

Chapter Nine

Teen Years in NY and US Navy 1929 – 1936

As stated earlier, 1929 was a turning point in our Herb's life. He finished "public school" (elementary grades) early, and had little to occupy his time until beginning junior high/high school in the fall. He was just 12 years old for most of that year. As we describe what his life must have been like during this time period, it is helpful to consider how events that shaped his attitudes and personality carried into adulthood.

He was raised by his stepmother, Mae, along with two younger half-brothers. His father continued to be involved in business and civic affairs in the region. His older brother, Bernard, had already left home. On the 1930 US Census, the Lentz family of Lake Huntington included Henry, age 54; Mae, age 35; and their three younger sons Herb (13), Howard Arthur (7) and Robert (5).

The stock market crash in October 1929 and the Great Depression that ensued would have a long-lasting impact on their family. Herb graduated from high school and left home to live in New York City in 1933, then joined the U.S. Navy in 1935. Four decades would pass before he returned to his home town to visit.

This chapter takes a look at some of the details of these events in Herb Lentz's life, up to the three days in September when he and Louise fell in love and got engaged.

Stories of His Youth

During the 1984 reunion, Herb's younger brother Bob reminisced that for exercise, Herb would run around the lake, which was about a mile long and half-mile wide. Herb wrote about how much he enjoyed swimming and experimenting with moves underwater. "I used to live on a lake most of my life, and could swim miles without stopping" (*February 9, 1938*).

He wrote about how he fell in love with a chorus girl when he was about thirteen years old (1930). Next door to their house was a dance hall that operated during the summer months. He knew the people that staged vaudeville shows there. The girl he was enamored with also was a blonde (*January 16, 1939*).



Howie and Herb with little girl, c 1932



Howie, a friend, Bob c 1929

During the family reunion of 1984, Herb told the story of how he broke a bone in his shoulder. What he revealed in this story about his family is interesting.

One day early in 1931, when Herb was 14, he was at a friend's house, playing in the hayloft in their barn. He was supposed to be home by 5:00 pm. But shortly before it was time to leave, he fell from a rope he was swinging on, and hurt his arm badly. Because he was afraid to go home late, he stayed late at his friend's.

He learned later that because he was late, his father threw his clothing outside and had locked the door. Finally, Herb returned home, and "caught hell." But seeing his injury, his father had to drive five miles to see a doctor. Then they had to drive another 10 miles to get the proper treatment (in Monticello, the county seat).

Herb recalled that on this drive to the hospital his father was very upset. Everything was going wrong. This was during the depression. It was in the middle of winter, and the road was icy. Herb's step-mother was in a hospital at the time, in New York. His father said during the drive "I ought to just smash into this telephone pole!" It turns out Herb broke a small bone in his shoulder, and had to wear steel traction for a month.

One well known story in our family is the one about the boats on the lake. We have two primary sources of information about this prank, which I combine into a single narrative below. One source is the audio recording of the family reunion in 1984, and the other source is a letter Herb wrote to Louise (December 11, 1938), while he was stationed overseas in the Philippines.

We lived on a lake that was a mile long and about a half mile wide; and two or three people owned a couple of hundred row boats; taking up three or four docks around the lake. "Boucher," one of the owners, was a mean old guy. One night in the summer time it was very humid, and I could not sleep. So, I sneaked out my bedroom window at the back of the house, climbed down, and met up with my good buddy, Billy Schafer, who was the same age.

During the night we loosened all the boats from the docks, tied them together, rowed them out into the middle of the lake, and anchored them. Then we swam back to shore.

The following morning their respective owners scrambled to recover them. It was just our luck that someone really did steal a canoe off one of the boat owners that night, so they called the state troopers to town. However, no one could ever prove that we let the boats loose. We had alibis. However, one grouchy individual suspected us. He knew we had it in for him, but he never did get us even though we were always haunting him.

Here's another story Herb told us during the family reunion of 1984.

There was this old lady that we didn't like. Her name was Nellie White. She had lakefront property, and there was this standpipe, which actually I guess belonged to the fire department. So, one night we said "Let's fix Nellie. Let's get a bunch of gravel and we'll stuff it down that pipe until it fills up." So about two weeks later they had a fire department drill. And my dad was in the volunteer fire department. And they went over there, and hooked up to that particular standpipe. They tried to connect to this stand pipe but they couldn't get any water. They were furious, and were eager to catch the guy who did it. (My father was one of those men). My dad came home blue in the face and two hours later said "If we can ever catch who did this terrible thing ..."

During the family reunion he reminisced that he used to keep a diary of sorts, a "little black book" that he kept for a while.

