

HIGHLIGHT FROM THE MARINE CORPS ARCHIVES

From Parris Island to the Pacific

THE SERVICE OF EDWARD LEROY PARKE IN HIS OWN WORDS

by Alisa M. Whitley

Archives preserve the physical historical records of those who have come before so that their stories may be told and studied. Through their preservation work, archives enable current and future generations to understand the different experiences, identities, places, and situations encompassed by their collections. The collections housed in the Marine Corps Archives preserve evidence of the lives and experiences of many Marines, such as shrapnel damage on a World War I letter, blood on what would become a last letter home, or sand in the folds of maps from Iraq. In a world where seemingly endless amounts of digital content is available at our fingertips, it is easy to overlook those historical resources that cannot be found through a quick online search or easily viewed on a screen. As archivists endeavor to digitize as much as possible to make collections more widely accessible, there are still many stories that can only be told through physical artifacts. The documents and ephemera left behind by Marines guide the way into the future through the resources of archives.

Alisa M. Whitley is branch head and an archivist of the Historical Resources Branch of Marine Corps History Division. As a highlight of the collections held by the Historical Resources Branch archives, this article did not undergo peer review.

After leaving Guam on 28 July 1945, at 15 minutes past midnight on 30 July, the USS *Indianapolis* (CA 35) was struck by torpedoes from a Japanese submarine. Twelve minutes later, the ship rolled completely over and plunged down into the depths of the Pacific. Among the ship's complement were 39 members of the Marine detachment, commanded by Captain Edward LeRoy Parke. Of those 39 Marines, only 9 of them survived. Since the sinking of the *Indianapolis* is a tragic chapter in U.S. Navy history, and there were so few Marines aboard, it is not a story that is generally told from the Marine Corps perspective. The letters of Edward LeRoy Parke, written to his father, offer a rich narrative of Parke's experiences as a Marine, culminating in his untimely death in the sinking of the *Indianapolis* 75 years ago. These letters were graciously donated to the Marine Corps History Division in 2015.

According to the age certificate submitted by his mother when he enlisted, Parke was born on 29 October 1913 in Middleburg, Virginia. His parents, Betty Gorse and Clarence Parke, married in August 1905; after 29 years of marriage, they divorced in June 1935. His father was an associate in the Converted Insur-ance Division of the Veterans Administration and also owned a tobacco farm in Davidsonville, Maryland. His mother remarried an Army officer who was sta-



*Edward L. Parke, Official Military Personnel File,
National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO*

Edward L. Parke's enlisted photograph, 15 August 1938.

tioned in the Virgin Islands. Edward graduated from the Petworth School in Washington, DC, in June 1925 and attended American University, where he studied political science, graduating in 1933.

On 4 August 1938, Parke enlisted in the Marine Corps and was stationed at Parris Island, South Carolina. He wrote to his father in October of that year.

Dear Dad:

I received your letter two weeks ago, but have been so damn busy that I've had no time to write. About the only free time I have is on Sunday and that is the time I devote to my washing and ironing. I'm becoming quite a laundress, or should I say launderer, learning to wash my own clothes, starch my trousers, darn socks, sew on buttons, and keep a glistening polish on my

boots. I may not be a brilliant master of military strategy, but I'm a four point soldier in personal hygiene and appearance.

We're finished Marines now; adept in the use of rifle, hand grenade, bayonet, automatic pistol and bush warfare.¹

Later that year, Parke was attached to the USS *Henderson* (AP 1) as a member of the Marine detachment. He served as a captain's orderly and pointer in the 3-inch antiaircraft artillery battery.

Dear Dad:

Just a few lines while I have the time and opportunity to write. I am now stationed aboard the U.S.S. *Henderson*, leaving Norfolk the seventeenth of October for the West Coast and then China. I've been in so damn many different places in the last two weeks—that is since leaving Parris Island—that it would have been useless to write and send an address.

The work aboard this ship amounts to nothing at all. In fact you don't have enough to do. I'm standing two watches at present, telephone operation one day, Captain's orderly the next. Nothing to do and all day to do it in.

