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OVER HERE! OVER HERE!
Sketchbook of an Army Wife (1942-1945)

KING STREET STATION in Seattle in October of 1942 was a zoo. Soldiers in scratchy, new, ill-fitting and drab uniforms banged their duffel bags up and down the rows of oak benches, hoping to find a place to sit to wait for the train that would come. Whenever. Army wives, like me, clutched an outsized purse and a bulging suitcase and banged up and down the rows with the best of them.

The train's coming was welcomed. And dreaded. The long lines of laden ticket holders siphoned into the track area and clutched and clawed their way onto the cars. The trip was long, noisy and sweaty. I had plenty of time to remember.

That morning. That morning when I realized with horrific clarity that Bob was actually going to WAR! My Bob! Pictures, news clippings, stories of horror on battlefronts, terrible injuries, death...all whirled through my mind like a kaleidoscope. It might have been easier for both of us had we simply sat down and blubbered, instead of trying to be brave, nonchalant, and casually gay, pretending that this was just another morning instead of five-thirty of the day when the young husband was leaving, perhaps forever, his wife not long since his bride. I do not remember gritting my teeth, but I do know that my jaws ached for days.

Our apartment, on Bellevue North off Pine Street in Seattle, had been so much a part of us. We seemed to belong together in it. The thought of Bob's leaving seemed nothing short of desertion. He took an extra long time to dress, as if he wanted to remember it always. I saw him run his eyes over our bedroom-Murphy bed-living room, briefly tucking away each dear detail into some secret cache of his mind upon which to draw when the going got tough and home seemed far away. Breakfast was nibbled at to the accompaniment of nonsensical monosyllables. "Awfully good bacon." He'd had one bite. "Toast just the way I like it." Hadn't even tasted it. Zero hour came. "I mustn't cry," I said to myself, "I mustn't, mustn't, mustn't. It's hard enough for him without my making it worse. "

It was all so swift. I scarcely knew when he kiised me and ran out the door. His footsteps receded, the fading tap, tap, tap, rained blows upon my heart long after the actual sound was gone. Only mocking echoes remained. I cried until there wasn't another tear to shed. Perhaps it was for the best. When I could draw a fairly steady breath, I headed for the medicine chest and the boric acid for the sore eyes. Finally I sat down to gather my life's dropped stitches and set about to weave a new pattern with one lone needle.

I half-heartedly cleared away the breakfast things and finished without a breakdown. The flood started again when I picked up his clothes and straightened out the littered closet. As I rested my cheek forlornly against an old sport shirt he had worn the day before. I rubbed my face thoughtfully in the old shirt, now so dear, I began to realize how many little things make up a happy marriage. I loved every bit of my Bob. Now, that I had only memories left, I loved the bits of him he'd left behind: books with irate comments in the margin, his pipes, the book cases he'd almost broken his spine carrying home....and the delightful view from our apartment window

that we'd giggled over so often.....the back side of a tavern with garbage cans and old beer bottles.

After a sigh and a longing backward look, I took a hitch in the belt of my morale and cast a glance into my future. Fortunately, I still had my jobs. I worked as a typist at the Court House in the mornings and then took a bus to the University of Washington where I was a teaching fellow working for my master's degree in drama. Bob had been sure he wouldn't be sent overseas at once and he thought he'd possibly be sent for basic training somewhere in the States where I could follow. Right on! Camp Callan in San Diego!

The train to San Diego was alarmingly behind schedule as it sped through the waning sunlight, tall shadows mocking the sweet flowering orange trees as the sun slid behind the hills and the shadows merged into the deepening twilight. Bob hadn't been sure he could get off to meet me and through my aura of bubbling adventure crept a wee and forlorn feeling. The night was so black...everything was so strange.

It was a subdued little bride that crept off the train that night in San Diego. Tumultuous crowds milled around, pushing and buffeting, this way and that. "Now let me see..where do I go from here?!" Wham! Whango! I was completely and capably enveloped in a pair of strong khaki-clad arms and partook of one of the most satisfying kisses ever...hat veil or no hat veil. Breathlessly, I dug the veil out of my teeth and yanked my hat back on my head...and then looked ! Oh-h-h-h my! Six feet one of the most handsome male in the world! Bronzed and grinning from ear to ear!

True, the khaki was a particularly vile shade, the G.I brogans looked like gunboats...and that haircut! I thought irreverently of those little clay heads that are set on kitchen window sills and watered to make the hair grow. Bob's head needed watering. But I couldn't have cared if he'd looked like Rasputin! We were together again...and that's all that mattered.

Monkeys couldn't have jabbered more rapidly or incoherently. There was so much to say and we both tried to talk at once. It was wonderful! We scarcely noticed the coming of the bus. We eagerly climbed aboard. I was all agog to see the much publicized city of San Diego but, alas, I'd reckoned without blackouts.

Bob pointed out the Consolidated Aircraft factory and I gaped appropriately at the myriad of shielded lights that honeycombed the plant. He explained enroute that from La Jolla (which he described in accents delirious) we would have to take a taxi to Camp Callan. My feet scarcely touched the ground as we made our way through La Jolla to the taxi stand. Palm trees, ocean...and Robert! My cup of happiness had a head on it like no beer ever imagined!

In the taxi, we swept through the gates of camp and to the "Visitors' Housing" where I would spend the next few days. "Visitors' Housing" = a hastily thrown together portable with bedrooms the size of closets, walls of wrapping paper, and the sometimes-I-will and sometimes-I-won't flusher down the hall. Two bright spots appeared high on my cheeks as we checked in at the desk below and the desk clerk asked with a suspicious leer for my wedding license. He seemed to find ours legitimate enough and we were allowed to proceed to our room...to take up life where we'd left off. Bob had been seeking housing and had some leads but, meantime, we were together and we had the weekend to test the strength of the bedsprings!

I woke to an insistent buzzing...prodded Bob who wakened with a scarcely obliging grunt and groan.

"Something in here is buzzing!" I said.

With one look at the window, through which daylight was streaming, he leaped to his feet, dashed into his clothes and was out of the door without so much as a "pleased to have met you, girlie!" I was well on the way toward nursing hurt when he flew back in, flung a few words in my direction, and was gone with equal dispatch.

But this time I grasped the gist of all the flurry. Bob was to have reported for reveille at six-thirty and here it was eight o'clock. "Well, for goodness sake," I said to myself, "what's an hour and a half?" I certainly didn't see why all the bustle and hustle. I was sure if Bob would go to the man in charge and say.. "Say old man, I'm sorry I'm late but you see..."

Ah me, I sigh for the days when I was so naive.

I didn't see Bob for the rest of the day. I went to breakfast at the nearby Service Club and made friends with other newly-arrived wives. We were all delighted over the inexpensiveness of Service Club food, as well as with its abundance and excellence. The Club was large and comfortable with a well-equipped library, desks for writing, lounges, cafeteria, and various coke machines. We surveyed everything and then went for a tour of the camp.

It was a truly beautiful camp, situated on the edge of the blue Pacific. We were extremely interested in army construction and method and ogled every building, jeep, truck...and soldier. All the insignia were Greek to us. We gabbled merrily about it all. How little did we know where Army life was to carry us and our futures.

Bob had dinner with me that evening at the Club and patiently answered my many excited questions about the Army. He was excited himself over the prospect of going to Officers' Candidate School. "There will be competitive tests," he said...and added gloomily..."probably with lots of maathematics." I airily waved that aside with the retort that I had pulled down an "A" in high school algebra and I would put him through it. As a matter of fact, he put me through trigonometry instead!

The Housing Bugaboo. A La Jolla real estate office urged us to consider buying; we xouldtget a smart, brick house on the sea for \$5,000. Looking back from 1990, I could cry. But we didn't have \$5,000; we didn't have \$50. We moved onward.

"And what goes with the apartment? I queried. Here we hit a snag. I was still clinging to my dreams of a modern, little apartment with electric range, refrigerator, washing machine, and all. Bob gave me a brief survey of housing conditions in both San Diego and La Jolla. This brought me down to earth with so resoundingly that when he said he had found a nice room, I was ecstatic.

The room was indeed lovely! It was in an old bungalow on Coast Boulevard overlooking the ocean with a cheerful little garden in the rear. The room was large and nicely furnished; the landlady was a Marine Captain's wife and couldn't have been more accommodating. There were bright yellow curtains, crisply starched, and a cheery chenille bedspread of the same hue. (The bathdoom was but a hop and a jump around the corner and down the hall). (We went back there in the 60's and the house was still there!) A nip out the back door, a trot up a flight of stairs and zippo! You were in the bar of the La

Valencia Hotel. This was very important. In the Drama Department of the University of Washington after a show, we either drank coffee out of cracked cups or gin if anybody had a bottle. Being an impoverished lot, drama majors were a lot more used to coffee. But when Bob sailed in after...er...work...it was bar time and time for things like Southern Comfort in the bar of the La Valencia where the war was a million miles away. There was a rail down the side of the stairs from the La Valencia to our bedroom-a-deux and I'll bet it still has my fingers prints on it.

I was delighted to hear that the rent was only \$10.00...until Bob told me it was \$10.00 a week! (Note: remember, this was 1942 when a dollar was worth one hundred cents.) I saw some drastic budget reducing ahead. When I had figured out the practicality of living on Bob's Army salary...even plus my allotment, I decided to get a job the very next day.

But first, surely some celebration was in order! Here we were in beautiful La Jolla, with its quaint and brightly colored stucco shops, its wide streets, its unparalleled view of the ocean, and...we were together! We found a snug little restaurant called "Holiday House" which just fitted into our mood. We entered a low-ceilinged, heavy-beamed room with an old winding staircase in the center. Tables were gay with checked gingham; candles twinkled cheerfully in the twilight. Our table was next the windows overlooking a rugged stretch of coastline just like a French scene in a Somerset Maugham novel. The food was delicious--succulent roast lamb, fresh peas, fluffy mashed potatoes with creamy gravy, mint jelly, and the lightest, most tasty rolls we had ever eaten. We sallied forth into the starry night, contentment high in our souls.

The next morning, I hustled out to find a job. The day was warm and clear, the ocean an entrancing blue and the waves rolled in and out with undulating beckonings to come to play. La Jolla shone. The store windows in the sunlight twinkled with friendliness. My resolve almost failed me when..I saw it! A dear little bank! So white, so clean, and so cheery. If only I could.....

"Do you need any help in the bank?" I asked hopefully. The affirmative answer crowned this beautiful morning in gold. So I became a bookkeeper at the La Jolla Branch of the Security Trust and Savings Bank of San Diego. Everyone was very kind....and very pleased when I went through the first day's business with scarcely an error. The next day was a complete botch and I doubt they've balanced the books yet. The work was interesting and so were the other employees. I learned for the first time what a circuitous journey a check may travel after it has left the writer's checkbook. It was intriguing, too, to try to identify people by their signatures. Some were legible, others looked like the scrawls of arthritic hens. Gradually, I learned to identify each one.

I admired the manager of the bank. He was tall, grey-haired, rather English looking and smelled of cloves. He was the soul of affability to everyone and had a wild sense of humor. I had to retire to the back room for quiet hysterics the day an ardent W.C.T.U. (teetotaler) customer came in and inadvertently tripped slightly on the rug. As she wobbled to her feet, Mr. Kenyon smiled broadly, and said, "Well! You'd better change your brand of likker!" He always had a cheerful word for everybody and never became angry, no matter how much provocation...and with my jejeune blunders there must have been plenty. He was also remarkably tolerant. The head teller

was a dashing young man who hadn't been married very long and went home for lunch each noon. Some of these lunch hours were of considerable length and when I tentatively put forth a query to the lady teller, she sniffed, tossed her head and said, "Nooners!"

One thing Bob and I soon realized. If we ate all our meals out, we'd soon be in the poorhouse. The war had wiped all electrical appliances off the shelves but Dad sent me an electric hotplate and I determined to get equipment to make our meals in our room. There were two ten-cent stores in town and one hardware store but not one of them had a pan of any kind, neither frying pan, stew pan, nor just plain pan ...not a pan or kettle in the whole town! I was at my wits end when I spied in the dime store window an enamel baby's pot. Enamel...pot... pan ! We had dinners of creamed tuna, creamed beef, hamburgers, bacon and eggs! We dined in style---by necessity. Our dinner was served in courses. We ate the first course while the second cooked. We managed very well, too...at least neither of us came down with pellagra or cholera.

Camp Callen was a beautiful camp. He had been assigned to the camouflage division. Since he had been an actor, he made a big hit when they came to camouflage makeup. Peter Van Eyck of Hollywood had also been drafted and was a private...for the time being! The Army Public Relations inducted him in one day, Bob made him up in camouflage makeup for a publicity photo and a few days later Peter was on his way to make training films. Nice guy!

On visiting day, I noted the absence of bristling arms. "Where are they hiding all the guns?" I whispered. "There aren't any," Bob replied. "The war came on so suddenly that we're training with wooden rifles."

I gasped. "But what if a Jap invasion force comes?"

He replied, "We do have fountain pens so I suppose we'll march down the beach and squirt them!"

I cased the little town. There was a bank. There was a hotel. There was a variety store. There was an ice house. There was the Holiday House restaurant. I don't remember another establishment. This was 1942 and if anybody really wanted anything, they went into San diego. There were a few sort of fancy homes on the hillside, but not many. It was a sleepy little town.

It was here we met Nette and Pat Childs. They also had only recently been married and Nette was determined to be the best little wife and housekeeper ever. One day, I noticed that her hands were red and raw.

"It's the damned toilet," she said wryly. "I don't know what you're supposed to clean them with so I use clorox."

"Straight?" I squeaked.

"You got it!" she said.

After working out my budget one month, I decided that the cost of Bob's laundry was one item that could be eliminated if I did the washing myself. Mrs. Chamberlain very kindly let me use the wash tubs and I set to work. The underwear and socks were fairly easy, though the skin on my knuckles protested violently. The wool O.D. (olive drab) shirt was a bit more of a struggle and I thought all the skin on my hands would come off when I tried to wring it. But the fatigues stumped me. "Fatigues" or work clothes are built like tents and are just as heavy. I got them all scrubbed, but lift them to wring I could not. I tugged and I yanked, I pried and I hoisted. Finally, I had to wait until Bob came home to drag them out and onto the line. The underwear and socks came through beautifully; the woolen O.D. shirts shrank two sizes and the fatigues took two weeks to try. I revised my budget.

I had some relatives in Los Angeles of whom I was very fond and was anxious to have Bob meet them and just as eager, if not more so, to have them see him. We planned to make the trip one Saturday. Unfortunately, we were not the only ones out that day nor on that trip. When we came to board the bus in La Jolla, there wasn't room for a cockroach. An obliging soldier gave me his seat...I, who sat down all week was seated while Bob, who spent all week trotting about the range, was left to stand. Bob, already in an ill humor at the thought of standing four hours to see his wife's relatives, snapped when I queried, "Can't you find yourself a seat?" "Dear, I have my seat. What I want is a place to put it!" I lapsed into hurt silence which, however, didn't last long as I became entranced with the passing scenery.

My aunts and uncles met us at the station, took us home to Arcadia which was a suburb on the outskirts of Los Angeles proper, and after a delectable chicken dinner, Bob's glumness disappeared and he was forced to admit he was glad we had come.

We felt almost like civilians again that weekend. My uncle took us for a long drive around Los Angeles and environs and to the Lucky Baldwin Ranch where so many south sea island scenes in movies are made. We prowled around the ranch, the old mansion, and the lake for almost an hour. Often since, we've exclaimed with surprise at the setting in some old movie and cried aloud, "Why, there's Lucky's Ranch"....as if we'd just discovered it ourselves.

Sunday night came all too soon. We hated to leave. It had been so nice to be in a real home again. We waited to take an evening bus. A sad mistake. Everybody had waited for the later bus. I wasn't able to get on the bus at all. "Servicemen first" was the cry of the conductors and there were enough servicemen there to fill the buses for the next six hours. So Bob went back alone and I followed the next morning. What a weak end to a weekend.

We spent most of our evenings sweating our mathematics in preparation for the entrance examinations to the officers' candidate school. What little arithmetic we could remember seemed frightfully muddled. The examinations were finally held and we awaited the results. Time did more than drag. I think the hands went backward. It wasn't at all a busy day at the bank. Unfortunately. There was no doubt; the hands of the clock were paralyzed. Then, to make it worse, Bob was later in coming home than usual so I was in a fine state of

nerves by the time he did appear. As soon as I saw him I knew the result! He had passed! We were wild with joy! He would leave sometime after Christmas for Camp Davis, North Carolina, and was sure he could find some housing so I could follow shortly thereafter. We celebrated the triumph at our little cliff house restaurant and were deliriously gay!

