

Chapter Eight

Halcyon: Feb-March, 1938

February

Louise opens her first letter of February, a day after her 21st birthday, with a familiar line “It seems like it’s been a long time since I wrote to you last. ... Besides, I’ve nothing to say, except that I still love you” (February 3). Then she writes about learning to play the guitar.

Pearl let me have a guitar that Doctor used to play a long time ago, and now I’m learning to play it. It’s lots of fun, although I’m just starting out, and the tips of my fingers are so sore! You see they have to get calloused where they press the strings and the process isn’t very pleasant. Did you know that I could play the violin a little? I don’t anymore as it tires me out, but I used to. So, we’ll have lots of fun when you come home. We can sing together with the guitar. (February 3).

To celebrate Louise’s birthday her family hosted a party, and joining them for supper and festivities were Virginia and Herb Holman and their two kids, and next-door neighbors Mr. and Mrs. Tarbox. Louise wrote that afterward they all got down on the floor and played games. “Even Fred!” (February 3). Her step father was 19 years older than her mother.

Louise continued working daily for Pearl, sometimes typing from dictation, but usually cooking meals and cleaning. She and Pearl were learning about each other – how to work well together – with patience and humor, but that Mrs. Varnot sometimes would get them down. (February 6).

In spite of her statements referring to the lack of interesting things to write about, Louise found ways to occupy her time. One of her favorite pastimes was going to “the show.” Usually, she went with her close friends; sometimes with her mother; sometimes several Halcyon folks all went together. Once she accompanied her friend Jean and Bob, her vocal trio partners. She wrote that Bob really liked Jean (who was only 15 at the time), but that she didn’t care for him as much. So, Louise had to accompany Jean (February 3).

Louise also enjoyed going to the beach. She wrote that on one occasion she and Jean went to the beach and discovered oil all over the beach. An oil tanker had dumped a bunch of oil into the ocean (February 6).

Louise was proud of learning to play songs on the guitar. “I can play the ‘Pagan Love Song’ and ‘Moonlight on the River Colorado’ now. I’ll pick up some more soon. My fingertips are getting nicely calloused now so it doesn’t hurt so much” (February 9).

Louise cared a lot about her Halcyon friends. She, Jean and Bernard went to San Luis Obispo to visit Herman, who was in the hospital suffering from what she called a “nervous breakdown.” She explained that everybody imposes upon him to do things for them, and he always complies. During their visit Herman told them all that he was able to remember was going to the beach, and then waking up in front of the hospital. “He was awfully glad to see us, this afternoon, and so we’re planning to go again, and I’m going to bring some magazines” (February 9).

“Do you like to spend your last dime?” Louise asked Herb in one of her letters. She was eager to reveal more about herself, and hoping for a response from him at some point.

You know, just get reckless and not care when you get paid again? I think its lots of fun. I like to have a hamburger after a show, do you? Even if I can't afford it. And I like to take a lunch to the beach, or out in the woods and spend the day. I love to explore roads that I don't know where they end, and take chances on all things. I love to take bus rides in the city, or just to walk at night – anyplace. All this is just to let you know what things I like. (February 10).

California experienced some violent storms that winter. One night the wind blew so hard it knocked down five trees in Halcyon. It blew someone’s roof off their house in Arroyo Grande. Electricity was off for five hours on one occasion (February 9). The Arroyo Grande Creek, which was about a quarter mile to the east and south of Halcyon, had flooded. All of Oceano was flooded. “To get to Pearl’s we have to go over the hill, because the water from the creek is flowing all over the road” (February 11). Local newspapers reported that the city of Los Angeles was flooded. Nearby, Santa Maria was flooded, and the Santa Maria River was close to overflowing its banks (February 13).

That winter Louise had difficulty working alongside Mrs. Varnot, who had begun doing the meal preparations last fall. It got so bad at one point that Louise tried staying at home, away from Pearl’s for a few days to take a break away from Mrs. Varnot. Pearl thought that Mrs. Varnot would act more decently toward Louise if she was without her assistance for a while (February 16). And it wasn’t long before the situation improved. “I’m going to Pearl’s today. Mrs. Varnot and I are nicely made up. She hugged me and kissed me yesterday, and all my anger melted. A tip for you, darling” (February 21).

Films she saw recently included “Every Days A Holiday” starring Mae West. She writes to Herb “The picture was very boring. And I don’t like her! All she did was squirm and wiggle her eyes” (February 21).

Yesterday she and Jean went to the beach, because it was so warm. “We had to walk home from Oceano Beach and I’m telling you I got tired! Then I had to walk back down to Pearl’s” (February 23).

