

SARA

Edward (Tab) Tablak

Sara

He went to the desk and removed a folded paper that appears to have been opened often in the past. Opening it lovingly, as he had many times, he read:

So I want to thank you for life's greatest gift

Our deep, enduring love

A love that is rooted in things that last

Dedicated to my Romeo

Love, Sara

Preface to my memoirs

A note to my daughter and grandchildren and any friends who may read these words:

David. The love of my life convinced me a few years ago that rewriting my journal notes into a book form might make it easier for you to understand and know a deeper me.

He was certain that no other woman at this time in history had dared to compete in a man's world and risen to the top in such a brief time. I think he exaggerated but he felt that it was important for you to know this.

While the order of this memoir is somewhat chronological, it was not my intent to detail my life. My journal is more complete. Here, I hoped to present the important events and persons who strongly influenced and shaped me. I need the support of so many in order to move through the struggles and biases that faced any woman in the business world. Because of that support was I able to me to make some contributions to humanity while I was enriched by those around me.

Those of you closest to me know the stories of my childhood, the humble beginnings in western Pennsylvania and my university years. You have made me repeat stories of the war years, particularly of my great love affair with David during our years at Pearl Harbor. I am sure that particular story has been lived out by thousands of other couples who came together during the war years.

David believed it was my life after the World War II that might serve my readers in some positive manner. You must know that all that has been accomplished would not have happened without David's devotion and support.

I have asked David, if I predecease him, to edit my first draft and add any event from my journal that he believes might enrich this memoir. If not David, then it must be Maria.

Sara Komar Sellech

Ed. Note

Sara was like a white star nova, exploding and burning brightly for the world to see until circumstances decreased her energy but not the love. As you will discover, her creativity and passion to serve was like a beacon that brought supporters like the star in the east brought shepherds and wise men.

Chapter 1. Autumn 1945

I was doing some personal evaluation one evening lying in bed awake after David had fallen asleep. The evening was memorable ending a day celebrating our first wedding anniversary.

While having pre dinner drinks, we were considering my immediate vocational choices. For the immediate future, I was to be the bread winner since David was enrolled in the law school at Georgetown. I wanted to use this time to launch a career as well as provide near term income.

Although few women of our era considered being both a mother and a career woman, David had encouraged me to try.

We discussed the fact that this was a man's world. Most of the women who had worked in industry during the war would now be replaced by men returning from the war front. The role for women in business or public life was restricted by the old traditions which portrayed women as inferior and pigeon-holed to the kitchen and the bedroom.

David was an exception. He defined our marriage as a partnership and constantly had told me that I should never limit myself because of current beliefs.

We had agreed to focus on my career during our dinner date tomorrow evening and I wanted to be ready.

I asked myself. Where am I, Sara Sellech? What skills have I learned?" I started to giggle because the first thing that popped into my mind was my ability to please David, particularly in our bedroom. I got to laugh so hard that the bed was shaking and David stirred. I eventually got a grip on myself but I had been reminded that regardless of all other ambitions I had to be a good partner.

On with the evaluation. I decided that I had proven to be a good leader and manager of a team of co-workers while serving in the Waves during the war. I was able to discern that about myself even earlier during the university years.

I was aware that all sorts of people liked me. Perhaps I was in denial but I found few if any who disliked me. I was comfortable and confident when moving with those of higher rank in the navy. I mentally reviewed what I had learned in history and political science classes I had taken and how that might be having value in Washington, a city of big time politics.

My mind traveled back to that summer day's conversation with my first boss, Mr. Frost, the attorney. I had worked in his office during my senior year in high school and any time after than when I was home for a week or more in the next four years.

I remember his telling me that I had to be as honest as I could, not to over estimate or under estimate my traits. He smiled when he said "I see a saw a smart, maybe even, brilliant young woman who will prove herself at the university."

As we talked, I told him that I discovered that I have a talent for teaching, particularly young adolescents. I giggled and blushed when I continued "People describe me as charming and apparently like me."

My attorney employer had said something like "Don't stop there, Sara. You are everything people say you are but I certainly see other attributes. "You are a beautiful woman, tallish, with striking body and a very caring woman, to boot. I notice the way you relate to my clients, many of whom make complimentary comments to me."

I think I laughed and said “Boss, does your wife know that you have been taking inventory of me?”

“Of course, she does. In fact, we often speak of you.”

I remember that he quoted her as saying that she saw me as strong. She and I had spent many an evening talking after I had been invited to have dinner with them. She had told me on one occasion that she had admired the way I handled a particularly serious emotional upset with aplomb.

I wasn't sure I agreed with their views but I had to take them into account. I had to be brutally honest with myself, even if it sounded immodest. If I had that much to offer, I ought to strive for work or a vocation worthy of those gifts. I wasn't about to resolve it tonight but David and I had something to chew on.

I stopped to review. That sounds like boasting but, as I reviewed, I told myself that was my personal view although I could not let the world know those inner thoughts.

I was starting to feel sleepy and decided to snuggle close to David and take off for dreamland. I fell asleep giggling about my first thought earlier.

I was feeling on top of the world when I arrived home the next afternoon. I dropped my purse, bounced toward David and slipped my arms around his neck using my lips to taste my man, he, whose eyes always hungered for me, no matter what. “What's first? A drink? A shower? More cuddling?” I giggled. “Or something more like last night?”

He laughed but said he would get the drinks.

David grinned “Sara, I love your options but I have something to discuss. I looked for and found a small cottage behind a large home in Georgetown, low rent and a convenient streetcar or walking commute for me.”

“Great. Can we take a look tonight?”

“I made an appointment for seven.” He grinned. “That should give us time for choosing several options or whatever.”

After the dinner, we drove over in our new used station wagon and came to terms. I asked, “When can we move in?”

Our new landlord said. “You can move in on the first of the month, if you want.”

We did.

I was the Senior Officer of the Wave staff in the communication department at the navy hospital at Bethesda. My duties were managerial and were limited to the daylight shift, except for emergencies, making me available to be the full support that David needed.

He was still in the final stages of recuperating from his injuries at sea. His week days were long, late to bed and early to rise, once in a while allowing him no more than two or three hours in the sack.

He was determined to finish law school in less than three years. I made him sleep in on Saturday mornings, awakening him about ten or later, bringing the invited lips and a smile, which rewarded him with a glass of OJ before I slipped into bed with him. I always giggled when I was about to seduce him. I said, “David, this time is our time. I want you selfishly, on Saturday and on Sunday.”

We lay in bed long after we teased each other and laughed at the jokes we shared. It was our special time to share the experiences of the week and to talk seriously about my separation from military service and my next step.

We played word games and our own versions of trivial pursuit during breakfast; then took a long walk in the brisk autumn sunshine or even in the drizzle of an overcast day.

We were living out our pledge to continue our honeymoon as long as possible.

During the evening after my self-evaluation, David and I had dinner at a family café near the hospital and spent an hour exploring ideas for my future vocation but came up with only some general ideas.

In the spirit of transparency that we had pledged to each other, I handed him a set of notes in which I tried to include all the thinking of the previous evening.

David caught the blush on my cheeks and raised an eye brow. "What?"

"It seems like braggadocio as I share it with you."

"Let me be the judge of that." A few minutes later he took my hands in his. "Don't be ashamed of those thoughts. That is a good picture of you and you must keep that in your mind so as not to settle for something less than you deserve."

On October first we moved and I had begun casting around for a position, one I could begin shortly after the first of the year. One would have expected the job market to be competitive with the shrinking of government military positions. That, however, was off set by the influx of lobbyists, lawyers and others hoping to capture post war contracts with the federal government. Washington, once a sleepy southern town was emerging into a powerhouse city.

One afternoon the chief administrator of the hospital called me in for a conversation. "Sara, if you were to apply, I know you can continue to serve as a civilian in your current position. Your outstanding work is needed in these transitional times. The fact is that I would like you to stay. Your work has been exceptional and I won't have to worry about the qualifications of my next hire. I'll even work to get you a civil service rating with higher pay than your navy salary."

It was tempting and certainly challenging. The management experience would serve me well in later years. After some contemplation I said "Thank you, sir but I need to look around. I am not sure what kind of career I want for these few years. Do you need an immediate answer?"

"We need to make a decision within the next week or so." I knew that he was intentionally putting the pressure on me.

I thought "Perhaps I should say yes.

This was government service with a guarantee of income to undergird our marriage until David passed the bar. I decide to buy a little time. "Fine, sir. I will let you know within the week."

As I thought about the offer, I realized that this was in line with my thinking. It was a supervisory positions but I "I needed a change."

After a series of interviews with several law firms and a couple of corporations, I was still undecided. Having had administrative and executive responsibilities, I wanted more than secretarial type of responsibilities. I was aware that a world dominated by males left little room for women to find major positions with administrative or executive responsibility. The offer at the hospital was beginning to look good.

“Perhaps I should look for a position with a mid sized business firm where I could make an impression on an owner with all I had learned from my dad in our family business. It might be possible to get past the secretary role with some insight that I could bring to my employer. I know daddy would help me research and maybe find a way to rise to my potential. I could even take some evening business courses.”

David and I had several conversations on the subject. It was David who urged me to take my time and not settle for what he called a flunky job. “Phi Beta Kappa grads do not have to settle. Take your time. I want you to find something that challenges and uses that summe cum laude mind of yours. Your leadership experience and human relations skills are needed in some place other than a secretary’s desk. Maybe some personnel department could use your human relations skills.”

I saw a notice in the Washington Post that Sears had a representative in Baltimore, talking to applicants for a new position that had been advertised. Sears was planning on hiring junior executives to undergo an on-the-job training at many of their retail stores across the country. The plan was to have enough trained executives ready to fill the slots that would be created by their planned expansion over the coming five year span.

I took the first train to Baltimore the next morning and arrived an hour before the office door opened. I sat in the window of a café across the street nursing a cup of coffee until I saw someone unlock the office door.

I dropped some money on the table and hustled across the street. A rather handsome gentleman, about my dad’s age, greeted me with a warm smile as I closed the front door behind me.

“I’m sorry but we are taking no applications for clerks or secretaries today. This office is a temporary one to interview potential executives only.”

I flashed my warmest smile and said “I am aware of that. I read your ad in the Washington Post and would like to apply. I took the early train from Union station I brought a resume with me to supplement the application form information.”

His smile vanished and in a truly reluctant voice said. “I am sorry that you went to all that trouble. I am only taking applications from male, college graduates under the age of thirty-two.”

I tried not to hide my feelings of rejection and made one more try. “I fill that requirement except for the sex. My navy experience was filled with supervisory and executive demands. I am sure that with some specific training, I can live up to Sears needs.”

I could see by the long look on his face, that my statement would make no difference. “I am sorry, dearie, but your qualifications will make no difference”

I was furious and probably would have given him a piece of my mind with some language I learned in the navy but the door open to admit two young men, veterans, I was certain. The representative turned away to greet them. I was dismissed. All I got was a low, hardly discernible wolf whistle from one of the fellows.

I was steaming as I headed for the door.

I told David about the fruitless attempt. “I was expecting what I got but I had been hoping. I probably should look elsewhere. What do you think of the idea of a small business where I can get the experience so I can start my own business once you are practicing?”

“Go for it, honey.”

I spent another day in Baltimore looking for opportunities in smaller businesses but found nothing to excite my interest. I then interviewed with two firms, including the U.S. Steel plant at Sparrow Point. Both firms were happy to have me start immediately as a secretary. There was an opening for a managerial position in the personnel department at U.S. Steel but the interviewer said “Sorry. That position is only open to men. We have no female managers.”

He made a point of really wanting to hire me because of my experience but made it clear that I would never make the jump to management.

I was quite despondent as I took my seat on the train ride returning to Washington. I was in a dour mood, barely aware of the conversation in the seat behind me. I perked up when purely by chance I heard two Navy officers talking about the Office of Naval Intelligence I heard one say “The ONI was interviewing candidates for junior analysts”

I wondered what if that offered any possibility for media looked at my wrist watch as I stepped off the train. It was still early enough that the personnel office would still be open. Deciding that maybe this was worth a chance, I headed for the office of the ONI, directly from the train station.

There was no sign denoting the type of office but I opened the door and stepped in. The tall petty officer behind the desk gaped for a long moment. I could see that he was giving me a real once over. I smiled to myself.

“May I help you, miss?”

“It’s Mrs. or Lieutenant, if you please. I would like to see the information regarding the open position of junior analyst.”

The petty officer, first class, looked askance, but gave me an information form. I sat in the reception area and read through the information sheet. I approached the counter. “How may I make application for the position?”

The petty officer handed me a form. “Ma’am, I’m not sure you could qualify, if I may be frank?”

“Why is that?”

“Up until now that position has always been filled with a civilian male or a male officer.”

“Thank you, but I think I will give it a try. I’ll complete the form right here if you would try to set me up with an interview.”

“That would be unusual. Interviews usually take place after the officer interviewer has an opportunity to review the application.”

I was not to be put off easily. “Please try. My name is Lieutenant Sellech. I might get lucky.” I had decided to press for a real chance.

With a shrug, the petty officer placed a call while I completed the application form. When I stepped up to the counter, the petty officer with a big smile said, in a surprised voice “Lieutenant Johnson will see you now, lieutenant. Third door on the right.” I could feel his eyes glued to either my legs or my fanny and smiled to myself.

A big smile from the welcoming officer made me feel warm. “May I presume that you are Mrs. David Sellech? That is an unusual name.”

I grinned. “Why, yes I am.”

“I was so sorry to hear about David’s injury and I would appreciate an update when we complete our business. He and I met when he served briefly with the Flight Intelligence unit at Pearl. Please sit while I take a quick look at your application.”

Three minutes later he commented. “Very impressive. Yours is the most impressive application that I have received and the only one from a woman. We would be breaking new ground if we offered you this position, but maybe it’s time. This may be challenging.”

“Based on what you see in writing, am I qualified for a personal interview?”

“Absolutely. We should set a date, probably a two-hour time period. Here is a more complete information sheet. By the way, if you come aboard, you will do so as a civilian not an officer. The post war navy isn’t quite ready for women officers. The civilian option gives you freedom but special benefits that are less than military. On the other hand you may have the advantage of fast promotion.”

Thank you, Mr. Johnson.”

“May I get you a cup of coffee?”

“That would be nice. Thank you”

He brought the coffee and said. “David called me Bob and I hope you will. Now tell me about David.”

I spent the next twenty minutes with a glowing report of his physical progress and his school work.” I remember your name now. David worked with you during his first duty with Captain Biggs”

“That’s right. Great memory for a minor detail.”

We set a date for two days later, during the noon period of 1200 to 1400. As I was leaving, he said, “By the way, Admiral Witty will be the new deputy head of ONI starting January 15 and Captain Biggs will be his number two. David will be interested, I’m sure.”

I could hardly wait for David to arrive home that evening. I was pleased to see that he had a little bounce in his step. “Hey, sailor. You’re looking pretty chipper this evening. Do you have a free evening? Can we grab a movie at the hospital?”

“Absolutely, if they have anything worth while to see.”

“Let’s have a quick bite and head for the movie. If we don’t like the movie, we can make out in the last row.”

Over dinner I gave David a run down on the job search. “I ran into a friend of yours when I made an application for a position with the Office of Naval Intelligence. Do you remember a Bob Johnson?”

“Sure do. I worked with him at the Flight Intell unit at Pearl. What were you applying for?”

“I’ve been exploring with different types of employers and heard that ONI was looking for a junior analyst, so I thought I would give it a whirl. The position description looks enticing. I’m hoping for something challenging as we had agreed. Bob gave me a brief interview and set up a second two days from now.”

With a grin he asked, “Are you truly interested in spy work, sweetie?”

“Not field work, smarty, but I have been trying to decide between law, industry and public service. If I were to be hired I would be the first and only woman in that department. That sounds a little intimidating but challenging. What do you think?”

“Hey, babe, you can hold your own in any group, even in an all male grouping. You know how I feel about this male superiority bunk. I will be gloating and bragging about you with my buddies at school.”

“Okay, I am going to give this a good look, especially since the admiral will be aboard in mid January. How about that?”

“Really? You mean Admiral Witty? That is an awesome miracle. That means they will be in the area for some time. I love it.”

“Me too, I can hardly wait. Meantime, sailor, let’s go the movies.”

Some of you readers will know the story but I should explain that David was the aide to Admiral Witty at Pearl and that the Admiral and Laura, his wife, had practically adopted David, having lost their own son when he was only two years old.

Despite the fact that our love affair was expressed in ways contrary to navy regulations, the Admiral looked the other way. In fact, over a period of time, I was accepted into the family bosom, especially after David and I officially tied the knot.

The petty officer smiled warmly to welcome me. He picked up the phone. “Lieutenant Sellech has arrived.

Bob stood as I entered, put out his hand to welcome me. “Nice to see you again.” I became aware of someone else present. Bob said “Sarah, meet Commander Richardson carrier when David was injured.”

Setting aside protocol, Rich who had met me at Pearl, put his arms around me asking softly “How is he? I know what he says in the occasional letter.”

“He is doing well. The residual pain is bearable and his studies put the pain way back in his psyche. This is a real surprise seeing you. David was sure you were out of the navy and back on campus.”

“I would be but Biggs and the admiral asked me to stay until they are safely installed in their new positions. I expect I will be back teaching before the spring quarter begins.”

“We had better start the formalities. Do you have any idea what we do here, Sara?”

“I know what info Bob gave me. I did some reading at the library yesterday. I am aware that analysis takes known information and situations of strategic, operational or tactical importance then characterizes the known and deals with probabilities of future action. I would expect that the best results would be when ambiguous information or situations can be clarified.”

“Good start. You are quick study, which is a characteristic we need in each of our analysts.” The questions and discussion went on for more than an hour. The tone was very professional. It was obvious to me that personal relationship got me a quick interview but being hired was all on my back.

“Sara, what made you decide to apply for this position?”

“Interviewing with a number of firms this past few weeks alerted me to the fact that despite war experiences, women are still seen as assistants to males in every profession or business. I feel determined to rise above that.”

“My personal opinion is that I can make a more important contribution than secretary to a business exec or an attorney. I wasn’t sure what that might be but this position sounded appealing and seemed to offer an alternative. I am confident that I can carry my weight if you take me on.” Rich listened intently but did not respond to my last statement.

Finally Rich said “You did well, Sara. We need to discuss this with Captain Biggs.”

“I really want this challenge and I’m hoping that the admiral and Captain Biggs are willing to have the first woman analyst in this unit.”

Richardson got the answer he was fishing for. He knew my logic was sound, based on my analysis of the political situation in the military at this time.

I had a phone call from Rich the following day “I thought you would like to know that your application has been approved by the Captain. It should have the okay of the Director within a few days.

Four days passed and no word. I was getting worried. I was saying to me “This feels bad. Bias about women is raising its head again.” I was right.

That evening, Rich called to say that the Director didn’t believe that a woman was fit for this position and, for the moment was withholding his approval. I bit my tongue before I asked “Any chance I might request an audience so I can convince him?”

Rich laughed. “Request yes, but an audience, probably not, but I will drop in tomorrow and have a chat.”

I was steamed although I should not have been surprised that the Director’s attitude reflected a strong anti- woman bias. David must have tired of my ranting that evening.

The next afternoon I had the follow up call from Rich. “This is amazing. I am to present myself with you in tow at 1000 hours tomorrow.”

The Director was standing when we entered his office. “Good morning, Richardson.”

“Good morning, Admiral, May I present Lieutenant Sellech?”

The director nodded but did not extend his hand. “Please take a seat. So, Lieutenant, I understand you are desirous of entering the all male bastion of naval intelligence analysis. What makes you think you are capable of competing in this arena?”

Despite the anger down deep, I strove to have positive projection in my response. “Sir. I hadn’t thought of it as competing. I simply see it as a way of using the brain that God has given me to serve my country.”

I could see by his reaction that the Director was taken back with that unexpected response “Well, what makes you think you have the experience to serve in that manner?”

“The confidence shown in my work at Pearl and the complimentary reference from my superior at Bethesda tell me I must have learned well. The apparent approval from three of your staff persons, including Captain Biggs after intense scrutiny is also an indication. I also happened to be married to a medically retired officer who served in flight intelligence. He has been of assistance in my preliminary learning time.”

“What haven’t you mentioned the reference I have from Admiral Witty?”

I thought you might see his support as biased since we enjoy a special relationship with Admiral and Mrs. Witty.”

He went silent for a long moment then asked me many of the questions I had been asked by Rich, and then shifted to questions of my work at Pearl. His voice continued to reveal nothing of his own thinking. He grilled me about the responsibilities at Bethesda. “I am

surprised that you have not accepted the directorship of that communications unit. I understand that the position is yours if you choose.”

I was stunned. He appeared to be against my working with the ONI but he had thoroughly researched my background. I was confused, unable to read any signals

Suddenly he switched topics, asking about David’s studies. He began to smile when I waxed eloquently of David’s performance at Georgetown then surprised me with “How are his injuries?”

“He is doing quite well, sir.”

Thank you, Lieutenant. You have convinced me that you should have the chance, although working in an all male group may be a difficult task. I like your spirit. You may be a spearhead for breaking new ground in the navy.”

He stood, as did Rich and I. Then I walked over responding to his invitation to shake hand. “Good luck.”

Three days later I received a formal invite to join the staff with all the information of the terms and pay grade. My acceptance would include a starting date of January 14, 1946, if I accepted by signing and returning the enclosed form.

David was late returning home that evening. He sunk into a seat at the table, his body telling me how tired he was. He seemed distracted while I was eager to tell him about my day.

I poured him a glass of Zinfandel and served him our favorite dish, beef stew. “That was delicious, Sara. Thank you.”

A half hour later, a rejuvenated student was up to discussing the offer. “I’m sorry, honey. You must be bursting to tell me the news, good or bad.”

A few minutes later he was hugging me “That’s wonderful, knowing you as I do. You will be a real part of that team in a hurry. I like his idea of your breaking new ground. I am sure you will bring new approaches once you get acclimated. I am so please. Come sit on my lap so I can reward you.”

A little later, I completed the paper work, sealed the envelope and attached the stamp.

Lying in bed with the light out me I asked about David about his studies. “It’s time for an update, Mr. Attorney.”

“I’ve found this first quarter only relatively challenging, although today was a tough one. The introduction to all the legal institutions has gone very well. Legal reasoning has been more challenging. The most difficult has been the analysis of the close votes of cases in the Supreme Court, but I’m doing well. I probably worry about it too much. I do like the way you relax me each night, Sara. You are a dynamite woman and a real support.”

“For that compliment you get a nice soft kiss and a promise of something more on the week end, big boy. Time to say good night, honey.”

On Friday morning I notified my superior at the hospital that I would not apply for that position as director of communications

Chapter 2.

I was bouncy and excited on the trip to see our families during the Christmas season. I gave David a run down on my extended family members. “You will meet them. I want, especially, for you to have some time with Aunt Catherine, who is returning early from a vacation trip to see us. Whatever you need to know about my maturing years is available from her, my closest friend ever.”

I told David how I ran over to Aunt Catherine’s house two or three times a day as the little girl who adored and idolized her older friend.

My younger siblings could not wait to get David telling those stories of his part in the war. He was soon telling them about his flights between carriers with his Bobcat. They knew a little about David’s place in the war from the letter I had sent.

In the middle of his story, conversation among the adults had stopped with all of our ears tuned to his story. I could see the kids on the edge of their seats when he told of seeing the kamikaze headed for the cruiser and then the Corsairs stopping the enemy in time.

“Weren’t you in danger, David?”

“I never thought so because the enemy seemed to have a more important target in mind than a little old AT-17.”

“What’s an AT-17?”

“That’s the model of my Bobcat plane.”

The three of us returned to our chat while David went on for a half hour keeping the kids spell bound.

We spent six days with my family.

I took David to meet some neighbors, drove him to see Dad’s bank where he was now the manager and then to the Alcoa plant, the center of New Kensington’s economy.

Sunday morning, the entire family attended mass. David noticed sadness around mom’s eyes during the service. Afterwards daddy drove us to the country club where we attended a surprise wedding reception celebration with family members from as far away as Akron, Ohio.

It was a typical European type of wedding celebration including my dancing with every male willing to pin a green back on my dress. The first two chances went to the highest bidder who had the prime choices of what they called my lovely breast.

The alcohol flowed freely while the orchestra played Slovak and Hungarian dance tunes. My proud daddy introduced David to everyone personally as though this was his long lost son.

Aunt Catherine cornered David while I stood nearby. I was obvious that David was taken with her charm and obvious love for me. During the next half hour he received a loving and biased view of her Sara, the bright youngster, who loved people and went out of her way to help her less fortunate friends during the depression years.

She laughed when she spoke of my young teen years struggling to come to grips with my changing body and the role of boys in my life.

Years ago I would have been embarrassed to listen to these compliments.

Aunt Catherine went on. “We wrote often during her college years and spent hours together when she was home for a visit. One thing she has not shared with me was the way you two actually met. Is there some secret I need to know?”

David's face turned red as he said, "Well, it was unusual but I think you best ask her."

"Oh, oh."

I was sure my whole body was flushed but this was Catherine. I could tell her everything.

It was a joyous visit through Christmas Eve. Gifts were exchanged with the usual noisy clamor and kisses being exchanged. Catherine came by with a gift and soon the two of us had disappeared for a short time.

When things settled down, mom took me into the master bedroom to give me some extraordinary gifts. I gasped as I opened the first package, a gorgeous expensive chemise that would make David's eyes bug out and then a box with a set of three of the sexiest panties I had ever seen.

I hugged mom, who could read the question in my eyes. She was blushing. "Dear, I learned two extraordinary things about keeping a man happy. One was to feed his stomach and the other to meet his physical hunger. Your dad is a romantic and a great lover and I made sure he liked what he saw. It never failed. I should have had this kind of conversation with you earlier, but at least now as woman to woman I thought I had to tell you one reason why your dad and I are so happy. The bedroom has been our secret sanctuary."

I had no other way to say thanks except to hug mom for the longest time and share the tears that escaped down the cheeks of two women.

Later that afternoon Catherine arrived and soon she and I were tucked away in a bedroom for some personal exchanges. I'm sure David could hear occasional eruptions of laughter and wondered which the ones were relating to my story of our love affair.

We left my family the next morning and arrived about ten at David's family home spending the first two hours exchanging gifts. David had gone overboard with gifts for his much younger siblings.

After a scrumptious dinner, David piled all of us into the station wagon to go visiting mom's brothers and sister and their families. We waited until the last to visit Uncle Frank, so that the two of them could have a long chat after all others had gone. The uncle, who had been his surrogate father after his dad died when David was a baby, wanted and deserved to know all that could be divulged between two friends.

Frank had been his confidante as he grew up, helped him find a scholarship to the university. David gave Frank a complete history of his wartime life including his two trips to the war zone in the Pacific.

David spent most of the next two days with his family telling stories. Mom had a few stories about relatives, three of the cousins, two dead and one seriously injured in the war. No mention was made of David's injuries in either home. It became obvious to me that his mom and dad, as well as the kids, fell in love with me and let me know. It was as David had predicted.

David told me that I was the idol of his fourteen-year old sister and he heard his brother say. "She's beautiful to which Sis, replied, "Of course, she is, because she's David's wife."

David had a breakfast alone with his mom and told me later of her comment.

“David, she is wonderful and I want you to know that it’s okay with me that you are not practicing Catholics. I don’t believe all that stuff about your sinning although I did not approve of your sleeping together before you were married, but I know God forgives you. That’s good enough for me.”

I am sure that David took his mom in his arms and said “Thank you, mom.”

Saturday night Uncle Frank held another wedding celebration party at his home for the family aunts and uncles and cousins, seventeen in number. The party continued until mid night in much the same manner as the celebration with my family, even though not as elaborate.

We arrived at own cottage early evening of the next day. After unpacking and putting the bags away, David undressed and dove into bed sure he was hoping I was in the mood. I kept fiddling around, getting the clothing sorted out for work the next day. He picked up the book we were reading to each other; impatiently waiting He had no idea of the surprise that was forthcoming.

Hearing the bathroom door open he looked up to see me intentionally standing with full light as the backdrop. I was hoping my body was visible through the short see through chemise that fell just short of my special place.

I strode slowly toward David with the exaggerated hip movement of a model on the runway.

Seeing the look on his face, I laughed softly and in a husky voice asked “See something you like, sailor?”

He must have, judging by the events that followed.

Much later David kissed my hand. “Sara, what a magnificent gift to me to end this holiday.”

“Honey, you won’t believe this, but that was a gift to us from my mom. She took me to her room to hand me the gifts and share some private information about the private life of dad and her in the bedroom as a way to make sure I took good care of you. It was so unexpected but so moving.”

David said, “I need to thank her.”

“Don’t you do that? She will die of embarrassment.”

“Just teasing. My Uncle Frank was concerned that my focus on study might divert me from giving you the attention you deserve but I assured him that our love life was as potent as his with Kitty. He laughed, knowing that I guessed what hot lovers they were.”

“I had no idea of the secrets that my folk’s bedroom contained. I think it is wonderful. Both those conversations confirm one thing for me. In addition to all else the intimacy we find in this bed puts the seal of love on our life together.” I rolled on top of him for a good night kiss. “I love you, tiger. Grrrr.”

In the morning I asked David. “If you can afford time away from your books, I would like to take this coming week end trip to visit Al and get to know Joan better. The two of us had some fairly intimate correspondence when you guys were at sea. Our time together in San Diego was so limited. I am sorry we live so far apart.”

David said “Me too. I never had another friend as close as Al. Let’s call them. I have his number in my date book.”

He rose just as the phone rang and he picked it up. "Al, believe it or not I was just about to call you. What was that?" He signaled me to get to the extension. Al was asking if we could come down. I heard David without hesitation say. "We can leave within an hour and arrive this evening. Reserve us a room."

I could hear a catch in Al's voice as he thanked David. We knew very little except that Joan had a miscarriage and was in the hospital. David called for directions, getting Joan's dad on the phone who gave us clear instructions

Joan was asleep and Al was in the reception area when we bustled through the hospital door. We headed for the cafeteria to help fill a couple of starving travelers. Al filled us in.

Joan and Al Walters discovered that Joan was pregnant. They had been so careful to use protection during that time of the month when she might be likely to conceive. From the very beginning Joan was suffering morning sickness and having the same symptoms throughout the day. Two days after Christmas Joan decided to see a doctor. On the morning of the 30th she had a miscarriage. Fortunately, Al, who was in grad school, had no classes that morning, giving him the opportunity to drive her to the emergency ward at the hospital. While waiting for word from the doctors, he decided to call David who had no classes scheduled until January 2nd.

Without hesitation, David responded

David had done the driving while I was busy reading some papers I had picked up from a nurse on the subject of miscarriage.

An orderly came by to tell Al that Joan was ready for company. The moment I walked into the room I saw that Joan was obviously in mental and spiritual pain. She went to Joan and wrapped my arms around a weeping would-be mother.

Joan, in a soft voice, said to me "I've been looking forward to spending more time with you, Sara, but not like this."

"Never mind. Just be strong. I have some time when we can chat to our heart's content."

She said "The doctor wants to keep me overnight and release me in the morning."

David suggested he and Al have some coffee while we women chatted. When they had their coffee in hand, Al ran through the entire story with David. "God, I was scared, David. How she got pregnant is a mystery and at first a disappointment, then joy, then this. I am all mixed up."

"What does the doc say?"

He doesn't seem too concerned. These things happen with no serious after effects in most cases, meaning we can have children after a few months of making sure she doesn't get pregnant."

"How about you?"

"I think I will be okay. I have been focused on Joan who has been quiet, only expressing guilt that she may not provide a son for me, as if that is the important thing. It is Joan who is important."

"Well, from what the doctor says, it looks like after a brief interim you will have a chance at both."

They returned to the room where I had just finished telling Joan an off-color joke, bringing a smile to Joan's face. The nurse came in to say it was time for lights out. We stepped outside while Al said good night to his sweetheart.

Joan's dad ran out to greet us and inquire about any progress. I took him back into the house giving him a run down on her conversation with Joan. The creases on his face were gone by the time I finished. "Thank you two for coming down. She admires you, Sara, as Al admires David. This is very special. I have your room ready and if you hand me the car keys, I will take your bags in."

Al asked, "Sara, what do our think?"

"My guess is that with a little time she will be okay. She did understand and accepts the doctor's words. She is more worried about you, Al. She worries that in some way this event may affect your love for her. You keep that in mind and all should work out. I did suggest she drag you into the saddle as quickly as she felt up to it. That kind of loving, I told her, puts the seal on the love of a woman for a man. That brought out a giggle."

Al couldn't help smiling.

I continued. "She told me that the doctor said she had to avoid getting pregnant too soon. She thought that meant no intercourse. I suggested she ask the doctor specifically about that before she is discharged."

Al, with tears in his eyes and flowing freely, took me in his arms. "Thanks, Sara. You are an angel of mercy."

We heard Al's father-in-law call. "Time to chow down." We trooped into the kitchen and inhaled bacon, eggs, toast and coffee.

We drove the station wagon to the hospital the next morning. When Joan and Al were settled into the rear seat, Joan spoke up in her normally spirited voice.

"Sara, I asked the doctor as you suggested and just for your private information, some action will be taken within a few weeks." She and I giggled. The men smiled.

The trip to Washington was delayed for twenty-four hours so that David and Al could play catch up.

Joan and I took a couple of long walks. On one of those Joan said. "I called the office and they have agreed to a week of sick leave. That was very considerate. Now tell me about your plans since you are being separated from the Waves."

Joan was astounded to hear my plans and delighted about the news of the admiral being my super boss. "I was sure you would end up an admin in some big law office. Why back into the navy?"

"The navy was accidental. I wanted to try being more than a flunky to some male egos."

Joan smiled. "That part doesn't surprise me. I can see you ten years from now. Sara Sellech, Secretary of the Navy." Both of us started to giggle.

That evening David decided to wash the dishes while Joan dried. Just as she finished wiping up the counter, she put down her towel and put her arms loosely around his neck. She could not hold back the tears. "Thank you, David. Al says you did not hesitate one minute about his call for help. That is friendship and love. We owe you and Sara so much. I

pray that the tie that binds us is never ever severed.” She planted a sweet kiss directly on his lips.

That evening Joan and I spent an hour making girl talk while the guys played gin rummy. We had a late snack and headed for bed, hoping to rise early for our trip home.

Tears and laughter were intermixed at the parting on New Year’s morning. We had not stayed up for the bell ringing at mid night but were awakened when the canons exploded.

Dad had packed a special picnic type lunch and loaded up the back of the station wagon with dozens of jars of canned fruit, vegetables and jellies.

A few minutes after leaving the driveway, David said, “Sara, you are an angel. How you had the presence of mind to find that medical paper on miscarriages and abortions blows my mind. All I could think of was getting to Lexington.”

“Thank you, dear. It is nice to know that one can think in the middle of a crisis. You have done it often, but it easy to forget when the emotion of love is thrust in the middle of a crisis. Your love for Al is so deep, almost as though you were bonded together.”

David grinned. “I am going to have to change some perceptions among our friends who keep calling me the brainy one. I cede the title to you, Sara Sellech.”

I laughed. “I’ll remind you of this conversation during our next argument.”

“I quit arguing with you. It’s depressing to be on the losing side always.” I laughed and took his hand in mine.

That evening I spent an inordinate amount of time writing in my journal. As I jotted down as much in detail as I could, I felt that I had been given more praise than I deserved but it was so heart-warming.

Chapter 3.

I went to the Separation Center office to complete the paper work and was on terminal leave beginning at 1700 January 2nd, 1946. The next morning I was shopping for the proper clothing for my new position. I spent two hours in two different government offices evaluating the proper dress for government workers. I modeled the clothing for David after dinner that evening, taking only one suit back to the store and made a date with David for Saturday to go shopping for evening wear.

I finally settled for some less conservative dresses and accessories, although not quite daring. I teased him when he said that he was disappointed because stylish hems were now below the knee and he thought of himself definitely a legman.

David came home on the following Friday with a huge grin on his face. "All right, sailor. Let's have it." He grasped me around the waist and spun me around, put me down and bruised my lip with a hard kiss. "You are looking at the top first year student at Georgetown Law School."

After a long hug, I said. "Gosh, that puts me on the spot. We have to celebrate, meaning I am forced to slave labor by broiling a steak, making a chocolate sundae and of all things; I might have to take you to bed as a reward. I sure have a tough life being the wife of a genius." I giggled while taking his face in my hands so I could be in charge of the congratulatory smooch.

It was a joyous evening, both of us a little tipsy on a bottle of Zinfandel when we tumbled into bed to complete the celebration.

At 0755 on the fourteenth of January, I presented myself to the petty officer at the counter in the reception area of the ONI office. With a big smile, he greeted me with a good morning Mrs. Sellech."

I responded and then asked, "What's your first name? I can't keep calling you 'petty officer.'"

"It's John, ma'am."

"All right. John it is. My name is Sara. I am no longer an officer. Is that a deal?"

"Yes, Sara."

"Mr. Johnson is ready to see you, Sara. Third room on the right."

As I stepped into the room, Bob rose and welcomed me. "Every one here is on a first name basis, Sara, except for the admiral and the captain. I head a team of five, of which you will be a member. Let's go into the conference room to meet the other members of the team."

The three occupants stood when Bob and I entered the room. I said. "Your mothers taught you well but you can't possibly do that when I enter a room, no matter what your mother taught you." The whole group laughed, but each came forward to shake my hand. Bob said, Sara Sellech meet Harry Dana, Richard Musso and Tom French. They have been briefed on your background. Let's sit."

"Harry, introduce Sara to our method of working, if you would."

“Sara, some of our work is parceled out into two teams. You will work with me when such is the case. Dick and Tom work together. Bob will join whichever team he thinks can use the help.”

“Some work is parceled out to us as individuals. Each person may ask for a co-worker at times convenient to each other. When the team or the individual feels that the material is understood and characterized, the entire group gathers to listen and analyze the deductions. The goal is to determine the import and extent of distribution of the information.”

“I think that’s enough for the first pass. Any questions?”

“Not yet.”

“Since we are still awaiting acceptance of the FBI investigation of Sara, we will take the first hour to introduce her to how we work. Each of the team members will take fifteen-minute turns introducing some subject. Afterwards, Sara can do some reading while we go about our tasks. I have been assured that the FBI report will be here before noon.”

Harry, in a concise manner, talked about the team coming to agreement on the content of the information, stressing the need for boldness and full honesty on the part of each member

Dick then explained the various types of analyses including Inductive, Deductive, Scientific Method and the need for intuition.

Tom addressed various methods of analysis, including Analogy, Opportunity analysis, Lynch Pin and Hypothesis.

Bob completed the presentation talking about the analytic process such as defining the problem, setting up a hypothesis, gathering information, evaluating sources and hypotheses, peer review and feedback from the receiver of the info.

I was busy scribbling notes, unable to absorb all the information but feeling certain I could make sense of it when I had time to study. “Thanks, guys. That was a lot of information. May I presume that my questions will be answered when I type up my notes?”

I got a chorus of “You betchas”.

I was shown a small office to be shared with Harry. A well used typewriter on a stand was placed next to my desk. It took an hour of typing and correcting to get a satisfactory copy of the notes, the study of which was interrupted when Bob stuck his head in the door. “Lunch time. Three of us are headed out and you are invited.”

After their orders were placed, Bob said “Good news, Sara. The report is in. You are now official. For your information, there is no shop talk when we gather outside the office. Any other subject is allowable, including family life, sports, and recreation and even politics and religion. We believe it all contributes to creating close team work by getting to know with honesty the way we each view life.”

Harry asked, “If you are willing, tell us a bit about your husband. Bob said he suffered some serious injuries while on duty in the battle of the Philippine Sea.”

“Yes, that’s right. He is currently studying law at Georgetown U. doing a lot of walking to and from school to strengthen his left side, hip, knee and foot, if you don’t mind my bragging he is tall, handsome, and brilliant and a great lover.” That brought out a roar, turning heads of the other patrons.

Tom asked “How did you find such a special guy?”

I laughed, “You will never believe this, but I picked him up in an ice cream parlor in Corpus Christi.” The brought another round of laughter and they knew from my manner that I had, with all honesty, answered their question.

Tom, the only unmarried member of the group said “May I hire your services to find some woman for me, although I do not get to many ice cream parlors?” He was speculating on the details of my comment about picking up David. “I would sure like to find a Sara for my life. Lucky dog, David.”

Smiling at Tom I said “I am a pretty good matchmaker if you are serious.”

The conversation moved to national politics, wondering if the congressional makeup would change this year.

We convened as a group of five at 1330. I was reminded that all papers distributed at these meeting were secret and if not placed in the vault at the end of the day, they were to be burned.

The list I received contained a number of general subjects without definition: underground activity in Jerusalem; revolutions in Vietnam and Indonesia; Syria; elections in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria; new socialist government in France.

The focus for the afternoon was on the preliminary analysis of the fighting and bombings in Jerusalem after the conversations between the British protectorate officials and a delegation of Jews.

We worked as a whole group with two small breaks until 1730. Bob reminded us that at 1100 tomorrow the section would be meeting with the new deputy chief, Admiral Witty.

I turned up the heater at home, did a quick change into some casual clothes and surveyed the refrigerator in order to prepare for dinner. David would be late so hot dogs and baked beans with salad sounded just right.

