

LOVE LETTERS
FROM WORLD WAR II

ROBERT W. DALTON'S WWII SERVICE

EDITORS

JANET DALTON HONEK & RUSSELL J. DALTON

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ISBN: 9781650156620

DEDICATION

To the soldiers who served in the 76th Infantry Division, 417th Infantry Regiment, 1st Battalion, Company C, Squad 1 – Bob Dalton’s comrades. Thank you all for your service.



Sgt. Eugene Brown
Assistant Squad Leader



Pfc. Willis Reamer



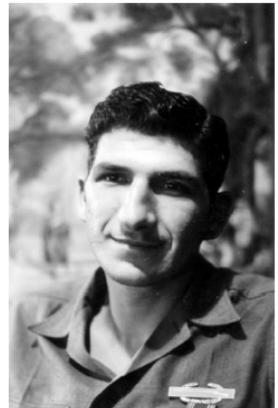
Pfc. Anthony Caporosso



Pfc. Melvin Jordan



Pfc. Charles Deckle



Pfc. Sam J. Gattinella

PREFACE

Our father, Robert “Bob” William Dalton passed away from cancer on October 20th, 1994. On January 22, 2018, our mother, Alfreda “Sandy” Emelia Dalton, passed away at the age of 99 and six months. They both lived amazing lives that we didn’t fully realize until they were gone.

This is part of their life story. After Sandy passed, Janet found a trove of letters that our father wrote to Sandy during his service in World War II. There were several hundred letters beginning with his induction in October 1944 through his return to the United States in May 1946. These intimate letters show aspects of our father that we hadn’t known. It is also a contemporaneous story of America’s history and the experiences of the *Greatest Generation* that we only heard about through history books and movies.

We transcribed and edited his letters, focusing on his description of life in basic training, the experiences of war, his images of postwar Germany (and the U.S. Army), and his relations with Sandy and Carol. The book gives voice to his thoughts and words. There are many low points and high points. It describes the everyday life of one of the millions of World War II GIs.

In addition, our father was a technology buff, probably what led to his career in engineering. He recorded his travels across America in the 1940s with a family camera. In Germany, he chronicled parts of his experience with photos, beginning with the defeat of Hitler’s army and the Third Reich and through the immediate postwar reconstruction period.

Together the letters, photographs, and family oral history chronicle an infantry soldier’s first-person experience in the last year of World War II and through the postwar occupation and the reconstruction of a new Germany. What follows is Robert Dalton’s contribution to the war effort and a memorial to both our parents. We hope that if they were alive to read this, it would be a source of good memories and joy.

Janet Dalton Honek
Russell Dalton

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1. LIFE IN THE GOLDEN STATE

Robert “Bob” Dalton and Alfreda “Sandy” Dalton left Beverly, Massachusetts in Spring 1941 to move to California. Bob had a generous offer from Lockheed Aircraft that included a 10 cent an hour raise. So they packed their belongings in a Model A Ford and headed west. Long before the postwar interstate highway system, this was an adventure. Would the next city have gas, where would they stay, and would the car hold up for the 3000-mile journey to Burbank? They took a route through the Great Midwest, across the Mississippi, Iowa, Utah, and then to the Grand Canyon, Vegas, and



into California through Death Valley and the Mojave Desert. The last part of the trip was along the famous Route 66 that then ended at Olympic Boulevard and Lincoln Boulevard in West Los Angeles, just a few miles from where they would make their postwar home and raise their family.

California was an amazing place, full of celebrities, the beach, big bands playing in the big

nightclubs like The Brown Derby and Ciro's. One could sit at a table and see Ginger Rogers, Bing Crosby, or Humphrey Bogart at the next table. Bob and Sandy began to explore the Golden State. They went to Mexico. They had their picture taken in front of Bing Crosby's house after Sandy rang the front doorbell and asked the butler if this was OK.



