

2nd Lt. E. M. 1/2 U.S.
63 Bn Co B-17074780
San Francisco, Cal



UNITED STATES NAVY

2 Sept 1943

Dear Frank:
It's about time I dropped you a line, I find it very hard to write because after writing to Marge & my mother, to write to anyone else in the family would be just a repetition, but as you don't get around much here I guess I left the states last day of April and damned glad to leave, that is that training we were getting in California was getting my goat and we were getting no liberties (nights out) to speak of, considering we were navy, I should have been every other with you. You've heard of transports, well this ship was typical, we sailed and sailed this way and that way and guessing from the stars I thought we'd hit New Zealand or Australia but my reckoning was off for one morning the cry of "land" went around and I took a look & there you could see surf and hills, looked like California but when we got closer we could see the palm trees, finally we were told we were in Fiji. Oh yes on board ship we had a hell of a time initially, changing the boys to shell backs, at the crossing of the equator, I got a great big certificate and mailed it to Marge, you went down one side of the ship and on the way, pirates with scissors cut gobs of hair off your scalp, then they threw you on an operating table and the "doctor" squirted some mill stuff down your throat and some other guy gave you a generous portion of mustard in your shorts, then you passed about ten
Stephen W. Lude E. M. 1/2

San Francisco Cal
63 Bu Co B-1 70 Ft. Po

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guys who unbacked you on the ore with wet towels
and most were knotted, then into a tank of salt
water bucket on deck you went and you were
ducked and ducked, then you got out and
ran down a long aisle and about fifty guys
worked on you with towels, kinda brief
because of the number of men but your
fanny sure looked like a red rose
We hung around Fiji and I got ashore ailer
to a town called Latoka or something like
that, had some brandy, gin and a gin slings
twenty cents a drink, but a British product and
an American wouldn't like it, The town was
all native except for Chinese stores, got a Chinese
meal for six bits, cold orange juice, fresh
fried egg - piece of steak, size of egg and fresh
baked biscuits, the town must have
been a tourist stop before the war as
they were so many shops selling silver
articles, tortois shell with silver inlays
made into necklaces, Marge & Ursula
has one and then butterflies and other
items of finely woven silver wire, we
got a snootfull and went back to ship.
After awhile we set sail on another
ship and landed in New Caledonia, this
was a rough crossing & guys would sit
on one toilet and heave down the next,
what a leaning mess, from seeing
all this I got a lump and felt like it
but didn't as I wasn't so sure I could
stop if I started, after some time
in New Caledonia we sailed again
and landed up here which we are
only allowed to identify as "Coral Sea Area"
Farty - two days at sea, but we can't men-
tion the excitement. We landed and
for two miles slept in our pup-tents about

Stephen M. Luce Com 1/c

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1st Lt. L. E. C. USNR
63 Bu Co B-1 90 Ft Ft
San Francisco Cal.

fifty feet outside the jungle in grass shoulder
high, I guess you'd call those fields the
veldt, when we moved inland and built
a camp in what looked like jungle to me
but what is a wooded grove here, had
a hell of a time chopping out trees and vines,
and roots all over, lizards all over from
the pretty little ones to the two foot ugly
ones, and centipedes and scorpions, the
centipedes scared the shit out of me for
their venom is worse than a rattlesnake,
tho they don't fave enough.
We had a hell of a time the first
few miles, with the sentries challenging
wild figs and cones that wouldn't stand
still. Stayed long enough to get the place
in order, five mess-halls + showers
over again. We all had fox-halls,
Washing-machine Charlie would come over,
I didn't like this new camp at first
but now I do. my tent is one hundred
and fifty yards from the coral sea,
swell swimming, the beach is a grey
colored sand and the water sure is fine.
there are octopoi here but they don't
hurt you or the sharks either, up
the beach are some coral reefs and
there are clams sixteen inches across,
there where you find the coral
snakes also - ugly tempered devils.
There's not much animal life, except
coconut-possoms - supposed to be some
monkeys - but I never saw one
Stephen W. L. E. C.

San Luis Est 1/2⁵ NR
 63 Bu Co B1-9074 PO
 San Francisco, Cal.