"All the details of intricate stunts we perpetrated were in it. It was really just juvenile drama; serious to us at the time though. But we never really did anything bad. Just a nice way of having lots of fun. And [the book] gave my buddy the jitters."

"You should have seen the little black book I used to have. In it were a list of our "enemies." Also, a diary of our accomplishments! One day I burned that book up!" (December 11, 1938)

In that same letter to Louise (December 11, 1938), Herb gave a few more examples of his pranks and mischievous undertakings.

But then my stepmother's influence started to change me, for she really brought me up right. Though she couldn't take the devil out of me. Even until I got out of high school, I used to pull all sorts of tricks. One buddy of mine and myself were just like Penrod & Sam.

On Halloween we would really run wild. We plotted for that night months ahead of time. [Once] we turned the lights out in the middle of a basketball game. [Another time] we threw a bag of sugar out in the middle of the dance floor at the junior prom from the back door. Then ran around to the front door where they were taking tickets just in time to give the principal a bland look of innocence when he came down the hall. "Nuff said."

High School Days and Other Activities

Herb told us when we were growing up that his high school included 7th and 8th grades, and was very flexible with the coursework. He said that much of his actual school work was independently carried out. He was proud of the fact that he was able to complete all required course work early and graduate when he was 15 years old in January of 1933.

He wrote that he used to like English and Shakespeare in high school. He liked compositions, as well (*March 24, 1939*). In one of his letters, responding to news of Ebba's dramatic class, he wrote about a play he was in during his senior year. It was a production of "Oh, Professor," and his role in it was the professor. (*September 28, 1938*).

Herb's enjoyment of literature helps to explain how his descriptions of events and experiences during his time with the Navy were so beautifully written. He was a good writer.

In one of his letters Herb reminisced about life in New York. "When we used to ride nine miles to school in a bus [to Narrowsburg] and lots of times we'd sing popular music on the way to and from school." One of the songs he recalled was "It's Only A Paper Moon" (*August 14, 1938*).

He also wrote "Back home a bunch of us fellows ... used to go to the movies every weekend to a place about 15 miles away; and we used to have lots of fun (harmonizing) all the way" [reference to singing songs]. "There are few things I'd rather do more" (*August 19, 1938*).

Herb wrote about how he enjoyed watching boxing matches, and in one of his letters to Louise he provides an interesting description of boxing.

"I see that you have got the wrong idea about the fine art of pugilism darling. It's really a skillful sport and providing the contestants are in good condition they usually don't get hurt much. ... However, I don't believe in boxing unless one is really good and can even get someplace. ... Maybe I like to follow boxing because I've met a few good boxers at times. They used to come up and train near where I went to high school and us kids used to know them and talk to them. Tony Canzoneri was some fighter and one of the fellows we knew. I also own a pair of boxing gloves given to me by a man who once won a lightweight championship with them" (*June 21, 1938*).

I recall that when I was a young boy, Herb used to watch boxing matches regularly. He even got out a pair of boxing gloves for me, and he tried teaching me how to box. In his letters to Louise describing events and people while he was overseas, there were a few stories about conflicts and how he resolved them. It seems that often his first impulse for solving a problem with another fellow was with violence – e.g. punching someone.

In another letter he wrote that he was an altar boy in a catholic church for 10 years (*October 3, 1937*). We know from many stories he told us that he hated the dogma and the strictness of the catholic church. It is interesting that while on Sundays he would perform this duty, yet how he occupied his time was often “devilish.”

Herb's Family Life and Hardships

In a letter to Louise Herb referred to his family's economic plight. “Once Dad [Henry] had such a stable existence there [Lake Huntington]. Then it was 1929 [stock market crash], sickness [Mae's kidney problems; Henry's stroke], one thing after another; now, charity” (*February 22, 1939*).

Our cousin Gert believes that Henry had his first stroke when her father (Howie) was eight years old, which would have been early 1931. Herb was still living at home. From Henry's obituary we learn that he had an intermittent illness for about five years before his death in 1936.

The reference in his letter about charity was due to his mother needing financial help from Herb after Henry passed away in 1936, while Herb was in the Navy. At the time of the letter he was still sending a third of his monthly paycheck to his step mother. His salary when he first joined the Navy was \$60 per month.