The food aboard is extremely good. The only drawback is the lack of space for sleeping and bathing, and the fact that I have to bathe out of a bucket.

It's great sport taking a bath under these conditions and you have to take one a day. You can hardly imagine forty men attempting to bathe

¹ Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 2 October 1938, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), Marine Corps History Division (MCHD), Quantico, VA.

and shave in a space designed for ten. I often think I'm shaving my face and it turns out to be someone else's backside. However it all turns out for the best, someone shaves mine.²

In April 1939, Parke was transferred to the Marine detachment aboard the USS *Pennsylvania* (BB 38) where he served as the admiral and captain's orderly and as a range keeper for the secondary battery. In a 30 April 1939 letter, he describes life on board his new ship.

I am now doing duty on the *Pennsylvania*, the flagship of Admiral [Claude C. Bloch] Block, and what a pig iron so and so this battle wagon is. Bad food, poor quarters, and no liberty but I suppose the honor of serving on the flagship makes up for all of those.

We've been here in Balboa [Panama] since Thursday and during that period I've had five hours liberty. It wasn't much but it gave me a chance to see a part of Panama that I'd never seen before. This was my third trip here but previous to this trip I'd done no sight seeing due to the fact I was serving on ships that granted all night liberty but cargo operations curtailed leave during the day.³

In October 1939, he was detached to the Naval Fire Control School, Washington, DC, completing the course by June 1940, and being assigned to the Sperry Director School, Brooklyn, New York. At the completion of the Director School and being awarded the certificate for "operation, maintenance and adjustment of the M-4 director," he was transferred to the 4th Defense Battalion at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

² Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 14 October 1938, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

³ Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 30 April 1939, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

In 1938, the Marine Corps decided to establish defense detachments that were intended to repel minor naval raids and raids by small landing parties. These detachments would consist of 5-inch coastal defense guns, 3-inch antiaircraft artillery guns, a machine gun battery, and a searchlight battery. One of these detachments, the 4th Defense Battalion, had been formed at Parris Island in February 1940. The battalion moved to Guantánamo in February 1941, remaining there until October. Parke shares his feelings on being stationed in Cuba in this 23 February 1941 letter.

Dear Dad:

I don't know what you think had happened to me, but the chaos and confusion of the past month and a half have made it impossible for me to even think of writing a letter let alone start one.

We are now on the sunny isle of Cuba, that "Pearl of the Caribbean," and what a God-forsaken hole it is. It is so bad that I have coined a phrase, that to my mind, fits it very aptly—"Cuba is the place, created by the Devil, to take care of the over-flow from Hell."

This "Island of the Damned" has two sorts of weather—scorching suns and torrential rains. You either fry your brains in the heat, or wade in mud up to your armpits. It rained so much the first two weeks we were here that I began to grow webs between my toes.⁴

With their exercises completed in Cuba, the 4th Defense Battalion embarked for Pearl Harbor, arriving just seven days before the attacks. On 7 December, the present defense battalions were able to offer limited and generally ineffectual opposition from their

⁴ Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 23 February 1941, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

stations in and around the Navy yard, due to the lack of a ready supply of ammunition. Since they had only arrived days before, many of their weapons had not yet been unloaded from the ship and set up on shore. Nevertheless, the battalions had 25 machine guns in action within an hour and a half of the start of the attack and they managed to down three Japanese planes. None of the defense battalions' heavier weapons were ever fired.⁵

Following the attacks on Pearl Harbor, Parke's mother wrote to his father.

Dear Clarence—

Am worried terribly about Eddie. Had a letter from him last Thursday saying that he reached Honolulu on the 20th of November. Have sent two cablegrams to him since Sunday—but no reply. Please, please go to the Navy Department and see what you can find out about our kid. In his letter he said that he was going to write you as soon as he finished my letter.

He wasn't positive about staying there but thought he might be sent to either Wake [Island] or Guam. Please do your best to get what information you can and please write me. Will be anxiously waiting to hear from you. I am frantic about that child. Pardon my brief notes. Am worried.

