

Chapter Thirty-One

Halcyon: August, 1939

Outside of her usual work responsibilities, Louise was enjoying the summer. She had been out dancing, enjoyed a community picnic, went swimming in the local creek, and went out with her brother and his friend.

It's Tuesday, and a week has gone by before Louise writes again. But she is not feeling well when she begins her letter. "I can try to write a letter, but it won't be easy. I have a streptococcus infection in my right hand and it is rather difficult to write" (*August 1*).

She tries to write again the next day. "My hand is somewhat better, although it still hurts. But I can write with it anyway" (*August 2*).

On Friday Louise begins answering one of Herb's letters. "My hand is much better – I can use it now, although it hurts if I use it too much" (*August 4*).

She informs Herb "Tomorrow I start being terribly busy – getting up at six every morning. How I hate that part of it¹" (*August 4*).

Next Tuesday evening, during Convention week, Louise starts another letter.

Oh darling – I haven't written a real good letter to you for so long – and I should.

*We're in the middle of Convention – and so far, things are going fine. Except for a few minor mishaps. Like – my hand got worse – a blowout on the way to San Luis – oh, a cold and I could name some more but what's the use? The meals are going along fine – everybody enjoys them a lot. I don't know how much of a profit we will make, but who cares especially? Although I do need new shoes and things. (*August 8*)*

She goes into detail about the infection on her hand.

*A week ago, Sunday night I had a little pimple in the knuckle of my middle finger on my right hand. As you know, it turned into an infection. Well, it got better, but from using it so much these last few days, it got worse. I'd hang it on everything. The area spread and my hand would hurt so I didn't know what to do. So, the doctor gave me a salve of some kind to put on it. Today it didn't hurt so much, but it still looks bad. (*August 8*)*

Louise tells Herb about the tire blowout.

Bob told me to drive slow as the tires were worn. So I was going about 35 (in Greenie – to San Luis) when wheeee the tire blew. I got the car slowed down before it started swerving, so nothing serious happened. But – here I was, with Patty, Juanita and Dolores

¹ Cooking for the Temple Convention guests.

– and I don't know how to change a tire, besides I only had a jack. So, I tried to flag some guys, but they only waved. So I got on the other side of the road and hitchhiked. At least I pretended to. Well – a guy stopped and I told him I had a flat tire, and would he change it. He said yes – so there I was all set. (August 8)

She closes her letter with “I've got four letters of yours to answer, and I promise you honey, I'll answer them next week. Plus whatever others I might get” (August 8).

The next day she adds to her letter “I had a shot – injection – in my veins today for my blood, [because] my hand got worse” (August 9).

Almost another week goes by before Louise writes again. This time, her hand is so bad that she has to dictate her letter to a friend, Olive Ross, who actually writes out the letter.

As you see I now have a private secretary, my hand worse so I couldn't use it. I have about six of your letters to answer now and I hope my hand gets better so I can answer them, because there are a few things in them that I would like to talk about. That may sound ominous but I don't mean it as such.

I received those pictures from you this afternoon and I don't think I like the photographers retouching artistry.

Patty and I each made \$6.75 during Convention time and we paid Juanita \$3.75. Considering how few people there were that paid by the week I think we did better than last year; anyhow it was lots of fun.

Today I am in bed – my hand got worse so they thought a rest for a few days wouldn't do any harm.

I have to close now as Olive has to go right away. (August 15)

In the next few days Louise's hand improved enough for her to write a letter. It's Sunday.

My hand is quite a bit better although I'm still in bed. I had another infection – in my left wrist. But that is also better.

Yesterday Georgie chased a car, got tangled up with three cars, and came out with a broken leg. Dr. Harris fixed it up for us.

Flamore had a case of pneumonia – but aside from all that, everything is just ducky.

I received three letters from you yesterday, and now I shall take an opportunity to answer all your letters. My hand gets a little tired but I can go slow – I've lots of time.

Ten letters to answer my love. Before I begin, let me say I love you. And you are so sweet to me. And good to me. I don't deserve it. (August 20)

She begins answering Herb's letters; the first one was written June 19. It is likely that Herb will not receive her answer to his letter until late September.

Lots of your letters don't need much answering, as they are just about some of the things you've done ashore. Interesting of course, but not much for me to comment on. I guess

you have a lot of fun sometimes though when you go to those cabarets. Or do you just get bored?

It seems funny to have you comment on news that happened a month before.

Second letter, June 23, is a long one.

We are not going to spend a hundred and fifty dollars on our honeymoon. That is, if I have anything to say about it. Not over a hundred, if that much even.

The last letter I answered was June 27. Now for July 5.

Haven't you heard "The Beer Barrel Polka" yet? It sure is a catchy tune, and popular! All of June and July, and part of May it was heard everywhere.

(August 20)

Herb had written about how he feels obligated to financially help his step mother. Louise responds, pointing out their different views on the matter.

