

## **Tut at the Fortnightly Club**

“ Now hear this! This is the Captain speaking....The ship will be leaving port in five minutes. There will be stormy weather so Dramamine is available. Mostly it will be smooth seas with some troughs. The return to port will be calm. All ashore who's going ashore. Lift anchor and full steam ahead!”

Often when growing up I heard stories of Army wives and friends would say “You know, they are different from us.” Well, having been a Navy wife for many years now I feel I can say service wives are different, but not in the way you may think.

They are different because as a rule they are not in their home environment, around people and customs they grew up with. They are temporary dwellers in the midst of their civilian friends and neighbors. They are usually well aware that their husbands have jobs which could at any time require them, on little notice, to leave families behind to defend our country or some strange part of the world. Service wives, at least those married to Annapolis and West Point graduates, realize early in their married life that their husbands have a loyalty, respect and duty to God and Country, and then to their families - not that they love them less, but more because they are willing to put their lives on the line to ensure not only their families but America itself be kept safe, so that the ideals that our country stands for will endure. That, in fact, is one of the reasons I have had the happy life I've had - knowing that it takes a truly good man with strong values to be able to be true to his God, his country and his wife and family. So - that's the way I feel that service wives are different.

I've lived in lots a places and believe me, kindness and generosity abound every where in this great land of ours.

But now - let me take you with me back to 1952, when my life as a Navy wife began.

What a life it has been! I would not trade these 50 years for all the money in the world, for I have been blessed and my life has been so rich, not in money, but in the wealth of friendships. Very diverse ones - as someone once said, "not all my friends would feel comfortable at a morning coke party in South Carolina." A million thrills and adventures and travel - all filled with an abundance of love and laughter, a few tears of both joy and sorrow, and lasting memories. Little did I know when I fell in love with the dashing, handsome young naval officer with the "cool and limpid green eyes" and dimpled chin what a wonderful and exciting life I would lead. When I innocently married Dick, I soon realized that I was in a totally different world and that it revolved around the Navy. As a selfish only child I never realized that I would never be #1 in this world. It was an orbit I found exciting and challenging. Realizing that I was not worldly wise, the Lord took pity on Dick and - honestly - issued me a guardian angel, equipped with the patience of Job, nerves of steel, the wisdom of Solomon, bravery of David and - most importantly! - a sense of humor. An angel; who had her hands full protecting both my body and soul, and trying - mostly in vain - to keep me from saying and doing the wrong things. Fortunately she seems to need little sleep, and thrives on rescuing me with narrow escapes.

Before marriage the largest city I had lived in was Columbia, and I

had been to New York once - never to Washington - and Dick is stationed in Washington, so there I went. Bo and Felicia Morrison were there too, and what good times we had. That was the start of how throughout Dicks naval career South Carolinians have always been part of our happiness - all over the world! I had a very competent angel.

Before Dick and I were married, he gave me a little book entitled Welcome Aboard - a sort of manual for young navy wives. I wasn't too impressed, but my mother - God love her -read it from cover to cover, underlining it and quoting to me constantly, and "Read it!", she said in that "or else" voice. Also she said "and remember, a lady always wears a hat and glove in the city."

Washington was wonderful! On my first trip to the grocery store I remembered what Mother had said and wore my hat and gloves to the Safeway - in Southeast Washington - never again!

As part of the Navy family in Washington - Dick being in Intelligence School - I went to the Navy wives' luncheons -always hat and gloves then - in 1952 and 53, always very proper protocol. The foreign attache wives went also - what a blend of saris and Chinese gowns and native dresses. Many wives spoke no English and I soon realized they were as afraid and as unsure as I was, but each was lovely and sincere. British, Canadians, Laotians, Italians, Indian, Pakistani - what a thrill!