As ever—Ed's Mother—Betty⁶

On 12 December 1941, Edward wrote a brief note.

Dear Dad:

Just a few hurried lines to let you know I'm alright. Think of me this holiday season.

Love,

Edward L. Parke⁷

In subsequent letters, Parke did not elaborate on his experiences at Pearl Harbor. When his father heard from him again, it was January 1942.

Dear Dad:

Just a few lines to let you know that I'm still alive and kicking. My mail has finally caught up with me, but I don't have much time to write letters. Under the present regulations we are not permitted to discuss the war, or any of its phases, but I was present and took part in the opening act.

What I've seen and done will have to be related when we get together again, but the Lord only knows when that will be.⁸

In addition to his everyday duties, Parke was also hard at work trying to obtain his commission as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserve. He requested that his father obtain a transcript from American University and three letters of recommendation to submit to Headquarters Marine Corps.

In support of a commission, E. H. Callahan, chief, Converted Insurance Subdivision, Veterans Administration wrote:

I have known this young man for fifteen years or more, since he was a school boy. His father, Mr. Clarence L. Parke, is my official associate and one of my best friends. I have had occasion to observe Sergeant Parke in his home

⁵ Maj Charles D. Melson, *Condition Red: Marine Defense Battalions in World War II* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1996).

⁶ Betty Gorse to Clarence Parke, 9 December 1941, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

⁷ Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 12 December 1941, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

⁸ Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 23 January 1942, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

and elsewhere and I believe him to be qualified physically, mentally and morally for the commission he seeks. He has been endowed with natural intelligence and physical stamina far above that possessed by the average man. These qualities have been supplemented by a first class formal education, acquired technical knowledge and skill and a broad practical experience for one of his years, all of which, in my opinion, should make him an ideal officer. I recommend him without reservation.⁹

Future Marine Corps historian and Marine, Captain Robert D. Heinl Jr., was at that time serving as a battery commander with the 4th Defense Battalion. He wrote in a memorandum of recommendation of meritorious noncommissioned officer for appointment as second lieutenant:

Staff Sergeant Parke has either served under me or been under my close observation for (14) fourteen months. During this period, he has consistently demonstrated outstanding qualities of leadership, intelligence and initiative far beyond those required of his grade. He is not only an able fire-control technician but a noncommissioned officer of loyalty, discipline and zeal.

The service record book of Staff Sergeant Parke indicates that he served afloat, in the Fleet Marine Force, and on foreign shore duty, since the date of his enlistment, 4 August, 1938. He is a graduate of the director course of the Sperry Gyroscope Company; of the Primary Class, Navy Fire Control School; and of the Mathematics

and Mechanics for Civil Engineering Course of the Marine Corps Institute.

He has had no average marking lower than 4.5, and his average markings during the past thirteen months have been 5.0. He holds a letter of commendation from the Commandant, Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for having participated in the handling of certain munitions under exceptionally unfavorable conditions during February, 1941. Parke served as Aviation Cadet, USNR from July, 1935 to April, 1936, as a member of Pensacola Class 81-C, from which he was honorably separated by reason of ineptitude for aviation. He participated with credit in the defense of the Navy Yard, Pearl Harbor, T. H. against enemy forces on 7 December 1941, and has since taken good part in active operations.

In my opinion, Staff Sergeant Edward LeR. Parke, U.S. Marine Corps is qualified mentally, morally and physically for appointment to the grade of second lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserve. Had no limitation on age prevented it, the undersigned would readily have recommended him for a Regular appointment.¹⁰

The commanding officer of Parke's battery received a memorandum on 3 March 1942 stating that at the age of 28, he was ineligible for a commission in the Marine Corps Reserve, but he was eligible for a temporary commission in the Marine Corps. In July 1942, Parke received his commission and was appointed a second lieutenant. Meanwhile, on 27 April 1942, Parke's father, Clarence, went to register for the draft. He was 59 years old and listed his son, stationed at

⁹E. H. Callahan to LtGen Cmdt, 5 February 1942, Edward L. Parke, Official Military Personnel File, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO.

