

Chapter Four

Halcyon: Fall, 1937

October, 1937

On the other side of the world, on the central coast of California, a young woman awaits news from her fiancée, who is heading for China and perhaps into a battlezone. Herb's letters describing where he was and what he saw would not reach her for several weeks. Where *she* was, life was tranquil.

Louise's family lived in a cottage on a dirt driveway off of Halcyon Road, just north of the temple. Her mother and Fred used the main cottage that Fred had built a few years ago, and Louise's "room" was a very small cottage next to theirs. There were a couple more cottages at the end of that driveway. One of them belonged to the Tarbox family. Polly Tarbox had five daughters, and one of them was Virginia, now married to Herb Holman. The Holman's lived in one of these cottages as well, with their two young children.



Fred and Ebba in front of their cottage

On a Saturday evening, just before going to sleep, Louise writes about babysitting for her neighbors.

I am over at Herb and Virginia's, taking care of their kids while they go to the show in San Luis. I just put them to bed, and so, I have an opportunity to write to you. I'm going to sleep here tonight and have waffles or pancakes for breakfast in the morning. Nancy is two, she's the youngest, and Mary Anne is five. They sure are sweet kids. (October 2).

In the same letter Louise writes about the vocal trio practicing again.

Last night, Jean, Bob and I practiced singing again. Bob is coming again tomorrow night, Jean too, and we are going to make some candy – at least I am, and Jean will probably read a movie magazine. Jean gets very disgusted with me at times when I want to talk about you, and she hopes the next two years go very slowly. She doesn't want me to get married (October 2).

Louise's mother and Fred took an overnight trip to Los Angeles, in order to pick up a new car for the family, while Louise stays at home.

I did a very dumb thing Sunday. It was cold, and I had to split some wood for kindling (Fred and mother were in Los Angeles). So I held the wood in one hand, and chopped with the other. The first thing I knew, I split into my finger. It was quite deep, but thank goodness I wasn't chopping hard or I'd have been minus the top part of my finger.

Fred's sister and brother-in-law gave us their car – he had a stroke and can't drive any more. It's a 27 Pontiac – rather old, but it runs very nicely, and is better than our Ford. We're keeping both for a while. I can use the Ford whenever I pay for the gas and oil, until they sell it. Sunday night Jean slept with me because I don't like to be alone, and Bob C. came up. But we didn't sing because I couldn't play, on account of my finger, so we listened to the radio and made candy. (October 5).

On the evening of October 8, 1937 Louise sees Dr. William Dower for the last time. He had been very ill, and now his condition is rapidly deteriorating.

I just came home from Dower's, and Dr. is going very fast. He is unconscious all the time, has been since Wednesday. Everybody around has been staying with him, because he can't be left alone. Herman stays until twelve and my mother and Bernard stay the rest of the night. My mother has to give the hypo¹, and Bernard stays to hold him in bed while she fixes it. I went to see him tonight – Pearl thought I should – and oh darling its awful to see him like he is. I just can't believe that he is really going. I'm so glad you said goodbye to him before you left. (October 8).

Dr. Dower died early the next morning. Louise wrote to Herb describing the funeral and how so many people were deeply moved.

With reference to the leadership of the Temple and management of most of the property in Halcyon, Louise writes "I imagine there will be quite a few changes as time goes on, but just what will happen I don't know" (October 9).

¹ Shot of morphine, enabling a painless passing.

Then just a few days later Louise writes “Pearl is now the Guardian-in-Chief of the Temple. We can’t be married by Doctor and Pearl, but you know who can marry us? My mother and Fred can. Did you know they were priests² too?” (October 11).

Later that week Louise reveals that Herb is often the subject of her conversations with his brother Bernard, and with her mother Ebba.

Bernard and I finished the dishes at Pearl’s at 7:00, and when I took him home, we stopped and talked outside the Administration Building in the car. But imagine my surprise when I got home to find it was quarter of ten! I’d no idea it was so late. We talked of everything under the sun. Especially you. Bernard and my mother are the only ones I can talk to about you. And boy, they sure get plenty! Anyway, we’d talk of you, then something else, which would lead back to you, etc. (October 20).

She also writes that she and Bernard talked about a situation that troubled them both.

You see, we both had a little steam to spout off about various things, and it did us good. Mrs. Varnot, whom I like very, very much, is a little trying at times, and (there is where I learn to conquer my biggest fault, which is arguing) as I never talk back to her - I think I keep my feelings marvelously under control - why I think I really need to blow off [about her] to somebody. (October 20).

On Sunday night Louise is writing to Herb, just before going to bed, and she makes an interesting observation about a dance she went to on Friday.

Friday night I went with Jean and Bob C. to a high school dance. I had a pretty good time, but the kids are all so much younger than I that I felt very very old. They act so silly. However I got a lot of fun out of watching them ‘truckin’ [a new dance craze] and Jean and I learned how to do it on the edge of the dance floor. So now you don’t have to teach me how to do it. (October 24).

Louise writes to Herb about her busy social life and her health.