Then Dick's orders came. Yugoslavia. Where? Sassy and Billy drove us to New York and we boarded an Army transport- a far cry from the Queen Mary, but what did I know? We didn't even have a port hole, but I was going to see the world! And we saw quite a lot before getting to Yugoslavia.. Casablanca, Florence and Pisa, Naples, Athens, Istanbul- What a lot to digest! On the ship was an Army dentist from New York, and the wife was from Georgia- they adopted us and we enjoyed them quite a bit in Trieste.

From Trieste, we board the fabled Orient Express- remember the movie with Tyrone Power, and the spy getting pushed off the train? We boarded that very same train for an overnight trip to Belgrade, with a border crossing complete with armed guards - my imagination ran wild. I was panicky, but survived and we arrived in Belgrade at 5AM, we were met by a Yugoslav driver, and taken to our hotel, which would be home for the next six weeks. The driver told us to be ready to be picked up a 9 and taken to our Captain's villa for breakfast. What a start, and me not a morning person! It was a perfect day. We had breakfast on the terrace. The Captain was a bachelor, and his mother - a true Philadelphia main-liner - was visiting and they immediately made us feel at home and welcome.

Before going to Yugoslavia, I was briefed by the Navy's protocol director. She gave me a booklet and informed me that I needed service for 12 in china and silver, hundreds of calling cards, etc. Fortunately, I had everything she said was required, so I packed it and sent everything we owned - and my guardian angel really stepped in

and everything arrived unbroken - a miracle! I now know that at a little embassy like ours, many people rented silver and china. You learn a lot - after the fact. Many at our embassy hadn't had the advantage I had of growing up in the south, where you grew up going to teas and parties and learned thru osmosis the art of small talk.

We had a great life there, with a maid, a butler, a cook who could read English, and a driver. I had taken my Joy of Cooking which saved me and my marriage, I might add.

There were 5 South Carolinians there among the 90 Americans - two from Florence and one from Charleston - tell me I'm not blessed! I learned early on that altho in the South you were accepted for who you are, it was not quite like that in the Diplomatic Circles. On arrival we were informed that we were to send about a hundred of Dick's cards and mine to the embassy, and they would be delivered to the "proper persons".. We were given a booklet listing the different embassies and legations with the names of all the ministers, ambassadors, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> secretaries and attaches. It was very helpful to us to learn names, but that wasn't the purpose - if your name was not on the "Dip List" as it was called, you were not invited to parties, receptions, ceremonies, etc. So I never forgot that rank was more important to many people than personality, integrity or graciousness. That, I hope did not change my attitudes, it was not the attitude I found among most of the service people. At Christmas we ate dinner with our Chief Petty Officer and his wife and Geral and Mrs Harmony - the head of the US military aid group- at the Chief's

apartment. It was great.

Then - back to reality and life in Newport Rhode Island, with Dick at sea. Fortunately, Dick's academy roommate was stationed there which eased our arrival. Again, we lived in a hotel for several weeks while house hunting, and we shopped for a stove and refrigerator, collecting the Sears salesman's card to remember his name. We were scheduled to call on Dick's commodore and his wife that evening. I reached for my trusty Welcome Aboard to find the protocol for an "official Call". We were to stay no longer than 30 minutes and to leave X number of cards for the commodore, his wife and eligible females. I asked Dick to please do this, I would be too nervous, but he said that I was to do it- good practice. (For what, I never found out) So, I counted the correct number of card, put them in my pocket book with my gloves, and upon arrival, very nonchalantly placed them in the card tray. We met the Lanings - the wife was great, a former child film star in the Our Gang series. They lived in a super house owned by an author and all went well - we stayed our 30 minutes and left. I got in the elevator with Dick to return to our room, opened my purse, and screamed! There was one of my calling cards! How could that be? Oh, no, the Sears salesman's card was not there! I had ruined Dick's career- all was lost! In tears and desperation, I called a complete stranger for advice - Dick's roommates wife, whom I had not yet met. I introduced myself, told of my horrible mistake. I expected comfort and sympathy, and could not believe my ears when I heard shouts of laughter, and so it went time and time when my guardian angel's back was turned for just a minute I would be in

trouble. The devil really wanted me for stoking duty.

