

Part Nine: Belle Fourche and WWII 1940-1945

Chapter 34: Life in Belle Fourche, Collins Burton Marries Beth Innes

In early 1940, the sugar company transferred Collins to Belle Fourche¹ in the Black Hills of South Dakota to oversee the construction of a new plant and to manage the large sugar district in that area.² Near the eastern Wyoming border, the town was named “Beautiful Fork” by 19th-century French-Canadian trappers. Train lines in place for Belle Fourche’s large cattle industry and interstate bus lines³ facilitated the six hundred miles of travel between South Dakota and Salt Lake City during the gasoline-rationed years of WWII.

The Black Hills are home to Mount Rushmore, which was being constructed during the time the Cannon family was in South Dakota. Shown right are Ida May, an unknown person, and Janet, all in typical hiking clothing of the time, visiting the site.



Upon receiving his transfer, Collins initially moved alone to Belle Fourche and lived in a boarding house.⁴ Ida May lived temporarily with Joan and Bud in a basement apartment of Charlie Smith’s at 565 I Street until the school year ended.⁵ Janet and Ida Mae lived together in an apartment on 4th Avenue, and Betsy and Ted moved to the Eagle Gate Apartments downtown.⁶

Collins returned to Salt Lake City in early June and drove to Belle Fourche with Ida May and Joan, stopping in Garland, staying with Beth’s parents for one night on their way.⁷ Collins Burton moved to Springville for a summer job tearing down an old sugar factory.⁸

¹ Belle Fourche is pronounced “bell foosh.” In letters, family members simply called it “Belle.” In 1940, Belle Fourche had a population of two and a half thousand people, many of them ranchers.

² 28 February 1944 Salt Lake Tribune. In 1944, Grace’s obituary identified Collins as the manager of the plant.

³ 24 October 1942, Ida May Burton Cannon to Janet Cannon. Ida May had returned from a trip to Utah on the bus. My older cousins are certain that Daddy Cannon traveled by train between Salt Lake City and Belle Fourche.

⁴ Collins was enumerated in April 1940 in Belle Fourche. I could not find Ida May or Joan on that census. However, for his parents’ address in his 1941 naval service card, Collins Burton listed them at 565 I Street, an apartment where they lived after WWII. While I can’t really explain this, I believe I can safely assume that Ida May and Joan, and likely Collins Burton, lived there through May of 1940.

⁵ Cannon Randall told me that the friend and later landlord was Charles W. Smith, president of Enoch and Sons Construction. Once I knew his name, the city directory validated that.

⁶ I have a few letters Dad wrote his parents in June 1941 from Springville. The 1941 city directory listed Janet and Ida Mae as roommates at 175 4th Avenue, Janet as a student, Ida Mae as a secretary. The city directory also listed Betsy and Ted in the Eagle Gate apartments.

⁷ The article about the Cannon’s overnight visit with the Innes family, on the page below, is from The Garland Times, 6 September 1940, indicating the Cannon’s returned for a visit in late summer, 1940.

⁸ “Collins Burton Cannon, as told to Julie Cannon Markham, 1983.”

Ida Mae shared her feelings about moving away from Salt Lake City:

In 1940 we were transferred to Belle Fourche, South Dakota, with the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company. When we left Salt Lake, it was very sad to me; it meant the breaking up of our family home. Our daughter Elizabeth was married, Ida Mae was well-employed at the State Engineer's Office; our son a senior at the University; our daughter Janet, a sophomore at that school. Joan, 13, went with us. Our children visited us frequently but we never again had a real family home.⁹

Mr & Mrs Collins T Cannon and daughters Jeanette and Joan arrived
Mr & Mrs Collins B Cannon visited at the T W Innes home Sunday. The guests were on their way to South Dakota.

The photo at right shows Ida Mae visiting with Joan and Collins at Spearfish Lake.¹⁰

In early June of 1940, Collins Burton wrote his father from Springville and gave him some surprising news:

Springville, Utah
June 16, 1940

Dear Collins,

I have just returned from S.L.C. I went up for the week-end. I slept at Rachel's last night and had breakfast at Bet's this A.M....



Beth and I have decided to get married in July. I will get four days off over the fourth and Betsy wants us to have the wedding at her place the night of the third.

I don't want you to think for a minute that I have given up thoughts of going back to school next year. I am going to make every effort to do just that. As to finances, it will not require any more money on my part than if I were single. I discussed it very thoroughly with Mom before you came out here. She can explain to you why I say it won't cost me more. The basis is that two together can live as cheaply as two single.

⁹ "Ida Mae Burton Cannon, as told to Laurie Smith, 1978."

¹⁰ This photo and many others came into my possession after the 2018 death of Joan Cannon Innes.

Beth and I were very anxious to discuss it with you while you were here. That was why she changed her hours to go to Spanish [Fork] with us. Unfortunately, we could not discuss it that day. We did not get another chance. We have discussed it with Mr. and Mrs. Innes, and they are 100% for us. I hope you will be also.

