

[This letter is written on legal length (14 inch = 355 mm) paper. It has been segmented to be printed at full size here, with the complete page printed at reduced size at the end of this document.]

[Upper section]

At sea
February 3, 1943

L-115

Dear Aunt Jondie et al,

It is beginning to look as if we have made it- the ship, and I. Everything has been most pleasant, calm and uneventful; the accommodations are marvelously comfortable, the food is good, the officers and passengers interesting to be with. Be that as it may, I certainly cannot recommend sea voyages at this time on this or any ship. They are hardly rest cures. The constant apprehension is incredibly nerve-wracking to everyone. One comes aboard perfectly reconciled to the fact that one is undertaking a dangerous trip, and perfectly willing to forget it, since there is absolutely nothing to be done about the situation beyond taking normal precautions and trusting in God. But little by little, perhaps from being in such close contact with the crew, one becomes nervous and fidgety. We passengers are on the ship for one trip; they have to continue till the end of the war, or the end of them. I think it would be less of a strain to be on a battleship, where you would know at least that you could fight back, where you aren't just a moving target. These men are brave, and I wonder how they manage to keep out of the insane asylum.

We had a nice long stop-over in _____ much to the surprise of all the passengers, who didn't know we were ~~going to~~ going to make any ports other than our destination. It was pleasant to interrupt such a very long sea trip with a little land. _____ is extremely interesting just now, with all the activity centering there. I saw my old boss from Miami days down there, met some of the local people (with their amazing accents that don't seem to come from any place in particular) and visited some of the Army and Navy officers' clubs, some of which are simply lovely. Young ladies are at such a premium there that anything in skirts is bound to be rushed off her feet by eager legions, with the result that I was able to see a great proportion of the sights from the comfort of Government vehicles. After X weeks, we set out to sea again, not particularly looking forward to the long, log trip. Seeing the same ten faces for X months in a small ship becomes rather monotonous, but thank goodness everyone is very nice, and we have come to be fond of each other. The captain is at the bottom of all the entertainment on board, probably because he is so fearfully nervous that he must always have someone around him day and night. Never again will I look on the phrase "heroes of the merchant marine" as an empty cliché.

[Lower section]

Soon I'll be seeing my love
again after fifteen months. Whoops! Peace, it's wonderful!

Thank you dear people for all
your kindnesses to me. Thank you for the two visits in Vermont, which
were just wonderful in all ways, and thank little ~~Susan~~ Susan for
the fine lunch and bull-session the afternoon in New York. The next time
you pass by the West Coast & Africa....

Much love to you all,

Love Philinda

P.S. Am now honest woman,
and working hard.

[Complete page]

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Much love to you all,

Laura Philbida

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