While we waited for Bob's orders, we spent his time off exploring La Jolla. There were few shops, no restaurants really except for the Holiday House and the dining room in the La Valencia Hotel. The La Valencia Hotel was like an old Spanish hacienda. It was right above "Our" house. The steps from the beach led right by our house to the street above and the entrance to the La Valencia. We usually peeked into the dining room to see if Pat and Nette Childs were celebrating. Each month, they treated themselves to the extravagant \$1.25 steak special to celebrate another month's passing without Nette's getting pregnant. It was a condition most of us new Army wives dreaded and did our best to avoid. Moving from station to station, struggling with housing, coping with the concomitant stress would be unbelievably complicated with a child. Little did I know.

Bob's becoming an officer meant a lot to me. More than I could possibly have realized four months before. It meant a modicum of financial security, at least for the nonce. And then there was that indefinable thing called "prestige." Gradually, I had come to realize that just as there was a chasm between enlisted men and officers, so was there a similar gulf between their wives. I failed to grasp this completely because I always liked the enlisted men's wives as well as I did the officers' wives. But it was there. Tangibly. It could neither be denied nor ignored. When a soldier donned bars, he was raised a notch on the scale of esteem. So was his wife. Officers had special privileges, special clubs, special responsibilities. So did their wives. I was anxious to see into this new world.

One evening we walked to the La Jolla U.S.O. and had a pleasant surprise. This U.S.O was built along the lines of every U.S.O. in the states and had the usual stage. Being old troupers, we couldn't resist going backstage to just feel a stage under our feet again. As we came out of the wings, we were surprised to see a small, white-haired gentleman kneeling on the floor and wrestling with a big tin can. Mr. Figge was delighted with our interest and insisted on showing us his theater, especially his unique system of lighting which consisted of excellent spot lights made from old popcorn tins. "I was an actor," he said, "and not bad either but the leading men parts gave way to character parts to walk-ons....so my wife and I retired to La Jolla because the weather is nice, it is a sleepy little town, and the prices are cheap. We bought a nice little house about a block from the ocean for \$3,000." He showed us all over the theater and discussed the show he put on for the soldiers. We spent another pleasant hour planning a show in which Bob and I would appear, a production, alas, that never materialized because Bob finally received his orders to proceed to Camp Davis.

Often Bob couldn't get in at night on pass, so I would take a bus out to the Camp after work to have dinner at the Service Club with him and perhaps go to a Post movie or just take a walk. Seeing a movie with a G.I. audience was a blast. Love scene with kisses of undue length were accompanied by simulated loud smacks and subsequent loud slaps; a torrid embrace brought forth ear-splitting wolf calls from

all sides. Sometimes the movies were free but at most we paid fifteen cents. "Road to Morocco" was the latest movie with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope and was a delight. Sometimes, Movie stars came to entertain the troops. Bob Hope was a big hit. Wives of high-ranking officers got to go, but not lowly corporals' wives. Bob gave a reprise of the show. He even remembered some of the jokes, like the one about how short the girls' skirts were in 1942. "...and if the skirts get any shorter the girls will have two more cheeks to powder!"

I never minded the bus rides out to the Camp, but how I did hate the ride home! The evening farewells became quite a ritual. There were always a dozen or so wives and mates waiting at the bus stop for the last bus to La Jolla. When the grimy bus approached, as if ordered: "By the numbers, kiss!" we each in turn kissed and then hopped aboard. After several unfortunate choices, I learned to carefully choose my seat since late returning soldiers, some in advanced states of inebriation, often left reminders of themselves and their condition on the bus.

I loved the tales Bob Brought home of Army life. While awaiting shipment to O.C.S., he was part of a temporary cadre which trained inductees. Once they got in a batch of Cajuns from the bayous of Louisiana. The inductees were tractable enough except for a few things. One of them was bathing. They didn't know what showers were and they were completely disinterested in finding out. No one bothered much until some of the cadre, who slept in the same barracks, became troubled with unaccountable itching. Lice! The next day the entire Swamp outfit was ordered to the shower room where, with G.I. scrub brushes, two of the cadre almost scrubbed the hide off the offenders with strong soap, while two others held the recruits. An energetic shaving session followed. In their zeal, the amateur barbers left nothing hairy. But it was the end of the lice.

Some of the bayou boys couldn't speak English. One, in particular, was unable to be reached by any English word. The officers couldn't even decide what, if any, language he was speaking. Bob heard the man speak and was startled to realize that it was French. Sort of. On listening further, he realized that the man was speaking a French patois existent in the 18th century but now thought extinct. Bob explained his theory to the officer in charge and offered to take the man on. The officer told him to go ahead.

It was a lively time. Bob's French was none too fluent, but the Frenchman was bright enough to understand Bob's modern French...and to correct it! Bob's method of teaching the man to drill was unique. "Forward march" equaled "d'avant marchez." To the rear, march!" was harder. He finally hit on, "A derriere, marchez" or "to the behind, march." The Louisianan howled, then said, "Mais non....'ranverse, marchez!" The Frenchman was so delighted to find someone who could understand him, at least somewhat, that he dogged Bob's steps. Bob was sorry he had to leave so soon after. They might both have learned a new language!

For a long time after the Pearl Harbor attack, the entire coast was on alert. Just to keep the men in practice, night alerts were often called at Camp Callan. At the warning, the men had to dress quickly, grab their guns and rush to established positions. These alerts were often sounded even though on the preceding day the men had been on a grueling, forced march up and down the merciless sea cliffs.

One night, after a particularly rough day, the alert shrilled. Bob, with one eye scarcely open, put on his shoes, grabbed his coat, clutched his machine gun and sped to his gun position. When he'd arrived and set up his gun, he heard a snort behind him and looked up to see the inspecting lieutenant in a paroxysm of laughter. Looking down, Bob saw to his chagrin that while he had his machine gun, his helmet, and his field jacket, his boots...he had no pants!

Reveille was a big nuisance to all concerned. Often it was held when it was still pitch dark, but still the men had to roll out to answer to their names and then could just fiddle around until mess call came and it became light enough to continue training. One bright G.I. conceived the idea of slipping on shoes, overcoat, and hat at the sound of the bugle, standing reveille, and then returning to bed until mess call sounded. It worked and soon became standard practice. Later, at Fort Bliss, Bob had occasion to hear about early reveille again. It was at a general's meeting and this is the general's story. "When I was a young and eager shavetail, it pissed me to rout out the men in the dark and then dink around until it was light. So I went to the Colonel in charge and asked why reveille should be so early. The Colonel scratched his head, harrumphed, and said, 'Well, it's an Army Regulation.' So I checked into Army records and found that regulation that related to 5:30 a.m. reveille. This Army Regulation was over a hundred years old and stated that men should be called to reveille at 5:30 a.m. for it was common knowledge that the Indians usually attacked shortly after that hour! When I told the Colonel, he said, 'I'll be damed' and immediately changed the reveille time in his command to daylight hours. And," concluded the general, "we'll do the same here! Let 'em sleep!" Was he ever popular!

Bob left right after the first of the year and I waited for word to follow. The waiting wasn't too tough. I liked the work at the bank and I had made friends with a charming girl who also roomed with Mrs. Chamberlain. Dottie was grand company. She was an out-door girl and, like me, liked nothing better than a long hike into the lovely hills behind La Jolla. A La Jolla hike was all up hill one way and all down the other. Ah, but the view at the top more than made up for the jumpy leg muscles. We could see La Jolla far below, sparkling in the sun, nestling against the clear, blue of the ocean. How aptly it was named, "The Jewel." There were some lovely homes in the hills. There was one in particular that we liked. It was a hacienda with a red tile roof and a lovely enclosed garden. Our curiosity finally got the better of us and we presented ourselves at the back door to request a glass of water. What an old stunt! The lady of the house, herself, came to speak to us and graciously invited us inside. We confessed that our real thirst was not so much for water as to see whether the inside of her house was as lovely as the outside. She took no offense but took pride in showing us every nook and cranny. The living room took our breath away! At the far end, where the house overlooked La Jolla and the ocean, was a huge window which almost reached the high ceiling and did reach the floor. A lovely damask curtain hung over the window to keep the sun out and we did not realize it was a window until she pulled the cord which drew the curtains apart. Involuntarily, we stepped back, for with the full view of the window realized, it seemed as though it were only a step to the precipice outside. The lady chuckled appreciatively over our

and we chatted amiably for some time on the world, the war, and the weather. With a final long look from the skyview window, we made profuse farewells.

Bob wrote he was having difficulty getting housing but the wives of the other candidates seemed to think there were possibilities if one had time to look. So I wrote to the various soldiers' aides in Wilmington, such as U.S.O, Chamber of Commerce, Travelers' Aid...etc. for information as to housing and employment. I obtained a reservation at the Cape Fear Hotel in Wilmington...for three days only...but at least I wouldn't have to lie in the gutter. Mr. Kenyon of the Bank wrote gracious recommendations for me to the various Wilmington banks, so I felt somewhat prepared when I started out.

I left early one gray morning, with Dottie, to catch the earliest bus into San Diego. Dottie urged me to have a hearty breakfast as it was a long trip to Los Angeles to change trains. I ate a "tall Stack" of pancakes and almost foundered. I said goodbye to Dottie as she got off the bus to go to work at Consolidated Airplane Plant with many promises to keep in touch ..and then on to the railway station and my train seat.

I was lucky. I had a berth. True, the car must have been used to transport Civil War troops. It was rattley and shabby and it was hard to believe there had ever been any velvet on the seats. But the berth was flat. The people on the train were very congenial, as I found to be always true when they found I was an Army Wife on her way to a new station. So I was in fine spirits when I detrained in New Orleans.

A most unique conveyance was waiting to carry all the passengers who had to change stations in order to leave by a different railway. The Hearse (for that's what it most resembled) pulled out with a jerk that threw us all forward in a heap. The maniac who was driving obviously was hell on speed. I did not realize that many of the downtown streets in New Orleans were one-way streets (a new concept to me) so when we began careening down the dead center of the streets faster than I ever thought such a vehicle capable, I closed my eyes and hung on. With a screech and a lurch, we stopped at the station... miraculously in one piece. I crept out muttering that I'd never, never, never get in one of those contraptions again.

I had an eight hour wait so I checked my bag and went out to "do" the town. I had heard so much about the Old French Quarter that I decided to see that. The intricate grillwork was lovely, though the balconies themselves looked as though they would collapse into the street at any minute. The dirt and litter was beyond belief. I stopped at several small "Patisseries" for luscious looking bakery goods, though the numerous flies made me uneasy. I had lunch at a small cafe and was served by a very chummy waitress who asked me, "D'yall want ya coffee play-yin o' with chick'ry, honey? I didn't know what "chick'ry" was, but it sounded like pigeon food so I said, "Plain." A good choice.

After my refreshing tour of the old French quarter, I strolled down to the station to board my train. I had been traveling "Pullman" but at New Orleans my ticket became "Tourist." The South does not do things by halves. You either wallow in the luxury of first class or suffer the indignities of Tourist. I was in for it. The gate was swarming with an assortment of individuals, each with a grim "get-on-or-die" air. Relying on masculine chivalry, I had brought a bag far too heavy for me. So far chivalry had stood me in good stead but as I saw this swelling mass, I knew I'd tote my own load. Several times a sudden fear struck me as I realized that I was half way across the United States and there was no one for hundreds of miles who gave one good gosh darn about me.

Then came the train. Now the seething mob became violent. My monstrous valise was jammed tightly against me, making me black and blue as I was buffeted about by the now almost hysterical mob. Everyone was for himself. Here was survival of the fittest in its most elementary form. All eyes were glued on the conductor.

"Only servicemen," he said. "Stand back and let the servicemen through. If there's room left the rest of you'll get on." Servicemen surged triumphantly forward as a sullen murmuring arose from the civilians.

"How about my wife?" shouted one soldier. "Bring 'er on!" was the answer. Married couples appeared everywhere. A single soldier plowing through reached the steps with a wife and mother he'd never had before. Another acquired a wife and a baby. As this state of affairs progressed, I began casting my eye about for a likely spouse.

No! Could it be? All servicemen (and "wives") were aboard and there was still room! Inexperienced as I'd been at mob movements, I'd learned fast and by dint of my unwieldy suitcase had banged and crashed my way through, stepping expertly on a toe here, giving a neat dig to a shin there. So I was first aboard. I crept down the aisle and, finding a single seat next to a marine private, I sank wearily down and counted my wounds.

The car was composed almost entirely of soldiers and if I hadn't been so exhausted I might have tried to be alluring. But I'd acquired a run in my precious Nylons, my clothes were awry, my hair devoid of curl, and there were streaks of dirt on my face. My marine was as dog-tired as I, so we took turns that whole ghastly night through, sleeping on one another's shoulders. At first, I stoically tried curling up the other way, but when I'd fallen out in the aisle twice and been knocked back once by a gay bucko with a bottle in a sack a rendering, "Annie's Cousin Fanny was a friend of mine..." I said, To hell with propriety and collapsed on my snoring partner's shoulder.

Another long day and another longer night. Have you ever tried to dress...or do anything else for that matter...in a "Tourist" restroom? Getting in is itself an engineering feat. I took advantage of my turn in the miniscule toilet room to get dressed but as I tried to put on a stocking, the train lurched and only by grabbing the hook on the door did I save my leg from going straight through to the tracks. Since there was no place to dry the stocking, I just gave up and went barelegged.

It was with a jaundiced eye that I viewed Wilmington for the first time. Trains always pick the most awful sections of town to run through and the old milk train I was riding was no exception. So past

outhouses, with doors open and shut, occupied and empty, colored back yards and with the pungent aroma of fresh dung, I caught my first glimpse of Wilmington.

I stumbled off and headed for the peewee railway station. One door said "colored" and the other "white." After days of no face wash I scarcely felt white, but as it was the nearest door I pushed through. First thing was to order a cab and then call Bob.

There was a delay of hours on my call so I went to the hotel, had a hot bath and climbed wearily into bed. In no time at all (four hours later!) the phone rang. My harassed husband was on the line. "I've tried, honey, but there's no place to stay...no jobs. Ohhhh honey!" I calmed his fears. After all, when a girl has spent two nights with a marine, she can face anything!

Next day I felt cheerier and set forth to make the rounds of the banks. I found a position at the Security National Bank as bookkeeper, at a raise in pay, and with this triumph behind me I sallied forth to find a place to roost.

This time I looked "Housing" right in its ugly face. A quick tour of U.S.O's and Travelers' Aide told me the sad story in a very few minutes. So I straightened my stocking seams, gave my lips a bravely rosy tint and started forth. My instructions from the varied soldiers' wives bureaus had been "go from door to door, dearie"...and I was going!

I spotted a large, brick house, white shuttered and friendly and rang the bell. The kindly woman who answered was sorry she couldn't help me as she was full up. I smiled my thanks a trifle forlornly and turned away in dejection when her words stopped me. "I don't know if this would help you, Miss...but there's a woman down the street who lost her husband last week. She's all alone...I really don't know...but...." I thanked her and hastened down the steps. See a widow of a week and callously inquire about vacant rooms? Never! And yet...I was lonesome...and surely she was lonesome. Among so many other deep emotions, loneliness must lie there too. "So perhaps we could help each other, Mrs. Pate," I said anxiously to the tear-stained woman at the ironing board. The silence had grown long. Our eyes met. With a deft sweep, she wiped her eyes, heartily blew her nose, and with a tremulous smile said..."I think you'd like the front bedroom, Miz Frinz...bring yoah bags raht away!"

So began my life as an O.C.S. wife. Bob came in that weekend and the look in his eyes made my heart sing. He looked wonderful to my eyes, straight and slim in his O.D., with that proud, round patch on his breast which proclaimed to all that he was an officer candidate. A more serious one never existed. He sweated out every minute of his candidacy and to my knowledge never broke a rule and saluted all officers on the street. Every street.

The new army jargon took some digesting, too. I knew that "s.o.s" (shit on a shingle) referred to hamburger and gravy on toast, but now I found that everyone had to "keep on the ball," all courses were "rugged" and, unavoidably some situations were just a "T.S." and then you were "S.O.L."