I flipped on the radio for the news, poured a glass of wine and whipped up the salad and salad dressing.

Afterwards, I took a nap, being awakened with a set of lips locking onto mine.

Over dinner, I briefed David on my first day with what information I felt free to share. We both knew that my workdays would be mostly non discussable at home. “David, tomorrow at 1100 our group gets to meet the admiral. I wonder if he will see my name on a list before we gather.”

“I would think so.”

“I’m so damned excited, David. I wonder if Laura will be there.”

Their entire section was made up of thirty personnel, twenty-four naval and six civilians. I, as the most junior, was at the end of the reception line. My eyes were glistening as I approached him. His smile was warm as expected and he held my hand just a bit longer and called me Sara instead of Mrs. Sellech.

His comments were brief before we were dismissed.

Back in the team gathering, Tom asked “Sara, did I hear him address you by your first name?”

I blushed “Yes, Tom. The admiral and I have known each other ever since I served at Pearl.

Bob interjected “David, her husband, served on the admiral’s staff as well as part time with me at Flight Intell. In fact, he was, for several months, the admiral’s aide. I know

for a fact that he was practically a member of the family. Some one once told me that Laura, his wife adopted David as the son she never had,”

I said nothing although I could have made some minor corrections to Bob’s comments.

At 1700 I received a note asking me to come to the admiral’s office before I left for the day. I presented myself and was escorted to Captain Biggs’ office where the captain introduced himself and asked about David’s health. After my brief response, he knocked on the admiral’s door and walked in. “Sara’s here.” He ushered me into the room and closed the door as he left.

The admiral was moving toward me with open arms and a catch in his voice when he said “Sara, what a marvelous surprise. We hugged for a long moment. “I only have a minute. Not much time for talk. Please jot down your phone number. I will have Laura call you. Are you free on Saturday?” I nodded a yes. “Sorry I have to go.” He hugged me again just as the door opened.

At 2030 that evening David answered the phone. “Laura, how wonderful to hear your dulcet tones.” He laughed at her response. “Absolutely. I know we’re free on Saturday afternoon. I’ll look forward to being wrapped in your arms while the admiral and Sara drool. Okay. Here’s Sara.”

Twenty minutes later I hung up. “We have a luncheon date in their suite at the hotel at 1330. Dress is casual. She said we should be ready for a complete interrogation and grilling. David, she sounded bright and cheerful.”

I must have been a sight with the grin pasted on my face as we rode the elevator in the hotel.

The admiral opened the door, had a bear hug for David then passed him on to Laura. With tears of joy streaming down her cheeks Laura wrapped her arms around David, gave him a long kiss and just kept weeping for joy. She welcomed me from the Admiral arms into her own for a long minute. “Oh, my dears, what a wonderful sight. We have missed you so and wanted to surprise you with the news of our assignment near you. Come sit down while Michael pours some orange juice and champagne to start this celebration of our family reuniting.”

We spent two hours at the table eating, reminiscing and exchanging news. Laura switched subjects with a question “Sara, what made you apply for that position with the ONI. That is certainly not a conventional idea.” Then with a sly smile, “Not that I think of you as conventional, either of you.”

I could feel the blush starting up from my throat. Her smile deepened but I gathered myself and said “You know, Laura, I was thinking about that the other evening. Part of the reason rests with David, who encouraged me, saying he saw more in me than the traditional secretary type of employee. I suddenly thought about the fact that there was something inside me that motivated me to even consider this. I remembered that during the course of my American History studies at college I was deeply moved by my studies of Abigail Adams. I wrote a paper for that class on her contribution to the foundations of our society. Through letters to her husband, President Adams she influenced major decisions made in those founding days.”

Laura interrupted “You, too, dear? Abigail Adams is one of my heroines. It was great to learn of her position on married women’s property rights and especially

opportunities for women in the field of education. She was a woman ahead of her time. I certainly can envision you as a woman ahead of your time.”

I added, “I am so grateful to David who shares her attitude that women should be recognized for their intellectual capabilities and thus influence the lives of others.” I remember reaching for David’s hand, giving him a warm smile.

Laura and Michael beamed as they witnessed that intimate communication that passed between their adopted children.

I asked, “Have you started a list to decide on your housing location?”

The admiral piped up. “We have a place, Sara. It is being refurbished which is why we are here in the hotel for a few weeks. Laura, who had a small inheritance, insisted we buy the house during our first tour in Washington.”

“Great foresight, Laura. I had a feeling that, you were a foxy lady,” said David, causing Laura to giggle.

“Would you like to drive out to see the house?” We were planning to do so. Michael can call his driver.”

David said. “We’d love it .There is no need for the driver. We can take our station wagon.”

I drove accompanied by the admiral in the front seat. Laura hugged David’s arm and beamed at him. “I like this snuggling in the back seat. Michael. We need to renew that practice again. David, it is good to have you so near again.”

Their home was three blocks from our cottage. David said. “We are practically neighbors. He pointed out the property as they drove by.

The painters were working even on a Saturday. They toured all five bedrooms, two and a half baths, kitchen, formal dining room and a large den. One of the remote bedrooms had a separate entrance, probably used as a maid’s room. The grounds were well maintained .The guesthouse was a two-bedroom cottage, completely and tastefully furnished.

Laura said, “Both houses had been rented furnished. Some of the antiques were in storage as well as the oriental rugs. We will have to replace a few items but the renters have taken great care of the furnishings.

The admiral chatted with the head painter while the others toured the premises. “It’s a great property, Laura,” I said. “You had keen judgment with perfect timing.” Laura thanked me, giving me another hug. “Sara, you are so good for one’s soul.”

We women sat in the back of the wagon on the return trip, conversing in low voices while the admiral gave David some general information about his new tasks.

Later at home we had some soup for dinner, having been sated at the luncheon table. In bed just before I turned over, I said “Since Wednesday is your study group through the dinner hour, I agreed to have dinner with Laura. It is a late evening for Michael too. I dropped a kiss and “goodnight, lover boy.”

Every day was exciting for me with so much to learn about my new position and to learn about the team members. Bob wanted the members to be a real team, close to each other, almost able to read team member’s minds.

I had been assigned to retrieve the latest info we had on the developments in Palestine and present my information and analysis to the group during the afternoon session.

I worked in our intelligence library during the entire morning. I was surprised to find that we had three of our own men stationed with the Jewish underground and an unidentified source with the Palestinian militants.

The British forces that were mandated to rule Palestine since the First World War were in fierce struggles with three different Jewish underground units. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from post war Europe were attempting to migrate to Palestine, many succeeding even though thousands were turned away or some were rounded up and sent back to Europe.

Palestinian forces were attacking Jewish targets, receiving aid from a number of countries, members of the "Arab League.

There were signs that the frustration level was at a high level within the British Authority. I had a gut feeling they were glad that the mandate was being considered and reviewed in the newly formed United Nations which had just gotten organized.

The Zionist movement was building up its strength. With help from all around the globe, arms were easily available. The influx of Jewish immigrants was the third major migration and the largest since the programs in Europe back in the 1880's and the determination of those refugees to find a home was highly motivated.

The more I read of the history, the clearer it was to me that the Arab opposition would be just as strong.

I read with interest a number of anecdotal stories from our source within the Palestinian militants.

One such story was that of a young Arab who was found weeping after an intense exchange of fire. Our source sat with him and attempted to discover the cause for his crying. The young man had been an exemplary soldier, fighting to maintain his home.

After several long minutes of sobbing, the young man said. "I can't believe it. He pointed to an area about twenty meters to his left where the corpse of a young Jewish lad was lying. Through a voice, interrupted by sobs, he said "I just killed one of my closest friends and a neighbor since we were toddlers."

With my notes neatly typed I walked into the afternoon session as nervous as a high school freshman about to read my first composition in class.

Seeing the acceptance and attention of the group as I finished reading the first paragraph, I relaxed and soon found that I no longer had sweaty palms.

When I completed the reading of the entire report, the group sat silently pondering my conclusions. I read "I believe that the United Nations will have no choice except to set up a two-state Palestine, which will be acceptable to the Jews but not to the Arabs. The war will continue but with greater intensity"

There was a grim hush when I finished and took my seat Bob turned to face me. "Well done with concise historical view and a good starting position for our discussion.

I felt good inside that I had passed my first real test as a full member of the group.

Wednesday, I was in time for tea and a long chat with Laura. Afterwards, the hotel staff served dinner. We chatted about Laura's ideas for the house. She probed to verify that our marriage was on track.

I got home quite late, still beating David by twenty minutes. He was preoccupied unwinding from his studies thus limiting their conversation before bedtime. I did say that I accepted a dinner date for Saturday, "subject to your approval, of course."

Saturday afternoon, we drove over to the Lincoln memorial at my request. Seated on the steps, I took his hand in mine. "David, did you notice anything special about Laura last weekend?"

"She seemed a little too bright and spirited, more so than I remember. Her cheeks were a little more flushed but I thought she had done a good job of applying makeup. If there was something wrong, I missed it in my enthusiasm to see them and have them near us."

"I am sorry to say that there is more than you detected. She invited me to tea and dinner to tell me the whole of it, saying that she could not talk directly to you without breaking up. She has breast cancer, David, and will undergo surgery."

His tears broke through the invisible dam. He wept, sobbing in gasps, his tears soaking my blouse as I held him to my breast.

It was many minutes later when he said, "Damn it, Sara. We have to do something to support them. He is like the dad I never had and I know how deeply she loves me. Is there a prognosis as to time?"

"Not that I know of. Perhaps the admiral knows more. Laura is asking him to talk with you tonight after dinner."

David continued. "Last Saturday in the back seat, with my arm tugged close to her breast, she hinted about the cottage behind their home. I wonder if she was hoping for a response that would open an opportunity to ask us to live there. If so, I missed the hint. How would you feel, Sara, if that was her request?"

"If they ask, I'd jump at the chance. Let's try to find out at dinner. We are due at five for drinks and dinner at six. We're a little early so let's park near the hotel and do some window shopping until five."

Laura answered the door with a warm welcome embrace. David was unable hold back the tears.

After hugs from the admiral we sat down with drinks in hand. The admiral opened the conversation. "We have a serious and sad conversation that we should get to and then adjourn to a hearty meal. Is that acceptable?" We nodded.

"You know the worst of it, but let me expand. The doctors will make no prognosis regarding time because they believe that Laura has a slight chance with surgery, since we made the discovery early. They do say that if it is more mature than they believe then surgery will only hasten the end."

"Laura can tell you that pain is minimal as of now, that she has plenty of energy remaining and would like me to take her dinner dancing soon. She has been told that the level of energy will soon begin to deteriorate so the dancing date must be on an early schedule."

Laura interjected. "Michael, let me continue. If you would be willing, Michael and I would like you to consider moving into our guesthouse some time soon. I will have plenty of caretakers and servants but I have this desire to have you two closes by. You are the closest

to being my family. Michael and I are quite alone in the world. If it is not too great an imposition, we would be overjoyed to know that you are close by.”

The silence was deafening for about ten seconds. David stood up, walked to Laura, leaned down, put his arm underneath her legs, lifted her to sit on his lap and buried his face into her hair. He wept and finally said. “You name the time and we will be here.”

I walked to the admiral with open arms “David and I had agreed that we wanted to be close if asked.” He kissed my forehead. “Thank you, dear”

Finally Laura rose from David’s lap saying, “On that good news let’s have another drink and get a little tipsy. Pretty soon some damn doctor will tell me I can’t have my evening cocktail. Michael, please make my martini stiff.”

We spent some time talking about details, agreeing that the main house would be ready by the end of January so that the move to the cottage could follow immediately thereafter. Michael said. “Definitely rent free. You young folks can use at least that much financial relief.”

I said “Laura, while you are able, we can shop together or if you are not up to it, just give me a list for my shopping day.”

“Sara, I have a better idea. We can order by phone, saving you time by having the food delivered. That will leave more time for the lovebirds to enjoy each other. I hope you two are still acting like honeymooners.” She giggled getting a slight blush along with a “Darn right” from me and a grin from David.

Laura laughed “I know because I can see it in your eyes, Sara.” We all roared. Laura had used that same phrase when she let us know that she was aware of our affair at Pearl for months before we married.

The following Saturday evening saw the four of us seated at a nice table at the officer’s club at Bethesda. Champagne was iced and served as the opening gambit. All of us had filet mignon, rare, accompanied by a bottle of a good Zinfandel. After the salad course, Michael led Laura to the dance floor for a slow dance with the lovely Laura dancing tight. David glowed as he watched a display of intimacy.

When we arrived at the table, Laura tapped David on the shoulder “Hey, handsome. Would you like to dance with your mom?”

“Love it.” The band started Glenn Miller’s arrangement of “In the Mood”. Seeing David’s hesitancy, she said, “Don’t baby me, David. I have plenty of zip left. Time for slowing down when I have to.” They moved along side Michael and me, both wearing broad smiles.

The dancing after dinner was to a long medley of special love songs that Michael had requested of the orchestra leader. It was one of the most romantic evenings that I could remember.

Chapter 4.

The next weeks at work were intense. I joined in the two-person team analysis with Harry and then was an observer when the team of five met. During that period the team centered on the Palestinian situation, which was heating up,

We learned of the heavy arm shipments to both, the Palestinians and the Zionists who were determined to create a homeland for the children of Israel.

The next highest priority was any information that came our way about the rebellion, led by Sukarno in Indonesia. The situation in Vietnam, where the French were being seriously challenged was another priority.

It seemed that the whole world was in chaos. Indigenous peoples were trying to shed the yoke of their European masters. From our vantage point in the intelligence branch, it was visible long before the public became aware. The English, the Dutch and the French were facing pressure in most of their holdings in South and Southeast Asia. The tribes in many of the African areas were stirring under the strong hand of the European nations, which also included Germany, Belgium, and Portugal.

Bob assigned me the responsibility of gathering the latest information in India. A few days prior, the Indian sailors in the "Royal Navy had mutinied aboard ships as well as at the installations in Bombay although the struggle for independence had been dragging on for years; this seemed to me like a pivotal event. It turned out to be just that as strikes and mutinies and demonstrations proliferated during the coming months.

Every other day I stopped by the hotel for a short visit and a cocktail with Laura who fussed over me, obviously pleased with my visits. David stopped in on the alternate days.

On two Saturdays during the month, I drove Laura on short shopping excursions when she was looking for small items to detail the décor of the house. There was always time for tea and sometimes a light dinner when both David and Michael were delayed at Michael's golf club. I was beginning to sense a bonding with Laura that matched the ties to my own mother.

In the very beginning I had wondered if the workday with all the bad news would continue to weigh down on me making my visits with Laura less than cheerful. As I look back, I am amazed that I was able to compartmentalize the two different parts of my day.

We had moved into the cottage on January 30th, selling off what little furniture we had accumulated. The Witty cottage was fully furnished. Laura and Michael moved into the main house on the 31st.

We had letters from Joan with tons of news about Al's studies and her work and study. We exchanged letters about twice a month

David's other close friend from his cadet days was Adam with whom we also exchanged letters. We had a letter from Rosalie that included the hot news that Rosalie was pregnant. There was a brief catch in my voice when I read that line to David.

He put his arm around me and called for a little lip interchange. "Honey, are you still comfortable working or are your hormones calling for a baby?"

In all honesty I was able to say, "Unless you are totally ready, I would like to wait at least a year or even until you're admitted to the bar. You don't mind, do you?"

“Nope. It’s your call. It will be nice to have a little more financial security. All right. Are you strong enough right now to lose a buck playing gin rummy?”

“You’re on, sailor.” Thirty minutes later, I was exacting my due after whipping him two games to one. He washed the dishes while I sat on the high stool nearby and dried.

Two days later, I went to see who had rung the front door bell to find a beaming Rosalie with wide-open arms. “I decided it was time to see my dear friend whom I have come to know and love.

David came into the room and one look said “Hi Rosie.” After hugs all around, we sat down for drinks and news. After a few drinks and a bite to eat, Rosie said “I chose now because of your letter regarding Laura who has adopted two of our favorite people.

We walked over to the main house to the absolute delight of Michael and Laura. Within minutes Rosie had charmed them and particularly Laura. I knew in that moment that Rosie would be a welcome addition into our support group for Laura.

The analyses team was deeply involved with all the data flowing in regarding the spread of Communism in Eastern Europe. It seemed that the team was forgetting that I was a junior analyst still in training. My input was welcome; particularly my understanding of what was happening in Poland and the new communist state of Czechoslovakia. I also realized that I was getting especially good at evaluating sources of information.

We were working overtime, but the team excused me because of my need to be with the admiral on certain days.

In the meantime, Rosalie and Laura were becoming confidants as the busy days slipped by.

At the end of two weeks, Rosalie decided that she was free to leave. She and I had at least an hour each evening chatting and planning ideas by which our three families could keep tying the bonds tighter. I had laughed, “We’re a couple of sneaky conspirators, Rosie.”

Saturday afternoon, Rosalie invited Laura and me to lunch at an upscale restaurant and an afternoon of shopping at some of the special boutiques. The laughter was hilarious as she insisted on buying sexy, alluring lingerie for each of us. “This will knock their socks off. I can hardly wait to strut my stuff for Adam.”

We were still giggling when the cab pulled up at home. She had the cabbie wait while she hurriedly packed and headed for the airport after a flurry of hugs and kisses.

Laura sighed “What a woman and what a friend. You are blessed, Sara, with such a friend. Right now, I am a little overwhelmed from all the fun and am going to nap.” I noticed that Laura was a little pale. I walked her to the bedroom, rolled back the covers while Laura undressed.

Often when the two of us were tucked into bed, David would whisper to me something beautiful, outrageous and flattering. One night he called me strong and forthright, holding my own in a field dominated by men. The next night he was thanking me for being extremely sensitive to Laura’s pain as I told him about the evening.

I must admit that he may have a strong bias but the words were so supportive and gave me a good feeling as well as more confidence.

David found a few minutes to visit Laura late every afternoon on his way from school. If I came home within a half hour of his arrival, I noticed that he had not been able to clear his eyes which were red rimmed and often still moist. I believe he suffered emotionally the most of all of us.

During the next several weeks it was obvious that Laura was weakening. The three of us decided on a plan for being with her as much as possible even with full time availability of the nurse.

Twice a week David came directly from classes missing his study group time but doing his individual study while staying with Laura. She would sit in the same room while he studied and occasionally had the nurse bring tea for the two of them.

Michael came home early on two other days as our trio had planned. He and Laura played gin rummy or some word games or worked on the Sunday Washington Post crossword. They spent long periods silently wrapped in an embrace while she snuggled on his lap.

My long visit came on Fridays, a plan worked out by my team members who were aware of the Admiral's concern. Laura and I worked on the menu for the following week, called in the list to the grocer. We found that each of us loved poetry so there was some time set aside for reading and occasionally trying to compose a few rhymes. There were tears and laughter to be shared as we became tightly bound as friends.

One Friday she said to me "By the way, surgery is scheduled for next Monday morning."

Laura, despite the fact that she was tiring more quickly, insisted that she prepare dinner that evening and for the next few days because I was heavily committed at the office for the weekend. "I'll talk the housekeeper or nurse into helping."

That night I said to David "Wow. Michael really gave me the third degree after dinner tonight. We didn't quite finish our conversation so Laura is having us to dinner tomorrow evening in order for us to finish the conversation."

Monday morning I was off early to work. David had driven Laura and Michael to the hospital at 0600 to prep for the operation and then went on to school. Neither he nor I was able to concentrate while our minds were on Laura's operation. I left the office early and encountered David walking into the hospital entrance

We joined the admiral in the waiting area minutes before the surgeon came to see Michael. We heard the door open and saw the doctor approach. The look on his face boded bad news. David and I moved to either side ready to support Michael.

"Sorry, Admiral. We chose not to operate. The disease is too advanced."

"May I see her now?"

"Yes, but she is unable to respond and may not recover enough for you to communicate."

"Will I be able to take her home?"

"If she recovers enough, but I very much doubt that."

We sat down to wait. I held David's hand and could feel his trembling as he tried to hold back the tears.

Michael returned about an hour later, his swollen eyes red "The doctor has given permission for you to say good bye. Apparently she will not be with us in the morning."

David caught his slumping figure. Minutes later we walked to the recovery room where each silently said goodbye to the one who was so special in each life.

The doctor discouraged Michael from staying all night. All three of us were back at 0700 only to discover that Laura was gone at 0349.

I called Bob at the office to give him the news and asked for the day off so that I might be present to the admiral. I suggested that David go on and do his best at school while I drove Michael home.

As we neared the house Michael said "Sara, there is so much to do. I don't know where to start."

"When we get home, I'll make us pot of coffee and some toast. You can start telling me all that comes to mind while I take notes. Afterwards, we can plan out the best way to get things done.

It was apparent that he was dead tired and had not slept during the night. I settled him into a recliner in the den while I went to the kitchen. Five minutes later, he was asleep. I covered him with a blanket and let him sleep until he awakened in an hour. He ambled into the kitchen where I was sipping coffee and reading the Post. "Thank you, Sara. I'll have some coffee now."

A half hour later, I had written out a long list of items, reset in priority order. I called the mortuary to make arrangements according to Michael's wishes and then the National Cathedral for a Saturday afternoon memorial service. A call to Commodore Biggs about time arrangements set things going at the office. Biggs agreed to call the Secretary of the Navy and all the key offices in the military hierarchy. The family lawyer said he would arrive at one o'clock.

When all the calls were complete, I asked Michael to dictate some notes that I could use in a draft of the obituary. That took time with several interruptions due to Michael's emotional state.

David left school early and popped in at 1230, in time to make some lunch for the three of us. It was obvious that Michael was deep into his thoughts while he ate very little.

It was after David cleared away the dishes that Michael stood to embrace the two of us, and in a husky voice said "Thank you and I know Laura thanks you for taking care of me." The tears flowed from three sets of eyes, as we stood wrapped in each other's arms.

David spent some time with his studies while I saw to some household chores. That took little time since the household staff had everything under control even though they stayed invisible unless called.

Several hours after the admiral and his lawyer went into conference, we were invited to join them in order to witness the reading of the will. Most of the distribution was, as expected, to Michael with the exception of fifty thousand dollars, of which twenty five thousand was gifted to David and a like amount to me, "my dear beloved and loving children."

Both of us gasped at the surprise, bringing a smile to Michael's face.

The attorney closed his attaché case and left soon after having a cup of coffee.

Michael went to the cabinet and opened a bottle of single malt scotch. "On a whim, we bought this bottle fifteen years ago for this very purpose, to drink to the recently departed loved one." Once again salty tear drops were shed some of which mixed with the scotch in tribute to Laura.

“Kids, I wish you had known the younger Laura, so full of life and fun. She was a gifted hostess and had much to do with my easy movement up the ladder of responsibilities in the navy. That is a side of military service that you had never seen.”

“She was there for me from the moment I walked in the door at home whether it was a trip from the office or a return trip from six months at sea. Intuitively she knew what I needed, first was a warm hug and a long kiss and next be it a drink, food, a bath or bed. It has been that way even up until a few weeks ago when she became too weak.”

His voice trailed off as the tears began to flow and then the sobs burst forth. We wrapped our arms around him and let their tears mingle with his.

After a long period of silence I asked “Michael, if you think you can eat some food, I’ll whip up something light for us. You hardly ate at lunch time.”

“That would be nice, Sara.”

Michael topped off their glasses of scotch as I started to walk out I heard Michael ask. “David, This house is too big but I do not want to move. Do you think that you and Sara might consider moving in?”

The response was an enthusiastic yes.

The admiral said, “Some conditions come with the offer. We shall continue to have a housekeeper. As a career woman, you will not have time for that. Agreed?”

He got a slightly reluctant agreement. I’m glad you agreed because there is a good possibility that next Monday you are going to be requested to take on some new responsibilities, which may not leave you much spare time except to provide David with the niceties of life. No, don’t ask me. The commodore will want to ask you.”

I tried to cajole him but he laughed it off.

“Ok, then. Let’s talk about the where. Which bedroom shall we occupy?”

He laughed “As far away from the master bedroom so that I will not be disturbed with your riotous lovemaking.” That brought a roar from all of us.

Michael and I sent David off to his study group while we ran all the errands to the mortuary, the cathedral and the florists. Michael insisted on a short trip to the office while I performed the rest of the errands such as getting copies of the death certificate. While waiting for Michael, I went to my office in order to make some phone calls.

I poked my head into the team conference room to say hello and fill in the team on what was happening with the admiral. They were filled with questions, which I gracefully answered to the best of my ability.

Laura’s ashes were brought home after the memorial service on Friday morning. Over three hundred mourners attended the service including the Vice President and the Secretaries of the Navy and the Army plus a raft of brass including Michael’s immediate superior. The reception following was held in one of the anterooms in the Cathedral. I, at Michael’s request, presented the primary eulogy.

Michel had insisted that Al, Joan Adam and Rosalie stay the weekend with us. We seven gathered at home afterwards for our private reminiscing.

Friends came by on Saturday and Sunday, David serving as bartender and I serving small plates of catered food when it was proper to do so. The housekeeper had brought in her daughter to help.

We were totally exhausted by the time the last of company departed at 1700. Michael retired to his room at 1730 saying good night.

An hour later the two of us sank into bed, too tired to talk

At 0900 the following morning at work Commodore Biggs sent for me. "Have a seat, Sara. I'll join you as soon I finish this call."

Three minutes later he pulled up a chair directly opposite her. "I know that Michael has indicated that we would be asking you to consider making some changes in your work assignment. Prior to that, Michael was carefully but pointedly asking you for a lot of information. There are some changes taking place all over the globe. We are expanding a number of departments that deal with understanding these changes. For instance we are beefing up staff related to the sabotage and espionage departments as well as our information collecting agents."

"The executive arm of ONI is getting stretched thin. We have made some changes and additions that will help. I still personally need a right arm to assist in coordinating the multifaceted organization. I am not talking a secretarial position. My long, faithful and competent Marie handles that task. What I need is someone who can organize and then manage the interdepartmental communications flow and keep me informed on issues that should come to the executive branch of the ONI."

"Michael is sure you can handle it. The big question is do you believe you can and are you interested. If you choose to do so, you will be reporting to my deputy, Captain Horn and you will sit in on our daily executive staff meetings."

"Let me hasten to say that your history in communications management makes you an ideal fit. Johnson really argued against your leaving his unit. Your work has been exceptional but he agreed that the need is for your talent is greater here

"I am honored, sir and surprised, not at the idea of change but at the level of operations to which you are inviting me. I feel so inexperienced and definitely so young for such responsibility."

"Sara, have you ever heard the biblical story of God's call to Jeremiah to be his prophet?"

"No sir, I haven't had much exposure to the old testament."

"Well, the first response Jeremiah makes is "But I'm only a youth, too young for this responsibility. God tells him not to worry because he will be given the wisdom and maturity to carry out his task. That is how I would respond to you, Sara. I have had the privilege to review all your personal records. The only other person who ever came to work with me who matches your IQ is that husband of yours. I will be more than pleased to have you serve, Sara."

"Whew. May I have overnight to discuss this with David and Michael?"

"Of course, you may. I would hope that your family supports you because we all need spiritual and emotional support when we are so exposed to the problems that pervade society and the world. We shall defer any deeper discussion until tomorrow. Come by at 0900."

It was a trying day, dealing with the heavy load for their team analysis as well as my thinking about the commodore's request. I knew that Michael would not be home for dinner but David would get in about 1730.

He met me at the door with open arms and a loving kiss that had its usually melting effect. "Oh, David, I do love you."

As he helped me out of the light spring coat, I asked, “What do I smell? Are you cooking dinner? You are a love.”

“The housekeeper gave me a special recipe. It’s vegetable soup but won’t be ready for an hour plus. Let’s have a drink with you on my lap telling me about your day.” Little did he know how engaging the next hour would be?

The excitement in my voice and my body was vibrant not quite masking a bit of worry. “It sounds so right for you, Sara. You don’t have doubts about your ability, do you? You can hold your own at any task you want to undertake and you know you can count on full support from me.”

“David, I knew you would say that but I may be putting a burden on you, needing your support when you may need me most. I promised us that I would always be there for you. That is how I envisioned our marriage.”

“I understand but we must always be ready to accept change and challenges. Hell, you know that none of us have any way of knowing what tomorrow brings. We just saw that happen to Michael who lost his love at least twenty years earlier than they had hoped. Who knows what will be up for grabs by the time I get admitted to the bar.”

“Darling, you are something else. I can hardly believe what has happened to me since I met you in that ice cream parlor. I am truly overwhelmed by your love and acceptance. Just hold me while.”

“I just had another thought, Sara. To have you moving in the highest circles of management will be a trail blazing experience. We talked about the need for the world to recognize the equality of women in the work place I would like to see you at the top of a ladder during your present venture. I want you to go for the gusto, as we always say.”

When I approached the subject with Michael later, his response was. “Of course, you must for two reasons. You have the ability and the navy needs you. I know that the position will make changes for us at home. Your hours will be a little more uncertain, but we can compensate as David has said. We will employ a full time housekeeper and cook, one willing to be flexible to meet our needs. He chuckled “I’ll be happy to take your hugs whenever I can get them. You can double up on the hugs the next day after you miss one. Come, both of you. Let’s have a nip to salute our Sara’s success with our wishes and support.”

“That’s a deal, Michael, if I can have your shoulder to cry on when David’s is not available.”

David fell into an easy sleep while I lay with dozens of ideas and some questions bustling around my head. Am I really mature enough to handle this responsibility? How will any co-workers, all men, feel about taking orders from me? What impact will this have on my relationship with David?”

A myriad of other concerns kept my mind occupied. I finally fell into a fitful sleep late in the morning. When he kissed me in the morning, David saw the dark rings but said nothing. He teased me while we showered and then made breakfast while I dressed.

Chapter 5.

What thrilled me as the commodore unfolded the detail of his expectations was the understanding that I was privileged to all the information from every unit as it crossed my desk. In addition to organizing and managing the flow, I would have the responsibility to cull through and concisely but thoroughly have the important information ready for the commodore each day.

I had been right about needing support during those first weeks. I was often truly spent upon arrival home. After a few weeks, I prevailed on Commodore Biggs to provide me with an assistant. The result was a young Lieutenant JG who, once trained, handled many details and gave me full relief most weekends.

Only then was I able to resume my special attention to the men in my life at home.

The commodore also provided transportation available to me in the morning and at the end of the day

I received compliments from the senior officers of every department for the systems I devised and the training I provided to their staff members. As promised, Michael kept an eye on me at the office, like an archangel making sure office politics circled around me never catching me up into its web.

Sitting in his chair each evening, Michael was always available to me, no matter the subject, such as some current information from Korea, what meals he would like, some frustration with one of the new underlings in some department or my worry that David was working too hard.

One evening he seemed to be detached. I went to his lap. "Dad, you must miss her terribly, If David and I do, and it must be doubly difficult for you."

"Sara, you are right. For some reason I was missing her deeply tonight. I was also thinking how fortunate I am to have the two of you to partially fill the chasm". He could not hold back the teardrop that had been clinging to this eyelid.

I changed the focus of our conversation and shared an idea of a new filing and retrieval program for the information system. Michael loved the idea.

I approached the commodore to provide two extra staff in order to implement the idea. He approved and the project was launched.

Over a period of months other departments were seeking my assistance to set up similar systems.

David welcomed me with his warm body every night, no matter how late I may have been. He caressed me, kissed me, comforted me and was even known to seduce me when I had arrived, nerves taut and muscles tense. He made sure I slept in on those rare mornings when I had a night of bad dreams.

There were also fun evenings planned by David and Michael just to divert my mind after work. Some times it was cut throat gin rummy, hearts or pinochle. Once in a while, the three of us would take in a movie, dad sitting in the loge section while David and I headed for the cheap seats. Many evenings often closed with discussions of the economy or personal planning.

David asked Michael one evening “Dad, we need to plan on some investment for our inheritance funds. Any ideas for us?”

“What are you looking for? Income? Growth? Gamble?”

I said, “In our discussions the words growth and risk came out on top.” David nodded agreement.

“On that note I would suggest you consider a third of your funds be invested in real estate, ten percent in cash and the balance in one of two stocks, Dupont or International Business Machine Co. Let me know what you decide.”

We took Michael’s suggestion, choosing IBM stock and starting a look for a small property in Georgetown.

David had finished third in his class at the end of the second quarter and first as they came to the end of the year in June. He was provided with a clerkship in the legal division of the State department for eleven weeks including a week’s vacation during those summer months.

David told me of a conversation he had with Michael one late afternoon. He said to Michael

“Michael, we love you and are happy you found us. I want to thank you for whatever role you played in placing Sara in this new position. Although it is tiring and sometimes draining, she seems to be so fulfilled. She is vibrant, knowing she is making a contribution.”

“David, she is doing more than making a contribution. The entire senior staff holds her in high esteem; at first finding it difficult to believe that one so young carries her weight right along with captains and commanders. In fact, she is doing exactly what you were able to do at Pearl and at sea. God knew what he was doing when he used physical desire to bring you two young people together.”

“By the way, what are you going to do for your birthdays?”

I was overwhelmed when David told me. I buried my head on his chest, a heart filled with gratitude that I made such a contribution through my work.

Since we had no plans for our birthdays, Michael took us to dinner. On a Saturday evening we had dinner in a neighborhood family style restaurant. Michael secretly ordered a birthday cake, which had all the patrons singing when the chef walked to the table with candles burning.

When we were having the second cup of coffee, Michael distributed the birthday cards, which held a surprise for each of us. Folded inside of each card were stock certificates of Dupont and Coca Cola Companies.

I said “Michael, such expensive gifts.”

“Hush, child. You are my children and I want to spoil you. It is what Laura would have wanted.” With a laugh he added “Just keeps down the noise tonight. I need a little sleep.”

The following Saturday evening, I looked up from the novel I was reading to interrupt David’s study.” Honey, do you ever think of returning to the church?”

“In fact, I have, but not to the RC.”

“How about Episcopalian or Presbyterian? You know that Michael occasionally attends a low Episcopalian congregation that he considers liberal enough for him.”

“I didn’t know that. Do you want to try it tomorrow?”

The small sanctuary was fairly full, quite a few couples in their late twenties or early thirties. We both appreciated the service and the sermon. The priest greeted us warmly, inviting us to return. A young couple, special greeters, invited us to coffee in the social hall, which we turned down with warm smiles.

The church had been within walking distance. On the way home, we talked about the experience and decided to return next Sunday and we did and on occasion did the same during the following years.

In the midst of changing into shorts, David asked. “Did you at any time think about making love with me an hour before we went to church? I did.”

“No I didn’t, David. Making love with you is so sacred, honey. I am looking forward to this evening with the same anticipation I do each weekend. To be in your arms, to exchange exploring kisses, the feel of adoration you exude with each caress and to be linked in deep love is a spiritual experience for me and I sense it is for you.”

“Yes it is, but this morning for a brief moment my mind flipped back in time. It didn’t last long and I wondered if it had happened to you.”

“Nope and I don’t expect it will. I know my mom struggles with my outlook but daddy is totally accepting of our not being RC anymore.

The next evening during dessert time David asked, “Dad, I’ve been meaning to ask you to tell us a little about your navy career. We’re you always involved with the aviation side?”

“For the most part I was, serving at four different air stations as a squadron commander, executive officer of one station, commander of one, wing commander of a fighter unit. One exception was my tour at the Naval War College; another was time off for six months to take some special aeronautical engineering courses at M.I.T.”

“Another exception was an assignment in 1939 when I served as executive officer of a destroyer squadron in the northern Atlantic providing escort duty for ships carrying material to England. While most of the German activity was in the mid-Atlantic where the Canadians and British were thin with escort ships, some of the U-boats would stray closer to our shore lines, hoping to destroy coastal oilers.”

“I remember a specific night when a thunder and lightning storm was in full force, our detectors picked up the presence of a u-boat. The German skipper was tailing an oiler, about three thousand yards aft. The destroyer was my squadron flagship. Our skipper was sure he had a direct hit with the first drop of depth charges but two minutes later our sonar picked up the echo. The u-boat zagged and we zagged. There was no way the U-boat would elude us but the clever captain was not going to let us destroy his boat.”

“We spent four hours doggedly pursuing the enemy, unable to make the kill. Finally, for reasons that will never be known, the sub surfaced off our starboard bow, strafing our deck with machine gun fire and its four and half inch deck gun. We lost six men, four injured and some damage to our superstructure before our heavy fire power sunk the sub.”

“Speculation was that their air supply was running out and forcing them to surface, thus hoping to do some major damage before sacrificing themselves for the father land.”

“That in fact was the most hazardous duty of my career including all our time at sea in the Pacific. Well, there was, of course, December 7th at Pearl Harbor.”

“We’re you on duty that morning?”

“Actually, I was on leave. David, you know that Laura and I own that property just outside the station at Pearl. I was on a two-week leave before beginning my new assignment at Pearl. Laura and I decided to spend the entire time there. Both of you know our story as told to you by Laura at dinner the first time Sara met Laura. Remember her telling of experiencing the Japanese planes flying directly over our house during their bombing runs to destroy the fleet anchored in the harbor. We were able to help our neighbors stay calm by pointing out that the target was the ships not our homes.

By the way it was that night when we were exchanging stories that Laura fell in love with your, Sara.” There was just a hint of a choke in his voice as he continued. “That evening when Laura and I lie abed, she said, “Michael, we already considers David as our son but today we are adopting a daughter.”

There were tears in my eyes as I went and sat on Michaels lap. “Thank you, Dad. I am so blessed to have had two wonderful sets of parents who love me.”

David asked “Were you already a flag officer when you arrived at Pearl?”

“No I wasn’t, still not senior enough to be on the list. Furthermore on that day of infamy I was still on travel orders, in Hawaii because we were residents. I was truly off duty when the bombs struck. The only contribution I made was to calm my neighbors as I sized up the hub of the action, knowing only some fluke would put us at risk.”

“I was able to reach the communication center on December ninth, letting them know I was on the island and available. Three hours later, I had a call from Chester that is Admiral Nimitz. “Stay put, Mike. I want you on my planning staff. You will hear from someone in a couple of days. You kids know most of the rest”

The next morning at work, at the request of Commodore Biggs, I was sitting outside his private office. I had been cooling my heels for fifteen minutes, an unusual situation, wondering what the occasion was. His secretary smiled when she walked in but had not followed with any other conversation. That too was unusual. At the sound of a buzzer “You may go in, Sara.”

I was surprised to see Bob, my first supervisor in Analysis, seated next to the commodore. “Sara, we seem to have a problem. Bob’s report to me regarding the Korean affair, dated two days ago, has not reached my desk. It was routed through your office. Any ideas?”

“No, sir. I do remember that not one day during the last week has passed without a report to you via my department. Let’s see. Two days ago, the report’s subject was troop movement to new locations just north of the thirty-eighth parallel. Is that the one?”

Bob said, “That’s it.”

The commodore asked, “Sara, would you please get your department log book covering the last thirty days?”

Five minutes later I was perched on the edge of my seat as the commodore and Bob were discussing what appeared to be reports for two other days within the month. Bob asked. “Is this the official log? It seems to have a different cover from our official log books.”

“No, I brought my personal log. I know it’s not standard, but I keep a second log in my personal safe just as a precautionary measure. There should be no difference between the two.”

The commodore said, “We have a problem, Sara. Bob and I will work on it and get back to you. You’re dismissed.”

I was baffled and uneasy with the fact that no full discussion happened on the subject.

I found out later that after I departed Bob said, “Her personal log notes that she read all three of the reports that failed to reach you, Dave. Something fishy is going on. Not that any of the three reports were overly sensitive, but procedural errors might indicate some other problems. It just doesn’t seem like Sara.”

That evening I debated the wisdom of discussing the situation with Michael but decided against doing so. I did raise the subject with David. Neither of us could make a good guess, leaving me to fret, delaying sleep for a couple of hours. I barely kept up with the conversation at the breakfast table.

Nothing further was brought forth during the balance of the week, allowing me to gradually let the matter fall to the back of my mind. Things changed early Monday morning. I was summoned to the commodore’s office to meet with him and Bob.

“Sara did you read and forward Bob’s report on Bulgaria last Friday.”

“Yes I did and I attached an addendum based on some additional information that came through from London.”

“May I presume that you have a copy of the addendum?”

I excused myself and returned with the copy, handing it to the commodore. “May I ask what this is about, sir?”

“Not yet, Sara. We’ll see you here tomorrow at the same time.”

I was distraught. No one was blaming me for any improper discharge of my duties but I felt I was in some kind of trouble. By noon I decided I was getting nothing done. I told Jimmy, my deputy that I was leaving for the day.

After spending an hour meditating at the Lincoln Memorial, I went to the Georgetown Law Library to find David. I spied him eventually and convinced him to yield some study time to listen and offer some wisdom.

We strolled home, I receiving no wisdom but a sensitive ear and a shoulder to cry on. In our room, he undressed me, tucked me into bed and gave me a sleeping pill.

I was not feeling very sharp when I awoke at 0400, but arose, dressed for the outdoors and took a brisk walk for over an hour. I entered quietly, slipped out of my clothes. My cool body was an absolute shock to David, causing him to awaken with a jerk of his body.

I laughed as he sputtered. “Did I wake you, sailor boy?” Giggling, I splayed her cold palm across his belly, making him jump.

“Are you asking for trouble, little lady?”

“Sure am, sailor.” I always got anything I wanted from David.

