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(Un)Documented, a Narrative of M— in Letters to/from US Institutions

Randy Gonzales

University of Louisiana at Lafayette, rg@louisiana.edu

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Letters from the military and civil service personnel files of M—, selected, edited, condensed, and (annotated) into a narrative of his (un)documented life in the United States.

Service

—1908—

From: M—

To: US Navy, Naval Station at Cavite, Philippine Islands

I, M—, (a citizen of the Philippines), desiring to enlist in the Navy of the United States (as a Mess Attendant 3c), oblige myself to serve four years from September 10, 1908, and subject myself to the laws, regulations, and disciplines of the Navy.

—1912—

From: M—, Mess Attendant 2c

To: USS Kansas

1. I respectfully request permission to take the civil service exam for a position as a clerk or day inspector in the custom or Isthmian service (on the Isthmus of Panama facilitating the construction of the Panama Canal).
2. I have been preparing for this examination for the past three years and five months (my first night sailing the Pacific, I dreamt of land— my home on the green plains of Leyte, then any stretch of soil where I could live and work).
3. Should I fail the examination, I will reenlist.

From: USS Kentucky

To: Secretary of the Navy

1. It is requested that M— and G—, Mess Attendants, recently honorably discharged from the USS Kansas be transferred to this vessel upon their reenlistment.
2. The men have no assurances that they will remain on board the vessel (or that the vessel will remain stationed in Philadelphia).

—1914—

From: M—, Mess Attendant 1c

To: USS Kentucky

1. It is requested that I be granted permission to take the coming civil service examination for Navy Yard service.
2. My reasons for this request are: I am confident of passing the examination and getting an appointment whereby I shall be able to earn a better living (I have a family to raise, and need to earn more money).

— Disapproved, only men serving the last year of their enlistment are permitted to take civil service examinations.

From: M—, Mess Attendant 1c

To: USS Arkansas

I respectfully request that I be permitted to purchase my discharge from the United States Naval Service for the following reasons:

- (A) My pay as a Mess Attendant 1st class, \$27.89 a month, is insufficient to support my family, which includes my wife, child, mother-in-law, and myself.
- (B) In order to obtain a position in civil life (on dry land, in Philadelphia, near my family) to provide for my wife who has been in poor health and my mother-in-law who is too advanced in age (50) to be of financial assistance.
- (C) To take the civil service exam (which I am unable to take while enlisted).

To: Bureau of Navigation

From: Recruiting Station

1. M— called at this office today making the following request: permission to reenlist with a rating of Ward Room Steward.
2. He states that the conditions for which he was allowed to purchase his discharge do not exist (he cannot secure a better job).

——If qualified, M— may reenlist as Mess Attendant 1st class, not the higher rating.

——1916——

To: US Mint
From: M—

I, M—, do solemnly swear that, to the best of my knowledge and ability, I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same, and that I will faithfully and diligently perform the duties of the office of temporary helper at the United States Mint at Philadelphia. So help me God.

Opportunity

——1917——

To: Fort Mifflin Naval Ammunition Depot
Subject: (Should we hire M—?)
From: US Mint

My only knowledge of M— is through his six months of temporary service, during which period his work was satisfactory.

From: Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania

The inquiry form you sent me concerning M— is almost impossible for me to fill out. The man was an orderly here for some time (16 months), and was satisfactory in every respect; doing his work efficiently. The form you sent me calls for much more information than I can possibly and honestly give (I don't know him that well).

From: Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania

He was very willing and ambitious, but he was continually asking for money to be advanced, apparently a poor manager in this respect.

—1918—

To: Fort Mifflin Naval Ammunition Depot

From: M—

I would like to come back to work. I left two months ago (for a better opportunity). I was a second class ordnance man for about 11 months and would like to come back as a first class ordnance man.

Debt

—1921—

To: M—

From: Fort Mifflin Naval Ammunition Depot

This office has been docked \$7.45 for overpaying you in 1918. You were paid for leave at the rate you were getting when paid, instead of the rate you were getting when on leave. Send the money with the bearer of this letter.

— I received your letter informing me of the alleged overpayment. I don't understand how I could have been overpaid. I always kept an account of how much I was supposed to get paid. In fact, I was thinking that I lost a few days vacation. For the 15 months that I worked, I was entitled to 36 days vacation with pay and some sick leave as well. So if there was any mistake made, it can't have been on my part. I would be obliged if you could look this over, as \$7.45 is a lot to a married man with four little children and considering the high cost of living and the \$1,400 a year I make as a government clerk.

To: Fort Mifflin Naval Ammunition Depot

From: F—

I am very sorry my husband was not able to keep his promise by sending the money to Fort Mifflin. I was sick as I am in a delicate state of health (pregnant), so I could not spare the money, but he will certainly send it by the 2nd of next month.

— Money order for \$7.45 in settlement of the amount overpaid to you as wages is hereby acknowledged.

