

Last Letter from Second Lieutenant Haruo Araki to His Wife



Shigeko,

Are you doing well?

One month has passed. The happy dream has vanished, and tomorrow I make an attack on an enemy ship. I will cross the River Styx to the next world along with some Americans.

Looking back, I have been very unkind to you. It has been my habit to treat you unkindly and have regrets afterward. Please forgive me.

I feel as if my heart will break when I think of your long life ahead. Please somehow be strong in spirit and be happy. After I am gone, please take care of my father in place of me.

Living for an eternal noble cause

Protecting always our country from the despicable enemy.

Haruo

Yukyu Hikotai Commander

On May 11, 1945, Army Second Lieutenant Haruo Araki, 51st Shinbu Special Attack Squadron Commander, took off from Chiran Air Base as part of a mass kamikaze attack of Navy and Army aircraft. One month earlier he had said to his new wife Shigeko that he would be back when it rained, but he never returned.

Haruo and Shigeko grew up together in Tokyo when Haruo's father and Shigeko's mother married. When Haruo suddenly returned home for an overnight leave at about 11 p.m. on April 9, 1945, he asked whether he could marry Shigeko. Even though his parents and Shigeko knew he had been assigned to a *tokko* (special attack) squadron, the marriage ceremony was held that night in the midst of tears from all of them. Haruo spent only four hours with his new wife Shigeko before he had to return to base. In mid-June, reporter Toshiro Takagi visited the home of Shigeko and her parents. Takagi gave them the news that Haruo had been killed in action on May 11, and he delivered his last letters and his hair and nail clippings.

Final Letter in Katakana

Dear Masanori and Kiyoko,

Even though you cannot see me, I will always be watching you. Obey your mother, and do not trouble her. When you grow up, follow a path you like and grow to be fine Japanese persons. Do not envy the father of others, since I will become a spirit and closely watch over you two. Both of you, study hard and help out your mother with off all the enemy. Please be persons who rise above me and so avenge my death.

From Father

Among those who sortied from Chiran, there were few fathers who volunteered to be kamikaze pilots. Captain Kuno was one of these men. On May 23, 1945, the eve of his sortie, he wrote his final letter all in katakana to his 5-year-old son Masanori and his 2-year-old daughter Kiyoko who he was leaving behind. A child learns katakana in the lower grades of elementary school. His wife Chiyoko received this letter and soon gave birth to their second daughter Masae on October 18, 1945. He did not know that she was pregnant with their third child.



Letter to My Beloved Child
from Lieutenant Sanehisa Uemura

Motoko,

You often looked and smiled at my face. You also slept in my arms, and we took baths together. When you grow up and want to know about me, ask your mother and Aunt Kayo. My photo album has been left for you at home. I gave you the name Motoko, hoping you would be a gentle, tender-hearted, and caring person.

I want to make sure you are happy when you grow up and become a splendid bride, and even though I die without you knowing me, you must never feel sad.

When you grow up and want to meet me, please come to Kudan. And if you pray deeply, surely your father's face will show itself within your heart. I believe you are happy. Since your birth you started to show a close resemblance to me, and other people would often say that when they saw little Motoko they felt like they were meeting me. Your uncle and aunt will take good care of you with you being their only hope, and your mother will only survive by keeping in mind your happiness throughout your entire lifetime. Even though something happens to me, you must certainly not think of yourself as a child without a father. I am always protecting you. Please be a person who takes loving care of others.

When you grow up and begin to think about me, please read this letter.

Father

P.S. In my airplane, I keep as a charm a doll you had as a toy when you were born. So it means Motoko was together with Father. I tell you this because my being here without your knowing makes my heart ache.



Last Letter of Second Lieutenant Kenji Tomisawa



I trust that everyone has been doing well recently.
I am dearly grateful that you went to all the trouble
to come visit me the other day in such a busy time.
Since my injury is already healed, do not worry.

At last for me also the time of final service has arrived. I very
deeply appreciate my special upbringing until now. I am one who
lacked courage, but please do speak well of me.

In order to destroy our enemy, I will summon courage with all my
might and will go to strike. We are the ones to deliver the country
from the current crisis. Taking pride in this, I will surely do it. My
comrades have already done it. Even right now my comrades,
believing in those who will follow after them, are striking the enemy.

