



## With the *3/7/44* Colors

Chief Petty Officer Earl Jones, United States Coast Guard, writes his parents, Mr. and Mrs. V. A. Jones of Newton, from New York, where he has just returned from a thirty-five days at sea on a destroyer escort, which helped convoy a group of ships to the Mediterranean, taking seventeen days to go and eighteen to return.

"Right after I called you we left New York with a convoy and took the ships across the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, where they were taken on to Sicily by British ships. We were disappointed in not getting to Sicily, but the Mediterranean is controlled by the English. We got ten miles inside Gibraltar but that is all.

"In all of our trip both going and coming we had no trouble with submarines and didn't see any. We received reports of subs being in areas where we had been but they didn't bother us. The day after we turned the convoy over to the British two ships were sunk by German subs in the Mediterranean. There are still subs in the Atlantic and there are a few sinkings but not many compared to the number of allied ships going back and forth. We took eighty-four ships across and brought forty-eight back. They were protected by ten destroyer escorts; that's plenty of protection. We had air protection along the Atlantic coast of the United States, around Bermuda, off Africa and over the Mediterranean.

"Before getting to Gibraltar we (our ship only) escorted three ships to the Azores, which belong to Portugal and are neutral. Before we anchored in their harbor the natives paddled out to us and tried to sell their goods. I had a four hour liberty in one of the cities there and in this time I learned a new exchange of money, saw women with baskets on their heads and bought a few things to bring back. The Azores are much different from Bermuda in that they have many mountains and hills. Their homes aren't as nice as the people are mostly peasants. They must have colder weather in the Azores because things weren't as green as Bermuda.

"I saw the famous rock of Gibraltar stretching up in the clouds. She's really unusual, there at the mouth of the Mediterranean and one can easily understand why she is so valuable to England. I was just as impressed with the high rocks on the African side, which belong to Spain.

“Then we went down to Casablanca and were there three days, two of which I used as liberty and looked the city over. As we came into port we could see sunken ships, some with only the masts showing and others turned over. They belonged to France and were fighting for Vichy, France, and when we invaded they tried to get out but our ships and planes took care of them. Most of the French ships are there being repaired. They are beautiful ships but not much gun fire.

“The United States Navy has a supply and repair base there but the Army has moved out. Casablanca is made up of Arabs, French and Jews. Most of the Arabs are beggars and the minute the American sailors land ashore they start begging and they pester you until you have to give them something. The first day I looked around and I knew that I was being gypped in every store I went in so the second day I hired a guide and toured Casablanca. The city is very

modern except for transportation and has a lot of tall buildings. I saw the sultan's palace and the hotel outside the city where Roosevelt and Churchill met.

"Roosevelt's picture was prominent in store windows but I never saw Churchill's. I saw the dirtiest, filthiest class of people there I ever saw in my life and then in other sections there were beautiful, modernistic houses that we would be proud to own.

"I asked the guide what the people think of Americans and he replied, 'Well, you treat us fine but we really like your money.' He said that the food we were sending was going to the rich, the French and the military, and that the poor were starving. Prices have gone up tremendously since we invaded. Eggs were 3 cents per dozen and are now 65 cents. Everything went up. On top of that the United States used to get 75 francs for a dollar and now we only get 50.

"We could only use invasion money ashore. Everywhere you could see American influence taking hold. Orchestras played American songs, American movies were showing, etc. The guide told us that the Germans ransacked the city of most good articles and I found it hard to buy anything good. I did get hold of some leather articles, for they have plenty of leather. I tried to buy some mahogany lumber but the guide said that there was none in the city because they had no trucks to haul it in. The French army had several camps there and they were holding some Italian prisoners. I saw rows and rows of American jeeps and trucks.

"The weather was nice and warm all the way. I played a game of ball in Casablanca. Went around in shirt sleeves and got a nice tan coming back. Some rough seas but I don't mind this anymore.

"In addition to running the store, giving tests to those being promoted, managing the movies and laundry I was made chief master at arms for the trip. That's a tough job and one that no one wants. I'm in charge of the cleanliness, bunks, gear and have to work men keeping it clean. We have an inspection every afternoon.

"Among other good things the Coast Guard has taught me to like reading. I never read much until this trip when with nothing else to do I started reading books we have and now I'd rather read at night than do anything else. The food has been good. We have good bakers and get pie or cake every day. I do miss ice cream and milk but we can get along without it."

Lieutenant Don E. Meeker of Hidalgo writes the Press from Tonopah, Nevada, where he is receiving advanced training as a bombardier:

"I haven't received the Press since I have returned from furlough and have missed keeping up with the Jasper gang. I spent a week in Fresno, California, then was sent to Tonopah, Nevada for O. T. U. The news should be spread to the Jasper county gang that are lucky enough to be in Texas that they are lucky. I am about a hundred miles from the center of Death valley, and if they think the half Mexican cities of Texas are bad they should try Tonopah.

"It was a mining ghost town; now it is about three thousand. Half is Army personnel and the other half is Indians, with a few whites. We have been without electricity for forty-eight hours due to a storm. Lines are down in the mountains which encircle the field. It has been snowing the same period of time. No heat in the bunks because the heating unit operated by electricity.

"Some of the folks in Jasper may think things there a little high. Here one room furnished, with bath, costs from fifty to seventy-five dollars a

month. If you have a room without bath you have to pay fifty cents each bath. At camp the water is also short. Water is turned off eight of the twenty-four hours.

"Morale is as good here as it has been at any camp I have been in. Last night we had a candle on top of the piano for light, and from fifty to a hundred officers from second lieutenant to major sang songs from 10:00 to 12:00. Last night I played two games of chess with a colonel, might add, I lost. The c. o. is grand and swell to work for.

"It would be swell to hear from more of the fellows from Jasper, especially the fellows on air crews. I am a bombardier now on a B-24 or hope to be soon. My address is Lieutenant Don Meeker, 802 squadron, 470 Bomber group, Tonopah, Nevada."