Your son,
Bud¹¹

Collins was traveling on business when Bud's letter arrived in Belle Fourche. Ida May enclosed his letter as she wrote to her husband on June 19th:

We are enjoying an electrical storm but as far as the rain is concerned, that is still very much in the offing. I hope it comes. We have kept the lawn watered, separated the zinnias, moved the snapdragons without the loss of one and all in all obeyed yours truly to the letter. Now to get down to business:

I am closing Bud's letter. I sent you Betsy's yesterday. I think (I can still do a swath of thinking) it would be wise to write to him and if he is so determined to get married, suggest that he do so the latter part of August while we are in Salt Lake. I would very much like to be there and I am sure that you would also. It might just as well be done in a conventional matter and in a way we will all be happy over. It is a serious move and I would just like it done in the best possible way. If Beth wants it to take place in Garland there is certainly no objection to that and it would indeed be very nice. I thot of writing my feelings directly to him and then decided it might be better to voice our sentiments in place of just mine. You know dear, this damnable war has altered my feelings somewhat in regard to this marriage. I certainly have no objections to Beth, the only objection I have had is that incompleteness of Bud's schooling. Well, think it over, the letter was addressed to you. Maybe over the week-end you can write him. I thought I might as well give you the notes and send Mae's card along also.¹²

¹¹ 16 June 1940 Collins Burton Cannon to Collins Telle Cannon. I was stunned to read this letter. I came across a folder of letters in April 2020 as I was writing this biography. Dad had sent me the letters in a manila envelope with a postmark of November 1983 and apparently I stuck it in a box with other genealogy papers. I did not know I had these letters. In all fairness, in 1983 I'd had a baby, my mother and Grandmother Cannon had died, and my husband was a bishop. I had never opened the envelope or looked to see what the letters were. If I'd read these letters, I would have asked Dad a lot of questions. Rachel is Ida May's sister. Bet's of course is Betsy.

¹² 19 June 1940 Ida May Burton Cannon to Collins Telle Cannon. This letter and others came into the possession of Collins Burton Cannon after his mother's death in May, 1983, and were included in the bundle Dad sent me in November that year. I read these for the first time in April 2020, as I worked on this biography. Mom and my Grandmother Cannon got along well throughout their lives, and interestingly, they died within a few months of each other. Mom felt Nana's resistance to their marriage was because of her. She did not ever factor in the concern over Dad's education. Nana's words, "It might just as well be done in a conventional matter and in a way we will all be happy over" were very true as far as I am concerned today, knowing what I know, painfully aware of what I don't know.

MARRIAGE ANNOUNCED

Dr. and Mrs. T. W. Innes announce the marriage of their daughter, Beth, to Collins B. Cannon, son of Mr. and Mrs. Collins B. Cannon of Salt Lake City. The marriage took place Wednesday, July 3rd, at Salt Lake City.

The bride is well known thruout the valley having graduated from the local high school where she was active in school affairs. She graduated last year from the L.D.S. Hospital Nurses Training School and has since been employed as a nurse in the city.

The young people will make their home in Salt Lake City.

Beth Innes' Troth Told By Parents

Dr. and Mrs. T. W. Innes of Garland announce the marriage of their daughter, Miss Beth Innes, 128 B street, to Collins B. Cannon of Salt Lake City, son of Mr. and Mrs. Collins T. Cannon of Belle Fourche, S. D.

The couple were wedded Wednesday at the home of the bridegroom's aunt, Mrs. Willard T. Cannon, 23 Virginia street, by Edwin Q. Cannon. Only members of the two families were present.

After a trip to Yellowstone National park the couple will make their home in Salt Lake City.

The bride is a graduate of the L. D. S. hospital school of nursing.



Mrs. Collins B. Cannon, a bride of Wednesday, who was formerly Miss Beth Innes, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. T. W. Innes.

Collins Burton did indeed marry Beth on July 3rd, but not in Betsy's apartment. Extended family members stepped in with generous offers of help.¹³ The marriage took place at the beautiful home of Caroline Young Croxall Cannon,¹⁴ Willard's widow. Edwin Q. Cannon, bishop of the Twentieth Ward, performed the ceremony.¹⁵

Chapter 35: 1941 -- A Grandchild and Another World War

Janet and Collins Burton continued their studies at the University of Utah during the fall of 1940. However, at the end of that quarter, Janet spent Christmas with her parents in Belle Fourche. The next month she enrolled for just one quarter at the nearby Black Hills Teachers College in Spearfish. The photo at right was likely taken on the day her parents took her to the college. They are standing in front of their Belle Fourche home.



¹³ 5 July 1940, Garland Times; 7 July 1940, Salt Lake Tribune.

¹⁴ This home was also designed by Lewis Telle about the time he designed his mother's home.

¹⁵ By the end of the year, Edwin Q. Cannon would be sustained as the president of the Ensign Stake.

In January of 1941, Ida May, using carbon sheets, wrote to her three children in Salt Lake City:

Janet Polly did not come home this week-end. We drove over to see her yesterday afternoon. She had a date for dinner and a movie with Johnny but had to be in at eleven. She has been a bit home-sick this week but is settling down now.