Bob had only weekends off and spent those explaining his last week's courses to me. I was so happy just watching his face and being

with him, I never cared whether he was talking about gun recoil or petunias. Sunday mornings, Mrs. Tate let me cook our breakfast in her kitchen, so we had glorious breakfasts of bacon, eggs, toast (with unsalted butter from the commissary...ugh!) and trimmings. The O.C.S. jitters would settle down on Bob about noon Sunday, so we'd stroll into town to the bus station and take an early bus out to Camp Davis or "Swamp Davis" as the G.I.'s said. Army fable has it that it's the only camp in the world where you "stand ass deep in mud and the sand blows in your face." Fable nothing. It's true!

Whenever I drink coke or eat a candy bar I think of Camp Davis! I think of those afternoons in the Camp Davis Service Club spent in such pursuits, with the big clock noisily ticking away our weekend together and Bob's mouth getting tighter and tighter as he envisioned the next week's horrors. Each week end he was dismally sure he'd flunked last week's work and gloomily predicted he'd flunk the next. Bob's spirits were always lowest those Sunday afternoons. He was so sure he'd washed out. A classmate stopped by one Sunday and to my inquiries about his fears of being washed out, replied that there certainly was nothing for Bob to be worried about since he himself has been called up before several officers for various offenses and he was still in.

"See," I told Bob, "you're a cinch! He's been through all those interview and he's still there." I had Bob hoisted somewhat out of his dumps before I left. Tuesday, I received a letter from him saying that the cheerful Candidate we'd met on Sunday had been washed out on Monday.

One Sunday on my lonely ride back to town, I was chatting amiably with a young soldier on the next seat when I noticed the round OCS badge on his blouse.

"How is it you're not back in camp?" I asked.

With a wry smile he answered, "I was washed out yesterday." I floundered in a bog of embarrassment, scarcely knowing what to say.

"I don't mind so much," he continued after a pause, "but it's my folks. They don't understand what piddling little things a guy can be thrown out for and they're bound to have bragged to everybody that their son is going to be an officer. And I'm not," he added bitterly. "That's what hurts."

I went to work on Mondays badly in need of a re-charge job, after pumping my optimism and vitality into Gloomy Gus over the weekend. It must have worked. He never did flunk a course. In fact, he never came close---except for one memorable week-----and then he certainly had cause if a man ever did!

I had been feeling odd and upset, so one day in exasperation, I trotted into the Army Surgeon's office and staggered out in a horrified-appalled-and somewhat blissful daze. How shall I say it? A bundle of Joy? A little package of happiness? That attachment no house is a home without? So sat down and penned a joyous note to Bob....which resulted in his being called down for not keeping his mind on his work and almost flunking gun-gunnery.

How I began to hate those bus rides out to Camp Davis! the doctor said it wouldn't hurt me, and I did hate to miss that time with Robert when I could see him so seldom, but the motion of the bus unsettled my tummy to a frightful degree. One unfortunate morning, Bob decided a glass of organge juice purchased at the bus station would be a good idea, even though we'd had a fullsome breakfast as usual not two hours before. I drank mine with considerable misgiving. Arriving at Camp, I managed somehow to get off the bus and to the Service Club restroom. For some time afterward, I turned an unbecoming shade of green at the sight or mention of an orange.

My time at the bank, as weeks went by, was divided between a bookkeeping machine and the Ladies' Room, as I was ignobly nauseated much of the time. I had one of those famed pregnant "cravings" for

peaches so Mrs. Tate promptly dubbed our offspring-to-be "Peaches," and such he remained to her until he formally appeared as "Bobby."

Aside from these nauseating interruptions, I greatly enjoyed my work at the bank. It was my first real contact with southern people and I liked them. I was vastly amused by their double-standard behavior, though. I had long secretly chuckled about how the girls would be "regulars" or "old shoe" as long as just girls were present, but if one of the gentlemen came in, speech and demeanor changed radically. I wouldn't call it sham; it was merely their mores. There was a rather dense girl from South Carolina who managed to mix things up every day and cause the girl (from Oklahoma) who took over her work at lunch hour, untold misery. One noon, the gentlemen came back to see if the ladies were ready for dinner. Thickhead stopped picking her teeth long enough to simper at the men and say casually to the Oklahoma girl that she seemed to be a "bit mixed up." Oklahoma took one look at the mess and without thinking gave out with a resounding, "Oh shit!" A stink bomb couldn't have gotten more reaction! The gentlemen jumped as if they'd been stabbed and scuttled from the room. The ladies turned red and white, and finally decided that they hadn't heard what they had heard. Being the only other non-southerner there, I felt I was entitled to clutch my throat and repair for the ladies' room.

I had quite a discussion one day with one of the southern boys working in our department. We were discussing southern women as opposed to northern and his preference was definitely the former.

"Ah like'em coy," he said, "and sweet. Why ah once went with a no'the'n girl to a dayance and when ah left huh at the do'....she stuck out huh hand and said, 'Charlie....ah had a hell of a good time!'....and shut the do' in mah face!"

I had quite a time in the department stores keeping on my side of the color line. Several times I took from a nearby fountain, only to glance up to see a sign above saying "Colored," and a saleslady looking at me in horror. Everything seemed to be divided. there were white and colored rest rooms, Jim Crow cars on trains, and on the buses, the colored people were expected to occupy only the rear seats.

One day, Mrs. Tate had a colored woman in to clean. When it became lunchtime, Mrs. Tate asked me to set the table, which I did. I set three places. Mrs. Tate threw up her hands in horror. After the woman left, Mrs. Tate explained the southern attitude toward negroes...at least hers. She said that northerners didn't realize the position of the white and the negroes in the south because there were so few negroes in the North. "In their place" she had nothing against them. For example, she told of how Cora (the cleaning "girl") had been coming to clean for so many years that she had begun to take "liberties." Instead of coming in the back door, where every negro should (and every servant for that matter), she would open the front door herself and walk in! Instead of showing proper respect for her employer, she would often talk back and once even arrived drunk and had to be sent home, protesting every step of the way.

Mrs. Tate was an interesting woman as well as a kind one. Often in the evening, we'd settle ourselves in the living room and talk of

all the things that people talk of by their firesides. Her memories were still vivid of childhood visits to her Grandfather's plantation with its big, white manor house and the rows and rows of ramshackle shacks for the darkies behind. "Mah Gran'papy treated 'em jest like chillun...fo' chillun is what darkies are," she say. Nobody; coulda bin kindah...an' he neavah had any trouble. They ate what they wanted...co'n pone an' cracklins, grits an' sweet p'tata pie. They were happy. We nevah had any race riots then."

She had been the eldest of a large family and had been teaching school for several years when her mother once again became pregnant.

"Bill was courtin' me then. He came to dinnah one night when he'd finished his run. When it came time to eat dinnah, ah had t'take Bill aside while Mothaw seated herself at the table ahead of the others, so he wouldn't notice her condition. She was powuhful emba'ssed about bein' that way at her age and swo' she'd nevah fo'give Pappy fo' it. But d'ya know, when that baby was bo'n, she was as crazy about him as a pet coon. Ah think he was huh fav'rite above us all!"

Billy, her nine-year-old son, was a sharp youngster and little escaped him. Being enceinte was a source of delight to me, and I never though when one day I mentioned in Billy's presence about "when my baby comes." Billy was all ears and inquired frankly of his embarrassed mother where I was going to get the baby. I realized by Mrs. Tate's stricken silence that I'd stepped on thin ice, so I left it to her to explain the matter as she saw fit. After several false starts, she finally told Billy: "Wha..wha..she's goin' to pick it out in th' department store when she gets home!" Billy's eyes widened in disbelief. "Awwwww," he said in disgust and dropped the subject.

"Billy doesn't know anything about those things," Mrs. Tate explained apologetically when we were alone. "Ah'm goin' t'wait until he's old enough t' unduhstand. He isn't aweah of the diff'rence between boys and girls yet."

"Hasn't he ever wondered about pregnant women he's seen?" I asked.

"Oh yes," she answered, "we saw one once when we were goin' to town. He wondered why the lady's tummy was so big."

"Oh?" I said "And what did you tell him?"

"That the lady had eaten a big chicken dinnuh...and thet was wha huh stomach poked out."

I was left speechless!

It was Mrs. Tate's turn the next day. Billy came home to lunch in high glee, telling us, with a juvenile leer, how he'd gotten a little girl behind the bushes...and kissed her!

Mrs. Tate had reckoned without self-eduction!

With a shy smile, one evening, Mrs. Tate asked me if I'd care to ride out with her and Billy to the cemetery. I went, of course. The cemetery was a truly lovely one with many trees and numerous flowers. Mr. Tate's grave was a simple mound, unmarked except for a gallant miniature American flag fluttering in the breeze. Mrs. Tate gazed with quiet dignity on the place where her husband lay. Billy's eyes filled with bewilderment which overflowed onto his cheeks. As Mrs. Tate looked at the shading trees, the green grass, I could almost see the contentment easing into her soul. What honest comfort she took from seeing her loved one resting quietly in such serene surroundings. She talked softly of plans for laying stones above the grave, for planting flowers about the edge, and then taking Billy gently by the hand, led the way back to the car. I had always scorned the barbaric practices of funerals and marked graves, but certainly a rite that brought such solace to Mrs. Tate, could not be wrong. It is with deep sadness I think back on that visit to the green knoll, for Billy now rests there too, having died but six short months after his father, leaving his mother to again pick up the pieces of her life.

Each Saturday at the bank, long lines of negroes formed to cash the checks they had drawn at the shipyards. These checks were often seventy dollars and over. Seventy dollars for one week's work! Always on these days I noticed a peculiar odor, and asked one of the women the cause of it. Her nose wrinkling in distaste, she gestured briefly toward the long queues. "But why?" I persisted. "Is it their skin color that makes it?" "No," she replied. "It's the lack of baths." These men who endorsed their checks with x's because they could neither read nor write were making fabulous wages, none of which was going to plumbing or sanitary facilities. I didn't need to ask where some of it was going. The drunks on the street, the negroes in sleek cars told their story.

On my way home from work I passed a negro section. These sorry ramshackle buildings, which looked on the verge of collapse, didn't even have electric lights. I couldn't understand it. I should very much like to go back again to the South someday, when I could stay longer, and see more. It poses an interesting paradox.

Graduation day came at last! I rode out on the bus early that morning to watch the boys march by in their new uniforms. How splendid they all looked in their new greens and pinks with those new and incalculably precious gold bars sparkling in the sunshine as they marched to an unconscious "hup tup thrip four" on their way to the theater where the commissions were to be distributed. The "house" badly needed "papering" as we used to say in our theatre days, meaning the audience was definitely on the sparse side. I was disappointed.

A wearying chaplain droned on, a wearier Brigadier General droned longer, and a deathly pall settled over all, as one by one the boys marched up onto the platform to receive their commissions. No fanfare. No applause. Just glum silence. What a shame, I thought. Here these boys have worked their hearts out for three ghastly months, and now, a paper is thrust in their hands and they're "graduated." I knew what those three months had cost and if I were thrown out bodily my Robert would not graduate in dank silence. As Bob moved toward the center, I took a deep breath and sat erect. As his name was read and

his diploma presented I gritted my teeth, clapped my hands as hard as I could, smiled at my officer and gave out with a heart-felt "bravo!" I may not have been in order, but things came to life. Shock, amazement, then a growing ripple of amusement brightened tense faces. Bob's face was a lush fuscia but a secret smile tugged at the corner of his mouth.

In my smug corner it looked like a damn-fine graduation!

There is nothing quite so officious as a man who has decided that the little woman is helpless and inefficient. Bob merged into a blustering male when, with sparks striking from the brand new bars, he stalked into our room on Grace Street. Unbeknownst to me he had been unable to find room in his receptacles for an undoubtedly invaluable pair of G.I brogans and was indignant to find that my already bulging bags wouldn't hold another shoestring. The gist of the ten minnute tirade was that like all females I was completely incapable of organizing and completing anything and that from now on he was taking charge. I docilely trotted forth to the doctor's for last minute instructions, while he hailed a taxi and sailed down to the depot with all our plunder. I have never been able to decide just what it is that causes our belongings to multiply each time we have to move. When we first entered into Army life, we could carry all we possessed. This time we needed a taxi; soon we would need a trunk, and now I believed an out-size camel caravan would be most suitable.

I didn't arrivwe at the station until some time later. My General was in a state of nervous prostration. An incoherent explanation conveyed the explanation that he'd run into some trouble with our baggage. He had. In his efficient zeal, he had placed the bags we wished to take with us on the train out on the baggage platform so they couldn't become mixed with the luggage we wished to ship. Unfortunately, our bags were altogether too near those of a Camp Davis-destined Colonel. Unnoticed by Bob, a lorry wheeled up to the platform, threw in the Colonel's luggage and ours. The combination of Bob's tragic face, and the thought of my perfume tucked in among my hats gurgling away in the lorry, as well as every stitch of clothes we had intended for the cross country trip, was too much for my funny bone. I choked and snorted in gusts of laughter, becoming merrier by the minute. I was severely brought to my senses by an irate husband's reminding me that his orders were in that suitcase, that an M.P. would undoubtedly ask him for them, resulting in courts-martial, etc. etc. When he had himself being shot at dawn, I sobered up and did what I could to rescue the purloined bags. Train time came too soon, though, and it was not until we were in Seattle that a battered suitcase tied together with a strong piece of hemp and a whupper-jawed hat box reeking of Tabu appeared.

Without toothbrush or change of clothing, we made it to Chicago where some friends put us to bed while they washed our clothes and bought us the necessities. So, plus the fact that I was disgustingly nauseated the entire time, our trip fell somewhat short of a Cook's Tour.

Riverside, California brought us to the crowner in housing of our Army career. After a wintry and bleak Wilmington, with perpetual soot

in our eyes, ears, and noses, Riverside was like a dream come true...palm-lined drives, magnolia-lined drives..all green and lush with a hot, hot sun.

I stayed with my parents in Seattle until Bob could find housing, and rejoined him on a superb May day at the famous old Mission Inn. Stepping from the scorching sidewalk into the cool grotto which forms the Inn's entrance, I felt as though I were entering a Tale of the Alhambra. There were dark beamed ceilings and walls, an enveloping patio canopied by tropical vines, and a garrulous old parrot blinking morosely at all who passed..

A whirlwind entrance by Bob made me sure that life had never been sweeter. We had dinner in the dimly-lit dining room, earnestly discussing past, present, and future as that old devil "Housing" reared its twice ugly head.

After harrying every landlord who'd open the door, Bob heard vaguely about some big building between Riverside and Arlington that was being turned over to soldiers and their wives and rushed out to investigate. He discovered a white-stuccoed, four-winged mansion with a red-tiled roof, a rolling green lawn in the foreground, large orange and lemon orchards in the rear, and an imposing palm-lined drive up to the entrance. In great glee over his discovery, he rushed through the entrance and to the desk where he waited impatiently for the clerk, viewing the interior with mingled surprise and incredulity. An elderly lady wheeled by, pushed by an equally ancient gentleman who greeted the young Lieutenant and showed a willing disposition to review personal and public history of the last eight decades. The smoke of the Civil War was just clearing away when the Matron appeared and in answer to Bob's bewildered questions, told him that the back wing of the Old Folks' Home (for that is what it was!) had been turned over to soldiers and their wives.

Bob rented a "suite" for \$60.00 a month. The furniture in each room was the usual dark, wicker rocker, wicker chair, desk, dresser, and a single iron bed. We made one cell into our living room...meaning living, kitchen and dining room..and the other into our bedroom, with the two iron beds. The furniture was comfortable enough...what there was of it...though the iron beds creaked protestingly, and the wicker chairs revealed an alarming weakness in the joints. My throat was parched for weeks from breathing through my mouth in order to escape the overpowering odor of moth balls, which clung to the but recently stored rugs. When airing failed to remove the odor, I hit upon the bright idea of generously sprinkling some potent perfume; upon the offending rugs. I was crushed when, thinking my idea had been fairly successfully, my husband sniffed in disgust and said that all the establishment needed now as a red light! So we just stank until through time and humidity, or perhaps our numb noses, all but a lingering hint of the naptha was removed.

"Soldiers' Paradise," as it came to be called, proved to be an hilarious institution. The husbands were able to get in only a few times a week so the wives formed a gay society of their own, rising leisurely at mail time...approximately 11:30 a.m.