Utter tension had risen the moment I was summoned to the commodore’s office, but it slowly evaporated during the next minutes. Bob and the commodore broke into smiles. “Mystery is solved, Sara.”

“You are going to tell me why you have been punishing me, aren’t you?”

“We didn’t mean to punish you but we did have to prove you innocent by proving someone else guilty. We have had internal security working with us to solve the mystery of missing communications, all of which pointed directly to you.”

“Why me? I don’t understand.”

“Well, it seems that a certain deputy director of communications, encouraged by some male chauvinists, decided that you were not worthy of your position. With some silly idea that he would be appointed in your place, he cleverly misdirected four reports to other departments instead of to the executive office.

“I can definitely inform you that he has resigned from the service and four others will face a captain’s mast.”

“Internal security finally resolved the problem, clearing you of any wrongdoing. The fact that all the evidence pointed to you was suspicious and very amateurish. A group of regulars in the ONI resented having a woman with a degree of power serving within the traditional bastion of Navy officers. Your deputy, an ambitious officer, a graduate of the old boys club, Annapolis, eager on principle as well as to serve his own ambition, was selected by that small cabal to undermine your influence and have you ousted.

The only problem now is for you to cure that cold and then train a new deputy.”

“Whew.”

“Sara, take off a few days to get well while we set up some candidates for interviews. You need to know that no future staff in your department will be hired without your personal approval.”

I laughed. “I guess I need to get well here since I have no deputy.”

The commodore laughed with me. “You’re right. Now, scoot.”

By the next morning, my doctor arranged for me to be admitted to Bethesda with a case of pneumonia. David told me that he had arrived home at noon and received the message. He was about to leave when the phone rang. “Oh, hi, Rosalie. No she isn’t. I just had word that she has pneumonia and is at Bethesda. I’m headed out right now. I’ll call you with the news.”

When he and the admiral arrived home after visiting hours the next day, they found Rosalie having tea in the kitchen while Mrs. Doyle was whipping up a salad to go with the homemade soup. “Don’t look so surprised. I took the first plane available to take care of you two and support my best friend.” Rosalie was still there seven days later until she was assured that I was well on the road to recovery.

By the end of the month I was back to work and breaking in a new young Lieutenant JG as my deputy. The data that passed through my department was as grim as ever. Czechoslovakia was definitely under the thumb of the Soviets. Israel was defending itself against five nations which had aligned with the Palestinians to oust Israel from the Mideast. Violence was rife across Africa and parts of Asia.

NEW FRONTIERS

Chapter 6.

The year 1949 was a pivotal year for our extended family. In the spring, David qualified for the bar in DC, his scores high enough to qualify for reciprocity with all the individual states. Al was working for an electrical engineering firm in Lexington, completing his thesis for submission in June along with his orals and expecting to receive his doctorate. Adam saw more opportunities for the family business but needed capital and more personnel to accomplish his vision.

The admiral was considering retirement. The last six months had been intense. The internal disagreements on the future of Naval Intelligence had been breaching Michael's relationship with the powers that be. Some of the brass was taken with the idea of turning all intelligence gathering to the new Central Intelligence Agency, successor to the OSS. The CIA had been established with the passage of the National Security Act of 1949.

Michael had argued hard, successfully defending the status of the Office of Naval Intelligence as required from the very origins of the U.S. Navy. He was tired of the political infighting, which continued to put too much pressure on his emotions. He did not feel ready for retirement but thought he was ready for a new challenge.

I was ready to become a full time mom. It looked like politics had caught me in its web at ONI. Reorganization was underway. Michael had submitted his request for retirement and Commodore Biggs appeared to be in line for Michael's position. On the day after he was installed he invited me to have lunch so that we could discuss my future.

He waited until we had ordered before initiating the conversation. "Sara, we have some hard liners moving into power at the top levels of the navy and that spells trouble for advancement of women into the higher structures of the service. I have no idea of your hopes but I had been considering a significant vertical move for you."

"Thank you, sir. I am just about to propose a new project for our communication system and had hoped to be aboard long enough to get that underway if it were approved. On the other hand, with David ready to practice, we are seriously considering starting a family. That would put me on quite a different track."

"That is good news and bad news, good because I can keep you outside the messy politics but bad because I will have lost one of my star performers."

"Thank you."

He said wryly "I can just visualize some of the hard liners reacting when you walked into their offices, looking very pregnant." We laughed and he continued.

"Now let us enjoy lunch. We can set a date for you to make your presentation while I figure a way to have you around long enough to get it off the ground, if approved."

No way could I have shared the news that one area of activity at home was increasing frustration in our lives. Pregnancy seemed to be eluding us. During that special time when it was possible for me to conceive, the intensity combined with the desire for success was making sex work instead of joy.

I found myself sniping at David over some little incident. Yesterday I went silent, frustrating him when I would not talk with him. Last Friday he had come home late

without calling to let me know of the delay. My surprise dinner roast was overcooked causing me to break down in tears.

Yesterday when David arrived I was busy doing something and not available for his usual hug and tease. I silently stormed around the house until he finally cornered me in the den. He swooped me up in his arms and carried me, legs kicking, to his big chair, setting me into his lap and forcing me to look him directly in the eye “What’s going on? What have I done or failed to do that is so serious that you are avoiding me. Talk to me!”

I tried to avert her face but he cupped my chin and forced me to look at him. I finally stammered “It’s not you, David. Climbing into bed with you or having you initiate a seduction was one of my great joys. Now I am in such a state that just thinking that you will want me makes me uptight. I am sure I will let you down and that is going to put our marriage in jeopardy.” My voice broke and a loud sob escaped my lips, tears were falling down my cheeks.

David held and rocked me for the longest time until the sobs subsided and the tears ceased falling. “I am so sorry, Sara. I should have seen this coming but my selfish desire to get you pregnant had blinded me to your feelings. Forgive me, please.”

With a slight stutter I said. “It’s my fault, David. I should have been direct with you, letting you know what was happening to me. I need the forgiveness.”

David put his lips to mine in a gentle loving manner and suggested we start finding out what might be done to move things ahead. We spent hours reading all available material, consulting with various specialists but finding no help.

One day when we both took off the afternoon to try again, I burst into tears once more. In between sobs I managed to say, “David, I just can’t go on today. Nothing you do feels good. I know I am not my usual self. I am letting you down and that is unacceptable. This is so disheartening. Can you just hold me?”

David enfolded me in his arms, kissed my forehead, letting his body tell me it was okay. I finally ceased trembling and fell into a calm sleep. .

Slipping into a robe, he went into his office to place a phone call to my OB. The result was an appointment for the next day with a specialist to start tests for both of us in order to discover the root cause.

I awakened about five, pulled on a terry cloth robe, and joined David in the den for a glass of wine. I’m calm now, honey. You, sailor boy are so loving and patient. ”

“Sara, I called and have an appointment tomorrow for both of us to undergo tests to see if we can determine the basis of our problem.”

“Good. I have to know soon if only so I can relax again,”

“Honey, it’s okay. If we cannot have our own we can adopt. It will all work out.” I moved onto his lap, accidentally spilling my wine on my chest. We started laughing as David used my robe to wipe the wine off my breast.

When he started to take his hand away I said “That feels nice, honey. Maybe we can make one more try.”

Two weeks later we walked out of the doctor’s office, tears now dried up after a long cry.

That evening after dinner, with coffee cups in hand, the admiral and the kids retired to the living room. “Now, Sara and David, out with it. You’re holding out on me.”

I put down his cup and sat on his lap. “Dad, there will be no grandson or granddaughter. Yours truly is unable to conceive. We just got the word we are so sorry.” Neither of us tried to hold back the tears.

I poured myself into the proposal to the big brass. I checked and double-checked with the two IBM software planners who were working with me. We were ready with a proposal that was sure fire and a step forward for the navy.

Two weeks after their luncheon date, Commodore Biggs asked me to come to the conference room. My palms were sweaty although I was sure that no way could the proposal be shot down

Without preliminaries he started in.

“The top brass has accepted your proposal for the storing and retrieving a whole myriad of data in our new computer system. They were impressed with the detail with which you submitted the project as well as your recommendation for the software planners and programmers to implement the proposal.”

I could sense elation in the pit of my stomach. “That is a relief, sir. When can we get started?”

“That is the bad news. The directory has picked his own project manager who will choose his own team and you are not expected to be on the team. I am more than sorry. It is another major blunder when some of the old time members of the club work to further the career of a buddy and you never heard me say that.”

My gut tightened into a knot. “So where does that leave me?”

“Still coordinating our communications until the new system is ready to replace the present one.”

“I guess it’s time to move on. How soon do you think you can have a replacement for me?”

“I was afraid you would say that. How about your deputy? Is he ready?”

“I believe I can have him ready within a fortnight.” I was self-contained, not about to let my feelings of disappointment show. Personal disappointments may bring tears but not navy politics.

The commodore would not be fooled, however. “Your time will come, Sara. It’s still as man’s world, but that world is slowly unraveling. It is women like you who may help speed up the process.”

I gave him a warm smile. “Thanks to you and Michael, I do think the first threads have started to unravel.

“Since I have a choice, I will place you on terminal leave the day that you leave. It is my way of giving you a small bonus for the proposal which will put us miles ahead of the enemies we face.”

I was feeling down when I arrived at the house. David had not returned but Michael met me at the door. He embraced me and said “Biggs called. I am sorry, dear. Perhaps you can understand a bit of what I was going through, triggering my retirement. You sure didn’t need this on top of your news about not able to conceive.”

“Dad, pour me a tall scotch and ice. I need to get a little tipsy”

After dinner the three of us held a powwow. Michael had a plan. “I think it’s time to blow this town. You know that I am loaded and you two have enough working capital to make a new start. Sara, I think you have the makings of a top-notch executive in some field. David, you are qualified to practice law in any state. Once we unload this house, we are footloose and fancy free starting a new life. What do you say?”

His enthusiasm was contagious. David was looking to see my reaction. The smile on my face was his signal to say, “Let’s go for it.”

In July when the three couples were vacationing at Lake Tahoe, on the Nevada side, David, who had a dream of the families bonding, was about to see his plan to take off. It was more than just David’s dream, having been adopted by all of us through the years. The dream of a large structure for three families had been under consideration for several years.

It had taken on the cloak of reality when, during the previous year, Rosalie’s dad, Aaron Ross, deciding that we kids were serious, bought three acres to hold for us.

He had been considering retiring from the business since he felt Adam, his son-in-law, had secured the reins of the business. Planning to move to the lake with his wife, Anna, he promised to be on hand to supervise the construction of our dream house when we were ready to go.

The six of us, after spending three years planning and saving our funds, had completed the planning during last year’s vacation. We had spent most of that vacation developing the house plans and hiring an architect

. Plans were finalized during their winter week vacation the following January.

Financing had been arranged between January and this June vacation. We were agreed on the contractor, who promised to have the home completed before the coming Christmas

When Al had expressed concern about the years it would take them to accumulate funds, David and I helped with some of the funds we had inherited from Laura.

Michael told us later of the turn of events during that afternoon. He was baby sitting little Aaron when Aaron, the grandfather joined him in the shade of the pine grove. In the course of the conversation Michael asked “Aaron, why so early retirement? You look younger than I.”

You’re right, Michael. I have been thinking of going back to work for Adam. I could probably handle some of his financial work. He has some great ideas but that means expansion which requires more capital and more top level management.”

“Adam, what kind of expansion are you considering?”

“Well, Michael, you know we have been manufacturers of vacuum tubes with a minor sideline in aviation radio equipment. What we have been considering is the future of the jet age of commercial flying along with expansion of private and corporate ownership of aircraft. At least I believe the flood of qualified air personnel coming out of the military bodes well for that market. We have been developing a business plan.”

“Would you be willing to share your plans with us tomorrow during the morning?”

“Absolutely. You might be able to poke some holes in our thinking.”

At Michael's invitation we gathered at ten, all five of the men and me. Rosalie and Joan figured the discussion would be over their heads.

Adam unfolded the plan, which called for expanding the radio division to create and sell new-sophisticated radio equipment to small plane manufacturers. That step would require an investment of a quarter of a million dollars additional capital (Author's note: An equivalent of three million dollars today). The company would also need to hire an electrical engineer to oversee development and manufacture of current products and new technology.

"What about increased capacity so you can approach major commercial plane manufacturers like Boeing, Lockheed, etc.?"

Adam beamed, pulled out a second volume and laid it out before the group. "That is more ambitious. It will require considerably more capital. That may mean going public."

I asked the most questions and contributed a few insightful comments. I probed into the financial areas with questions regarding cash balance, receivable ratios, unit costs and other related subjects. David asked questions regarding personnel numbers and job satisfaction.

At first, Adam was a little resentful of my probing but eventually understood that I was trying to be helpful. I was aware that despite his respect for me, he was still a traditional thinker.

The conversation continued for a couple of hours with various ideas being put forth. One idea was hiring Al, with his doctorate, to head a new engineering section for phase one. Michael said he might be able to help finding some of the additional funding for phase one.

It was time for lunch so we adjourned until 1600 after some relaxed time at the beach that afternoon.

Michael gathered David and me and suggested a walk on the beach. "Kids, do you have the ability to raise ten thousand for the risk part of your investment funds?"

I asked "David, we do, don't we?"

"Sure do. I see where you're going and I'm ready if Sara is."

"You betcha, big boy."

"Good. I need some time to make a phone call."

Rosalie told me later that in the meanwhile Aaron was saying to Adam and Rosalie "Those two friends of yours are sure sharp. Great insight and questions while neither have any real experience in business. Am I right?"

Rosalie answered. "That's right dad. Both are brainy and interested in so many things in life. I suggest that if you and Adam make a deal with Michael, then it must include important roles for those two."

Adam nodded his support. "I agree, dad. It would be great to be teamed up with David. We always called him the brainy one."

When the group gathered Michael popped his question. "Aaron or Adam, what does a quarter million buy as a percentage of ownership?"

Aaron spoke up "We were going to offer outsiders fifteen percent but if it's family, I think Adam would agree on twenty percent." He looked at Adam who nodded affirmatively.

Michael turned toward Al. "Are you open to Adam's suggestion that you head the engineering unit?"

“Joan and I talked about it and the answer is yes if I can get some help on the management skills I would need.”

Adam jumped in. “That part can be handled.”

Michael turned to Adam. “I have a close friend who will come up with fifty thousand along with our two hundred thousand. We would need to form a corporation and issue shares as agreed upon.”

“How soon?” asked Aaron?

“As quickly as you can incorporate and then flesh out and initiate this plan of Adam’s, but there are details to be ironed out. I personally want you to make room for Sara in some significant position. I would also like to see a chance for Al, Sara and David to have options to make further investments as the company moves ahead.”

Adam turned to David and me. “Are you two guys ready to move to California? If so, David, you should become our general counsel. You can open up a practice and contract with us”

David, without looking at me, said. “We need some time to discuss this, Adam.”
“Of course.”

During cocktail time, Michael, David and I found a private corner for discussion at David’s request.

“Michael, there is no way we come to California without you; I have a great job offer in DC. We’re family.”

He received a big grin from Michael. “I know that, but I am ready to move. We can sell the Georgetown properties and buy something on the San Francisco peninsula or in Marin County. That puts us closer to the Oahu vacation house. I had it on the market but I think it would be well to keep it. So I’m ready if you are. How bout you, Sara?”

“I’m tied to this big hunk. Whatever he chooses is my choice. There is an old biblical saying, slightly changed. “Whither he goest, there go I. We will sell our rental property at a good capital gain, by the way.”

We celebrated that evening, killing a couple bottles of good Zinfandel.

Upon our return to Washington, Michael, looking forward to a new adventure, felt no remorse about leaving the navy and Washington. It was more difficult for me because of the close relationships that I had forged during my service. The original group decided on a blowout party at the Army-Navy club.

That party was soon expanded to include the farewell for the admiral as well as for me. Navy brass, including Michael’s buddies as well as a few enemies, was in attendance along with the Secretary of the Navy.

In the corner where my cohorts were gathered, the laughter and jokes were mixed with tears of sadness at the departing of a close friend as well as a colleague.

Two months later, we were settled into a five-bedroom ranch home in Portola valley, south of San Francisco. Al and Joan had decided to live in the semi rural area across the bay near the small town of Fremont, the future location of the new plant.

Aaron accepted the role of chairman and Michael, vice chairman of the board. Adam was President while David was Vice President, general counsel and Al, vice president of Engineering. There were forty other employees.

Aaron and Adam must not have remembered Michael's request that I had to be included. I was feeling left out and tried my best to hide my disappointment.

Michael purchased ten acres outside Fremont, leased it to the corporation which began construction of a new plant forty five days after the incorporation of Radio, Inc. Based on a long term lease, Wells Fargo made him a significant loan. He was unaware of the future value of land, but he focused on making it possible for Radio, Inc to become a player in aircraft communications. He did take an option on five additional contiguous acres.

The quality of our aircraft radios was tested and came through with flying colors. The sales department then approached such aircraft manufacturers as Fairchild, Piper, Beech, Cessna and Taylor Craft. The quality of our two products was equal or greater than their competitors and the prices were very competitive.

Demand was so heavy that shipments had to be deferred thirty to forty days until the new facility in Fremont was completed and equipped.

Meanwhile Al set up a research and design center working primarily to increase his quality of their products, implementing an improved quality control system, improving the life of their products. He had a small crew; a physicist and a chemist under contract, working on the possible use of materials to reduce the size of the tubes and eventually replace the tubes.

With the completion of the new facility, production caught up with demand. Aaron and Al in the meantime had initiated new designs for equipment that would meet the needs of major plane manufacturers such as Douglas, Boeing, Grumman and Lockheed.

Once I, with the help of Rosalie, had completed decorating and furnishing our home I was ready to make my contribution to the business, if permitted. I was hoping for that invitation from Adam. Rosie came by and found me puttering in the garden. "That doesn't look like your kind of activity, Sara."

"You're right, but I have nothing else on my platter at the moment. I hinted to Adam but to no avail."

Rosalie said. "I'm afraid he is not yet alert to the changes that are in the wind. I know he thinks you are brilliant but maybe not the business executive type."

Rosie, sharp as ever, took the problem in hand. She told me "A little pillow talk with Adam helped to solve that problem." She told me later that she told him she needed him less tense when he came home and that "Sara can help relieve the pressure." She said he kept resisting, saying he had a good secretary. "I told him. "The admiral made it a condition that Sara was to be involved and not at a secretarial level."

That weekend at dinner with Adam and Rosie, I was invited to work as Adam's Executive Assistant. I thought he was less than enthusiastic and said so.

Adam was taken back with my direct statement and turned red. He went on as though I had said nothing.

"I need you to become aware of everything that is brewing. If there is such a thing as an alter ego outside one's self, then I want that to be you. With that retentive memory of yours, it will be like keeping a book of secrets in human form".

I asked Adam “What if I see something that you’ve missed? Will you take my comments as constructive?”

I saw some hesitation in his eyes but I waited. I’m sure he knew that I wanted to be more than a glorified assistant. He grinned. “I can take that from you, Sara.” He went on to outline the plan.

I jumped at the chance. The task looked like something I could handle easily. I thought of the position as a sort of glorified secretary but I would be making a serious contribution to a young growing family owned business. After all, I was one of the owners. Moreover, I would be taking minutes of all board meetings and executive committee meetings, thus privileged to all the inside info,”

I dug in from day one and truly got to know how Adam’s mind worked. Since I was not a wallflower or expected to be one, Adam and I soon had major verbal disagreements. Mostly I deferred to his judgment but I pressed hard when I felt I was right. Even when he won the argument, I noticed that his final decisions included some of my comments.

Trying to evaluate myself, I saw myself as calmer as and more objective than Adam, while his intensity or passion was the major driving forces that made him a great leader. Yet I had to make sure he would listen when I pressed hard.

One major obstacle presented itself at the very beginning. Because of limited space, my desk was placed just outside Adam’s private office, causing a rearrangement of desks, thus placing Adam’s secretary farther from his door. Marge, who had always been pleasant around me, suddenly turned cool and nothing that I tried seemed to help. Marge never failed to respond to my request but did it efficiently without a smile. This continued on for some time. I accepted the situation, did most of my own typing and hired a temp to do extensive typing when the workload was heavy.

I learned that every step forward had some little hook that slowed progress just a bit.

David opened an office in Palo Alto, joined the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club, upon invitation. Deferring his hope for international clients, his business card read “Business Law Specialty.”

His first clients were small entrepreneurs starting up their own businesses. He had some work for the corporate counsels at Varian and Hewlett-Packard, a couple of small new companies. With rapid growth of Radio, Inc there was greater demand from Adam for his time.

Within months I had absorbed the details as well as the style of Adam’s management system. I developed a manual of operations for use in the executive department. When Adam saw the resulting product, he decided to have a manual created for each department of their business. I took the responsibility for overseeing each manual and created them in loose-leaf notebooks so that suggestions from any employee could be incorporated. In fact, I instituted a system for bonuses based on contributions to the manuals the manuals became actual living documents.

In the process, I included input from each and every employee and thus established an easy camaraderie with each of the men.

During that first year I enrolled for a Saturday morning class on management at Stanford. When I first planned to attend, David, with a laugh said “That seems to let me off the hook for our Saturday ten A.M. date.”

I giggled. “No way, sailor. Change A.M. to P.M. and present your body or else. Better yet, why don’t we both take that class? I think you ought to be prepared. If Adam were to become ill for some reason, you probably would be called upon to step in for some interim period. I, with what I am learning, could be of real help to you if that become necessary.”

By the end of the first year, success was abounding on many fronts. The business was practically galloping ahead. Joan was very pregnant and Rosalie was talking about another baby, hoping to convince Adam, laughing, “As though he would object.”

In each of the summers, Radio. Inc. had closed down operations for one week in the middle of July. Our three- family Lake Tahoe home was ready for us.

I spent much of my time playing with Rosalie’s son, Aaron, her daughter, Leah and Joan’s little Davey. I built a sand castle each day and told them stories. I had a great need to be with the young ones, sensing that I would never be able to bring our own into the world.

David and I took some golf lessons and took long drives around the lake. Each ride was interrupted with time for some hot petting and intimate conversation in some shady glen.

Cocktail time was the only permitted time for shoptalk with everybody in the mix. Michael wanted Rosalie and Joan somewhat acquainted with what was happening. The conversation centered on our new product, which, Michael felt certain, would attract the ear of the navy and the recently created US Air Force. By the last day, he had everyone excited. “If it’s okay with you members of the executive committee I would like to take Sara and our sales manager on a week’s trip to Washington two weeks from now.”

Aaron looked at Adam who hesitated for a long minute then nodded. It was set but I could not forget that hesitation by Adam before he assented. I thought to myself. “It looks like I’m boxed in. Adam will undoubtedly not approve of any upward movement on my part when such possibilities become evident. I guess I need to start consider setting up some business. It’s time for a talk with David and Michael.

We had three appointments set up before departing for Washington. The first visit was a wonderful surprise. Admiral Biggs, my big boss, the commodore, when I was at ONI, but now at the Bureau of Aeronautics, whistled and with wide-open arms welcomed me as “my whiz bang genius analyst and communicator.” After a cup of coffee and bringing each other up do date, Michael walked off with two important names in the bureau’s procurement department.

The next stop was just as much a surprise. I was warmly welcomed by Captain Robert Johnson, my first supervisor at ONI and good friend of David’s from their days in the Pacific. Bob was able to lead us to the right contact in procurement.

Bob took me to lunch while the admiral lunched with his third appointment. “Tell me all, Sara. I had only a brief note from David at Christmas.” I gave him the full scoop during a very long lunch. I had to tell him the sad news when he gently asked about any little Sellechs.

Just before we parted, Bob said. “The captain, who took charge of your project, blew it within six weeks and was given early retirement. The ONI ended up with another civilian, male, of course.”

I had a chance to visit Mrs. Doyle, my previous housekeeper in Georgetown, while the admiral and Mark, Samson the sales manager, followed through with the new contacts. Mrs. Doyle wept with joy when she saw me standing at her door. We exchanged news just like we had in the old days, both of us weeping openly when I spoke of my inability to conceive.

Mark was enthusiasm itself as he told me of the reception he and Michael had received during their calls.

The next day at Colorado Springs I sat in on the conversation with General Deal of the Air Force. When we were ready to depart, he said, “Sellech is an unusual name. Are you related to a David Sellech who trained with us during the war?”

“Why, yes. David told me about learning to fly an AT-17 here shortly before he went overseas. What a wonderful surprise. By the way, Admiral Witty had an AT-17 and David was his co-pilot at Pearl, shortly after he was commissioned.”

The general turned to Michael. What a small world. I hope he performed well for you, Admiral.”

“I should say so. He aced his first landing for me and I never could match him.” Michael took time to tell him of David’s flying his Bobcat as a messenger between carriers during the battle of the Marianna’s.

On the final leg of their trip to San Francisco Michael sat with me and briefed me in complete detail. “Just so that you know, I think that last interchange regarding David tipped the scale in our favor. I’ll bet Mark gets an invite to make a bid.”

On their flight home, soon after we passed over San Jose, Michael asked, “Sara, what courses are you taking at Stanford this quarter?”

“Statistics, Michael. It’s pretty tough going. Advanced math has always provided a challenge, but I think I m finally on the right track. I think I need two more quarters, one on finance and the other on advanced accounting. David is going to join me again when I take the finance course.”

“What do you plan on doing after that? You will be ready for some serious management position rather than a glorified assistant to Adam.”

“I’m not sure, Michael. The business world is not ready for women at the head of corporations. I could challenge one of the local politicians by breaking new ground. The medical field is a little more open but that is not my cup of tea. I do believe law might be an easier field to crack, but that takes another three years.”

I continued. “Perhaps I can start up a small firm, perhaps one that provides sales representation to some of our vendors. We certainly do more buying than some of them do selling or marketing.”

Michael switched subjects. “Have you and David given more thought to adopting. You would be so great a mom.”

“That’s our thought, dad. If we adopt a little boy, you can have that grandson. David is agreeable and is leaving it to me. I’m having a hard time accepting the doctor’s opinion and hoping that on some outside chance I will get pregnant. I have this strong feeling of wanting

to feel a little one inside my body, being fed and nurtured. I am willing to undergo the pain, if that is what it takes.”

I spied David at the gate as we descended the stairs from the cabin of the plane. At that moment I felt the deep bond that bound the three of us as a family unit.

Michael and Mark made very positive reports to the executive committee the following Monday morning. Based on their reports, in addition to the latest acquisition of three new customers for their current line, management made plans for expansion into the rest of the plant building. Adam said it was time to start advertising for both skilled and unskilled labor even though it might be premature “We could make a big splash by quick delivery of our new products to our new clients. I certainly had good feedback from my trips to Lockheed and Boeing. We can take a giant stride against our competition.”

We were ready to start the production line at the end of sixty days, making a trial run on the sixty-first day. That afternoon Mark had a call from a captain at the Air Force procurement center to bring samples for demos. The following day Adam had a call from Boeing to do the same.

Selected personnel were gathered in four teams. They worked feverishly for two whole days testing and retesting the demos. When the testing was complete, teams were assembled to rehearse the presentations and demonstrations. Adam went with the team to Boeing, asking me to join the team at the demo for the Air Force. Michael had made sure Adam was aware of my role during the Air Force sales call.

A week later purchase orders triggered rapid redesign of the radio casings in order to meet specs for two new customers. Our hopes were being fulfilled

I was thrilled with my role. Adam now was totally open to my opinions so that I was completely aware and fully knowledgeable of the progress and the obstacles we faced. He welcomed my opinions both supportive and critical.

At the next executive committee meeting I was excused just before the committee was to consider an item not originally on the agenda. I wondered what that was about and figured it probably had to do with my compensation. That was the only reason that came to mind.

When the meeting was completed, Michael came to my desk and invited me into his office for a cup of coffee. When we were settled he said “Sara, I was voted down on a recommendation that you be offered the position of Sales Manager for Government Sales. I made a sound proposal based on your work that brought about three contracts. I pointed out that you already had strong relationships that opened the door to more business.”

“Adam strongly opposed the motion. His reasoning was that the busier he was, the greater was his need for your service.”

I was total surprised to learn that Michael had made the proposal but curious about Adam’s argument “Do you believe there was another reason? I thought we had made good progress and he would be supportive of any move that might enhance our progress.”

“I really don’t know honey. He seemed very sincere and I did not want to challenge his motive. I may still do that privately.”

“I hope you won’t do that, dad. If the idea is sound, you will have another opportunity to present the motion.” He gave me a big hug acquiescing to my request.

Three months later at the quarterly board meeting, several important items were on the agenda. Al was proposing that the company authorize David to pursue patents for two applications using transistors based on some experiments in the chemistry lab. There was need for another patent for a restructured vacuum tube that would reduce leakage.

Adam asked, "Where do we stand on the development of our newest models of aircraft radios, Al?"

"We need at least two more weeks."

Adam, who was negotiating with Lockheed, said brusquely "Let's step on it, Al. I'm under great pressure."

"Adam, I can't make a promise to hurry. Tests take time. If you had authorized overtime, we would have this completed." Al usually was more tactful but had been frustrated with Adam's refusal to spend the funds.

They both knew that finger pointing served no good purpose but emotions were running high.

The silence was deafening for about ten seconds. Adam was fuming and his face was flushed. Aaron, trying to keep things calm, interjected "We ought to be able to live with a two week timeline, Adam."

Adam stood up, having lost his cool and in a loud voice started to say "Dad" ... keeled over, gasping for breath and holding his chest. While others gathered around, David started CPR and I dialed the hospital. I then asked the others to step back leaving David to do his job. He was sure he had lost his friend but continued with determination. The ambulance with a doctor aboard pulled up within fifteen minutes. The doctor took over and a few minutes later said to David "Good work, young man." and then rushed Adam to emergency.

"Aaron" I said "Let's not tell Rosalie by phone. Why don't you and dad drive to Berkeley to tell Rosalie and take her to the hospital? A phone call could be devastating Al, we need to tell the crew what has happened and ask them to not speak with any newspaper people. Afterwards, why don't you go to the hospital awaiting Rosalie's arrival? I'll talk to Mark, in sales, and cover the office." Everyone thought my plan was a good one and went along as requested.

I had to drive my mind away from trying to figure out how Rosalie would respond. I forced myself to think about the company.

I wondered what would happen to the plans for the company to go public, that is, sell stock to the public in less than three weeks. It was a known fact that stockholders tended to panic when the president or chairman is suddenly out of commission. I had read about such a case just last week. Considering the facts, the planned public issue would probably have to be deferred.

Back in Adam's office David brought me a cup of coffee and a hug. We sat quietly contemplating the ramifications for Adam's family as well as for the corporation.

It was two hours later than the call came from Michael. "Adam has survived a major heart attack but is in serious condition. He will be hospitalized for some time even if he survives the next twenty-four hours. Rosalie's mother is babying sitting while Aaron and Rosalie are with him just to be present. Doctors want him to sleep for most of the next twenty four hours and have given him sleeping aids."

David asked "Any prognosis?"

“The doctors refuse to speculate at this time, but I think they are optimistic. I was about to call Adam’s family in Philadelphia but maybe we should wait until we know more in the morning. What do you think?”

“I agree, dad. They can be here by evening, given the time differential.”

“That’s the way we’ll play it. I plan to stay with Aaron and will keep you posted. Don’t wait dinner. See you when I get home tonight.”

After the call, I asked “David, walk with me and Al through the shop while I chat with the workers on the line as well as their supervisors. I want them to know that any thing they would have asked Adam, they can ask me until definite plans are made. I promise to get them answers.”

Most of the folks in the plant seemed to be grateful to hear from me, each wanting me to offer wishes for recovery. I knew each by name, which, of course, seemed to please them.

David drove us home after stopping in Palo Alto for a quick bite, neither of us with any desire for dinner. At home, having changed into a dressing gown, I climbed into David’s lap, wrapping my arms around his neck and laying my head on his chest. “I can’t help thinking about Rosalie and what I would be doing if it had been you.”

“Sara, I know it’s difficult not to project but I am right here. We need to focus on support for Rosalie and her family. You, as the one with the most intimate knowledge of Adam’s plans and style of operating, will be key to helping the board finding both the short and long term solution, particularly if Adam does not have a full recovery. You can be sure Aaron will call a board meeting as early as possible. The board will want to hear from our CPA firm, the investment bankers who are planning our public offering and me as general counsel.”

“You are absolutely right. I’m just silly goose thinking about us while major problems face Rosalie and the company. I’ll be ready.”

It wasn’t that simple to dismiss my thoughts about losing David. From that afternoon so long ago, in the Corpus Christi hotel room, I felt a deep sense of safety in David’s arms. My feelings had never changed, even when he lay in the naval hospital recovering from his war injuries. I knew I was strong in my own right, but very aware that I drew strength from my rock, David, who was there to support me when I needed him.

I called Rosalie. “Good morning. Oh, Sara, I am so glad you called.” She broke down sobbing, unable to say a word as I waited a long minute for her. “Adam is going to make it, thank God. I was so scared, Sara.” I understand why you can’t be here right now. We are all grateful that you have so much knowledge of what Adam’s plans were. They need you there, but I need you, too. Meanwhile, Mom is a big help especially with the little ones.”

It was obvious that she wanted to continue our conversation. I let her continue until she finally came to a stop. “I need to let you go.” I told her I would see her this evening.

She said. “All right. See you tonight.”

I was alone with my thoughts, waiting for the others to arrive. “I wonder how this will play out with Adam, the driving force, out of the picture, at least for a short time. Neither Aaron nor dad is familiar with operations but Aaron has the experience and savvy to step in until a permanent solution can be made. Maybe they will ask David to step in with my help.”

Aaron arrived for the start of conversations. The news he brought was that Adam was resting, was awake and talked briefly with the two of them before falling back to sleep. He said that Rosie had decided to go home for a rest but that he stayed at the hospital. “The doctor says that he will be in the hospital for at least two weeks and must not try to do any work from his bed. He said the usual prescription under the best circumstance would be no work within the first month. It could be longer since Adam had a really severe jolt. Rosie has called his folks, who will arrive tonight.”

After answering a few more questions, he said “Let’s join the board members and start informal discussions until our guests arrive for the board meeting. Michael, why don’t you chair the meeting today?”

The Admiral said, “As you wish, Aaron.”

We entered the boardroom where Michael addressed the group. “Folks, let me introduce Phil Grace, the newest member of the board. Phil is an old friend who helped us with the original financing.” We all shook hands and welcomed Phil aboard.

Michael then said “We need to focus on two near-term concerns. Who should be serving as the chief operating officer during the next thirty days and what do we do about the planned public offering this month. Let’s have some suggestions.”

Aaron and Al spoke at the same time with Aaron deferring to Al. “No one is in better position at this moment to keep us on an even keel than Sara. She has lived at Adam’s side every single day for months on end.”

Aaron said. “I agree she has the greatest knowledge of current operations but she is too young and not experienced in operations management. I also know that Adam would be opposed if he were here.”

Mr. Grace spoke up “Mr. Walter, you can’t be serious. No matter her abilities, this is not time for a young female to be named as the top management exec of a public corporation.”

Al started to speak but was cut off by Mr. Grace. “I have to add that no one so young can possibly have learned enough to develop the management skills to head this operation.”

Aaron cut in. “Mr. Grace, hold your thoughts for a few minutes, please.” He did, with something less than grace.

Meanwhile my head was spinning. This was as far away from my thoughts as anything could be. I could understand Al, who had been a longtime friend, but Aaron. I was blown away.

Al, quite apologetically, continued to press forward with his recommendation. “Aaron, on the surface it would seem you should take Adam’s place, but we all know that while you know the business very well, you have been removed from day to day operations and probably know fewer than five of our plant people. Am I right?”

With some reluctance, he said. “You are right, of course, but I have had so much faith in Adam and his ideas. We all know he has strong ideas about women executives.” He turned to David. “How about you, David. You probably can do this with all your education and knowledge. Adam always said you were the brainiest guy he ever knew.”

“Thanks for your thoughts.”

Before he completed his thought, Al interjected with a laugh “I remember the day before we all separated in San Diego. Adam and I argued, in a fun way, about which of these two was the brightest.”

That sort of relaxed everyone with laughter.

It was Michael who shifted the focus of the discussion. “Do you realize we are talking about Sara as though she were not present?”

Aaron was suddenly aphorizing to me. “Sara, would you consider doing as Al is suggesting?”

Although I had appreciated Al’s proposal, the invitation was so unexpected, even though I had thought about the knowledge I had absorbed. I struggled for the right words “Whew. That came out of left field. Mr. Grace is correct. Women, especially young women do not hold positions such as president of a public corporation. The only major exception I can think of is Elizabeth Arden, who started her own company and whose products are related to women customers.”

Michael interjected “That is a fact, no doubt, but, Sara, you and the commodore at ONI had a long conversation once before on the subject of being too young.”

I laughed “I remember the story of Jeremiah, dad, but, even so, there is the matter about public confidence in expecting a woman, especially a young woman, to know her place and that is not heading a major public company and you know it.”

Mr. Grace started to interrupt but Michael asked him to bide his time. “I promise you time to be heard.”

Aaron spoke again. “I have to admit that I have giving you Adam’s ideas but I believe that Sara has what it takes. Sara, I don’t think we have much choice. Having you assisting and guiding one of us will only slow us down. We need you at the helm and must find a way to make that work. I remember that you disagreed with Adam at times and influenced the executive committee to side with you. I consider that to be leadership.”

Just then a buzzer from the front desk indicated that the guests had arrived.

After making sure that everyone was introduced, Michael called the meeting to order. When the previous meeting minutes were read and approved and the agenda approved, the CPA representative made a full report and responded to a lot of questions.

The second item on the agenda was a presentation from the investment banker, Johnson Childs, on the present state of readiness for the public issue. “We are all set, simply awaiting you’re setting the date I believe the sooner the better, especially in light of the financial report you just received.”

Al spoke up. “Mr. Childs, there is a serious hitch. The board is about to announce that yesterday our President, Adam Silver, suffered a major heart attack. Would that news have serious consequences on the price of our issue?”

With a shocked voice Mr. Childs replied “Definitely.”

Aaron followed up. “We were hoping for thirty dollars a share. What might the result be with this news?”

“There is no telling. I believe it would a serious mistake not to hold off until his return and no sooner than the end of your next quarter. If you do not want to wait then I suggest you bring in a professional experienced chief who has headed a major corporation, someone with a recognized name. I know that there are three possible candidates who are in the market at present.”

“Are any of them experienced in our field?” asked David.

“No but with the right name up front, at least for a short term as interim, you may be viewed as a real player which enhances the bidding process for your offering.”

Michael stepped in as chair of the meeting. “Thank you both for coming. I believe the next step will take some serious deliberation by our board members. We shall definitely take your recommendation into consideration. We’ll take a short break and will be in touch for another meeting with you when we make some decisions.”

When we reconvened, Aaron presented a suggested press release which he and David had prepared for the papers. Everyone approved the suggestions and Michael called for general discussion of the matters of interim President and public offering.

David’s comment was “The two are definitely tied together.”

Al said, “I think we ought to persuade Sara to take the helm. Not a single one of us or any outsider is better suited.”

“Michael said, “Let’s take a break and meet in a half hour. He had the feeling that I wanted to talk with David. Indeed I did, taking him by the hand, I led him on a walk to Adam’s office.

“David, they’re putting me on the spot. I figured they would be asking you to do this. I have two big questions. Do you think I can do this successfully and secondly, how do you think our personal lives will change? I would become your boss, in effect. I hear Al saying that this will take time, definitely until Adam is well or longer. We have always been a partnership in our family life. It seems scary to me.”

“I have no doubt about your ability if you have the will and I suspect you do or we would not be discussing these questions. Our lives will change to the extent we let it change us. If we meant the personal partnership agreement, then that will not change’.

“Of course, your hours will be longer but Michael and I will accept that and will do everything to support you. You know I have the ability to let you be my boss, mostly because I know you will lead us in a collegial style where the word boss is never a factor. That is not your style; honey and your colleagues know it. Now give me one of your fabulous kisses and go for the gusto.”

When Michael reconvened the meeting, he turned to Mr. Grace “Phil?”

“I seem to be a single voice in opposition but I need to affirm my position. I believe that all of you, being closely related to her in one way or another, are not being objective. This is not a role for a young inexperienced woman, no matter how brilliant.”

He turned to me. “This is not personal, Ms. Sellech. You do understand, I presume.”

I nodded.

Aaron asked “Well, Sara?”

My mind was whirling. I was trying to see it from Mr. Grace’s point of view and the view from the outside. After a long silence I finally said “I’m open but I need to put before you another obstacle. While I have a good personal rapport with our workers, we still face the bias of some males who resent taking orders from a woman. Perhaps I can eventually win over the important resisters, but that may take time and will be a distraction, drawing focus away from our goals.”

Michael interjected “We’ll find a way to handle that if you have the fortitude to face a little hostility in the short run.”

I hesitated before nodding acceptance. “All right. I need some time to set out a possible game plan. If my thinking is acceptable then we have a deal.”

Aaron asked “How much time do you suggest?”

A couple of hours.”

The board convened two hours later, I took the floor. “Al, if you work overtime and take on one or two extra hands, can you have the test results by the end of the week?”

After a few minutes to deliberate, he said yes he could with lots of overtime.