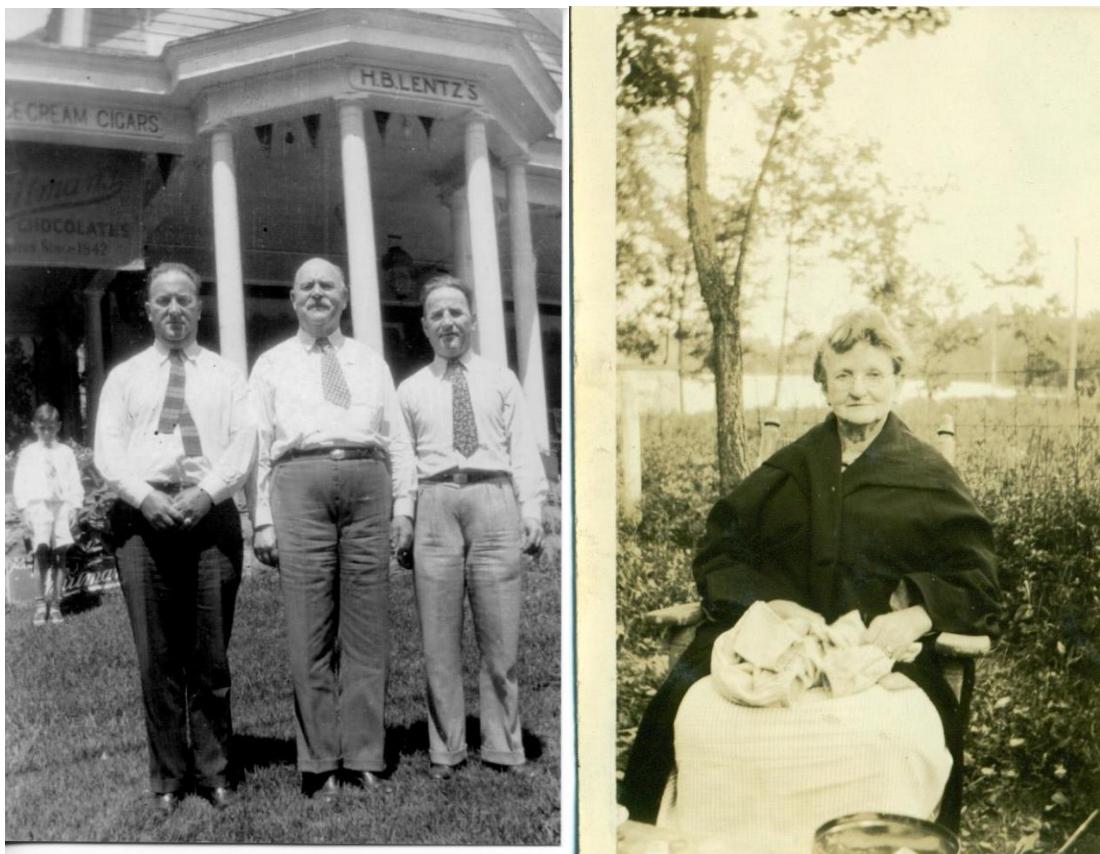
Throughout his letters to Louise he described his stepmother with glowing terms. Phrases like “One couldn't help loving a mother like that” (*December 31, 1938*) and “She really is a wonderful person, too” (*December 27, 1937*) are typical.

Stepmother Mae Mahoney's Family

No doubt that Herb's life, and his attitudes about life, were shaped by his stepmother, Mae; his own words, in his letters to Louise, attest to that. Having lived with members of his stepmother's family in Brooklyn for a couple of years would have played a role in shaping his values as well.

John Francis Mahoney, Mae's father (Herb's step-grandfather), was born in Cork County, Ireland April 1, 1863. He came to the United States around 1866 when he was about three years old (US Census 1900, 1920). He married Mary Jane Clancy, (also of County Cork, Ireland) in September, 1884, when they were both 21 years old. They had seven children, between 1885 and 1895, and Mae was one of the youngest. John Mahoney joined the New York City police force in 1888.

Below left: In this photo (taken around 1930) John Mahony Sr. is in the middle with sons Walter and John Jr. on either side, in front of the Lentz drug store.



Above right: Mae's mother, Mary Jane (Clancy) Mahoney, is in the photo at right.

The family lived at various different residences in Manhattan, New York, based on census reports from 1900 through 1920. After John Sr. retired from the police force in 1918, with 30 years of service, the family moved to Brooklyn. On the 1930 and 1940 US Census and on the 1935 New York Census, they lived at 160 Bay Ridge Ave., Brooklyn, NY. Mae's mother, Mary Jane Mahoney, died in October 1935. John Mahoney Sr. died in April, 1944.



Left to right: Heinrich (Henry's father), Henry, Mae, John Mahoney Sr., and Howie in front of the Lentz store. Notice next door is The Nutshell dance hall.

Living and Working in New York City, 1933-1935

Herb told us stories about where he lived, and all that we can remember of the stories is that he lived in New York City with an Irish cop. Fortunately, we have a few sources of information that enable us to tell an expanded story of his time in New York City, which included Brooklyn. One source is the audio recording from the family reunion in 1984. Another source are a few family stories passed along by our cousin Gert, who now lives in upstate New York. Some of Herb's letters to Louise between September 1937 and December 1939 also provide a few tidbits of his life in New York City. Finally, data from *Ancestry.com* helps us to sort out where he was living when. We have just enough to construct a possible scenario, or progression of residences and events.