I was the only one in those early days with a hot plate, so into our "suite" each morning surged our crowd of about eight girls of varying ages and backgrounds. Fearing the old people might break a leg tripping the lamp cords, I suppose, the "Home" management had

failed to install wall plugs of any description. So..to iron, read, or cook it was necessary to straddle an arm chair, carefully balance with the rocking, remove the overhead bulb, screw in a plug, and attach an extension cord. This done, the cord was gracefully draped from the ceiling behind a nearby picture on the wall, thence to the hotplate on the table. The cord, unfortunately, was always coming loose at a most inopportune time and slicing some poor unfortunate a sound one on the chops.

A similar arrangement was set up in the bedroom. So while some of the girls superintended the brewing of coffee in the "living room," others made toast on the toaster set on the floor between the twin beds. My sporadic house-keeping inevitably revealed assorted heels of bread and wrappers discarded at intervals under the beds.

For a while we had only one pan, which like my La Jollan pot, served as a frying pan, boiling pan, and coffee pot. My method was to fill a pan with water, let it boil, add four to six tablespoonsful of coffee and boil it till it could lift its own lid. This brew I called "Dutch Coffee" for no earthly reason than because I'd seen my father make it that way and he's of Dutch lineage.

The girls downed this concoction for a few times and then, uttering a few choice comments, marched downtown and brought home a glass percolator. I felt myself revenged when they poured boiling water in it the next morning and it broke with a resounding crack, soaking thoroughly all in the immediate vicinity. We returned to the Dutch brew until I took pity at seeing the poor wretches straining the coffee grounds through their teeth and bought another percolator.

The luxuriant and fruitful orange orchards to the rear we took as belonging to the "Home," hence our right to fleece. Jean Yount, a gorgeous girl of sanguinary speech, and I one morning strolled out to the orchards with our waste-baskets. The farther in we went the more luscious seemed the oranges until, unknown to us, we'd passed the "Home" boundaries and were poaching on the neighbor.

Being at the cumbersome stage, I felt the need of rest, so we sat down on a furrow to eat a half dozen delectable oranges before starting back. We were sticky up the ears, our noses deep in golden rind, when a menacing "Moooooooooooo" lifted us to our feet in terror.

"Sonuvabitch!" said Jean. "We're in a goddam cow pasture!" As if that weren't enough, the cow's owner appeared in a thunderous mood, wielding a pitchfork.

"Git off the place," she shrieked. "Them's my oranges...git!" Another wave of the pitchfork and we'd closed our gaping mouths and were making tracks, Jean's scampering on ahead, I lumbering as only a pregnant woman can lumber, expecting a pitchfork, in my rear at any second!

We escaped unharmed and then chortled with glee when we realized that, frightened as we'd been, neither of us had forgotten her waste-basket heaped with oranges!

The girls kidded me incessantly about being "fragrant," and yet were wonderfully kind, always helping me with bundles and watching out for my health like a bunch of mother chicks. They overcame my natural desire for lassitude by organizing daily hikes to Arlington, a small village only a few miles away. We really became bosom friends on these treks, which means that we discussed everything that every woman does...and a lot she shouldn't. After we'd compared backgrounds and briefly skimmed over literature, politics and religion, we tangled with SEX. This took some guarded maneuvering, but we finally reached a unanimous decision----we liked it!

Being true Army Wives, we griped and argued as heatedly as the men did themselves. Latrinograms were plentiful as always and we chewed over every one with relish. Most of the husbands were second lieutenants, though one was a captain; hence, Ginny, his wife was undisputed leader. The Army class system catches on quickly. We saw movies together and some even were so bold as to read books so we had a good deal to discuss on our daily trips to Arlington.

One memorable day I saw an inexpensive redwood night stand that I thought would look fancy in Cell #2 so I bought it, with never a thought as to how I was going to transport it and a full load of groceries home. That was solved, of course, by my loyal cohorts nearly breaking their backs carrying my things and theirs. They never complained--though when we got home and unloaded, Jean sat down with a thump and sputtered, "Jesus Christ, ladies, I'm dead on my ass!"

It was a very hot summer and we had the problem of keeping our food from spoiling as well as cooling our cokes. It was becoming irksome to struggle with heads of lettuce, bottles of milk, and water-logged lumps of butter in order to rinse our hands or perform any of the prescribed nightly laving. Discouraging it was too to feverishly hang ivy in neat pots, string curtains, nail pictures and then have cabbages and various bottles floating under a noisily dripping water spout in prominently displayed lavatory bowls, which

were none too decorative in the first place. So one day I announced I was going to Arlington to buy an icebox--which brought forth loud protestations and grievous mutterings that "we'll all be dead on our...un...Jean Younts...if we have to lug that home!" I assured them that I'd have it hauled so we set off in fine fettle to round ourselves up a snug icebox.

I found a good one of solid oak and set it up in Cell #1's clothes closet. Ice delivery was simply arranged but I never could remember to empty the pan underneath. I'd purchased a large yellow crock for use under the box which the girls promptly dubbed, "Junior."

It caused me a good deal of embarrassment.

One afternoon we invited a new neighbor to Arlington for a soda. While dawdling over the sodas, I was struck with the thought that I hadn't emptied Junior and that brackish water was undoubtedly flooding the floor, joining odors with the fragrant rug.

"Great heavens!" I shrieked. "Junior's overflowing!"

Used to this phenomenon, the girls deprecatingly scolded me for never remembering him and returned to the subject under discussion, with our new friend becoming more perturbed by the minute. We had scarcely returned to the normal tenor of conversation when she burst out..."Well, for goodness sake, aren't you going to go to the hospital?"

We all gaped in amazement. Bobby wasn't due for another two months. What could she be talking of? Then we realized that "Junior" and "Bobby" weren't two separate entities to her and that she'd jumped to a very wrong conclusion. We explained it to her, though I always imagined that afterwards she looked at me in a wary fashion.

There was a charming little library in Arlington from which we all borrowed and enjoyed very much. Being a very conscientious mother-to-be, I inquired of the librarian one day if she had any books on pregnancy or motherhood. The little librarian, a female Uriah Heep, emerged from whatever philosophical fancies she'd been floating in and peered up at me through her myopic lenses. She obviously hadn't heard, so I focused on her one good eye and loudly trumpeted my request. She evidently heard the second time for she thumbed swiftly through some cards and came up with the answer she didn't have a single thing on hand but would be happy to order some for me if I cared to stop back. I promised to do so and a few days later appeared with the same query.

"Oh my dear," she simpered, "we have been very fortunate...I'm sure I have the very thing for you. Here...I just got it in yesterday." She sat back in quiet satisfaction.

The book was entitled: "Birth Control."

"Thanks...oh thanks," I croaked, "...but I really do think it's just a bit late for that!"...and fled.

Mrs. Weeks, a matron of about forty-five, and her mother, Mrs. Atkins, age indeterminate, ran the soldiers' part of the "Home." Mrs. Weeks was a mannish, robust, and capable looking woman who was quite able to take any bull by the horns and say..."Now, look here Bull..." She wore health shoes, conservative colors, and a boyish bob. Her mother was a delicious contrast. Mrs. Atkins might have sprung full blown from "Punch." Her spry trot and her snapping black eyes belied her sixty odd years. Her hair had suffered with the years and it now took only five curlers to "do-up" her entire head of wiry pepper and

salt hair. For days I never saw her without the tightly drawn curlers, the pink baby-like skin peeping out from the gray thatch. I quite understood why, when one day, each curl having been snatched from its snug crasis, the result was somewhat like a parrot's tail feathers in moulting season.

These two widely different women were the law and order of our existence at "Woodacres Retirement Home, Brothers of Woodcraft" at 8432 Magnolia Avenue in Riverside, California. Mrs. Weeks kept occupants' friction to a minimum, as far as it was in her power to do so, while the wily Mrs. Atkins dealt out weekly allotments of sheets and linens with a jealous eye. As more and more soldiers of varying grades and rank were allowed rooms, some riff-raff crept in to disturb the smoothly running managerial machine.

Late one night, we heard startling sounds of hysterical gaiety emanating, it seemed, from the seldom mentioned fourth floor. The latter had but recently been opened up for occupancy and the tales of the manners of living of some of the tenants were enough to make even Mrs. Atkins' hairs stand on end. The commotion became pronounced and continued to grow in intensity. Mrs. Weeks, who at first had shrugged distastefully, as if to say.. "What else can you expect of such people"....at last raised a listening ear and then hurried up the elevator to settle the matter. We, who were listening enthralled below, heard a sudden quietude, equally precipitous bursts of shrill laughter...then the slamming of doors and the hum of the descending elevator. Mrs. Weeks stalked out of the elevator, her color apoplectic, strode into her room and slammed the door. Rising tones, interspersed by Mr. Atkins' sharp, scandalized barks, electrified the air.

Next morning, while collecting our clean linen, we casually asked if anything interesting had been happening around the place. "Well," Mrs. Weeks started off, "the mailman left his rubbers here again." We wheezed and gasped and buried our snorts and chuckles in the sheets in our arms.

"....and then there was them yahoos last night." She had our attention. "They was all stewed t'the gills...an' behavin' crazy like. One of 'em"....she swallowed convulsively..."one of 'em was naked as a jaybird...jes wanderin' around the halls without so much as a...as a...and he was drunker'n a lord ,too. When my daughter tried to reason with him...you know what he done?" Her jowls shook as she whispered in outraged tones.... "He shook it at'er!" She looked around the enrapt circle who were hanging on to her words. "An' ya know what I told her?" We shook our heads numbly. Triumphantly: "I told her she just oughter cut it off....that's what she oughta done!"

The word must have got around. There were no more riots on the 4th. floor.

More and more I realized that it takes all kinds to make a world. If the polyglot of the "Home" was any indication, I knew there must be incomputable varieties of human beings I'd never dreamed existed; certainly one peculiar aspect to this dormitory living bore me out. That was the bathroom problem.

On each floor were two bathrooms, one ostensibly for men and the other for women. But Mrs. Atkins, with a friendly leer and a nudge in the ribs, always assured new occupants that they could "jes' use whichever's the closest. When ya gotta go ya gotta go, y'know." As a result, it was no

uncommon sight to enter one stall and see G.I. brogans, with O.D. trousers draping downward, in the next! Some of us, whose sensibilities shrank at this blatant ignoring of propriety, banded together and placed large signs on each door reading: "Men_only!" on one; "Women_only!" on the other. In two days they were torn down and the co-toiletal practices resumed.

~In each bathroom were three toilet stalls, one bathtub stall, and a shower. When a couple decided they'd take a shower together, they simply sailed into one of the bathrooms....and locked the door. And locked it stayed regardless of anyone else's need.'

One night Bob went as usual to the men's bathroom and found it locked, a female voice and a male voice chattering inside. He shouted through the door that he intended to come in and that they could either unlock the door or he would. Verbal badinage went on like this for some time, growing hotter and hotter, until the offending male stepped out in a towel to settle the matter on a physical basis. Unfortunately, he was an enlisted man and it's a courts martial offense to strike an officer, so when he saw Bob's bars, they both growled like bristling dogs...and Bob stalked unconcernedly into the bathroom by the shrieking female in the shower.

Notwithstanding all the furor this encounter caused, no change was made in the state of affairs.

The basement of our wing of the "Home" was equipped with a laundry room containing four wash tubs, a ringer, four ironing boards, and four irons. The first week someone tried to run a pair of fatigues through the ringer by brute force instead of loosening it...so that eliminated the ringer. Three of the irons simply disappeared. Thr fourth never did work. In a very few weeks the covers of the ironing boards were scorched through several sheets, wool pads, and down to the wood. Shortly after that, the entire boards disappeared.

Some of the girls, it seems, got tired of sitting down in the clammy basement waiting for their turn at the boards, so early in the morning they carried them up to their rooms to use at their leisure. This seriously handicapped the other girls who now had no boards to iron on even if they were willing to wait their turn.

Mrs. Atkins took the matter by the forelock and roared through the halls, bellowing, "IF ANY---ONNNNNNNE HA-A-A-AS AN I---RON---INGGGG BO---ARD IN THE--IR ROOOOOOOOOOM, PUL--EEZE REEEEEEE--TURRRRRRN IT." Up one floor and down the other she went, riding the echoes of her call down the hall...but to no avail. Finally, Mrs. Weeks and Mrs. Atkins had to resort to searching the rooms. While they were searching one floor, the ironing boards were being transferred to one already searched. Then, Mrs. Atkins watched the stairs and elevator while her daughter searched the rooms. They found the boards.

Our Breakfast Club was so thoroughly disgusted with the whole proceedings that we bought a board of our own. Our esteem for our fellow humans had sunk mighty low. It was due to sink a good deal lower.

Again, some of the girls disliked waiting their turn to use the wash tubs, so they hit on the scheme of putting their clothes to soak the night before and washing them at their convenience in the morning, thereby reserving themselves a wash tub without the trouble of waiting their turn. Dottie Barnd and I one morning bright and early descended to do our weekly wash and found the tubs all filled with cold and clammy soaking clothes. Enraged, we decided to ring out the clothes, put them aside, and get on with our washing. To Dottie fell the nauseating task of ringing out some stranger's snotty handkerchiefs, socks, and underwear. She had the dry heaves doing it...and I almost joined her. We made appeal again to Mrs. Weeks, which precipitated a ruling against the clothes-soaking practice, which continued to go on to a great extent, nevertheless.

We began to understand a bit the complex problems facing a government, when people care so little for authority...or for common courtesy.

I was kidded unmercifully about my washing procedure. Due to my shape, I was forced to wash sideways since I was able neither to extend myself over the washboard nor under it. I suppose it must have been ludicrous, but to me it was a source of exercise---and saved money besides. An unbeatable combination!

The washroom gradually began to resemble a public restroom in the slums: papers on the floor, filthy and soiled clothing that had been discarded and simply thrown on the floor, empty soap boxes, soap wrappers...abandoned articles of the most intimate sort.....and just plain dirt! I suggested one morning to Mrs. Atkins that it would be a good idea if a large carton could be set up in the washroom in which to place all rubbish. Suspicious that I intended to slight her efficiency, she barked, "Now see here. I'll tend to my business, an' you tend to yers." Haughtily stalking out, she couldn't resist turning sharply for a last word, curlers tinkling agitatedly, "An' if everybody else jest tended to their business as good as I do, sure's God made little apples, the world'd be a better place." Her triumphant exit had all the aplomb of a belle dame of the silent flickers.

The clothes lines in the basement were insufficient to accomodate all the washings so many of us bought clothesline rope in Arlington and strung our own lines outdoors, palm tree to palm tree until the backyard resembled a stage set for a Tarzan movies..or hectic preparations for a May pole dance. Dottie and I congratulated ourselves on our choice location between two enormous palms. Only later did we discover that a colony of birds had discovered the spot before us and had apportioned off the section of palm fronds above our line as a restroom. To save ourselves washing the same laundry twice....sometimes thrice....we took sunbaths while the clothes dried, keeping a wary^{eye} out the while for our feathered friends.

Life for the women more or less fell into a pattern, a pattern woven of endless golden days stumbling on the heels of one another in a lazy procession. From mail time in the morning until the late afternoon, femmes in various stages of unconcerned dishabille strolled indolently about the cool halls, perspired to achieve a tan, made toothsome fudge in the rooms, or settled each others' sex lives in heated sessions in the lobby. In such slothful pursuits, the

heterogeneous sorority languidly lolled through the afternoon....until, like the witching hour in Cinderella, the clock struck 4 p.m.!

At the stroke of the clock, the women en masse galvanized into action! Showers roared, bathtubs became ringed, curlers were shed! Total repaint jobs were applied from Mum to Maybelline. By 5:30 a sedate and shining group of wives hovered about the lobby....thinning out as with glad cries first of one, then another, left the waiting line to cling to a tired and dusty arrival. Often Bob and many of the other men as well would be so exhausted that, after a brief kiss, they promptly fell asleep before and after dinner, while we women sat with our freshly tinted fingernails draped at an attractive angle, our noses becoming shiny....and reflected upon the joys of wifehood.

Weekends, however, spelled a different tale. After a sound nap, the men would be good for a lively evening out: seeing a show, dancing at the Club...or perhaps simply a spirited game of bridge. Our fears of overseas shipment were drowned in this gay and happy living. With all our gripe sessions, we at heart enjoyed our Army life.