Louise continued to express her unhappiness with how being apart from each other for two years had become two and one-half years. Somehow, he had not sufficiently explained why his tour was two and one-half years, not two years. She writes “You seem so darned cheerful about those extra six months before you come home” (February 23).

March

There had been devastating floods throughout California in February, and more flooding occurred in March. Louise writes “Los Angeles and all the towns around there are flooded. Long Beach is almost entirely wiped out and we are cut off from all communication with Los Angeles. No trains are getting through” (*March 3*).

In spite of the stormy weather, Louise and others were still able to enjoy the local beaches. On Sunday, March 6 Louise went to Shell Beach with Jean and her mother, Gertrude; Louise’s mother Ebba; and a young man named Louie. They climbed on the rocks at the base of the cliffs, and at one point Louise got splashed by a big wave. Fortunately, she was wearing shorts. After exploring the coves and caves at Shell Beach, Louie took her and Jean to Avila Beach, then back home. (*March 6*).

On Sunday Louise was very happy to receive a photo album from Herb. He began assembling it when he first joined the Navy, in 1935. It had a soft, brown leather cover. In the front of the album was a section for its owner to write a daily or weekly log of events. The first entry in Herb’s log described his ship’s departure from the Norfolk, Virginia training base on November 7, 1935. One of the first photos was of the U.S.S. Tennessee, a large battleship, which was his first official assignment. He completed this album two years later, but most of the photos and log entries described his life with the Navy before he and Louise got engaged to be married. When it was filled up, he sent it to her. [A copy of one of the pages from this log is at the end of this chapter. The page includes his reaction to news that he made the draft to go to China.]

She was also somewhat jealous upon seeing some of the photos of his female acquaintances in the album, and in one of her letters, she asked him about them. With reference to one of his log entries of July 19, 1937, she asks “Who was the reason you liked Tacoma?” (*March 6*).

Yoshiko thinks the Japs have gone too far, but the people she works for are “pro-Jap to the bitter end.” (*March 6*)

Two days later, on Tuesday Louise writes

I received your letter this morning because the mail came in late last night, still on account of the floods. It will be quite a while before trains are normal again. But wasn't it appropriate that I should receive your letter on your birthday?” (*March 8*).

Herb had asked her what she would like him to purchase while he is overseas. She responds:

Gee honey, you're awfully sweet. I don't know what I want. But anything for our home like table cloths, bedspreads, bureaus, scarfs will always be welcome. ... For myself, I'd love to have some pajamas – real pretty ones. So, you want sizes I wear? Stockings are 9. Slippers 4 ½. Pajamas would be 34. I wear size 16 dresses and 34 slips. My finger is 5 ½. Yours was 8. ... Every time I think of something, I'll write it down, and when I've got a nice list, I'll send it to you. ... I'd love to have some real exotic, oriental perfume sometime. Something that costs \$10 an ounce (Oh no! That's too expensive!) ... Would you really spend \$100? I think that would be heavenly – to have \$100 to buy anything

you want. If they should have some pretty Turkish towels that are the real thing, it would be nice to have some. ... and Chinese trays are pretty. (March 8)

Louise refers to a movie that Herb saw, which featured the song she sang to him on the night they got engaged.

“The Toast of New York” was at Pismo last September, two nights after we were at the show, and I didn’t see it. Aren’t we lucky sweetheart – to have each other? I should speak for myself. I’m lucky to have you and to be loved with a love like yours. (March 8)

Louise remarks about Herb’s frequent references to his anticipating letters from her arriving when he expects them to, based upon ship schedules. And she tells him about her own research on ship schedules.

You really are sure of getting a letter on each ship, aren’t you? I’ll try not to disappoint you, but then, accidents happen. Yesterday, I had nothing to do so I spent nearly an hour studying the waterfront news in the San Francisco paper. I found out that the Pres. McKinley arrived in Seattle Saturday at 10:00 a.m. so I expected a letter, and sure enough I got one. Also, that the Ramapo, is arriving in San Diego Saturday from Manila on the 12th and the Chaumont the 24th from Manila, and the U.S. Grant the 24th, also from Manila. I wonder if any letters will be on them. The McKinley is leaving the 10th or 11th for Manila. Mail for Manila closes 6 p.m. the 10th. If I mail this tomorrow, it should go off this week. See how smart your fiancée is getting! (March 8).

In this same letter Louise also responds to a suggestion Herb had made with regard to them preparing for intimacy in married life.

