

Chapter Fifteen

Halcyon: August-September, 1938

August, 1938

Summer is a busy time in Halcyon. Most residents, especially those connected to the Temple of the People, are busy getting ready for the annual Temple Convention held the first full week of August. Louise is no exception.

Louise was up late each of the last two nights. Then late on Monday night she is writing again to Herb, explaining how busy she has been. “Boy, am I sick of looking at apricots! Patty and I put up nineteen quarts in the last week, and Clarence is going to bring us another lug Wednesday” (*August 1*).

The next time Louise writes to Herb is nearly a week later, again late on Sunday night. She had been very busy with activities getting ready for the Convention.



Patty and Louise, August 1938

I'm writing this now, when I should be asleep because I have to get up at six tomorrow. I did at 6:15 today. You see, I'm so terribly busy now that I haven't a single minute hardly to do what I most want to do. That is, to write to you.

I had to change my mind, and so now I have 16 for dinner and supper, and 10 for breakfast. And boy it keeps Patty and me busy! But its so much fun – I just love it, and everyone is so good to us – they offer to help with the dishes, etc.

*Did I tell you we charged 35 cents a meal? Or seven dollars for the whole convention. We took in so far \$61.41 and spent \$13.51. I guess we'll make a profit of about \$10 each, more or less. (*August 7*)*

The next day, in between serving meals to their guests, Louise and Patty went to the beach with two of the Convention visitors, and they went in swimming. “The water sure was swell today, for the first time I've known it to be this summer” (*August 8*).

Another week passes before Louise has a chance to write a letter to Herb. Convention week finally came to an end, and she opens her letter “Oh honey. I’m afraid I neglected you so terribly – and I’m really very sorry, but I just didn’t have time to write” (August 15). She explains how busy she was.

I’d just finish cleaning up one meal, when we’d have to go shopping for the next. Then when I had spare moments, I’d go to the beach and relax thoroughly.

Everything went swell all week, and I’m not tired at all. Except I’m kind of glad it’s all over – until next year. Yesterday morning they gave Patty and me an envelope with \$3.00 in each, also a card and appropriate verse, a token of appreciation. Everyone is so sweet.

Last Thursday was picnic day, and we were at the beach all day. When I got home, my face, arms, back and even the back of my hands were beet red. Oh I was beautiful! And sore! Now I’m peeling. (August 15).



At left: Patty, Twisty, Louise. At right: Louise, Bernard.

After preparing and serving breakfast that morning, Louise took a short nap, awoke feeling nicely refreshed, and that afternoon she writes “Now to clean up the kitchen and bring the various pots, pans and dishes back to where they belong” (August 15).

She then tells Herb about going to the show earlier in the week. On Saturday night she saw “Three Blind Mice” and last night, in San Luis Obispo she saw “Alexander’s Rag Time Band.” Then she writes “Harold and Carolyn left this morning. Bob’s gone. What a life! Everybody goes but me. Someday you and I will be going together, wont we?” (August 15).

In spite of her feelings of being left behind by others, Louise is quite pleased with how well she and Patty made out by providing meals for Convention guests.

Patty and I each have \$8.50 – after giving Bob \$4.00 We spent a lot too, which we didn't need to. We bought films and milkshakes, and little things like that. So, we really did pretty good, didn't we? \$17.00 profit after feeding 16 people – an average of 13 people - for three meals daily. (August 16)

She reads in one of Herb's letters another reference to him spanking her. She is not sure of his intention for writing about it as he does.

Am I supposed to look forward to (no, I wouldn't call it that – anticipate is more like it) a spanking when you get back? You know – or do you – I've some spirit of my own, and I'd hate to have to punish you for spanking me. Why don't you let it go with – oh say three kisses for each spanking I deserve – or you think I deserve? (August 16)

During the summer, when Bob was home from college, Louise joined him and his new girlfriend Dorothy on several outings. She writes: "I'm going to the dance tomorrow night with Patty and Dorothy. I think Dorothy is a swell kid – and we are getting to be good friends" (August 16).

Louise wrote about a movie that was coming to Pismo Beach in the near future, called "Give Me a Sailor." This prompts her to explain what she previously wrote about men in uniform.