A short time after graduating from high school in 1933, Herb went to New York City to live with members of the Mahoney family. Herb was 15 at the time, and at some point, he got a job working at the New York City public library. Let's assume that at 15 years old, the likeliest family for him to stay with would have been his step-mother's parents, John and Mary Mahoney. Gert wrote that "a lot of people seemed to have stayed with him" over time. She said that even her father Howie, Herb's younger brother, lived with him as an adult for a while.

In 1933 when Herb might have lived with them for a while, John and Mary were 70 years old. Their daughter Katherine (Kitty), at age 40 was still living with them. Their residence at the time was 160 Bay Ridge Ave., Brooklyn. It was about ten miles from the closest New York City public library, in Manhattan. Herb was not listed as living with them on the 1935 NY Census.

After living with his step grandfather for a while, Herb most likely then lived with one of Mae's brothers, Andrew Harold Mahoney. Andrew was just a couple of years younger than Herb's step-mother. Records show that Andrew served in World War I from May 1918 to April 1919. Prior to his service his occupation was "salesman," and after his discharge from military service he was a "bookkeeper." He went on to become a fireman with the NY City Fire Dept, stationed in Brooklyn. Andrew married Marie Dupras in 1926, and their daughter Marilyn Ann was born in 1932.

Herb wrote about Marilyn-Ann. He wrote that he lived with them "quite a while" when he was working in NYC and he "used to have to mind her at times," meaning care for her - like babysit. He called her a "cute little tyke" (April 2, 1938). When Herb was living with them, their address was 1673 Troy Ave., Brooklyn. This location was ten miles from the nearest NY City public library.



Above left: Andrew Mahoney, Fireman. Right: Marilyn-Ann in 1936, at age 4.

Living with a Buddy

We know that for a time Herb lived with a buddy of his, in New York City at 32nd Street and 3rd Avenue, Brooklyn. In this letter Herb wrote that a buddy of his, named Hal, also lived in NY City. They both enjoyed talking NY City slang with another guy, Vernon, in order to tease him. They called him "Voinon," and used other slang such as "soitenly," and in the "foist" place. He wrote that he was from "thoity" second street and "thoid" avenue (*September 16, 1937*).

[Note: There is an East 32nd Street and 3rd Ave. in Manhattan. At first, I thought this location obviously was where he lived, because it was only 6/10 of a mile from the New York City public library main branch. However, it is also only a few blocks from the Empire State Building, and the main business area. Therefore, it seems more likely that they would have been living in Brooklyn at 32nd St and 3rd Ave. This location also was about ten miles from the nearest NY City public library, but the library would have been accessible via public transportation.]

Daily Life in the City

In another letter Herb wrote about living in New York City.

When my buddy and I lived by ourselves in N.Y. City we used to have a big pot of oatmeal for breakfast nearly every morning. We used to cook ourselves some pretty good suppers too. Lots of spuds, some canned spaghetti, and a steak. Not fancily done up but we appreciated it. We even had four visitors for supper one night too. A bunch of us fellows working in the city who were all from the home town used to have occasional reunions (June 15, 1938).

It must have been during his time in Brooklyn that he became an ardent Brooklyn Dodgers fan. They were known as "the Brooklyn Bums." I also know that he went to their ballgames, and one of the famous players he saw playing for their arch rivals (New York Yankees) was Babe Ruth. He wrote how he enjoyed watching big league teams in NY and enjoyed college football (*November 6, 1937*).

Herb reminisced about dancing when he was young. In one of his letters he wrote about his experience at the annual Fireman's Ball.

The most crowded place I ever danced in was Madison Square Garden in N.Y.C. at the annual fireman's ball in 1934. There must have been two thousand couples on the floor with orchestras here and there, and you couldn't get very far around the floor with just one number. And you'd get lost and not be able to find the place where you started from. But it was lots of fun. It was a guest artist program with Kate Smith, Donald Travis, and dozens of other stars (July 9, 1939).

Most likely he would have been a guest of Andrew's, whom he was living with. Herb would have been about 17 years old at the time.

He wrote a long description of an old buddy of his – still working in the New York Public Library where Herb used to work with him. He wrote to Herb with news of a couple of others they worked with who were “communist sympathizers – who went to Spain to fight for the Loyalists.” One came back but the other got killed. Herb wrote that they were “swell, hardworking, clean cut guys” (July 23, 1938).