In this letter, Ida May indirectly referred to preparations for the War. She wrote:

It looks like I am lined up for some Red Cross Work. I have the time and the Very Rev. Mr. Blunt thinks I have the ability so I am on the committee for sewing and knitting. It was suggested that I take Mrs. Hales place as pres. of the Relief Society but I would rather help with the lessons and do this other work. It will take quite a bit of time and I will enjoy it.¹⁶

Decades later, Ida May spoke of this experience:

One day in South Dakota, Reverend Blunt of the Congregational Church called me and asked me if he could come up and talk to me. When he came, he told me that they were opening a Red Cross production program in Belle Fourche for that area and they wanted me to be chairperson. When I asked him why he was asking me to fill this capacity, he said, "Aren't you a Mormon? All you Mormon women are raised and trained to do these things." This was during the Second World War and I felt that this was something I could do to help out. So, I was the Red Cross production chairperson for Butte county for the duration of the war.¹⁷

In this same January 1941 letter, Ida May described a party hosted by Joan, at this time thirteen:

Joan had a party Friday nite. You will all fail to mention it when you write, but it was a good one. I tried to persuade her to just have girls but she would have boys. There were six of each kind. They planned to go skating but for the first time in many Januarys there was no ice. They were so disappointed that I let her go on with it and they had it in the basement. They danced and played Michigan. She deals with her left hand only and is quite a shark at it. One of the boys brought a "seegar" and three of the boys had to keep running out side to take a puff. She finally became so disgusted with them that she gave them their coats and sent them on their way and to cap it all and to show them that she meant it, threw a root-beer bottle at them and struck one in the solar plexus and it crashed to the ground. The party then settled down and ate four quarts of chili, twelve bottles of

¹⁶ 12 January 1941 Their Adoring Mother to Mrs. Edward B. Kimball, Ida Mae Cannon & Collins B. Cannon. I am grateful to Annette Randall Haws for sharing her mother's collection of Ida May's letters with me.

¹⁷ "Ida May Burton Cannon, as told to Laurie Smith, 1977."

root-beer and two dozen apples and a box of crackers. We had a difficult time breaking them up at eleven. Life is just full of one little experience after another.¹⁸

In a letter two years later, Ida May wrote:

Joan is trying to make up her mind about the Bronc dance. Both Bill and Ray have asked her but she thinks she would rather go with the girls. I told her she could not go out with Ray if they wooed and she looked a bit stumped and wanted to know just why. I drew her a mental picture of just what happens to girls who WOO all of the boys and she had no further comment.¹⁹

The picture at right, taken in 1944, shows Joan with her crush, Bobby Sell.²⁰



To the dismay of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, President Franklin D. Roosevelt publicly held to the nation's isolationist desires and declared that the United States would not enter the European war. However, after the Nazi occupation of Poland and France, the president took strong action to increase the size of the U.S. military. Collins Burton later wrote:

While I was in college, war had busted loose all over Europe. We knew we were going to get into it. We were on a wartime basis. It was a shooting war in the North Atlantic as far as the Navy was concerned, and they issued the call for Navy officers. I went down and talked to them. It sounded like it would be an interesting career. In December 1940 I signed up and I got my commission the day I graduated.²¹

Collins Burton, shown on the right below at Cal-Tech, later said:

When I had graduated and finished classes in the spring of '41 I went to work for the Army on a survey crew up at Hill Air Force Base staking out the runways. I was working there when I got a letter from the Navy that ordered me to go to school in Pasadena at Cal-Tech for the summer.

¹⁸ 12 January 1941 Ida May Burton Cannon to her three oldest children.

¹⁹ 28 September 1943 Ida May Burton Cannon to Janet Cannon.

²⁰ Joan's high school photo album included 20 pictures of Bobby Sell.

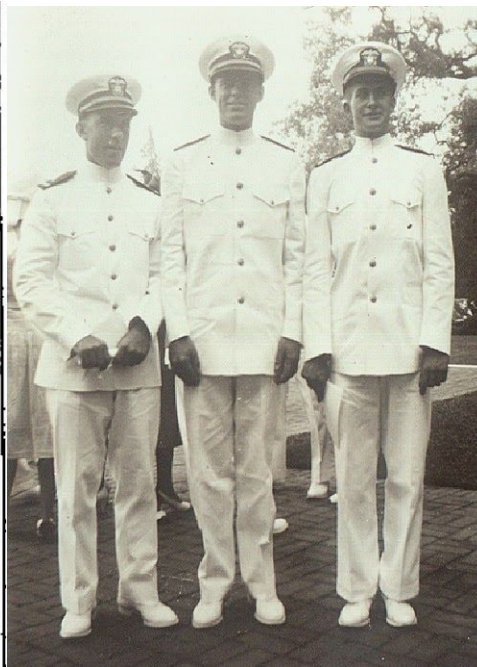
²¹ "Collins Burton Cannon, as told to Julie Cannon Markham 1982."

Four Utah Ensigns Report for Duty

Four Utahns, ensigns in the United States naval reserve, had reported for active duty Saturday, Lieutenant Commander Arthur F. Anderson, recruiting director for the Salt Lake district, reported.

Ensign Joseph Patrick Quinn, 23, 335 East South Temple street, reported to the naval supply school, Harvard university, Cambridge, Mass.

Ensigns Collins B. Cannon, 23, 435 East South Temple street; Herbert Leichter Jr., 21, 922 Hollywood avenue, and Robert E. White Jr., 23, Goshen, reported to California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, Cal.



