

"If I Don't Get Back You'll Have To Be Your Mother's Protector And Take My Place"

Five-year-old Jackie Shea treasured what may have been the last letter written by his father, Com. John J. Shea of North Cambridge, flight officer reported missing after the U. S. aircraft carrier Wasp was sunk.



Dated June 29, the letter read:

"Dear Jackie:

"This is the first letter I have ever written to my little son and I am thrilled to know he can read it all by himself. If you miss some of the words, I'm sure it will be only because I do not write plainly. Mother will help you, in case anything is not clear.....

"It is too bad this war could not have been delayed a few more years so I could have grown up again with you and done all the things I planned to do when you were old enough to go to school.

"I thought how nice it would be for me to come home early in the afternoon and play ball with you and go mountain climbing with you and see the trees and brooks and learn all about woodcraft, hunting, fishing, swimming and other things we've talked about. I suppose we must be brave and put these things off now for a little while.

"When you are a little bigger you will know why

your daddy is not home so much any more. You know, we have a big country and we have ideals as to how people should live Unfortunately, some of the countries in the world don't have these ideals and where a boy cannot grow up to be whatever he wants to be with no limit on opportunity

"Because there are people and countries who want to change our nation, its ideals, forms of government and way of life, we must leave our homes and families to fight. Fighting for the defense of our country, its ideals and homes, is an honor and a duty which your daddy has to do before he can come home to settle down with you and mother

"In the meantime take good care of mother. Be a good boy and grow up to be a good young man. Study hard Be a leader in everything that is good in life.

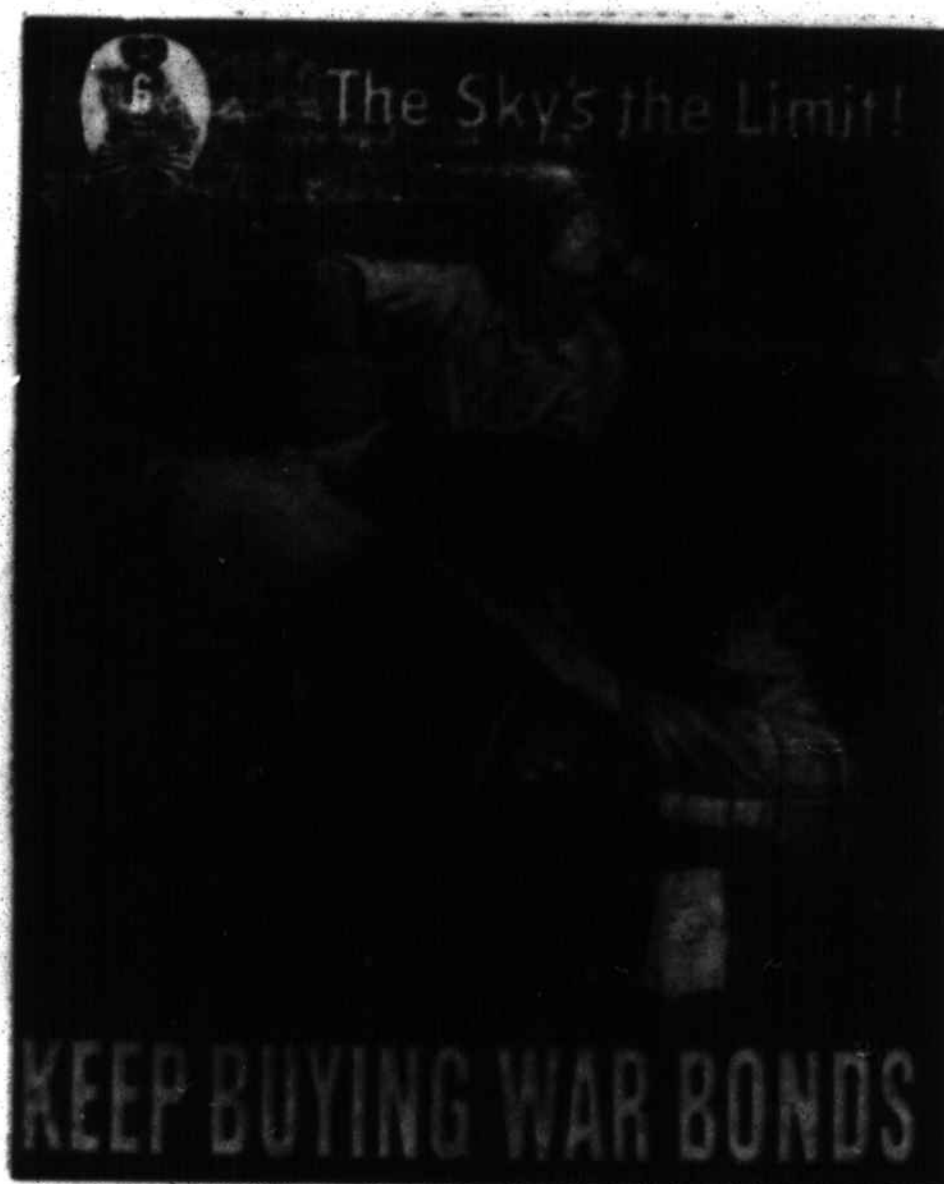
"Play fair always. Strive to win, but if you must lose, lose like a gentleman and a good sportsman. Don't ever be a quitter....

"Get all the education you can. Stay close to mother and follow her advice always. Obey her in everything no matter how many times you disagree. She knows what is best and will never let you down or lead you away from the right and honorable things of life.

"If I don't get back you will have to be mother's protector because you are the only one she has. You must grow up to take my place as well as your own, in her life and heart....

"Last of all, don't ever forget your daddy. Pray for him to come back. And if it's God's will that he does not—be the kind of a boy you know your daddy wants you to be.

"Kiss mother for me every night. Good-by for now."



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