You said in the letter I received Sunday that as time rolls on we should compare notes to see how much we’ve learned, and how much we need to learn, concerning married life – and everything about it. I’ve never talked very much about things like that with anyone. When I used to take care of Pat’s kids for her when she’d go out at night, I used to read a book on sex that I found in her bookcase. She never knew it. Yoshiko bought a book that we used to read in Los Angeles, and that’s all the reading about it that I’ve done. I don’t know – I guess I’ve a lot to learn, and you’ll find that I’ll be a good pupil, but, darling, do be good to me? (March 8).

Louise opens her next letter explaining how she will write it. “Well dear, here I am again, and I think I’ll write this letter in serial form. I just feel like being in contact with you tonight whether I have anything to say or not” (March 10).

On Saturday, Louise went to Pearl’s in order to take dictation from her. She was preparing a talk to give in the Temple a week later. Louise wrote “It’s all about Doctor’s life¹ and when the Temple was founded, etc., and it’s very interesting. I hope they print it in the Artisan² and then I’ll ask Bernard to send a copy to you because I think you’d like it” (March 12).

¹ Dr. Dower, Pearl’s deceased husband and former head of the Temple.

² Quarterly publication of the Temple of the People.

When she got off work “Bernard came home with me tonight from Pearl’s and got to talking with Fred, so mother had me go to Arroyo Grande for some ice cream” (*March 12*). If she knew what they were discussing, Louise didn’t share that in her letter to Herb.

Louise often wrote that she didn’t have much to write about in her letters.

What I should do is carry a piece of paper around with me and then every time I think of something I want to say to you, I should write it down. Because the minute I start to write to you, I forget everything but the fact that I love you intensely. I shouldn’t think that being in love should make you forgetful. (March 13).

On Sunday, Louise went to the show and saw “Happy Landing” starring Sonja Henie and Don Ameche. Afterward, she wrote “Not half as good as “One in a Million” but good enough” (*March 13*).

Louise was looking forward to her brother Bob coming home from college on spring break. She wrote that he would probably spend all his time with his best friend Leland (*March 10*). “Every time I used to go to a dance, he’d have a different girl.” She wrote that he didn’t have a “girlfriend” as such. He didn’t have the time or money. (*March 16*)

Louise wrote about taking dictation from Pearl – several letters – which she then types for her. (*March 15*) On Wednesday she typed nine letters for Pearl, in addition to six pages of her speech for Sunday. (*March 16*)

The vocal trio that performed so well on the radio last year, and consisting of Louise, Jean Tedford and Bob Crozier, saw its demise.

Our trio broke up for the mere fact that Bob fell in love with Jean, and sent her a valentine with “I love you” on it. Jean got highly insulted and has not yet spoken to him since. But Jean loves somebody else. She’s only 14 and the boys in question are 17. (March 17)

Louise reflected on her relationship with Herman. They used to go riding in the car, and sometimes they would park, and he would talk. “But never once did he put his arm around me!” “I can’t make him out sometimes, although I like him a lot. But he’s funny” (*March 17*).

On Friday morning she drove Pearl and Flamore to Santa Maria to go shopping. “I don’t like to window shop like most women do” (*March 18*). They could not help but marvel at the beautiful spring weather and all the flowers in the fields and on the hillsides. Louise wrote that it’s an ideal place to spend vacations. (*March 18*). When in Santa Maria Pearl bought a radio for herself, to listen to in her room, but no one was supposed to know. So, Pearl had it “installed” in Louise’s room instead – until Mrs. Varnot leaves (*March 19*).

Something in one of Herb’s letters was bothering Louise. It was his use of the term “relief.” She doesn’t like what she perceives to be his attitude toward people in need of economic relief. She explains that initially she did not know what he meant by “Navy relief” and she suspected that it was her misunderstanding that led to him feeling misjudged by her reaction

to what he wrote. "I'll admit that you were perfectly justified in getting upset over the whole business" (March 21).

All during the month of March, Louise is looking forward to changes in her own work environment at Pearl's. In one of her letters to Herb she describes how Mrs. Varnot had been difficult to get along with.

Mrs. Varnot never bothered me by teasing me about you. I don't mind that at all. But about a month ago, she was perfectly terrible. She'd complain of this and that, and had a grudge against me, and had no civil word for anybody. And as I was helping her in the kitchen, I was the one who was the goat. For a week there she wouldn't even talk to me, and she'd slam dishes around. Why, I don't know. I didn't do anything to her. So, Pearl told me to stay home for a few days, and during that time Mrs. Varnot blew up, and Pearl told her a few things. Since then, she has been as near an angel as she could be. But for a time there I couldn't even eat – it really was terrible. (March 24)

A few days later Louise explains "Pearl is going to let me plan the meals when Mrs. Varnot leaves. She says it will be good experience for me, as I'm going to be married someday. I think it will be lots of fun – just think of being able to wash dishes as I like without feeling guilty about it. Well, Friday she goes!" (March 29).