¹⁰Memorandum, Robert D. Heinl Jr. to MajGen Cmdt, 5 February 1942, Edward L. Parke, Official Military Personnel File, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)			
SERIAL NUMBER U 2755	1. NAME (Print) CLARENCE- LEROY PARKE (First) (Middle) (Last)		ORDER NUMBER
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) Cottage Farm Davidsonville Maryland (Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)			
[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]			
3. MAILING ADDRESS Cottage Farm Davidsonville Maryland (Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same)			
4. TELEPHONE +	5. AGE IN YEARS 59	6. PLACE OF BIRTH Indianapolis (Town or county)	
(Exchange) (Number)	DATE OF BIRTH Oct 30 1882 (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)	Indiana (State or country)	
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Edward L. Parke U. S. Marine Corp. Pearl Harbor			
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS Veterans administration Wash. D.C.			
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Veterans administration Wash. D.C. (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)			
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.			
D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 4-1-42)	(over)	16-21630-1	Lawrence L. Parke (Registrant's signature)

War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942, digital image, National Archives via Ancestry.com, accessed 26 December 2018
World Draft Registration Card for Edward Parke's father, Clarence Parke, born 30 October 1882.

Pearl Harbor, as the person who would always know his address. However, by that time, the younger Parke had left Pearl Harbor, offering his father only a line in his next letter saying, "We were transferred over two months ago, but naturally I am unable to say, or hint, where we are at the present. From now on the letters you receive will be very irregular, but you remember the old saying, 'no news is good news'."¹¹ During this time frame, the 4th Defense Battalion established itself on the island of Efate in the Pacific to start building an airfield. In August 1943, the unit was stationed on Vella Lavella in the Solomon Islands in support of the I Marine Amphibious Corps. In October of that

year, Edward shared his opinion on his place in history by writing:

Things out here have apparently cooled off to a certain extent, but not so long ago we were experiencing some rather hectic days and nights. As you probably know [it is a] great deal more pleasant to read history than to assist in the making of it. History has a habit of relating only the high lights, but the thousands of small, insignificant incidents that make up those high lights can be very, very grim while they are directly concerned with you.¹²

¹¹ Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 4 May 1942, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

¹² Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 12 October 1943, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

For his actions during these “hectic days and nights,” Parke was awarded the Bronze Star. His citation reads:

For heroic service as Commanding Officer of an Antiaircraft Group Battery attached to the Fourth Defense Battalion, Fleet Marine Force, in action against enemy Japanese forces on Vella Lavella, New Georgia Group, Solomon Islands, from August 15 to October 31, 1943. Attacked by fourteen enemy dive bombers while his battery was vigorously repelling Japanese aircraft menacing our shipping in the Barakoma Area, First Lieutenant Parke ably controlled the determined and accurate performance of the battery, effectively bringing his 50-cal. guns to bear on the diving bombers as he continued to ward off the enemy’s aerial attacks on our shipping with his 90-mm weapons. First Lieutenant Parke’s inspiring courage and zealous devotion to duty during this period of intensive combat contributed materially to the success of our forces in the destruction of forty-two Japanese aircraft. His gallant conduct throughout was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.¹³

As Parke was serving in the Solomon Islands, the USS *Indianapolis* was participating in actions against the Japanese on Tarawa and then Saipan before relocating to the Mariana Islands. It was here that First Lieutenant Parke joined on 1 September 1944 as the commanding officer of the Marine detachment aboard. He shared his excitement about his new post with his father in a letter dated 29 September 1944.

Dear Dad:

It has been a long time since my last letter and from the looks of things my letters will be more infrequent than the past. We only get a chance to post our mail when we are in port and port is something this packet doesn’t know much about.

My luck is still holding out! What I go through now is a long far cry from what I went through in the past. The only discomfort I suffer now is lack of sleep, and I never thought I’d live to see the day when I could be at the scene of an action in clean khaki, freshly shaven and a cup of coffee in my hand. I must admit it is a lot more comfortable, but somehow—when the whole show is over—you don’t have the same feeling of satisfaction. The feeling of a job well done. It is probably due to the fact that your individual part is so small, so insignificant to the part played by the men on the beach.