You know, there is one subject I disagree with you on, and that is, I don't think children owe any debt to their parents. People want children. They take care of them because they like to, love them – so – I don't see why the children owe their parents anything for that. If I have children it's because I want them. I'll do all I can for them because I will love them – and even if I didn't, I couldn't let them starve. I don't want my children to feel they owe me anything because I brought them up. If they want to do something for me after they're grown, I hope it will be because they want to. Not because they feel they owe it. (August 20)

Then she responds to something Herb wrote about what happened to Georgie one day at the swim hole in the local creek.

I wasn't babying Georgie! I threw him in myself. But that is different. There's a difference who throws him in and why. I threw him in because I wanted him to swim. Those boys threw him in merely to tease him and see him cringe. He couldn't swim very good, either. He hardly could make it to the dam. So don't say I baby him 'cause I don't. (August 20)

She continues answering selected portions of his letter.

Boy, I am catching up on these letters. I haven't much more paper so I have to make it short.

As for our honeymoon – I'll do my best. I'm not very smart at figuring out things like that, but I can learn, I guess.

Well, I finished all but the three letters I received yesterday. (August 20)

The next day, Monday morning, Louise is ready to resume answering Herb's letters. Almost.

Darling, I filled my pen, got some paper, and a stamped envelope, and came up to the house to answer your letters, and I'll be darned if I didn't leave your letters down in my

room [at the Guest House]. So, my dearest angel, you'll have to wait till I go back again to get it answered. Because, I get too tired if I walk very much.

Gosh sakes, Georgie sure is sick. I guess it effects his stomach too. I sure will be glad when he's better.

I guess I won't write now until I get to my room. My hands are hurting. (August 21)

Later that day, in the early evening, Louise has sad news to report.

Well honey – Georgie is dead. He just died a little while ago. We think it was blood poisoning from the last time he was sick. That abscess probably broke out inside.

Anyway, he began to get worse from when I wrote this morning and got so he couldn't move. Poor darling. I did love him so. Well, I guess he's happy in dog heaven now, because if ever a doggie deserved to go to heaven, he did. In spite of his obnoxiousness.

(August 21)

Louise responds to Herb's growing dislike for the Navy.

Well, if you're fed up on this Navy business, I guess there's nothing for you to do but to get out when you can. But I hope to heaven you can get a job on the outside. And darling – you won't quit the Navy unless there's at least a prospect of something else, will you? ... All I want is for you to be satisfied with your job. (August 21)

She tells Herb how she feels about Bernard.

You and Bernard are alike in some ways – you both tear things up and wish afterward that you hadn't. Anyway – Bernard is an exasperating person, but you have to learn to take him as he is, because you can't pound things into him. He's been awfully nice to me – helped me bathe my hands in Epsom salts, and I begin to be ashamed for some of the things I say about him. Then he does something that gets me down – and I just get so exasperated. Anyway, for a couple of weeks now, he's been swell. (August 21)

Louise responds to something he wrote about how he loves her and what she means to him.

Well, I still say don't put me up on a pedestal. You know, anyone or anything on a pedestal is above reach, and not to be touched. Well, I want to be loved – by you, and not on a pedestal to be admired only. (August 21)

In one of his letters from July, Herb had responded to one of Louise's earlier letters, in which she alluded to an encounter she had with a young man named Leonard, who was a former high school boyfriend. She felt badly about this recent encounter with him. In his July letter Herb tried to reassure Louise that she had done nothing wrong. Today Louise responds to what Herb wrote.

You really are the most understanding person, you know it? I wonder if you would be if I should happen to lose my head and go all the way with somebody? Just wondering of course, for there is no real reason back of it, because I wouldn't.

My mind may be at ease about what you think about Leonard and me, but my conscience still bothers me. You are an angel anyway. But then – I think your attitude is more or less the same as mine.

If you had a wild affair with a girl, I think I wouldn't mind. What I mean is – I think I wouldn't. I may have that opinion because I slipped and kissed Leonard, but one should learn from experience. I mean, through one's own mistakes, one learns to be tolerant of another's. I don't condone it but neither do I condemn. (August 21)

In closing, Louise brings closure to one of their ongoing debates. She concedes to him.

It would be foolish of me to insist that you'll be back this year – since I can see the Henderson won't be. Darn it – are you always going to be right? (August 21)

More than a week passes. Louise asks Bernard to write a nice letter to Herb explaining why she is unable to write.

Just a few lines to convey a message from Louise, so you will understand in case you do not hear from her for a while yet.

As I mentioned in a previous letter, she is still getting over a bad strep infection in both hands, which is slow in healing, although it seems to be coming along alright very gradually. This came on before Convention. And was aggravated considerably later on, but everything possible is being done for it.

She is able to be up and around but cannot use her hands or arms for anything. Olive and Jean are back to school, so she cannot dictate through them as easily as before, and asked me to drop you a line on her behalf.

Louise said the Henderson was arriving, and expected to receive the material for her wedding dress you sent through a friend returning on that ship some days ago, but to date it has not been received, and she asked me to tell you about it. Perhaps it has been held up for some reason and may reach her shortly.

All best wishes from Louise and the Halcyon Temple Family. – Sincerely, Bernard.

(August 29)

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