In Pasadena I learned about aviation maintenance and how to be a Naval Officer. I finished very well there. There were 108 of us in the class and at the end of the quarter I ranked pretty high. I've forgotten whether I was 20th or whatever. Then I went up to Seattle. I

was there just nine months, just long enough for Philip.²²

The uncertainty caused by the War affected everyone. However, Beth had loved that summer in California while her husband was in officer candidate school. It was also the first time she hadn't worked or been in school for many years. Beth, shown right, wrote Ida May from Pasadena near the end of the summer:

I've been a dither lately waiting to see if Collie will get sent to some island where I can't go, but if that does happen at least I've had the satisfaction of having had the most fun I've ever had in my life these last few months.²³

Also during that summer, the due date of Collins and Ida May's first grandchild approached. Daughter Ida Mae kept her parents up-to-date on Betsy's health.

In an undated letter written during the summer of 1941, Ida Mae said:



²² "Collins Burton Cannon, as told to Julie Cannon Markham 1982."

²³ 27 August 1941 Beth Innes Cannon to Ida May Burton Cannon. The context of the letter concerned a possible visit by Collins and Ida May to California before Bud's orders arrived. I do not know if that trip happened.

Betsy looks fine. I'm really proud of her. Her maternity dresses are the best looking I have ever seen and quite concealing. To Dad: She is not flaunting her condition.²⁴

Born in July to Betsy and Ted, this little child brought great joy to everyone. A few weeks after the baby's birth, Ida Mae wrote her father:

Karen Elizabeth is most beautiful. I know you will be very proud of her good conduct. We can't wait for you to see her & we are just dying for Grandpa Cannon to see her cause we talk about you so much.²⁵



Collins wrote his newborn granddaughter Karen, who is shown at right in 1943 with her newborn cousin Rosanne Smith. In writing this letter, Collins recounted a completely fabricated life history of his own:

I, myself, was deprived of my natural food at an extremely early age in my life. We didn't have any of the delightful patent substitutes now available and served up under conditions of laboratory sterility...I do recall however, that "sugar tit." My first experience with it was when I was six weeks old. It was delightful. A sugar tit you know -- no, I guess you don't know and likely will never learn of it under modern conditions under which you will be reared -- is a spoonful of U&I wrapped in a rag and tied with a bit of twine. It is inserted in the mouth of the squalling infant and instantly gratification results. My mother was deft at it. I soon became so, too. I could prepare my own at the age of two months. All it required was a squared off rag -- any old rag. I sometimes used to tear mine off the rag rug on the floor....

You know there are lots of things you can do to help your mother. For instance you can, if you try, house break yourself. What a help that would be. I wasn't able to house break myself until I was about four years old. However, I did learn to change myself when I was about a month and a half old. At first, though, I had quite a time with the pins....I remember once when I was struggling with the pin, the hired man was passing....The man noticed my difficulty and went to the stable for help. He returned with the grandest thing you ever saw. It was made of brass and shiny...it was generally used to pin a blanket on a sick horse....Forthwith I adopted it and my pinning troubles were over. Mother found it handy too, when she wanted to carry me around. It was a fine handle.²⁶

²⁴ Summer 1941 Letter from Ida Mae Cannon to Ida May Burton Cannon. The first page is lost.

²⁵ 13 September 1941 Letter from Ida Mae Cannon to Collins Telle Cannon.

²⁶ 8 August 1941 Letter from Collins T. Cannon to Dear-what-do-they-call-you?

A few weeks later, Collins Burton moved with his wife Beth from Pasadena to the Naval base in Washington State. Once there, he wrote his parents from Seattle in September that year:

Wednesday we assembled parts for a scout plane which had crashed in the Sound.
Thursday, I went to Bremerton and visited the *Lexington* and the English “Warspite.”
The *Warspite* was hit by a Stuka at Crete. The damage was terrible....Friday I went up with the squadron. We practiced crash landings in the Sound. The tender “Teal” would come alongside and tow us a short way, and then we would repeat. The water was very rough, but the planes make good boats....Let me know what to get Mae & Fenton to avoid duplication.²⁷

Chapter 36: Ida Mae’s Marriage, the War Continues

Collins Burton’s mention of Mae was a reference to Ida Mae’s upcoming marriage to Alfred Fenton Smith, shown at right. Barbara Cannon, the daughter of Daniel Hoagland Cannon who had grown up at the same time Collins was on the Cannon farm, had introduced Ida Mae to the handsome Fenton Smith, who worked for U&I Sugar Company and who had served a mission in the British Isles in the late 1920s. Apostle John A. Widtsoe was the British Mission president at that time.



Ida Mae later wrote about meeting Fenton:

Barbara introduced me to Fenton, I needed a date for Spring Formal. It was on the Roof Garden at the Hotel Utah. We hit it off nicely. Seemed we had many things in common. He worked for the Utah Idaho Sugar Company and my dad did and that looked like security to me.²⁸

Late in September, Ida Mae wrote her parents in Belle Fourche:

Was I ever happy to get your note saying that it was quite possible that you could come out in November to participate in the festivities. I had really been plenty worried about it, in fact, several good nights of rest had been devoted to thinking up some way I could get you here.