I nodded and went on “Since the odds are quite likely positive, based on preliminary tests, I think we ought to take a risk with Lockheed and Boeing. Dad, you with Al, takes Boeing. Aaron, you with Smitty, takes Lockheed. Make appointments for next Tuesday. If the question of President comes up, let’s say it is dad, that is, the admiral. I believe that will carry more weight with the public than someone outside the communication field.”

“Let our minutes indicate that he is elected as President and I as Executive VP. Perhaps the question may never come up. That’s step two. If you agree, I will suggest step three.”

Aaron said, “Bold, but the risk is worth it.”

Mr. Grace smiled, apparently pleased that his comments seems to have averted a complete disaster.

There were no dissenting comments. Michael said “Gentlemen, we have a leader. Let’s go forward.”

Feeling a bit more confident I went on. “Adam and I have been fighting over the public offering date. He has been determined on an early date because we are facing a cash crunch. I wanted to await the launch of our new product and the results from our approaches to Boeing and Lockheed. If I am right, our financials will be stronger and I project at least ten percent higher opening bids.” I went to the blackboard and three minutes later had my projections before the board members.

“Based on Mr. Childs’ response earlier, we should defer the offering. Michael can go to the bank to arrange an interim loan pending the offering. That may be enough time for Adam to be back. That’s step three.”

“If those three steps are a go, I will be willing to stand in for Adam as temporary chief executive. I am willing to serve with support from this board and particularly my life partner, David. Let dad’s name appear in public as President.”

After fifteen seconds of silence, Sara received the first embrace from Aaron, who said “Well done, Sara. It is clear to me that you are the chief executive. I am recommending to the board that your permanent title be changed to Executive Vice President and your salary as of this date is equal to that of the president of this corporation.”

I thanked him and asked, “Aaron, how is Adam handling all this. David and I want to go by but I need to know what to expect.”

“Adam is fine. He has accepted the facts of his health, although disappointed. I will give him today’s news. He will see the wisdom of our choice. Call him tomorrow to make a date. Rosalie and I will be nearby to make sure he doesn’t get too excited, although I believe he will be pleased with all the news.”

The long-standing problem in the office now had to be faced. Marge, who had been Adam's secretary from the outset, had never warmed to Sara, a condition that could not be tolerated. Reconciliation or terminations were the words that crossed my mind. I decided to face it head on immediately, inviting Marge into Adam's office, which was now mine for a while.

Marge opened the conversation. "Based on the information that the admiral gave me, I'll give you a week's notice since I am sure you want your own secretary. In fact, with your influence with Adam I figured I would be gone before this."

"Tell me, Marge. What made you think that?"

Haltingly she said, "Well, I knew how close you three couples were, going back to war time. Your close relationship to the admiral was a perfect way for you to worm your way into the company. I was sure that executive assistant ploy was a way for you to learn the ropes and replace me. I wasn't about to give you more information than you asked for. "

"Did I seem so aloof that you couldn't talk with me or with Adam about this?"

"I did talk with Adam and he blew me off with an explanation about needing you to know all about our operations. That sounded to me like learning everything I knew, meaning that my days were numbered."

"This has been a long stretch of time and your fear was not realized."

"You're right, but after behaving like this for so long, I had no idea how to approach you."

"How do you feel now that Adam is out of the picture for a while? Do you think I am capable of running the company?"

"Frankly, I am not sure. I never heard of a woman managing a company this size and this complex. My boy friend is sure the company has to find some outside man who can run things. He will be shocked when he finds out that you are the next chief."

"Is your boy friend one of our employees?"

"Yes. He is the plant foreman."

I filed that information for future reference. "Marge, what do you want to do, leave or stay?"

Marge looked surprised. "Are you inviting me to stay if I say so? I can't believe you are serious after the cold shoulder I have given you for so long."

"I have this gut feeling that you love this company so much that you would like to stay. The question is about your loyalty to me from this day forward."

"If I am lucky enough to stay on, you can count on me a hundred and ten percent."

"I will need that. The founders and board members and even my husband are insisting that I can do this. Being a novice, I will need a veteran like you to help me when I stumble. I have this feeling that you carry a fountain of valuable information in your head that will be helpful to me. If you think that you can give me that loyalty and support then I would like you to stay."

Marge had to pull out a hanky to wipe away her tears. "Thank you, Sara. I will go to the mat for you and even convince George, my boy friend."

Smiling, I said "You can give him the pep talk tonight but I will have some conversation with him in just a few minutes. I am delighted to have you with me, Marge." I

rose, walking to Marge and giving her a welcome hug. This was the core of a team I wanted to build.

It wasn't a surprise that George would be shocked but it meant a challenge for me. It so happened that we had a good relationship but not nearly as cordial as I did with most of the others on the floor.

I knew his importance and did not want to lose him. If he chose to leave, I was sure their competition would snatch him immediately. "How do I play this? I can't kowtow to him because that will prove his point. I can't come on too strong. Yikes, what a problem."

After spending half hour thinking about my approach, I walked out to the plant floor looking for George. I was facing a situation unlike any I faced prior to this. I kept telling myself to stay calm, no matter what attitude he displayed. George was in the break room just finishing a conversation with a unit foreman, who smiled and greeted me warmly. George, on the other hand, with a bland expression asked, "Were you looking for me?"

"Yes, I was. Mind if I have a cup of coffee while we have a chat?"

"I really don't have time for coffee but will be happy to answer your questions."

"What is so urgent? I am not aware of any emergency on the floor and I know we are not heavily pressed with orders at the moment. I have the feeling you are uncomfortable talking plant business with me. Am I right?"

George hemmed and hawed and finally said, in a sulky tone "Okay, I can make some time to talk."

I decided to be blunt. "Marge tells me you would be shocked if I were chosen to manage operations here at Radio, Inc. Is that a fair statement?"

"Yes. I don't believe a woman can run a group of male employees, especially one without engineering knowledge. I never heard of a woman engineer."

"How do you come to that conclusion, George?"

"Manufacturing is a man's world. As I said, I have never heard of a woman taking courses in any kind of engineering."

"What if I told you that the board and the founders of this company disagree with you?"

"I wouldn't believe you."

"I am afraid you will have to believe it. George, you are looking at the new chief executive officer who at this moment is wondering if she can count on your willingness to support her in a daunting task."

"You mean for a short time until they find an expert outsider?"

"No. I mean until Adam is able to return, which may be for some extended period."

"I'll be damned. Pardon my language."

"I've heard worse in the navy, George. More important right now is what reaction you have to that news since you seem convinced that a woman is incapable?"

He avoided a direct response. "You know there are other guys who think as I do."

"Yes, but in my opinion, if you agree to take the challenge, they will follow you. This crew likes you and even admires you. You know that I know this because you have seen how I relate to the men from day to day,"

Reading the expression that softened just a bit, I felt he was hooked.

“I am surprised you know that. I need some time to mull this over. I can’t believe that I am even considering working for a woman boss, but this seems like a real challenge, a challenge to help you succeed where no woman has traveled. No, I don’t need to mull this over. I’ll do my best and then let you know if I think you are wrong. Of course that depends on whether you want me to stick around knowing about how I feel about women managers in general.”

“You have a lot of experience and your record here is outstanding. I would be pleased to team up with you to make a success of Radio. Shall we give it a try?”

With a handshake we sealed what would become a solid team. On my way to the office, my thoughts were on Mark, the sales manager. I had no idea how he might feel about reporting to me. I was about to open the door to my office when I heard a voice calling. “Sara, Sara, do you have a minute?”

I turned to see Mark striding toward me. “I just heard the news. Congratulations. I am looking forward to working with you.” He shook my hand. “I think the board made a great choice, Sara.”

“Thanks Mark. I was just about to call you to see how you felt. I am so relieved. I need the likes of you to help me meet this new and demanding task. Are you free the first thing tomorrow morning?”

“I am.”

“Good. I’ll order in a breakfast for us and Al and George and spend some time talking as the new varsity team.”

“I’ll be there.”

I had Marge call the others and make arrangement for a continental breakfast in the conference room.

That evening I could not get away in time to visit with Rosalie. We talked on the phone for an hour, much of the conversation interrupted while Rosalie let the tears flow. Our conversation was terminated when Rosalie announced the arrival of Adam’s family.

Friday evening Rosalie had David and me for dinner after our visiting Adam in the hospital. Adam, still weak but doing really well, participated in the discussion, told me that he was pleased with the way things were working out. “Sara, if Rosie isn’t too tough on me, I would be pleased to get a monthly update.” He turned to Rosalie. “What do you think?”

Rosalie started to object but had second thoughts. “We’ll work out something. Maybe I can filter out the bad news if any.”

Aaron piped up. “Why don’t we set up a monthly dinner so Adam can keep in touch?” All agreed with that suggestion.

I kept the early part of the dinner conversation light by talking about the time that Rosalie flew to Georgetown to help and then took the women shopping before she left. That got us to reminiscing about her early romance with Adam, when he was still a cadet. We were soon howling with laughter at some of fun stories.

Rosalie suddenly turned serious and said “I am so fortunate to have you guys in my corner at this time. I know you will be busy but we can stay in touch by phone. That will be enough for me.”

Our dinner plan worked for a few months until Adam lost interest, focusing on his children and other personal activities.

Chapter 7.

Wednesday evening David and I drove to the airport to pick up Michael arriving from SeaTac and Aaron arriving from Burbank. Michael waited for Aaron to arrive before he gave his report. At the cocktail lounge he ordered a bottle of champagne signaling that he had a positive report to come. Both elders were grinning from ear to ear when they reported a sizable order being cut from two of the country's major aircraft producers.

"You two old codgers sure are hot," I voiced.

Michael said "We owe our success to you, sweetie. You are the real brains of this outfit showing us the guts to make a major move under duress."

They refilled their glasses, toasting me, much to my chagrin.

As someone said the next evening after work, "The joint is jumping" He was describing the party the company held for the entire crew to celebrate the good news. They had another round of good news when Al announced the positive results of their quality control tests on the new radios.

Three months later.

During the last few months I had become friendly with two youngish executives that I had met at the Bay Area Association of Manufacturers. One was Gus Edgar, of Fairchild Corporation. The other was Max Feld of Varian Corporation. We stopped for dinner after the first meeting where we had met and found that the three of us were facing similar situations as top executives within our corporation.

Each of us was considered to be too young for the positions we held. We shared the common challenge that was to prove the world view of young was wrong. We decided to lunch weekly in San Jose to share concerns, problems and our ideas of solutions. There was no competition as to products or services that we provided.

I had no trouble from any members of our board, although Max never felt the kind of support that I had. Never the less, those two were a great help to me and I hope that I was to them.

The Wall Street journal carried the news on the financial page that Radio, Inc stock offering opened yesterday at \$33.00 and closed at \$35.25 the offering was for a forty nine percent share, leaving control to the original founders.

There was a special news article at the bottom of page one. "It should be noted that a special event occurred under the radar. For the past several months the company's brilliant Executive Vice President, Sara Sellech, rather than Admiral Michael Witty, the nominal President, has managed the affairs of Radio, Inc. This is according to insider information recently obtained by our special investigative reporter. We learned that she has been the driving force since the serious heart attack to Adam Silver, the first president, who laid the foundation for this successful venture. The accomplishment of this very special young woman should be acclaimed in a world dominated by older males. Congratulations, Sara."

Rosalie told me about her conversation with Adam. He was lying back in his barcalounger with Rosalie and the babies playing along side his chair. "The news from dad

is that Sara is a great executive and a marvelous leader. Dad says everyone loves her, from the janitor on up.”

“Yes, she is, honey. We have always known that. You should be so proud that you had her ready when the tragic moment hit. Now you just need to be ready by the first of the year.”

“Why? What’s happening for which I need to be ready?”

“All will be revealed to you tomorrow night at our anniversary party.”

The next evening the entire board with spouses and Michael with a lovely, tall female friend, were gathered at the Fairmont hotel in San Francisco to celebrate the anniversary of Adam and Rosalie. The gifts were expensive and tasteful. The surprise came at the end of the gift opening.

Aaron stood along side Adam. “I am proud to announce the formation of a new charitable foundation created by funds from Radio, Inc, Michael Witty, the David Sellech family and us. Furthermore I am pleased to announce Adam Silver as the first Chairman of the Ross-Silver Family Foundation Board.”

The entire group stood to clap for Adam and walked to him for a handshake.

Aaron called to all to hear more news. “All this is possible really because of the drive of three young men who were intent to stay bound together. One of those original trios, of course, is our Rosalie’s Adam. Another is Al Walters, our genius head of Engineering and Research. We honor Al this evening with a special gift of stock, a cash bonus and options to buy additional stock with acknowledgement for his recent patent in the field of radio communication.”

Everyone gave Al and Joan a big hand and congratulations.

“The third member of the trio is

David Sellech, our counsel and more importantly, the rock from which our President draws her support.”

“Finally, a very special announcement. Sara, please come stand with me. Cash, stock and options are accorded to Sara Sellech for her leadership while stepping in for Adam after his heart attack. In addition we are pleased to announce to the world in tomorrow’s press that she is elected to the position of President and Chief Executive of Radio, Inc” He took me in his arms before releasing me to Michael and then David. The room was chaos for the next twenty minutes celebrating this historic and momentous occasion.

The next day being Sunday, with no need to rise early, the two of us slept in but I had briefly wakened at four thirty when I heard Michael’s car pull into the driveway, thence quietly sneaking into his suite.

He joined us for breakfast about ten o’clock while we were having coffee and reading the morning papers. “Hey, dad. Long night. She must have been special since you seem radiant in spite of the bleary eyes.”

“You’re a smarty pants, Sara. I could say the same of both of you. You’re right though. Jane and I hit it off beautifully during our five dates. She is just what I need. We had a long conversation about who we were, what we want, what we need and about a possible relationship.”

“Jane is very wealthy, wants me in her life but does not want to get married. We both think the complexity within established families precludes marriage in our case. She wants to see me as often as possible but does not want to move in together. She has two children and three grandchildren. We even agreed that we may fall in love, but we agreed on this discreet relationship, at least for the time being. You and I are invited to dinner this evening, just the four of us. Next week she will host a dinner in order to introduce me to her family and explain our relationship”.

I walked around the table and sat on his lap, giving him a daughterly kiss. “That sounds wonderful, dad.” David came over for a small group hugs. “Nice going, dad.”

Michael had left the house earlier to help Jane cook dinner since she had no live-in help. That was her style. The long driveway to Jane Fellows’ house was bordered by a white fence serving as a corral for three mares and two ponies, quietly grazing in the gold of the setting sun. In the distance I saw a rambling ranch house and a large white stable.

Jane and Michael walked out the front door just as David stopped the car. Both were radiant as they came forward. I whispered, “I think they just enjoyed a little sack time, honey. I am sure I see it in their eyes.” I giggled.

Sitting on the patio with drinks in hand, we found out a bit about Jane’s family. She talked about the children and the grandchildren coming by to visit and to ride. “Do you two ride? No? Would you like to?” We said yes, if we could carve out the time.

“Any Sunday after three would be a good time. I would love to have you and will give you a few lessons.” She laughed as she continued. “You might have to do that if you expect to see the admiral on the weekends since I plan to have him close by as often as possible.

In such a short time he has swept me off my feet, emotionally and definitely in some other ways. Your dad is fantastic, in case you didn’t know that.”

David looked at the admiral and noticed his light blush. Jane laughed, “That’s another thing I like about him. We are going to be great together.”

Some time later after a beautifully prepared and served light supper, Michael cleared away the remains of the main course while Jane prepared the dessert. She brought four plates with ice cream on the side while Michael brought the chocolate cake inscribed with ‘Congratulations, Sara.’

“Jane smiled “I am impressed, Sara. I know several women who have a board seat inherited from their deceased husbands, but I have no knowledge of any woman who has worked her way to the top, receiving the respect of her male compatriots. You must be something special, which is another reason I hope to get to know you.”

“Thank you, Jane. As for the two of you, I am sure you will make a great couple. I think you are both lucky to have found each other.

The press release was picked up in the Washington Post financial section, the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times financial section as well as the San Francisco Chronicle, the Oakland Tribune and the San Jose Mercury. There were more than two dozen phone calls and about two dozen telegrams of congratulations to Sara and to various board members for their wisdom. As to be expected, the board-received telegrams and letters from shareholders expressing grave doubts, requesting a reconsideration of the appointment of a

woman for such a responsible job. Comments included phrases such as “unheard of”, “risking our investment” and “other sharks will eat her alive”.

Aaron responded to each and every letter and telegram if a return address were available, saying that the board had discussed the concern being offered and still felt confident in their decision.

The stockholders also added two outside members. They were selected from a group of four recommended by two groups of owners of significant shares of stock. Both came with a special agenda that was to test the steel of this young woman who would either help or hurt their new investments.

The new board convened two weeks after Sara’s election. As soon as the floor was opened for business, Felix Schmidt, one of new board members rose. “Mr. Chairman. Will we be discussing the matter of a permanent replacement for the temporary President?”

“Sorry, Mr. Schmidt, no such item is on the agenda. We do not have a temporary president.”

“You can’t be serious. There has not been a successful public corporation headed by a woman and even by a man who is this young. Our stock will be worthless in six months.”

The chairman responded with “Up to this date, she has the full support and confidence of the board, without exception. Perhaps we can have a private conversation after this meeting.”

The first item on the agenda was a presentation by the CEO.

I presented the plans for the additional manufacturing facility. The surprise was my recommendation to put the plant in southern Ohio.

“Why Ohio” asked the other new member, Jack Smart.

I responded. “Three reasons are economic. Transportation costs will be the same to all parts of the country. Land and taxes will provide significant savings. Labor costs will be a little less because cost of living is less in that area.”

“There is another even more important reason. Research has shown that where plants need trainable workers, willing to be good company employees but not necessarily especially skilled, that semi-rural areas provide such a pool of workers. They often are more dedicated and loyal employees than the workers in metropolitan areas. We do have that type of employee in our plants here but land is getting very limited and therefore more expensive in the bay area. With a more urbanized growth, good dedicated labor will be just a bit more difficult to find.”

Questions and challenges followed but I was able to answer the questions and respond in full to the challenges. Before the vote for approval Mr. Smart asked for the floor. “Mr. Chairman, I came to this meeting with curiosity and doubt that our president was all that had been said of her, but I am pleased to say there are no longer any doubts. She is all that and more. The board has made a great choice and I will be happy to tell that to my colleagues in the business world. I will vote to support her recommendation and her continued leadership.”

Aaron waited to see if Mr. Schmidt had a comment. He looked in his direction but received an affirmative nod. After a unanimous vote Aaron as chairman announced that a special board meeting was scheduled 30 days from now. “The single agenda item will be the question of expanding to a new product line in addition to our current products.

Preliminary data will not be available because of the secrecy and we do not want to risk interception by our competitors. Therefore we will meet for two days, the first to study the written data with staff members available to each director for clarification. The next day will be for discussion, debate and voting on the proposal. We will also have some outside consultants to help us look at advantages and risks.”

This notice caused a lot of stir and buzzing and excitement about the next meeting. The board members loved being on a working board rather than mostly rubberstamping staff proposals.

At the special board meeting, I had Al, as the head of Engineering and Research, present results of their studies in the field of solid-state radio, that is, use of transistors instead of vacuum tubes. “There are a number of companies ready to manufacture transistor radios that need suppliers since they are assemblers of a finished product for sale to the public. Each will have need for transistors. I have made a recommendation to Sara who will present the idea after I answer your questions.”

“Al, I missed your comment on advantages of transistors.”

“Mr. Smart, transistors are much smaller than vacuum tubes and take less energy, thus reducing the total bulk of the radio itself. With the increased volume of users, costs will be reduced.”

“Aren’t there patents in place?”

“Yes, but I think we can either find a way around those or create our own product or we can license from the patent holders.”

I stepped in. “Why don’t we put Al’s recommendation on the table for conversation without formal consideration at this time?”

They’re being no objections I stated the proposal.

“The idea is to create the new plant so that we can have two separate functions occurring within. One side will be devoted to manufacturing our new radio product using transistors as recently developed and now at the final testing stages in our own labs, the other half to manufacture transistors under license from Texas Instruments Company. Our plant location in Ohio is relatively close to major sources of silicon, the base material used in transistors. Now you know the last unspoken reason for choosing the state of Ohio for our location.”

Voices began talking over each other, with no attempt by Aaron to calm things down. The atmosphere was charged with positive and enthusiastic comments bursting out over the cacophony. Finally Aaron rapped the gavel for order. The next two hours were spent in small groups with staff as resource for each group. One focused on the technology, another on understanding the switch from vacuum tubes and the third centered on the site location. The staff was occupied with questions of all sorts regarding, building costs, taxes, labor costs, transportation, and plant management, particularly management of the transistor manufacturing.

When we regrouped, I spoke to that issue “I believe that TI will let us use one of their managers for the first six months of operations, managing and training a person we choose for the long term position.”

After all the questioning was exhausted, Jack Smart recommended that the executive team prepare a formal recommendation. “How long will that take, Sara?”

“The staff is ready but Aaron should reform the board’s executive committee. That committee should make the formal recommendation.”

Having researched Jack Start's business background, Aaron discovered what he considered a gold mine. Before early retirement, he was an executive with RCA and served on the board. He represented RCA at meetings of the American Manufacturers' Association and was a member of the board of the National Chamber of Commerce.

Aaron asked, "Jack, would you be prepared to chair an executive committee of three. Sara thinks we can be ready in ten days if the committee members have the time."

Jack agreed and with the appointment of two other members, including Michael, a date was set ten days hence.

Jack asked, "Sara what is the earliest your staff team will be ready to put your proposal before our committee?"

Without hesitation "Next Monday morning."

"Ten o'clock all right?"

"No problem. Mr. Smart."

Please. It's Jack."

The board meeting was finally adjourned at the end of that long day.

That evening at dinner Michael said. "Beautifully and skillfully handled, Sara. I marvel, trying to analyze this new daughter of mine whom I know as loving, caring, sweet and sensitive who serves with strength as the chief of a growing and profitable business." You are special, making me wonder what has made you so versatile and able."

"Oh, Dad, you're making too much of this. Your prejudice is showing and I love it."

"Make light of it, but it is still the truth. "How did you get here?"

"Seriously, I owe it to the men in my life. My dad always encouraged me, saying no person was my superior, neither man nor woman. Then there is David that brilliant, strong husband who only sees me in terms of equal partnership in all that we do. Dad, you have made me feel so able with your confidence and backing in my leadership. "Let's switch subjects. Now, how about a little cutthroat gin rummy?"

When the written proposal was in front of the committee, I, along with Al and David, who were there in case of legal questions, waited for comments and questions. Jack's comment was first. "I like the idea of issuing bonds to cover the start up costs including the land, buildings and equipment. Do you have a bridge loan for the interim?"

"Yes, Wells Fargo will arrange loans with their corresponding banks in Ohio. They have assured us that adequate funds will be available.

More questions were forthcoming regarding finances and availability of the land.

I answered the financial questions and turned to David. He stated "Sara made an executive decision to take an option on some land, using her authority as given by the board. Working with attorneys in the state, we have a firm option and can execute ownership immediately with your approval."

Jack spoke up. "Congratulations, Sara and Al. You have done a fine job, first with the idea and then the thinking and planning that has been done. I have to hand it to you young people. I think we should take this to the board for a vote next week."

I asked "Do you want us to prepare the paper work with full information to be distributed to the board members in advance?"

“Good idea. Please do so. If there is nothing else, the meeting is adjourned.”

After the meeting, Aaron joined Michael and me in my office. “Great job, Sara, I liked your idea to have Jack, a non family member, head the executive committee. We are stronger for that. He will be important in our outside business relationships and he admires your skills.”

Michael asked “Now that you have launched this expansion what is next for you? The great staff you have put together will now implement yours plans.”

“I have two things in mind. I have tried them out with David during pillow talk and now need your input.”

“I think the three of us should find ways to get invited to serve on some industry committees or organizations. We need more tentacles in the wider business community. The other idea I have is putting together a stock bonus plan for key employees to keep off the raiders and spies. I am hoping Jack can lead me to some answers. You can bet your boots that some shark will try to get control of us because of our earnings potential. The moment we need more outside investors, our family majority will be gone, opening up vulnerability to the sharks.”

“Good thinking, Sara.

At home that evening during the cocktail period, Michael toasted us. “That was a great proposal and I could see the teamwork in the way you prepared the committee.”

David said “Thank you from both of us. Now, what’s for dinner?”

“Mrs. Ramirez has made a large pot of pasta with Marinara sauce and a green salad since we would not be home before she had to leave tonight. By the way, she has a son, Rafael, who is looking for work. Dad, do you think we can give him a try as a grounds keeper at least part time?”

“Absolutely. I don’t think our contracted firm is doing that great a job. By the way, we are invited to take horseback riding lessons on Sunday and dinner with Jane and her children and grand children. Are you up to it?”

David nodded and I said, “We sure are.”

“I am so proud of you guys. David, when did you first recognize the power and strength of Sara?”

“I had a hint of this on our second date. Dad, I am sure you are not aware that it was Sara, not I, who took the initiative leading us to making love to each other. I knew what courage that took considering her rearing, her religious background and the mores of the time.”

“That strength continued emerging during those months we courted and began our married life at Pearl, but it was very evident at the hospital when she was my rock. Her strength is the binding force for our three families.”

“I certainly have seen it for myself, and you can stop blushing, Sara. I have never felt judgmental about your romance with David before the wedding. I love the way you take the opportunities that come your way and convert them into assets. When did you become aware of this inner characteristic? Was it early in life and after you met David?”

“My dad and mother instilled self confidence in me and my siblings. I was aware of my independence while attending college, in the way I related to my professors and

especially in the way I handled eager beaver young men on dates. I knew how I wanted a date to go and made sure that it did.”

“I spent long hours debating with myself after I heard the stories that my college mates related about their dates but I always came out of those self debates knowing I would define my relationships.”

“Leading up to meeting David, I was still having those internal debates in the months after I had become a Wave. Like a lot of women in wartime, I had no idea what the war would produce and decided I wanted to sleep with some nice guy but I didn’t know how I could determine what a nice guy was. It was pure instinct, sensing in just a few hours somehow that David was different. I had made a good guess. He was beyond just being a nice guy. I recognized his strength but his gentleness, his caring and his desire to put me first not only swept me off my feet but assured me that life with him would give me the freedom to be what I wanted to be. He wanted from the start and still to this day to be equal partners in our family life regardless of what we do in our professional lives”

“Thank you, Sara. I am so happy that we three found each other. I love the way you two can downplay your own needs for each other’s welfare. That is such a rarity.”

David started to clear the table. “Jane will be waiting for us to see her grandchildren perform.”

Later in the afternoon Jane gave all three a short riding lesson, keeping it short so that their muscles would not treat them too severely

Jane’s grand daughters had their rides earlier in the day. They were skillful, obviously well trained.

I skipped cocktails again, preferring to spend time with the young ones. I must have been the epitome of the grandaunt, but young enough to relate to the young teenagers. We seemed to hit it off in great fashion.

They had questions about my position in the business world. Linda, one of the daughters-in-law, asked, “How does it feel to live your life in the midst of all those males? I would be intimidated.”

“I felt a little that way when I started working in Naval Intelligence, but my all male group took me at face value. They were interested in what I could add to their thinking, making it clear that none of them cared that I was a female. They made me feel at home. Since then, it has never bothered me. If I had a different start, I might have felt otherwise.”

“Well, I think you are so brave.”

Everyone, including the children, had a chance to tell a story. It was a warm experience. It seemed impossible that close and warm relationships could develop so strongly and quickly. Time seemed to fly.

As we were leaving I said, “Thank you, Jane. We will plan our second riding lesson two weeks from today but please allow us to bring a nice picnic basket for dinner.”

“All right, but the drinks and wine are on me.” Everyone shared warm good-byes.

Lying in bed after our return I said. “That was a lovely experience with Jane’s family today. My rump is a little tender but the rest of the day was a great experience.

Everyone seemed to hang on to anything dad is saying. They were utterly rapt with his story today.”

“It sure was. The entire family seems to be so accepting of their continuing relationship outside marriage. It certainly is unusual in this day when tradition and religions take exception to living in sin.”

“I am sure that Jane has been very clear with them. She is right. It does make for complex financial arrangements when second marriages occur and children and grandchildren are involved, especially in California, a community property state.”

“I am so happy for dad. This may, in some way, make up for losing Laura so early in life. I couldn’t imagine losing you, Sara. You are so much a part of me as Laura was for dad. I know he has loved having you in his life. You have fulfilled his desire for having a daughter.”

“You too, sailor boy. By the way, you’re a softie like me, David Sellech. I saw those tears during dad’s story and I also saw the crinkle in his eyes when he talked about our affair.” David nodded but said nothing. I snuggled, resting my head on his chest, while he rested his chin on my head. It was a tender time until sleep took command.

My secretary, Marge, had Saturday’s mail sorted and waiting for me. She always managed to be at the office before me. No matter how soon I arrived.

Sitting on top of the pile was a short note from Commodore Biggs, my big boss at ONI, offering his congratulations on the news he had read in the Washington Post? “It is no surprise, Sara. I am sure greater success is ahead for you.”

Right underneath was a letter from Bob Johnson with brief notes attached from two other former members of her team at ONI. I slipped all the notes into my purse to share with David and Michael that evening.

Jack Smart arrived at ten. We had some coffee and sweet rolls before engaging in discussion of the topic of the morning.

“Jack, I think your experience is very much needed for my next project. With the expansion beyond our original plant, the growth of our employee body will be taking us out of the kind of family operation we have enjoyed. While we have good plans for stimulating creativity from key personnel, I believe we need some special way of dealing with all the rest of our employees. I won’t be able to walk through the shop and call them all by name or discuss their family situations. Up until now it has been an extended family operation.”

You’re right Sara, I like your thinking well in advance of a possible problems. Do you have some ideas or do you want me to do some research?”

“Actually both. I am hoping we can grow without being involved in union contracts but I want all employees who like working for us to develop into a family community. I would like you to help me find some company or companies who have done this successfully.”

“Sara, I can think of three companies who seem to have done this well. I happen to have a good friend who is a key executive with the International Business Machine Company that is emerging as a powerhouse and operates in a fashion that may be a model for us. Let me do some exploring. Any sense of urgency?”

“Only my own drive, Jack. You know the way I am once I have an idea. It will be a while before we face the opening of our new plant but I would like to know that we have something solid in mind.”

“It may take me a little time. I want to look at all three companies that I know about.”

“That will be fine, Jack. Thank you.”

While at cocktails before dinner on Friday evening, David asked the admiral. “Dad, have you and Jane any special plans for tomorrow evening?”

“Not as of this moment. Do you have something in mind?”

“This has been the most relaxed week for Sara in many weeks and I was about to invite her to go dinner dancing at the Fairmont. Perhaps we could make a foursome. I remember some comment from Jane about loving to dance.”

Michael went to the phone and returned in a minute with a wide smile pasted on his face. “We have a date.”

The food was delicious. The ambience provided a romantic setting for the lovers. We young ones had just returned to our seats after dancing a tip (a set of three numbers). Michael was leading Jane to the floor holding hands like any loving couple. When the band struck up the tune called STARDUST, Jane moved into his arms, her arm wrapped around his neck and her body molded into his. The look on her face was absolute admiration. She, in her full flowing gown, and Michael in his tux were the center of attention as their long legs moved them like skaters on a sheet of ice.

I sighed. “Don’t they look adorable, David?” They absolutely belong to one another. I am so happy for Dad.”

“Amen to that. Just like us. Come on, I need to feel that lovely body of yours tight to mine.”

When we glided close to Jane and Michael, I noticed heads turned to stare at two handsome couples. I smiled, looked into David’s eyes. “You sure know how to surprise a woman. It seems that always at the right moment you have something special in mind. This is glorious and so romantic. I seem to underrate the romantic side of you which is so often hidden under the serious and logical side that makes me feel so safe.”

It was a lovely double date that lasted until past midnight. Michael had driven, dropping us off before he drove on with a final word. With a big grin he said. “See you tomorrow at the stable in time for our riding lesson. You can make all the noise you want tonight.”

Taking Charge

I slipped out of bed to start the coffee and pour some juice. Seven minutes later I slipped into the bedroom to awaken David. “Rise and shine, sailor boy. I need your help.”

David in his easing voice asked “Business or pleasure?”

“First a business session and then something personal.”

With ogling eyes he asked, "Are you sure business first?"

"Down, sailor. If you help the way I think you can, you can have a special bonus." I sipped my coffee and reached for a pad and pencil.

"Put your mind back into our management class earlier this year when the subject was on long range planning. I want us to noodle a bit on a ten-year plan for our lives and for the company. Are you up for this?"

"Yep, let it rip."

"All right. First question is how do you visualize the two of us on our fortieth birthdays?"

"Wow, you sure start out big. Okay. I see you retired with a fistful of honors and more than a fistful of dollars in the bank. You will be nurturing our thirteen-year-old daughter in the serious matter of becoming a real woman while we share the duty of tutoring her so that she can make some good choices for her life. We can discuss further details if you buy this part of my dream."

I said "Hmmm. Go on."

"Secondly, I see you as chief of staff of our own private charitable foundation working with Adam and that foundation on some focus for helping young women in under developed areas of the world. Since I am semi-retired, the three of us can take long summer cruises to the areas that concern you such as India, some emerging country in Africa or the Middle East. How's that for a start?"

"Oh, I love that. That second part is a close match to my own dream but I hadn't gotten to your first part. I like the idea and think his name should be Mike. If we expect him to be thirteen, we had better get started. I can see it in your eyes that you want to start soon, right?"

"Yep and I think we ought to plan seriously during lunch, but let's stay focused on the matter at hand."

"Well, if that plan is to come to fruition, then we need to plan for where Radio, Inc is at the same time and how did we get there."

David said. "Okay. First tell me what plans you have ready to present to the board for the near future and how you see the company in ten years."

"Are you familiar with the way IBM is structured and how it works with the employees?"

"Yes. They have a great and loyal spirit as well as highly satisfied employees."

"Jack Smart has done some special research for me with his friend who heads IBM. We are ready to propose that type of structure and process to the board so that the family spirit that we have here can become a model for our Ohio plant,"

"Beyond that, I only gave a vague dream at the moment of growing us to a place where we become such a pain to our competition that some one will want to merge or buy us out. I think that is one exit strategy for me. The other is to make some investment in a young up coming staff that will result in bringing forth my replacement:

"Speaking along those lines you have to find out whether Aaron or Michael will want to continue as chairs of the board or whether that will fall on your shoulders. If you pursue the merger or sale, then that will not necessarily be a consideration. That form of leadership may be in the hands of the new firm."

“What if some company or some wealthy individual starts to buy up our stock and tries to invade us? “

That’s not a problem with family still owning 51 per cent of the stock, but if we are to grow, we need to make another public offering which does increase our vulnerability.”

“Hey, big boy. That’s why we pay you the big bucks. I’ll bet you can find some legal way to make that tough for anyone to do. By the way, I need you to start working with our investment bankers. I have my eye on a small company that we should acquire. They are cash poor and have an excellent plant manufacturing products compatible to our lines.

David made a special note and returned to the topic at hand. “Is that part of your thinking? Do you think we can become a threat by acquiring the right small companies or by coming up with new products?”

“I am hoping that we can do both. Al is brilliant and has surrounded himself with keen young talent who love being on the edge of breakthroughs. Joan, who has decide that two children is their limit, has been doing voluminous reading for Al and finds it exciting. I’ve told Al that when he applies for the next patent, Joan is to be a recipient of some additional stock as a bonus.”

“Sara that is a magnificent. Idea. I believe our research unit has been so successful because you have made every researcher a partial owner of each patent that we have developed. They are the most excited employees on our payroll, thanks to your thinking.”

“All right, sailor boy. That’s enough for today on this subject. I need to let this sink in and play with it for a while. Speaking of playing, I am ready for some fooling around.”

David made sandwiches and soup for lunch while I lounged with a cup of coffee.

“Honey” I started “Were you serious about visualizing a young adolescent in our midst ten years from now?”

“I was and keep wondering if you are ready to talk about adoption. All the research I have been doing does not seem to offer an alternative to adopting. That part of our dream seems to be fading.”

“Reluctantly, I have come to the same conclusion and in a solitary moment at my desk this other day I told myself that very thing. I had a long cry about having to give up my dream. It was then I had the idea for this morning’s meeting. I’m ready.”

David asked “How serious are you about having a boy?”

“Not overly. I was thinking about our hope for a grandson for Michael. We could start with a girl since that seems to be your hope and if all goes well we can consider adopting a boy later.”

“Okay. I’ve been having some conversation with an attorney friend who specializes in family law, including adoptions. He was telling me of a four or five year old who is in a special foster home awaiting adoption. He described her as a dark haired beauty, daughter of a Spanish mother who recently died in a car crash. The woman, whose family lives in Spain and disowned her when she had the child out of wedlock, the father, who comes from a well to do family on the peninsula, settled a lump sum payment and signed off any claims to the child. He is a brilliant grad student at Stanford and she was a scholarship student before she had the baby. That is one option. He will be happy to take us for a visit if we wish.”

“David, I keep thinking that our first should be a little boy. I still have this dream about the way the two of you will bond over the years. Why don’t we wait until we have that option?”

“If you insist, we can do that but Joe believes this is a special situation and suggested we don’t pass it up.”

“How old is the baby?”

“You missed my comment. She is four or five.”

“I always thought of a baby, new born or certainly no more than a few months old. Are you sure we should even consider this?”

“Why not? We have nothing to lose with a single visit. It can be arranged so that she has no idea of our intentions.”

“Well, all right. When can we go?”

“If we call now we can visit on the way to our riding lessons. My friend said he is available today and flexible on any other weekend.”

I said “Call him while I change for the afternoon.”

An hour later we were introduced to Mrs. Phelps, who was the foster mother to a little girl named Maria. After the introductions, Mrs. Phelps took us to the den in the rear of the house from which we could see Maria playing ball on the lawn with her teen-age foster brother.

Her glistening black hair set off a beautifully proportioned face with deep blue eyes that were crinkled in the sun. She was laughing as she rolled the ball to her mate. She turned suddenly and ran to her foster father, handing him the ball, which was an invitation for him to join the game.

Mrs. Phelps suggested we join the group outside. Maria moved shyly close to her teen age foster brother who whispered in her ear. She turned toward David and slowly moved toward him, handing him the ball. David took the ball and rolled it toward the boy who in turn rolled to dad who relayed it to Maria. She laughed and rolled the ball to David who rolled it to me. They continued the game for a few more minutes until Mrs. Phelps came out with some lemonade for all.

I took one glass and walked toward Maria who shyly accepted the glass and sat between David and her brother

After a few minutes David finished his lemonade drink and started playing with a silver dollar. Maria was fascinated, her eyes very expressive. David asked, “Have you ever held a silver dollar?”

Maria shook her head. “No, I haven’t.”

“Have you ever seen magic tricks?”

“No. What is magic?”

“Watch this.” He slipped the coin into his left hand, unseen by Maria. He showed her his empty right hand, and then reached to pull the coin from her left ear. Her eyes widened and once more when the coin disappeared and was pulled from her brother’s ear. She giggled and whispered into the boy’s ear. He said aloud “Why don’t you go to him and ask him?”

She moved shyly toward David. “Can you show me more tricks like that?” For the next twenty minutes David treated us to a half dozen coin tricks and some card tricks. I could see Maria adores eyes pointed toward her new hero.

Mrs. Phelps asked me to join her in the kitchen. “You should need to know that even though she has been forgetting what her mother looked like, I find her crying for her mommy every night. In the mornings she is the bright cheerful young girl you are seeing today. We three try to show her lots of love. I thought you ought to know this up front. By the way, where do you live?”

“We live in Portola, a quiet community with several children in her age range.”

When we were leaving, Maria walked up to David “Will you come back and show me more tricks?” David reached down and lifted her up for a hug “You bet I will. Would you give a hug to my wife, Sara?” Maria put her arms around my neck and squeezed tightly, totally melting me.

Driving to the ranch house in Woodside, I said. “She is precious and beautiful. Judging from the way she talks I’ll bet she is also very precocious. She is in love with her new hero, the magician. Do you think we have any chance to adopt her? I fell in love with her smile and her warmth and the way she responded to you. Of course, all women do that so why am I surprised.”

I giggled and David roared. “Since we both were so taken, I will call tomorrow and check out procedures. Are you sure about this? What about that dream of a little boy? If you’re sure, we ought to plan something with her and the Phelps for next weekend. If we still feel the same, we can start proceedings so that we get full information about her background.

Sipping cocktails with Jane and Michael after the riding lesson was a relaxing respite after an intensely active day. I was excited as I talked about Maria. David could see that Michael was pleased with what he was hearing.

Jane asked “Why don’t you invite the Phelps and Maria to a picnic here on our little ranch? Maybe one of you can give her a ride on horseback. If you do adopt her, I hope to see her out here with you on riding days and maybe more often. I already see the gleam in grandpa’s eyes and I personally would love to have another real young one around to spoil a little, as any grandma should.”

When the laughter quieted down, it was agreed upon.

I called the Phelps who accepted the invitation. I asked “Does she have long pants that will keep her from chafing if we go for a short pony ride?”

“No, I’m sorry.”

“That okay. I’ll pick up a pair for her.”

For me, the week seemed to drag by. Things were running smoothly at work. We were trying to catch up with sales and resting our oars otherwise for the moment.