According to the doctor's calculations, Bobby was due to appear the 25th. day of September so my mother planned to arrive in Los Angeles where she would stay with friends until this miracle of birth was accomplished. Ginny Ponder, who roomed across the hall, offered to take me...or us...in her car to the hospital when Bobby announced he was coming. We arranged an elaborate system of knocks and calls, never for a moment doubting that the event would occur on the stroke of midnight or some moment equally fraught with drama. As a matter of fact, he arrived at 5:13 in the afternoon---and made a great deal of trouble for everybody.

Bob came to the hospital with me and was much more upset than I. He was due to command a convoy back to Camp Irwin out on the desert that afternoon and so couldn't stay for the outcome. Her left me "laboring" and rushed to organize his convoy. That supposedly slow convoy roared along at an alarming rate through valleys and fairly flew over the mountain pass. The C.O. saw the trucks rip into camp and meeting Bob as he sprang out of the lead truck snapped irately,

"Well, Lieutenant, just where's the fire?"

"My wife's having a baby, sir!" gasped Bob breathlessly.

"Well, for God's sake why didn't you say so?" shouted the captain. "Get the hell out of here!"

Bob managed to catch a ride back to town but by the time he reached the hospital, visiting hours were over. He did find out that Robert Peter had arrived on schedule and that all was well.

Since I hadn't known that Bob would be home--or for that matter that Bobby would choose a Sunday to appear---I had arranged with Ginny for her to send the announcing telegram to my Mother in Los Angeles. Telegrams, unless of a distinctly serious nature, were at that time banned. To outfox this ruling, we arranged with Mother that if Ginny sent her a telegram reading, "Ruth very ill. Come at once." a girl would have been born. If the telegram read, "Ruth extremely ill. Come at once.", it would be a boy. When Bobby actually arrived, Ginny was so excited that she wired: "Ruth extremely ill. Come at once. Both are doing well!"

The Prins Stock Company

presents

"A Star is Born"

introducing

Robert Peter Prins



Riverside Community Hospital

September 26, 1943

"A STAR IS BORN"

Presented by special arrangement with Samuel Stork, Inc.



Author: Lt. Robert Frederick Prins

Producer: Ruth Balkema Prins

Technical Director: Dr. Geo. W. Coon



CHARACTERS

(In Order of Appearance)

Father	-	-	-	Lt. R. F. Prins
Mother	-	-	-	Ruth B. Prins
Doctor	-	-	-	Dr. G. W. Coon
Baby	-	-	-	Robert Peter Prins

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Act I.

Place: University Temple Church

Time: Saturday evening, March 21, 1942

INTERMISSION

Act II.

Place: Riverside Community Hospital

Time: Sunday, Sept. 26, 1943



Acknowledgments

Special Sound Effects - Robert Peter Prins

Notes

This Production Will Play Continuously.
The management advises the public not to look forward
to any new opening for the balance of the year.

All the time we'd been in the "Home," we'd harbored hopes of finding a house or apartment before Bobby arrived. Luck was against us. The few places we did find would take no children--one would have thought that babies were three-headed monsters who ate paint. So when Mother arrived to take care of the baby and me until I'd "regained my strength," (as Mother said who really wanted to hold a baby again!) we had no choice but to return to our diminutive "suite" which now must double as guest room and nursery.

Cell #1, in which an extra bed had been placed, was, besides being painfully cluttered, also adjacent to the elevator, a banging, clanging contraption that wheezed up and down night and day. Mother confessed later that she thought she'd go berserk with that rumbling in her ears all night long. We had become so used to it I doubt if we could have slept without it. That hiccupping noise was to us what the subway is to New Yorkers.

Along with Mother's bed in cell #1 was our trunk, which doubled as a catch-all, the stove apparatus, Bobby's bed, a rocking chair, and a large, new bathinette. It took a sober soul to navigate the maze.

Despite my conscientious reading of all literature I could lay my hands on pertaining to care and training of infants, (in spite of the Arlington librarian!), I was woefully ignorant on the subject. If my Mother hadn't been there, I think we all would have perished. Bobby seemed such a fragile little mite. I was just sure if I held him in some incorrect fashion something would break or twist. The first evening home, Bobby set up a howl which instantly dissolved me in sympathetic tears, leaving my Mother with two howling offspring on her hands.

A baby is a wonderful thing! I marveled day by day at his tiny body, the eyes that could not yet see and the limbs that were just discovering movement. The cataclysmic discovery, though, was the realization of the upheaval a baby made in the habits of living. No more did I stretch lazily at 11:30 a.m. and leisurely waddle forth to mail call.

Aside from the natural confusion of bottles six times a day, diapers, airings, and coaxings to sleep, Bobby decided to stir things up even more by developing the colic. Mother and I often looked at the peacefully sleeping little wretch with suspicion. He slept so well during the day, while we were cleaning up his clothes, but displayed proclivities toward night life more natural to a prowling cat. No sooner had we all retired for the night, than he would make the night horrendous with his cries. Mother insisted I needed to save "my strength" so when this nightly scene occurred, she'd take him up, give him some warm water and rock him until he fell asleep again. Bobby enjoyed this. As long as he could be rocked and sung to, life was rosy but should Grandmaw decide he was asleep and attempt to put him back in his bed ---he would protest with howls of indignation. Many was the night I'd waken, raise groggily on an elbow to see a light under the door, hear the old rocker tiredly creaking and Mother's singing lustily, "Give me one do---zen roses, put my heart in beeeeeee-side them, aaaand send them tooooooo the one I luv-v-v-v!"

I always became greatly excited if Bobby's bottle wasn't ready right on the dot. He shrieked so insistently, I was sure he'd drop with starvation if the bottle wasn't immediately forthcoming. One a.m., yowls of such volume issued from the "nursery" that both Bob and I raised up in apprehension. We stumbled into the other room, eyes blinking stupidly at the sudden light and found Grandmaw savagely snapping nipples off and on the bottle.

"Wh-what's the matter, Mom?"

"The dratted nipples won't work," she snapped. Some pamphlet on care of nipples had said that if milk didn't come through fast enough, a sterilized needle should be quickly plunged through the original holes, making them larger. I ran to get a darning needle, Bob singed both thumbs sterilizing it and, with Bob's howling as though he were being flayed alive, Bob viciously stabbed a nipple and handed it to Mother to try. Bobby took a suck, failed to get milk and cursed us in a series of angry screams. I bawled helplessly, Mother wrang her hands, Bob grabbed the bottle, tipped it up---and got a mouthful of sweetish evaporated milk!

"Pah!" he spat. " I can get milk out of it. Why the hell can't he?"

As Bobby and I wailed like a Greek chorus, the overhead extension cord, which draped behind a picture on the wall, chose this occasion to free itself from its moorings and come sailing down to catch me neatly behind the ears! The picture....Mother's snapping on nipples, Bob's intently punching nipples, and Bobby's and my weeping damply with that silly cord draping about my neck....was one indescribably ludicrous!

Mother and I were so dead tired we were hysterical. So Bob had to go through the needle process again, this time making a hole large enough for a cat to jump through, and stuck the bottle in Bobby's noisy orifice. The din stopped as if a blotter had descended.

Bobby appeased, we all trooped back to bed, Mother and I giggling helplessly, Bob in stoical silence, though secretly pleased that he the helpless male had solved the situation while the women had been of no use at all!

Not all the nights were so terrible. When we'd all caught up somewhat on our sleep, we really had enjoyable evenings together. Our self-entertainment was somewhat limited as our lighting system discouraged much reading. To save the baby's eyes from glare, we'd tied a brown sack over the overhead globe, which left us just enough light to wiggle around the furniture and, half by peering and half by the braille system, identify objects and one another.

I wish I could paint. The "Still Life" of that living, dining, kitchen, bed, and nursery room is too diverting not to share. The "front door" opened on a charming view of the ice-box in the closet, the door always left open to prevent "odors." Sidling by the door led to scrooching around the bathinette on which hung several damp rags---ro use in various situations. The bed squeezed from the bathinette to the window, which was artistically lined with baby bottles filled with water to varying degrees like a set of musical jars. Our unwieldy Dutch trunk (a relic from Bob's grandparents' emigration from Holland in the early 1900's) sprawled in front of the window, loaded to the groaning point with the various paraphernalia necessary to a baby----and any other old stuff that couldn't be pushed under a bed. The large rocker, the chair, the table's doubling

as a stove jig-sawed into the floor arrangement, leaving just room enough for one person to stand.....if he or she were a stork!

I mustn't forget the charming view above: the bulbous sack, scorched on one side where the bulb had touched, the long, black cord draping funereally from the overhead fixture to behind a picture, and thence to the two hot plates tht we called "stove." The bedroom ----not so intricately arranged---- was simply cluttered. We all suffered acute attacks of claustrophobia.

In four weeks I felt like my old self again, though I retained the mid-riff roll of a Helen Hokinson dowager. So Mother returned home ---minus ten tired pounds. Ironically enough, the week after she left, an apartment we'd long hoped for fell vacant and the rest of our Riverside stay proved quiet and singularly uneventful.

That January, Bob was transferred to Camp Callan, where he'd begun his army life and I'd become an Army wife. Housing was more difficult in La Jolla and environs than it had been when we'd arrived two years before. One real estate agent explained this by saying that the many wives who had followed their husbands to the coast had remained there even after their husbands had been shipped across. I could well believe it --- having fallen in love with La Jolla long before.

Bob made the rounds but was unable to locate anything. So one weekend he came home and proposed that I pack up the baby and come down to La Jolla for a week and look myself. A Major who was also stationed temporarily at Camp Callan and whose home was in Riverside offered to drive us all down on Sunday night and back the following weekend. I concurred and began to pack the multifarious things necessary to caring for a baby away from home. Bob protested vigorously the mountainous assortment I insisted must be transported. I dug in for an argument and, at last, after much adjustment and arranging, the pile of baby gear was swallowed up in the sedan and we were off.

Room arrangements had been made by a friend of Bob's but when Bob went to register at the La Valencia Hotel, the clerk reflected blank astonishment and firmly parried a retort furious by saying that the hotel had been full for weeks!

When Bob emerge, I was standing on the curb, our plunder heaped around me, holding the babysomething like Eliza on the ice. On hearing Bob's news, I felt myself nailed in the frame. Nothing daunted, however, we gathered up what we could carry and trudged to the next nearest hotel, Bob's carrying the buggy under one arm, a dainty blue baby tray in the other with a traitorous trickle of fragrant baby oil dribbling off the edge and drip, dripping on a pair of freshly cleaned pinks.

At the Colonial Hotel the fates smiled on us and we obtained a large room. While Bob lugged in the remainder of the equipment and Bobby went obligingly to sleep, I unpacked my trusty hot plate and enamel kettle and set to work on hands and knees to sterilize bottles and prepare formula.

The next morning, I bundled Bobby into his buggy and set forth to renew acquaintances in the bank and to see for myself the condition of the housing market. From all sides came the same answer: "Full up!" One friend in the bank told me that the widow lady in the house next to where she lived had died suddenly late the previous night and that

if it wouldn't wound my sensibilities I might see the landlady about renting the house. Deja vu! It didn't take me long to decide that my sensibilities could stand a wound or two so I fared forth to find the landlady.

I launched forth on my story, sympathy oozing from every pore, apologies for coming at such an inopportune time tumbling from my lips. But others, it seemed, had seen the time strictly opportune. The house had been rented again but one scant hour after the undertakers had carried the stretcher down the stairs. That, Ladies and Gentlemen, is what I call a housing shortage!

My next stop was at the Red Cross. I waited patiently in line to present my tale of woe to the smartly dressed and coiffured young woman at the desk. As I inched my way within earshot, I perceived that the smart young woman was more than a little annoyed at all these soldiers' wives and their numerous requests. A young woman with a small baby in her arms explained to the woman that she desperately needed someplace to stay where she could care for her baby. It needn't be a permanent place, she added, as her husband would be overseas within the month. She had come across the country to be with him those last few weeks.

"I'm sorry," said Harper's Bazaar, "but what rooms we have available refuse to have children. I'm afraid I have nothing for you. Next."

"But where can I go....what shall I do?" pleaded the young mother desperately.

"You should have thought of that earlier," tartly replied the Red Cross representative, and then in exasperation added, "You can always go home, you know." The girl turned away with tears in her eyes. I followed. I hadn't the stomach to stay.

It was exhilarating to once again walk along the sea wall, sniff the salty air and be hypnotized by the sun's gilding the sea....but delightful as it was and rosy as it made Bobby's cheeks, it brought me no nearer a solution to our housing problem. A Navy wife I chanced to meet suggested I try Del Mar, a small village a few miles on the other side of Camp Callan....and, incidentally, famous for Bing Crosby's race track. I relayed the suggestion to Bob that evening and he said it might be worth a try. If he had thought to lay a few fins on Crosby's horses, he was in for a surprise. The erstwhile race track was a teeming defense plant.

The next morning I transported our belongings and ourselves to the Hotel Del Mar and set out with Bobby to scour the neighborhood for an abode. There were many lovely apartment houses and cottages with views that made me catch my breath in awe and dare to hope. But there was no vacancy in sight. Landladies were kind....but also discouraging. I returned to the hotel dispirited and that night poured my woes onto Bob's broad shoulder. Dejected though I was, two days still remained before the weekend could return us to Riverside.

On the following day I canvassed the few remaining districts I hadn't previously covered, with the same disheartening result. On the way back to the hotel, where I could weep bitter tears of despair in private, I stopped at the small, local grocery to buy some strained food for Bobby. As I passed the butcher on my way out, he smiled down at Bobby and remarked what a fine young man he was.

"Thank you," I said and added more from force of habit than hope,

"don't know where we could find a home for him do you?"

"Wa-a-lll now, I don't jest know but seems to me the Rogers might have something. I rent from 'em myself. Fine people. Yep. Fine people. Why d'you know....."

"Where do the Rogers live?" I interrupted breathlessly. "Do you really think they might have something?" My heart had begun to pound and my tongue to stutter.

"Why, I dunno," he said with some surprise. Y 'might call 'em...F.B. Rogers. Live on 4th. St."

I rushed to the corner Drugs and upon finding a number opposite the name F.B. Rogers, I nervously rang it.

"Hello."

"Do you...would you..." I licked my lips nervously and started again. "We're looking for housing. Do you have anything to rent?" As there was no immediate answer, I added hurriedly...."or know of anyone who does have something to rent?"

"No, we don't have any vacant right now." (My heart sank.) "But I believe I know someone who has..." (I grew dizzy.) "Although you might not want it when you saw it. Depends on how fussy you are." I was riding so high with joy and relief that I didn't know the existence of the word "fuzzy!" I told her I'd have my husband stop by to see it after work if she'd give me the address, which she did.

I sterilized bottles, washed diapers, and pattered about, wondering with increasing impatience why Bob didn't come. When I heard his step in the hall I flew to meet him, firing questions so rapidly he raised his arms in mock alarm. When I'd calmed down, he proceeded, with ill-concealed amusement, to tell me the news.

"We-l--l-l," he said slowly, with a teasing grin and then hurried on when he saw another question already formed on my lips. "It's a bungalow at the top of the 4th. Street hill, about two miles from camp, a mile from Del Mar, and with a magnificent view of the ocean. It has a living room, dining room, two bedrooms, bath, and kitchen." (He paused for effect and I gratifyingly gasped with incredulity.) "Unfortunately, the landlady occupies one of the bedrooms....don't look sad yet, honey....she's quite deaf and really seems to be a very sweet person. Mrs. Thom is her name. She has her own kitchen and stove back there and locks the door between her rooms and ours. And besides that, she offered to watch Bobby for us any night we want to go out!"

"Oh darling!" I cried. "It sounds too good to be true. But tell me more! What kind of stove is there? Is there an ice-box?....or (did I dare tempt the Gods by even mentioning it?).....a refrigerator? Oh, do finish quickly!"

"Wel-l-l," he said again with that glimmer of secret laughter in his eyes, "I spoke the truth when I said there was a living room, a dining room overlooking the ocean, a kitchen...yes, stove and icebox...but when I said 'bathroom' I misled you. You see (that glimmer was now an open grin).....when Mrs. Thom showed me the bathroom, I noticed one important gadget was missing. As she showed me the rest of the house, I looked in vain for it. It was only when she led me out on the back porch to point out the clotheline that I noticed it.....tucked coyly behind a screening shrub!"