Ida Mae added a note about Betsy’s baby:

²⁷ 27 September 1941 Collins Burton Cannon to his parents.

²⁸ Life History of Ida Mae Cannon Smith, 1997.

Karen Elizabeth is doing beautifully and we do adore her. Betsy takes lovely care of her and her Grandpa Cannon won't need to worry about holding her as she is not smelly!! Ted is indeed a proud papa and loves wheeling her up and down in front of the apartment to show her off to the neighbors.²⁹

Ida Mae later wrote of her wedding day:



On November 15, 1941, Fenton and I were married in the Salt Lake Temple. Elder John A. Widtsoe [shown left] performed the ceremony. Present were Mother and Dad, Fenton's mother, Roy and Faun, and Betsy.³⁰

In this photo at right, Maydae is wearing a brown dress which she bought for \$25 to wear at events on her wedding day, which included a luncheon at the Hotel Utah. A coordinating hat, pictured below, was purchased for \$12.95, with Ida Mae saying:



...it is the most stunning thing I have ever had on my head.³¹



Ida Mae later remembered the meal:

We had a wedding breakfast in the President's Suite at the Hotel Utah. There were 24 present and it cost \$30! The menu included: shrimp cocktail, salad, lamb chops with little cuffs on the bones, browned potatoes, peas, famous Hotel Utah hard rolls, and the dessert was molded ice cream in the shapes of little love birds and wedding rings. Mother [shown below with Collins]³² brought the wedding cake, her homemade, wonderful wedding cake (fruit

²⁹ 20 September 1941 Ida Mae Cannon to Dearest Mother, Dad and Joanie.

³⁰ "Life History of Ida Mae Cannon Smith," by Ida Mae Cannon Smith, 1997. Elder Widtsoe was at this time a senior apostle in the Quorum of the Twelve. Roy was Fenton's half-brother. Faun was his wife, Lafawn.

³¹ 20, 27 September 1941 Ida Mae Cannon to Parents.

³² The two luncheon photos were provided by Georgia Smith Miller. The news clipping is from the Salt Lake Tribune, 16 November 1941.

cake). We had a honeymoon to Las Vegas which was brand new then and stayed at El Rancho Vegas. We visited the brand new Hoover Dam and Zion's Park.³³

Two weeks after Ida Mae and Fenton's return from their honeymoon, on December 7th, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, a significant military base in the Pacific, and the United States entered the War.

Miss Cannon Wedded in Temple Rite

An interesting nuptial event of mid-November was the marriage of Miss Ida Mae Cannon and A. Fenton Smith, which took place Saturday morning in the Salt Lake L D S temple.

The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Collins T. Cannon of Belle Fourche, S. D., who arrived Thursday for the wedding. Mr. Smith is the son of Mrs. George A. Smith of 1009 McClelland street.

Following the temple ceremony, a prettily arranged breakfast in the president's suite of the Hotel Utah, given by the parents of the bride honored the couple.

The table was centered with an artistic arrangement of pure white chrysanthemums and in attendance were members of the two families.

The bride wore a smart afternoon gown of coffee brown crepe with gold trim and accessories, and the costume was completed with a corsage of orchids and bouvardia.

The couple left early in the afternoon for a short wedding trip, and on their return will reside in Salt Lake City.



Chapter 37: More Grandchildren, More War

Six months later, on the 27th of June, 1942, and two days after the birth of a red-haired five-pound baby, Collins Burton penned his parents a hurried letter from Kodiak Island, where he was stationed as part of the military's strategic Pacific defense against Japanese attacks on the west coast:

I got to hold Philip (how strange that name seems) yesterday for 15 minutes before I left. He is a lot cuter than when he was born. The change is surprising. If anything should happen to me, see that Beth gets taken care of. I carry \$2,000 life with United Benefit Ins. Co. of Omaha and \$10,000 National Service Life Ins. with the Gov't. All payments are automatic. She knows about all of this, but I want you to know about it also.



³³ Life History of Ida Mae Cannon Smith, 1997.

I want to apologize for the penmanship. I have had but 15 hours sleep in 4 days, hence I am sleepy and very tired. I expect to catch up on it soon though and then will be able to write more legibly--³⁴

Collins Philip's birth had been induced two days earlier, one day after his father received his orders for Alaska.³⁵ Beth's mother, Mary Elizabeth Grover Innes, took the train from Utah to Seattle where she stayed with Beth for a month, until they could arrange for a flight back to Utah with the baby. Mary, whose husband had died suddenly two months earlier, sold her home in Garland that summer for an unexpected profit.³⁶ With the proceeds, she bought a home in Salt Lake City. Mary, shown at right, who was as peaceful and lovely in person as she is in this photograph, was able to pay the mortgage with a



job as a secretary at the State Capitol.³⁷ Beth and Collins Philip, both shown at left, lived with Mary for several years during the War and are shown on Mary's front porch.

For the next eighteen months, Beth did not know where her husband was stationed. From his letters, she knew he lived in a series of quonset huts on various islands and in difficult circumstances, but his whereabouts were considered by military officials to be top secret information and any hints of his location in his letters to her were blotted out.³⁸ Lieutenant Cannon is shown below at left.

