

22 February 1942

Dear Betty:

I started writing this letter a few minutes after Pye gave me your letter of 21 February. I thank you for the letter and for the information contained therein. I also thank you for your other letters which I have not answered.

I understand from your letter that I will not be retired for the present, that I will be in a leave status until some further action is taken.

I submitted my request for retirement because I was notified that Short had done so and took that notification as a suggestion for me to do likewise. I submitted this request solely to permit the department to take whatever action they deemed best for the interests of the country. I did not submit it in order to escape censure or punishment.

When I was notified that the notification in regard to Short was not meant to put pressure on me, I submitted my second letter on the subject.

When the fact that Short and I had submitted requests for retirement was published to the country, I was astounded that the department would put Short and me in such light before the public.

On February 19, I received notification by the Secretary that I would be placed on the Retired list on March 1, 1942, Paragraph 2 of this letter states, "This approval of your request for retirement is without condonation of any offense or prejudice to future disciplinary action."

I do not understand this paragraph unless it is to be published to the country as a promise that I will be disciplined at some future time.

I stand ready at any time to accept the consequences of my acts. I do not wish to embarrass the government in the conduct of the war. I do feel, however, that my crucifixion before the public has about reached the limit. I am in daily receipt of letters from irresponsible people over the country taking me to task and even threatening to kill me. I am not particularly concerned except as it shows the effect on the public of articles published about me.

I feel that the publication of paragraph two of the Secretary's letter of February 16 will further inflame the public and do me a great injustice.

I have kept my mouth shut and propose to continue to do so as long as it is humanly possible.

I regret the losses at Pearl Harbor just as keenly, or perhaps more keenly than any other American citizen. I wish that I had been smarter than I was and able to foresee what happened on December 7. I devoted all my energies to the job and made the dispositions which appeared to me to be called for. I cannot now reproach myself for any lack of effort.

I will not comment on the Report of the Commission, but you probably know what I think of it. I will say in passing that I was not made an interested party or a defendant.

All this I have been willing to accept for the good of the country out of my loyalty to the Nation, and to await the judgment of history when all the factors can be published.

But I do think that in all justice the department should do nothing further to inflame the public against me. I am entitled to some consideration even though you may considered I erred grievously.

You must appreciate that the beating I have taken leaves very little that can be added to my burden.

I appreciate your efforts on my behalf and will always value your friendship, which is a precious thing to me.

My kindest regards always.

/s/ H. E. Kimmel

To: Admiral H. R. Stark, U. S. Navy
Chief of Naval Operations.

(WRITTEN IN SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA)