

Chapter Eighteen

Halcyon: October-November, 1938

October, 1938

In the fall of 1938 Louise's life continued to consist mainly of her social activities in Halcyon, working for Pearl, going to the show, and going dancing with her friends. Although she was still under her doctor's orders to rest every afternoon and get to bed early every night, she often was up late at night, usually writing to Herb while lying in bed, just before going off to sleep.

Early Monday evening she writes about going to the show two nights in a row. "Last night I went to the show and saw "The Crowd Roars" with Robert Taylor. She knew Herb didn't like Robert Taylor, but she wanted him to see the movie, because it was about prize fighting. "Night before last I saw 'Give Me a Sailor' with Martha Raye. It was really very good, only hardly anything to do with the Navy" (October 3).

Very late Wednesday night Louise is answering one of his letters in which he reminisced about events of a year ago. "It really is nice isn't it, thinking of September '37 over and over again. Its nice too, to look ahead to about March '40 (October 5).

Two nights later Louise again responds to Herb's account of events of a year ago. She writes "It's fun, isn't it, to reminisce? After you kissed me, I asked you if you loved me, and you said 'I love you, honey' Remember?" (October 7). She continues:

Yes, Bernard told me afterwards that he had often thought how nice it would be if you and I could ever come together. And we did – and how wonderful it was too. (October 7)

The following Monday Louise writes a short letter with highlights of the week.

Nowadays when I walk home from Pearl's at night – I usually get through the dishes at 6:30 – its already dark! I like to walk at night though – I always have.

Tomorrow night I'm going to take care of Mary Anne and Nancy, while Herb and Virginia go to a dance. It gets me 50 cents and boy do I need it. Although, since I'm to sleep there too, it doesn't seem to me that I'm earning it. (October 10)

Louise recognized that she had become somewhat dependent upon Herb's letters as a source of happiness in her life, and she knew he felt the same. Herb's letters often revealed how writing to her made him feel as though he were actually talking with her, and being there with her. Louise felt the same. She begins her next letter with these feelings in mind. "You must think I'm terrible for not writing sooner – I really have been awful about writing lately" (October 14). Then she updates Herb on her latest activities.

Tuesday night I slept at Holman's, waking up at 6:00 a.m. the next morning. Mary Anne and Nancy immediately proceeded to get in bed with me. Such fun! (for them). At 8:00, Mother, Pearl, Flamore and I went to Atascadero to see the Cyr's. ... Flamore began to get a cold while up there, and she lost her voice, so we came home sooner than we expected.

Wednesday night, mother and I took Ella and Twisty to the show. Its "Pal night" which means two people can see the show on one 30 cent ticket. We saw "Shopworn Angel" a war picture – but it was good.

This walking back and forth from here to Pearl's may be good for my health, but its sure hard on my poor feet! But I think I shall continue walking nevertheless. (October 14)

Louise writes about a dream she had.

I dreamed of you last night. I dreamed you had come home, and we were in the store¹ together and I received a letter from you. You seemed to be in love with me, only neither of us were very demonstrative about it. Then we were in the car, and I was driving and you had your arm around me. I was thinking how nice it seemed, and was just going to tell you that you hadn't even kissed me yet, when I woke up. ... But you know – we didn't need to kiss, or say we loved each other. There was such a deep contentment at being together it seemed like we just didn't need it. (October 14)

Louise enjoyed an outing with her family on Sunday, then writes about it the next day.

Yesterday after the meeting² Patty, Mother, Fred and I went to San Luis to eat, and a show. We saw "Sing You Sinners" with Bing Crosby, Fred McMurray. It was awfully good. Patty and I bought 50 cents worth of expensive chocolates, and we got a bag as big as you can get in the 5 & 10 for 10 cents. ... Oh yes even though I do owe a lot of money, I do silly things like that. But I had that money to spend, so I spent it.

In the same letter she shares her thoughts about money.

You know, I've had so much experience being in debt, that's why I don't ever want to buy anything after we're married unless we can pay cash for it. Its really terrible to have to figure when you get some money... and by the time you've paid some of your bills, the pay's all gone. (October 17)

The next evening Louise writes about their letter-writing.

See, I kept my promise this time, and am writing to you when I said. Even though there isn't much to say. It seems as though it's been a long time since I heard from you last, but it's been only a week and a half.

I really can't think of a thing to say. Nothing ever happens around here. (October 18)

¹ Halcyon Store and Post Office

² Temple services were always held on Sunday afternoons.

Louise decided to start letting her hair grow long, and she explains in her next letter.

Patty and I are letting our hair grow. And the first one to cut her hair has to buy the other a \$2.00 box of chocolates. She's going to have you persuade me to cut my hair when you get back, but I warn you if you do, you'll have to buy the candy. (October 19)

Late Friday night, before going to sleep, Louise again addresses an issue that keeps coming up in their letters to each other. "Yes – let's drop the subject of a spanking. You won't agree with me that I won't get one – so I'd rather not think about it." (October 21).

Louise closes that same letter with "You are so sweet to me Herb. I'm not worth all you do for me. But I do love you so. I simply adore you. Again – thanks for everything. Do you still love me as much as you always did?" (October 21).

Late Saturday evening Louise is feeling good. She had just taken a shower and washed her hair. She even put clean sheets on her bed. She writes "Washing my hair is a job nowadays. It's so long – it comes below my shoulders. Pretty soon I'll have to start doing it up in a knot in back. I'll look like a Swede then" (October 22).

Louise writes about her plans for tomorrow.

I'm going to give Georgie a bath. Then I go to the Builders meeting – then make a cake for Fred – then the afternoon meeting – after that, we're having Twisty up for supper, 'cause Wednesday is his birthday – then we go to the show. No rest for the wicked. (October 22).

The next day she felt depressed, until she got one of his letters, which completely changed her mood.

This afternoon in the meeting I was feeling kind of sad. For one thing, today was one of those gray days, no sun. Also, I had on some perfume that I haven't used for a year or more, since about the time you were here. Well, in the meeting, it kept getting darker (it gets dark early) and all I could smell was that perfume. As you said, it's a funny thing about perfume. So – I kept getting bluer and bluer.

Well, when I got to the store, Aileen said I had a letter, Honey, it was just as if you had taken me in your arms and kissed me. Why I was just up in the air the rest of the day. Blue? Not me! (October 23)

She writes a short letter Tuesday evening, telling Herb about a "most wonderful dream" of him. She dreamt that he was holding her hand, and that "When I woke up, I could still feel your hand in mine – just as if you were with me and actually holding my hand" (October 25).

In the same letter she tells Herb how busy she will be tomorrow. "Ten people for supper at Pearl's, and two cakes to make besides a roast, etc. Gosh! (October 25). And the next day she writes:

We had a grand time at Pearl's tonight. ... The Whitney's, Bernard, Clarence, Ella and Twisty, Patty, Flamore and Pearl and me. It was really lovely. ... Today is Twisty's birthday. He's 76. Clarence is 71 on Friday, and Fred is 65 Monday. (October 26)

On Thursday Louise writes about a skit that several Halcyon people are planning.

The play we're putting on for Thanksgiving is the nuttiest thing. And funniest thing of all is that all players fit their parts. First of all is the mother – a flighty “Billie Burke” type played by Anita Wilson³, whom you don't know. Her sister, an overbearing woman, always talking for herself and her husband is Patricia Mallory. Her husband, who only says “yes dear” and “no dear” to his wife, played by Bernard. Grandpa, who is deaf and always falls asleep, was Twisty. The brat is me. Don't you think they fit? (October 27)

November, 1938

Five days later Louise begins a very long letter with “It seems like such a long time since I last wrote to you, doesn't it dear? I've a lot to tell you” (November 1).

Saturday night Jean invited me to her Halloween party, along with all her high school friends, from ages 14 to not more than seventeen. Five boys and ten girls. Among the games we played, were two that I had never played before. Post office and spin the bottle. You don't mind, do you? I had to play because I don't like to be a wet blanket, besides they're only boys.

Then Sunday night I went to a Halloween party at the Oceano Recreation Center – sponsored by Patty's mother. It wasn't so hot because it was composed mostly of very little boys.

Last night I went to the show and saw Ginger Rogers and Fred Astair in “Carefree.” It was good, but I still think their first few pictures were the best.

Mother's getting ready to go to the Lodge for choir practice so that means I must leave you. (November 1)

Late that evening, after returning from choir practice, Louise writes a bit more, and she informs Herb “My mother says according to our horoscopes⁴, we're both going to get married in 1939” (November 1).

The next morning, she hurriedly finished this letter so she could get it in the mail, intending that it would go out on a ship “leaving in a day or two for Manila” (November 2). Then she tells Herb what is planned for Armistice Day locally.

On Armistice Day the cruiser Memphis is going to be at Avila.⁵ And so I'm going to try hard to go see it because one can go on board. I'd love to go. Also, that night there is going to be a dance in Pismo for the sailors. I'm going to that too. (November 2)

³ Anita was new to Halcyon, having started coming to Temple functions in August.

⁴ Louise's mother often drew up astrological horoscopes for various individuals and interpreted them.

⁵ The ship was moored out in the harbor, away from the pier.

She continues telling Herb about what she's been doing.

Last night we had a dinner at Pearl's – nine of us. A Mr. Bilger from Connecticut came out here on his way to Honolulu. He sure is a swell man – he reminds me of my grandfather. ... Anyway, we had the dinner for him.

Tomorrow night I'm going to another of those enchilada dinners⁶. I guess tonight was the first night I've stayed home. (November 4)

Late Sunday night Louise writes in a short letter to Herb "Yesterday was a swell day for me, because I received five letters from you." And she goes on to inform him "I won't be able to write much tonight because I'm terribly tired. I'm afraid I've been out too much lately at night. I think I've been home one night in the last two weeks" (November 6).

Late Monday night Louise writes "I stayed home tonight and was going to bed early to write to you." The family had a visitor, which interrupted her letter writing. Later she continues "I shall endeavor to answer your first letter now dearest. Dated Oct. 1" (November 7).

Next, she answers his letter dated October 5, and congratulates him for doing so well on his Storekeeper exam. Then she addresses his letters dated October 8 and 9, and closes:

Mind if I say goodnight now? It's not 11:00 yet, but my back aches from sitting up like I am. I have a board to write on, and your letters are all over the bed. Anyway, I'm tired. (November 7).

Louise's next opportunity to write is in the early afternoon on Saturday, the day after Armistice Day. "This letter is going to contain something very pleasant and something decidedly unpleasant. I shall leave the unpleasant news until the end, because I hate to tell you" (November 12).

Then Louise writes about her visit on board the U.S.S. Memphis, on Friday, Armistice Day.

Yesterday, Patty and I left her house about 10:30, and proceeded to Avila to see the ship. Visiting hours were from 1 to 4 but in order to be sure and get there we waited from 11 to 1 to get the boat over. More fun! It was a cold day and a heavy wind. From the pier to the boat was a long step – I mean the boat landing. The swells kept bobbing the boat up and down, and boy was the sea choppy! There were 45 to a boat. Then when we got to the ship, we had to be lifted out of the boat practically.

When Patty and I got on deck, a guide stepped up and offered to take us around. So we went up and down those steep ladders, and saw all of the guns and everything. I sure could hardly walk straight though. I love the way the ship rocks and rolls – its lots of fun.

Then we sat down on something – and stayed there all the rest of the afternoon. You see, our guide (Jack) was bored anyway, so we talked and he showed me some pictures of Australia, and I guess by that time there were five more around us. I can't remember their names – one was called Jitterbug. ... Another was Tex – another Inky. He came from Worcester, where I did, so we had fun talking about all the different places.

⁶ The dinner and dance at the Oceano Pavilion every Wednesday resumed after a hiatus.

We stayed till four, and then went back. Boy, did we get wet, too! The wind, and the choppiness of the sea. Oh yes, one of the sailors gave us some apple pie. It was good too. Lots of kids got seasick but I didn't. I made a bet with Jack – he didn't have liberty last night and said he'd be at the dance. The enclosed picture is of Jack. The one that's marked. The Memphis carries airplanes, and it catapults them into the air. I did learn something. (November 12)

Louise continues her letter, telling Herb what they did next, including what happened after the dance; something that she feels terrible about.

Then we went to Pismo. Got there at 5:00 – ate something, and then sat in the car until the time for the parade to start.

About 6:00 three sailors went by and then came back and asked to get in the car because it was so cold out. They're not used to our climate, which by the way, was about the coldest day we've ever had. We said no, but they got in anyway.

Well – they behaved themselves nicely. We had three sandwiches which they ate. By the way, all the sailors noticed my ring – and by the questions I asked, I guess they knew I'd been around a sailor. Well we all talked until time for the parade, when Patty and I ditched them. Boy was it cold!

After the parade, and I'll be darned if they didn't come along later, and got in, and waited till the dance started. The Pharmacist's Mate – Sawyer is his name, and they all call him Tom, he was the nicest of them all. He's 26 – I saw it on his liberty card. I danced with him most of the time – he's a swell dancer but a poor leader.

Now I come to the part I hate to tell you. In fact, it takes a lot of courage – I'm not afraid of you, I'm afraid of what you'll think. I kissed Tom goodbye. Which in itself doesn't mean much – it's the fact that I broke a promise to you.

I don't know what to say – I hope it doesn't make you respect me less, or not trust me anymore. I know I wouldn't like it if you kissed somebody. You could also quote from something I said, that if it happened once, how would I know it wouldn't happen again. All I can say is it won't.

I didn't kiss him once either, which is worse. Oh, Herb please don't think I'm terrible, will you? I hope it doesn't make any difference in what you think of me, will it? They say confession is good for the soul, but it doesn't do me any good. ... Herb – I'm sorry.

It's so hard to tell something in a letter. ... Now I have to wait until January before I know what you think of me. I guess though, that I'll get over feeling the way I do now, but it will still be a weight. You can't realize what it means to me to have broken a promise to you darling.

