

27 March 1945

My dear Mrs. Carr:

Although my own injuries which kept me hospitalized for some time prevented me from going to Washington D.C., to personally take care of writing to you and the families of the other gallant men who were lost on the U.S.S. SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, I have not been unmindful of your grief occasioned by this loss. Although I know that Mr. Roberts, the Executive Officer of the ship, has in writing to you, expressed far more ably than I can do, our sympathies, I cannot, as your husband's Commanding Officer, avoid expressing my own personal sympathies to you. I trust that you will realize that it was due to my own hospitalization and the difficulty of acquiring all the addresses and of writing them out a few each evening, without stenographic assistance, which has caused the apparently long and unwarranted delay in my writing to you, and not lack of interest, appreciation, or understanding on my part.

The loss of each man who made the supremensacrifice from the crew of my ship was a very personal one I assure you. A destroyer escort is not so large but what the Commanding Officer can know most of the crew. Paul was better known to me than many of the men, except the chiefs, this is spite of the fact that he was very quiet and unassuming. He was, from the very first one of our more outstanding men, and we had a fine crew throughout. His gun was the pride and joy of the ship's ordnance department, due not alone to his tireless energy in servicing it as a fond mother would a cherished baby, his mechanical skill in so doing, but due to his inspiring leadership, which shown forth like a beacon during the battle of October 25th. Gun "2" was always an outstanding gun, that day it was superb; its rate of fire phenomenal and its accuracy had a telling effect upon the Jap cruiser at which we were firing. Every man in that gun crew was brave, every one of them a hero, every member of the gun's crew has been recommended by me for an award, and all but one of them, who by some stroke of luck escaped, died, a terrific price to pay for their unflinching and limitless loyalty and devotion to their homes, loved ones and country. I have recommended Paul for the award of the Navy Cross, an award second only to the Congressional Medal of Honor, and the only man from the Samuel B. Roberts so recommended by me, although a number of others were recommended for high awards, not however as high as the Navy Cross for other feats of outstanding courage and heroism. However, from any way we looked at it Paul was the outstanding example of American inspiration courage on board the Samuel B. Roberts that day, a courage and devotion to duty which was with him until his last breath.

I am sure that Mr. Roberts has acquainted you with the details of Paul's gallant, heroic and inspiration conduct, such courageous conduct and leadership in battle as will be forever remembered by us who were there with him so I shall not dwell on it longer. I have put off writing you for some several days as I went down the list of addresses, for I am so filled with emotion every time I think about Paul and the job he did that I feel wholly unequal to the task of properly expressing my sentiments to you. I trust that you will realize the feelings that surge through me and the visions that pass before my eyes as I write to you, and therefore excuse the torn paper and the many typographical errors that fill these pages, for the scenes that flood my memories are so real that typing a letter in an orderly fashion is a bit difficult and I doubt if by doing

it over I could do much better.

I need not tell you in so many words that Paul's conduct in every respect was a credit to him and to his family, for by now you must be fully aware of that, however I feel that fact so keenly that I cannot avoid repeating it to you. Great though your sense of loss and grief must be, greater yet, however should be your pride, that if Paul's allotted time had run out, that to the very end he was a man, worthy of the highest respect and cherished and endeared to the memories of we his shipmates who were privileged to serve with him.

Yours most sincerely

R. W. Copeland