Shall I keep silent? Shall I try to be quiet about this?
Father, Mother, please do congratulate me.
Brother, sister, please take care of Father and Mother.

I surely will be protecting everybody from the immortal faraway
skies in Nansei Shoto (Okinawa and other islands in archipelago that
stretch south of Kyushu and toward Taiwan). Even though my body
dies, I will certainly defend you.

Please give my kindest regards to the neighbors. I hope you will
always keep in contact with Mr. Ebihara of Honjo. Since I have been
busy, I have not been able to write a letter to him for a long time.
Please give my greetings to Mr. Nishigaya also.

With this I give you my final farewell. Thank you for everything.
Goodbye, goodbye.
Second Lieutenant Tomisawa

Kenji Tomisawa was born in March 1922 and grew up in Tokyo Prefecture. After accelerated graduation in September 1943 from Tokyo's Chuo University Commerce Department, he entered the 1st Class of the Army's Special Cadet Pilot program. In October 1944, he graduated from Kumagaya Army Flight School Atsugi Training Unit and was promoted to Second Lieutenant. In November, he was assigned to the Tachiarai Flight School Kiwaki Training Unit in Miyazaki Prefecture. In January 1945, he transferred to Shimoshizu Airfield in Chiba Prefecture.

On March 23, 1945, he became a member of the 62nd Shinbu Special Attack Squadron when it was formed at Shimoshizu Airfield. On April 6, 1945, he died in a suicide attack when his squadron's Type 99 Assault Planes (Allied nickname of Sonia) took off from Bansei Air Base in Kagoshima Prefecture. He was 23 years of age at the time of his death.

Last Letter from Flight Petty Officer 2nd Class Nobutaka Inoue to His Parents



Father and Mother,

Please excuse this hastily written letter. I sincerely thank you for taking care of me until this, my 18th, year.

I also at last have joined the Special Attack Corps, an airman's highest honor, and it has been decided that I will make a sortie. I am sorry that recently I have not been able to send you news, but this also is unavoidable for military reasons. However, I have not regretted this. My heart is full of gratitude not only to you who have taken care of me until now but also to the senior officers and my friends from whom I as a single person have received so much.

Please enjoy good health until the day when in the end the Greater East Asia War is won. Even though my body disappears, my spirit only will remain. Please let me have the honor of seeing your cheerful faces from the skies of Yasukuni. The end is near. I want to write various things, but I do not know which ones are best to write.

Tomorrow at last I will fly to Okinawa and carry out a *taiatari* (literally "body crashing") attack. I will die for an eternal cause believing I follow after my younger brothers and convinced of certain victory. If a white wooden box arrives, please praise me without crying. I earnestly request this of you.

I could not do any acts of filial piety for you, but I ask my older brother to do this. The enclosed photograph was taken just before my takeoff. I am in high spirits. Please rest assured. They are dirty nail clippings, but I enclose them with this letter.

I hope you live long and take good care of yourselves.
Please say hello from me to our neighbours and relatives.

Nobutaka
April 27, 1945

Flight Petty Officer 2nd Class Nobutaka Inoue from Osaka died at the age of 18 in a special (suicide) attack near Okinawa. On April 28, 1945, he took off from Kokubu No. 2 Air Base as navigator in a two-man Type 99 Carrier Dive Bomber (Allied code name of Val) as a member of the Navy's Kamikaze Special Attack Corps. He graduated in the 13th Ko Class of the Yokaren (Naval Preparatory Flight Training Program), and he was a member of the 3rd Kusanagi Squadron from Nagoya Air Group.

The above letter was written one the day before his final mission.

Last Letter to Parents from Ensign Kiyoshi Ogawa



Father and Mother,

It has been decided that I also will make a sortie as a proud Special Attack Corps member. Looking back, when I think of your raising me in your arms for more than twenty years, I am filled with a sense of gratitude. I truly believe that no one else has lived a happier life than me, and I am resolved to repay the Emperor and my father for your kindness.

Beyond those boundless white clouds, I will make my attack with a calm feeling. Not even thoughts of life and death will come to mind. A person dies once. It will be an honorable day to live for the eternal cause.

Father and Mother, please be glad for me.

Above all, Mother, please take care of your health, and I wish for everyone's prosperity. As I will be at Yasukuni Shrine, Father and Mother, I always and forever will be living near you and will be praying for your happiness.