And then after 6 months, everything changed. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7 stimulated U.S. entry into World War II with California at the boundary of the Pacific Theater. The December 8th headline of the *L.A. Times* proclaimed:

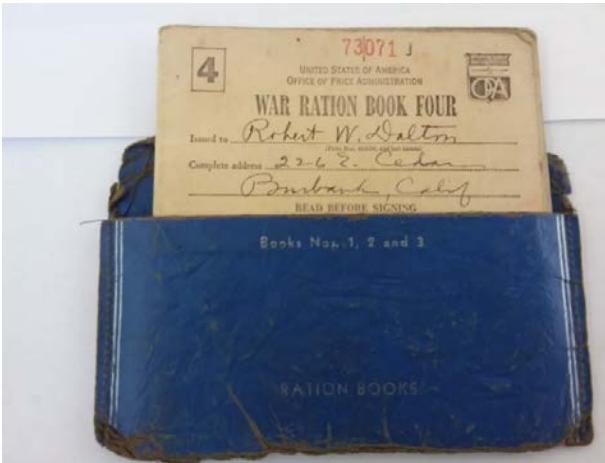
“JAPS OPEN WAR ON U.S. WITH BOMBING OF HAWAII.”

L.A. Times, December 8, 1941, pg. 1

Japan assaulted every main United States and British possession in the Central and Western Pacific and invaded Thailand today (Monday) in a hasty but shrewdly planned prosecution of a war she began Sunday without warning. Her formal declaration of war against the United States and Britain came 2 hours and 55 minutes after Japanese planes spread death and destruction in Honolulu and Pearl Harbor.

Life changed in Los Angeles. There were blackouts at night for fear of Japanese attacks on the city. The war effort meant a heightened demand for war materiel, ration cards, recycling campaigns, bond drives at the Hollywood Bowl, and other support for the war effort.

Because Bob worked on the construction of military aircraft, he received a deferment. From August 1941 until November 1942 he worked for Lockheed as a tool builder and draftsman. His projects included work on the split-tailed P-38 Lightning [Next page]. The P-38s were workhorses of the U.S. military effort and had distinguished war records. [Chapter 6 shows Bob with a P-38 in July 1945.]



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In March 1942 he became a senior tool designer and then industrial engineer for Adel, a firm that manufactured precision products for the military. Life seemed to settle down a bit. At Adel, he worked on the development of the J-value that was a major product. They rented a home in Burbank at 226 East Cedar Avenue, close to friends from Bob’s work and other transplants from Massachusetts. For them, a fancy night was when Bob walked down to the local Bob’s Big Boy and brought hamburgers home for dinner.

*The Winged Star
in Combat*

Lockheed's management and work force had reason to be proud of the airplanes that flowed from the company's assembly lines during the war. The P-38 Lightning, the Hudson, Ventura, and Harpoon patrol bombers, and the B-17 Flying Fortress all blazed across the skytrails to immortality as they fought on the side of the free world. Lockheed cargo transports and general utility ships of the Electra-Lodestar series ran up records of unflagging service. Most renowned was the P-38.

In Italy and the Mediterranean, New Guinea and the South Pacific, North Africa and the Aleutians this two-engine, twin-tailed terror of the skies wrote aviation history—with a turbo-supercharger whine that made it whistle while it worked. The P-38 was the most versatile fighter of World War II—the only one that served continuously in steadily improved versions from start to finish.

P-38s flew across the North and South Atlantic.

Dad worked on
this plane



They winged over the hump to join General Chennault's Flying Tigers in China. They fought island-to-island across the Pacific.

The "Fork-Tailed Devil"

"Except for 'Der Gabelschwanz Teufel,' we might hold the air," German pilots complained when Lightnings brought them down in the Mediterranean and North Africa. In the Pacific, Japanese airmen called the P-38 "two airplanes with one pilot." American flyers swore by its two-engine safety and affectionately dubbed it "round-trip ticket." One Lightning returned to base on a single engine five times.

It was the world's most easily recognized airplane. To Axis flyers it became a symbol of death. To General Jimmy Doolittle's young airmen it was the wonder plane of the African campaign. In actual tests against fighters of all nations it proved itself beyond

Sandy's Comment on Lockheed Flyer: "Dad worked on this plane".

On July 7, 1943, they gave birth to Carol Jean Dalton who became the center of their life. Bob's deferment for wartime production exempted him from the draft, but a sense of national need was asking more of him. Bob's two brothers, Ed (served 1942-1945) and Rich (served 1944-1946), also were in the military. Many of Sandy's brothers were in one of the services. Building aircraft was not enough.