Working for the NY City Public Library, Herb often clipped used postage stamps from the mail received, and sent them to his brother Bob in Lake Huntington. Bob developed a collection of about 150 to 200 stamps from all over the world.

While working for the NY City Public Library, Herb was earning \$35 a month. One day, flipping through the magazines that the library received, he saw an ad to join the Navy. As a Seaman First Class he could earn up to \$54 a month. So shortly after turning 18, on June 10, 1935 he joined the U.S. Navy.

After four years of Navy life he wrote “Once in a while I miss the old home town ... Most of the old gang are all married by now” (December 11, 1939).

Family Transitions

Henry last worked at his drug store in August, 1935, after being a druggist for 36 years. This was the same year that Herb decided to join the U.S. Navy, much to his stepmother's disappointment.

In one of Herb's letters to Louise he described how disappointed his stepmother was that he did not try to get a job with the NY City Fire Dept. He explained that one of his uncles had arranged for him to take a city exam for employment. Gert wrote: “Perhaps she was talking about Andrew. If I had to guess I'd say it was Andrew who would've had those connections as a firefighter.”

Then Mae experienced major family losses in 1935-36. Her mother died in October, 1935, and only seven months later Henry died. Henry and Mae had been married only 15 years. Mae was left to raise her two boys on her own; Howie was 14 and Bob was 12 when their father passed away.

We know that Mae Mahoney had many physical ailments during the 1930's, leading up to surgery to remove her left kidney in 1937. Herb wrote about his aunt staying at their home in Lake Huntington taking care of his younger step brothers – because his step mother was in NY City for her surgery (*September 15, 1937*).

According to Gert "My grandmother had multiple medical problems and my dad [Howie] and Uncle Bob often got farmed out to neighbors for long periods of time when she was hospitalized after their dad had passed away." It is worth noting that the person who the boys lived with when Mae had surgery in New York was the same Nellie White that fell victim to one of Herb's pranks.

Mae then lived to be 65; she died in November, 1956. Gert also wrote: "My father acted like he felt a lot of guilt involving her and he lived either on Long Island or in Brooklyn at the time of her death."

Obituary for Henry Bernard Lentz:

Popular Lake Huntington Businessman Was Victim of Stroke

Henry B. Lentz, 60, popular businessman of Lake Huntington died at his home there last Saturday morning, April 11, 1936, after an intermittent illness of five years' duration. Mr. Lentz suffered a stroke Friday evening and he expired early Saturday morning. He had been in his drug store on Friday and the attack which proved fatal came suddenly. He had a wide acquaintance in this section and he was highly respected in western Sullivan County.

Funeral services were held from Valentine's parlors in St. Lucy's Church, Cochection. Rev. Fr. Felix officiating and interment was made in the R. C. Cemetery at Narrowsburg. Surviving the deceased are his widow May Mahoney, and four sons, Bernard and Herbert, the latter a sailor in the U.S. Navy, sons by a previous marriage, and Arthur and Robert at home.

Mr. Lentz came to Lake Huntington about 20 years ago having purchased the drug store then operated by the late Dr. Augustus Mayer.

Herb's Early Navy Years

The following accounts of Herb's early years in the Navy mostly are from the log that he kept up to date, from November, 1935 to September, 1937. His log entries are in italics. Excerpts from a few of his letters to Louise help to add color to his log entries. Photos in this section are from his "Brown Album."

After joining the Navy in June, 1935 Herb reported to Norfolk, VA for basic training. When he completed boot camp three months later, he earned leave and caught a bus for New York. In a letter he wrote that he had been gone from his home town for almost three years (*December 5, 1938*).

At the age of 18 years, Herb was embarking upon a whole new life. He was getting ready to see the world.

1935 Log Entries

Transport U.S.S. Chaumont (Norfolk to San Pedro)

November: Panama Canal

Set sail on from Norfolk. "One thousand men in the draft. About 999 became seasick after six hours at sea" (11/7).

Arrived Cristobol (on Limon Bay, the Caribbean side of Panama Canal Zone). "Went ashore in Cristobol next day. Heat terrific with frequent showers. Very interesting place with its quaint native customs and buildings" (11/14). Sailed from Cristobol to Panama City (on the Pacific side). "Passage through locks, very impressive. Made trip in about 8 hours" (11/15).

Panama to San Pedro: *Pacific Ocean seems well named, after the rough Atlantic. Flying fish and porpoises provide novel scenery against the bright blue of the sea.*

Arrived San Pedro November 29, then sailors were distributed to various ships.

Herb was then assigned to the U.S.S. Tennessee, a large battleship (photos next page). In the photo of the ship's 14-inch guns, he is standing under one of them.

There were no log entries from December, 1935 through March, 1936.