I just love to look at them dressed as sailors, and pretend it's you. I'm not in love with the uniform either. If it was a uniform I was after, why just think of all the guys from the National Guard I could have picked up! There's a camp at Morro Bay; and Pismo; and San Luis is full of the guys. But I always give them the cold shoulder and don't pay any attention to their advances. (August 16)

On Thursday Louise went to the show and saw "Best of Broadway." Then she went to the show again on Friday, and saw "Blockade" with Henry Fonda. She writes that it was all about the Spanish Revolution – with a pro-loyalist point of view. (August 18, August 20)

She apologizes for not having enough money now to pay for developing prints of some recent photos she took. Then she provides a breakdown of how she spent her recent earnings.

I bought a pair of shoes for \$2.49, a pair of stockings, 1.00; and a winter coat, on which I put a deposit of \$3.00. It's a \$13.37 coat – last winters, or I'd have had to pay \$20.00 Then I've been to the show a couple of times, and treated Annie. Oh, money flies, and I'm so sick of money. I wish there wasn't any such thing. I hate it! We're always worrying about it. When we haven't got it, we wish we did, and when we have it, we strive desperately to either save some, or spend it all. It's too much for me! (August 20)

Louise had not received a letter from him for a week and a half.

Now I impatiently wait for another one. ... I wonder if I'll be waiting for you, or a letter, all the rest of my life? I suppose I will if you stay in the Navy, and yet strangely enough, it seems to be what I want you to do. So far anyway. Maybe I'll change my mind after a few years of it. I do want you with me so much. Life is so empty without you. (August 20)

Louise went to the show on Sunday night and again on Tuesday night. Late on Tuesday night she tells Herb how pleased she is to have received three letters from him. "They were

heavenly and they put me in heaven too" (August 23). She starts answering them, but her exhaustion from all of her late nights gets the better of her. Then on Wednesday night she goes to the show again, and it is late when she continues writing her letter. She writes about his reference to spanking her, this time using a little bit of sarcasm. "You wouldn't do anything drastic, would you, like spanking me? I'm sure that would make me love you twice as much! Oh yes!!!" (August 24).

Writing in small increments over the next several days Louise finally finishes answering his recent letters. The following Monday she writes about one of her mother's activities.

Mother has been changed from teaching, to having dramatic classes. The first one was tonight. I think they will be lots of fun. ... It was decided tonight that for next week, everyone submit a plot for a play – an original one. Then they will all be read, no names mentioned, and one will be decided upon, then a play written on it. Imagine me writing a plot! (August 29)

Upon closing her letter, she gives an update about her brother's status in college.

The person who helped Bob get through two years of Junior College, and one year at State Teachers' College, decided she had no more money to help him. And he only had one more year! We all felt terrible, so Louise Awerdick [their next-door neighbor] pulled strings and Russel Varian¹, Eric's oldest brother is loaning him \$200 to get through on. (August 29)

September, 1938

In her first letter written in September, Louise made a reference to recent actions taken by President Franklin D. Roosevelt with regard to the war in Europe. She asked Herb what he thought of conditions in Europe. (September 2)

As she was writing, she reminisced on some of the events of Labor Day a year ago, when she and Herb fell in love and became engaged.² She heard a new song on the radio, "Bambina, Bambina" and wrote out the lyrics, and writes "Suits us, doesn't it?" (September 2).

*Bambina, Bambina, you're far away and I'm so lonely
Bambina, Bambina, can you be lonely too?
I'm living in dreams of you my one and only
I'm living each tender kiss anew
Wondering if you're still caring
Or if you're sharing our rendezvous
Bambina, Bambina, when I return will you remember?
Bambina, Bambina, I left my heart with you.*

¹ Russell Varian, scientist and inventor, who eventually established Varian Electric Company, based in Palo Alto, lived most of his life in Halcyon. (Varian, Dorothy, *The Inventor and the Pilot*, Pacific Books, Palo Alto, 1983.)

² What Louise wrote in her letters in September, 1938 about the events of the Labor Day weekend a year ago already has been incorporated into the detailed account presented in Chapter One, "Three Days in September."

It is Sunday, and Louise begins to feel frustrated because she has not received a letter from Herb for a while.

If ever I felt like swearing, its now. No ships are coming in all this week either. Aug 23 was the last time I received any letters from you, and unless a ship came yesterday, I'll not hear from you for another week anyway. (September 4)

Louise tells Herb what they had to do for their new puppy. "We took little Georgie up to San Luis this morning to the veterinary. He had a couple of foxtails in his ear" (September 4).

On Tuesday, September 6 Louise is compelled to write him a letter.

I must write to you tonight, because it is exactly one year now that we've been engaged. It really doesn't seem like a year to me ... and now we've only 1 ½ years to go. I reviewed every hour pretty nearly as it happened then. Memories are wonderful things, aren't they? (September 6)

Then next Saturday Louise received several of letters. Late that night she begins answering them. "I received six letters from you today, and I'm still trying to figure out where they came from. I mean, how they got here³" (September 10).