Announcement is made of the birth of a baby boy to Lt. (J.G.) and Mrs. Collins B. Cannon of Seattle, Wash., June 25. Mrs Cannon was formerly Miss Beth Innes of Garland. Lt. Cannon left June 26 for Alaska by plane. Mrs T W Innes who is with her daughter, reports that Mrs Cannon and son will return to Garland with her at the end of July.



³⁴ 27 June 1942 Collins Burton Cannon to Folks. I know from other letters which Mom wrote to Dad that he received his orders on the 24th of June. Collins Philip was induced on the 25th and Dad was shipped out on the 26th. In an enormous understatement, this was a very difficult time for my mother.

³⁵ The article announcing Collins Philip's birth was from The Garland Times 10 July 1942.

³⁶ 10 September 1942 Beth Innes Cannon to Collins Burton Cannon. Because there was no will, Mary's house was sold through probate for \$3720 instead of through a local agent, which brought an unexpected additional \$500.

³⁷ Letters from Beth Innes Cannon to Collins Burton Cannon, 1941. I only recently learned these details as I transcribed these War letters Dad had saved.

³⁸ Mom's letters to Dad during the War are heart-rending to read. Mom had a network of friends with spouses in the military who helped her with details about Dad's whereabouts. Sometimes this information frightened her all the more, such as when she learned Dad was in Dutch Harbor.

At his father's funeral, Thomas Michael Cannon later recounted a conversation with Collins Burton about his time in the War:

Japan occupied some of the Aleutian Islands. Atka was one of them – little known fact – so we had quite a force up there. I asked my Dad where he served. He said he served on Kodiak, Cold Bay, Dutch Harbor – the Japanese bombed Dutch Harbor – Unalakleet, Adak, and Amchitka. And the Japanese occupied Atka, the island of Atka. He briefed and debriefed Navy pilots before and after their missions. He was also responsible for aircraft maintenance.



There's an interesting story here. I asked him what kind of planes he worked on. One was a PBY Catalina. I know what that is. Another one is a PB1 Ventura – this would be for the older generation in the congregation this morning. These are piston engine aircraft. And for you young people, you have probably never heard one of these piston engine aircraft take off, but when it does, it is loud. You can feel it in your chest. And, when the Navy guys were maintaining these things, they would tune these things by ear. And Dad was one of them. They would lift up the cowling and adjust the carburetor on these things while they were running. And if you've wondered why my Dad's hearing went bad, that's why. They tuned these piston engine aircraft by ear, up close. He didn't talk about that. He didn't complain about that.

I asked him how he liked serving in Alaska and he said, "I didn't like it but I did a good job." That's my Dad. He might not have liked it, but he did a good job.³⁹

Collins and Ida May worried about their only son. In a letter to Janet in late 1942, Ida May wrote:

We haven't heard but once from Bud. I understand there has been some more activity in the Aleutians and I would so love to hear from him. Give Beth my love, I hope her flowers arrived for Thanksgiving.⁴⁰

In a letter a few months later, Ida May wrote:

³⁹ 30 August 2003 Excerpt from "Thomas Michael Cannon's Remarks at his Father's Funeral in Salt Lake City."

⁴⁰ 30 November 1942 Ida May Burton Cannon to Janet Cannon.

We had [a letter] from Bud but he did not seem very cheerful in it. He is well and working very hard. He says the days go like mad. I wish we could see some end to this chaotic condition.⁴¹

Daughter Ida Mae wrote in her autobiography how the onset of the War affected her life:

December 7, 1941!! Pearl Harbor Day. Our lives changed. By April of 1942, Fenton had enlisted in the Navy in the recruiting service.... Of course, Fenton worked long hours, 7 days a week, we were at war. In June of 1943, Rosanne entered our lives. Of course we knew she was coming for 9 months. How darling she was and how crazy I was about her. In September of that year, we were transferred to Cedar City where Fenton was in charge of their recruiting office....

That summer found Ida May recovering from an illness, and in her place she sent sixteen-year-old Joan to Utah to help Maydae before Rosanne's birth.⁴² Collins wrote his son Bud in early June, 1943. He provided some family details and then discussed with Bud the difficulties of finding employees at the Belle Fourche plant with the War in progress:

Joan is leaving for Salt Lake this coming week. She will help Maydae through her confinement etc. The Hugo Whites from Sioux Falls are being transferred to Salt Lake and Joan is going to travel along with them. I am glad that we can send her along with someone since she has never traveled by train or bus. I suppose she could make it alone alright since she is now so grown up...Really she is getting rather pretty. She is as tall as her mother, much taller than either Bet or May and perhaps will end up as tall as Janet....

Reading between the lines I take it you are looking for leave soon. If it comes in July perhaps I can get away and go over to Salt Lake. In any event your mother expects to be over there for some time after Maydae comes home from the hospital. If our difficulties over here should prevent my leaving and they very well could perhaps you could spend a part of your leave time over here. Of course I will do all I can to get away. Certainly I need it. The difficulties we have been thru during the past year have been almost killing. There isn't much relief in sight either. At this time I do not have the remotest idea how we staff the mill this fall. There are simply no loose people around. Ordinarily you can go down town and pick up a few men for emergency or extra work any time you want some. Now however it is different. We will work it out some way surely.⁴³

⁴¹ 22 April 1943 Ida May Burton Cannon to Janet Cannon.