I could hardly wait for Sunday late morning when we were scheduled to escort the Phelps to the ranch. Mrs. P asked Maria if she and Tommy would like to ride with David and me, she looked at Tommy and said, “That would be very nice.” She and I sat in his rear while Tommy joined David in the front seat.

Later, David told me of his chat with Tommy, who was very engaging for a thirteen year old. He found out Tommy was a good student and hoped to get to the Air Force Academy or the Navy Academy when he graduated from high school. David plied Tommy with a lot of questions, finding him to be a sharp thirteen year old, mature for his age. He mentioned

that Michael was a retired admiral and that Tommy might think of some questions he would like to ask during the picnic.

The picnic was a huge success. Jane and Michael engaged the Phelps while David and I took Maria for short rides. After each ride she kept asking for more. Jane gave Tommy some hints about riding and found that like most youngsters that he was a quick study. At David's suggestion Michael invited Tommy to take a short ride together. David noticed that after the ride, Tommy and Michael never left each other until it was time for the evening barbecue.

By the time the party was over, Maria was friends with every one, including Jane, but mostly she seemed stuck on David. When they were leaving in the Phelps' car, Maria gave him a big hug. "Thank you for the new pants. Will you come to see me next week, please?"

One phone call was all it took to initiate proceedings. Several weeks later, the county office notified Mrs. Phelps officially those adoption proceedings had started and the adoption was likely to be approved. She set a special table for lunch just for Maria and herself. In the course of the conversation, she confirmed her thoughts about Maria really loving David and Sara. It seemed so perfect during the last Sunday visit.

"Maria, do you remember the social worker who brought you to our home several months ago?"

You mean Susan?"

"Yes. Do you remember what she said about your living here?"

"Yes. She said it would only be for a short time. Is the time up already? I like it here. You and Mr. P and Tommy have been so nice to me, not like it was for those days before I came." She placed her face into Mrs. Phelps' bosom and let the tears flow.

"I'm afraid the time is short. We love you so much and will miss you," In order to preclude a direct question from Maria, Mrs. P asked. "Did you have fun with Sara and David on your last visit with them?"

Wiping her tears she answered "Oh, yes. I had fun with them every time. Since I have to leave you, it would be nice if I could stay with them for a while." She noticed tears through the smile on Mrs. P's face. "Why are you crying and smiling at the same time? I never saw you do that before."

The ringing of the doorbell interfered at the right moment. "Come in, Susan. Join us for some dessert. Maria and I were having a nice conversation, including the news that her short visit with us is coming to a close."

While Maria went to get the cake from the kitchen, Susan told Mrs. Phelps that we had been approved for the adoption.

As the three of them were enjoying the chocolate cake and ice cream, Susan learned that Maria would be happy to stay with David and me even for a short time.

It was great news when Susan and Mrs. Phelps told me of their conversations with Maria.

The final approval for the adoption was Susan's to make. She turned to Maria. "Since it appears that you would be happy to stay with Sara and David and I learned that they want that even more than you do, I am recommending to the judge that you move next weekend. Is that okay with you?"

that?” Yes, but only if I can come to see the Phelps sometimes. Can you promise

“Yes, I can. I will make that a condition of the move.”

“Thank you, Susan.”

Mrs. Phelps also told me about that evening. Maria knelt by her bed while Mrs. P waited for her to complete her prayers. The tears flowed from her eyes as she heard Maria “Dear Lord. Thank you for Mr. and Mrs. P and Tommy. They help me forget my sorrow, missing my mommy. Please take good care of my mommy until I see her some time. Thanks for bringing new friends, David and Sara into my life. Take good care of the Phelps after I am gone, and take care of my new friends. Amen.”

Chapter 8.

We three had one week to get ready but we did it. We took the room next to ours with some options left to Maria for final decorations.

Maria was not quite packed on that Thursday morning when David and I arrived to pick her up. She didn't want to leave this nice family who had been so kind to her, although she knew it had to be today. She liked them because they made her laugh and forget how much she missed her mommy.

She was pleased that no one was angry about her being late with her packing. Tommy had stayed home from school to be able to say goodbye. He and Mrs. P were crying, but hugged her and kissed her goodbye. She didn't quite understand why I was crying. She thought she even saw a tear in David's eye.

"Why are you crying, Sara? I know why Mrs. P and Tommy are crying." I hugged her and said, "These are tears of joy, Maria."

She was suddenly swooped up into David's arms sensing the love that he must have felt for her. She sat on the front seat between David and me for most of the trip home. After a stop for some ice cream, David put her on his lap for the drive home. She giggled pretending she was driving the car. That was to become a trademark of her rides with David for months to come. She never asked but always had that expectant look when she entered the car with David.

I could see that she was delighted to see Michael waiting for her at the new home. She told me later of her thoughts at that moment. "Maybe he lives here and could be my grampa since I do not have one of those. That would be nice even for a little while".

We decided she might want a few minutes to rest. Then we thought that Michael should get into the act. Michael knocked even though the door was open. "Hello Maria. How would you like a tour of the whole house and some of the outside gardens before lunch?"

She gave him a bright smile. "Okay but first I need to know what I am to call you. I know your name is Michael but I'm too young to call you by your first name."

"What would you like to call me?"

"How about grampa? I don't have one of those in my life."

"All right. I like that. So grampa it is."

Maria grinned, put her hand in his ready for the tour.

When the tour was over, grampa took her to the kitchen to meet Melita, the housekeeper and her nursemaid. Grampa said, "Maria, many days in the future Sara will have to go to her job at the company we own. Melita will be your companion. Her last name is Mrs. Ramirez but she wants you to call her Melita. She will take care and play with you until your new mom or dad get home each day. Sara says that three days a week in the afternoons another young woman, named Joyce, will come by to play certain games with you and prepare you for starting kinder garden next year."

"Okay, Grampa, what do I call Sara?"

"What would you like to call her.?"

"I wanted to call Mrs. P mother but she said I would not be there long enough. Do you think I will be here long enough to call Sara 'mother'".

"I think you will and I am sure she would love hearing you call her momma or mother. By the way, there was an emergency at the office but both will be here in time for

lunch.” At that moment they both heard car doors slamming and excited voices coming to the kitchen door.

David scooped her up into his arms. “Has Michael been keeping you company?”

“Yes he has and I am going to call him grampa.” she said with a big smile on her face.

I reached around David to hug Maria. “Welcome home, Maria. Have you had a chance to see your room?”

She ignored the question in her eagerness to get to something more important. “Grampa said it would be okay if I called you ‘mother’. Is it okay with you?”

I took Maria into my arms and with a big hug “You certainly may call me momma or mother as you choose.”

“Then, yes, mother, I explored the room and grampa took me on a tour of the gardens. They certainly are beautiful.”

“Yes, aren’t they? Did you see the magazines in your room?”

“I did and I would like it if you read some of the print under the pictures for me.”

“Would you like to do that after lunch?”

“Yes, that would be nice.”

I sat on the edge of the bed in Maria’s room with Maria lying on her tummy next to my hip. “I like the pink walls in that picture.”

“Better than the yellow walls you showed me earlier?”

“Yes, I like the pink better. I also like the bed cover in that same picture. It goes with the pink walls, don’t you think? I had a pink bedroom before my mommy died. I sure miss her but I can’t quite remember what she looked like. I do remember she gave me a lot of hugs and kisses and read many stories every evening. We used to have a lot of grown up talk.”

I caught my breath with the unexpected comment from Maria. “Well, we will find a way to make this room the color that you want, especially if it helps you remember your mommy.”

“Mrs. P and I talked about changing the colors in her house, but she said it was too expensive for the short time I was going to be with them. Does this mean I will be here for a longer time?” I could hear the catch in Maria’s voice.

I, on the verge of choking up had to hesitate for a minute. I lay down along side Maria. “Honey, David and Grampa and I want you to become a permanent member of our family.”

“What does permanent mean?”

“It means that this is your home from now on. We want you as our new daughter in this family just like Tommy is with Mr. and Mrs. Phelps.”

Maria suddenly wrapped her arms around me, while tears streamed down her cheeks. “Oh, mother. That would be wonderful. I can have a daddy, a momma and a grampa.” She squeezed my neck and let the tears of happiness flow.

Later that evening I said, “David, I can’t get over how precocious she is. Her conversation is so adult-like, almost too serious. We have our work cut out for us.”

“I caught that during my chat with her after nap time, she broke my heart when she asked me for the hug and kiss her words were “Those hugs remind me of my mommy

whom I want to keep remembering.” I promised her I would help her to keep that memory alive.”

All four members of our family embarked on a buying expedition on Saturday. First stop was the City of Paris department store in San Francisco where we were able to find all the bedroom items to match the swatch of pink paint that the contractor had given them.

We had lunch in the dining room at Macy’s where Maria did not want to sit in a high chair, instead sitting on Grampa’s lap while she ate her hot dog.

From there David led her to the toy department to find the toys that she had listed as her favorites. Her delight was infectious as she found each item on the list. Just as David was ready to arrange for everything to be shipped, Grampa, who had been carefully watching her, asked, “Maria, would you like to have that hobby horse to ride in your play area?” She looked at David “Oh, daddy, could I please?”

There was no doubt about his answer. She jumped into his arms and asked Grampa to come close for a hug.

Before the car was outside the city limits, Maria was sound asleep in Grampa’s arms.

At six-thirty the next morning I heard the patter of bare feet near there door way. I looked to see Maria holding her doll. “Would you like to come and join us, Maria? It’s warm and cozy.” I put out her arms and Maria came running.

She and the doll snuggled between us. “Thank you, momma. I haven’t done this since my real mommy died. This is nice.”

I put her arm around Maria, pulling her into a warm embrace. Within three minutes Maria was asleep staying with us until David knew it was time to begin prepping for our special outing.

We were meeting for brunch, picnic style at the ranch. Michael and Jane were having all her family plus Adam and Rosalie with their brood and Al and Joan’s family.

It was Michael who, with Jane, thought this would be a good way for Maria to make her debut in the large family circle. David was also picking up Tommy, thus giving Maria a chance to visit with her former foster family.

There would be swimming, riding, games, food and most of all a lot of kids and folks getting to know each other.

We were the last to arrive at the bustling and noisy party. Kids were jumping in and out of the pool, three of them playing a game of tag and all of them shouting. Maria held tightly to David’s hand and then wanted to be picked up. Joan stood up, took little Sarah by the hand and approached David, who reached down to pick up little Sarah in his other arm. Sarah, who was about the same age, smiled and kissed Uncle David then looked at Maria and smiled. “What is your name?”

“I am Maria and this is my daddy.”

Seeing the surprise on little Sarah’s face, David interjected. “This is our new daughter who recently came to live with us. We are holding this party so she can meet all her new cousins.”

Sarah's face lit up. "I am pleased to meet you, Maria. If you would like, I will take you to meet my brother."

Seeing the look of approval from her daddy, Maria slipped down while Sarah did the same. Soon hand in hand Sarah was leading her to meet Davey and her friend Leah. When those introductions were complete, Maria was led to meet the other small ones, little Adam and Rebecca. Davey rushed over to jump up into Uncle David's arms.

I took Tommy over to meet Jane's grandchildren, Phil who was thirteen, Alice 12 and Peggy 15. The three of them had just agreed to saddle up for a ride. They made Tommy feel at home and invited him along. Peggy turned to me "Would you like to join us?"

"Are you sure you want one of us old ones along?"

Peggy laughed. "You're not old, at least not in spirit."

After saddling up, Peggy and I were leading the pack. Tommy's shyness was soon replaced with conversation led by Alice who was obviously smitten by this handsome boy only one year older than she. She had the two boys responding to her within five minutes. Ten minutes into the walk, she called for a halt. "We need to adjust Tommy's stirrups. Otherwise he is going to start hurting." Three minutes later we were on our way again.

Peggy was telling me about this new boy at school who seemed very interested in her "but Mom won't let me go on a date with him. I can't date until I am sixteen. It's not fair. He will find somebody else and I like him."

"Has he asked you for a date?"

"No, but if he does, I want to be able to say yes."

"Do you know how old he is?"

"He's fifteen also."

"Why don't you wait to see if and when he asks you? It is possible that he isn't allowed to date until he is sixteen. If he asks you, he will understand if you tell him that you need to get permission."

"Thanks, Sara. I hadn't thought about that. He might ask me to a party with other kids I know. Dad would approve if the party were chaperoned. Thanks again, Sara. You're a peach."

After the ride Alice took complete charge of Tommy until the admiral said he needed to talk with Tommy.

I observed Maria who seemed to be in seventh heaven with little Sarah, Leah and Davey to play with. She laughed throughout her first swimming lesson from David. Jumping in like the older kids was enticing but too scary. Sitting with grampa and Aunt Jane at lunch gave her a special feeling of importance.

She said to little Sarah "Aunt Jane is sure nice. I wish I had a gramma."

Little Sarah said, "I do too. I had two but both died. You're lucky you have a new grampa."

Jane listening to their conversation said. "If you want, I can be a gramma for both of you." They looked with surprise and agreed to that arrangement from now on.

Maria said "Sarah, I can share grampa with you. I'm sure he won't mind. He so loves."

My heart was bursting with pleasure as I heard those words. I noticed that young Aaron and Sister Leah were very close. Davey seemed to hook up with the two of them much of that day. I had a sense that much of what David and I had dreamt was in fact

happening. Not only were the three couples tight with each other. Their children seemed to making new bonds with each other.

I walked to Joan and together we joined Rosalie. While we chatted, I changed Rebecca's diaper and held her until she fell back to sleep.

Al was holding court for his buddies. He was giving the other two a rundown on the most recent research and patent filings "Off the record, Sara and I are plotting an acquisition of a small company that is set up nicely for a new product line that I would like to put into operation."

David was aware of the development but Adam was all ears and wanted more info but Al demurred. "That would be premature, Adam. She and I haven't talked with the Chairman or the Executive Committee yet. Sorry"

"I understand."

"What's new with the foundation, Adam? I presume you are feeling as well as you look."

"Physically I am doing well, although my folks and Rosie are always after me to slow down. My alliance with two other foundations to develop new schools in Israel and Palestine is exciting. We believe that assisting in educational developments with both sides may ease some tensions and produce hope for reconciliation in the next generation."

"Do you think it can happen within the next generation?"

"Maybe or maybe not, but we feel this is one option that could lead to some reduction in the tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. In the meantime we are also doing some similar work in the Cameroon and Ghana. In order to be effective all three foundations are limiting their investments to the field of education."

Just then the ringing of the big dinner bell located near the stable interrupted every conversation. Alice had the honor, ably being assisted by Tommy. If they were older some one would have said they were an item, exhibiting the signs of puppy love for two young adolescents.

Now that she had their attention, Alice announced, "It's time for games. Please gather on the lawn. The first game is a horse race of twenty yards. Number one position is Grampa being ridden by little Aaron. Number two is Mr. Al, being ridden by little Davey. Number three is Mr. David ridden by Leah. Number four is Mrs. Sara, ridden by Maria. Time to enter the gates."

To no one's surprise the winner was Leah riding Mr. David.

Tommy easily won the softball throw for those age twenty and younger.

With prizes for second and third places in all events, no child was left without a prize.

What would be considered teatime in England was the five o'clock refreshment period of soft drinks for the young and other libations for the adults? We had formed a large circle sitting on the lawn and swapped funny stories from both young and old. The thirteen-year old Phil who told a golf story about Jesus playing against Ben Hogan had the winning story.

Meanwhile the imported chef was stirring up the fire for barbecuing the steaks. In just a short time the aroma was luring hungry partygoers to line up and place their orders for rare, medium rare or medium; definitely no well-done orders were acceptable.

Jane and Michael had hired a young couple to come in for the clean up so that families with tired children felt fine about leaving as needed.

Maria was asleep in Tommy's arms three minutes into the ride home. Tommy said that the admiral had invited him to bike out on Thursdays for some math and science tutoring. He said he was excited about the opportunity to be ready for the next term starting high school. That started David thinking that he might get Michael to do the same for Rafael, our garden worker, who was also starting high school in September.

Chapter 9.

Monday morning Rafael arrived with his mom. He had a full day of work trimming and clearing out some underbrush. David invited him in for some coffee with us before he started. "Rafael, do I remember you saying something recently about having a hard time in some school classes. What subjects were those?"

"Math and general science."

"Would you be interested in some tutoring if I can arrange it for late Thursday afternoons?"

"Yes, but it means changing days I work on the lawns. The admiral might not like that."

David didn't tell him that the admiral would be the tutor.

At the office David and I picked up two cups of coffee and walked into Michael's office. "Oh, oh, you're looking for a favor. Okay I'm feeling magnanimous."

"I hear that you are going to do a little tutoring on Thursday afternoons. How would you like another student?"

"Kind of depends."

"Rafael."

"I'd be delighted."

"He is in the same grade but a different school. He has the same problems. He can be available if we let him change his work days."

"That would be no problem. I am pleased that you discovered his need. While we are at it, let's check their word skills. We might entice someone to help if there is a need."

Rafael's schedule was changed so that he worked at their yard on Thursdays before tutoring time. Tommy biked from home.

At dinner, on that first evening, Michael gave us a brief report of his day with the boys.

Michael poured some iced tea for the three of them and handed each a book of math statement problems with a range of difficulty. He asked each in turn to read an easy problem in order to gauge their reading skills. They had no problems with the easy problems, which were essentially basic arithmetic problems. In fact, both had excellent reading skills and good command of grammar so that Michael decided to concentrate on the math. Neither had problems with beginning algebra that focused on equations with one unknown. Both were having problems with more complex equations giving Michael the clue for setting out the path of their future study.

When the first math session was complete, Michael gave them each a list of words from a ninth grade speller to test the level of their spelling and understanding. Tommy did a bit better than Rafael but still only comprehended the meaning of eighty per cent of the list. Their homework was to return next week knowing the meaning of all the words and bring ten additional words that they researched on their own.

He gave them the text and asked them to study chapter 2 so that he could test them with comparable but different statement problems.

Both boys seemed excited and grateful and promised to do their best before next Thursday. Tommy left and Rafael worked in the garden until his dad came to take him and Melita, his mom, home.

Friday afternoon, as I was considering packing it in early, Marge announced David and Al. I invited them to enter. Al asked if I had time for some noodling. I pointed to chairs, walked to the door to tell Marge that she was free to leave. I took a seat and waited for Al. “Sara, now that we are operating in Ohio and the board has approved the employee plans, what’s next to move up from the back burners?”

“Al, remember that small company in Santa Clara involved in manufacture of transistors it is a small start up with about twenty employees. I hear the principal is a whiz-bang electrical engineer, graduate of MIT. He has two associates; graduates of Cal Tech. They have a couple of patents pending. As far as we can find out, they are desperate for cash although they have turned down two acquisition offers to date. I think if David and you were to engage them in conversation, you might hear what is important to them and determine if we can meet their need.

David asks, “What do you think we can gain, honey?”

I spoke to Al instead of answering David. “Al, you know we are facing the end of our vacuum tube department with the exception of our sales for VAR, for the rotating beacons used in air way navigation. Do you think a transistor manufacturing outfit might be a good investment to take up the slack?”

“You betcha. With our start in the Ohio plant and the addition of new technology here on the coast, we can start to compete for replacing vacuum tubes in those rotating beacons, Sara, you always are one step ahead of the rest of us.

I turned to David “Now I can answer you, David. We may be the kind of company they want to join. They probably will like our life style and we can probably meet their financial needs. With your ability to listen and negotiate we can probably come together, whether it is a buyout, merger, joint venture or whatever. I am sure you can get the feel. I’ll sell it to the board if you two think it is a good deal for both parties.”

David had set up a Wednesday meeting with James Slavich, the founder of Silicon Solid, Inc. After a brief tour of the plant but not the research lab, they sat in James very plain office, which he shared with his secretary, who went on some errands for the next hour. Slavic said, “I presume you know a lot about us, including the fact that we are cash poor, but I know nothing about you.

Al gave him a full review of the operations, our clientele, and our patent holdings. Slavich could not hide his pleasure to be in the company of officers of a very successful small but public corporation. “Tell me about how you are organized and the number of employees and remuneration plans, if it is not too big a secret.”

David asked “Are you aware that our President is a woman?”

“I had heard about her but I didn’t make the connection when you introduced yourselves. I am surprised but I guess I am the typical old school male. I think that’s terrific as long as the bias out there doesn’t hurt you.”

David nodded and went on using IBM as the example of their structure and corporate style. He emphasized their bonus and stock plans but reminded Mr. Slavich that corporate control was still in the hands of the founding families.

“Tell me what you have in mind for Silicon Solid and our stockholders. You probably know that we have turned down two offers from rather large corporations.”

“I’m David and this is Al, May I call you James?”

“It’s Jim and I would like the informal.

“Just so you know. Al is a PHD from Kentucky, VP and head of engineering and research. You can see that I am general counsel but more importantly I sleep every night with the president and carry the same last name.”

Jim laughed. “Nice way to tell me you are married to the chief and report to her.”

“Well Jim. We are very interested in some relationship with you but only if it is something you can live with. From what we hear of your operation and personnel, we have no interest in change; in fact we hope it might remain intact. The purpose of this visit was to learn about you, size you up, and let you learn as much as you want about us. Now we would like you to take your time and consider what would be best for you and your hopes, keeping in mind that you have to give up something for whatever help you need.”

“That sounds fair and somehow I sense that you will play fair with us.”

“You can depend on that. In fact, I suggest you do some research by talking to any of our vendors or clients. One requirement that I have is if you want us to come back then we need to know that we are the only party you are talking with at this time.”

“I understand and think that is fair. Let me talk with my other investors and call you. I will do that by Friday. If the signals are good then you can let me have your references.”

David stood and shook hands with Jim, as did Al who said, “Jim, I like what I see and hope you see your way to become part of us I think I would like working with you.”

“Thanks, Al. My gut says that has some possibilities.”

Al was driving on the little country road that lead back to their offices in Fremont. “I liked what I saw and learned, David.”

“I did too and my gut says we are going to make a deal, something that will benefit both firms. Your boss is sure smart, Al.”

Al laughed and said. “One thing I liked was his openness about their situation. This feels like a good fit.”

I was ecstatic with the report. “I have no doubt that you will make a good deal, David. Do you want to start noodling on some options to offer?”

“I think we should just wait. My gut tells me that we will be able to live with whatever he offers.”

“All right. It’s in your hands until I have to take it to the board.”

Friday at eleven thirty David had a call from Jim. “We are ready to sit down Friday after next if that is okay. We are not conversing with anyone but you and I can put that in writing if you want. Now we are ready to check with your clients and vendors. I’ll send you our list, too.”

“All right, Jim. Mail me a note about the exclusive conversations but you can have the list today. When we are done, hand the phone to your secretary and my secretary will dictate a list to her.”

“You sure are trusting, David. I like that kind of old fashioned handshake deal making. My secretary will dictate our list to your secretary.”

“We can get formal when we have a deal, Jim.”

“All right, David. I’m putting Sue on the phone.”

At the end of two weeks, Jim called David “Sorry about the delay but we need another week at least. Why don’t we set a date for mid August?”

I was edgy about the delay but David agreed and asked “Jim, if you or any of our staff would like to visit our facility prior to the meeting, you would be very welcome.”

”Thanks, David. We may take you up on the invitation.”

A week later, after a phone call arrangement, John Urban, their VP of manufacturing accompanied by Steve Miller, foreman came by for a visit. I decided to introduce myself and walk them through part of the plant. I wanted them to be aware of my knowledge of the operation. I introduced them to Fred, the floor manager who completed the tour.

Coffee break came during the visit and I noticed both visitors spending time with some of the manufacturing hands.

I decided that my light schedule provided another opportunity for me to spend some time with Maria. I called home to talk with her. “Honey, how would you like to go out to lunch with momma?”

“Wow. Do you really have time? I loved it the last time we did this. Can we go to that outside place where daddy plays golf?”

“Yes. Now, ask Mrs. R to give you a bath and you can choose whatever dress you wish for our date.”

Two hours later found us seated at a table with dessert dishes being cleared away. ‘Momma, do you play golf too?’

“I just took another lesson last Friday evening”

“Maybe you two can play together like little Sarah and I do. I sure like her and Davey have become my good friend too. Did you know his daddy when you were little like we are?”

“No, honey. We were grown up when we met.”

“Tell me about it. I’ll bet it was romantic.”

‘It was, but where did you learn that word?’

“I heard Aunt Rosalie and Aunt Joan talking about what a romantic couple you and daddy were. Why is your face turning pink?”

“Oh, I’m getting a little warm. That’s all.”

“Are you going to tell me about you and daddy?”

“Okay. We were both in the navy after graduating from colleges in a state called Pennsylvania. In the navy we ended up in a place called Corpus Christi in a state called Texas. When we get home, I’ll show you a map where all those places are.”

“We passed each other going to and from lunch four different times, your daddy giving me a big smile each time, but we had not met officially. One Saturday I was in town hoping to find a restaurant for lunch. The place I chose was busy and full. Daddy was seated alone at a table for two. I got brave enough to ask him if I could share his table, to which he was kind enough to say yes. Realizing that we recognized each other, we had a friendly chat. Afterwards he invited me to take a walk in a nearby park. We had such a good time that I invited him to have dinner with me.”

“Through dinner we began sharing a lot of personal information. I liked what he was saying about himself and the way his mind was working and apparently he felt the same about me.”

“It felt so right that I agreed to a kiss. It was wonderful. I did not want it to end. He must have felt the same because we agreed to spend the next weekend together. We walked and talked, held hands, kissed and hugged tight late into the night and then again during most of the next day. (I, of course, could not tell Maria the whole story of that weekend in which the two of us found the joy and thrill of making love to each other.) It was so wonderful that we agreed to the same on the following weekend.”

“Why did you wait a whole week?”

“We both had duties in the navy during the week and lived in different parts of the navy base.”

“We’re you able to meet every weekend after that?”

“No. Unfortunately the navy decided it needed me in Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands so that we had one more date on the day I left.”

“Oh, how sad. Where is Pearl Harbor?”

“Thousands of miles west of here over the ocean. You and we are going to visit there just before you start school. Grampa owns a house on that island.”

“I’m confused. How did you get together if you were so far apart?”

“Well, daddy got transferred to the same place under orders to work for Grampa. His new room was only twenty minutes away from mine. He looked me up and we began to see each other much more often, sometimes four or five times a week. We spent a lot of that time in my room and fell in love. After many months we were married.”

“Thanks, mommy. That is a real lovely story. I guess that is what Aunt Joan meant by romantic. I want to go shopping now if you’ve finished lunch, but I also want to know about daddy working for grampa.”

“Why don’t you ask grampa to tell you that story? I am sure he would be pleased to do that.”

“Okay, but let’s go. We are going to find a bathing suit for me, aren’t we?”

“Yes. I also thought we could call Mrs. P to see if we can visit. Would you like that?”

“Oh, yes. By then Tommy will be home and we can see him too.”

Michael and David arrived home simultaneously and were greeted by Maria, wearing her bathing suit. “Look grampa. I am ready for our trip to your house. I can’t remember the name of the island, but won’t I look pretty for a trip to the beach?”

Michael swooped her up into his arms “You look pretty right now and always will be my pretty little granddaughter.”

“She turned in his arms to look at David. “Mommy and I had a delicious lunch today. She also told me the beautiful romantic story about your love and marriage. That reminds me. Grampa, mommy suggested I ask you about how daddy came to work for you. I really want to know. Daddy your cheeks are pink just like mommies when I asked about your romance.”

Michael took over, giving Maria a special hug, saying. “I’ll tell you the story at bedtime tonight. Is that okay?”

“Sure.” Off she went to her room to play until called for dinner. That evening Maria tired from her big day out, fell asleep without hearing Grampa’s story.

Our weekends were mostly spent relaxing. Saturday afternoons we would take Maria to a movie or shopping. Sometimes we took her to the park. Sunday mornings after attending worship, we usually headed for Jane's to continue our riding lessons and join her family and occasionally the Walters. Maria, who was a bundle of energy, almost always fell asleep on the ride home.

The day of the scheduled meeting with Silicon Solid representatives had arrived. David arranged for a private dining room at Rickey's restaurant south of Palo Alto on the El Camino Real.

Jim made the opening comment. "For a myriad of reasons we are open to discussions with Radio Inc. Two or three things stand out. One is the way you're structured, including the way you work with and remunerate your people. Second is the rapport you have with clients and vendors. Those findings gave us the feeling that all dealings with you will be transparent and above board. Thirdly, Mrs. Sellech, every one I talked to says that you are the finest strategist in the small business world today. That is high praise."

Thank you, Jim. Please call me Sara. Just as everyone in our firm, except the newest employees."

"All right. One more comment. It is our hope that, whatever is worked out, will leave our work force intact."

David said. "Thank you for those comments, Jim. We think that before we talk values or dollars or anything in that field, it would serve us to hear what other hopes you have if we come together."

"Two basic hopes: Working as a subordinate but independent company probably would be our greatest desire and best solution for you. A separate board of directors might give us greater flexibility."

Jack spoke up on behalf of Radio, Inc. "Our executive committee after two long sessions has come up with exactly the same conclusions. We will have to negotiate the size and representation after the financial arrangements are complete but I say we are on the same wave length."

I could see the relief across the faces of Jim and his associates. A knock on the door produced a waiter with coffee, juice and some morning sweet rolls indicating time for a break.

During the break, two representatives of Silicon Solid's CPA firm arrived. Jack went to gather Radio's CFO and a rep from their own CPA firm. It was agreed that the offer from Radio should be reviewed by the finance people before being presented to the decision makers. Meanwhile, discussions would continue on structure, board membership, strategies in process at Silicon Solid, etc. My contribution was limited to key questions at various points in the discussion.

After lunch, I excused myself. This was David's deal who would continue along with Jack.

The recommendations of the finance staffs were presented regarding cash infusion, share swaps, future options and related matters. By six that evening matters had been agreed upon, details were referred to the legal staffs, the final recommendations to be made to the boards of directors. The drinks carts were wheeled in for a mini celebration of what seemed to be a perfect marriage. I was called in so that I could toast the new members of our family.

Before he left, Jim arranged a meeting with me in order to develop some strategies and test the current strategies of Silicon.

Dinner was late. Game playing with Maria and then two extra bedtime stories was fun and time consuming. . Michael had extra long tutoring sessions with the boys.

Later, David brought Michael up to date on the negotiations. "I am most impressed with everyone at that company. I believe we have a great fit. Reading their faces, I am sure that they are well pleased with the results and will contribute well above our hopes at the present."

Michael asked, "Do you agree, Sara?"

"Absolutely and my boy friend here did himself proud negotiating the deal."

Michael said "Thank you for the report. I am glad that Jack, as head of the executive committee was in the discussions. All should go well at the board meeting.

Maria celebrated her fifth birthday on the island of Oahu in what was now called our "island get away". She learned to swim and snorkel, received a history lesson about the attack on Pearl Harbor. The four of us visited the historic site of the sinking of the battleship, Arizona. She got to see the offices where Michael served but missed the dismantled quarters where he parents lived before and after marriage but she did get to picnic with mommy and daddy in the park that was so much a part of their courtship.

The three of us spent a tender time visiting the hospital where her daddy spent days after his injury at sea. She pressed him for complete details of the incident. When he finished the story, her tears were unstoppable. Later, however, she wanted to know if it would be okay if she could say hello to some of the sailors who were recuperating in the hospital.

Shortly before we landed back at San Francisco, Maria asked me "Am I going to start school some time soon? Am I going to kinder garden or into first grade?"

"School starts on Monday but tomorrow afternoon you and daddy and I are going to visit with a school guidance counselor to determine the answer to your last question."

"Joyce thinks I am ready for the first grade, I heard her telling Mrs. R in the kitchen one day. I know that the games I play with Joyce are intended to make me more knowledgeable about our country and the world. Maybe I am ready."

When the conversation between Maria and the counselor was concluded, a teacher's aide escorted Maria for a tour of the grounds. Her counselor turned to the two of us. "There is no question that she is ready for the studies in the first grade .In fact she could handle second grade level material."

David asked, "What is your opinion of her social skills. Do you believe she can handle emotionally the challenges of children a year older than she?"

"In my opinion, the answer is yes, I believe so. We would accept her at that level if you want us to do that. She is also tall enough to mix with the older children. Take some time to discuss this while I handle another matter for fifteen or so minutes."

When she returned, David said. "We agree that she should try the first grade."

“That’s settled then. I suggest that if there are some slightly older children in your neighborhood that you allow Maria to play with them so you can observe her interactions, particularly when she is teased or confronted by any of her playmates.”

When Grampa arrived that evening, Maria ran out to meet him in the driveway. “Grampa, I am going to be in his first grade, starting Monday and today I played with Mike and Mary from down the street I learned two new games but I couldn’t win at any of them, but I am going to learn so I can beat Mike.”

Michael broke into a huge grin and swooped her into his arms.

When Michael put her down, she asked me “May I use the phone to call Mrs. P to tell her about school?”

“Why don’t we see if she is available so we can visit her? Would you like that?”

“Oh, yes.” Off she dashed to make the call. She had so much to tell the Phelps about school, her trip to Hawaii and all she had done since her last visit. As soon as I dialed the number, Maria took the phone in hand.

Monday morning David drove Maria to her first day at school. He waved good-bye at the classroom door when she ran to greet Mary, her neighborhood playmate. It seemed like another pivotal moment in life as he walked away.

I made it appoint to be home on Monday afternoon when the school bus dropped off Maria, Mike and Mary. When we started walking, Mike said “Mrs. Sellech, Maria did all the kid’s a favor during recess today. Felix, who is a bully started calling her bad names and pushing her with his finger at her shoulder. Maria turned, pushed her finger at his shoulder and said, “Stop it or my gang will knock you down.” He made a funny face and left. We didn’t even see him during the lunchtime or the second recess. She is our school hero.”

Maria didn’t expect to talk about it with her folks and was mad at Mike for telling mom. Sitting at the table with me, having some milk and a cookie, she answered the question. “Mom, I don’t know how I realized what to do. Somehow, I wasn’t scared of Felix even when Mary warned me about him as we went to recess. She said he did that to someone almost every day last year, especially if some new kid showed up on the playground. I once heard daddy talking about a bully in his navy days, so I decided to stand up to him. I’m sorry because it was not very lady like.”

I put her hand over one of Maria’s. “Honey, you did the right thing to stand up to a bully. There are times when even a lady has to be tough. In my world of business I have to meet that kind of challenge often.”

“You do?”

“Yes, sweetie. My job is one that is usually and traditionally performed by a man and lot’s of men don’t want to see a woman stronger at her job than some man.”

“But you are such a nice, loving lady.”

“Never the less, there are times for any lady to do what is necessary. I want you to be a kind and caring person but I also want you to make a right decision about when to confront someone,”

“Is that what I did today? Confront Felix?”

“Yes, Maria. You did just that.”

By the end of that school year, to no one’s surprise, Maria was tops in her first grade class. The question of her jumping a grade came up but David and I opted to decline, wanting

her to be with a group nearer her age. We continued to have Joyce come in to tutor with her special skills that enhanced Maria's learning and mental development. She also widened Maria's interest to include studies in geography by teaching her to read stories of children in other parts of the globe.

All the kids in the extended family were sharp, but it was noted by all that little Davey and Maria were the two precocious ones. All the adults made certain not to make a fuss over either of them, keeping all the kids on a level playing field. One of the nice things was that Maria and little Sara, who continued to be close, continued to want Davey to play with them. If it could be said of a child that young, then Maria was developing a crush on Davey.

I found special times during the week to talk with Maria about her activities with Joyce. It was her idea that Maria should feel free to discuss any subject either with momma or with daddy. There were moments when Maria's curiosity challenged me to the limit like "Are you and daddy going to make a baby sister for me? Or "Why do you and daddy sleep naked?"

When David was able to get home in time, he drove with Maria on his lap helping to steer, the way down to the railroad tracks so she could wave to the commuter train engineers. She was delighted when one waved back and sounded the whistle, giggling and thanking daddy. In between visits with David or me there was always grampa, her absolute love, who listened to all her stories, real or imagined, while they had tea on some afternoons.

Silicon Solid had matured during that first nine-month period. Jack Smart represented Radio's interest on the board and executive committee of the subsidiary. Jim as chief operating officer of the subsidiary initiated frequent conversations with me. The result was a successful growth and a beautiful tight fit between child and parent company.

At an executive committee meeting that fall, I, after consultation with Aaron as Chairman, asked "Michael, are you willing to take some time with our sales rep in Washington to explore the possibilities of suggesting up grades to the air traffic beacon system, replacing vacuum tubes with our new transistors? Our combined labs have developed and tested new products that could make our domestic air navigation system become state of the art. I hear things are starting to move in that direction and that Texas Instruments is in the game along with others."

Michael acquiesced and had appointments set up within three days. Two weeks later, a team of three, including Al and the Engineering VP of Silicon Solid were dispatched to participate in demonstration meetings.

Shortly after the New Year, Aaron, chairman of the board, hosted a dinner meeting of the board members of both corporations. In his opening remarks he thanked the board of Radio, Inc. for making life so easy for him as the chairman and glowed when he thanked me, especially for my leadership as president. "As you have guessed, this is my swan song as chairman of the board. The company that I am leaving is much more than I ever dreamed when I began my radio repair and sales shop in Berkeley. The Ross-Silver Foundation now owns my voting shares. Assuming that the shareholders have no objection to having my seat replaced with a representative of the foundation, I am asking that you elect to that seat Rosalie Ross Silver, my daughter.

Aaron laughed when he heard a gasp from me. "Yes, Sara. The big secret is that we have held back from all our friends that we had been grooming Rosalie for such responsibility."

“Aaron, what a stroke of genius. I am more than delighted. I want to be the one to nominate her when the shareholders meet.”

Aaron grinned and thanked me. “Now, I want to turn the gavel over to Michael as vice chair to conduct the short meeting before we celebrate the good news that both boards will hear from our respective CPA firms.

When the celebration was coming to a close, Michael asked the members of the executive committee to meet briefly.

“It is time for us to initiate another phase of planning. It is my hope that as the chairman of the board I will be replaced within another several months. That means we need to look at top-level personnel development. Although not assured, it would seem that Sara is our top candidate to replace me. If that is the case are we ready to groom some one for her as the chief operating officer or load her with both jobs, which she may be able to handle.”

David interjected. “I hope not the latter. We have a growing young daughter and a desperate husband who need some of her time.”

That brought a big laugh before they turned attention to Michael’s point. Jack Smart asked for the floor. “I see other things that need attention. The industry needs someone of Sara’s ability to help influence public policy that is beneficial to this country and this industry. The executive committee of the Communications Association wants her to be the President and Chief spokesman a year from now. I am urging her and us to make that move so we can become a major player in spite of our size. I know that Sara is considering even if it is only to raise awareness of the ability of women to play roles at high levels of management.”

Michael said. “It’s late and we all have our share of glad tidings. Let’s meet next Wednesday to continue these deliberations.” It was so agreed.

[* Author’s note. The following is quite personal and intimate but for the sake of honesty I need to tell it as it was.]

Days later in the evening after we turned out the lights, I rolled on top of him. “All right. Honey, I’ve got you pinned down so I expect a yes answer. If I can swing it with the board, would you be my chief operating officer in-training for six months while I serve as Chairman and COO for that period. At the end of six months you will be the President and COO while I resort to being Chair of the Board.”

I had his hands pinned raise above his head and my lips nibbling his ear. “I’m not letting you up until I hear a “yes ma’am.”

“How can a man say no to a woman who is promising him rewards?”

“Is that a yes?”

“It’s a maybe so we can talk twenty minutes from now.”

I began giggling.

Dressed in our robes enjoying some hot chocolate David agreed that no one else was in a better position, particularly since the board had just promoted their operational officer to chief executive officer. “If the board agrees with you strongly then I would be happy to give it a stab.”

“Oh, they will support this, I am sure. They love me and they love Jack Smart and they love dad. Jack and dad cooked up this idea and figured I knew how to get you to say yes.”

“Daddy. Mommy where are you? I’m scared.”

David dashed to find Maria and brought her to the table where I wiped away the tears and took her onto my lap. David made another hot chocolate for Maria while she told us about her bad dream and waking up without finding her doll next to her on the bed.

David, through eye contact, sent a signal to me. I went to the master bedroom to change sheets while David chatted with Maria and then asked, "Would you like to sleep with us, honey?"

"Oh daddy that would be wonderful just in case that dream comes back besides it is always so warm in your bed. David chortled, knowing that children say the darndest things.

By the time the executive committee finished its deliberations the recommendations to the board were ready. I would be nominated to serve as Chair of the Board. David would serve six months, probationary, as Chief Operating Officer. If he survived the probationary period satisfactorily, he would be nominated to be President of the corporation. The executive committee was to monitor his progress every two months with a major review at the end of six months. Five weeks later the plan was adopted by the board, which included a non-binding vote of confidence from Rosalie who attended, pending the shareholder vote.

At the board meeting in May, David was elected President and Chief Operating Officer. The new Chief Financial Officer and I worked him hard in order to help him grasp the financial implications since that was where he was least experienced. I groomed him in the area of personnel relations and the state requirements in California and Ohio. "You may as well learn about Nevada too. As you know, we are thinking of expanding into that state in the near future."

He said, "Tell me more. I heard Jack talking at the last executive meeting but caught only a little."