As I told you before I left I chased my ship about 15,000 miles before I finally made connections. I travelled by every means of transportation except dog sled and ox cart.

I received my promotion 31 July and am more than satisfied with my new command.

All for the present.

Love,
Ed¹⁴

A month later, he lamented not being a part of the big action at the Battle of Leyte Gulf in the Philippines, but was hopeful of his future chances, writing, “I don’t know whether my luck is good or bad. I managed to see some fair action since I joined the ship,

¹³ Edward L. Parke, Official Military Personnel File, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO.

¹⁴ Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 29 September 1944, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.



Palmer Rixey Collection (COLL/1348),
Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA

The first and second wave of landing craft approaching Saipan in the Mariana Islands, as seen from the USS *Birmingham* (CL 62). USS *Indianapolis* (CA 36) is visible in the middle distance and Tinian Island lies beyond it.

but unfortunately we are not with the 'Bull' [Admiral William F. Halsey Jr.] so we missed the really big one that is filling the papers now. I have a fair idea that our boss [Admiral Raymond A. Spruance] will take us to the doorstep of Tokyo on our next move. Here's hoping.¹⁵

The next stop for assistance from the *Indianapolis* was Peleliu. From 12-29 September 1944, the ship bombarded the island before and after the landings. In November 1944, Parke was ordered on leave and sent stateside for 10 days. He writes without the expectation of censorship from San Francisco, California.

The last move I made was Palau where the "old man" [Admiral Spruance] took our packet in so close I thought he wanted us to throw hand grenades

on the shore batteries, but it certainly gave us a grand stand seat for the fighting ashore. It was one of the grandest spectacles I ever expect to see. Up until this time I had only seen the fighting in my own vicinity and as a rule you were so busy ducking that you didn't see very much, but here the fighting was spread out like a giant panorama. You could take your pick of the action from the initial landing, the battle for the air-strip, to the last assault on "Bloody Nose Ridge."¹⁶

Clarence Parke would not hear from his son again until April 1945, when he wrote, "We took part in the first two raids on Tokyo and participated in the occupation of Iwo Jima."¹⁷ He wrote again the next month:

Well here I am back in the States again, but I don't know for how long. We arrived this morning and I am snatching a few moments to dash off a few lines to let you know I am still in one piece and in good health. My luck certainly held out during the past four months and from the looks of things it will continue to do so. When I speak of luck I do so reservedly. I am still alive which is lucky, but my luck at cards and dice as bad as ever.¹⁸

At the end of June 1945, Parke wrote this joyous, but also introspective letter.

Dear Dad:

I know this letter will come as a surprise, and I also realize that I should have written sooner, but since Mon-

¹⁵ Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 31 October 1944, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

¹⁶ Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 22 November 1944, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

¹⁷ Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 10 April 1945, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

¹⁸ Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 2 May 1945, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

day I have been swamped with work and was unable to write until now. I also thought of sending a wire but during these times I dislike that form of communication very much as that is the form used by the Navy Department for informing the next of kin of the death of someone in the service.

The whole thing is that I was married last Saturday to Miss Eleanor Wright of Chicago Ill [Illinois].

I have known her since last October and I believe I mentioned the fact I intended to marry her in one of my previous letters.

I believe that I thought the whole thing out very carefully and do not think I have made a mistake. However time alone will show whether I have or not.

As far as my financial affairs are concerned they remain about the same. My insurance remains unchanged. That is to say to be divided between you and mother. The \$1,000—I believe that is the amount I sent home when I was in the islands—goes to you. The six month's pay—in the advent of my death—I would like to go to mother, so I have made her my beneficiary for it.

As a married officer my pay has been increased \$111.00 per month so I intend to send Mary \$150.00 per month to do with as she likes.

I don't intend to sound morbid, but for the past six months it is beginning to look as if my luck might not hold out. Each time things get a little closer.

