

[05 June 1945]

**Frank Bemis Tells of Visit to Manila,
P. I. ¹**

Clear Lake--Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Bemis, 211 1/2 W. Main street, have received a letter from their son, Frank Bemis, San Francisco, Cal., in which he tells of a recent trip to the Philippine Islands and New Guinea. He spent several days in Manila, P. I., and stated that "It sure is a mess, and I mean mess."

He said "Nothing much is left but wreckage. It is said that there are 300 ships sunk in the harbor. I counted over a hundred. Many are completely below the surface and can't be seen."

"I think I am going to have a chance to go to England and France and maybe India, via the Panama Canal. Will be gone 3 months." Mr. Bemis is a linotypist for news tabloids printer aboard ship. He served in World War I.

[19 July 1945]

**Frank Bemis Writes from Ship in
Atlantic ²
Visits New York City**

Clear Lake--Frank Bemis, who is a linotypist for news tabloids printed aboard a ship transporting U. S. troops has written his parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Bemis, of some of his experiences.

In one letter he said, "Am enjoying the trip though I don't know where we are going and I can see nothing but water. We have good food and don't have to worry about points. Miss fresh milk after about 2 weeks out. We do not have to be careful about blackouts any more. We will reach port in about a week and I will try to send you some souvenirs. All my letters will come at once since we can only mail them at ports and ports are far apart."

In a letter written July 8 in New York City he said: "Have been out to Coney Island. The board walk extends about 4 miles and was really crowded. It is like the midway at a state fair only bigger.

"Yesterday I went to the top of the Empire State building and got a bird's eye view of the city for \$1.20. It is 102 stories high. Radio City is a group of buildings about 4 blocks square. Each building is dedicated to some country or large industry. The largest is the R. C. A. building which houses the main studios of the National Broadcasting company. The music hall is the largest and most elaborate theater in the world. I didn't see a show as one has to stand in line about 3 hours to get in.

"We are in dry dock now next to the *Normandie* which sank more than a year ago. I doubt it it sees service in this war. We brought 6,500 troops from France. The Queen Mary came recently with 15,000. We have 327 crew members. We get 3 meals a day. The troops have to stagger their meals and eat twice a day so that from 7 in the morning until 7 in the evening there are troops eating. The have to stand so don't linger too long. We have the best of food including the choicest cuts of meat which can't be found ashore.

"We leave July 11 for some place in Europe, maybe France, Italy, Germany or England. Then we are supposed to go back through the Panama Canal to the Pacific and to San Francisco, maybe by September. If you don't hear from me, you will know I am where letters don't travel too fast. Write often and I'll receive them some place."

¹ "Frank Bemis Tells of Visit to Manila, P. I.," *Mason City (Iowa) Globe Gazette*, 04 June 1945, p. 8, col. 4.

² "Frank Bemis Writes from Ship in Atlantic; Visits New York City," *Mason City (Iowa) Globe Gazette*, 19 July 1945, p. 9, col. 6.

[13 August 1945]
Frank Bemis Visits Marseilles, France ³

Clear Lake--Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Bemis have received a letter from their son, Frank, written aboard ship July 27. He says "I am on my way back from Marseilles, France, after crossing the Atlantic from New York. We are bound for somewhere in the Pacific and then will head back home.

"I tried to send you a radiogram from France for your anniversary but it was Sunday and couldn't find a place open. We arrived in Marseilles Saturday night and loaded up and pulled out Sunday evening. That is really speeding for a ship this size.

"I didn't care about France. The French can have it. There wasn't much destruction at Marseilles but a few ships were sunk in the harbor. The city is unharmed except around the water front.

"Judging by what I have seen at different places the U. S. is financing the war. About all one sees in France is U. S. jeeps, trucks and motorized equipment. And more American than French troops. Wish we could have had a longer time in port. I only had time to walk around the business district. All the stores were closed but there were plenty of bars open."

[14 September 1945]
Frank Bemis Writes Home from Manilla ⁴

Clear Lake--Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Bemis have a letter from their son, Frank, written Aug. 27 aboard the SS Monterey in Manilla, P. I. He says: "It was a long trip from Marseilles, France, through the Panama Canal and across

the Pacific, 3/4ths of the way around the world. Manila bay is crowded with about 360 ships. The city is cleaned up quite a bit since the last time I was here but is still quite a mess.

"Now that the war is over, apparently not at peace yet as far as ships at sea are concerned, we took more precautions on the trip down than during the fighting. We were all blacked out at night and on the alert all the way, zigzagging and all under cruiser escort, just in case the Japs pulled anything treacherous. We head back to the states in a few days, with a capacity load of wounded, sick, children, women and troops -- about 6,500 in all -- which is quite a load even for this ship.

"Manila sure is money mad. I needed a new screw in the frame of my glasses and all it cost me for one little screw was \$2.50. A hamburger sandwich is only \$2 but a ham and egg sandwich is \$3.50.

"Hope to be back in the states about Sept. 17. Then I am going to stay put forever as far as sailing again is concerned. I wanted to do something in this war since I didn't in the last one but now it is over I am through with the sea. I don't regret my experiences but am counting the days till I get home.

"As I am writing this the thermometer is 110 degrees and it is difficult to write. I have a towel around my neck to keep from dripping sweat on the letter."

³ "Frank Bemis Visits Marseilles, France," *Mason City (Iowa) Globe Gazette*, 13 August 1945, p. 8, col. 3.

⁴ "Frank Bemis Writes Home from Manilla," *Mason City (Iowa) Globe Gazette*, 14 September 1945, p. 8, col. 3.