I will go smiling, both on the day of my sortie and forever.

Ensign Kiyoshi Ogawa died at 22 years of age in a kamikaze attack against the aircraft carrier *Bunker Hill* (CV-17) on May 11, 1945.

Ogawa's life story is told in detail in *Danger's Hour: The Story of the USS Bunker Hill and the Kamikaze Pilot Who Crippled Her* (2008) by Maxwell Taylor Kennedy. Ogawa grew up in Gunma Prefecture and attended Waseda University in Tokyo. In the fall of 1943, he was drafted along with other liberal arts students from top universities. He entered the 14th Class of Naval Flight Reserve Students and received basic training at Takeyama Base near Yokosuka and flight training at air bases at Tsuchiura and Yatabe in Ibaraki Prefecture. He became part of the Kamikaze Special Attack Corps 7th Showa Squadron that sortied from Kanoya Air Base in southern Kyushu on May 11, 1945. Ogawa piloted the second bomb-carrying Zero fighter that crashed into *Bunker Hill*. This kamikaze attack killed 393 and wounded 264, more casualties than those inflicted by any other Japanese suicide attack.

Last Letters of Corporal Yukio Araki



Dear Father and Mother,

I trust you and my brothers are doing well recently. It has been decided that at last I will go to take part in the Battle of Okinawa as a member of the special attack forces. I am deeply moved. I only look forward to sinking a ship with a single blow. When I look back, I apologize for not being devoted to you in any way for some ten years to this day.

Through teaching by various senior officers after I entered the Army, I now devote myself to my country as a special attack force member. Please find pleasure in your desire for my loyalty to the emperor and devotion to parents.

I have no regrets. I just go forward on my path.

I ask that you teach my three younger brothers so they can serve our country as noble airmen. I sincerely hope you take good care of yourselves and make strenuous efforts on the home front.

Please give my regards to all my relatives and to everyone in the neighborhood association.

Sayonara,
Yukio Araki - 72nd Shinbu Squadron

Dear Older Brother,

I want to give my thanks to you for taking care of me for a long time. I go to die with no regrets and will earnestly make a hit.

I apologize that up to now I have not been able to repay you in any way for your kindness to me. Please be glad that this dispatch to the front will be my repayment to you.

Today as the war situation is becoming more and more intense, it is necessary for me to crash my 17-year-old body into the enemy. This year you also will enter the military, and I sincerely expect that you will exert yourself with hard work and devoted military service.

I have something to ask of you and our parents. I especially would like that you give a good education to our three younger brothers and that in the future they follow after me as fine Japanese men.

Let's meet under Kudan's flowers.

Yukio

Yukio Araki died at the age of 17 in a suicide attack on American ships near Okinawa on May 27, 1945.

Last Letters from Corporal Nobuo Aihana to His Parents



I joined an Attack Corps Shinbu Squadron and was able to repay my debt of gratitude to the country.

Father and Mother, I set out to battle in high spirits.

Father and Mother, I put a photograph of my older brother in my flight suit.

Father and Mother, I am deeply ashamed of myself that until the end I did not rectify my improper and rude speech as a child.

Mother, you raised me since I was six years old, and I did not say "Mother" to you who are more than my birth mother.

How sad you must have been. I thought many times to call you that, but I could not say that to your face since I was embarrassed to do so.

Now is the time for me to call you in a loud voice: "Mother."

Probably my older brother in central China also feels the same. Mother, please forgive us two brothers.

Now as I leave for battle to make a special attack, my only concerns are the two things mentioned above. Other than these, I have no regrets.

People live 50 years, and I have lived a long life to 20 years of age. As for the remaining 30 years, I give half to each of you, Father and Mother.

Please use the enclosed money for Mother's favorite cigarettes.

Father and Mother, I go. I am going with a smile to surely kill an enemy ship.

Corporal Nobuo Aihana was a member of the Army Special Attack Corps 77th Shinbu Squadron. The squadron sortied from Chiran Air Base on April 28, 1945, but only Aihana remained behind as his plane had mechanical problems. However, on May 4, 1945, he took off from Chiran together with the 78th Shinbu Squadron to make a suicide attack near Okinawa. He died in battle at the age of 18.