1936 Log Entries

Battleship U.S.S. Tennessee (Adventures on the West Coast)



April 1936: First Visit to Halcyon

During the 1984 reunion Herb told us his story about going to visit his older brother Bernard who lived in a little village up the coast from where Herb was stationed in San Pedro. On April 11, 1936 Herb hitch-hiked from Long Beach to Halcyon. He wrote in one of his letters that at one point along the way, he was asked to drive a ways. Since he had never driven a car much, he did a poor job of driving; he was soon asked to stop (*November 19, 1937*).

He recalled being dropped off at the Arroyo Grande Cemetery (at Highway 101 and Halcyon Rd). He said back then Halcyon Rd was lined solid with trees on both sides. There were only six houses between the highway and Halcyon, and just one model T Ford passed him along his walk.



The Temple viewed from Halcyon Rd., 1936

Herb went on to say that Bernard had already been in Halcyon for six years, and that he lived in the old Admin Building at the time.

The photo at left shows Herb's "sand dunes art" carved one day when he and Bernard went exploring in the dunes.

When Herb arrived in Halcyon on April 11, 1936, it was the first time He had seen Bernard "in about ten years." He wrote "And by a strange coincidence it was on that day that our father died" (*Letter of March 18, 1938*).

When his father passed away Herb was only 19 years old.



April-May: San Francisco, Panama, and Equator Crossing

Sailed up the coast from San Pedro to San Francisco Bay, for dry dock scraping and painting, which took three days. Returned to San Pedro for preparation and provisioning of the ship for its next mission (4/13-4/19).

USS Tennessee and the rest of the fleet headed out for Panama on maneuvers (4/27). "About two hundred U.S. ships present in the harbor. Had an interesting time seeing Panama City" (5/9).

Left Panama headed to Equator (5/16). Crossed the equator. "Neptune services and initiations were held with the shellbacks giving all us polywogs a most thorough working over. Well, now we are shellbacks too!" (5/20). "We arrived back in Panama and began preparing for our homeward trip. Went ashore a few more times, also went on swimming parties to nearby islands."



Above left: King Neptune. Above right: Shellbacks

This initiation occurs every time a US Naval ship crosses the equator.

Below: Pollywogs undergo "the works" – a thorough dunking.



June-July: San Pedro, Santa Barbara, and San Francisco

"At last San Pedro again! Everyone is happy to be back in sunny Cal again. Crowds of wives, sweethearts, relatives and friends mobbed the Navy landings as launches rolled in from the ships filled with sailors glad to set foot on California land again!" (6/6) "After a fair time in Santa Barbara over the fourth (excepting a tiresome parade) we proceeded on up the coast." (7/1-7/5).

Arrived San Francisco, joined the rest of the battle group, and prepared for departure to Honolulu (7/6). "Immediately after leaving the harbor we ran into rough weather which continued for two or three days. Decks were awash and little work was done" (7/7).



July-August: Pearl Harbor, Oahu

"Proceeded to Pearl Harbor where we tied up. This part of Hawaii proved to be very interesting. Several of us toured the island and we visited Honolulu on several occasions. Natives, customs and the climate proved to be quite novel. Different troupes of Hawaiian entertainers came aboard the ship to amuse the crew" (7/16).

During the week cruised around the local islands on maneuvers. Ran into heavy weather once (8/3-8/8). "After weeks of fun on Oahu, from surf board riding on Waikiki beach and touring the island, we were finally glad to weigh anchor and head for the old home port" (8/13).



Above left: In Oahu – Herb is on the far right. Above right: Herb enjoying coconut.

August-December: San Pedro, and Opening of San Francisco Bay Bridge

"At last, San Pedro once again. Hawaii may be interesting and duty on its shores alluring, but I'm for the States any old time" (8/22).

"After a few months of anchoring in, except for short range and night battle practice runs, we shoved off for San Francisco again where we spend a week at the celebration of the opening of the world's largest bridge, the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge. A visit to Frisco is always welcome. Its size and atmosphere compare with the one and only 'City of N.Y.'" (11/9) "Bridge opened amidst huge throngs of people. Walked half way across it. Splendid view of harbor and ships. Also visited the Golden Gate Park (11/12).

Sailed back to San Pedro (11/18), then the ship was out at sea for long range battle practice (12/14).

These were the last entries in Herb's log until March, 1937.

December, 1936: Second Visit to Halcyon

In late December 1936 Herb hitch-hiked from Long Beach to Halcyon, to visit his brother again. He stayed through New Year's Day, 1937, when he met Louise for the first time. He wrote: "How different it was last New Year's Eve. Gee, I was in Halcyon then. I first saw you about a year ago, but even before last September, I had never completely forgotten you. If I'm not mistaken, Bernard and I went to a short meeting in the Temple last New Year's Eve, and after it, Cethil and Pat [Mallory] invited us down for a glass of wine. And of course, I'll never, never forget the few minutes I spent with you and how sweet I even thought you were then. If only we, (Bernard & I), would have come up to play cards like you wanted us to, perhaps we might have got to know each other enough then to at least write to each other" (January 1, 1938).