"It is the focus of the next meeting. Our field people in Washington say we need to move fast. That means an acquisition since we will not have time for setting up a new plant. The subject is beacons. Al and his cohorts at Silicon Solid have developed new features for omni directional beacons, the navigational aids of the future. We hear that two other companies are playing in the same field so it's a matter of technology and of timing. There is a small company in Reno that is cash poor but are holders of patents which with minor modifications could set the standard for the navigational beacons."

"Sounds interesting. I've been so busy that I haven't been aware of this development."

"That's why you need to catch up quickly. Jack and I have been doing a lot of prep work. We are ready to launch another public offering to raise the cash. We have held two private meetings with the Reno firm, Beacons Plus. There will be a special meeting of the board two weeks from today. I hope we can move quickly."

David said, "Although things may be a little tight, I will have accounting working overtime to pull all the info together. As you know, we have a relatively new CFO. Did I ever tell you about my college friend, Burt Smythe?"

"No detail that I recall. I know he is doing a good job in spite of my doubts when you told me that you were hiring a friend. I was too tired that night to ask you more."

"Well, several months ago our CFO resigned due to some family problems. The personnel department was not having much luck with any of the executive search firms. I got thinking about Burt who was a business admin major and brilliant Straight 4.0 in every subject and lots of time to date and play bridge. We spent a lot of lunch time's together, brown bag lunching while we talked world affairs and argued national politics, through which we developed a close friendship. I decided to call the university to track him down and I lucked out."

“He headed the accounting department for a large steel fabrication company in Pittsburgh. We had a great phone conversation, lots of laughs and found out some personal information. I could sense his holding back something, so I decided to fly in for a personal visit and possibly recruit him.”

When I called him for lunch he insisted we eat at the company dining room instead of at the highly regarded restaurant where I had booked reservations. I found that a little strange until he met me at his office door, seated in a wheel chair. He smiled while I gasped at my friend who had lost both legs during the Battle of the Bulge in Germany. He clasped my hand, gave me a big smile and said simply. “I know it seems bad, David, but I am doing well and have a happy life.”

“During the next two hours I got all the gory details of the battle in which he was injured. I learned much of what other things he endured while I had my cushion job at Pearl. Burt is married to his college sweetheart, a good friend of mine. They have a daughter about Maria’s age.”

David continued. “After the initial shock, watching him wheel himself around with ease, handling some paper work that was required while we chatted, he handled life very naturally.”

“When I approached the subject of working for us, I could see his interest while he expressed doubts of handling a position with more responsibilities than his present position demanded. His company is not a public corporation.”

“We spent more than an hour discussing what it would take. Based on my knowledge of his brilliance and willingness to learn, I made him an offer.”

“The up shot is that he is our new CFO. His family will be moving here in about ten days. He is the whiz that I knew and respected those years ago but it is learning time so more time is required to get us what we need but we will have it for you on time. The marvelous tale is that of the way his staff has adjusted to having a paraplegic for a boss He had everyone at ease within two days.”

“David, what a story. I am pleased for the two of you and, of course, for the fiancé department to move ahead without missing a beat. We must have them to dinner just as soon as it is practical for them.”

“I’ll fill you in with more info while we have drinks before dinner tonight.”

I looked at my watch. “Why don’t we cut out now, pick up Maria and head for our favorite hamburger joint?”

“Great idea. Maria will love it, especially if we invite her friends Mary and Mike to come along.”

Maria squealed with delight at the invitation, hurried to the phone to call her friends. Thirty minutes later, with three noisy kids in the back seat, we headed for Hamburger Heaven.

After Maria, stuffed to the gills with French fries and ice cream, was gleefully off to bed, we settled down in the den for a nightcap. “David, you were going to tell me more about Burt.”

“Oh, yes. Burt who corresponded faithfully with Kathryn had written that he had some wounds and would be recuperating at Walter Reed hospital, giving no hint of his real condition. Reading between the lines, Kathryn took the bus to Washington and simply showed up in his room one afternoon to find him sitting in a wheel chair she gasped and could not hold back the flood of tears. Burt was embarrassed, angry with himself, upset with Kathryn for

finding him this way. He shouted angry words at her, wrongfully thinking that would send her away and the ordeal would be finished.”

“Instead she walked behind the chair, wrapped her arms around him from behind and nestled her face in his hair. “When were you planning on letting me know?”

“I’ve written ten letters breaking off our relationship but couldn’t bring myself to mail them. I did not want you to know or ever see this cripple.”

“Burt said to me that she turned his head so that she could plant her lips directly on his. No matter how he tried to shake her off, she clung to him, her lips and tongue so much in command that he finally opened himself to her. He said that her exact words were “Soldier, you’re stuck with me so suck it up and let’s go from here.”

“Apparently it wasn’t the end. Burt says he went through periods of depression, either crying or shouting at times. But Kathryn never wavered. When he was being discharged, she insisted that he live with her even though he refused to marry her. He told me he caved in since his own family situation was pure hell, whatever that was. He insisted on paying room and board. Meanwhile she talked with doctors, with psychologists and two other couples who had weathered the same storm. It took time but as Burt told me “Her love wore me down and everything I am today I owe to her.”

Sara who had been listening intently said, “I am curious. Is Katy their own progeny?”

“No but Burt says they have one helluva sex life”

“I can’t wait to meet them and I am so glad you found him.”

At the board meeting, there were a multitude of questions. When there was full understanding of the new product and the patents held by Beacons Plus, it seemed like a go, but up popped the question of moving so quickly. I explained about the competition moving quickly. “In fact, the president of Beacons told me that they had an inquiry from COA about merging. As you know, COA, the largest company in our field, plays hardball with everyone. Fortunately, our binding agreement with Beacons keeps away other inquirers for three more weeks only.”

One of the board members got my attention. “Have you considered that another round of stock selling means your close family holdings will no longer remain at fifty one percent? I think the reputation of Radio, Inc. makes it a prime target for one or two corporate raiders. How do you feel about the threat, Sara?”

“You’re right, Sam and we have discussed this in the family several times before. We have to put all our shareholders on an equal footing. When faced with offers, the shareholders will have to decide whether a capital gain at the present value is better than a longer-range projection. I recently have been doing some study on a subject called “poison pills’, which may be one antidote.”

“Good. It is always a pleasure to see you ahead of the curve.”

“You know, Sam that the antidote may not preserve management, but it could increase the offer from the raider. Of course, the pill may make it too expensive for the raider to pursue the takeover.”

Sam laughed. “You sure are something.”

The vote on all issues was unanimous.

“Jack,” Sara said to the chair of the executive committee. “We’ve got trouble. Beacon is dragging its feet. We are not going to meet the three-week deadline and I’m sure they want to hear what COA is offering. This isn’t going as smoothly as our deal with Silicon Solid.”

“I have lined up another, slightly smaller competitor which we can pursue or at least use it during our next meeting. The name is Comco and their problem is the same. We might move more quickly but their plant is smaller and therefore requires several shifts to meet our production hopes.”

“If they are a close corporation with few shareholders we could get a decision very quickly, Jack. Maybe we should move in that direction.”

“Let’s break for lunch. You have a date with Maria. Come back refreshed and we can noodle our way into a good plan. The tougher the problem, the better I like it.”

At lunch Sara asked Maria again “Why do you have this day free?”

“Mommy, I told you before that it is a teacher training day. Now can I have anything on the menu?”

“Let me think. Should I spoil my little girl?”

“You don’t spoil me too much, mommy. I know some very spoiled girls at school. You didn’t let me get that sweater I wanted last vacation. I don’t get ice cream every night like I want.”

“All right, smarty pants. Anything on the menu.”

“What is a soufflé?”

“It’s like a very light omelet. Is it the cheese soufflé?”

“Yes.”

“I think you will like that. I am going to have the eggs benedict.”

“May I have a taste?”

“Certainly. I want you to learn to eat a great variety of foods. It’s also time to have Joyce start to teach you about food groups and values. I’ll talk to her this week.”

On the way home “Mommy, please drop me off at Mike’s, down the street. He invited me to come play with them today. You know, I think he likes me.”

“How do you know that?”

“He likes to hold my hand and touch my hair. It always feels so nice when he does. He is so nice, as is his sister, Mary.”

Back at her office, the planning began. Jack had put some notes on the blackboard. I asked “You feel we ought to offer fifteen dollars a share for their stock, one third cash and two thirds in Radio stock and fully integrate them into Radio?”

Yes. That would give each shareholder a twenty-two percent gain on the original investment, made eighteen months ago. We then pay for the upgrade of the equipment and provide the cash flow. I reviewed the patent and I believe Al’s design is superior but that would mean more investment in retooling.

“Jack I think we ought to be ready to pay a little more so we get the patent. That will also feed the founder’s ego which may help grease the way to a deal.”

Sara went on. “What about their executive staff?”

“They’ve run the company into the ground. Most of them will have to go.”

“Do they understand that may be the way it goes?”

“I was pretty clear and I believe the founder agrees with me. I get the sense from your questions that you think I am going to lose this one.”

No, I am not ready to say that but I do believe that a softer, more rounded approach might give us a better chance.”

A little huffy, Jack asked “Like what?”

“For instance, some of those execs may be long time friends, who will feel their buddy, sold them out. We can find a way to keep a few until they realize they bring little value to our organization. That will give them time to find other jobs that fit their skills.”

Jack spent some time with his calculator. “Sara your approach could cost us another three or four hundred thousand.”

“I know. Let’s run the numbers and odds on the other deal, that’s Comco, right?”

“Taking everything into consideration, I believe we can make a deal and save three hundred thousand, but with less production capability. We would need to run two shifts, bringing on problems such as training a lot of new hires and doing business in Pennsylvania, with labor laws and taxes well above those in Nevada.”

“No retooling if we use their current tools but Al might want to change and that might cost up to another hundred thou or a little more.”

“So, how do you want to proceed?”

“Let Beacon talk with COA, I am sure they will find a way to offer just a bit more, then we can. They’ll make the pitch for the patent to sweeten pot.”

“All right, Jack. Give it a shot.” I was willing to bet money that Jack would need to come back to the executive committee.

Jack also continued conversations with Comco in order to keep his options open.

Four weeks later, a disgruntled Jack plopped himself into the easy chair in my office. “I blew it with Beacon, Sara. They said no to my increased offer although they did not close the door.”

“That in itself is a good sign, Jack. They left the door open.”

“I don’t see how. I hinted at offering more cash. They could have asked me for more if that was their need. But they didn’t. The answer was no to my best offer.”

Who was in the negotiations, Jack?”

The founder, his VP and CFO. I got the impression that the founder was happy to see me go.”

“I have an idea. The four of us, including Michael’s friend, Jane, are going to our place at the lake this weekend. Why don’t you call and tell them I can be in Reno on Monday afternoon and would like to meet the founder and have a tour of his facility.”

“All right, but I don’t think they will be open to that.”

“Why not? If the door is still open, let’s take advantage. Nothing to lose by asking.”

Jack came back into the office ten minutes later with a message that he received from the receptionist. “The founder is in conference with representatives from COA who had just arrived. She thought it would be a long meeting”

Jack was on pins and needles, pacing back and forth. “Jack, settle down and relax. Some one will call you back. Find something to keep you busy for a few hours. I am going home to find some playtime with Maria when she gets home from school. Call me.”

It was five forty five when Jack heard from Harry, the president of Beacons, Plus. “What can I do for you, Jack? You know I can’t accept your last offer.

“I realize that, Harry, but I got the impression that you had not quite slammed the door. The chairman of our board will be in Reno on Monday and would like to meet with you if you are open to any more conversation.”

Five minutes later Jack was on the phone. “Good news. Three o’clock, Monday. I’ll fly up and meet you there.” He repeated the exact phone conversation.

“Okay. Book me on the return to SFO. David will drop me off and bring everyone else home.”

Monday afternoon at three minutes after three, the receptionist with a broad and warm smile welcomed me. A minute later Harry Jackson, the founder opened his door and put out his hand, a warm smile gracing his face. “So happy you wanted to come by, Mrs. Sellech.”

“It’s Sara, Please.”

“Yes and I’m Harry. Would you like something cool to drink?”

“Yes. A Seven Up or some juice would be delightful.”

After some light conversation while we finished our drinks, Harry asked, “Would you like to see our facility?”

“That would be wonderful and perhaps I could meet some of your top staff along the way.” I greeted various workers stopping to discover the nature of their work. I was impressed with the layout and the cleanliness of the plant. When I met the foreman, I asked and got a full explanation of their processes, including which areas could lead to manufacturing problems since, in my opinion, every plant had some weak spot. The foreman was hesitant on that point looking to the big boss.

I said “We all know that every system lacks perfection and usually it is one weak spot that lets us down. Don’t you agree, Harry?”

Harry laughed. “I see why you are so successful, Sara. Go ahead, Max.”

I took time to ask each administrative person and each exec what were their duties. It was almost two hours before we sat in the small conference room. In the midst of their tour Jack said to him “She is charming the pants of the whole damned outfit.”

Back in the office, I opened the conversation. “Harry, Jack tells me you refused his offer but left the door slightly ajar. Would you be willing to discuss that with me?”

“Sure. COA made us a higher bid for our shares but all our senior staff including me would be gone within ninety days. Maybe I would be consulting for another few months. Jack’s offer was for fewer dollars but kept me in place as President or at least general manager with a say in management. I feel there may be room to negotiate but Jack was not offering more. I hoped he would reconsider since my deadline since the COA deadline is ten days off. I hoped your management might send him back to negotiate.”

Jack was about to say he wanted to renegotiate but I held him off. “You said, “Hope Jack would be back. Do you mean like right now?”

“Yes.”

“If I were to guess, you needed to be alone when talking with us, not in the presence of other staff. Am I right?”

“That’s it exactly. You sure know how to read between the lines. Personally I prefer becoming a part of Radio, Inc. Everyone I talked with, especially your vendors were enthusiastic about doing business with you. I could see that Jack admires you and that he gives a lot of uncompensated time on behalf of the company. I would have liked to be affiliated with such an organization.”

He went on.” There is a little complication. I need to come away with a little more money for the shareholders and especially continued employment for my key staff, since all helped me by investing with some hard earned funds and loads of overtime when we started. I am aware of their short comings but I figure you could absorb them for a while instead it appearing that I sold them out.”

“You are talking about the four men I met on the tour, am I right?” Harry nodded.

“If we offered you another dollar a share and guaranteed the four employees a position or income for a year from the date of take over, would that be enough to make the deal?”

“It would. In fact I would look like a hero to my people”

“Are you pleased with your continued role and the remuneration package as presented by Jack?”

“Very much so and I guarantee full cooperation of the rest of the crew. We have weeded out the marginal workers and have a great crew. They will be delighted that their jobs are no longer at risk.”

I looked to Jack who nodded his approval. I stood, put out her hand, saying. “Mr. Jackson, we have a deal. I would like to have your marketing and sales management people are available to our managers even before we get board approval. Is that possible? I will get a special board meeting ASAP if you can do the same.”

“Sara, may I take you two to dinner?”

“Jack what is our time schedule for the flight?”

“We leave in three hours.”

“Harry, we would love to have dinner.”

Jack was ecstatic on the return flight to the bay area. “Sara, you are more than anyone could imagine. You just took a jewel away from our main competitor, which jewel I was sure we had lost. Not only that, but you have an admirer in Harry who will drive himself to meet whatever goals we set. He adores you.”

“Thank you, Jack. You’re giving me too much credit. All the ground work, the plans and the basic finance were in place for a little tweaking.”

“No way. I had already lost that deal. I must say that you are one hell of a poker player.”

I laughed “I’ve been coached by one of the best, one David.”

NEW BATTLES

Chapter 10.

The new public offering brought in four dollars a share more than had been projected earlier, creating a nice surplus in their coffers. All the approvals and paper work on the Beacon deal were complete, Radio, Inc now in the beacon business, complementing our radio and transistor businesses.

One Monday morning, the company CFO, Burt Snythe, wheeled into David's office. "Boss, sorry to interrupt but I just had an interesting phone call from the CFO at Comco. He told me that president would like to talk with someone again on the subject of making a deal. I got the impression that the situation is urgent."

"Thanks, Burt. Give me the number."

David walked into my office, interrupting a meeting with Jack, to relay the message. He said "You think we should take time to consider this now even though we are in process of starting up Beacons Plus?"

Jack said. "They are half the size of Beacon with a great but small facility, a sharp founder completely under funded."

I said to David. "David, good thinking. Since this is Western Pennsylvania, not too far from our Ohio plant we ought to explore the idea. Do you have some sharp diplomatic younger exec that could mind the store for you and maybe a finance type if we make a deal?"

"Definitely the finance type. The young man from Beacon is a gem according to Bert. I do believe that Steve, our production planner has more to offer than we are using at present. If you have the wherewithal to make a deal, we can handle the operations."

I turned to Jack "Want to give it a try?"

"After that last deal, you want this amateur to blow another?"

"You didn't blow anything. I think you learned about being soft on the edges. If you take David and moneybags, Burt, with you, I am sure you can size up the situation and if the prize is worth while, you will bring it home."

"I will be happy to give it a go. Besides, they must be getting squeezed by COA and looking for relief."

Three days later I had a call from Jack. "David has gone on to Ohio. I was right about COA squeezing. Comco is desperate, only a short way from bankruptcy, which is not much worse than the COA deal. The business is the dream of Pete Rizzo. His small crew is terrific. This would have been a small but very successful operation if properly funded. David said that he thought if we want to go we will get in cheap even with a fair deal for Pete."

"How many stockholders?"

"Pete is it representing family money."

"All right, start some serious digging and due diligence. If you need some temporary help to speed up the process, call David or call Ohio. Time is important. I want them, if only to keep COA out."

Three more days into the process, Jack called. "Based on preliminary findings we have a deal in the making but their finances needed some immediate cash infusion to avoid some creditors."

“Call legal and find out if a loan will not foul up the negotiations. How much do they need?”

Fifty thou will do it for now.”

I was not about to let this deal move away. “If there are no objections from legal, Burt can get you the money. Good luck.”

Ten days later, all the preliminaries were handled and the way was open for the acquisition of Comco. On the phone Jack said. “The employees are so delighted they are working for three days without pay to save Pete some money, aware that their jobs are safe. I plan to bring Pete to Fremont for three days so all of you can meet this great young entrepreneur. I want him to know what great bosses he has just acquired.”

“Thank you, Jack. I have a nice surprise for you when you return.

David and I hosted a small dinner party at home for Pete Rizzo and Linda, his dark skinned and black haired beautiful wife. Maria said upon meeting her “You have beautiful hair like I do.”

Linda replied “And I have a Maria who has hair like we do, she is about your age.”

David and Pete were talking business soon after the drinks were poured and were hitting it off. Jack and his wife kept the women entertained. Linda invited Maria to sit on her lap until it was time for Maria to leave.

During the dessert time I passed an envelope to Jack. “This is the surprise that I promised you. Pete has become one of your enthusiastic adorers for saving their business life and I want to thank you for this new addition to our family.”

Jack opened the envelope and suddenly was teary eyed and unable to say a word. Finally able to speak he said. “Thank you. He turned to others. This is a gift of a thousand shares of Radio, Inc made out to the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula, my special charity. Hundreds of kids will benefit from this gift.” You are such a thoughtful friend, Sara.” He walked over almost crushing me with a big bear hug.

I said “You need to thank David, too.”

David explained to Pete and Linda “Jack is a board member and chairman of the executive committee, not a staff member. His work with you was as a volunteer. This is our way of saying thanks to him.” They were obviously impressed.

David spent much of the next day conversing with Pete, filling him in on the Radio philosophy, the admiration that all had for his Sara, the various health plans and benefits accorded employees.

Pete had been impressed with the plant layout but more so with the people with whom he would be working in days to come.

David took Pete out for a nine whole round of golf later in the next afternoon. I treated Linda and Maria to a trip to the city and lunch at the top of the Mark Hopkins hotel and a shopping trip. We, then, joined David and Pete at the club for dinner. Maria sparkled in her role as junior hostess but finally fell asleep on the way home that evening.

On the following Friday evening, the Burt Smythes came for dinner, a sort of welcome to the west coast for the newest addition to the Radio, Inc. family. Katy Smythe was a charmer and bonded with Maria during the first fifteen minutes. I remembered thinking it was a shame that the Smythe home was in San Jose, making it difficult for the two girls to see each other very often.

Kathryn and I were comfortable with each other, finding much to talk about with daughters of the same age. Kathryn was warm and direct, not nervous in the presence of her husband's bosses.

The following week, accompanied by Maria, we flew to Pittsburgh, picked up a car rental and drove to see the new acquisition.

The visit was then extended to spend a few days with my family and David's family. Maria, as usual was the center of attention from the grandparents and the uncles and aunts. At David's brother's home, she spent much of her time cuddling or playing with the newest arrival in that house, another little Sara.

I had a wonderful two hour private get together with my dad, who was ever so proud of his young but so successful daughter. He carved out the time so that he could thank me for her generosity of the gifts of Radio stock and my recommendations for investment in IBM stock. "Our retirement funds are growing ever so nicely as are the trust funds that you and I have set aside for the grandchildren

"I am so proud of my little girl who heads a pretty big business, whose clients are big corporations and the federal government." He gave me a bear hug and let the tears of joy flow.

Mom had other important things to talk about. "How does David feel about you're being his boss, Sara. That must be hard for him. Men aren't used to women being bosses, especially when the couples both work in the same company?"

"Oh, momma. It is okay with David. We have had a good understanding from the time he had to go to school and I took the job with the navy. When this job came up, it was he who pushed hardest for me to be offered the position. We had a private talk before I said yes."

"You're saying he really approves and means it?"

"Yes momma. He does. He and the admiral and I work as colleagues. The word boss never comes up. As the chief executive I don't think I have ever taken an action that David did not approve and most often with his counsel."

"He must be very special because he doesn't look like a weakling to me."

"He sure isn't. Momma, in our family there is no boss. From the beginning he insisted we be partners and we are. I think it takes a strong man to insist on that kind of marriage."

"I really have hard time with your generation. It is so different from the way that your dad and I live."

A similar conversation about the gifts of stock took place later that week between David and his mom. She had a terrible time getting out the words through the sobs and tears of joy. The memories of the depression years could now faded into the background.

His conversation with Uncle Frank took on a slant like that of Sara and her mom. Frank found it difficult to believe that David could work under Sara, his wife, as President of their company. He finally accepted the collegial idea and was satisfied to hear that Sara never had acted contrary to an objection from David.

"How about the bedroom, David?"

"What can I say? In man talk the word is "hot."

Frank laughed. "That's my David."

He was overwhelmed when David and Sara presented him with 500 shares of Radio. "It's just a small way to thank you for what you did for me as my surrogate dad in those first

years of my life and again when I needed you in my teen years.” All three were in tears when Frank clasped them in his arms

Except for some temporary setbacks at Radio, Inc that were handled with dispatch, David’s tenure as president saw great financial improvement at Radio. His reward program for improvement suggestions bore great results in new efficiencies and morale.

Life ebbed and flowed for all the families. Kids were growing up. The big news from outside the family was the announcement that Tommy was accepted to the Air Force Academy and Rafael had two scholarships to the University of California at Berkeley.

By the year 1959, Radio, Inc. was a medium sized corporation with a successful track record for earnings related to sales and investment. David and I were able to have some time for recreation, both loving to play golf, taking a few days occasionally at the Lake or a long week end at Michael’s place on Oahu. We never hesitated to take Maria out of school for a few days. Academically she was miles ahead of her classmates while socially compatible with lots of friends.

I resisted putting her in a private school because I believed the mixture of children in public schools provided a better training ground for whatever Maria chose to do with her life. I wanted Maria to know what life was like for people in all walks of life, even though her own family now would be called ‘well to do’. Joyce, as Maria’s tutor and adult companion enriched the learning process by leaps and bounds.

“Lordy, David, do you realize that we are nearing our forties. Time has flown but I must admit that the fleeting year have been good to us.”

We were having dinner alone on a Friday evening. Michael was spending the weekend with Jane and Maria was out overnight to a slumber party. David said, “Yes, These have been great years. We have managed to meet life’s obstacles and work out way through them, both in our family life and in our business life”

I reached across the table to take his hand in mine. “We haven’t had too many spats but your patience and caring pulled us through all of those. I was never allowed to go to sleep without some reasonable resolution to our differences.”

“That is true and at work you always led us into the middle of our problems, knowing that success was meeting our problems head on and with integrity. The only major problem I can see is that we have gotten stinking rich.”

I said, “Part of what you pictured has come true. We are very well to do; in fact, we are on our way to getting too damned rich, what with our stock ownership in Radio and our investments in the three fastest growing corporations in the country. Add that to the holdings of Michael. As you know, he considers all that to be ours since he has so little need with his retirement program in tact.”

“I’ve been thinking it is time to move many of our assets into the Witty-Sellech foundation. If you want to continue at Radio, that is fine with me. I am ready to devote myself to Maria and to the foundation. I do want to do some world exploring with Maria and you as you are available.”

David smiled. “That sounds terrific. I like it.”

I said, “There is at least one more major task to handle before I try the retirement route. Maybe there are two. Right now one or more companies seem to be positioning them

selves to strip our family of its hold on Radio, Inc. We have become a moneymaking machine and we have some valuable assets in the patents we hold. The world is not aware that Al's lab is on the verge of some new uses of silicon that could make major changes in the communications world. You know what I'm talking about."

"So what are you saying?"

"I believe we need to keep you steering the operations of Radio, Inc and let my last major contribution be on behalf of the stockholders. COA and another hungry business group want to come in the back door to take control. The best way for them to do that is to get control of the board of Radio. There is more than a rumor that two corporations are buying up small chunks of stock, in order to acquire enough shares to create a real proxy fight or at minimum get one or more places on the board. The companies are COA and Audio Transmission Company. I believe I should be the one to lead the defense against that type of raid."

"The second thing I may want to do depends on the first. If we can win a major victory so that we are in a strong position, then I hope the board will back me in an attempt for a takeover that would make us the top company in our field."

"Why would you want to do that?"

"I believe it would be good for our stockholders and those shareholders of that company I have in my sights. There is a lesser important reason. If I can enrich our shareholders while I get a little revenge, the deal can be awfully sweet."

"Is something happening that eludes me?"

"The management of COA and AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO, while buying up shares of Radio has authorized a campaign of slurring my name and reputation. Some of the epitaphs are downright crude. A few are slurring our business name but some go beyond and are attaching me personally."

"What kind of personal attacks?"

"They are implying that I am using sex with key corporate and government officials to get their business, referring to me as the sexy proxy."

"That is really uncalled for and rude but I've never known you to worry very much about what people say when you know it isn't so. Those who know you never buy into that type of talk."

"There is more to it than just my feelings. David, I feel that since I am the first woman to reach this level of responsibility in a public corporation, then I have a special role to opening up the doors for those women who want to follow in my footsteps. If clearing my name is partnered with roundly defeating those who slur us then a real blow can be struck for women in the business world."

"Now, that is more like it. I can buy into that. How do you want to start?"

"You do what you do best. Make Radio the best and most profitable company with highly satisfied clients and vendors leaving the admiral, Jack and me free to develop a strategy and get it rolling."

"How do you plan to start?"

"If we want to take over either company we need some major loans. The three of us will start there. If we have three banks willing to go with us, they will also help us determine a reasonable offering price. My guess because AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO is smaller and a little shaky cash wise, is the direction we will move."

"In addition to Jack we have four other outside board members who do not want to lose control to the money grubbers who control COA. They believe in you and your staff. If you

decide to stay on course, and then make yourself available for the chairmanship they will join me in the battle. Each is a significant shareholder and can use their ownership as testimony to other shareholders to stay with the present leadership. It could get nasty and I like the infighting even though the business world views me as the Lady Executive.”

“If, on the other hand, you want to retire and open a law practice, then we will work to get him best deal for our shareholders and silently steal away into the night.”

“So, it depends on me as to the route you travel during these next months.”

“That’s about it, honey.”

“I’ll have to give it some thought and survey the strength of the team that surrounds me.

During the next several weeks the admiral, Jack and I were either digging deep to determine a real value of AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO now as well as its potential. The admiral spent most of his time on the phone with their bankers. He had four banks committed to help them finance the takeover subject to the evaluations from Jack along with their own figures.

One Monday morning David walked into my office while Jack and another board member were having coffee with me. Seeing them, David started to back out. “Come in, David. If this is about your decision, you have the right audience. This is a special huddle on the subject you and I discussed. You know Jack, of course and you remember our mostly silent board member John Donahue, who talks when it is important to do so. He is part of our special team.”

“I’ve decided to continue as president if that is the will of the board. I figure that two years will be enough time to groom a new team to implement the board’s will in what is becoming a fast changing business culture.”

Mr. Donahue was obviously pleased and said so. Jack shook David’s hand. “That is good news. We have the ammo to start a counteroffensive battle for proxies for the shareholders meeting. David, it is our plan to garner enough proxies to hold off COA who is buying up shares of small holders. According to information coming our way they are moving rapidly with an unknown number of teams working in various regions of the country seeking proxies to oppose the current nominated slate.”

Donahue said, “Sara and Jack have initiated a strategy using our own board members and a group of their friends to contact personally every person or institution which owns more than a half percent of our voting stock. The idea is to lay out our plan to increase stock values by another ten percent, up our dividend by fifteen percent and point out how COA had treated management and investors of the corporations which were hostile takeovers.”

“Sara is taking to the road using her position as president of our trade association to gain widespread publicity as a big name in the business world. While she is in key communities, we will plan some invitational parties for stockholders in the area to meet Sarah personally. This will be a ninety day blitz ending two weeks before the annual meeting.”

I looked closely to observe David’s response and was pleased with what I saw.

“I think it is a great plan except for one thing.”

Donahue was startled. “What is that? What did we miss?”

David said with a straight face “You’re making a bachelor of me” and broke into a big grin. Every one settled back and relaxed.

“Can you think of any thing else that might help?”

“You might ask any institution that gives you its proxy to let their members know so that individuals who own our shares learn the position of their management. Its small potatoes, but every bit helps in a proxy battle I presume you not only want to maintain control but, if possible, limit the enemy proxies to prevent COA from getting any representation on the board.”

“Definitely, we want to keep the camel’s nose from poking into our tent.”

The strategy planners rounded out with two suggestions from Donahue. First Jack and the admiral would determine the companies or organizations that held significant portfolios of AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO shares, set up appointments in the same cities to which Sara was traveling. Some of these companies probably would have representatives at sessions where Sara was speaking. Jack and the admiral would try to have appointments with those AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO block shareholders for the following day. The purpose of the meetings was to determine if, in the event of a tender by Radio to buy AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO, they would be interested. The offer would be for a figure eighteen percent higher than the closing price on the day of the offer. If there were interest from such stockholders, then Radio executives on behalf of their board would approach the board of AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO.

Our men were able to meet with three groups in Boston with combined holdings of four and a half percent of ATC outstanding shares. They figured the sample would be enough to give them direction.

Five more groups representing six percent of the shares were identified in New York.

Calls would be placed immediately to see if meetings could be scheduled.

That evening on the drive home from the office, David asked “Who is Donahue and how did we get him on the board? I am impressed.”

“Jack suggested his name to the nominating committee and you are right we call him ‘tall and silent’ but when he speaks everybody listens. He is a retired public relations firm owner, having represented two of the largest corporations who had gotten themselves in hot water with the public. Two senators are in office because their campaign managers were smart enough to use his firm. I find him to be a great strategist. Like Jack he has taken an enthusiastic interest in serving us. He and Jack work as hard as any member of the executive staff.”

My travels were to begin on July 7th. The Fremont plant had become so busy that the company no longer closed down for a week each July. Vacations were scheduled per worker’s desire, fitting in with production schedules. The fourth was on a Friday, allowing for a nice three day holiday. As had been our annual tradition, all three families and Michael with Jane arrived Thursday evening. The children’s ages ranged from nine to fourteen but were as compatible as the adults.

Little Aaron had a friend with him this year, which cut Davey out of some of their activities when three was a crowd. That meant Davey spent more time with Leah, little Sarah and Maria. That was fine with Maria, whose crush on Davey grew with each visit that brought them together. David was also aware that Maria had increased her over night stays with little Sarah.

Some of the games the families played over the years changed but everyone continued to participate, including the two older boys.

I spent a lot of time with the children. No combined vacation went by without some “counseling by Aunt Sara”.

The lazy days offered plenty of time for catch up, particularly for Rosalie who had no family involved in the daily affairs of Radio. She was thrilled to announce that she was going on a three-day trip to talk with five Jewish institutions that were Radio shareholders. “Thanks to Sara, I get to take a short vacation. Adam will accompany me so that we can see his dad who still lives in Philadelphia. Dad and Momma will have the children here at the lake.”

Sunday morning saw our whole gang sailing on two large charters, courtesy of Aaron who was beginning to show his age. Anna, his wife, was still very spry. The charter captains, as planned, used the children to serve as crew, much to their delight. They explained each maneuver as part of their first sailing lesson.

The evening was capped off with a huge barbecue down on the beach and another fireworks display across the lake. The kids had sparklers for their own private display, finished off with a skyrocket that Al shot out over the water, legal or not.

Jane and I were seated next to each other during the festivities, Jane telling me a little about her experiences raising a young teenager and her observations from watching her grandchildren maturing. “Sara, relax. You and I have talked about this before. You will do great with Maria. You have a great touch with children. All the kids come to you to share their hurts looking for the empathy you have and some of the counseling they want. You are a great mother and friend.”

“When we were just starting out, Jane, we talked about a lot of children but, as you know, that was not life’s plan for us.”

“Unless I am missing something, you appear to be very happy, at peace with yourself and glowing with love from David. At times you seem to be on an extended honeymoon with him.”

“You haven’t missed seeing anything. I am all that you say I am. David is my rock and my intimate counselor. He is so perceptive. Among the many things he has taught me is that life is what it is, often not what you plan or want. The important thing is how one deals with the events that challenge one.”

Jane said “He must be something special and obviously very insightful. If I had a word to describe him from what little I have seen to date, that word would be balance. I admire the way he accepts the fact that you are the head of Radio, Inc and among other things, his boss. Am I right?”

“Definitely. In fact, if he were not what you see, then I would not be in this position. You may have heard of my work with the ONI from Michael.”

“Oh, yes, glowing reports of your contributions and success.”

“It was David encouraging me to find a career other than the usual secretarial or flunky that was the standard for women. He supported me and loved me in the midst of a crisis, while he had the tough task of accelerating his studies in law school.”

“I am seeing a deeper David who doesn’t need the adulation of the public but serves quietly and effectively. Am I right?”

“You betcha. I certainly would not be where I am if it were not for him. He saw that my work with Adam, our president before his heart attack, would serve me well in some way,

always aware that I was headed for some major career. Our pillow talk often centered on ideas I had that were counter to Adam, who was our very successful leader. When the crisis hit, I was ready whether I knew it or not. I was torn between doubt and desire.

“You are one lucky woman, Sara. You are beloved by a man whose inner strength has given you a freedom that few women ever achieve. At least that is my observation”

“Thank you, Jane. You must have had a beautiful marriage if I read you correctly.”

Yes I did but I have to admit that I don’t think it was as heavenly as if I had Michael in my life in those early years. He is so tender and like your husband, he never let’s his ego get in the way in the midst of our love affair. That is pretty rare. His Laura was a lucky woman.”

They were suddenly interrupted when Maria popped up between them asking “Mom, may I take a walk along the beach with Davey and little Sarah?”

“I’d feel better if the older boys were along. Would you ask Aaron?”

Maria was off and was successful. After all, what she really wanted was to have Davey hold her hand during the walk.

The morning after our return, after David had gone to work, Maria and I took a walk around the garden. We found a seat near the fountain. Maria dashed into the house and returned with some iced tea. “Mom, I heard Aunt Rosalie ask Aunt Joan whether she knew if I had started to menstruate. So this morning I did some research using the dictionary and the encyclopedia? Wow, I guess a lot of changes are about to take place in my body I also got the impression that sometimes there is pain related to that special time of the month.”

“What a surprise, Maria! I had planned this morning to open a conversation with you on the very subject.”

“Good. You probably can answer some questions for me. Although I did a lot of study, learning all the technical stuff, I don’t quite understand why this really happens to girls about my age or a little older. What does it mean to become mature? That word means to age and I know we are all aging.”

“There are, as you know, most often more than one meaning for most words. One other meaning is that you are of an age to start having a baby. That is not possible until this change in your body occurs.”

“Since you are already well past this age, did you go through this change?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Why didn’t you have a baby instead of adopting me, even though I am so glad you adopted me?” She saw tears starting to cascade down my cheeks. “Oh, mommy. I hurt you. I’m sorry.”

Wiping away the tears, I pulled Maria into a hug. “It is just the memory. Whatever life’s plan was for me turned out to be you. I was unable to conceive, that is the ovule or egg in my body was unable to be fertilized with daddy’s seed. We tried and tried but to no avail.” I could see the big question mark on Maria’s face. “We are going to have another conversation on how men and women have to interact in order to produce a baby but let’s finish with your questions.”

“Is it true that approximately every month I will have this experience?”

“Yes, probably every twenty eight days.”

“Does that still happen to you?”

“Yes. If I were able to conceive, it would mean that I could have a baby, even at my age.”

“I noticed something happening to me recently. It seems to have started some time after our first conversation about body changes. It has been since then, when we talked about hair starting to grow around my private place and more so since my nipples grew a bit. I used to like and still do like holding hands with Davey. Now, I keep hoping he would ask me for a kiss like men do in some of the books I read, but Davey doesn't seem interested.”

“How long ago did we have that conversation?”

“Almost a six months ago.”

“You've never mentioned any itching or any pain since the swelling of your breast began.”

“Oh, I read about that in the encyclopedia and it is so minor, that I didn't want to bother you.”

“You are already into the change even if you are not menstruating. Davey will also have changes happening in his body that will urge him to want hugs and kisses. Boys usually mature later, by a year or two, than do girls.”

The conversation took a right turn.” I am going to marry Davey when we are grown up. He has been so nice to me. I feel so good inside when he holds my hand. I am glad that I will be able to have babies.”

“That is some years away, dear. There is high school and then college, the years when you will meet a lot of boys. Things may change for both of you. I hope you will date a few different boys during those years so that you remain sure of Davey.”

“I know that is important. I know that you and daddy did not meet each other until you were fully grown. I think the way you met is so romantic and I know you love each other very deeply. I have to leave to see Mary. Can we finish this talk when you return from your trip?”

“Absolutely. You will let me know the first time you notice any blood spots in your panties, please.”

“Okay, mom. Gotta go.”

David and Maria drove me to the San Francisco Airport. I was heading for Boston to address the Chamber of Commerce as guest speaker on the subject of “Communications Developments in the 60's.

Donahue's public relations firm had been working each city well in advance of my arrival. Stories of my work and success were published in local newspaper business sections and in the weekend special magazine editions. These stories featured my personal life with David and Maria, bits of history of military service, accenting my contributions to the ONI as well as my so-called humble beginnings.

On the day of my presentation, my picture accompanied a story about the program on the front page of the business section of the morning paper. A half page display ad for Radio, Inc with a photo of David and me appeared on the last page. The ad also appeared in the business section of the New York Times and the Washington Post.

I was the first businesswoman to ever address this organization. The auditorium was filled with standing room only. Wives of the businessmen members were more than curious to

hear this female “phenomenon” of the business world. The question and answer period was extended so that I could respond to personal questions regarding my career in addition to the stir I had created with predictions of rapid change in the coming decade.

Just before the end of this period a sharp voice in the rear shouted “Which of your extra marital lovers do you favor, Mrs. Successful Business Woman?”

Angry voices were shouting to hush up the voice. Several women were hitting the man with their fists before he escaped out of the room.

Well-dressed, sharp young women rose and got the attention of the emcee. One of them said “Mrs. Sellech that is obviously what women have to face as they compete in what is considered a man’s world. His stupid attitude does not reflect the general attitude of our businessmen or women. I wonder if your time in Boston allows for an extra two hours to meet with a businesswomen’s group. Tomorrow”

I consulted my diary. “I’d love to do that if your group were meeting at three thirty. I have a six o’clock flight following a meeting with some of our stockholders.”

“We’ll book a conference room at the hotel near the airport for three thirty and I promise you a roomful of women who want to talk with you. If it is all right, I can leave a confirmation note with the hotel front desk before breakfast time.” I nodded.

After the session I paused to chat with a few of the attendees while I made my way to the elevator. I was escorted by an off duty policeman hired by my hosts to assure my safety while in Boston. Standing at the elevator I had an eerie feeling as though I were the focus of some unknown stranger. Turning slowly I surveyed the room but saw nothing to substantiate that feeling. The lobby was crowded with folks departing the hotel but that uneasy feeling persisted.

After a breakfast meeting with eight Radio stockholders at nine, which lasted for two and half hours, I was promised proxies from everyone in attendance.

My other open meeting with any stockholders or interested parties from the metropolitan area was a huge success. Both meetings included personal questions about my ability to raise a child, run a growing business and find time for public affairs.

Once again I had that strange feeling but could not discern anyone showing unusual interest. I asked my escort to take some photos of me with the attendees as a background just in case the photo might produce some clue.