Louise's brother Bob arrived home for spring break, and during the week he took Louise and Jean to the dance at the Recreation Center in Oceano, with music provided by a WPA orchestra. That night she had a pretty good time dancing, and they "got home late around 1:15 a.m." (March 24).

During his visit Bob told them all about his living situation at San Jose State College. He had a room in a house with lots of rooms for students, and paid for it by doing janitorial work. He also worked at the Elks Club for his dinner plus 25 cents extra.

At the end of the week, on Sunday, Louise and her mother Ebba, and Jean and her mother Gertrude, took Bob back up to San Jose. Just before leaving home, Louise writes a short letter to Herb with part of their itinerary. "We might go to San Francisco while we're up there, since it's only 50 miles from San Jose. I'll drop you a postcard from up there anyhow" (March 27).

Sunday night we arrived in San Jose at 11:30 pm. Mother and Gertrude went to a hotel and Jean and I slept in Bob's bedroom and he slept in the kitchen. Yesterday morning we went to San Francisco and arrived at 10:30. And then we spent until 12:30 trying to find Market Street. We saw the Golden Gate Bridge, and paid 50 cents for the privilege of driving under the toll house! We didn't have time to go over it. After finding Market Street we went to a cafeteria – a very expensive one – for dinner, and I had to pay 52 cents for a piece of raw roast beef plus some lettuce.

After that we went to the Golden Gate Theater and saw "Snow White." And I tell you darling, that is a picture that you must not miss. It's a full-length Walt Disney production based on the fairy tale "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." It ran eight weeks and everybody from the tiniest kid to the oldest adult enjoyed it, and I'm sure even hard-boiled sailors would too.



The Golden Gate Bridge opened in May, 1937 - Postcard from March, 1938

After the show Jean and I went into the department stores and rode up and down the escalators. Then we went to the five & ten, but could find nothing to buy. I didn't see hardly anything of Frisco, so you have plenty to show me when we go there. I still like L.A. better. The people there are more friendly, and are not in such a hurry as the ones in Frisco.

At five we started for home, and I drove from Salinas to Paso Robles – a distance of about 100 miles. We arrived at Paso Robles about 1:00 this morning. Boy, when you drive at night when you're sleepy the road dances in front of your eyes, and the white line zig-zags. (March 29)

They stayed in San Jose only one night, arriving back home at 2:30 a.m. Louise wrote that she slept until 12:00 noon and had to be at Pearl's for work by 12:30 p.m. (March 28).

MY LOG AND DIARY

July 28, 1937
For week ending
 At or
 SUNDAY en route from Tacoma to S.F. board. The
 Remarks: trip to take about 3 extra days because of maneuvers.
What a trip! Fording around for a whole weekend in Oriskany
a desolate, bleak cove (only 30 miles from Fescio. Finally we went
into Fescio on Aug. 4. Fog and chummy winds as usual. Swimming
 At or
 MONDAY en route from Fescio to San Pedro
 Remarks: duty not such fun! No was there anything else
good about this stop in Fescio! Oh well, maybe the future
will show up better.
 Aug 10. - Left S.F. with rest of the fleet more maneuvers,
 At or
 TUESDAY en route from S.F. to San Pedro another couple extra days at sea. Drills & conductor watches!
 Remarks: Aug 14. arrived back in San Pedro to stay for awhile at
last. Nothing now but gunnery practice until next
spring. But came out and found that I forgot a date, boy
 At or
 WEDNESDAY en route from San Pedro to China is my memory bad. To this coast has me all
 Remarks: mixed up. I'd like a change. Well an Asiatic draft is
going China & pound soon. Welcome to see Asia, new places,
trouble over there might be interesting too.
 At or
 THURSDAY en route from China to San Pedro Hot dog. I made the China draft. Now for a
 Remarks: weeks leave before I catch the transport Henderson in
San Pedro. Had to argue Div. off. & Gun. off. enter it but finally
got it. Guess I'll go up to Wake on leave.
 At or
 FRIDAY en route from San Pedro to China Left 8. Come back off leave (in a day) and
 Remarks: ought to Henderson at Pedro. Why the delay? 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
 At or
 SATURDAY en route from China to San Pedro girl like Louise, that
 Remarks: what! Well now for
two and a half years of waiting & hoping - & we can do it,
rounded Henderson up with a mob of others and spent time on
way to Korea. marveling over the fact that I was engaged.

CRUISING RECORD

WEIGHED ANCHOR

DROPPED ANCHOR

DISTANCE
FORWARD