[It should be noted that there is another reference to the fact that Louise was ill at this time, and was confined to bed. My best guess is that she attended the Temple meeting, and then afterward, standing outside talking with Bernard and Herb, Louise invited them to come play cards. She was living with her mother and Fred at the time. Most likely she did not go to the Mallory's because she was supposed to be in bed, recuperating from her illness.]

1937 Log Entries

Battleship U.S.S. Tennessee (A Friend in Every Port)

March-April: Bremerton, Washington

"We arrived in Bremerton to start our three-month overhaul in the yard. What a three months! In drydock the bottom of the ship had to be chipped with air-hammers and all hands will remember that rare experience for a long time to come. Very rainy weather in March and most of April" (3/9).

Rowboat crews started training for races to be held in San Pedro upon their arrival. Herb joined the 150 lb crew, and usually worked out in the afternoons by pulling over to Port Orchard (4/12).



June: USS Tennessee Runs Aground; Return to San Pedro

On June 8 the ship left Bremerton, bound for San Pedro. On June 11 "We shocked the world at large, particularly in naval circles, by carelessly going aground on a mud bank slightly off our course upon our entrance into San Francisco Harbor. Remained there for 30 hours. After removing 600, 14-inch shells and much fuel oil, we were finally towed off it by a dozen tugs and three Coast Guard cutters."

Finally, arrived San Pedro. "The 150 lb race for us was disastrous! Came in 5th place. Then five days leave! San Pedro-ballgames-Wilmington-Roberta! How those 8 days flew" (6/16).

June-July: San Francisco and Maisie

"Left San Pedro, and the following day arrived San Francisco for our ten day stay over July 4th. Had a very interesting time in Frisco. Got out of a tiresome parade on a mighty hot day on July 4th on account of a new job in motor launch crew. Went over to Golden Gate Park with some friends and had a good time" (6/24).

He wrote at length about his relationship with Maisie Magee, responding to Louise's questions about her. He guessed that she was about 20 years old at the time. "I can answer all of your questions. No – I never kissed her, hon. You see we never went together. I went with a girlfriend of hers a couple of times in Frisco, and a buddy of mine went with Maisie. Neither of the teams worked out. I didn't like the girl I knew and my buddy didn't appreciate Maisie, since he was a typical sailor; so, Maisie and I became friends. The four of us went to a couple of shows and the Golden Gate Park once; that's about all we ever did" (March 21, 1939).

July: Seattle/Tacoma and Barbara

Set sail for Seattle, encountering rough seas all the way, arriving July 9. "Boats were kept pretty busy with visitors every day. Mayor Don's beer party for the fleet personnel turned out to be quite a success" (7/6).

Headed to Tacoma, "a darn nice place, and hospitable people, for a change." "Who was the reason? I've really got something now!! Darn it, when will we ever get back to Tacoma. Sigh! But like everything else thus far, it turns out to be just a memory. Some day??" (7/19).

In a letter, Herb tried to reassure Louise that his relationship with his friend in Tacoma meant nothing, anymore. She was a "silly young girl who seemed to get a kick out of being silly [all her life]" (September 12, 1937).

There was a photo of Barbara in the photo album that he sent to Louise (the Brown Album). She asked him about her, in a letter. Herb explained that the photo was taken at Spanaway Park (south of Tacoma, near McChord AFB). He wrote that they didn't have much fun there (June 15, 1938).

August: San Francisco and a Bad Date

"At dawn we departed Tacoma, bound for S.F." They took three extra days for maneuvers in and around Drakes Bay, "a desolate, bleak cove," he wrote (7/28).

Arrived San Francisco, with "Fog and chilly winds as usual" (8/4). "Left S.F. with the rest of the fleet, more maneuvers, a couple extra days at sea for drills and condition watches" (8/10).

In a letter Herb provided some detail about the incident in which he overslept one morning, and missed returning to the ship when required to report. "The girl who I was going with [a friend of Maisie's] was the cause of my almost getting into trouble after the last time I ever saw her. She broke a date and I was so angry I made a wild liberty in Frisco, really hitting all the high spots; but I felt pretty low when I woke up the next morning in some hotel room at 9:30 a.m. to realize that I was a couple of hours overleaving. The one and only time I ever fouled up in any way since I've been in the Navy. ... Anyhow the Captain only gave me a warning because of my good record" (March 21, 1939).