⁴² 1943 5 July Ida May Burton Cannon to Janet Cannon. Collins and Ida May picked up Joan in Deadwood that night, likely at a bus station, indicating Joan stayed in Utah about a month..

⁴³ 6 June 1943 Collins Telle Cannon to Collins Burton Cannon. This letter was included in a folder of Mom's letters to Dad, 1941-1943. I don't know what was involved with Grandmother Cannon's illness. I know from other letters that the curative procedure involved radium, a trendy medical treatment at the time which she felt had worked.



They See Brighter Outlook For Sugar

Representatives of Utah-Idaho Sugar Company's plants in five states met today to solve industry problems. Those attending included Collins T. Cannon, left, of Belle Fourche, S. D., W. J. O'Bryant, center, of Spanish Fork; and Paul Scalley, right, of Idaho Falls, Ida.

The picture at left was taken during a meeting in Salt Lake City in late 1942. An accompanying news article, not shown, addressed the sugar company's difficulties in finding workers during the War and mentioned the company was considering automation, if they could find the metal, which was also in short supply. An alternative was bringing in workers from Mexico.⁴⁴

Ida May's older sister Rachel spent several weeks in Belle Fourche to help Ida May through her recovery.⁴⁵ During this period, Ida May wrote Janet. A brief comment in one letter illustrates the frugality imposed by the War and also by their personal circumstances:

If you think you will have time to make a brown wool dress from this brown suit of your father's, I shall pick it to pieces and wash it and send it to you. If not, I shall have it made for Joannie. You will have to do with very few things this fall. As I told you before, my illness was really quite a blow

and very little of it was covered by insurance.⁴⁶

Ida May wrote Janet, shown right, often from Belle Fourche. They discussed finances, clothing and sometimes the men in Janet's life. Three years earlier when she was eighteen, Janet had met Pete Randall at a dance in Logan which she attended with friends. At that time, more than anything else, Janet was struck by Pete's great ability to dance. Seeing a future with him, Janet continued to travel to Logan to see Pete, although her relationship with him was not exclusive.⁴⁷ It appears from a variety of letters from her mother which Janet saved, that during these years Ida May worried about Janet after she returned to Salt Lake City to complete her studies at the U. In a 1942 letter, Ida May tactfully wrote:



⁴⁴ 29 December 1942 Deseret News.

⁴⁵ 5 July 1943 Ida May Burton Cannon to Jananey Polly.

⁴⁶ 20 July 1943 Ida May Burton Cannon to Janet Cannon.

⁴⁷ 30 April-1 May 2020 Conversation with Carolyn Randall Farrell and Cannon Randall.

There are some very good articles in the Relief Society Magazine. On love and courtship and controlling one's baser instincts. You aren't Marian, of course, who knows everything, but you might read these and pick up a few extra pointers. This is really in seriousness. I am amazed and delighted at the frankness of the General Board in acknowledging a need for this type lesson. I am certain both your grandmothers would be greatly shocked.⁴⁸

Unbeknownst to Ida May or Collins, Pete had in fact proposed to Janet. Her answer:

I have to live a little first, but will you ask me again?⁴⁹

Betsy's husband Ted enlisted in 1942 and recruited for the Navy through that year. In 1943 he earned a commission and trained gunnery crews in the Pacific where he served on a 3000-man troop transport. After General MacArthur liberated the Philippines from the Japanese in 1945, Lieutenant Kimball's transport carried the American prisoners of war who had been rescued from the Japanese camps. Of this experience Ted later said:

One time out at the Philippines coming down through the straits, we were escorted by destroyers, and they decided--their sonar told them there was something there, and we had orders to full speed. Of course, we could run away from a submarine that was submerged, but I'll never forget this. I was sitting at my desk in my quarters when they dropped the depth charge. I landed on the floor.⁵⁰

Ted's transport carried the freed American servicemen to San Francisco and then took French paratroopers who had been marooned in the Pacific through the Panama Canal to Marseille.⁵¹ From there, they transported American soldiers to Virginia when the War ended. Ted was mustered out in California and returned home to his family.

Betsy had a second child while Ted was in the Pacific, a son named Edward Partridge. After his birth, and to the delight of Ida May, Betsy lived in Belle Fourche for a short period with her two little ones.⁵²

In the middle of WWII, Collins' older brother Sylvester passed away, followed the next month by apostle and long-time Cannon family friend, Rudger Clawson. At that time, George Albert Smith became President of the Quorum of the Twelve and a few months later, at the 1943

⁴⁸ 27 January 1942 Ida May Burton Cannon to Janet Cannon. Marian Dunn was a cousin who was engaged.

⁴⁹ 30 April-1 May 2020 Conversation with Carolyn Randall Farrell and Cannon Randall.

⁵⁰ 19 February 1985 Interview with Edward B. Kimball by Winifred Margetts, held at the Marriott Library.

⁵¹ Lauria Smith Priano read this page and told me that Uncle Ted loved to speak French (which he learned during his mission) and surely would have enjoyed speaking with the rescued men.