Betty and Walter Brandon were in Newport at the same time we were and that was a great comfort. But I got in trouble with Walter for saying the wrong thing - so what's new? When in Belgrade I had played bridge with two French ladies and an American whose husband was the Swiss minister. When Dick got orders, she said that she had a dear friend in Newport and could she write her and tell her that I was coming. I of course agreed. Then she told me that her friend was married to the President of the Naval

War College - an Admiral! That floored me. She also said that Mrs. Robbins had said for me to call when we got there. Well, I certainly couldn't do that. What would I say? "Mrs. Robbins, we are here" - then what? So I never called. About six months later, she called me to say she wondered why I had never called. That she had contacted the wrong Robertsons to call on her. Anyway, we did go to call and we enjoyed several visits with them, once bringing our mothers and a British guest. I remember now with great chagrin that when the Admiral said he had been to Yugoslavia 50 years ago and still remembered several Serbian words, I gushed "Goodness, you remember them after 50 years?" Where was that angel?? Anyway, I was relating this to Walter Brandon, and said "Mrs. Admiral said..." when Walt interrupted me to admonish, saying "Navy wives have no rank". That is very, very true.

All thru Dick's career we have been blessed with South Carolinians. We were back here stationed in 1956 when the Donald Russells were

at the university, and I think it shocked several of my former professors to see me there as the wife of an associate professor of naval science. When in Norfolk, the Alec Grimsleys were at the Armed Forces Staff College with Dick, as was the older brother of a classmate of mine from Florence- South Carolinians get around.

Then, sea duty, with me at home in Columbia with two young children and no husband, our furniture in storage, attic furniture salvaged by Sas, mother and Happy - try explaining to neighbors on Duncan street why there is no husband and you are “camping out” with two little children in a rented apartment.

But my guardian angel found me Tillie - a wonderful woman who helped me with the children and cooked us wonderful meals, never once taking off her hat! Jeannie Kean and Patsy Black truly made life happier for us. They fed us and relieved me of my sort of humdrum life. Jeannie introduced me to the New York Times, and I still get it every Sunday and read it all thru the week.

Then back to Norfolk and the world’s first guided missile cruiser - the USS Dewey! What excitement! The young skipper was Bud Zumwalt and his wife was the exotic darling Mouza - a Russian whose family had emigrated to Shanghai. (Bud had been stationed in Chapel Hill, serving under Mildred’s uncle). What fun we had together! The ship was once invited to New York, to receive the sword of Admiral George Dewey - the Spanish-American war hero. We were invited to stay in New York with a “poor young widow” the men had met in San Juan. Mother came to keep the children, and Hap and I went to New York with Mouza - and I drove! Imagine when we



drove up Park Avenue and go in this fabulous apartment building, ring the door bell and have the door flung open by this gorgeous, tall, tanned goddess who hugs us and ushers us into a two story Park avenue apartment. This is the tragic widow, Randy, with a darling 4-year old. Her husband - one of the McGraws - had committed suicide! Before we could catch our breath, she had gotten us seats - practically on the stage - for "The Miracle Worker" - after a luncheon the next day in the board room of the Dewey's naval architect on the top floor of the New York Athletic Club - then a luncheon the next day in the brownstone apartment of Admiral Dewey's descendent, then the presentation of the sword ceremony, and Randy takes Mouza, Hap and me to the Stork club for dinner! Am I dreaming?

Then she ship gets deployed, and there are those long days and nights with Dick away but sending glowing accounts of the fabulous ports they visit. And the mantra begins - "Well, you know children - your father was never there". - seldom for trauma like carwrecks and things - but,oh! When he was there - Santa Claus, the Easter bunny, the tooth fairy - gifts and laughter and non-stop fun. I needed the inbetween times to catch my breath.