—1926—

To: Philadelphia Post Office

From: M—

Please do not hold my resignation any longer, as I have to get the money or lose everything. My only wish is to pay my debts and shut those people up. They are driving my wife crazy.

— Your resignation as a clerk at this office will take effect August 15, 1926. Kindly call upon the cashier in order to fill out the necessary form to withdraw the money paid into your retirement.

To: Philadelphia Post Office

From: M—

Since I left the post office, it has been a real hardship for my wife and children, as I have not had a decent job. What I know from the post office is of no use outside, so please take me back. I promise to do my best and remain with you. My financial obligations are attended to and I will no longer contract debts more than I will earn.

To: Philadelphia Post Office

From: F—

Pardon me for writing this letter, but I would very much like to know if (my husband) M— has any chance to be reinstated. He has a family of six children. Since he has not worked since he left you, it is getting very hard to get along now. I really do not know what to do as things have gotten to such a crisis now. Please let me know as soon as possible what you can do.

— M— left the service under a cloud, owing many merchants and firms for merchandise purchased, and claimed he was resigning to collect his pension in order to pay his numerous debts. We tried to persuade him not to resign and to take other means to settle his debts.

To: Philadelphia Post Office

From: M—

I am sending you receipts and statements from the people who had claims on me. I hope you will consider my reinstatement soon, as my children are on the way to starvation. My rent is two weeks overdue, no coal in the home, and I can't find any kind of work. My children have no shoes to go to school.

—1927—

— In view of the efficient service performed by M—, it is recommended that his reinstatement as senior substitute clerk be authorized.

To: Philadelphia Post Office

From: M—

I am compelled to decline the position of substitute clerk, foot of roll, as I am positive of the unfairness of the appointment. I believe I deserve an appointment one grade below where I was at the time of my retirement. My long service in the government does not justify starting at the bottom again.

— Clerks who have resigned for personal reasons have had their opportunity and left the service. The other substitutes are just as much entitled to consideration and anxious to be appointed as you.

Migration

To: US Navy

From: M—

Please kindly give me a copy of my discharge papers. I mislaid my original and need it very badly to get reinstated to the postal service. I recently moved my family to New Orleans (in search of better opportunities in the warmer and more affordable South).

—1930—

To: Prohibition Bureau

From: M—

I served as an undercover prohibition agent attached to the 10th Prohibition District in New Orleans from Sept. 1927 to 1928. During this time, my record will show that I had very close to 1,000 cases from the following cities: New Orleans, Mobile, Pensacola, Baton Rouge, and Bogalusa.

I am a married man with five young children, a hard working wife, and about 19 years of government experience. Having been employed by the following departments: 6 years in the US Navy as a mess attendant and steward, 2 years in the Navy Yard as an ordnance inspector, 2 years with the US Shipping Board as a timekeeper, 6 years with the Post Office as a clerk, 1 year with the US Mint as a roller of gold and silver, and 1 year as a prohibition agent. I am now employed by US Steel as a chief steward on one of their ships. I would be very much obliged if you would consider my reinstatement; It will bring me closer to my family. I am away from them now and most all the time.

To: Philadelphia Post Office

From: M—

I have been in New Orleans over three years and have not found a regular position. So I have decided for the sake of my wife and the children to try to get back to government service where I have served faithfully for 19 years. If given the chance, I will remain in service and faithfully serve the government.

Citizenship

—1940—

To: US Navy

From: M— Proprietor, Filipino Colony Bar, New Orleans

Subject: (Am I a citizen of the United States?)

I enlisted in the US Navy in 1908 when the US fleet (Great White Fleet) came to Manila and the first lot of Filipinos were taken into the service. I served on the USS

Kansas for the whole four years of my enlistment, was honorably discharged Sept. 10, 1912.

On Oct. 29, 1912, I re-enlisted for four years. I was stationed on the USS Kentucky in Philadelphia until I was sent to Mexico on the USS Sacramento for occupation (of Vera Cruz) and we stayed there about 6 months, and I was transferred to the USS Arkansas. Then we sailed for Brooklyn Navy Yard. Then about Oct. 1914, I purchased the balance of my enlistment because my family was growing large. I was given Hon. Dis. Again.

Just before, I was first Hon. Disc. on the USS Kansas, I had applied for my US Citizenship, but I never got my papers somehow, and of course (since Filipinos are no longer classified as US Nationals and are now considered Aliens) I am in doubt of my citizenship. I am asking you Sir, if I can get my papers through the Navy.

I was brought here by the US Navy, came of age in the US, neither my father nor I have sworn allegiance to Spain (or any other country). I haven't returned to the Islands since I left in 1908, nor have I traveled outside of the US (but with the Navy). I have served the US civil government for 13 years by way of US civil service examinations and appointments, besides the 6 years of Naval Service.

I have always believed and considered myself a US citizen.

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