First she updates Herb on her finances. "Did I tell you Greenie is fixed? And it cost me \$16. Plus \$8.00 for my coat. Well, I'm sure in debt now. Figure an average of \$1.00 a week to pay it all. I'll be out of debt next summer" (September 10).

Then Louise reads what Herb wrote about "slipping," a term they both used in their letters to describe an action that could be interpreted as unfaithfulness. Louise responds "I know you could never slip. It isn't like you at all" (September 10).

On Sunday Louise continues answering his letters. She is still puzzled about Herb's references to his spanking her.

After all your threats of spanking me, I'm afraid you mean it. I asked you if you were serious when you said you'd spank me, and you answer, you'll not spank me seriously, but jokingly. (September 11)

Louise recently caught a cold, and it suddenly got worse, migrating into her chest. Pearl told her that she should go home and go to bed, so she would not infect the others at the Dower's.

So now she has an opportunity to answer more of his recent letters, while lying in bed with a bad cold. As she writes, she frequently includes the name of a song that is playing on the radio she is listening to, as she is writing.

With regard to her brother's comment that Herb was in love with an ideal, Louise writes "You sure answered that idea of Bob's very well! When he comes again, I'll read it to him" (September 12).

The next day Louise received two more letters from Herb, and she continues to remain in bed, nursing her cold, while continuing to answer his letters.

³ Reference to the ships that bring U.S. Mail.

She writes "Am I mean? I think today I am being kind of snappy. Do you notice it? Maybe it's because I've such a bad cold" (September 13).

Later that same day, Louise looks over what she has written. "I've just been reading this letter over again, and I sure think it's silly! Don't you? I wish I could write a really sensible letter once in a while" (September 13).

She comments about world affairs. "It sure looks like there is going to be a war in Europe. And I wouldn't be surprised, if America got into it eventually too. I heard Hitler speak yesterday morning, and he sure has a rasping voice. I hate him! ... Maybe I should say, I hate the things he does" (September 13). Further in her letter she writes "If Europe does go to war, I think I'll be glad you're where you are. Then if America gets in, you'll have to stay there, won't you? They'd leave some of the fleet over there I should think" (September 13).

Finally, by Thursday Louise recovered from her cold, so she went to the show. She took Bernard, Twisty and Pat Mallory with her in "Greenie." (September 15)

The following Tuesday she writes about participating in her mother's dramatic class.

My mother has dramatic classes now, and we have to learn to be at ease on the stage. You know that's rather difficult to do, but its good training, and lots of fun. Also, it's something to make time go faster too. (September 20)

She then tells Herb about her experience at the dance in Oceano, when she went with Dorothy, two weeks ago.

I must tell you about my latest conquest. The last time I went to a dance in Oceano, two weeks ago. I danced with a man – I don't even know his name – and he introduced me to his friends, and wanted me to go out with him, but I said no. Anyway, I didn't go to the dance last week, but Patty told me he was there and asked for me. She said she'd try and bring me next time, so he said he'd come then. He lives in Santa Maria, and is 23. But there will be no more dances for a few weeks, so he can't see me. Besides, next time I see him I'll tell him I'm engaged.

You should be jealous, but I'll bet you're not. Now if I had said I thought he was swell, etc. would you be? No? Well, I can't get you jealous any more than you can get me jealous. Isn't that nice? (September 20)

On Thursday, after coming home from Pearl's she had a surprise waiting for her.

My mother asked me to feed the cat, and I said alright. She said she had something nice for me, and it turned out to be two letters from you. Totally unexpected ... because no ships were coming in this week. But here they are – and such grand letters, too! (September 22)

She begins answering his letters right away.

Boy you sure have to work a lot. But keep the good work up, it'll pay in the end, besides keeping you from thinking of me too much.

During Convention, I had a notebook in which I wrote down all I took in and all I paid out. At the end of each page I'd add up each debit and credit, then subtract to find the balance, but I could never make the balance tally with what money I had, so I gave up after about three days of it.

Gee, Herb, that's grand about shore duty for a storekeeper. ... I've never been to San Diego or San Pedro, but I'm inclined to think I'd like one of them better than Frisco because I liked Los Angeles, and Hollywood, and Beverly Hills so much. But I'd like to go to those places before we have to decide where we'll live.

