

THE BATTLE OF SANTIAGO

Seaman Bernard J. Keegan

USS IOWA, Santiago de Cuba, 4 July 1898

Dear Mother—I suppose by the time you receive this letter you will know all the news. Let me assure you of my safety. I did not get a scratch in the engagement. I will now give you an account of what happened yesterday. We were all at quarters in clean white ducks and the executive officer was inspecting us when the signal was given that that Spanish fleet was coming out of the harbor. We didn't wait until general quarters sounded, but each one went at once to his station. We turned our guns on them and showed them what "Yankee pigs" can do. It was this ship that spied the Spaniards first and she gave the signal to the rest of the fleet, firing a gun. Everyone of the Spanish ships fired on us and you might say that the IOWA did all the fighting; at least she did the most of it. The OREGON and the TEXAS worked well, also. They chased and captured the *CHRISTOBAL COLON*. We had to contend with three cruisers, two torpedo boat destroyers, so you can see we had our hands full. One of our 12 inch shells hit the torpedo boat destroyers and all that one could see of them was a piece here and there. We now turned our attention to the *MARIE THERESA* and the *ALMIRANTE OQUENDO*. We hit them so hard that we drove them on the beach and set their magazines on fire. So we finished them. We next engaged the *VIZCAYA* and she met the same fate as the others. When the battle was over we lowered our boats, put off to the *VIZCAYA* and took off her crew. In all we took about 240 prisoners, most of them were wounded. Five of them died on board and were buried at sea. Their wounded bodies presented the most horrible sights I ever saw. They were buried with all honors, the chaplain of one of the Spanish ships performing the ceremony. Captain Eulate of the *VIZCAYA* was shot in the head and is terribly scaled. When he came on board he cried like a woman and waved his hat to his wrecked vessel. Then turning around smartly he unbuckled his sword and tendered it to Captain Evans. Captain Evans is a perfect hero and as true a gentleman as he is a warrior. He refused to take Captain Eulate's sword. We have on board as prisoner the captain of the *MARIE THERESA* and Admiral Cervera. The latter was very much surprised when he learned that not one man on any of our ships had lost his life. We had been waiting a long while to get a whack at the dons and we made up for lost time. Not one man shirked his duty. I know you will celebrate the Fourth as you never have before.

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