"NO!" I gasped. "Not an.....!"

"Yep....but don't look so appalled...looks quite comfy. A two-holer, too.....just think...we can hold hands!" He doubled up with howls of glee as he watched the multiple emotions of atonishment,

laughter, and vexation war in my face.

We bought a '34 Chevrolet Coupe in Riverside, loaded it until it groaned and set forth to Del Mar and our house on the hill.

Bob liked his new job and I liked his being home every night. With Mrs. Thom to watch after Bobby we became social butterflies and acquired some wonderful friends.

My days were delightful, albeit routine. Mrs. Thom explained to me that the 4th. Street group of houses were neither fish nor fowl nor good red herring, so to speak. San Diego disclaimed all relationship and refused to pipe water up the hill to the nest of houses. Del Mar simply ignored our existence. So Mr. Rogers, who owned the bulk of the hill houses, hauled by truck the water for all the houses. Hence, no flush plumbing. In addition to doing without that comfort, all tenants were cautioned to be as frugal of water as they would be of money. Water used to boil the baby's bottles and nipples must be saved to wash with. The waste water did not run to a cess pool but was piped to various portions of Mrs. Thom's garden, for flowers were a luxury with water so hard come by. When I'd grasped the idea that water was molten gold, I would set aside an unfinished cup of water to use in washing...from habit, rather than forethought. Even the baby's bath water was saved to become the first washing water for his diapers. I didn't waste a drop. Laughing Boy who thought the outhouse was so funny, scampered off to the Camp after breakfast every morning and seldom used the privy, except on weekends. He also showered at the Camp and that did help.

We were happy in our hill-top home...Chic Sales' addition notwithstanding. We griped regularly about it, of course. I have a vivid impression of Bob's stamping back into the house on a Sunday morning, book in hand, with the terse comment that there was too strong an updraft for literature! Once every month I pinned Bobby down on the car seat with a wrapping blanket and set forth to La Jolla and the doctor's for a checkup of Buzz Wheels. The drive was always lovely for the weather was, almost without exception, mild and sunny. We zipped up hills, flew down dales that opened vistas of sea, coast, and sky truly breathtaking.

But it was all far too wonderful to last. In April, Bob received orders directing him to leave immediately for Fort Bliss, Texas.

I remained in Del Mar until Bob could find some sort of living quarters. He drove the car, taking an Army friend along to spell him off, and arrived safely in El Paso, Texas, having had but one major interruption to the journey. That occurred in the middle of the Arizona desert.

The car had begun to heat up and, of course, there was no house or gas station in sight. Bob's companion remembered having seen a gas station some distance back and offered to hike back for some water. Unfortunately, when he arrived he found the station had long since been abandoned and there wasn't a soul in sight. After prowling about with only the dim glimmer of the moon as light, he barked his shins on a pump, muttered a curse and then noticed unmistakable signs of dampness. Score one! The well-pump worked! But what to carry it in? After a diligent search, he came upon an antique and battered piece of chinaware, the counterpart of which reposed under the bed in every well-regulated home before the advent of modern plumbing. Even before he brushed away the dust from the ornate letters which read "Custer's

Last Stand," he knew what he'd found.

He filled it with water and, balancing it carefully, walked to the road to thumb a ride back. To his grim amusement, car after car passed him by, with the occupants glancing in astonishment at the object in his hand, chuckling.....and driving on. The cars were few and far between at that late hour of night and he began to despair of ever getting back when a battered old Model T rattled to a stop. The elderly driver spat energetically through a brush of stained whiskers, opened what remained of the door to let the water carrier in, and, without so much as a curious glance at the water receptacle, drove off! The old duffer probably thought it was a new secret weapon! They deserved an uneventful trip after that!

Two weeks after he arrived in El Paso, Bob wrote that he'd found a house near the Fort...and with indoor plumbing! Bobby and I arrived on the doorstep as soon as a train could get us there. Besides the bedroom, there was a large, screened front porch, an overfurnished living room and a dining room with ghoulish Indian heads glaring down like so many resentful jinns, and a kitchen with an irascible stove. As the weather in May was already very warm, we slept in the beds on the porch and remained very cool and comfortable as a result.

Bobby, at this time, was in the habit of waking at the ungodly hour of 5:30 a.m. It was still dark and as Bob didn't have to be up until 6:30, I would put Bobby in his playpen in the living room until breakfast time. This worked out very well except that, one time, the night lock on the intervening front door had unaccountably been left on. As I stumbled back to bed, after settling Bobby in his pen, my one-half opened eye beginning already to close, I failed to notice the lock, and shut the door with a resounding thump. Bobby soon after set up a howl for some toy out of reach and when I tried to re-enter the house from our bedroom wing---I couldn't! Frantic, I raised Bob and we both tried to open the door.....and then the porch windows. All were firmly locked. Bobby howled the louder.

Our landlord had a persecution complex and had erected tall gates around the house and a fence separating the front yard from the back. The only window we definitely knew was open was the bedroom window...which fell in the backyard section. I had on a flimsy nightgown that was more a gay gesture to propriety than a covering. Bob, at least, was fully clothed, even if the pajamas were of a gaudy hue and pattern.

We slunk off the porch and canvassed the situation. Nothing would do but we must climb over the intervening fence and into the backyard; then, Bob could hoist me in through the window. Bob leaped lightly over the fence...I almost hanged myself. After wrestling with my hindering nightie...trying to maintain my modesty as well as my foothold..I managed to get over. Bob huffed and puffed and by brute force thrust me through the window, giving my thinly clad backside a resounding swat that sent me crashing to the floor and certainly arousing any neighbors who were not already watching the spectacle. I staggered groggily to my feet, wobbled into the living room, quieted Bobby and unlocked the front door for a disgustingly amused husband.

When, after three weeks, we finally got the house clean enough to live in, having scrubbed every inch of the place, the landlord informed us that his estranged wife had decided to change her mind and return to him...so he would be needing the house. Our old enemy, Housing, leered evilly in our faces again.

We advertised and we hunted and were finally rewarded (we thought then) by finding a new but small cottage down the valley. In itself, the cottage was a pleasant enough little place, though the rent was exorbitant (\$65.00 per month!) and the immediate surroundings unbelievable.

The landlady, Mrs. Binks, had decided that the time was at hand to build an inexpensive house, rent it to Army people at prevailing high rents, and grow fat off the proceeds. To do so, she had simply moved her barnyard back a few feet and erected the house. Consequently, a quick grab from the kitchen window would provide chicken for dinner--or to the leeward, a rabbit. The bathroom made an excellent duck blind and if the house had been set back any farther, the cows would have been in the living room. As it was, the cacophonous chorus from the surrounding barnyard often made conversation --to say nothing of thinking--- an impossibility. To complete the bucolic scene, but a few feet from the front door were a brood of odoriferous turkeys to entertain us. In the heat of the summer, the combined "fragrance" from the critters was overwhelming.

The first day of our little barnyard home, I received the initial installment of an extended course in zoology. When Bob and I had nearly everything stowed away, I straightened up with a creak and a tired sigh and, pushing back straggles of hair with a grubby fist, stumbled toward the kitchen sink to scrape off some of the grime. Awaiting me were several outsize cockroaches! My screech of terror brought Bob on the double.

"Oh-h-h-h, honey," I quavered, pointing a trembling finger at the sink, "

What are those?"

"Cockroaches!" replied Bob with a grimace of repugnance. "We had lots of 'em at Camp Davis. Used to find them in our shoes!" (I

shuddered audibly.) "We had to put tin cans of coal oil under the legs of our beds so the roaches couldn't climb in."

"Oh, no!" I breathed. "We're surely not going to have them in bed with us!"

"Oh, I don't think so," said Bob practically, as he cold-bloodedly wiped out one particular branch of the genus, cockroach. "They generally stay around the sink where there're bits of food. We'll get some powder and sprinkle it around."

Somewhat comforted, I completed my ablutions and went into the bedroom to check Bobby. On the wall above his crib was some horrible little beast with a long, thin body and many, many long, long legs!

"Boberrt...B---obert..." I wailed, "here's another one!"

These, it turned out, were centipedes. And there was more than one of them! I counted an even dozen.

"D--do they b-b-bite?"

"Sure," came the matter-of-fact answer, accompanied by a loud swatting..."if they get close enough."

My teeth began to chatter.

Before that evening was over, I'd found red ants, black ants, water bugs, and a black widow spider. I shook into bed and lay there miserably wondering which guest would arrive first, the centipede, the cockroach...or that repulsive and sinister water bug. If any did, I was too tired to notice.

The next morning started out with a bang! when I stepped on a stink bug with my bare foot! These incredible little beasties seemed to be part beetle, since they had black brittle bodies, but their legs were like no others I'd ever seen. Their front two legs were very short, the back two were extremely long, so that the head almost scraped the ground and they seemed to moon the world with the rear. I don't know what the zoological name is for these bugs, but "stink bug" is an extremely apt one. On being crushed, they emit an odor that for pure stench and penetration would put a skunk to shame. I stepped unwittingly on many another but never again, thank God, in my bare feet. My nerves would never have stood it! As it was, my spinal cord twanged for an hour.

In time, I was forced to admit that "familiarity breeds contempt." I still am not exactly fond of the little monsters, but at least it takes a good deal more to make me scream.

The Binks family was a page out of "Tobacco Road." Mrs. Binks was a thin, wiry woman with the pendulous breasts of a woman who has bred a baker's dozen and nursed them all until they could vote. She ran her "farm"---and her family---with a whiplash efficiency, flogging---with actions as well as words---the clan into a compact nucleus. Mr. Binks had long ago submitted to the yoke imposed by his zealous wife and retreated into a world of his own, made pleasurable by drink. Mrs. Binks' hard-bitten philosophy was born of years of struggling for existence which left no time for the gentler pursuits of life. At variance with her coarse exterior was a deep religious streak, shared by her flock, that took expression in weekly revival meetings complete with fervent knee cracking and clamorous appeals to the Lord, as if they expected....if they made enough racket...to get a little personal attention.

Most of the children had flown the coop, leaving several grown daughters of lax morals, one teen-ager, Ellie, with a voracious appetite, and Frances, a snotty-nosed child with a nasty disposition, whose escutcheon would have been a perpetually sagging grey pants

crotch rampant on a field of eyes to keyholes.

When we had first arrived, we noticed that Mr. Binks wore a bulky bandage on his head. I commented on his misfortune to Mrs. Binks, who answered evasively that, "Th' ole man had a bit of a run-in." A week later we could have told volumes about that "Run-in."

The Binks were inordinately fond of beer and one memorable Saturday night, in celebration of the return of one of the daughters from a hospital where she'd but recently been "uh--operated" on, the Binks blew themselves to a case. The evening began calmly enough, but as more bottles became dead soldiers, the voices grew louder and more strident. Soon a full sized quarrel was on with each heaping insults increasingly vile upon the other's head. From words they sprang into action! Incensed by some epithet, the convalescing daughter hauled off and cold-cocked the old lady. Without pausing for breath or glancing at the prone form on the porch, the family shrieked louder, shaking threatening fists across the old lady's body until, with a groggy shake of the head, Mrs. Binks shakily arose. Glancing balefully at her malefactor, she returned the compliment and, not content with a knock-out, was all prepared to jump on the newly-operated uterus..."ta finish th' little bitch off!" Mr. Binks, who had wincingly buried his nose in his mug as blows were exchanged, now tried ineffectually to add a word and, for his pains, was conked with an "empty," which put him out of the party for the rest of the evening. Now the rowing members poured pell mell off the porch, screaming in terror as the old lady, wielding a large knife and shouting dire threats, chased them down the road and into the night.

The next morning, all seemed serene, although a few bruises and black eyes were in evidence....and...oh yes..Mr. Binks had evidently had another "run-in!"

The Sunday revival meeting was held on schedule, unmindful of the bacchanalian orgy of the preceding night, with the Binks, bandaged and iodined, rocking in their chairs in their fervent singing of "Bright...tun the corrrr..nur wherrrrrr yew are. . .!" As Mrs. Binks put it, they were "on fire for God!"

Mrs. Binks offered to let us use her washing machine in her basement each week--for a slight fee, of course. The mechanical age had not yet reached Mrs. Binks' basement. A washing machine of uncertain age there was, to be sure...and running water..but that was all. There was no drainage system of any description. The heavy wash tubs had to be carried from the backyard down the steep stairs, and when the washing was finished, back up again. But the most arduous part was not the carrying of the tubs, nor the washing, but the emptying of the machine and tubs, bucket by bucket up those tortuous stairs. Twenty-six bucketsful I carried up the basement steps and sloshed wearily into the drainage ditch every washday. My arches began to fall and my muscles to bulge like a lady bouncer's. This routine came to a precipitous end for a totally unexpected and startling reason.

Hanging clothes in such slipshod surroundings presented an unusual hazard, as an innumerable series of ancient and poorly boarded-over cess pools were placed directly under the clothesline. I had noticed the gradual settling of the ground there, but had put it

down to the shifting of the earth, moles, or anything else that my fancy clung to at the moment---until one day, with an armful of fresh sheets, I plummeted with a sickening crack and crunch into one of these ancient privies. The rotten boards had finally completely given way

and I had had the ill luck to be standing squarely on them! My arm caught the edge of the hole as I fell. I pulled myself frantically upward, horrified at the thought of the slimy ooze below, and finally, thoroughly terrified and exhausted, I crawled out. With my dirt-spattered sheets clutched to my chest, I ran back to the house as fast as I could.

I carried no more water. Neither did I ever again go within smelling distance of the clothesline.

Icebox trouble dogged our steps! One of the two ice-houses in El Paso burned down, leaving but one ice company to supply the many yawning boxes. Becoming arrogant with the monopoly, the remaining company delivered ice when and if they felt like it. Living so far from town, we were more often ignored than remembered, making it necessary for us to use our precious gas to get ice ourselves. Many were in the same predicament, and it was not at all unusual for cars waiting for ice to stretch in a line of from three to four blocks. The heat of the Texan summer caused our ice to melt at such a rapid rate, we had to make the trip every day. One day, while waiting in the endless line and fretting over the wasted gas, I hit on the scheme of turning off the motor until the car ahead was well in front, then starting the motor and pulling up---probably saving a teaspoonful of gas, I suppose. Unfortunately, one time when I did this, an ancient jalopy that had been hovering about the sidelines took the opportunity to swing in ahead of me. I was so enraged that I blindly pushed the gas pedal down to the floorboard and whacked the interloper a sound one on his rear. The driver never turned around, though he must have cracked his nose on the steering wheel. I felt considerably better. It wasn't until later I realized I'd probably done more damage to our car than to his or his nose.

Thus, our "outing" consisted mainly of jaunts to the ice house, getting our bumpers loaded, and making dribbly tracks back home to a warming ice-box. Charles Atlas could envy the muscles I developed carrying 50 lb. chunks of ice into the house when Bob wasn't there to do it. If times get tough, I shall simply stick a pick behind my ear, not take a bath for a month, and hire out as a super chipper of the Glacier Ice Co. of El Paso, Texas.

Via the grapevine, we heard that gas was to be obtained in Mexico by the "Joe sent us" system. Unfortunately, we didn't know Joe. The Binks owned a car, though, and never seemed to worry about their gas supply. I knew they would know where to find "Joe" if anybody did.

"Working hard?" I said cheerfully to Mrs. Binks one morning as I backed the car out.

"Hell's catoot, yes! she said, wiping her face with her sleeve and leaning a moment on her hoe. "Might jest as well be one o' them slave laborers in Germany as workin' my guts out here!"

"Know where I can get any gas in Mexico...and still be legal?"

"Sure, Cidarossa."

Warbling in high spirits at the bright day and the prospect of a full tank of gas, I drove down the valley to Cidarossa. The highway was lined with overshadowing splayed cottonwoods. From the road spread broad acres of fertile, irrigated land, green with growth. Now and then I passed an irregularly shaped adobe hut, the ancient door's flapping to and fro as half-naked children ran in and out or played in the dirt. There was little or no cultivation around these huts, so I supposed the men of the family worked for some other landowner. I stopped on the way to ask directions of a regal looking old Mexican woman with a black mantilla over her head. She couldn't understand English, but she did recognize the name of the town and obligingly pointed out the direction to me. I thanked her and drove on, my gas tank getting lower and lower until, like the farmer who said he went fast to get where he was going before he ran out of gas, I unconsciously speeded up.