I'm awfully glad you can know some popular songs now. ... "Ti-pi Tin" is being sung in Spanish by your brother, to Patty, in a little musical skit Jean and I are putting on as part of my other's dramatic class.

My mother bought three records from "Snow White" as recorded direct from the sound stage. ... Bob fell in love with "A Tisket A Tasket" when he heard it over the radio, so he bought it. ... I've played it so many times, and Bob has, and Bob, Byron, Dorothy and I have sung it so often, you'd think I'd be sick of it, but I'm not. ... Bob bought it because the girl⁴ singing it sounds like Dorothy. (September 22)

The next day Louise has much she wants to say about the situation in Europe.

In your letter I see a question "What will Germany do?" Well, we found out what Germany did, and [now it is] a question of what will England and France do? Boy, they sure turned out to be traitors. Chamberlain especially.

But now it looks like from further developments, that there is war, undoubtedly. ... Hitler wants all of Czechoslovakia; whether they want to or not, England and France have to help Czechoslovakia ... Oh, it's all so terrible! All for a madman like Hitler.

I wonder how long Roosevelt can keep us out of war. I hope for a long, long time, but I doubt it. I think Russia will probably help. She said she would if France did, and it looks like France will have to. What a mess! (September 23)

Continuing the same letter, she writes about Yoshiko; then about Bob.

I didn't know Yoshiko thought I was swell. You never know what she thinks of you. ... So indifferent. But I got used to that. If she acts like that with you, don't mind, because she really is glad to see you. She told me so. You're the only one of my boyfriends that she liked. Aren't you glad? (September 23)

A few days ago, we got a letter from Bob telling us he had some good news. He has been made Assistant Instructor in the psychology department – a position, he said, equal to 43rd vice-president of a grocery store. However, its experience in his field, and pays \$24 a month. Two doctors are interested in his career, and have it all planned out what he'll be when he gets out of college. He'll get in a fellowship in a university next year. Pretty good, eh? Then he says as if that wasn't enough, when he got to the Elks Club, where he

⁴ Ella Fitzgerald

works for his board, some members had collected \$35 to buy him some new clothes. (September 23)

Sunday afternoon Louise finds time to start another letter to Herb. She opens by telling him about a dance she went to last night in Arroyo Grande, with Patty and her mother.

I had a swell time. And guess who I danced with? Milton. He came about a half hour before the dance ended, and he asked me to dance with him. He's got a girl now – again – and maybe it will last this time. (September 25)

When she returned home from the dance at 1:30 a.m., she found her mother struggling to take care of their dog, Georgie. They had taken him to the Vet in Santa Maria on Saturday due to an enflamed ear. The Vet gave him an anesthetic, and it took a while for him to recover from that. Louise writes about what she did after she came home from the dance.

He just wouldn't be still and he'd fall all over the floor. Well, I gave him something to eat, and boy did he eat! Then I took him out for a walk (at that hour!) I had to hold him up with his harness. Then he went to sleep, and he slept until seven this morning. He's going to be our dog when we get married. (September 25)

In closing, she asked Herb something about men's attitudes and expectations at dances.

Do men at a dance who come stag – always ask every girl they dance with to let him take her home until he gets one who says she will? Anyhow it sure seems like it to me.

I boosted the Oceano dances to all the men I danced with and they thought I wanted them to go because of me. You see, the dances at Oceano have been discontinued for a month because not many people came. That's why Annie went to Arroyo last night. (September 25)

Two days later Louise begins another letter. She opens with an admission.

It must sound funny to you, that I'm so tired at night, and then the next you know, I'm going to the show or a dance or something. But really. They don't make me tired. I get tired when there's nothing to do. (September 27)

A woman in her mother's dramatic class loaned Louise a "Hawaiian guitar" to use in one of their musical performances. Louise writes "I've always loved Hawaiian guitar, so now I'm trying to play it. It sure is lots of fun" (September 27).

The next day, again late in the evening before going to sleep, Louise writes a short to Herb. She teases him again, using a name for him that he detests. She gets some delight in taunting him about spanking her.

I'll show you how sweetly I can say "Herbie dear" and you won't even notice that I said Herbie. I'll say it so you'll like it even, and not feel that primitive urge to spank me. Besides you wouldn't dare spank me anyway. Besides, you couldn't. It would take more than one man to get me still long enough to spank me. Anyway, that wouldn't stop me from calling you Herbie. I like it too much. When I first see you, I'll say "Hello Herbie" and you won't do anything except kiss me – will you? (I'm not mean really - I just like to tease you). (September 29)