

Brunswick and Boston

On February 8, 1945, Tracy, Sherlene and I took the train from the warm sunshine of Hollywood to three or four foot deep snow at Brunswick, Maine, where Tracy was to start training to be a radar officer at Bowdoin College. Housing was very tight almost everywhere we went while he was doing his training in radar, but it was especially tight in Brunswick.

Brunswick was a small college town, and was trying its best to accommodate the influx of population caused by the war. Brunswick was a typical New England small town, with many old period homes. We finally found a room to rent in an ancient house (I wish I knew exactly how ancient that house was) not too far from the college. The owner was very proud of his early New England home. He showed us the living room, and pointed out the massive oak beam that ran the length of the living room.

We reached the second story room by means of an outside staircase that had been added to the house, so that the room could be accessed without going through the house itself. Inside the bedroom were a double bed, a couple of chairs, and a small table. A hanging light bulb in the center of the room was the only source of light and had to be turned on at the bulb. But the thing I remember most about that room was that the floor had a decided slant to the south. The slant was decided enough to give me a feeling of insecurity if not downright danger. That floor was one thing that definitely needed to be propped up in that house. There was no means in our room to cook, so we had to eat all our meals out.

When I went to scout out employment opportunities in Brunswick, I realized that Maine was different from any state I had ever been in—there are enough native French-speaking people living in Brunswick that in order to get a job you needed to speak French as well as English.

I soon found that I was in the early months of my second pregnancy, and the first two or three months of my pregnancies are always marked with nausea. These early months were not helped by the prevailing odor of Brunswick—*fish*.

While writing this paper, I looked up a map of Maine. One thing about the state of Maine that I noticed from the map was that there is water almost everywhere—small ponds, lakes, and streams; and of course everything is dominated by the nearness of the ocean.

It would be wonderful to go back again to Maine and tour the state. We did make one trip to Maine many years later, when a high-pressure conference that Tracy attended was held on the coast of Maine, and I and several of the children accompanied him. The beaches were rocky, but the coastline was very beautiful as the ocean beat against the shore.

At Bowdoin, Tracy had to study hard to keep up with the class. The class work almost assumed that the student would be a graduate electrical engineer (and many of the students *were* electric engineers), but Tracy's degree was in chemistry, and while his first two years at Weber College had been in chemical engineering, his basic engineering knowledge was almost nil. However, he managed and ranked high in his class. After about two months at Brunswick, a newly remodeled apartment in a nearby home opened up, and we moved. Because there was a kitchen in the new apartment, I could cook our meals again.

In May of 1945, while we were still in Brunswick, the Germans surrendered to the Allies! V-E Day! Could the surrender of the Japanese be very far away? On May 9th of 1945, less than a week later, Sherlene turned two years of age. She turned out to be a happy child and a good traveler.

In June, and before the snow had melted from the ground in Brunswick, we left for Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Tracy was scheduled to finish his radar training at Harvard and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

We had become acquainted with Jack and Dorothy Widick while still in Maine, and in Boston we ended up jointly renting the house of a Harvard professor who was on leave for the summer. Jack was a chemist too, and he and his wife had a baby son, Charles, about ten months old.

One interesting side note: While Dorothy and I were looking for a place to rent, we found many of the housewives in Cambridge did not have washing machines in their homes. And these were women who lived in large homes. They hired the black women of the community to do their laundry by hand. One place we investigated had an elaborate gas drier but no washing machine.

Before going east in the U.S, I had always assumed that culture and economic changes invariably went from the east to the west in the U.S. I found that I was mistaken. Boston seemed like a different country (as had Maine). There were no supermarkets in Boston, at least not near where we lived. At the same time in Utah and the western U.S., supermarkets were common. Buying groceries in Boston was like buying groceries in an old-time country store. Most stores were small, and the grocer measured out his wares from behind the counter onto a scale, or handed you an item from the store shelf. You never collected items in a basket. It was possible to buy a cup of sugar. At least that's the way it was around the area where we lived, and it wasn't as if the Harvard area was out in the sticks.

The home we rented was at 37 Trowbridge St., Cambridge, and was located quite near to Harvard Square. Tracy and Jack could walk to their classes when the classes were held at Harvard. The owner was a Harvard professor by the name of Brewer.

Dr. Brewer, a refugee from Hungary, had been an architect in Germany and Hungary before Hitler took over. When Hitler came into power, Dr. Brewer emigrated to the U.S. He had blueprints and pictures of some of his home and furniture designs and his work was very progressive. He had made his own furniture for his own home, and the furniture was very modern for the time. It had the simple lines we soon were seeing on the market after the war. He and his wife were lovers of modern art, and we were thus introduced early to an art we had never seen before. I'm afraid I never learned to appreciate modern art. One of the framed pieces of modern art in the house always looked to me like the skeleton of a dead fish on a platter. I have to admit that my taste in modern art has not changed much to this day.

Summer weather in Boston is the direct opposite of Utah's hot, dry climate. When it wasn't hot and muggy in Boston, it was cold and clammy. Air conditioning was not yet common in the U.S. and we suffered from the climate. When their classes were at MIT, our husbands took the subway train, which cost them \$.10 each.

One day when they needed to go to MIT, they both put in their coins for a ride on the subway, but the gate did not allow them both to go through. Being both slim, they crowded together and eased through the gate. They were not about to let that gate beat them out of a dime!

Mrs. Brewer had asked us if we would be willing to keep her maid. We said we would try. The maid came once a week, and we felt that between the two of us we could manage the expense. We both had a small child and no washing machine, and hoped that the maid might be willing to do some of the hand washing. Remember—disposable diapers

were not available at that time, and the biggest washing problem young mothers had were the seemingly endless stacks of diapers.

The first time the maid came she vacuumed and dusted. Before she left I told her that the next week we would like the kitchen floor scrubbed, and some of the woodwork cleaned.

“Oh no, Lady,” she said, “that’s man’s work!” And that was the last time we had the maid come. We felt if we were going to have someone help with our housework, we would have her do the things we did not want to do ourselves. Dusting and vacuuming were the easy part!

We enjoyed Boston, except for the weather. We attended several concerts, and we could walk over to the square where the concerts were held. We were unable to go to a ballet, which I wanted very much to do, but museums and exhibits were close by, and we enjoyed those.

I was scheduled to have our baby very close to the time Tracy was scheduled to finish his radar training and be assigned to a ship, so my doctor recommended I go home about six weeks before the baby was due. Subsequently, about six weeks before our second baby was due, on the 20th of August, 1945, I took the train for Ogden, Utah. My father settled Sherlene and me in one of his apartments at 2404 Madison Avenue, Apt. #2, near Weber College in Ogden, and we waited for Tracy to finish his training and find out where he would be assigned from there.

2 September 1945, soon after I arrived in Utah, was V-J day! The Japanese surrendered soon after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima! The end of the war, except for mopping up! Tracy wrote that he went to Boston to see the celebration. Huge crowds thronged the squares and danced and shouted with joy!

Tracy graduated from radar school on the 16th of October 1945, and wrote me that he would be home for a brief furlough before going to Hawaii to be assigned to a ship. He had survived the war and in addition had gained much knowledge while training to be a radar officer in the Navy.