At the airport the conference room was so filled that my escort had to make room in the midst of the crowd so I could get to the podium. The two- hour period was fast and furious with mostly business questions regarding marketing, sales, and women on assembly lines, personnel matters and myriad of other subjects. I was almost late for my flight because of the demand for autographs. I stopped at the top of the portable stairs leading to the plane and shot a picture of her waving fans, hoping for a picture to compare if I continued that feeling of being stalked.

Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Cleveland were just as successful at the public presentation and the closed stockholders meetings. The reports in the newspapers in the following days were accompanied by the same display ads.

I was pleased that I had agreed to both types of meetings. A stringer for the Wall Street Journal was present in Philadelphia and filed a story with large excerpts of my address. I read the story while in Pittsburgh and then the letters to the editor while I was in Cleveland. No matter the reactions, I was making a buzz in the business world.

There was at least one critical type of question at each meeting and I began to feel like the same person at each location posed the question. I knew that was silly but it was hard to dismiss. Why would the person follow me to each stop?

The nagging feeling that I was being watched continued. My observation produced no clues. I began to think I was being paranoid, but I did have my escort in each city take photos of the crowds.

David and Maria were awaiting me at SFO. On the drive home, I fell asleep before we were through San Mateo. Maria and got a big laugh when David insisted on carrying me to the bedroom as he had little Maria, herself, so many times before.

Several days later I had a full report from John regarding their meeting in Boston and New York with shareholders of AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO. Prior to making their request they presented very sharp analyses of both AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO and Radio, Inc. every statistic offered presented an edge for Radio. The significant difference that made a difference was in the age and capability of the manufacturing facilities along with the patents held by Radio. The request was for the degree of interest if Radio were to offer a share price that included the eighteen percent profit over the current price on the exchange. The deal would include twenty percent in cash and eighty percent in Radio stock.

By the time they had completed the nine meetings they had pledges for nine and a half percent of AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO shares, enough to take to their board for permission to approach the board of AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO.

One of the shareholders at the last New York meeting happened to be on the board of directors of AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO. After listening to the analysis of both companies as presented by Jack and Mr. Donahue, he turned to Mr. Donahue and said "Nice to see you again, John. I hadn't heard that you were serving Radio, Inc. I am surprised after hearing all the bad mouthing of their leadership by our executive staff."

"You mean the slurs on Sara Sellech, our president?"

"Yes, also implications of the self serving by some Radio, Inc directors. Knowing that you are advocating and serving, I am having second thoughts I noted that Radio is countering with well-written ads and photographs of your chief. I also hear she has been elected to head our trade association for the year."

"Fred, I want you to meet Admiral Witty, formerly deputy head of ONI and key stockholder in Radio. He considers himself to be the adopted father of Sara."

The admiral and Fred Jackson shook hands. The group vocally agreed to pledge their support for a friendly takeover if Radio chose to follow that path. Fred invited the threesome to be his guest at dinner at his private club.

While they were enjoying cocktails, Fred pumped the admiral for as much operational data as Michael was free to share. "Before we go into dinner, let me say that I plan to talk with our Chairman without the presence of any staff to explain a few things and see how he would feel about an offer".

By the way, I am surprised that you are attacking on two fronts by soliciting support for a takeover and countering our folks, who, as you found out, are trying to buy up shares of Radio."

Jack spoke up. "That's Sara for you. Underneath that lady executive exterior is a brilliant mind and nerves of steel. Moreover, after months of being slurred, while she has not

admitted it, I think this is her way to show up your execs for what they are. Just my opinion, of course.”

The following day our men went to Washington for two meetings, finding interest in their cause at both meetings. While there, John received a message to call Fred Jackson. “Hello, Fred, this is John.”

“I just want you to know that our chairman would appreciate a visit from Sara just as soon as her annual meeting has been held. You can tell her that AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO is not doing too well getting your shareholders to sign or sell. That’s on the QT.”

John shared the good news with Jack and Michael at dinner. It was decided not to continue their meetings until Sara had time to meet with the chairman.

Needless to say, Jack’s report of those meetings and the conversions with Jackson was welcome news.

The morning of July 20th I was on my way to Chicago and from there to St Louis and Dallas. In all three cities I discovered that COA had representatives already talking with some of our major stockholders, putting out some slurring comments about me and a henpecked husband operating a firm that was backsliding. Never the less, when I had completed my strong presentation and answered all questions directly, I was again promised the proxies from 18 of the 20 major stockholders in those cities.

The nagging feeling of being stalked began again just near the end of my first presentation. I was now convinced and was forced to drive the thought of it out of my mind while facing my audience. I continued to have photos taken by my escort here and at all my airport departures.

Upon my return, just as we turned in for the night, I finally discussed this experience with David. Typical of David, he was angry and chastised me for saying nothing until now.

For some strange reason I wasn’t ready to admit my anxiety. I usually was totally open with David. I pooh- poohed his concern which only made things worse. “I can take care of myself.”

“Usually true but this could be dangerous.”

“You’re exaggerating.

“The hell I am.”

He finally stomped out of bed to sleep on the couch and was detached and remote during breakfast.

There was no way he could stay angry when I slipped onto his lap and nibbled his ear. After a bit I did tell him about the photos and retrieved them for him.

David, later that day, called a friend and neighbor who was the San Francisco senior agent in charge of the FBI office, who promised to do what he could. It was David’s opinion that this was a serious matter, a possible threat to her life or at least some threat to the company.

At the office, the news was that COA was making inroads with their promises of a significant bonus for shareholders in terms of their bid price. COA was picking up blocks of proxies all around the country. The last estimate was that they also had accumulated six percent of the outstanding shares.

In two days I had calls from significant shareholders in Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Portland and Seattle, which cities were not on my travel schedule. I had planned and did make successful trips to the nation's capital and Miami.

After some head butting with David who was protective and insisting on ending the junkets and with Jack who was eager for me to continue, we came to a surprising compromise. We agreed to fly certain stockholders into San Francisco from each of those cities for personal conversations with David and me two days before the annual meeting.

David who was stewing about no calls from his FBI friend was finally rewarded. "You will be pleased to know that one person shows up in each city. He is a very handsome young man who has no criminal record. In fact he is an upcoming young executive with COA, a major player in the communications field. My guess would be that he was doing some spying for his employer who is actively buying up your stock, probably prepping for a proxy fight."

David thanked him and acknowledged that they were aware of the proxy solicitations by COA.

Word, unsubstantiated, kept coming about COA gaining ground in the proxy battle. Jack was getting nervous and wanted me to do more travel. I, on David's advice opted for a warm personal letter to our stockholders, asking for confidence in my leadership.

That evening after the call from the FBI David said, "I am sorry I over reacted regarding someone possibly hurting you."

"I'm sorry I let you down by not sharing early. My ego must have gotten in the way." Just a bit coyly, I asked "Any idea how I can atone for my sin?"

Heading into the last days before the scheduled meeting, we had no idea how the proxy fight was going. We did know that a record number of shareholders were planning to attend, probably a record for attendance. Jack was worried about the number of proxies usually returned that were still outstanding.

The meeting was being held at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. It was being held on a Monday so that those attending might have the benefit of a weekend in the city. Radio had hired buses for city and area wide tours as well as a Sunday evening floor show at the Palace ballroom.

The events produced a sort of festive mood before the meeting but Monday morning started out in ominous fashion. A rare summer thunderstorm hit the city at nine thirty just before the ten o'clock start. A dozen protestors with signs "Unfair to Small Stockholders" were blocking the entrance to the hotel. The police moved in quickly to clear the way for patrons and visitors to enter the hotel. Two of the protestors began shoving arrivals and shouting threats until the police took them to jail after a physical scuffle.

One, who had been the leader and recruiter, finally admitted to being hired by some well-dressed gent with a mid-western accent. His description fit the COA exec that had been tailing me.

The morning session was interrupted on occasion with questions not too subtly wondering if the company could continue to increase shareholder value with such a young woman swimming with big time sharks. As the moderator of the meeting, I was faced with the tough position of declaring the speaker out of order while he was attacking me I was saved by a large group of shareholders seated near the questioner. They stood in a group around him with threatening stares. He hushed and slunk down into his seat.

After lunch, the meeting reconvened at two thirty. Several issues for minor changes were passed without opposition. The financial reports were received with enthusiastic response from those present. It was finally time to tally the proxies in order to cast votes for the new class of directors. When the tally of 94.4 percent of the shares was in support of the slate was announced, the shouting and clapping was thunderous. Confidence in the present management was affirmed and the antagonist was unsuccessful in getting a seat on the board. The city was a place of joy for almost every attendee.

David and I hosted an informal party in our suite for the founding families which included a fast tiring Aaron supported by Anna and Rosalie and all the young children. We had also invited a few special guests who had worked so diligently to help us particularly in this campaign. I raised my glass for a special toast "To Aaron and Adam, who had the foresight that led to this special day."

"Here, Here" was echoed around the room.

Rosalie offered her toast "To Sara, our heroine, who has nurtured our children, boosted us in our low times, captured the admiration of the business world and, most of all, and has bound us together with bonds that run deep and true. To Sara." The response to that was hugs and kisses from everyone, including Aaron who had to ask me to stoop to receive his love.

The final toast came from little Aaron. "Congratulations, Aunt Sara." As rehearsed, all the kids raised a glass of juice. "Here's to the greatest aunt in the world."

Silence and then a single feminine voice "Mom, you should not be crying at a moment like this."

Chapter 11.

David swept Maria in his arms when she arrived. For breakfast. “Oh, Daddy, I love it, but don’t you think I’m getting a little old for this kind of cuddling.”

“Nope. I’ll still be doing this with you each time you arrive home from college. Now get yourself ready. Mom is doing her hair while I finish breakfast preparations.”

After Maria had cleared the table, David pulled out an envelope tied in a satin gold ribbon. “Maria, inside are two more envelopes. You may open the larger one and Sara, you the smaller one.”

Maria yelped, rose and came to hug David. “I can’t believe it. Three round-trip tickets to New York on the new Boeing 707. Daddy, you re a dreamboat. What is your surprise, Mom?”

“Reservations at the Waldorf, a dinner date at the Rainbow Room and tickets to the exhibition at the new Guggenheim Museum. Honey, you sure know how to spoil us women.”

“We’re going to spend ten days in New York as real tourists. I am planning a picnic in Central Park, going to the opera and to the Philharmonic, a Broadway show. I want us to do some walking in those concrete canyons that make that city so unique. How does that sound?”

“I can hardly wait to tell Davey and little Sarah. May I call them now?” Not waiting for a response, she kissed her daddy and dashed to her room. She was back in a minute and wrapped her arms around David. “Daddy, you are sneaky. Mom, the Walters are on the same flights with us and you, big man, are wonderful. What a glorious time we shall have. Davey told me that Aunt Joan had already gotten a copy of the Sunday New York Times to research activities for children visiting the Big Apple, as they call it.”

David said, “If you can let me get my breath, I may as well tell you the rest of the news. Grampa and Jane will be on a flight the day before, flying to Baltimore and a visit to Annapolis so he can show Jane the academy. They will take the train to New York and join us at the hotel.”

“Daddy, you are the greatest. If it’s okay, I am going to visit Mike and Mary around the corner so I can share my news. I know they have already visited New York.” Off she scooted, probably being invited to lunch and arriving home in time for dinner.

I laughed, saying “Daddy, you have competition for her attention these days. There is Davey and now there is Mike. She glows when she tells us about holding hands.”

“Sara, maybe it’s time for some girl talk.”

“I believe you are right. I am planning a few days alone with Maria just after we return. Maybe we can go to the lake by ourselves just before the Labor Day weekend. I am taking this long vacation before returning to the office. Dad and Jack are standing in for me, although nothing heavy seems to be in the offing.”

The Big Apple vacation was a huge success. We squeezed in all that David had planned and more, including a visit to the Empire State building. I was delighted to be asked “Aunt Sara will you take us kids to skate at Rockefeller Center?” I did and threw in a boat ride cruise around Manhattan. Besides the Guggenheim we all visited for hours at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Maria talked us into some horseback riding in Central Park.

David noticed a lot of handholding with Davey. Maria had pouted when the three males were off to Yankee stadium but was mollified with the chance to ride horses with Davey and little Sarah.

(Excerpt from David's journal).

Al and I sat together in the spacious seat on the 707 flights back to SFO. We had managed very little time together during the activities but had this long non-stop flight to catch up. We covered a lot of ground, most of which related to our work. "How do you see yourself down the road, Al? You have done such a great job for Radio, Inc and I'm sure it has been fulfilling. I guess my question is "Are you itching to change your field of work?"

"Not really, David. I have been changing fields every few years, from aircraft radio vacuum tubes; to aircraft radio to airline navigation communication and beacon technology and now with transistors Life has been exciting and continues to be. I have been thinking that it is time to develop more management skills in my two closest associates. If one of them could move into engineering management, I might like to spend more time in research."

"What's cooking that could hold your interest in research only?"

"There is a whole world of stuff related to our patents and technology that is coming; besides I would like to get down to a routine with fewer hours. I need to be closer to Davey as he moves through his adolescent years. I'm sure you and Sara have talked about the changes coming in Maria's life just as we have about little Sarah."

"Oh, yes. I'm also aware of some early adolescent sparking between Davey and Maria." We both chuckled.

"Tell me more about what you see coming in technology, Al."

"There is some interesting new work in the field of microchips that will open up a new world of communications."

"What is a microchip?"

"You're familiar with what we do with transistors and the advantages it has offered over previous technology?"

"Yep"

"To put it in layman terms. A microchip is a device that will allow us to put two miniaturized transistors on one chip. That suddenly opens up vast new possibilities and maybe even a revolution in communications equipment. Right now Texas Instruments seems to be ahead of everybody else. I'd like us to be one of the leaders in that field, if possible."

"It sounds like we need an old fashioned family get together to talk about making that possible. How about I set up a special meeting? Maybe we can meet off site, say at the lake an extra day, maybe a day earlier than the usual gathering."

"David. I sure like your style. I bring you a dream and you are ready to convert it to something real. You haven't lost a step."

"Thanks, Al. God was good to us the day we rode that train together. We have been joined at the hip ever since."-----

I had talked with the chairman of AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO offering to fly to Cincinnati, the ATC home office, but he said, "You've been on the road enough. Besides, my wife would like to visit San Francisco. Why don't you and I meet at the St. Francis the day after tomorrow if that is convenient?"

"That would work out fine. I will set up a small private conference room. Would lunch be a good way to begin?"

He answered. "Let's do that. See you then."

I met the chairman, Cyrus Donald, and his wife, Janet in the lobby of the St. Francis, where we chatted for a bit. I gave her directions to Maiden Lane to see the Frank Lloyd Wright designed building and some nice boutiques. After her departure we adjourned to the meeting room.

“I am delighted to meet you, Sara. I have been listening to our staff’s gobbledegook for too long, only to learn recently what a marvelous person you are in addition to be one of the craftiest executives in today’s business world.”

“Why, thank you, Mr. Donald. That is so kind of you.”

“Please call me Cyrus. I would be honored if you allowed me to call you Sara.”

“By all means, Cyrus. I have been reading some of the background information on AUDIO TRANSMISSION and particularly about you. I am impressed. CalTech, summe cum laude, holder of six patents, founder of AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO, and four major write ups in the press this year. I also learned you have a great marriage and four grown sons, all doing well in the professions.”

Cyrus let a small laugh escape. “I am the one impressed with your knowledge of me personally and, I am sure, thoroughly knowledgeable of ATC affairs.”

“Thanks for the compliment. I don’t know any other way, Cyrus, except to be totally prepared. Yes, you are right about researching AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO. In fact I found it surprising that you were buying up our stock during these past months. From the way I read it, you would have to borrow again if you expected to buy enough to make a difference.”

“You are right. We should not have started that maneuver. Our president, within the general authority given to him by the board initiated the action and informed us after the fact. It was another of his misjudgments.”

“Thanks for your honesty, Cyrus.”

“Sara, let me put it right on the table. ATC is ready to negotiate a friendly purchase along the lines of your conversation with Jackson. We are willing to consider mostly stock with some cash to offer our stockholders. I don’t have to tell you that your offer is generous. I am sure you have done due diligence knowing our strengths and our weaknesses.”

“Yes, Cyrus. We have dug deeply but if you have looked at our previous acquisitions you will have noticed that our final offer was generous in both situations. We believe that a very friendly merger of talent is a positive and paying a fair price usually a sound start.”

“Thank you. No doubt you are correct and we appreciate that. One issue for me personally is to know what your personal plans are. Is it your hope to chair the new board of this subsidiary?”

His anxiety was obvious to me. I was aware that he did not want to be excluded from policy and strategy planning, if possible.

“I haven’t a firm position on that, Cyrus.” I caught the minute sigh of relief. “I do think we ought to try to resolve some of those issues today, if possible, but first we ought to get into writing a memorandum of agreement on the financial issues. I have my personal secretary standing by whenever you are ready.

Thirty minutes later Cyrus was dictating a memo to be typed and held until we were ready for the second memo.

I opened in my usual straightforward style. “Since Radio nominated directors will be in control, I would be happy to cede the chairmanship to you. You notice that I serve only as a director on our other subsidiaries. I would like to serve on this board for one or two years

only. In exchange I wish to have complete veto power regarding the top executive staff as we merge our operations.”

“Do you mean that you personally want to have that choice, or the board members that Radio appoints?”

I smiled “I do mean me personally. I want direct involvement in election of the top two executives.”

“That surprises me, Sara.”

“At the risk of sounding a bit arrogant, you need to know that one of my talents, as far as I know, is sizing up the personality of our top executives. As far as I am concerned, it is the most important task assigned to the chairman. The candidate may be the most knowledgeable and experienced but if that person lacks the true spirit of leadership and caring for his people, then he or she is a step short of being the best choice. I do trust myself to be able to discern that asset among those selected for consideration.”

“I think I understand. I was hoping you would see my value as one of the original founders of AUDIO TRANSMISSION CO. I am aware that our top executive staff would not serve the new organization with the proper mindset for two reasons. First, their hostility during the past months has been unacceptable. Second, their style of management runs contrary to your philosophy, particularly in relationship to manufacturing and administrative employees. By the way, is it your hope to bring your personnel policies into ATC?”

“Yes. That is our hope. We did so in both previous acquisitions. Anything else? Then if you are ready, then let’s create our final memo.”

When all the forms had been signed and notarized, Cyrus shook my hand. “I look forward to working with you and I am eager to meet David who will be our interim president as we agreed.”

“Thank you. He will plan to serve for a short period in order to put a good team together. David should be in our hotel room by now. Do you think Janet is back? Cyrus checked the time and said he thought so.

“If it meets with your timing, let’s meet in the bar and hour from now and the two of you can be our guests at dinner.”

“That is most gracious. We would be honored.”

Al, David, Michael and I drove up to the lake a day early as was planned. The other three carloads followed twenty-four hours later.

Before we initiated the agenda that was the purpose for the meeting, I told them in detail the news of the purchase of ATC. I showed them the article in the Wall Street Journal that PR had let slip about the plans. The story indicated that the acquisition would make Radio, Inc the largest firm in the field. Responding to questions took the better part of an hour thus delaying the primary reason for their gathering.

At David’s request, Al brought us up to date on some of the newest technology developments. He spoke of the work of two scientists, Kirby at Texas Instruments and Noyce at Fairchild in California “In the use of transistors as we do individually, side by side, these men have found a way to put multiple transistors on a single chip. Kirby uses germanium and Noyce uses silicon. I don’t want to bore you with tech talk but the implications are that the changes from vacuum to transistors will be seen as a baby step when compared to the potential of chip use.”

Michael asked “Do you see short term or long term potential for Radio? For instance, can we get the jump on the market with microchips in our airline navigation equipment?”

“Yes, I see that for short term and getting a license would be an important, in fact, a necessary step.”

I asked, “Al, something in the way you just responded makes me think you are looking well down the road. Am I right?”

“As usual, Sara, you do read me. I mentioned to David the other day that I would like more time for hands on research because of the potential I believe exists as a result of these discoveries.”

“Such as?”

“I would like to see if the increased flexibility and power available because of these microchips could be used to create computers that would be small enough to be used in office spaces instead of large specially cooled spaces. I notice IBM recently made available their first lease for a computer with a transistor base system. I know it’s a dream and may take years. The investment may not even pay off.”

“Any other possibilities that we might pursue?” asked David.

“Well, a step toward the desk top computer dream could be an electronic calculator or a programmable calculator for desk tops as an interim, but that means a departure from our communications business. There is a myriad of possibilities if we can find ways to add resistors, capacitors and/ or some wiring on the miniaturize silicon chips.”

I asked “What kind of timeline for the calculators?”

“Maybe a year or less.”

“If we were to take up to license one of the two, which would you suggest?”

“The obvious would be the Noyce chip. It is a silicon base and we are using lots of silicon making transistors.”

When we broke for dinner, Michael asked us to join him for a drink before dinner. After drinks had been served Michael said, “I would like suggest that when we start up again that we change the focus of our discussion. Instead of centering on some new line or some new product, I think we ought to talk about breadth and size. What are our goals for our family life and what therefore might be the dimension of our business activity? What do you think?”

Al smiled. “Great idea. Let’s limit dinner conversation to family stuff.” We agreed.

When we resumed after dinner, I asked “Shouldn’t we have Rosalie in on this discussion?”

Michael said. “I think that depends on where this conversation leads. Al, you look like you want to start.”

“Thanks to you three, Joan and I feel that we have more money than we need now. Not that more would hurt but the drive for much more might demand a price that is too high. For me the satisfaction of our relationship to you and the excitement of my work are all that I need. By the way, let me say again. Thank you for putting up the ante.”

“You are more than welcome and your contribution has paid us back in spades.”

David pitched in at that point. “As you know, Sara has been making serious noises about retiring from Radio, Inc and I have promised two or three years, prepping a management team to be available for the board’s decision. When Sara first mentioned the idea of her retiring I began to consider doing what I started out doing. I’ve been dreaming of a small office in Palo

Alto or Menlo Park where I could be available for an occasional consult but primarily representing small businesses and engaging in some pro bono for non profits.”

Michael turned to me with a questioning raised eyebrow. I responded. “I need more time with my precocious daughter who already knows too much about menstruation and human reproductive systems. She is beginning to draw boys like flies to honey.”

“I also want to see some of the world and introduce Maria to the different cultures around the globe. That means giving up positions that tie me down. I see that as a kind of distant cousin to retirement. To be frank, money is not the object, we already have more than we can use and I want us to start using it for helping others in this mad world which seems to be going crazier.”

Michael said, “I’ve been trying to retire for years but you kids keep pulling me in. It sounds to me that the pursuit of expanding opportunities is in a minor key for all of us. Am I right?” Three heads bobbed up and down.

“Let’s continue to see where our thinking leads us. Al, if you had your druthers, what would you like to do?”

Without hesitation “I would like to train my replacement and get cozy in a research lab with silicone microchips and find some new products that can serve the people.”

“David?”

“Just what I said earlier. Three days after I let loose of the reins, I would like to occupy a deck chair with Sara holding my left hand and Maria holding my right hand while I watch some fish dancing in the wake of the ship.”

I said “I would set a date for two years from now as the ship’s departure.”

Michael said “Tomorrow afternoon, during the cocktail hour we can share our thoughts with the Ross-Silver clan and then with the children.”

About eleven the next morning, horns were tooting to announce the arrival of rest of the gang. Hugs and kisses preceded chaos of unloading suitcases, changing into shorts or bathing suits. The children reluctantly agreed to have some lunch before scooting off to their activities. We adults pitched in, creating salads for lunch, sat around the patio for leisurely conversation, before retiring or going for walks.

Before cocktail time I invited Rosalie for a walk down by the lake. “Rosie, what would you think if David and I were to retire from Radio, Inc within the next few years?”

“I think it is a marvelous idea. Go for it.”

“I knew you would say that. I am also aware that you are still heavily invested and felt you should have an idea since your holdings might be affected.”

“Don’t worry about it. It is your lives that are to be lived and fulfilled. Besides I trust your plans to keep Radio in good enough hands that will protect all the shareholders. I plan to diversify slowly.”

“Thanks for the confidence, Rosie. You know we will do our darndest.”

A bit later when everyone had some libation in hand, David made the announcement, getting immediate plaudits from Adam and Aaron. David went on to detail the plan that included training several of his executive team to become serious candidates for his position.

Meanwhile I would retire a year before David in order to spend more time with Maria traveling. My time during the interim would include finding a successor as chairman. David might serve as chairman during his last year.

Aaron asked, "Have you set a timeline yet?"

I laughed. "We wouldn't do that before we were all in agreement but since it is okay with all of you, then I want David back in his law office by September 1962"

Chapter 12.

Pillow talk in our bedroom was quite serious during the several evenings before our next executive committee meeting. First, I needed David's approval to be gone for two or three weekdays, possibly as often as twice a month. Secondly I had to test out the practicality of my new idea.

At the executive committee meeting after our return, I surprised everyone, except David, with an idea that I had been considering for some time. "What would you think about our starting up a new firm with a focus on international sales?"

I heard Michael start to laugh. "I should have known that she wasn't going to sit in her arm chair resting on her laurels. Certainly not with so much time left on her hands."

There was just a bit of chaos as questions popped from everyone's mouth. Someone asked "Do we need to move to something new so fast? Perhaps we ought to solidify our position at the top of the heap before we shoot off in some new direction."

Michael said "Probably, although I am intrigued because Sara never goes off halfcocked."

Jack seemed to agree. "I am sure Sara has been doing enough planning to lay out a framework for us to grapple with."

When everyone was quietly awaiting my ideas, I thought about the best way to introduce the subject. After a moment I said "Jack, I really do not have a solid plan to present. It is only a concept. "

I am sure that we need not weaken our effort to satisfy our current customers and the new ones who will be knocking at our doors. While that is happening I believe we should explore the possibilities of going international."

"We have a great talent in Mark Samson, who has done a miraculous job and probably deserves even more credit than we have given to him. My idea is to form a separate corporation, and provide a small amount of capital to allow Mark and me to provide an exploration regarding the feasibility of a marketing or sales company that could open up markets in the British Isles and in Western Europe."

Jack asked "You mean selling our products and services?"

"Yes but also developing a demand for some related products being manufactured by some of our vendors or companies in related fields. I see the possibility of being a major factor as a 'Sales Rep' for others wherein we might develop a small take over in several years for opening up an overseas market for other corporations."

Michael asked "How will the businesses in those countries respond?"

"My personal research, although limited, shows that there are products and services needed in England, France and Italy that have a very small available supply."

"Any idea how the governments will react?"

"Not yet at this stage but the answers to your questions is what I want to find. The cost to us will be miniscule. It will include the cost of incorporating, a bump in Mark's salary as president of the new corporation and some hefty promotional and travel expenses."

How will the corporation be organized? Separate stockholders or as a wholly owned subsidiary of Radio?

“I would recommend the subsidiary and then let the board decide the future depending on developments.”

There were no negative feelings being expressed as had there were at the beginning. Suggestions were constructive and enthusiasm was becoming evident.

The final decision was that Jack, Mark and I prepare a formal proposal for consideration by the committee that would then be on the agenda for the next board meeting.

Two months later on a Tuesday morning at ten in the morning, Mark and I were being presented to the U.S. Deputy of Missions at our embassy in London, Phillip Baron. He was standing and gave us a warm smile as he extended his hand in welcome. There was real warmth in his words as he said “Welcome to London, both of you. I am particularly delighted to make your acquaintance. I have read and heard such great things about you, Mrs. Sellech and the rapid growth and outstanding service provided by your firm.”

“Thank you, Mr. Baron. Much of our expansion is due to the magnificent work of Mr. Samson, who had headed our sales department from the very first.”

I noticed Mark blush ever so slightly as Mr. Baron acknowledged the compliment to Mark.

“May we serve you some coffee or tea before we begin?” We both opted for coffee. When the waiter departed, we were ready for business.

“What may we do for you? Our big boss, Mr. Herter, the Secretary asked us to pull all the stops. I presume you have met him, personally.”

“In fact, neither of us has. I had no idea he was aware of our visit.” A Mr. Jessup at the state department recommended that we meet with you. “I thought to myself that Michael was being very clever using his old buddies in Washington.

“We will help in every way we can.”

Without apology I stated “We could use any information you may have garnered and are free to discuss, regarding products in demand that are a scarcity. I am referring to all products related to communications, air navigation and aircraft parts.”

He nodded non-committally. I continued

“We are hoping to extend our services into the British Isles and possibly to Western Europe and to represent several other firms who have the same hope.”

“Are you talking about setting up plants here and on the continent?”

“That depends on what we discover. The demand for products and services will be part of the criteria. Another will be the receptivity of the countries or cities to such an investment. If there is serious objection to that process, then we are looking to sell our domestically manufactured products into the market here.”

The waiter returned to refill our cups. Mr. Baron then said. “I know we have a great deal of information regarding your question regarding supply and demand. I will make it available to you as soon as you wish. Meanwhile I will be pleased to introduce you to Lord Greene and his chief executive for the Business Development and Innovation.

Jack and I left Mark to follow through while we headed for Paris to meet with the deputy head for Mission at our embassy in Paris. The conversation was not unlike that in London except that it took much longer to get to the point of the meeting. Mr. Le Grand, the deputy insisted on having us to lunch where we met the ambassador and several other staff members.

He wasn't certain how long it might take to get the information we asked but he assured us that they would act with dispatch since it was Mr. Herter's wish. In the end, we had Mark fly over for the day since it was he who would need the information.

I flew back home while Jack flew to Bonn and Copenhagen

Three months later we opened the first office in London preparing to market out services and products as well as those of three of our vendors. It would take another six months to open in Parks and Bonn.

July 22, 1962. "All Aboard. Visitors are asked to debark in preparation for departure to the Hawaiian Islands, first stop, Oahu." Every one was waving to Jane's children and grandchildren on the pier. "Have a good time." "Take care of the horses." "See you in a few weeks."

The shareholders of Radio, Inc. had held a farewell party the day before in order to honor the two of us. They filled the ballroom at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco after the annual meeting was adjourned. The party was totally funded by donations from the shareholders. As Jack Smart put it "We have been beneficiaries of their work and ingenuity and so we can afford it. They leave us with a healthy PE and a nice quarterly dividend and a well trained staff to take care of the future."

I acknowledged the honor on behalf of David and added, "We must also honor the Ross family, founders of the business. We owe much too all our employees but I want us to acknowledge one special person. That is our head of research and engineering, Al Walters." The response was enthusiastic and thunderous.

Jack, who was selected to serve as the new chairman of the board led the hand clapping then said. "It is no surprise to any of you that the board has selected Burt Smythe as the president and CEO to replace David who has guided and nurtured Burt since his employment by Radio Inc. What may surprise you is that our new Chief Financial Officer is Laurie Havlichak and our new head of Marketing is Margaret Chilli. This may be a first, two women in leadership roles serving on our executive team."

Loud clapping and some bravos met the announcement by Jack.

The following day three families plus Michael and Jane were sailing as had been agreed upon two years ago at the lake. The teenagers separated themselves from the hullabaloo created by the adults and their younger siblings. Leah and little Aaron each had a guest for the three-week stay and island hopping. The threesome of Davey, little Sarah and Maria were, as expected, inseparable.

The kids spent some part of each day at the beach on Waikiki accompanied by one adult couple. Everyone participated in preparing two luaus during that first week. Starting with the following Sunday they became tourists and island hoppers - first stop, the Arizona memorial to the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The last island we visited was Kauai where we were treated to a Hawaiian revue and strolls among the palms. Tomorrow we Sellechs were starting the next leg of our trip around the world.

It was on that last evening as David and I walked in the shadow of the palms that quite by accident we witnessed a tender moment. Not noticed by us, little Davey shyly asked

Maria if he might kiss her. It had finally happened. Trembling but eager she put her arms around his neck and exchanged a sweet and chaste kiss

She told me later that it made her departure the next day for the Philippines much more difficult. She was to write faithfully each day a note that expressed her deep feelings for Davey.

In Manila, while we stayed at the fabulous International Hotel, David made sure during side trips we saw some of the poverty of the squatters and the combing of trash dumps by the children in Cebu City.

While we experienced the wealth of India in New Delhi and the sights of Agra, David made sure Maria saw what life was like in the poor areas of Calcutta.

We experienced the tension of life in the new country of Israel, chatting with the hard workers on the Kibbutz. Maria made it a point to play with and talk with some of children her own age but said nothing to us about what information was exchanged. She talked with the Jewish kids but also had some time with several Palestinian children.

Mark Samson of the London office flew to meet us in Paris to serve as our host in Paris and London. It was a truly joyful reunion.

Paris and London gave us history lessons and wonderful memories of parties and dancing and theater. Maria and I spent hours at the Louvre. She had quite a bit of exposure to the arts during her tutoring from Joyce. She appreciated the Mona Lisa but spent hours upon hours with the Impressionists. Degas was her favorite, especially his paintings of the dancers. In fact, she spent a long, long time enthralled with his "Blue Dancers."

Late on the first afternoon she made friends with a young teenage French girl who was accepting of Maria's French accent, teasing her in a friendly manner. The young girl convinced her mother to invite Maria and me to have tea together during which time we mothers agreed to do some other sight seeing together the next day. Before the week was over, the Sellechs were dinner guests of the Tourneau's

Henri Tourneau, an attorney, engaged David in a discussion of the French legal system before being brought back to engage with the rest of the family. Before we left, I had promised to host them the following summer when they toured San Francisco.

One afternoon the three of us walked along the Champs-Ely sees, stopped for refreshment at one of the outdoor cafes, then walked up to the Arc and watched the cars speed around the Arc de Triomphe.

Each day called for a rest after all the sight seeing, especially the day we took in the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame.

Maria wanted to take the ferry to the British Isles then encouraging David to rent a car so they could see some of the countryside. From London we made several short trips to Kent and Sussex and visited Windsor Castle. Mostly our sightseeing was limited to London including the London Tower, Westminster Abbey, and Buckingham Palace where Maria did her best to distract one of the palace guards without luck.

The thrill for Maria in both countries was to see and verify what Joyce had taught her during her tutoring sessions.

We were ready for the flight home but only after Maria were promised a future history-viewing trip to Europe.

Four days after their arrival home, the Walter clan came by for an overnight in order to see the 8mm films of the grand tour. Davey was feeling a little shy next to this world-traveling sophisticate who was the love of his life. Maria took care of that right after the movies when she took his hand, leading him to the bench in the garden.

The following morning after Maria and David had gone for the day, I called our family doctor, Mike Morrison. His nurse said he could see me at eleven.

Mike's smile was warm as he said "This is your only visit to me aside from your annual check up. I'm guessing it must be serious." His words triggered the bursting of the dam. I could not stop crying. Actually I was sobbing uncontrollably and continued for a very long time. Mike took me in his arms and waited.

Stammering at first and finally able to speak clearly, I said "its breast cancer, Mike."

"Why are you so sure?"

"I've been experiencing itching and some discharge from my left nipple and that nipple has changed color."

"I suppose you have been doing some research to affirm your diagnosis?" he asked.

"Of course."

"Okay, let's have a look." He called in Mae, his nurse and asked me to remove my blouse and bra He began a slow and methodical exam. I could not see his face but from the expression on Mae's face I knew what he was about to say.

"Your self diagnosis appears to be correct. There is also some bruising that appears to be there for some time. We won't rush to judgment. I want you to go down the hall to radiology for a breast exam."

Mike suggested I take time for lunch after the radiology. "The pictures have to be developed."

Now that the matter was in the open and I was alone, not needing to put up a front for David, I let the tears flow in the privacy of the café booth. I hardly touched my food, paid the bill and walked around town until three o'clock.

My mind was awl with thoughts of the reactions from David and Maria when I shared the bad news. Somehow I knew that David would handle all the problems and complications with his usual calm no matter how heart tugging the news would be. I tried to imagine how Maria would react, particularly if the cancer were life threatening.

A thousand pictures began to flood my mind until I brought myself up short with something I learned in my business dealings. "Don't waste energy on things you can not fix or control."

I was reasonably under control by the time I entered the doctor's office. Mike took my hand, "Sara, there is no easy way to say this but you were right on, The bad news is that I wish we had caught this a little sooner. I consulted with our oncologist who says that immediate surgery can increase the chances for a good recovery. He would like to meet with you at the end of his office hours, about six this evening." He took my hand in his.

It is impossible to remember the jumble of thoughts that swirled through my mind again. I needed David. I started to stand but felt my knees buckled. Mike caught me and helped me back into the chair. I had to rise to the occasion. I wanted David to be with me at that meeting. I needed Mrs. Ramirez stay with Maria. I had to get Michael into the loop?"

It is astounding how the need for discipline and cool took over. “Mike, may I use a phone. Yes to the meeting at six.”

“Mae will escort you to a phone.

“David, its Sara. I’m at Doctor Mike’s, not doing too well. I want you to join us a six to talk about it.” I listened for a moment. “I will arrange with Mrs. R to stay with Maria as she has done on other occasions when we have been delayed.”

I listened, then “Please wait until we meet at six.” I would have broken down and slobbered if I had to tell him the news on the phone.

As soon as David arrived, we were ushered into Mike’s consulting room. “Sara and David Sellech, may I present Dr. Francis Schmidt who is an oncologist. Sara, if it is okay with you, I will repeat our entire conversation so that David and Fran can hear your story.”

I nodded my approval. Mike had let me off the hook or else I probably would have tried telling David through my sobs.

David was his wonderful self. He was able to listen objectively and keep his emotions under control. He listened to Dr. Schmidt recommend early surgery and then outlined all the actions that would be needed in preparation for the operation.

Dates were set for the biopsy, which would undoubtedly confirm what we already knew and determine a date for the operation. I was thinking that the only question was whether the surgeon would remove one or both breasts.

Maria was in her room but Michael rushed to the door to meet us. One look at my face and he rushed to pull both of us into an embrace. David said quietly “Dad, the oncologist says he can probably make a good prognosis if Sara goes under the knife quickly.”

Michael nodded and said, “How do you intend to tell Maria?”

I said “David and I discussed this on the way home. We think we should a four way family conference and gently but openly give her all the facts.”

Michael let that sink in and was silent for a long minute. “I think you’re right.”

It had been the right decision. After the first rush of tears, which unleashed again the tears from all of us and Maria wrapping her arms around me, she listened intently to all we could tell her. She had one question “Is the doctor sure you will not die in the operating room?”

“He assured me, honey that the odds were in my favor.”

“Good, then the three of us can nurse you back to health.”

I retired early, needing time to ponder the future and I was confident that there would be future. As I lay in the dark, I considered the possibility that there would not be as many years left to do all that I had hoped I thought. “My life span may be shortened but at least I will have the next few years to be with Maria during the turbulent early teen years.”

David was awake. His right hand loosely clasping my left hand. I heard whisper of the door move, turned my head to see Maria caught in the hallway light. “Come in, honey.” She came in, sat on the edge of the bed.

“How are you feeling, mom?”

“Tired but unable to sleep. I have so many things on my mind, mostly, since I know that the odds are that I have five or ten years ahead of me, I wonder if I can still accomplish all that I want.”

“Maybe with help from grampa, daddy and me you can accomplish most your dreams. Then there is a chance that God will give you more time than you think.”

“Thank you, dear. You’re right. Now, is there something that you wanted to talk about?”

“Is it okay to talk about something that is bothering me?”

“Absolutely. I need to get my mind off my own problem.

“Mom, I’ve been doing a lot of reading about boy-girl sexual relationships. I know that often such actions make a girl pregnant. I keep experiencing strange feelings when Davey and I kiss and embrace. One time I noticed that Davey’s penis was poking into my thigh. Is this supposed to happen?”

I took my time before responding. My precocious daughter had much more information at this pubescent age than I had at the same age. I gathered in my breath and began “I hope I can explain this enough for you, Maria. Yes, it is natural for boys and girls your ages to become aroused. In primitive years people understood that it was the time to initiate a relationship that would produce children. Today, in a more civilized and mature time, the urge is still there because that is human nature, but since having a child is not necessarily desirable for many youth, the desire is usually put aside. For instance, you know that you are not ready for motherhood.”

Maria interrupted. “I read that adults have sexual relations for pleasure, not only for procreation.”

I knew that it was time to be forthright. “That is true. For instance, Daddy and I do and because I am unable to conceive, there is no pregnancy. For others, there are devices for the male or the female to use that will prevent pregnancy, although not fool proof. However, there are reasons for young adolescents to abstain until they are more mature.”

“I think I understand, mother. I, personally, want to wait until I am older, but what if Davey presses me? I don’t want to lose him.”

“Knowing Davey’s parents, I am sure he has been raised not to ever abuse anyone, let alone you. Pressing you to do something against your will would be abusive. I think he already loves you too much to do that. I remember one of the reasons I love your daddy so much was his patience and his loving manner when we came together for the first time. My wish for you is that your first time will be as wonderful a loving experience as was mine with daddy.”

Inside I said to myself “Whew. I hope I haven’t done the wrong thing by saying too much.”

Maria smiled leaned over with open arms to enfold her mother. “Thanks, mom. I needed to hear that and I am glad you didn’t hold back or give me some phony reasons to not have sex with Davey. It may be hard to wait until we are married but you can be sure we will be mature enough to manage our relationship. You are everything a mother ought to be. I also see why all the kids come to you with their questions.”

Seeing the tears in my eyes, she took a tissue to wipe away the tears, knowing they were tears of joy. She must have had a hard time stemming the drops from her own eyes. “I love you.”