A little later - the West Coast for four years - lovely Washington State, good schools, good friends, more visitors than ever came when we were on the East Coast. My college roommate's brother and his wife had just moved out, so another contact from home. A couple we had met in DC and Yugoslavia lived there. An uncle and aunt of mine, and Bud and Mouza came to visit. No way to ever by alone or

lonely! California for a year, while Dick was gone, but friends from Staff College there - he a USC grad from South Carolina. They lived in the seaside town of Venice, and when mother came out, we watched from their house all the boats with their Christmas lights parade by.

Then back to Washington, the Pentagon, and Industrial College of the Armed Forces, which provided a "field trip" to Europe. When the men went, we wives could pay our own way and accompany them. Twelve wives in all made that trip - and what a trip! Berlin - when it was still divided - a scary tour of East Berlin that Dick wasn't allowed to take, Bonn, Cologne, Paris, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Bruges, the Hague and Brussels - what a trip, that gave me a yearning to travel I've never gotten over. In each capital, a reception at the residence of the ambassador and parties by our host military.

Then the US Naval Academy, quarters in an old (1904) 19 room duplex, with three floors, tall ceilings, and no help! When I called Mama and told her frantically that I needed draperies for the living room and dining room, she said "Well, I'll make them for you." When I told her the ceilings were 10 or 12 feet high she didn't hesitate - "I won't make them for you." I had them made, but wouldn't let them hang them - once again, if it hadn't been for that angel, Dick would have killed me. Valances had to be put up, then lowered, then raised - nearly the death of both of us. We had so much company there - all hungry when they arrived. And Fran knew that when I called to her she was to jump on her bike and dash to the deli outside the gate and come back with a basket of ham, turkey, roast beef and lots of bread and potato salad. It was lectures, lunches, dinners,

parades, receptions for famous people - Bud Zumwalt had become the Chief of Naval Operations and we went to dinner at his quarters at the Naval Observatory with congressmen, foreign chiefs and we even spent the night there - That house is now the home of the Vice President of the US!

Dick next got a ship out of Charleston, and left on a long deployment before Christmas - not the happiest of times, but Fran met her husband-to-be there and there were Columbians who were super to us, particularly when I got my neck banged up in a car accident, with Dick 5,000 miles away. There were the Wardlaws, Charlotte Lide McGrady, Bo and Felicia Morrison, Mary King - so many good friends. Dixon was a senior in high school and we were fortunate to enroll him for his last semester at Porter Gaud - with classmates Trez Blencowe and Jamie Vardell. Fran went to Ashley Hall, and made good and lasting Charleston friends.

Then back to Alexandria, and our dear little Methodist Church and our Sunday School class (Pairs and Spares) that had grand lectures - biblical, political, timely topics and interesting Christian speakers. We formed a little group that had pot luck suppers and an annual New Year's Eve party where we all got together. One of our group - Bill Crowe, alternated with Dick as the head of the Sunday School Class, and he later became the Ambassador to the Court of St James, and we had our New Year's Eve Party at the Ambassadors house in London! Because of Dick's job with the Defense Intelligence Agency, we had invitations even before we got to Washington, and we found ourselves associating more with wonderful Army and Air Force friends than

with the Navy, We were out in the evening regularly and, of course, entertained. With only Fran to help, and I did what I've always done - stuck with the tried and true Southern recipes. And it seemed to work out, except for one Frenchman who, when I served white wine with my chicken cassarole, asked for red, and informed me that one always drank red with "whatever this meal is" and I tartly replied "It is not what you think it is a southern recipe!" So much for diplomacy.

Enough is too much, and I'm sure your ears are exhausted. Thank you for listening to my babbling on about "how a southern girl from a small town in South Carolina could marry a young naval officer, and with a lot of help from fellow South Carolinians and a guardian angel could have the best life ever!"