

AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN

On September 5 1944, while Tracy was still at the Great Lakes Naval Station, his commission as an ^EEnsign in the U.S. navy came through. At the time he received it, he was in the hospital with flu and a high fever. Due to this, he had resigned himself to not passing the physical again. Sure enough, when he reported for the required physical, his blood pressure had gone up again. The ^{Doctor}Dr. told him to come back again the next day, and maybe the fever would be gone enough to reduce the blood pressure to normal. But the ^{doctor}Dr. also told him that that would be his last chance.

When he went back, the blood pressure was still high. The ^SDr. was about to fill in the damaging blood pressure reading, when he said, ⁶“(swear word), with your training, if you’ve got to be in the Navy, you might just as well be an officer!” He substituted a normal blood pressure in place of the real blood pressure, and Tracy became an ^EEnsign in the U.S. Navy—an Officer and a Gentleman! Did you know that a man automatically becomes a Gentleman when he becomes an Officer in the U.S. Navy?

He was assigned to elementary gunnery training until September 16, when his orders were to then proceed to Princeton, New Jersey, for officer indoctrination training. Before he could leave to go to Princeton, however, his destination was changed to Plattsburg, New York

On September 16 he left for Plattsburg and reported for indoctrination training. He was high man in all his classes while there, in spite of the fact that he spent the first week or so in the hospital with flu again. Tracy said that Plattsburg, New York, ^ewas the coldest place on earth! Guard duty was agony, as was the indoctrination. Boot camp all

over again! But his general health seemed to be improving in spite of the weather at Plattsburg, perhaps *because* of all the exercise he had while there.

I had been having some health problems myself. Since I was living in Ogden, Utah, at the time, I called the office of our family doctor, Dr. Edward Rich, Jr., to get an appointment. His office told me that he was in the army, but he had another doctor, who was substituting for him while he was in the service. I made an appointment to see him.

His diagnosis of my problem was that I had an ovarian cyst and also that I had a chronic appendix that could rupture at any minute, and recommended immediate surgery. This surprised me, because I had never had any symptoms of a bad appendix. I told him I was about to join my husband, who was in the service, and this doctor gave me a big song and dance about how dangerous it would be if I had an attack of appendicitis while traveling about the country.

When I wrote Tracy about the situation, he recommended that I go to Salt Lake City and see Dr. Skidmore. I had inquired about this Ogden doctor with several of my local friends who were nurses at the hospital, and they assured me that this man was an excellent surgeon. I was anxious to be able to follow Tracy when he was next transferred, so I let haste overcome prudence. I agreed to the operation! Going to Salt Lake at that time was not as easy as it sounds. I did not have access to a car, and the only car my father had was a truck. Besides, I did not drive at that time. However, I could have managed it if I had really tried.

I was given a local anesthesia for the operation, so I was awake the whole time. I kept asking him questions. "Did you find the cyst?" I asked.

“Well,” he says, “you don’t have a cyst after all— isn’t that fortunate? But this appendix doesn’t look so good, so we’ll just take this out for you!” I asked to see the removed appendix, and that tissue looked healthy to me. I told him I wanted it put into a bottle and saved for me. Later I found out that I had become a victim of a knife-happy surgeon. Yes, he *was* a good surgeon, but he liked doing surgery so much he made up symptoms. The hospital ended up putting special restrictions on him. If only I had gone to Salt Lake as Tracy had suggested! Now I had spent most of the money that we had saved for Sherlene and me to join Tracy at his next destination, on that utterly needless operation!

Some time later, when the war was over and we had moved back to Salt Lake, Dr. Skidmore told me that no cautious surgeon would ever have operated on an ovarian cyst. More often than not the cyst disappears by itself.