Crossing the border, I bumpety bumped down the only --- and impossible ----road in the town to the nearest filling station. With much hunching of shoulders, waving of hands, and rolling of eyes, the proprietor explained that there was no gas to be found in Cidarossa that day, but if I cared to drive but a scant kilo farther, I would find a gas station that would undoubtedly have petrol.

I drove a good five miles before I sighted the station and drove up, the engine's giving a dying wheeze as the last drop of gas sputtered through the carburetor. I honked insistently for the attendant and then slumped disconsolately in the seat, entertaining myself pleasantly by envisioning my situation if this station failed to have gas. What an utterly stupid fool to have driven so far into a foreign country in search of gas that would hardly do more than get me home again! I was still gloomily scolding myself when the attendant appeared and, as if to dispel my melancholia, flashed me a white-toothed smile.....and filled up the tank!

I couldn't get backover the border fast enough. When Bob queried me as to the results of my trip, I replied tersely, "Joe was out."

Friends of ours were going, one Sunday, to one of the famous Juarez bull fights (\$1.00 on the shady side; 65 cts on the sunny) and wanted us to go along. Both having ignominiously weak stomachs, we declined in haste. Our friends returned to congratulate us on our decision.

There were many American G.I.'s there, they said, who upset the traditional attitude toward a bull fight by cheering wildly for the bull. "Come on Bessie!" they yelled. "Give Fancy Pants (the toreador) a kick in the slats!" The Mexicans who had enjoyed this sport for generations, ignored the stupid foreigners who didn't know a good, bloody sport when they saw one.

"What got me," said one of our friends, "was that that poor bull never had a sporting chance from start to finish. Jokers on mangy old plugs galloped alongside to stick spears in the poor guy; and if the bull managed to gore the nag--swell! Horse entrails or bull entrails...those lousy jigaboos cheered as if it were the world series. God! And then...when the bull was so weak it could barely move, with spears stickin' in him till he resembled a pickled peach, the Big Cheese strutted out and flapped some red petticoat in his face! Oh yeah...and when the bull sank dying to the ground, the Toreador stuck his sword in the bloody old neck, which, from the way that mob roared, you'd have thought was hard. That ended round one. Lots of the women...American women, anyway...couldn't stand it. We saw 'em get up with handkerchiefs to their faces and go out. One girl that passed us had tears running down her face and said to her husband as they went by...'How can anyone be so cruel?' Well....never again for us!"

It wasn't cruel to the Mexicans. It was sport. It was barbaric to us; butchery, not sport. Two attitudes, two peoples. They were entitled to their ways. If we didn't like it we could stay home. And we did.

I liked very much the Mexicans I ran across in the stores in Juarez. Once a month a group of us would farm out our infants and junket across the Mighty Rio Grand (a twin to the Mighty Los Angeles River), and do the shops. The clerks were very patient and helpful and talked English considerably better than any of us talked Spanish.

When my father, who sort of speaks Spanish, came to visit for a week, I took him on a tour of Juarez and to one shop in particular that was my favorite. Dad had a wonderful time bantering in Spanish with the sales girl. She asked at last if there were anything more we desired, "Si o no?"

"No, no," kidded my father, "you must never give the customer a chance to say no."

"Oh?" said the girl with a wink. "Well, is there anything more you wish, then, si o si?"

In the heat of the summer, Bob would come home to lunch and take Bobby and me back with him so we could spend the hottest part of the day in the coolest of the Club pool. Bobby loved the water and gurgled and splashed in delight. The pool lay in a small enclosed part hard by the Club itself. There were tables and benches generously shaded by the many trees. A large sand pile was at one end of the pool, with children of all ages gayly filling bright buckets with scoopfuls of clean, white sand and chattering like magpies. I never let Bobby in the sand box. Sand represented food to him.

The pool, itself, was good sized and crystal clear. Cabanas stretched along one side, a shaded patio on the other. I felt myself quite the Lady of Leisure as I stretched luxuriously in the warm sun or paddled about in the water with Bobby's gurgling over my shoulder.

Sometimes, I would do my shopping before going to the pool to cool off. Fort Bliss had a splendid Post Exchange; fresh meat, fresh vegetables, dry goods of all kinds were there in abundance. I would plump Bobby into one of the baskets and wheel him about at the same time I loaded the bottom basket with household necessities. It was late in the summer, when Bobby was walking, that I had a most embarrassing experience.

Bobby, at a year, was far too interested in the wondrous sights he saw afoot to be at all tractable. He was especially fascinated by the meat department. There was no gate barring the entrance to the space behind the counter, so Bobby would stand there wide-eyed, watching the men in their white aprons streaked with red, cut and wrap the juicy meat. He gave no indication of wishing to go in on the sawdust floor and I grew negligent in my supervision.

One day, he suddenly decided he'd like to see more and, without a sound, he stepped inside and began running on his short little legs toward the nearest meat block. With a cry of dismay I plunged after him and in a horrible moment realized that the sawdust that so fascinated Bobby was spread on a well-greased floor! Bobby's stubby little pins flew out from under him and he fell flat on his nose. My legs flew out from under me and I lit on my toosh with a resounding thud! I was crimson to the part in my hair. The butchers picked us both up and dusted us off, with nary a smile, though their faces cracked to prevent it.

I spent days picking sawdust out of our hair and clothes and always after that, when I came to the counter, I was treated to broad smiles that I strongly suspected weren't because of my allure.

Besides our old friends the centipedes, water bugs, and cockroaches, the hot summer days brought us myriads of flies in the day and mosquitos at night. Bobby's crib was elaborately covered with netting and still the mosquitos nipped him. I poured enough of that sheep dip called "Oil of Citronella" on the sheets to asphyxiate anything --the skeeters lunched the more furiously. I finally sprayed his room thoroughly everynight...or rather, Bob did...after he hit on the scheme of playing anti-aircraft gun to the Mosquito 38's. I'd hear "On tar-r-r-ger!" followed by a furious whooshing. I offered to paint a row of defeated skeeters on the sprayer but was given a wounded glance so resisted adding that I'd willingly give a medal, too. Nothing intimidated the flies! ---neither swatting nor swearing, nor spraying nor praying---not even Bob's anti-aircraft! Flies remained the eternal bug-bear. Dozens of them would wait slyly above the front door until someone opened it, then swarm in with noisy triumph. It became a psychological compulsion with me to open and shut the door quickly, penny pinching on time and space. I was eternally explaining and apologizing to friends who had been a bit miffed at being yanked unceremoniously into the house and just as rudely pushed out on departure and the screen door slammed tightly in their astonished faces...almost taking off the ends of their noses.

At Bobby's birthday party that autumn, the screen door was opened

and stayed open so many times that when the guests had left the ceiling was black with flies. With a sigh of despair, I put Bobby in his pen in the kitchen and set to work with Bob's spray gun. I scientifically tracked and targeted, but...since I never got "on target" till the blasted fly was directly over my head...I succeeded in getting most of the spray up my nose. Finally, trigger-happy, I squirted indiscriminately in all directions, till the fast densing mist made great onion-sized tears chase each other down my cheeks. Panting, I halted to view my destruction. Hurrah! the flies lay vanquished on the floor.

I washed my eyes and fixed Bobby's dinner before I went back into the room to sweep up the corpses. I had waited too long. The "dead" flies were very much alive...and once again on the ceiling! I went through the whole miserable business again, this time taking care to sweep the black heap out the door.

I was so aware of the loathsome diseases and germs flies could carry that I couldn't rest for a moment when one was in the house. In the evening, we would be unable to see through our screen doors or windows; flies covered the entire screens in garish patterns. That these flies ate and were bred in the stinking piles of offal in the barnyard around us, there was no doubt. When Ellie Binks, who had an appetite that yelled "tapeworm," would come out to milk, lay her eternal tid-bit carelessly down where the flies could share it and then pick it up again and munch....I shuddered!

One day Mrs. Binks mentioned that Ellie was home from school. She had come home complaining of fever and stiffness in her joints. "Flies," I thought, "dung heaps, bits of food...flies.." Could it be? I caught my breath. Infantile paralysis?

"Have you called a doctor?! I asked anxiously.

"Na," replied Mrs. Binks laconically, "I give her a good hidin' t'other day. She's jist stiff. Hell," she added plaintively, "I cain't go puttin' our no hard money to no sawbones jest cuz a kid farts crossways."

That evening, Mrs. Binks thumped on our door in high dudgeon. Ellie's muscles had gone into spasms and Mrs. Binks had changed her mind about calling in medical aid. The doctor had diagnosed the trouble as Polio and said that immediate injections of penicillin were the only thing that would save the girl's life. They were very expensive, he had added.

"An' I bet he'd a jest let 'er die, the old bastard," she thundered tearfully, "if I hadn't scratched up the dough. Ellie shoulda had that free...jest makes me sick thinkin' a all them dimes I give.....!"

I knew the time had come for us to move and move at once. Where, I didn't know.

I searched diligently each wday with the car and one day found myself on the opposite side of the Fort, in a bleak, wind-swept section of land called, euphemistically, "Sunrise Acres." Upon inquiry at a small grocery, I pantingly nosed out scent after scent and at long last unearthed a dumpy little rock house so squat it seemed its arms were desperately hugging the mother earth and looking pitifully to the gnarled scrub oak that sprawled closeby, in comic distortion, for protection. The unprepossessing outside wasn't a patch on the interior! The house was obviously an erstwhile chicken coop

still in the rudimentary stages of conversion. But....there was a large living room, two coops that would serve as bedrooms, an indoor bathroom and a kitchen....with a refrigerator! I knew Bob would scream the place down when he saw what a squalid hole it was ...but there were no cows, no chickens...and there was and electric refrigerator! I paid a prompt deposit on the \$55 a month rental (utilities not included), and said we'd move in the next day. Mrs. Binks was in a fine rage at our moving out and screamed after our car as we left:

"Good riddance! I sure ain't never goin' to rent to no more Shavetails!"

We fervently hoped she was right.

Bob viewed the house he'd agreed to rent sight unseen in grim silence. As his looks grew blacker and blacker, I pointed out the bright and gleaming refrigerator.

"An outhouse!" he exploded. "It's an outhouse...with a...with a...refrigerator!" And stamped off to unpack.

The miserable dwelling began to take on a semblance of civilization as we hung pictures and tucked knick-knacks here and there like gay bows in mouse colored hair. The bilious green sofa and overstuffed chair suffered from acute prolapsis of the springs, so that sitting unsuspectingly on the treacherous pieces left the sitter with his rump bouncing on the floor and his startled eyes peering from between his knees.

The living room rug was so thin it doubled up like a dowager's chin at each step. As there were no windows on one whole side of the house, the natural lighting in the rooms was appropriate only for its original purpose. The kitchen had no windows at all. There was a plethora of nauseating little insects, eager to make acquaintance and there was no stove, only a hot plate and an electric oven. The brooder had bunksk, a dresser, and two windows. Bobby's "room" had a window.

The "house" had no central heating. There was only a small wood stove in the living room and a broken down kerosene heater which delivered more smoke than heat. I was hanging wash the first time it smoked and when I opened the stove door a stifling wave of heavy, black fumes enveloped me. After airing, a fine layer of oily black soot covered everything. All our clothes had to be sent to the cleaners...every curtain, every table scarf...everything exposed had to be laundered...and by hand, for there was no washer to be used at all....not even in a basement.

Thiswas home!

Texas is the "land of the Sun." That's what they said, that's what the Chamber of Commerce said. They said that. Yet there was one particular week that winter when we thought we'd never see the sun again. It rained. It rained harder. It rained much, more, and most without stopping. I had had the car to shop with during one of these deluges and was on my way to pick up Bob...watching the road immediately ahead, since the Post streets unfortunately were not all level and I couldn't remember which were and which weren't. I was doing rather well, the car windows being splashed only half way up when, with a horrible sucking sound, the car sank into a shockingly

real mirage. Water sloshed over the car and when the tidal wave had receded, I saw the car was irrevocably stalled in several feet of water. I bailed myself out and hurried to the nearest phone to call Bob. It took an army truck to pull me out and an hour's wait till the motor was dry enough to start again. Aside from a series of similar cloud bursts all winter, we had sunshine all right. It never rained all summer.

But we had wind. I was stalled as thoroughly and as often by sandstorms as I ever had been by rain. I think I preferred the rain. Rain evaporated. Sand stuck with a tenacity beyond belief.. It made our eyes sore and our scalps grimy; it seeped into the car, into the house, into everything in the house. Dusting the house I gave up as a futile job while the sandstorm season was on. The larger piles I swept up; the smaller I swept into a corner until more sloughed in. We didn't need to eat spinach to get plenty of sand in our food.

As I gradually got my household in running order, once again, I began to look around to see what kind of neighbors I'd drawn. It took me but a little while to realize we'd hit the jackpot!

On one side was a group of small cottages and in the nearest lived a Sergeant Wilson, wife, and three and a half year old daughter, Sheila. Sheila was one of the most beautiful children I have ever seen. She was of petite build with platinum hair, rosy skin, and eyes like the blue of the sky. There were few children for her to play with, so although Bobby was scarcely over a year old, she took a great shine to him and they became inseparable companions.

Almost every morning I would hear a light rap at the door and Sheila would eagerly inquire if Bobby were up yet. If he was, there would be a great scramble while he tried to get through the door and I tried to dress him. We usually compromised and I became adept at fastening buttons and putting on sweaters at a dead run. Sometimes she would arrive late in the morning when Bobby would be down for his nap and on hearing that he was still asleep, she would shake her bright head in disgust and say, "Oh 'at lazy boy!"

Sheila was old enough to understand the reality of "let's pretend." As I hung my wash daily, she and Bobby would run and tumble about my feet, or perhaps, try to "help," which could only result in dirtying the clothes or losing the clothespins. So I tried to distract them with the idea of make-believe. Sheila caught on quickly and soon appeared with one of her mother's discarded purses, which she carried with great pride and seriousness. "I'm going to the store, Miz Pwins," she'd say. "Now do tell me if there's anythin' I can get you."

"Yes," I said one morning. "I do believe I need a dozen eggs." She scampered off, Bobby in tow, to do the "shopping." In a short while, she and Bobby returned with their hands full of small stones. Sheila was walking slowly, handling her rocks carefully; Bobby bounced along unaware that the rocks he so nonchalantly carried were now precious eggs. Sheila transferred her "eggs" to my hands, murmuring that she did hope they were fresh. Bobby spied a dog in the next yard, dropped his burden and galloped off. "Oh," scolded Sheila, "that Bobby Pwins has dwopped all his eggs ...and look!...they've bwoke on the gwound!"

I was scarcely inside the house with my empty wash basket when I heard that light tap at the door and, opening it, saw the two grubby imps standing there with their hands full of dry, sneezy weeds. "I jes thought you'd need some buttuh, Mis ^Pwins," chattered Sheila. If it had been anything but that hay I would have thanked her and taken it into the house but I scarcely could see dribbling bits of grass across my newly swept floor. I tried to extricate myself by saying that I had no place to put it, but Sheila was too fast for me. "Put it in yoah icebox...wight away," she cautioned. I could see she was quite ready, if not eager, to come in and do it for me, so I gave up, solemnly thanked her, and withdrew with my "butter."

We seldom saw the people that lived in the cottage on the other side of us. I exchanged a few non-committal monosyllables with Mrs. Huff while we hung clothes, but knew her not a whit better after living near her for three months than I did the first day. Mrs. Wilson's husband was in the same outfit as Sgt. Huff's, and having lived there longer, Mrs. Wilson knew her slightly better.

"Just what kind of a woman is that Mrs. Huff?" I asked curiously of Mrs. Wilson one day, knowing her reputation for devastating frankness. I wasn't disappointed.

"Her?" snorted Mrs. Wilson. "She's a Christer."

I was still at sea.

"Religious, y'know. Neither she nor her husband go to movies, dance, play cards, drink, smoke, or swear. She won't even cut off the split ends of her hair because she thinks it's heathenish to ever cut your hair. Her only vice is sponging, I guess-----and can she do that! She'll look through me for weeks and then, when she wants something, will come over to 'call' and butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. By the way, she thinks you and your husband are already sizzling."

"For heaven's sakes why?" I asked in astonishment. I'd scarcely seen the woman, let alone been blasphemous around her.

