

Her Man in the Navy Blues

by Sheila Luecht

Wistfully she turned the pages of the old album. It was something she did not do often, but today she had a fairly good excuse. She was going to be packing this stuff all up. She was going to empty the huge black trunk that stood under the stairs in the basement. She was going to finally get rid of some of the things in it, if she dared.

There it was among so many things that had to do with her life. Long ago now it seemed, but really, was it so very long ago? It was before husband and children and dogs and cats and a household in Illinois. It was another time, when the world was at war, it was her time.

Her time? Yes, when she was her own person, subject only to what her parents might think, but proud enough and strong enough to go her own way. It was a different kind of life, not the one they all chose. It was a life where she made her own decisions, the decision to be a "she goin' sailor", as one beau had suggested.

Her life to that point had been an exercise in some sort of independence. She did not, after all, work in the family business to support them all as her sisters and brothers once did. The depression was over and everyone could now breathe a bit easier. No, she had a job as a comptometer operator. She was skilled in something and it helped her get a decent job. She lived at home and saved her money. She even took vacations at a Dude Ranch.

So she joined the Navy for a number of reasons. Well, we were at war and it was a patriotic thing to do. She was not going to get married yet, as there had been a glitch in a courtship started at that Ranch some time earlier. His mother did not seem to want her son to marry. So she joined the Navy. She became a WAVE. After some training at Hunter College in New York, she strutted her stuff down Fifth Avenue with the rest of them, all on parade.

She made some good friends and had some great adventures. Beer drinking in Milwaukee and all sorts of girl stuff too. It was quite possible, at least at that time, this was going to be the time of her life.

Here she sat staring at that picture. That one picture where she is walking down a city street with a sailor on her arm. Not the Airman she married mind you, a sailor. It was Charles.

Charles had wrapped this northern girl around his finger with his southern charm. He was a gentleman and treated her as a fine lady. She never mentioned his last name. Only mentioned how much his mother loved him and how kind she was to her. Quite the opposite she experienced with the Airman whom she had originally met at the Dude Ranch and who once called her a "she goin' sailor". What was that again? "No girl of mine, is going to be a she goin' sailor!" And of course that was precisely what she did and that is precisely how Charles entered the picture.

Charles, not Chuck, Charles. Breathe it in ladies, and expel it with wavy dark blond hair and chiseled features. Charles, the man with dancing eyes, strong arms, and long, long legs.

What might it have been like, all right; a life with this smooth southern boy? How might it have been to be Mrs. Charles.....whatever his last name was. The picture stayed in the black paged book and now long after she has died, it looks out to me. Two young whipper snappers, out to join the world, smiling and laughing, as only youth could do. In wartime, the time when it could all come apart very soon, for young people.

In that time when the trunk was getting cleared out and when it became only the empty shell of what had once been so important, many things hit the match. She burned an old black negligee, a picture competing with the likes of a Vargas girl and other things that only she would know or remember. Charles however, survived the inferno. Protected in her Navy album. He remained the eternal beau, the one who could not be soiled by the realities of a long relationship, such as the man who had seen her through four children and a life of security, travel and some prestige. No he was

the the man in the Navy blues with the beautiful smile, who just once was.