I am writing this by the light of an oil flare and have to stop now and then to shoo away some rats that are fighting in other tent I hope to get some fasion and then watch the fun, Insect life is abundant, plenty of spiders, all sizes, sure could get a fine collection of bugs, and ants they're everywhere, in the four man tent I live in they are about an eighth of an inch long + keep my mess - pit clean as a whistle and the lizards catch mosquitoes and flies, they're our friends also, tho in the jungle there are bigger ants that really bite, There aren't as many birds as you would expect on a South-sea island, no sea-gulls at all - even around the ships, Saw some beautiful farrats in the jungle, also ~~white~~ ^{Red} parakeets, we have a red parakeet in our tent, wounded wing quite some but can bite, about ten inches long, there are also white cuckatoos and some birds resembling a woodpecker black on top and white bellies, There are some crocodills in the rivers, but few have seen them, a gang of natives quit working on a jungle river because they saw some, but we finished the work, The lagoons are full of hermit crabs and land crabs are here also, don't know about the salt water fish as these natives don't go in or on salt water although they like to wash + swim in the rivers, I see some fish with headfull of teeth like walleyes a game fish sure, in the rivers, grenades best bait,
 Stephen W. Luce Est 1/2

San Luis En 2/20588
 63 Bu & B-1 907470
 San Francisco Cal.

its half past eight and quiet as hell as we
 have a movie tonite and all the boys are
 there, I don't go as I don't like movies and the
 sound is junk. Coconut trees grow
 here like weeds, so far I have opened
 one coconut and ate about half; the
 dumber things are all over. This new
 camp is in a coconut grove and we
 have the added peril of falling nuts.
 Trees about sixty feet high and the nuts
 with husk about six pounds, and
 then the branches about ten feet
 long and eight inches across at the
 butt, the damned things could kill
 you, I was going to clean up the trees
 around our tent but a guy told me the
 rats are up there daytimes so the
 hell with them, besides I saw a
 guy half way up a tree get stung
 by hornets. There's plenty of int-
 eresting trees but outside of mahogany,
 bamboo and beetle-nut I don't know
 their names, their root structure is
 very peculiar, spreads all over top
 of ground. don't go very deep. perhaps
 because water is near the surface, I
 haven't been in the hills or mountains
 yet - have hopes though. Was in a
 clearing on side the jungle when a boar,
 pig and young - one come out of the grass,
 the boar was smaller than the saw

Stephen M. Lude En 2/20588

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San Luis E m 1/2
63 Bu Co B-1 907 Lt To
San Francisco, Cal

but a meaner looking devil I'd never seen
the hair on his back stood straight
up and he came toward me I jumped
up on my truck and they disappeared into
the tall grass, I don't know if they
hurt you but I took no chances.
There's not a town on this island, only small
scattered native villages, guess this island was
too full of disease for white-man before
the war, the natives are melancholy and
plenty strong, very smart, want work, the
missionaries done a good job as most believe in
god and don't let man or make push-push
without being married cause they want to
go to god - have better morals than we
civilized whites. They make thatched
huts, grass skirts and a comb and thats
about all, those on this island seem to be
outcasts from the other island, I heard one
tell he ate man when a boy, his father
cooked a chunk over a fire, but that
was a long time ago. I've been trying
to get a Schumpken head, but they all
disclaim any knowledge about the pra-
ctice. Fine for bed so guess I'll knock
it off and finish tomorrow. Another day
and I have fifteen minutes. Had Chow
at six-thirty - fooled around, went to the lab-
oratory for a blood count at eight, saw
the doctor at 9, count ok. Lost fifteen
pounds & kinda draggy but you would
expect that at the equator, then went
swimming in the Coral Sea for about
half-hour then a fresh-water
shower, the doc gave me some B1
vitamins capsules, one twice a day, weighed
Stephen M. Lude E m 1/2

San Luis En 7th USNR
 63 Bu Co B-1 907 1770
 San Francisco Cal

13th with shoes (G.I.) socks, dungarees and skivvy
 shirt, we shall see how the pills work.
 The noon show just blew so have to knock
 off again - will continue tonight after work.
 Went to work on the big grease-truck at noon.
 it's a large truck and we travel all over and
 service the caterpillars, road machinery, shovels,
 in fact all the heavy equipment, a good job
 I'm known as a heavy equipment lubricator,
 we even air the tires on the road-graders
 my fifteen years at Bell gave me the background
 for this type of work, knacked off at five
 thirty and on the way back to the tent stopped
 at the showers, had one and walked home
 in the nude, never use a towel as
 they are too hard to wash, you can
 do anything in the nude you care to, in
 Fiji you had to wear trunks, there
 were people from India there and that's
 probably, besides they were civilized, and
 some fine looking natives, the dutch cath-
 olics seem to pioneered in missionary work
 here but some natives are adventurists, they
 started about eight years ago, we have
 to work every day of the week but they
 can't work us and more than six hours as
 you can't take it so close to the equator,
 saw a swell show put on by army-boys
 last nite, all former professionals, swell
 orchestra, a chorus of feminine beauties
 had us in stitches, just like a burlesque
 show, boys dressed as girls. Should stay
 here awhile but then may move up to
 the front any day - one never knows,
 at least that's one way of getting home sooner.
 guess I'll knock it off for now.

Regards to all
 Steve

Stephen M. Lude En 7th