Two days after that first visit to the doctor, I went in for the biopsy. Three days later, at seven in the morning the operating team began the operation. I had been admitted to the hospital on the evening before. The head nurse made an exception by allowing all of my

extended family come in to wish me well, all thirteen of them. Every one of my family wanted to keep me entertained during these few hours.

Maria had insisted and I agreed with her that she should be with David and Michael awaiting the news from the surgeon after the operation.

Just as I had done most evenings, I found time to make notes in my journal. "I guess I need to put aside my journal for a few days."

I finally closed the journal, put out the light and began another evening of conversation with God. I doubted that he would personally intervene in the events that were about to take place, but I found a solace in this evening ritual, too long unpracticed.

(Editor's note)

---One look at the surgeon's face as he entered the waiting room spelled good news. Maria squeezed my hand as the surgeon walked up to us with a smile." I am sure we were able to remove everything successfully. We only removed the left breast. I predict a successful recovery with all the postoperative treatments. That may be a bit unpleasant and she will need your loving support."

With a grin on my face, I said "Thanks, Doctor. She will be smothered with love and caring from Maria, her dad and me." The doctor smiled and said, "Be patient." ---

I opened my eyes to dad hovering, his eyes suddenly twinkling and a smile spreading across his face. "Welcome back, dear." He turned to wave and was joined by Maria and David. I put out my left hand which was eagerly grasped by Maria, her eyes glistening as she said "Oh, mamma."

David had a smile a mile wide and as warm as a summer day. He pursed his lips in the form of a kiss and covered my hands with his right. "Welcome home, dear. The news is extremely good. I love you."

Maria asked, "Is it okay if I hug you?"

"I sure hope so." She leaned over, gently and careful not to put pressure on my body. A that moment the nurse entered, smiled and said "It would be better to hold off for at least a day." but waited for a moment before saying to the family, "Please give me a few minutes. I'll call you."

Anne, the nurse, read my blood pressure, took my temperature and read my pulse she murmured positive sound. She helped me into a bed jacket so that I could present a nicer front to my visitors and then I promptly fell asleep for about an hour.

During the next few weeks, until she had to go back to school, Maria was in constant attendance to my needs, played traffic cops regarding visitors so that I would not tire. It was a special time in which she bonded with my family. Mama and she were practically joined at the hip in the waiting room at the hospital and then later at home.

I had asked David to call my folks right after the operation. It had taken several days for daddy to arrange with his employees to handle the day to day operations. David

picked them up at the airport and brought them to my hospital room where tears flowed for the longest time before we engaged in conversation.

Daddy visited me three or four times a day for just short periods so that I would not become too tired. He held my hand throughout each visit as we exchanged bits and pieces of our early times. He insisted on a brief prayer after each stay.

Always in the background and present when needed was little Sarah Walters, Maria's closest friend and my favorite niece. She was present on the day that Maria left for Barnard and then opted to stay in Maria's room for the next several weeks until classes started at Stanford.

Chapter 13.

Needless to say, since I am still writing these notes, my recovery was successful. There were the usual struggles that all women who have breast cancer undergo during the long period of treatment and slow recovery. No need to dwell on that subject.

By the end of a year, I was in shape to travel Maria and I spent three weeks in the British Isles, just as I had promised her. We certainly covered the historical and archeological sights. I had an amazing amount of endurance but in order to pace myself, I took off the entire day every third day, letting Maria explore on her own.

The excitement in her voice as she related the day's experience, while we wrote in our journals, was infectious. We covered what seemed like every square mile of England, Ireland and Wales, leaving Scotland for another time. We stopped over for three days in Manhattan where David and Michael joined us for a short sojourn. The three of them did all the touristy things while I lounged in our small boutique hotel on the Eastside with one short shopping trip and a slow ride through Central Park in a horse drawn buggy

In the second summer the four of us did Scotland and the Scandinavian countries. The third summer was our long planned five-week grand tour of the continent. By this time Maria and Davey were very much in love so I invited Davey and little Sarah to join the two of us.

I had regained my strength and energy which enable me to stay with the three of them except for some late afternoon naps.

Their mom, Joan, also accepted my invitation and was a great company on the few days when I lacked the energy to keep up with the teenagers.

During the school seasons I enrolled at Stanford, taking courses that would earn me a teaching certificate and courses that would entitle me to be a school counselor. During the third year I took some additional management courses. I also attended evening classes twice per week at Berlitz Language School studying Spanish.

I had no idea what I would do specifically but I wanted to be prepared for the day that Maria was off to college leaving me with time on my hands.

During the spring term in the management course, I participated in a two-week seminar on entrepreneurship. We were a small group of twelve, three of whom were employees of Fairchild Industries and two from National Semiconductor Industries. Several years later I was to find out that at least three of my classmates were to branch out and find new companies, known as Intel and AMD, leaders in the chip industry.

I was thrilled one afternoon when one of the young men asked in front of the class if I were the retired head of Radio, Inc. When I acknowledged that I was, the leader of the seminar asked me if I would be willing to respond to questions from my youthful friends from these emerging industries in Silicon Valley. It was a thrilling afternoon. Based on the reactions of the students I felt that I had made a worthwhile contribution to the younger generation.

Maria opted for Barnard College where she could take classes at Columbia. We never pressed her for her actual reason but we had assumed it would be Radcliff. That

campus was but a stone's throw away. From M.I.T., where Davey was enrolled. What had started out as a childhood friendship had definitely boomed into a mature relationship?

When the kids were home for spring break during their freshman year, Maria invited me to take a walk one afternoon. After a brief up date on her studies and extra curricular activities, she said, "Mother, we need to talk about Davey and me. We are desperately in love and have started having sexual relations."

She was blushing only slightly because the subject had been discussed more than once. "Of course, Davey is using protection but that is not fool proof. Since I am still legally a minor, I would like you to take me to Dr. Mike to be fitted for a diaphragm."

I should not have been surprised because this was my little precocious daughter who was suddenly all grown up into womanhood. I managed to restrain the tears and pulled her into a hug and whispered. "Of course, dear."

After a bit, we continued our stroll. I asked, "Have you given thought to your longer range plans?"

"Yes, we have. Davey is planning on continuing until he has his doctorate in electrical engineering after getting his undergrad majors in electrical and chemical engineering. Since he is planning to study at Southern Cal, I will make sure I qualify for law school at Southern Cal or UCLA."

"You two seem to have set a definite path."

"Yes. Davey wants to work here in Northern California., particularly in the Bay Area, which he believes will be the heart of future industry and innovation. Besides having children I have been considering the idea of being in practice with daddy"

I had a sudden thought "Honey, since you are planning to practice in this area, have you given thought to learning Spanish?"

Maria laughed, "I forgot to tell you. At the end of the first term, I switched from French to Spanish." I smiled my approval and slipped my arm under her elbow.

I was impressed with the thinking but also was aware that life happens when one makes plans but I withheld any comment.

At the turnaround point I asked, "Maria, you never did say why you chose Columbia. We always figured you would want to be as close to Davey as possible."

"Not telling you was an oversight. We spent hours trying to decide. We finally decided that being together all the time would be a distraction from our studies. We also wanted to try being apart in order to test our relationship."

I laughed. "How did that work out?"

She laughed with me. "We spent four weeks apart before he came down for the week end. We were so desperate to be together that we chose to ignore the separate sleeping quarters and spent the weekend in a small boutique hotel in mid town New York where we fumbled our way through the weekend with tears and laughter."

I waited for her to continue. She said, "Davey was reluctant but I insisted. I hadn't planned it that way, but the moment he stepped off the train at Penn Station I could feel myself getting all-gooney. We sat on a bench at the station and talked. Davey has never been able to say no to me."

"We took a cab to Eastside where we found this lovely hotel overlooking a park. I must say, momma, that after the first couple of hours of frustration it turned out to be a marvelous weekend. In between the times of making love, we took long walks down what seemed to be canyons built of concrete and steel, window shopped, discussed life plans

“So how often have you been seeing each other?” I was remembering how eager I had been while having to wait a week until David and I could see each other.

“Davey wanted to come down the following week end but I reminded him that we were still in our test period. Despite the passion we decided on four week separations but I called him to come down for the second weekend.”

She tucked her arm in mine and said. “I am so lucky to be able to talk this way with you. Almost all of the girls I know at school rely on our girl talk for learning and venting.”

I believe that my recovery was hastened because of the support I had from Rosalie, Joan and Jane. As you will remember, Rosalie and Joan had been my strong allies since we met in the Navy hospital in San Diego while our husbands were being nursed back to health. Jane had been a big part of my life since and Michael had become involved and deeply in love.

Another group who contributed to my mental health during the recovery was Rosalie’s children as their adopted aunt. That began when they were still cradle kids. We had established deep relationships and it was me to whom they often came to discuss the problems which could not be discussed with dad or mom.

A constant help was little Sara, Davey’s sister who was in and out of our home and stayed over in Maria’s room many a night.

Chapter 14:

One afternoon during the solitude of a long reverie in the chaise lounge, soaking up the sunrays I began to reflect on the direction my ship seemed to be sailing.

I had plenty to do as Chair of the Witty-Sellech Foundation. David, Michael and I had not finalized our thinking in terms of the major use of foundation funds but Michael had an interim suggestion.

That hardly filled the need to be fully involved in life. Otherwise, I seemed to be adrift. I thought. "This will not do. I need to shift to another tack. I am at a new place in life. God has made it possible for our family with resources to help others. What is the new direction that I ought to travel?"

It was two weeks after Maria was off to Columbia (Barnard) when the three of us were sitting with Jane after a Sunday afternoon of horseback riding. Michael said "You know that I am now with my sixth young boy as tutor in language and math. The last two, like Rafael, are from Hispanic backgrounds, the current a refugee from El Salvador. Considering the fact that both of you are children of the depression and rooted in poverty, I think we might focus on helping bright kids from the poorer backgrounds find a way to bootstrap themselves as did both of you."

It still amazes me that if we are alert to the signals that are constantly beamed at us, we are provided answers that God provides through his servants.

That comment was the spur that we needed. David through his pro bono work in East Palo Alto and San Jose had good contacts in the Latino community. Michael and I started noodling and then visited the deans of students at Stanford and San Jose State.

We soon had a large group of undergrads that needed the income and were available for tutoring small classes at middle schools and high schools throughout the area.

Michael worked with school administrators to arrange for facilities, while I with teachers to identify recruits for our after school tutoring classes.

By the time for the second semester we had two middle school and five high schools involved with nine total tutoring classes and eighteen undergrad tutors, nine in math and nine in languages. There were only eight middle school children but thirty-nine high school students, none of whom were seniors.

I was telling this to David one evening He said. "That is a damned shame. There must be kids who could use that help. I need to make some inquiries among my clientele."

He called me the next day at noon "Sara, a client of mine who is a math teacher at San Jose High has a set of twins who might be likely candidates. If you can meet her at school at three this afternoon, she believes she can arrange for a meeting. She is here in my office ready to leave."

"I'll be there. I need her name and the location." A minute later I had the locations and her name, which was Stella Sanchez.

Ms. Sanchez said "This Rose and Roberto Brios whom I had to coerce to come to this get together."

I smiled as I ignored the comment. “Had Ms. Sanchez told you why I wanted to meet you?”

Rose responded “She said something about tutoring but my brother and I are not available. I tried to tell her that.”

“Can you tell me why?”

“We need very little tutoring since we are not going to college.”

“Ms. Sanchez says your grades and activities make you both candidates for college entry.”

Rose said nothing but would not look me in the eye. I looked at Roberto and raised my eyebrow. He said “My dad doesn’t believe college will do us any good and besides there is not enough money to send us.”

“How do you feel about that?”

He said, “That makes no difference. We do what my dad says.”

“I understand but I would still like to know how you feel.”

Rose spoke up. “Of course we would like to go to college. I would like to be a teacher like Mrs. Sanchez and Roberto wants to be an engineer, but it is not in the cards.”

“Do you think I might be able to discuss this with your parents?”

“That won’t help. We still do not have the funds.”

“There are scholarships, grants and loans to help if you really want to go. I would like to talk with your family if you are serious about your futures.”

Rose smiled coyly. “I think I can cajole my dad to listen if Mrs. Sanchez is willing to ask him. He likes her. He does not speak much English and is pretty suspicious of Anglos.”

At four thirty I was seated in a modest but very neat living room of their home on East Santa Clara Street. We four and Mr. Brios were having coffee while his wife served us and hovered in the doorway.

I think I melted his façade when I did my best to speak in my halting Spanish. He was amazed and excited when I told him that the children’s I.Q.’s made them the brightest children in the school and among the highest in the city. I didn’t want to stun him with the fact that they were in the upper 1 percentile in the nation.

After accepting that information he wanted to know why I wanted to help. Without mention of our financial situation I explained that both David and I were children of the depression and managed to get university degrees and that I represented a foundation set up to help poorer children get an education.

He pursued the subject with intelligent questions and then asked me about my schooling and work. He was intrigued when I mentioned the naval intelligence. An hour later he was insisting that I have a glass of wine while he smiled and told his children that they should seek any tutoring help they needed and start looking for ways to finance school. He said “And I have a little bit saved to help you but you must promise to help Joey and Sissy when it is their turn.”

It was hard to hold back my tears when the entire family surrounded the dad with love and tears.

That evening at dinner, Michael and David listened in awe as I described the afternoon event. David said “That is a signal that we need to consider how we might contribute toward the need of students for financial help.”

Michael said. “That is important but we also need to become aware of all the various sources so that our program can provide help to the kids as they try to find that help.”

I said “Michael, Fred Bartok. The recent applicant for being a tutor has found all his support through scholarships, grants and loans. Why don’t we hire him to create our own book of resources and be available to the Brios twins and others that come to our attention.”?

David said “If that works, we can use him in that role in addition to tutoring.”

“Right on, oh brainy one.”

He laughed and hugged me. “You haven’t called me that name for a long time.”

I gave him a peck on the cheek. “Just keeping you humble.” The admiral gave us a knowing smile.

Within a few weeks we had made the amendments we needed and felt we were off to a good start. I began some conversations with Adam about possible joint ventures with their family foundation, Ross-Silver Foundation. Adam pointed out “About three quarters of our funds are directed to assisting various projects related to Israel, but we certainly are interested. I know Rosie would love to have some project that brought the two of you together.”

Two days after Maria and Davey were out of school, they joined me at Logan Airport in Boston to begin our four-week grand tour of the European continent. We flew to Edinborough to launch our Scotland visit, then to Copenhagen for seven days in Scandinavia. We covered Germany, Austria, Greece and finally to Russia.

David joined us for the final week in Russia where we completed this tour at Leningrad. We all agreed that it was the grandest place to cap off our tour. The Hermitage Museum displays were awe inspiring as well as the Russian Museum. I personally was thrilled to visit the apartments of the Great Russian artists and composers such as Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Rimsky-Korsakov.

We were a very tired quartet that Michael picked up at SFO, thirty-one days after our departure from Boston. I considered the trip to be a grand success, just as planned, with one exception. It was tough to see my daughter close off the door to her room with Davey. This was my baby, all grown up, mature and sleeping with a man. “Ouch.”

A week into the school year, Marsha Luce, one of our tutors called, asking if she could see me for a short conversation about a student. I agreed to meet her at the high school.

After introductions she moved directly to her concern. “I have this sophomore girl, Erline Edwards, who is brilliant but unmotivated. She is a ward of the county, living in a foster home from which she is being ejected for rude behavior, meaning she will have to go back to juvenile hall. You can probably guess how awful that will be. She is so bright and, given a break, can become so productive.”

I was trying to decipher the reason she called me when she continued. “I have no idea how your organization can help, but if there is a way, I would like to see this young girl saved. Her mom, who is in a mental institution, probably will be released later this year. She loves her mom and probably would quit rebelling if they could be reunited.”

“My goodness, how did you learn all this about her?”

“She needed a friend more than tutor and I just sort of fell into a listening mood.”

“Where is she now?”

“At the child welfare agency or whatever they call it, eventually on her way to juvenile hall when they retrieve her belongings from the foster home.”

I thanked Marsha and headed for the agency. I was introduced to Phyllis Sanders, the woman in charge of Erline’s case. In less than a half hour I learned from Ms. Sanders.

“Apparently Erline was a model student, bright and a bit rebellious until her mother was sent into Agnews, a mental institution. She ran away before we could take charge. Living on the street with a handful of other runaways, she was soon into thievery and burglary and vandalism. She was finally taken into custody after burning down part of an elementary school on the east side.”

“What has happened since then?”

“You may not be aware but incarceration in juvenile hall does not provide the best environment for any of the kids. Despite our efforts with a dedicated staff, little progress is made with many of the children. We try to find foster homes as soon as possible.”

“How about Erline?”

“Some of our finer homes did not want Erline, figuring that she would be a bad influence on the current residents. I have to admit that the two homes we tried for her were not the finest but they seemed a decent alternative to keeping her in the hall.”

“If I am reading between the lines, you feel she needs a foster home with no other foster children.”

“Yes, but that is hard to find. The foster parents usually need income and want more than one child.” I could hear more under tone but did not pursue the subject. “She would also be better off if she could attend a new high school.”

I was deeply moved and sorry to hear the plight of juvenile delinquents and particularly the story of Erline. “I have no idea of how we can help but I will discuss this with others. If we can help I will call you within the next couple of days.”

Dinner was eaten mostly in silence that evening. We were missing Maria who had left the previous day for Boston. I poured coffee while David served up dessert. Deciding this was the time to bring up the subject of Erline, I told them of my call from Marsha and the visit with Ms. Sanders.

Michael, obviously moved by the story asked, “Do you have some ideas in that brain of yours that we can help kids like Erline?”

I hesitated. “Not a thing that our organization can do or should even try doing.”

David raised an eyebrow “But you are thinking of something you can do personally.”

“Well, not me personally but maybe we three.”

Michael asked, “You think we ought to become a foster family?”

I could feel the blush rising from my throat right up to my forehead and ears. “I thought this out to consider it or find some family who might get her out of hell hole called juvenile hall.”

As I look back through the years to that moment in time I am so proud of those two men in my life. They did not start with objections or reasons why it would not work, although we did make a list of problems that might make the mission more difficult

David said, “We do have that spare room which we can convert for her use.”

Michael asked “How about our ages. Do you two think you can qualify?”

I said “Ms. Sanders said something about his last foster mother being in her early forties.”

David said “We have to agree on a strategy regarding discipline in attendance at meal times, study times, bed time, and curfew during the week and on weekends.

I suggested. “We ought to try to enroll her at Palo Alto High. I know three of the kids from this neighborhood who commute there.”

Within two hours we were an excited trio until Michael reminded us that we might not qualify. That put a damper on for about two minutes when we decided that nothing was going to stop us from going for broke or as David said, “go for the gusto.”

Chapter 15

Four weeks later on a Thursday afternoon. David and I drove to pick up Erline at Ms. Sanders' office. Her possessions were all held within a medium sized inexpensive suitcase. She was dressed in new Wrangler jeans, a tight black tee shirt that featured her braless but firm breasts, black sox and black high top tennis shoes. She had a light black jacket slung over her shoulder and carried a look of disdain or of no interest in our arrival.

Ms. Sanders invited us into private office leaving Erline out in the larger reception area. She said, "You should probably reconsider your position. Erline has just been confined to solitary for beating up two girls. She is one tough cookie and can be violent when provoked."

"What happened?"

"It seems that while she was away, a new taller and heavier girl had arrived to be held in the hall. In a matter of weeks she was the new queen of the hill, so to speak. We figured she was shaking down the other kids and had corralled her own lieutenants. Not that we could prove anything.

Anyhow, when Erline showed up, she apparently refused to kowtow to the new leader. She simply ignored her as far as we could tell, but the queen apparently was determined to be recognized.

"Just after lunch the kids are released to the play yard. At the far end of yard a crowd was gathered with our guards unable to get the center. Kids on the outer rim of the crowd kept getting in the way of the guards. When they finally broke through, the queen and her number one lieutenant were flattened and out cold on the ground. Erline was disheveled and her shirt was badly torn and her jeans were dusty but she was absolutely unmarked except for her hands and knuckles."

"It took us quite a while to finally sort out the story. The queen, probably thinking her size was enough, grabbed Erline. That was a mistake. Our witnesses vary in their report. One says it was fist to the solar plexus, the other swears it was a haymaker to that special place on the left side of her chin. Never the less, the queen was quickly dispatched. The lieutenant jumped on Erline's back and tried for a chokehold but was unsuccessful. A one minute brawl ensued before the lieutenant was side by side with the now dethroned queen."

"Our guards took Erline to solitary where we kept her mostly in protective custody until fifteen minutes before you arrived."

"Did you tell her that it was for her protection?"

"No. After all, she had committed a violation and punishment was due no matter whose fault. This way we are seen as strict upholders of the rules."

I caught David's eye and said. "I think we will go ahead as planned."

I sat in the back of the car with Erline. Try as we might we could not get a verbal response to any questions during the ride, except for a couple of grunts. We were off to a rocky start, blunting a bit of hopefulness that preceded our arrival at the agency.

Michael was waiting for us in the driveway. I noticed Erline's eyes come alive when she stepped out of the car and saw the house and couldn't help ask, "Is this my new foster home?"

Michael stepped right up, surprised her with a hug. This is your home, Miss Erline. Welcome.” She was so astounded that she gave him a light hug in return. He went on “I’m Michael, your new grampa, at least, for as long as you want to stay.”

Erline grunted and abruptly disengaged from Michael’s arms. She sort of growled, “Where are the other kids. Are they older or younger than I am?”

I walked closer to her. “There are no others, Erline. Our only daughter is off to college. This is your new family and we hope you will be happy here.”

She stood there in stunned silence until I took her arm and led her into the house. She said nothing but I could see that she was surprised at her surroundings and was wide eyed when I took her to her room. David dropped the suitcase and I offered to help her unpack. She shook her head from side to side, said nothing but swiped at a tear as she turned her head. I left her alone.

We served dinner in the breakfast room, realizing that the surroundings were a bit overwhelming for this young woman who had been homeless for a good many years. Mrs. Ramirez had prepared the meal but quietly left before Erline came out of her room.

Surprisingly, Erline helped David clear the table and then offered to wash the dishes. I said “We can put them in the dishwasher.”

She said, “I don’t mind. I like to wash dishes.” I sat on a high stool and dried and then stored the dishes and silverware.

She volunteered a bit about her last foster home and why she was booted out. “They were afraid of me from the moment I arrived. I guess they knew I had lived on the streets and ran with a tough crowd. I never had a chance to tell them I was trying to change.” She suddenly quit talking, probably feeling she had said too much. I didn’t press and we silently finished our chore.

“Mrs. Sellech, may I take a walk for a while?”

“Certainly. Please take a jacket. Please don’t stay too long. We would like to talk about school and other things.”

“Okay.”

David pointed out to us while we were waiting. “Her knuckles are freshly bruised and scarred from previous battles, her nails square and long but surprisingly clean as were her hands. I am assuming she has been in some scrapes during all her stays at juvenile hall. Her clothes, although dark, are clean and neat. I see more than one dimension to our new daughter.”

Michael said, “I noticed and agree but we need to let her take the lead, although I hope she will be amenable to a change of clothing for school. If she goes with this mode, she will find it rough going and immediately be adopted or recruited by the wrong group.”

“I agreed and will try to test the waters.”

Forth five minutes later we were nursing cups of hot chocolate, seated at the breakfast table. I initiated the conversation. “Do you want us to call you Erline or do you have some nickname you prefer?”

She looked surprised. I continued, “In our family, we are not formal but we do use our given names rather than nicknames. How do you feel?”

“I like my name.”

“Good. We need to talk about school. I understand you are a sophomore, but have missed about a month.”

“Yes, but Martha, my tutor, came to the hall for our regular sessions and said I was not too far behind.”

“Do you like school?”

“Yes, I do. The trouble is that I had a hard time making friends except for a couple of tough guys. Everyone knew I was from the hall.”

“We heard about that. We would like to enroll you at Palo Alto High. Unless you choose to tell otherwise, you are our distant cousin just moved here to live with us.”

She was frowning and then asked, “Do you think that can work?”

David said, “I notice you have a good grasp of the language and around us you use none of the street slang. How come?”

“Before my mom lost her mind, she was grooming me as a lady despite our poor circumstances. I simply adapt to whatever is called for. On the street I can be as tough as necessary.”

“How do you want to be seen at your new school?”

“Just like any other kid from Palo Alto?”

“How do think that can happen?”

“Well, if you are willing to lend me the money, I can buy some new clothes before I start school. I can’t act like a rich kid but I’m sure that the school will have kids from a variety of backgrounds.”

I said, “We can arrange for that. How about we park near the school and when the students arrive tomorrow morning so you can size them up. Then we can go shopping before I take you to the office to register you.”

“That sounds okay, but the principal will want my report card which will give away my background.”

With more confidence than I had, I said, “I am sure that I can have the principal keep your background a secret. We can say that your full history has been lost and you are willing to be tested for placement.”

“You’re willing to do all that for me, a delinquent kid?”

Michael said, “If you can give us the chance, we like to have you start fresh. We just lost our daughter and we too have a need to fill that void. By the way, she was adopted when she was almost five, having lost her mom to the big C.”

“All right, but you need to help me earn my way. I will find a part time job to repay you for the clothing we buy tomorrow.”

David said “We agree, but you do know that the county does reimburse us for food and clothing.”

“Yeah, but not at the rate that will fully offset the real costs. I know a bit about the system by now.”

Michael said, “Right after Thanksgiving, our yard boy will be departing. You can have that job if you like. It pay pretty well since we have a fairly large piece of land.”

Erline muttered, “I know I am strong enough but I will need to be instructed as to how and what. I don’t know damned thing, sorry, I don’t know anything about gardening.”

We all smiled at the slip of the tongue. David said “If you like, Mark will be happy to have a helper and apprentice for the next several weeks. I can provide the knowledge you don’t get from him.”

“I guess that might work.” She didn’t sound very positive.

The registration at high school went smoothly and I got a solemn vow from the principal to keep our secret. I left a check to cover a host of supplies that the teachers could use.

Erline tested well enough to be placed in the advanced college prep course as a sophomore.

Since I had not arranged with our neighbors for any car-pooling, I was at the school to pick up Erline on Monday afternoon. She shuffled toward the car, head down, threw her book bag into the rear and climbed in beside. “Hi, Erline.”

Grunt and then silence was her offering. I tried a couple of questions but got the silent treatment. When we pulled into the driveway, she bounded from the car and disappeared in the direction of her bedroom, not to be heard from until she was called to dinner.

It was obvious to all of us that she had been crying. She picked at her food and did not respond to any of our attempts to converse.

Finally, David said firmly “Erline, we are not the enemy and we expect civil and polite behavior from each other in this family and we usually have it. Now, since you are obviously unhappy, is it something we have done or failed to do?”

I was looking carefully to see if I could read any body language that might help. I noticed her trying to gather up courage, her jaw tightening, and her throat showing signs of her swallowing. We waited patiently.

“Not one damned person spoke to me in the classroom or on the play ground. No one. It felt like they all knew that I was different. Her tears were rolling down her cheeks and a sob escaped her lips. Michael moved behind her chair and put his arm around her and pulled her head to his chest, cradling her until she became calm.

David then asked, “What do you believe they were thinking?”

“It felt like they knew my secret. I noticed a group of girls who kept sneaking a peek at me as I stood near the flagpole.”

“Did you try to speak to any of them?”

“No.”

“Is it possible that the strange surroundings were putting a strain on you and that their behavior was one of curiosity?”

“Maybe, but that’s not how it felt to me.”

“Did you see any really hostile behavior?”

“No.”

I noticed that Michael still had his hands on her shoulders and her breathing was even and all vestiges of tears had disappeared. She squeezed his hands, stood and began to clear away the dishes. I helped her and began to serve the coffee. She brought in the dessert.

Conversation moved to one of David’s court cases and when he finished, Erline reported that she found her teachers to be warm and very creative in their class leadership. “I’ve never experienced anything like that in school before today.”

She answered freely the questions about her classes. I excused myself to call my neighbor and fellow parishioner. “Hi Joyce. I’m fine and how are you?”

After a bit I asked “Do you or others have a carpool to Palo Alto high?” Fifteen minutes later, after explaining about our newly arrived cousin, I had arranged for transport in the morning that included Joyce’s Tom and two neighborhood girls. I would be driving on Fridays.

Michael and I were antsy awaiting Erline’s return from school. I wondered if my arranging a ride with others was helpful or hurtful. Michael assured me that I had done the right thing but I wasn’t convinced.

At three fifty five, I was looking down the driveway and caught a glimpse of Erline looking like a bedraggled humpback under the weight of her book bag. Then I was aware that she had company, a taller girl, also hunchbacked, walking just to the left and behind Erline. I heard a chuckle from her friend whose words drifted across the air. “That was a fun rejoinder, Erline. Even the teacher loved it.”

I walked to the door. Erline saw me and asked, “Is it okay if Martha comes in for a coke? We have some homework that we want to do together.” Before I could respond she said, “This is Martha Stuart who is one of the girls in the carpool.”

I nodded affirmatively and welcome both into the kitchen. Erline walked to the frig to retrieve the cokes. I asked, “Where would you like to study?”

Erline asked, “Would the breakfast nook be okay?”
“Absolutely.”

An hour later Erline walked Martha to the end of the driveway and watched as her new friend walked to her home three houses down the road.

We had hardly started our dinner before Erline started telling us of her day. “Tom is our star receiver on the football team and knows everybody. He is a junior. All the kids seem to like Martha, who is the brightest student in Social Studies and English, the two classes we have together. I like Pat Stump, the other girl in the car but she is a senior. Martha says she is the top debater in the school.”

We waited for more, which practically spewed out after a couple more bites of her meat loaf. “Remember the girls who were sneaking peeks at me yesterday? Julie, I don’t remember her last name, walked over to me and Martha in the yard and introduced herself and wondered if I would like to join their intramural basketball team.”

David said “That is good news, Erline. I gather you are more comfortable today.”

“Yes. I spent a lot of time last night thinking about all your questions. I appreciated the way you got me into that carpool, although I was pissed at the start of the morning Oops, sorry about the language.”

I smiled to show her that it no big thing.

Since we were too far from San Jose for her previous tutor to travel, we needed to find a new tutor. I happened to mention this to my friend, Joan Walter during our weekly catch up. She laughed “What a coincidence? Our Sarah just applied to your organization to be a tutor. She has some time this year during her studies at Stanford and needs some community service to meet her requirements. I’ll bet she would make a good tutor. She misses Maria and Davey, being separated after all these years as a trio. Her beau is already in your program.”

“Good. I have her number and will call her.” We went on with our usual weekly update before I called Sarah, who agreed to come to dinner

Erline, Michael and I were having cokes when Sarah drove up and dashed into the nook. “Grampa, Aunt Sara, great to see you. Oh, I’m sorry. I’m Sarah, close friend of the family since the day I was born. Sara is my godmother.”

Shyly Erline said. “I’m Erline.”

“Good to meet you. You lucky dog. You get to live with three of the five greatest people whoever graced this planet. Listen to me babble. Welcome.”

After hugs all around, Sarah went to the frig to get a Seven Up and joined us. David drove up at that moment so I poured him a glass of wine while he settled in.

We hadn’t seen Sarah since the Memorial Day weekend. She and her folks had spent a month in North Africa and the Middle East. She decided to spend the rest of the summer studying French at the Sorbonne. It took almost an hour to debrief her and listen to her anecdotes of travels in five different countries

Erline, caught up in Sarah’s enthusiasm was soon asking questions, particularly about Tunisia and Morocco.

Mrs. Ramirez had decided to stay and cook dinner, particularly because she wanted to see her little Sarah, who had spent days and hours helping her in the kitchen during her young years. This evening they teamed up serving a delicious rib roast.

Before the evening was over, Erline and Sarah had agreed to four hours a week focusing on French and English Composition. Sarah decided to stay overnight since she had no class until eleven. She treated Maria’s room as her own. After all she had spent hours and days playing with Maria and often spending overnight. Those two had been practically welded together.

This was not the end of Erline’s struggles to adapt to a new world but she managed well during the two years she stayed with us and became an integral part of the family. She and Michael became especially close. He nurtured her learning about lawns, trees shrubs, small animal life and the value of insects.

She displayed an avid interest in naval history and found a grateful tutor. David set up a big table in the basement and the three of them were replaying some of the well know battles of the Pacific during WW2

I was up to my neck in activity with the foundation work, finding the administrator and then expanding our tutoring services until we had seven chapters and forty-three schools. Add to that the appearance at several board meetings each quarter and speaking engagements around the country.

At the end of Erline’s junior year, her mom was released from Agnew’s state mental hospital. A major problem had to be faced. Erline wanted to move in with her mother but felt that her mom could not afford a rental in the area that would allow Erline to continue at Palo Alto High.

One evening about nine I knocked on her door and had to wait a full minute for her to ask me in. One look at her red eyes spoke loudly of a young lady in turmoil.

I took a seat on the edge of her bed while she turned away, staring at something on her desk she was aware that as usual I was willing to listen.

She finally reached for a tissue and blurted out. "I have to go to live with my mom. She is not well enough to live alone. She found a rental within her budget but it is in Sunnyvale. That means I will have to transfer to a new high school." She choked and began to sob, her breathing so deep that I was concerned that she was about to hyperventilate.

I stood and walked the three steps to be at her side and put my hand on her shoulder. I asked "Would she be willing to stay in a motel for a few days while we all pitch in to find something that is within the Palo Alto School district?"

Tears were still streaming as she said "I guess so but her funds are limited."

The four of us spent seven hours on Saturday and all afternoon on Sunday with no positive result. East Palo Alto offered a few choices but the area was too dangerous for two women living alone without any male protection.

On Wednesday, Erline, in tears at the dinner table said "It's no use and I can handle the change, especially since Sarah has agreed to continue to tutor me."

I was not going to let that happen. She was too precious and in a selfish way, I had become so attached to her. I asked Michael to visit some of the high priced rental managers to see if one of the larger homes might have a little cottage that was not in use.

I promised Erline a small loan to keep her mom in the motel until we found something.

It took another week but with everyone bending to the task, we found a small two-bedroom cottage at the rear of a small estate two miles from our home. The owner was willing to have Erline use the house if she agreed to manage the grounds, using her newfound skills, thanks to her new grampa.

By that time, Erline was the top debater on the team and the president of the history club. Her work on the estate was demanding and her mom found a solution. She insisted that Erline use part of the income her mom received from the state and uses it to hire a helper. That turned out to be a winner. Erline had more time as a senior to study for her SAT tests and other scholarship exams.

Little Sarah had to give up the tutoring, so Michael insisted on undertaking the task. He and Erline had bonded and since she came to the house for tutoring, David and I were incidental beneficiaries.

The astounding news came on Jan 30th of her senior year when she was awarded acceptance as a plebe at the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis.

Her mom continued on the road to recovery, allowing Erline the freedom to initiate her studies at Annapolis.

Michael was spending more time with the love of his life but it was evident that Erline's departure had created another small void in his life.

David and I had each other and the occasional visit from Maria to brighten our lives.

Chapter 16.

Since the majority of the students participating in our tutoring projects were members of lower income families, I decided to spend my time working on the means to get them into universities and colleges. I needed allies and had to decide where to start.

I began with the stockholders I had known well during my years at Radio. Jack, who had followed in my footsteps, was first on my list. We met at the Bohemian club in San Francisco, where he was a member.

“Sara, it is a delight to see you instead of just reading your occasional letter and Christmas card.” As we finished our pre luncheon cocktail, he said “I know you well enough that you are about to put the bite on me for something more than money.” We both laughed before I launched into recruiting him to join me in searching men and women of means as well as universities and colleges to increase accessibility to higher education by the lower income young in our midst.

Jack, within minutes, was aboard and spilling our idea of the first dozen contacts. “You do realize you will have to put on your traveling togs again. How will that sit with David?”

“He and I have discussed the idea and we talked about my travel. He exacted my promise to be home most weekends.”

“Then I suggest we start with the six stockholders who benefited from our success at Radio and expand to those whose firms merged with ours and became beneficiaries. Based on our learning’s, failures and successes, we can move on to some of my friends at the Club.

Within ten days I was on the road. The first week was in New York where David joined me for the initial thrust.

The next trip was another week, this one in the greater Boston area. Jack, being the dynamo, set up interview after interview starting with breakfast and more often than not ending with a post dinner meeting. I was truly beat by the time I arrived at SFO late on Friday evenings.

Jack had the fourth week set at Palm Beach, the retirement area for major donors. His call on Saturday came at noon. “Sara, can you fly out on Sunday?” I can get a Monday morning meeting with a significant participant who loves the idea.”

“Jack, I am tired. Can you delay until Tuesday?”

“He is leaving on his yacht for a long trip to the Mediterranean on Monday evening.”

“Okay. I have to clear it with David but you can count on it.”

David was furious. “You are endangering your life. Leaving with little rest is stupid.” Those were the nicest of all the comments he made. He stormed and paced about the room. I thought, “Thank goodness Michael and Erlene were not home.” I had never seen David this upset.

In my heart I knew I would win so I said nothing. David never ever denied me something I wanted or chose to do. He strode out of the room and out of the house. I poured myself more coffee and waited. David would be back, penitent about his anger and proceed to make the arrangements.

I was right, although it was more than an hour before he returned. “I am sorry for losing my temper, Sara, but I still think you ought to forego this early departure. In fact, you are so tired that it would not hurt to take off the week.”

“I can’t do that, honey. Jack and John have lines up sever major possibilities and probably more in the wings”

“Would it help if I begged you to postpone this trip for me?”

I went over to him and sat on his lap as I had so many times in our life together. “What I can do is promise to take off the next two weeks and then do two or three day trips only.”

He nodded and sunk his face on the top of my head and pulled my head onto his breast. We sat that way for a very long time. Finally he rose and went to the phone.

David prepared waffles and bacon for our Saturday evening meal after we got tipsy on a bottle of white wine. We lay on the sofa snuggling and whispering loving words to each other. We reminisced about the war years at Pearl and the brief honeymoon at Waikiki Beach.

We fell asleep to be awakened at eleven when Erline burst in with her current beau and another young couple. She laughed as we started to rise and rearrange our clothing and run our fingers though our coifs.

At five in the morning I wakened David with a scream of pain in my chest and in the middle of my back. David called to Erline to call emergency and within ten minutes a young doctor was listening to my heart and shoving a nitroglycerine pill under my tongue. The pain was excruciating and unrelenting A few minutes later; he was shoving another pill under my tongue. At that point I must have passed out.

The next thing I remember was awakening in the emergency ward with what seemed like a dozen doctors and nurses doing things to my body. I looked desperately for David or Michael but could see neither. One of the nurses noticed that my eyes were open. “You are doing well Mrs. Sellech.”

I think I blinked my eyes but must have fallen asleep. I found out later that I had been sedated to keep my heart working at a minimum level.

It was after seven that evening before I was alert to the fact that David and Michael were conversing quietly to the left of my bed. I tried to turn my head when I heard Michael say, “Sara’s awake.” Both faces were crowding my vision and Michael was pushing some kind of button. He said, “I’m ringing for the nurse.”

David must have read the question in my eyes. “The doc says you are no longer in danger but you are not out of the woods” He took my hand in his. “You gave us one hell of a scare, honey. Welcome back.” He gave my hand a gentle squeeze and let the back of his other hand whisper across my cheek. It was so gentle and loving that a tear escaped and rolled downs that cheek.

The nurse moved them back and did what nurses do, followed by the cardiologist who had responded to the page. I heard him tell the men in my life that they had five minutes only. Michael moved to my right, took my right hand in his while David held my left. No words were necessary. Deep love was transferred from their fingers to mine.

The next day the room needed a traffic cop to handle the crowd. The nurse finally arrived at a satisfactory plan. One three minute visit every fifteen minutes, starting with

David, Erlene, Joan, Al, Sarah, Rosalie, Mrs. Ramirez, and then Maria, who had flown in, her Davey and finally Jack who came rushing back from Palm Beach. I had to rest for hours with only Maria, Michael and David sitting as sentinels next to my bed.

Jack apologized for pushing me but then added. "Our friend decided on a gift before he sailed."

I took his hand in mine and said "Jack, no apologies. Your passion for service took us as far as it was possible to go. Thank you."

Two weeks later, sitting in the sunny breakfast nook at home, I took up my pen and journal to record the events to the best of my knowledge. When I exhausted my memory, I wrote a final note.

"This is the last entry into my journal. I presume that David will be my editor and want to add some notes about events beyond this date. He assures me that he will arrange for publication. The doctors tell me that I must limit my activity to the little things I can do around the house. I will be able to be driven but I will not have a driver's license.

The doctor says I should plan on no major travel, especially at any distance from first class emergency facilities.

I plan to read and write a little light fiction, maybe a love story or two. Michael plans on being my caregiver. He also mentioned the possibility of the two of us writing a history of naval battles in the Pacific. That may be a bit ambitious.

I plan to attend Maria's graduation and Erlene's commissioning, God willing.

Rosalie and Joan surprised me offering to pick up where I had to leave off in my projects. It was no surprise to find them doing a better job than I.

It is difficult to close this writing. I had so much more I wanted to do that might have filled more pages but I am grateful for what I was able to do while being loved as a daughter, wife and mother.

I give thanks to God for showing me that love and service without thought of reward are the greatest things in life and must be pleasing to Him, the source of love and service to all his creatures.

Sara Komar Sellech

