

O'Donnell, Leo F.

IN FINE HEALTH WRITES MARINE REPORTED DEAD

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Allentown Family Receives Letter Dated February 21—Reported Killed in October.

"I am now in perfect health," wrote Marine Sergeant Leo F. O'Donnell Sunday, February 21—a surprisingly, happy remark to strengthen the unfailing belief of his Allentown relatives that he is alive, despite an official Marine Corps message March 2 that he had died, and another Marine Corps notice received here Saturday with the notation that the "death" . . . "is reported to have occurred in October, 1942."

Two excerpts from the letter received Saturday by his parents-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Lentz, 1005 Tilghman Street, bolstered their faith, the faith of his young wife, Mrs. Grace O'Donnell, whose marriage was revealed with the "death" announcement, and the faith of his father, Patrick O'Donnell.

In the letter dated "Sunday, Feb. 21" and postmarked February 24, Sgt. O'Donnell wrote in part: "First of all, I can say that I am no longer in the war zone (previously he had been on Guadalcanal, among the first contingent of Marines to attack the island). We left the island some time ago after being relieved. I can't tell you just now where I am."

He concluded his four-page letter: "News is brief. There isn't much I can say except that I am now in perfect health. I've gained quite a bit of weight and, all in all, I feel swell."

A feasible explanation for the probability of an unfortunate case of mistaken identity is based on a cablegram sent to O'Donnell in October informing him of the death of his mother, Mrs. Kathryn V. O'Donnell, last October 5. He never received the cablegram but learns of his mother's death in a letter sent shortly after the cablegram had been dispatched. Mr. Lentz believes that O'Donnell may have been transferred to another base and that in the process of relaying the message to catch up with the Marine its contents were garbled.

March 3, 1943