

War Clouds

By June of 1943, when Tracy received his master's degree from the University of Utah, we realized that Tracy might soon have to go into the service. Married men with children had been deferred until 1944, but then the government started drafting fathers. The Bureau of Mines took Tracy off the deferred list. Tracy started thinking he should enlist before he was drafted and that way possibly get into the branch of the service he preferred. There were no sisters in the Howard Hall family, and Mother Hall was very worried that her older four sons would soon be facing the dangers of war. By this time, Eugene was married but had no children. Mom and Dad Hall decided that it was time they got their family together for a family photo session. And that's how it happened, of course. Before long, all four of their sons were serving their country.

Donald and Wendell were single and the first to go. Eugene and Tracy were both married. Eugene and Joyce didn't have any children, as yet, and Tracy had one child, which deferred him for a while.

In the fall of 1943, when we were again house sitting for the Bonners, this time with Sherlene, both Wendell and Donald came down from Fort Douglas to visit us while we were there. While still at Fort Douglas, when they were in line getting physicals, someone asked if any of the recruits could type. Both Donald and Wendell were excellent typists. Donald raised his hand. He was immediately put behind a typewriter to help with the enlisting and was later assigned to an office in England. Wendell, who did *not* volunteer to do typing, ended up fighting in the worst battles of the war in Europe. His unit had the experience of seeing the Jews released from their prison camps as the Allies progressed towards Germany.

With only one of the sons at home, Mom and Dad Hall remodeled their house and made an apartment in the west side of their house. It contained a living room, kitchen, bath and bedroom.

Tracy decided to try to apply for a commission in the Navy. That year his health was particularly bad, as he had bout after bout with flu. His tonsillectomy had helped with the severity of his flu bouts, but he still was having trouble with high blood pressure and dizziness. His weight was only 130 pounds, which was essentially what it was when we were married. Although he is five feet and ten and a half inches tall, his frame is light, and if it goes over that by five to ten pounds, he begins to look "jowly."

Because of his poor physical condition, he had trouble passing the physical for officers, although he took it several times. Just before he would go to take the physical, I would ply him with bananas, milk shakes, and anything else I could think of that might make him weigh a little more, all to no avail, so he finally applied to join the navy as an enlisted radar technician.

Everyone being drafted at the time supposedly had their choice as to the branch of the service they would enter. In reality, the draft boards would fill the quotas of the services, as they needed them, with little regard for personal preferences. The day of Tracy's induction was "navy" day, and he fortunately drew the billet he wanted.

In April 1944, Tracy moved Sherlene and me in the new apartment in his parents' home, and on the 24th of April he was inducted into the U.S. Navy as seaman 1st class and left for boot camp at the U.S. Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Illinois. He was assigned to Company 928, Batt. 42. Boot camp at first was brutal as far as Tracy was concerned. He was not as young as most of the men, and in his run-down condition it was especially hard

for him to take the rigors of basic training. Gradually, however, his letters became more encouraging. The navy kept recruits so busy and so tired; they almost didn't have time to get lonely.

On May 27, 1944, Tracy was called into the office at Great Lakes to be interviewed with a group of college graduates. The interviewing officer recommended Tracy for a direct commission, but told him he would have to pass a physical examination "now" and "again" when and if the commission was granted. He passed the first test with flying colors.

When his battalion was shipped out to various assignments, Tracy was held over at OGU (out going unit) until word was received about his commission. Meanwhile, he was given a brief leave to come home, which was shortened when the flooding of the Missouri River held up the train. He reported back to Great Lakes on June 23, 1944.

Meanwhile, I had arranged to receive my patriarchal blessing from our stake patriarch, William Z. Terry. The blessing gave me considerable comfort, promising me that I would live to see my "sons" and "daughters" grow to noble manhood and womanhood, and that I would work with the young people of the Church and do genealogical work. Since we only had a daughter at the time, and I had served in the church only briefly up to that time as a Jr. Sunday School teacher, the blessing gave me hope that my husband would survive the present war and we would continue to increase our family.

While Tracy was still at Great Lakes, and before word of his commission came through, I visited him while my mother tended Sherlene. On July 16, 1944, Tracy met my train. We found a room for me at a Mrs. Ernest Booth's home at 805 N. Lewis, Waukegan, Illinois. Tracy had overnight passes but we consigned to the base during the day, so (again) I applied for a clerking job at Woolworth, and this helped pay for our expenses while I was there. We visited museums, walked the streets of Chicago, and took lots of pictures. In August, I left Chicago to come home. I traveled coach, and because there were so many traveling servicemen, the railroad had a special "women's coach" which I was able to get on.

The car was "women only" in name only, because service men passed through all the time, and at night I would see young mothers in our car leave their small babies and spend the night somewhere else, coming back much later. It made me appreciate Tracy—I could not imagine him having clandestine flirtations and sex with someone he met on a train.

When I got home, my mother told me that Sherlene was "her girl" now, and sure enough, it took me a couple of hours to get her to accept me as "mother" again.