The Mallory’s invited us all - meaning the Dower family which includes Pearl, Flamore, Clarence, Mrs. Varnot, Bernard and myself - to dinner tonight. I’ve just come home from there. It seems like I’ve been out a lot lately, doesn’t it? Friday night I went to the high school dance, Saturday night was dinner at Tedford’s, Sunday night I went to the show, tonight Mallory’s, Friday night Bernard and I are going to the show - to see Annapolis Salute - Saturday is a Halloween party. And I’m supposed to be in bed by nine o’clock every night except two, and then its ten. Aren’t I terrible?

After this week though, I’m going to stay home every night and go to bed early, because I do want to stay well for you. Before I met you I didn’t care particularly whether I ever got better or not, but I certainly do care now. (October 26).

Herb had written to Louise about his long-term plans for saving money, anticipating what they would need to get started with, once they were married. Louise replies “As for starting

² Priests within the organization The Temple of the People.

out married life on \$500 plus an income of \$60 a month, you don't realize that that is a fortune to anybody who has lived in Halcyon for a while" (October 27).

November

Louise writes to Herb:

Tonight when I came home from Dower's, as I was getting out of the car, Herb Holman grabbed my arm and dragged me over to his house. When I got there, he and Virginia asked me to go to an enchilada dinner and dance afterwards at the Oceano Pavilion sponsored by some WPA workers. I think I'll go - and darling, you don't mind do you? For those things done mean much to me. I don't dance very much because I get tired, and I don't even like enchiladas. They're too hot. But the Holman's are so nice to me, and are always doing something for me, so I don't like to refuse. (November 10).

Yet in the same letter Louise writes "Nothing ever happens here that's exciting or worth writing about" (November 10). Maybe that's why the Holman's insisted that she join them at the enchilada dinner and dance.

Louise continued their written conversation about how long they have to wait until they see each other again. She writes:

This waiting isn't causing me any agony darling. Its awfully good for us, this two-year period, because it builds strength into us, and patience too. It also gives us something to look forward to and to work for. Oh, even though I love you more than life itself, I'm glad we've got this two-year wait, for what it will give us both (November 14).

She continued with this theme the very next day, writing:

At times our separation does seem cruel, but only at times. Sometimes I think "Oh God its such a long time to be alone." But then I never let that thought stay very long. And so instead I say "Thank God its not more than two years." And on the whole the time goes quickly. (November 15).

Louise probably read Herb's views on Halcyon with great interest, and she replies with her own thoughts about the Temple. At this point in time Louise had been living in Halcyon for nine years, and had been active with the children's group called Temple Builders. "You don't have to be unselfish to devote your whole life to Temple work." She observed that it's only the people who are older and who have suffered a great deal devote everything to The Temple. She also tells him that she wants to become a member "within the next five or ten years." Also, "I would have to read and understand a lot more than I do" (November 15).

Louise was keeping fairly busy now, working for Pearl. She was typing a lot of letters from Pearl's dictation, and she enjoyed getting back to typing again. "I used to work in the office at the high school under the UYA [a federal program] for \$6 a month." She thought working the study hall windows was fun. (November 15, 1937)

Additionally, because her mother was in bed all week with the flu, Louise writes “I had to take her place running errands for Pearl. A few of those days I just about lived in the car” (*November 23*).

At the next enchilada dinner and dance there were a lot of friends of the Holman’s there, and Louise danced mainly with the Holman’s and their friends. A man named Dick Fowler danced with her and brought her home when the dance was over (*November 23*).

Louise writes about their vocal trio. “You ought to hear Jean, Bob and I sling mud at each other. We really do have fun.” “I do love to have fun and that’s something I never had much of in my teens. I didn’t have any kids my age to go around with, and so I guess I’m making up for it now” (*November 23*).

One day Jean, Bob and she went to San Luis Obispo to audition at the radio station. She writes “They liked us.” But they had to enlarge their repertoire and return soon. “We only know about three songs and we have to know six or seven more in about a week” (*November 23*). After their audition the three of them walked around San Luis looking for a place to eat a lunch that they brought from home. They randomly selected the front porch of the home of someone not at home, as a place to enjoy their lunches. (*November 23*).

Around this time Louise began to write more demonstratively of her love for Herb. She writes “I love you and love you. Oh gee – there just aren’t words enough to express how I love you. Isn’t it funny though, that we both know how much we love each other, but I for one would feel terrible if you didn’t say it more than once” (*November 23*).

Two days later she writes “Oh, I do love you! You quite often make me laugh but especially when you say the sweet part of parting is hardly noticeable. But it’s sweet because of the anticipation of meeting again. Good by sweetheart. I love you, and love you, and love you” (*November 25*).

Thanksgiving Dinner in the Lodge that year was well attended with over 60 people. Louise had been helping all day, and wrote that it was lots of fun, even though a lot of work. She wrote that a bunch of them went to the show after dinner. They included Bob and Jean from her vocal trio; her young friend Patty, and a couple of others from town. (*November 25*).

After receipt of Herb’s letters describing what he saw in China, Louise writes back “I hate those Japs too, and yet my best girlfriend is Japanese – Also my mother has four or five Japanese music pupils. Yoshiko thinks the Japs are going too far” (*November 28*).



Dr. Dower and first wife Jane, in front of Halcyon Sanatorium



The Dower's private residence