"She makes herself an investigating committee of one, and when anyone around her has a party, she throws a cowl over her head, jumps on her broomstick and makes the rounds of the windows. You had something going on last Saturday, didn't you?"

"Two couples," I replied, "...and a case of coke, a bottle of rum and some cheese crackers."

"That was enough. Mrs. Huff made you out a first class ticket to hell!"

Mrs. Huff, it seemed, not only eschewed the usual vices, but she didn't even read a book for fear of what she might find. At least that's what she said. When she left, the next occupants found a well-thumbed volume of a book entitled, "How to Get What you Want!"

Measles struck! Bobby had been fussy all one Sunday and when I bathed him he grew red as a lobster. I called the doctor who said to keep him warm, away from other children, and that he'd be out to see him. We read our texts on rearing children and found Measles could cause eye damage so Bob and I brought his crib into the living room and put him in it, after carefully hanging blankets over every window and turning off all the lights. We could barely see one hand in front of the other and barked our shins on every stick of furniture we passed. Bobby thought the whole affair a great lark and delightedly climbed precariously out on the edge of his crib, just for the fun of having one of us run to save him with a sharp squeek of fear. As a matter of fact, he had more pep than either of us.

"Heck," said Bob, "he'll drive us nuts and shake that crib to pieces in the bargain. Let's dress him and let him run around."

So we did. The first thing we knew he had scampered up on the sofa, snatched the blanket aside and was gaping in unmitigated glee at the bright world outside. With shouts of horror, we hauled him down and replaced the blanket. From then, until the doctor arrived, was one nightmarish struggle to keep him from pulling the blankets from the window and peering out.

The doctor's arrival calmed things down considerably. He was vastly amused by the elaborate precautions and assured us that Bobby had only the light, or three day type, Measles and it was scarcely necessary to go to so much trouble. I thought surely one or the other of us would catch it, or Sheila who had been playing with Bobby, but no one did. Bobby had the doubtful distinction of being the only speckled sprout in the neighborhood.

I am amazed now that Bobby ever came through that winter alive. Most of the houses were heated by coal oil. Their oil drums stood outside, the spigots dripping continuously like unwiped noses. To catch the waste, many had attached small cans to the snouts. Whether Bobby would be thirsty at the time, or whether his depraved palate craved coal oil, I'll never know. At any rate, I more than once caught him with the Wilson's catch pail tipped up to his lips. I bribed, I scolded, I pleaded, and I punished. Still he persisted. Mrs. Wilson put the pail away when Bobby came out to play. He retaliated by turning the spigot on full force and soaking himself in the downpour. There was nothing to do but be sure he was in my sight every minute. Until I could get him interested in something less lethal, the dirt piled up in the house.

The days that it neither sanded nor flooded were lovely. It was truly a joy to go out into the bright sun, my wash basket balanced on one hip, to hang my daily dozen. Sunrise Acres nestled at the foot of a range of mountains...hills, if you came from the Northwest. In fair weather, deliciously light breezes would sweep down from these hills to gently buffet the clothes on the line until they smelled as sweet as clover. In foul weather, cyclonic drafts roared down from their mountain fastnesses to scream about our house until we thought it would collapse about our ears. These winds reached an intensity great enough to make walking a problem for an adult and impossible for a child. Bobby loved to be out in them and I sometimes took him when I went to hang diapers...which usually were blown off the line and across the road into the garbage gulch. Bobby would turn his face up to the howling wind in sheer delight; it blew so hard he couldn't even open his eyes. A sudden strong gust would send him head over heels like a wee brown tumbleweed and leave him in a heap, laughing helplessly at this unpredictable force.

It was on one of the blustery days, with the breeze blowing what little meticulous curl was left in my hair, and flapping the wet diapers in my face as I tried to hang them, that I mused on our life in this great, wide land and decided that perhaps our existence wasn't so bad after all. My cheery thoughts were sharply shattered by the roar of a large truck as it thundered into the driveway, stopped with a huge grunt and disgorged....to my horror....a pregnant cow and a bunch of cheeping chicks

"Ye Gods! We're doomed to live in another barnyard," I thought in panic.

We were.

The rest of the long chicken house, only a part of which had been boarded up to make our house, became the barn and the atmosphere changed from being quietly bucolic to noisily bovine.

Bobby and Sheila were wild about the cow and, soon after, the calf....but the chickens were their favorites! Any chicken mad enough to fly the coop was chased by two screaming little demons until her beady eyes almost popped out of her head. On the chicken scale of you-peck-me-I'll-peck-the-next-weakest, one particular hen was at the bottom of the social ladder. So she regularly flew the fence, reasoning (as if chickens could!) that inside she was both chased and pecked and outside merely chased. For a few days I never had to worry where Bobby and Sheila were ---their yips of glee betrayed them. However, their aim soon changed from mere chasing to catching! They were mighty shrewd about it, too! I watched them one day as, by dint of forcing the hen into an ever smaller corner, they finally had her cornered. With a beautiful smile on his face, Bobby lunged forward to hug the captured fowl, succeeded only in grabbing her around the rear portion, and then gave a mighty squeeze! That hen shot out of his arms like wet soap and, cackling frenziedly, her wattle shaking in maidenly indignation and terror, she flapped back into the coop and fell exhausted!

I suppose the landlady figured that any eggs the hen might have had had been scared plumb out of her and that if she partook of much more violent exercise she'd be all muscle. So Bobby and Sheila's feathered playmate made her last appearance calmly surrounded by dumplings.

With their gay hen gone, Bobby and Sheila turned to the cow and her calf. They were entranced by the various physical functions of the animals and frightened by the loud bawling of the calf. As long as the calf was in the barnyard, I didn't worry about their trying to get inside. But the calf was sold.

The next morning, when I went in search of Bobby, I found him and his accomplice... in the cow yard! They were a revolting sight! Tiring of watching the old cow monotonously chew her cud, burp, and re-chew, they had turned to the delights of the yard itself and had sloughed back and forth through piles of freshly minted manure! Bobby had it in his shoes, on all his clothes...and in his hair! With a detached thought born of horror, I wondered briefly if I could just pretend he wasn't mine.

There was no guilt on their faces when I marched them out. The difference between mud and manure did not make an impression on them....mentally. I sent Sheila home and dumped Bobby in the bathtub, clothes and all! I scrubbed him through four washings and twice as many rinsings and still, for days, that indefinable aura of dung followed wherever he went.

As if to compensate for all this grief, a most wonderful couple, Bob and Louise Smith, moved into the house next to us. They were from Oklahoma and had a small daughter four months old. We became fast friends at once and shared many of our evenings and outings together.

Louise Smith was a pretty girl whose sense of the ridiculous was as zany as my own and, loath to be apart when we could be giggling together, we got into the habit of breakfasting together. Louise was

a cross word puzzle addict and I soon became infected. I would clean house while Bobby played in the early morning and then, when he was safely snoring, would snatch up the morning puzzle and zip over to the next cottage. Or Louise would bring her battered coffee pot to our place....she didn't care for my "Dutch" coffee any better than the "Home" girls. With this new and gay companionship the days whirled by.

To celebrate the promotion of both Bobs, one evening we went together to Juarez to take in the hot spots. We had heard various and lurid tales of some of these smoky dens, where life was raw and the whisky rawer. One place, in particular, had been closed down at last because the proprietor, seeing that business increased as the dancing girls' garb decreased, had pared his costume expenditure down to an erasure. When the girls were nabbed by the local gendarmerie, the average costume consisted of two teeny rosettes and a Bull Durham bag.

It took considerable time and red tape for us to get over the International Bridge, as we had to swear to about everything swearable. We sympathized with the U.S. Army Sergeant ahead of us who, when finally asked his nationality, snapped, "Brooklyn."

We went to a fairly modern representative of the genus, Speakeasy, where too many tables crowded around a splintery dance floor, occupied by night clubbers of all nationalities and hues. One couple next to us argued vehemently the better part of the evening until the man angrily threw down a five dollar bill. The woman picked it up and out they went together.

Many soldiers were there in various stages of inebriation and as it came time for the gaudily advertised floor show, they began to stamp their feet and shout, "Bring on the gurrlls! The gurrlls! We want the gurrlls!"

I said to Bob that the floor show would have to go some to beat the audience.

I wasn't disappointed.

The "gurrlls" were six pudgy Latins, with broad fannies and thick ankles, undressed in scant grass skirts and scraps of brightly colored cloth that suggested brassieres. The lack of facial expression of any kind was remarkable. The dance was a pavanne...done to a hootchy kootchy tune. The dancers, ranged in two uninspired rows of three like a girls' drill team, collectively took a ponderous step forward every four measures and then, with an air of great deliberation, shook the marimbas they held, much as one would empty the garbage. This wild orgy continued until the musicians were either through the hootchy kootchy....or exhausted. After expecting sleek south of the border beauties with high busts and flashing limbs...in fiery dances of their race..we felt we'd been abruptly deflated.

After several cherry phosphates....which passed as brandy alexanders....we returned over the International Bridge well ahead of the 11:00 p.m. deadline. Louise and I had great fun on the ride home teasing the boys by telling them if they said one derogatory word about our figures, we'd leave them flat and join a Juarex chorus line.

Sunrise Acres had a one man Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Jenks, and there was just nothing, according to Mr. Jenks, that Sunrise Acres wasn't or couldn't become. Since Louise and I had numerous gripe sessions over the squalid conditions of the district, we were greatly amused when he would corner us down at the corner grocery and expound on the wonders of the sand on which we lived.

"Yep," he would say nodding his head sagely, "Once you've lived in Sunrise Acres, you'll always come back. Always come back. Gets in your blood."

"Say," said Louise aside to me, "the only way they'll get me back in this hole is on a slab."

"You know'er," I agreed. "And the only thing from here that gets in your blood is sand."

Mr. Jenks also had unwinking faith that anything in this paradise of his would grow, anythingif you just watered it enough. Mrs. Wilson gave vent to a few choice remarks on hearing of this, since she'd been carefully nursing a garden long beset with cutworms, slugs, snakes, and, finally, rabbits. Water or no water, she never developed a carrot. We decided Mr. Jenks had meant weeds.

When we reported these happenings to our husbands, Bob Smith remarked in his slow Oklahoma drawl, "Wa-a-al, all I can say is, that if the world ever needed an enema....right here is where they ought to insert the tube!"

Bob went home to Washington leave in December of that year. Not wishing to travel anyplace with the baby that wasn't absolutely necessary, Bobby and I stayed where we were. Anyway, I knew it could not be long before overseas orders would overtake Bob and I'd be going home for the duration, plus.

Bob borrowed a revolver, showed me how to load and shoot it, and left me "in charge." Bobby and I really got along splendidly except that for the first few nights after Bob left I became strangely afraid. The settling of the coals in the stove was enough to jerk me upright in bed, shaking like a leaf. The branches of the tree outside brushed against the house; the wind caused mysterious creaks, cracks, and groans. I never knew the nights could be so long. I lay with my knees under my chin, the gun clenched in my hand----it's a wonder I didn't shoot my toe off.

One night I was sure someone was trying to climb in Bobby's room. I rushed in wild-eyed, brandishing my revolver....no one there. With a burst of unfelt bravado, I poked my head out of the window and piped..."If anybody's prowling around here...I'll shoot 'em deader'n a nit!" Somewhat comforted, I went back to bed, my revolver still under my chin, ready to defend my family from whatever might come.

Everybody knew Bob had given me the gun and, knowing how little tutelage I'd had, gave me a wide berth in the late night hours when I might be "trigger-happy." One evening, however, the landlady did have reason to knock at the door. I heard a robust pounding and a voice shouting frantically, "It's me....Mrs. Prins...don't shoot...it's me....for God's sake don't shoot!"

Bob, at this time, was Camouflage Officer of the Post, and in line with his work studied booby traps, which intrigued him beyond the limits of sanity. He brought home hilarious tales of how some of the boys of the Section had fastened a booby trap to the starter of the WAC messenger's jeep, when she had stopped in at the office to deliver a bulletin. I gathered that the poor girl about jumped out of her hide when, after stepping casually on the starter, an ungodly WHOMP! almost lifted her off the seat.

Bob came home full of the devil after this successful escapade, itching to pull a booby on somebody. I flatly refused to be the victim, so he planned to plant the booby on Bob Smith's car, parked

almost directly outside. When he was sure the Smiths were asleep, Bob crept out and tied the trap to the front wheel.

The next morning, we could hardly wait for Smith to go to work! We hid behind our living room curtains like two mischievous school children and held our breaths with suspense as he climbed into his car, shut the door, stepped on the starter, and pulled away. WHOOMP! We involuntarily jumped, then watched with broad grins as the dust slowly cleared away and Smith's puzzled mien emerged from the car. He stooped, looked under the car, and to our astonishment, slowly pulled fortha rabbit! Our jaws gaped in disbelief. Smith looked even more incredulous. He glanced up, perplexed, saw our silly faces gaping at the window; the freakishness of the situation struck us all simultaneously....we stood there, shrieking with laughter like gibbering idiots!

Gasping for breath, Smith explained that he had hit something on his way home the previous night and it must have been the rabbit that had caught on the wheel. Wiping our streaming eyes, we agreed that for sheer wizardry, the trick couldn't be beaten....nor repeated.

The most tragic part of Army Life is not the continuous trouble of moving, nor the miserable scrambling for living quarters...but the leaving of friends behind. Letters are sorry substitutes for snug breakfasts mulling over puzzles, wild games of bridge, and practical jokes. We had been in El Paso the longest of any place in our Army career, so that leave-taking seemed the hardest of all. We had griped and growled for a year about the exigencies of Texas life, but found that when the time came to pull up stakes, the country was unbearably dear. We had really had a glorious year, but.....the Army doesn't ask whether you desire to change stations.

Bob received his orders to transfer to the Armored Corps and report to Fort Knox, Kentucky, in the spring. The plans were to train the men for six weeks and then ship them overseas as Armored replacement officers. Therefore, there was little use in planning to have Bobby and me join him. The only course open, the inevitable path, was to return home to my parents in Washington state and hope that Bob would be granted some sort of a leave before going overseas.

This leave-taking was not nearly so difficult as the initial one on Bob's entry into the Army. We had three marvelous years behind us which would give us chuckling material for a good many years to come. And then there was so much to be done ---clothes to be washed and cleaned, shoes mended, brass bucked, and the always present Army red tape to be gone through by the bolt. So, in a flurry of last minute admonitions and best wishes, he was off....and once again I was an Army widow.

I had small time to grieve. Dunning the railway companies for transportation home, plus keeping Bobby out of the cow yard, beside getting our multitudinous belongings together, kept me hopping.

I had understood that the quartermaster department would pack us but, at the last moment, I found that some new ruling made us ineligible and I was left alone to pack as best I could. Unfortunately, I had burned almost all my accumulated store of cardboard cartons to keep my toes warm, thinking I'd not be needing them. Bob Smith, Lord bless him! saved my life by uncovering several cartons of theirs and bringing home from the Post a large box of coffinlike proportions. It was ample and I packed it until the sides bulged like a chipmunk's cheeks.

Louise was invaluable in helping to to up last minute things, and especially in making the long trek down to the railway station to check all the plunder....a twenty minute trip that took us a round hour! The baggage compartment of the Smith coupe was already filled with a spare tire, well battened down; we had to grunt like a herd of bison to get my trunk over the tire and then seriously doubted if we'd ever get it to the station. Rope had long since given out and since twine would scarcely hold it, we started off with it as it was, hoping against hope it would stay in. Every few blocks, Louise would stop the car and I'd run out and around to see if the trunk was still with us. So up hill and down vale, through traffic, and finally to the station went this unique contraption...luggage piled all about, an oversized trunk wobbling in the rear, and a sooty-nosed, wild-eyed woman jumping out regularly to give the inoffensive trunk a punch.

The Smiths saw us off on the train, early on a cool, foggy morning as the sun was just beginning to sift through the light mist in shimmering rays. I chattered, joked, laughed gaily...waving vigorously...a lump in my throat...as we moved slowly away from a year of memories.

While awaiting Bob's discharge from the Army and our return to civilian life, I avidly read "To Rent" ads. One, in particular, I am saving. It sounds like just the sort of thing for which our life in the Army has prepared us.

HOUSES FURNISHED

One-bedroom cottage; free rent to family if man, woman, or child will help milk goats 6 days a week. Experience unnecessary if willing to learn. Phone or see Brushwood Gulch Goat Dairy.

Well....why not? We've done everything else!