Tom is going to write to me. Do you mind? I promised that I'd answer his letter. Do you mind that either? Please tell me if you don't like all this Herb, and I'll not do it.

And I want you to tell me truthfully, how you feel about it all. I'll never, never do anything like that again. (November 12)

Louise composes another letter late that evening, while she is in a more cheerful mood. She begins answering Herb's letter, in which he wrote about his ship's arrival in Hong Kong.

No darling, I don't mind if you dance – why should I? I hope you know how to lead well; I don't care about the rest. I'm not exactly a swell dancer – I can dance good though if I have someone who knows how to lead. So, learn how on those Chinese girls.

I love to waltz best of all, because then darling, we will be able to dance cheek to cheek. Have you ever? No, I'm not a jitterbug. I think it's silly. I hope it goes out pretty soon. (November 12)

Late the next evening Louise is writing again, and she still feels very badly about what she had done after the dance.

It seems that I can't forget it yet – a casual kiss never before meant so much regret to me. I guess that's because my kisses belong to you now, and I gave away something that wasn't mine to give. (November 13)

In Louise's next letter, she opens with "I like to be in contact with you whether I say anything or not" (November 15).

We had a lovely meeting in the Temple tonight, celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Temple. I think Bernard is going to write about it.

Everybody seems to have chicken pox. Mary Anne has it – I think Jean has – thank goodness I've had it already. Tomorrow night I'm to take care of the Holman's kids. Another 50 cents.

Late Friday evening after coming home from the show, Louise writes a nice, long letter, answering Herb's latest letter.

What a lucky day for me! I received two wonderful letters from you today, both very unexpected. Now I shall start answering your letters.

What you bought in Hong Kong sure sounds nice Herb. ... You sure are a sweet angel to get all those things.

Gee, I'm not wonderful any more Herb – am I? I hope you still think I'm a swell girl, but I don't see how you can.

Saturday afternoon Louise continues answering Herb's letter, and sharing her feelings about what she did on Armistice Day.

If you knew Yoshiko as well as I do, you wouldn't be surprised at not hearing from her. She told me you wrote her, but I imagine she's kind of waiting until after the baby is born.

You say a picture of me is not trivial – that it is important to you. Well then, look at it from my point of view. Darling, I've asked you and asked you for pictures, but I don't seem to get any. Please send me some. ... You are important to me; pictures of you are important to me.

Well – I still won't feel perfectly happy until January. Imagine – such a long time to wait to know what you think. And each letter I get from you in the meantime makes me feel terrible when you say how wonderful I am.

You know – I really didn't flirt with any of the sailors from the Memphis. I only talked to them. But do sailors hand out a line! (November 19)

Then Monday night Louise writes about Tom in her letter to Herb.

Saturday I received a letter from Raymond (aka Tom). He said that life was like that in the Navy. You meet someone you like a lot, and then have to go away. He's going on that eastern cruise in January, for five months. He said he'd like to see me when he got back, but that perhaps I wouldn't care. You know, I feel sorry for him.

And Tuesday night she writes about material for her wedding dress.

I found out from Annie the other day how much material and what kind to get for my wedding dress. It is a heavy brocaded silk, or a silk with a dull finish on one side, and shiny on the other. And eight yards if it is 36" wide. (November 22)

Late Friday night Louise writes about her recent activities.

Well, we had a very nice Thanksgiving Day. We had supper at the Lodge, turkey, etc. and orange sherbet instead of pumpkin pie. After the supper we had our little play, and it was a success. Mother, as Hilda the Swedish maid, took the show.

After that, Annie, Patty and I went to the Veteran's Dance in Arroyo. An old-time dance – strictly so. And mostly middle-aged people. I sure had fun! Those men know how to dance, even if it is old fashioned.

I told you Bob wanted me to do some typing for him? He wanted it by today, and he only sent it on the 22nd, and I received it on the 23rd. which left me one day to type 33 pages. So yesterday I typed four hours. ... I'm getting a dollar for doing it.

I was thinking today what a swell person you are Herb, to send your mother \$20 every month. Lots of men don't do things like that, and I'll bet she thinks a lot of you.

Last night my mother "progressed" both our horoscopes, and she says she can't see anything but that we'll get married in 1939. But I'm not going to believe it until it happens because I might get disappointed.

(November 25)

The next day Louise writes about Herb Holman losing his job, and what it means for Herb.

The Cuesta Grade is finished, and there are no new construction jobs coming up, so the State is laying off thirteen men. And as there are only fourteen working, he'll lose out, since there are lots of men who have worked for the State longer than he has. He's had this job for nine years. It's too bad because he has a wife and two kids to support. That's one reason, darling, to stay in the Navy. (November 26)