Bob, Carol and Sandy in Burbank

In the Spring of 1944, as the Allies were preparing to invade the continent from bases in England, Bob requested a change in his draft status to 2B and voluntary induction. On July 6 he received approval to enlist and requested release from his position at Adel. He wrote to the Selective Service office in Beverly, Massachusetts explaining that he had completed his present project for Adel on a device used in de-icing military aircraft thus was available for military service. His letter spelled out his service preferences:

Bob Dalton to Local Board #10, Beverly, MA, July 20, 1944

In order that I may get my wife and baby settled before induction, I am now making plans to leave my present position August 31st and will arrive in Beverly approximately September 15th. . .

At the time I took my physical examination here I stated my preference for the U.S. Marine Corps and hope that when the time comes for my induction I shall be able to enter that branch of the service.

At the end of July Bob finished a war training course at UCLA on Engineering Statistics of Quality Control [Russell would be an undergraduate at UCLA a generation later]. Soon after, Bob resigned from his position at Adel, they packed up their belongings, and said goodbye to their friends. On Sept 7, Bob, Sandy, and Carol left California for the long drive back to Massachusetts. Bob's brothers Ed and Rich were already serving in the Pacific Theater.

The three spouses posed for a family photo with their babies. Sandy and Carol would spend the rest of the war in Massachusetts.



Lorraine, Anna, and Sandy

2. ENLISTMENT TO DEPLOYMENT

Bob reported for induction on October 2, 1944. But he landed in the Army Hospital with men wounded or injured while in the U.S. Initial tests found blood irregularities, which generated a hospital stay and more tests. Here he began a long and active stream of letters to Sandy, that carried through to the end of the war and postwar Germany



Beverly Newspaper Clipping of Induction

Bob Dalton's first letter to Sandy, October 3, 1944

It's very hard for me to write and let you know just how I feel at this time. About all I have done so far is wait around this darn hospital. I still don't know what the score is on me. Here I am at the Army Hospital. Last night we all went to a band concert. Oh, yes, I have a uniform just like the rest of them, PJ's and a red bathrobe, with the initials "USA MD" on the left breast pocket. This morning about 9 am, I was called into the doctor's office and he took some blood from my arm and then stuck a needle in my back. Then he said, "OK, you go back to the ward for the day." I asked him what it was all about and he said my blood tests were doubtful so they had to make a new test. My back is a little sore now. It feels like I am carrying a ton of bricks in my back pocket.

In this first letter and throughout the letters he often says: "Please, for my sake, don't worry about me. Time goes by fast and before you know it we'll have our own little home in Sunny California."

After the tests, the doctors found he had an unusual blood type, but was OK to serve. He was sworn into the U.S. Army on October 4 at Fort Banks in Winthrop, Mass.

I, Robert Dalton, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the regulations and the uniform code of military justice. So help me God.

He then went to Fort Deven in West Middlesex County a few miles from Concord, Massachusetts. During World War II it served as a reception center for new military recruits from New England.

Bob Dalton to Sandy, 8 October 1944, Fort Deven

Today I have had a pretty dull time. After breakfast, we swept out the barracks, etc. After Mass, we just hung around until dinner time. Boy, we sure had a swell dinner - steak, potatoes, carrots, radishes, celery, ice cream, bread and my usual pint of milk. After dinner, I just laid in my bunk and tried to sleep. A couple of Negro boys were arguing about religion and it was a riot. Before they got through they covered everything from the depression to post-war planning. For about an hour it went on and all the fellows were edging them on. At the same time, they kept score for the fellow who put up the best argument.



Bob's Dog Tag

Afterward, I went out for a walk around the post to see what the place looked like. There are a lot of visitors this afternoon and I sure wished you were here. But I'll have it all over them next weekend when

I get home.

Most of the fellows say that the first two months are the hardest. They run you ragged issuing equipment, getting shots, etc. Next week I go before the assignment board and then I'll know what branch of the service I'll be in.

One of the fellows here saw us in the Red Cross that day you were up and he said Carol was "sure sweet looking" then he said, "your wife is sure nice". He showed me pictures of his wife and two children back in Ohio. There is a story about every one of the fellows in here and it sure is interesting to hear them.

Don't worry about me at all. Everything is fine and dandy and I'll be looking forward to seeing you soon.