

# LEON HENDERSON TELLS OF ACTION IN PACIFIC BATTLES

HAD PART IN BITTER NAVAL WAR-  
FARE IN PHILIPPINES AND  
AT IOWA JIMA

*May 24, 1945*

Mr. and Mrs. Bland Henderson, residing in the Shiloh district in Grove township, are in receipt of a very interesting letter from their son, Voris Leon, who is a gunner's mate on a U. S. Destroyer, now doing service in the Pacific campaign.

Leo graduated from Newton Community High School with the class of 1942, took part in the school's athletics and was well known here as well in his own community.

Through the release of some censorship rules he was permitted to write of some of the campaigns he has participated in, from Leyte to Iwo Jima. His letter follows:

April 27, 1945

Dearest Folks: Here's hoping everyone there is O. K. and happy. I'm quite well so guess I can't gripe.

We just got a notice of censorship release so I'll tell you now where I've been, etc.

We left San Pedro, California last September and went to Pearl Harbor. Just before we left Pearl Harbor, the Philippines were invaded, but we arrived at Leyte via Eniwetok in time to be credited with participation in the Leyte operations. We saw our first action while patrolling the Surigao Straights. A Jap plane broke from a cloud bank right above us. We cut loose on him and thought we got him. He pulled a fake dive and high-tailed it.

Our next action was the invasion of Mindoro. We provided anti-aircraft screen for the landing. The morning of the invasion we sank a Jap freighter with shell fire and that night we knocked down our first plane. We went back to Leyte, then to Palau for stores, etc.

Back to Leyte, we rested a while and got everything set for the invasion of Luzon. We had some trouble the morning we entered Lingayen Gulf. It was just breaking day and we were rounding the tip ready to enter the Gulf. Our Force was well ahead of us and just then several Jap planes came at us. We opened fire on them and got three. We had three bombs that were near misses. Shore batteries saw our gun flashes and opened fire on us. Still under air attack, we cut across an un-swept mine field and re-joined our Force, unharmed. We shelled Jap defenses on the beach for three days before the troops went in. We hit railways, trains oil tanks, radio installations, several Jap tanks, and machine gun nests. Well, the Army took over from there so we headed back to Leyte and then to another port for a rest and to get

ready for our next strike.

Off we went again with the boys who made the first carrier borne air attack on Tokyo. We listened to Jap radio newscasts and believe me they sounded pretty scared — especially of our B-29's which struck Tokyo at the same time our fleet planes did. We left our force then and went to Saipan for a few days. While we were going to Saipan we ran into some Jap picket boats and got credit for sinking one with shell fire. During our stay in Saipan, our troops landed on Iwo Jima. We headed for there and let me tell you, they were sure having a time of it on the Island. Old Glory was flying from the top of Mt. Surabachi although they were still fighting Japs in some of its caves. The wreckage of Jap planes and Tanks was strewn all over the slope leading up to an air strip. We poured shells on the beach for twenty-four hours straight and were congratulated three times by the Marine Commander for our accuracy in gun fire. We knocked out numerous concrete pill boxes. (The picture of us bombarding Iwo is in a news-reel. See it if you have a chance). We rejoined our Force and made another strike at Japan then came back to port.

Well, this is my story. I thought you would like to know, but please don't worry about me. What has been is water under the bridge and what is to be — I'm not much worried. We have had our close calls and came through O. K.

I'd better close and get a little sleep before going on watch so for now, Good Night and God Bless You All. — Leon.