

# BETWEEN THE COVERS RARE BOOKS

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## Alton L. Lattig

### *Korean War-Era Navy Letters*

New Jersey, Japan: 1953 - 1954

\$2500



An intriguing collection of 403 letters between Bayonne, New Jersey native, Alton L. Lattig and his fiancé, Marion Lynde during his tour with the Navy at the end of the Korean war. All letters are in envelopes and near fine with slight curling and tears from opening. Also included are two newsletters and 41 photographs.

Alton Lattig, who refers to himself as “Mike” throughout his correspondence, was on active duty with the U.S. Navy from 1953 until 1954. He was stationed on the U.S. Tarawa (CVA-40) which had just been recommissioned as an attack aircraft carrier in response to the Korean War. They embarked on a mission that took them from Gibraltar to the Asiatic over the course of two years. “Arrived safely last night at 11:45 and sure hated to come back aboard this pig-iron tub, but as the saying goes you can’t fight city hall.”

They were sent as part of the replacement for the 2nd and 6th Navy fleets on a tour that took them to Gibraltar, Spain, Japan, Australia, and Korea before returning to Pearl Harbor and home. “We are now 1,671 miles from “Rock of Gibraltar” and we are due to pull in there on the morning of the 23rd and will remain a couple of days and pull out for Algiers...will let you know as we go along from port to port.” When granted shore leave they participated in local activities, “I went to another bull fight this afternoon and it was really better than the other one I saw, there was more slaughtering in the fights today.” Their duties sent them on missions that mainly involved refueling and replenishing the Air Force and other Navy vessels. “Well we just finished refueling a destroyer around 6:15...we were supposed to do 2 cans but it got sort of late and they have flight operations again tonight so we have to get up early in the morning and refuel the other one.”



Shortly after enlisting Lattig was scheduled to take his test to raise higher in rank; “Tomorrow morning I am taking a test for 3rd class Petty Officer and sure hope I make it this time. I passed it last time but the quota was filled and they wouldn’t give it to me...with a little luck I will make it. It not only means more money but I won’t have to take too much bossing around I will be able to boss people around a little.” With a young wife at home the extra money from the position was useful and appreciated. It was also good for the card games that kept the men occupied. “I am going to keep playing as long as I win, but as soon as my luck starts running out I am going to quit, I know it’s an awful thing to gamble but what else have we to do here in the middle of nowhere.”

On April 7, 1954 while stationed in Japan he writes, “Hon, I don’t know if I mentioned in one of my letters when we were operating or not, but we were operating with the Oriskany when that plane caught fire we watched it from the flight deck. (The clipping you sent) that is the way we have some of our planes come in and lose altitude too fast and crack up, very very seldom does any pilot get hurt too bad but some of them luck isn’t with them.”

“We are in the South China Sea heading for Japan and we will pull into Japan on the 15th instead of 14th (Valentine’s Day) I sure wish it were in the U.S....but we have 121 days to go over here before we start back home for the good old U.S.A.” This was in February of 1954, a few months before they would head home. They spent roughly 2 years repairing and refueling aircraft at the end of the war. After the armistice they were sent to clean up after the war and became a roaming sea airbase. By September on 1954 they arrived safely on the shores of California.

Along with the letters Lattig sent back two “Tradewinds” newsletters from his ship with the caption, “Send me home” printed above the address. They include Navy related articles, photos of the crew, and each one provides a Hollywood starlet on the last page. March 1, 1954 has Lizabeth Scott posing on a beach while May 1, 1954 has Lucy Marlow in fishnets dubbed, “the saucy charmer.” He also kept photographs of his shipmates posing around the barracks, his fiancé, and some of a marriage, possibly his own after the war. One particularly nice photo is of a bunch of sailors around table of drinks presumably laying on the charm.

An extensive collection of letters detailing the life of a sailor after a short and unwarranted war which would lay the ground work for Vietnam.

List:

- 403 handwritten letters in envelope
- U.S.S. Tarawa-CVA 40 “Tradewinds” Volume IV, No. 3. March 1, 1954. 8pp.
- U.S.S. Tarawa-CVA 40 “Tradewinds” Volume IV, No. 5. May 1, 1954. 12pp.
- Newspaper clipping announcing the Tarawa joining the Navy

Photographs

- 5" x 7" Sailor, color
- Oblong 3½" x 5" U.S.S. Tarawa, black and white
- Oblong 3" x 4" Sailors at a bar, sepia toned
- Oblong 3" x 4" Sailor at a bar, black and white
- Oblong 8" x 10" Graduating class, black and white
- Oblong 5" x 7" Sailors at a bar, black and white

-5¾" x 4" Sailor, black and white

-5½" x 3" Sailor, black and white

-Three 2½" x 2½" Sailor, black and white

-Six, 3½" x 3" Sailors and barracks, black and white

-Ten, 3½" x 2½" Sailors and barracks from Newport, Rhode Island Oct. 1950 – Jan. 6, 1951, black and white

-4" x 4" engagement announcement photos and newspaper clipping, black and white.

-Three, 3½" x 3½" Bride, black and white

-3" x 4½" wedding guests, black and white

-Six, 3½" x 3½" wedding, black and white

-Four various family photographs, black and white [BTC#386497]