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If I Don't Come Back...Dad's Letter from WASP

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'IF I DON'T COME BACK . . .' DAD'S LETTER FROM WASP

ARLINGTON, Mass., Oct. 27.—(AP)—Jackie Shea, 5 years old, has a letter he never will part with—a letter that said, "If I don't get back. . . ."

It's from his dad, Commander John J. Shea, 43, last seen fighting flames aboard the United States aircraft carrier Wasp, shortly before the vessel went down under a torpedo attack near the Solomons on September 15. Shea is listed as "missing in action."

The letter, written June 29, reads in part:

"Dear Jackie:

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

Misses Things He Planned

"I was certainly glad to hear your voice over the long distance telephone. It sounded as though I were right there in the living room with you. You sounded as though you missed your daddy very much. I miss you, too, more than any one will ever know. It is too bad this war could not have been delayed a few more years so that I could grow up again with you and do all the things I planned to do when you were old enough to go to school.

"I though how nice it would be for me to come home early in the afternoon and play ball with you and go mountain climbing and see the trees and brooks and learn all about wocraft, hunting, fishing, swimming and other things like that. . . .

"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 and enjoy the riches of it, and how each is born with equal rights to life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness. Unfortunately, there are some countries in the world where they don't have these ideals, where a boy cannot grow up to be what he wants to be with no limits on his opportunities to be a great man, such as a



COMMANDER SHEA
"If I Don't Get Back—"

great priest, statesman, doctor, soldier, businessman, etc. . . .

Honor and Duty First

"Fighting for the defense of our country, ideals, homes and honor is an honor and a duty which your daddy has to do before he can come home to settle down with you and mother. . . .

"Don't ever be a quitter, either in sports or in your business or profession when you grow up. Get all the education you can. Stay close to mother and follow her advice. Obey her in everything, no matter how much you may at times 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 will be the only one she has. . . ."

Jackie and his mother are living in Arlington with her parents.

Shea, a graduate of Boston College, was executive officer of the Squantum Naval Air Station in Quincy and commanded the Miami Air Station before being assigned to the Wasp.