I don't intend to get killed, but I am really not in the least afraid of anything that might happen. Anyway if anything should happen to me I figure that you and Mother should be the

ones to receive any benefits that may result from it.

Mary intends to come to Washington as soon as she can arrange for someone to stay with her mother who has been very ill. At the present time Mary is staying with friends of ours here, but will leave for Chicago, 2 July 1945. I hope—when you meet her—you two will like each other.

Love and regards to all
Ed⁹

This would be the last letter that Clarence Parke would receive from his son. On 12 August 1945, he received an official telegram informing him that his son was missing in action following the sinking of the *Indianapolis*. On 17 August, he received a letter confirming the authenticity of the telegram, but it was not until 15 September of that year that he received the telegram confirming his son's death.

Edward Parke was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal posthumously. His citation reads:

For heroic conduct while attached to the USS *Indianapolis*, following the sinking of that vessel by enemy Japanese forces, three hundred miles north of the Palau Islands, in July 1945. Struggling in the oil-covered sea for a period of three days without food, drinking water or a life raft, Captain Parke worked continuously to keep together a group of survivors from the sinking ship and to rescue those who were helpless or in difficulty. Voluntarily giving away his own life jacket to support the exhausted on several occasions, he persisted in his self-sacrificing efforts on behalf of his men until he collapsed from complete exhaustion. A leader of indomitable

⁹ Edward Parke to Clarence Parke, 28 June 1945, Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), MCHD, Quantico, VA.

CLASS OF SERVICE This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.	<h1>WESTERN UNION</h1> <p>A. N. WILLIAMS PRESIDENT</p>	1201	SYMBOLS DL = Day Letter NL = Night Letter LC = Deferred Cable NLT = Cable Night Letter Ship Radiogram
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The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.

BRC213 55 = WASHINGTON DC 14 641P
 MR CLARENCE L PARKE (FATHER)
 DAVIDSONVILLE, MD

1945 SEP 15 AM 12 16.

DEEPLY RERET TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON CAPTAIN EDWARD
 L PARKE USMC PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION WAS
 KILLED IN ACTION 30 JULY 1945 IN THE PACIFIC AREA IN
 THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS DUTY AND SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY.
 WHEN INFORMATION IS RECEIVED REGARDING BURIAL YOU WILL
 BE NOTIFIED. PLEASE ACCEPT MY HEARTFELT SYMPATHY
 A VANDEGRIFT GENERAL USMC COMMANDANT
 OF THE MARINE COPRS.

30 1945

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE

P. m. 213 F14

Edward L. Parke Collection (COLL/5627), Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA

The Western Union telegram informing Parke's family of his status change from missing in action to killed in action.

courage, Captain Parke, by his devotion to others, saved the lives of many who otherwise might have perished and his valiant conduct throughout was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.²⁰

Following Parke's death, his father received his son's medals including the Navy and Marine Corps

Medal, American Defense Service Medal, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and World War II Victory Medal. His mother also received duplicate medals. Having only been married approximately a month, Mary Wright had to submit their marriage certificate as proof so she could receive his pension.

Much as with Parke's circuitous route through the Marine Corps, his letters went on a journey of their own. The donor of the collection, Meegan Delphia, tells us that when her father, Ronald Murphy, died in the summer of 2014, she was named as the executor of his estate. Her father was retired from the Air National Guard and a Navy veteran. He was also a collector who frequently went to flea markets, estate

²⁰ Edward L. Parke, Official Military Personnel File, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO.

sales, and auctions. She believes that he purchased the box of letters at an estate sale in Vermont. It is unknown how the letters ended up in Vermont, but we are grateful to both of them for saving the letters and finding them a permanent home. Edward Parke gave his life for his country, and allowing the public to read these letters resurrects his memory from the depths of

the Pacific into the collective consciousness to make sure he is not forgotten.

The entirety of the Edward Parke Collection can be found on the Marine Corps History Division Flickr page at USMCArchives.

• 1775 •

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