August: San Pedro and Roberta

"Arrived San Pedro to stay for a while at last. Nothing now but gunnery practice until next spring" (8/14). "Bert came out on Sunday. Then I forgot a date, boy is my memory bad. This coast has me all mixed up. I'd like a change" (8/14).

In a letter to Louise he wrote about Roberta Irby, his lady friend in Wilmington, near San Pedro. She was originally from Arkansas. "We were just pals and not much more" (*November 19, 1937*). He wrote that she "calls herself my sis" (*November 22, 1938*).

He wrote in another letter that he received a sad letter from his friend in Wilmington. "She's a swell girl too. Her boyfriend went back east to go to Harvard Law School. And until he told her he was going, she never realized that she cared for him. Know what she calls me? Brother?" (*December 7, 1938*).

August: The China Draft

"Well, an Asiatic draft is going China bound soon. A chance to see Asia, new places, trouble over there might be interesting too" (8/14).

Herb applied ("put in") for the China assignment. Not long after, he entered in his log: ***"Hot dog, I made the China draft. Now for a week's leave before I catch the transport USS Henderson in San Pedro. Had to argue Division official and Gunnery official into it but finally got it. Guess I'll go up to Halcyon on leave."***

In a letter to Louise he admitted that he was such a young kid, he let the glamour and excitement of traveling to China appeal to him (*September 14, 1937*). He also wrote that going to China was an opportunity to see things one would never get to see normally. He also wrote about his desire to work hard, stay aboard ship, and get advancement (in rank/pay) (*September 16, 1937*).

September: Halcyon and Louise

The third time Herb came to Halcyon, it was to say good bye to Bernard. Herb was getting ready for his long-term deployment to the Philippines and China.

Herb was in Halcyon on September 4, 5, 6. Bernard took him to meet Louise. He recalled that they went out for a walk on Sept. 6, the day before he had to leave. That night they got engaged. He recalled that she was the "most sought-after young lady in Halcyon."

Here's what Herb wrote in his log on September 8, after returning to San Pedro.

"Came back off leave (in a daze) and caught the Henderson at Pedro. Why the daze? Funny things have happened to me but to think that on a leave, just before leaving for a place like China; that I'd ever meet a girl like Louise, that ---- whew! Well now for two and a half years of waiting and hoping - we can do it. Boarded Henderson with a mob of others and spent time on way to S.F. marveling over the fact that I was engaged."

What Have We Learned About Herb?

Like Louise, Herb experienced a disrupted childhood. His mother died before he turned two. Then for the next two years he was raised by his grandfather's brother Herman and his wife Marie, living in Brooklyn.

Then at age four he was introduced to another significant adult in his life: his step mother, Mae Mahoney. Apparently, she was a strict catholic. It was she who primarily raised him, as his father was quite involved in his business and civic affairs in the region. Herb resented that part of his upbringing, including having to serve as an altar boy in their local church for ten years. Yet in his letters to Louise he expressed many very positive attitudes and loving feelings toward her.

From the stories we have been able to recover, and from his letters to Louise, we learn that Herb was a very bright young man, who loved literature, writing, and classical music. He was also a mischievous sort. He must have been on his own quite often. He must have developed a great deal of confidence in himself, graduating high school at age 15 and then going to New York City and Brooklyn to live with family, until joining the U.S. Navy at the age of 18. He had some very interesting experiences with the Navy from 1935 to 1937, prior to making a life-long commitment to Louise.

He wrote at times that the village of Halcyon reminded him of his home town, Lake Huntington. After his later duty with the Asiatic Fleet (Philippines, China, Southeast Asia, Indonesia), he probably was eager to settle down in a quiet little town on the central coast of California.

What Did They See in Each Other?

He must have appeared to Louise as this very handsome, fit and intelligent man; a world traveler, a person full of adventure. He was her ideal. And she was this beautiful, caring, spirited young woman, eager to embrace adventure, although with some significant health challenges. She was eager to see more of the world, and of life. Herb was her ticket.

What was Herb seeking in a relationship? At the time, just before he was to set sail for the Philippines and China, he probably was not yearning for a committed relationship. Or was he? He boasted of relationships with women who he referred to as “just pals” or like “brother and sister.” We know he was eager for the excitement of being in China and other exotic ports in Southeast Asia.

But did he really miss his home town, and thus see in Halcyon, and this young woman, an opportunity to return to a simple, stable and charming way of life?

Herb and Louise got engaged to be married on the evening of September 6, 1937, and on September 7, Herb left at about 4:00 a.m. for San Pedro. That morning he left a very sweet, passion filled note for Louise. The next chapter, “Three Days in September,” is a detailed account of those magical three days. It is a short segue between their lives as separate individuals, and their lives as a couple.

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