⁵² Autobiography of Ida May Burton Cannon. "Our daughter Betsy came to live with us with her two darling children while her husband served overseas."

October General Conference, Spencer W. Kimball and Ezra Taft Benson filled the two vacancies. At the time of Sylvester's death, fifteen children of George Q. Cannon were still living.

In January of 1944, Collins wrote Janet, who was attending her last quarter at the U. earning a degree in microbiology:

Keep telling us about your plans, particularly about your school. Are you surely going to get your degree. I'll be so terribly disappointed if you do not. It means more to me than it does to you. I used to tell Bud that also. Well any way the day he graduated was one of the happiest in my life. Yours will likewise be a most happy one you may be assured. I don't suppose you thought I could be capable of much sentiment.⁵³

The next month, Ida May wrote Janet. In this letter Ida May mentioned that Beth and Philip had joined Collins Burton in Seattle upon his return from the Aleutians, shown right. Ida May also expressed her desire to travel to Utah in May to help with the arrival of Betsy's baby, Ed, but if she did that, she would not be able to travel to Salt Lake City for Janet's graduation the next month. Ida May asked Janet to confirm that she would indeed be graduating. Ida May had also received a letter from her sister-in-law Grace, who had heard that Janet had received a "very beautiful ring" from Pete Randall, now a private in the Army who was in dental school in Oregon.⁵⁴

Good to See . . .
 There's much celebrating going on in the Collins B. Cannon home these days, for "the hero has returned." Yes, Lieutenant Collins B. Cannon, U.S.N., has returned from active duty in the Aleutians to be reunited with his charming wife and young son, Philip. And even the proud parents, Mr. and Mrs. Collins T. Cannon, have come all the way from Belle Fourche, S. D., to meet the returning son.

A few months later, Collins and Ida May sent a congratulatory card to Janet, who was the second and last child of theirs to earn a degree:

Belle Fourche
 6-1-44

Dear Janney:--

Of course we are desolated on account of our inability to be present at your graduation. The insignificant gift which Ted brings you from us is but a token. Something more

⁵³ Undated letter, presumably January 1944 (assumption based on a detail from a later letter), from Collins Telle Cannon to Janet Cannon.

⁵⁴ Obituary of Clarence Pete C. Randall by Clarence Cannon Randall. Cannon has since told me that because of the War, the program was accelerated and his father completed his degree in three years with no summers off.

suitable is not to be had a way out here. Sometime we will make it all up to you and in good measure you may be sure.

Well anyway we are as proud of you as can be. You have no idea the satisfaction it gives us to have you complete, so well, your college work.

Perhaps in July we will be able to come over to Salt Lake. That, however is uncertain on account of the difficulties of travel but anyway in September we expect you will come over here for a time with us.

Ted & Karen are leaving on the midnite bus. They bring you our very best love

Ida May Burton Cannon

Collins Telle Cannon⁵⁵



That month, at the end of Joan's junior year of high school, the government called for help in the country's aircraft manufacturing plants. Over 300,000 women were filling jobs previously held by men in this industry, but the need was still great. Collins Burton, who had returned to Seattle the previous year,⁵⁶ extended an invitation to seventeen-year-old Joan, left, to live with him and Beth for the summer and work in the shop he supervised. He later described his responsibilities:

I started off that time in charge of the hull repair shop. I was the shop superintendent, a Lieutenant. After a few months I was the Engine Overhaul Division Superintendent, and then I was Shop

Superintendent of the whole place. It was a good job. I had 3500 people in that shop. There were four big hangars full of people.⁵⁷

Ida May later recounted an experience of Joan's:

For part of the war, Collie was stationed at Sand Point Naval Base in Seattle, Washington, and he had charge of all of the redesign and reconstruction of the planes that were damaged in the war. Joan was living in Belle Fourche with us and Bud called and asked if Joan wanted to come to Sand Point, that he had a job for her. She went and got a job designing patches for the planes that came in. Because she had had geometry and was good at it, she earned a little more an hour than the other girls. While she was

⁵⁵ 1 June 1944 Ida May Burton Cannon and Collins Telle Cannon to Janet Cannon. This note was penned by Ida May on a card which she mentioned elsewhere came from Edwin Q. Cannon's stamp company.

⁵⁶ 25 August 1943 Salt Lake Telegram.

⁵⁷ "Collins Burton Cannon, as told to Julie Cannon Markham 1982."

working there, there was a lieutenant who was very huffy and snooty. She thought it would be fun to tease him a little by flipping a rivet at him and hitting him on his “derriere.” This went on day after day and he got very indignant and was determined to find out who had the nerve to do such a dastardly thing. When he found out who it was, word came to Joan that it was the day she had to go up to see the “brain.” That’s what they called Collie because he was the boss of the division. Collie asked, “Joani, why are you doing this?” Joan replied that the lieutenant was just bursting with pride and was so conceited that she just couldn’t resist it. Well, Collie told her that it must stop, and if it happened again, she would have to go home, and he didn’t want that. So, she reluctantly behaved herself.⁵⁸

Upon her return, Joan wrote her siblings:

Belle Fourche, So. Dak.
Sept. 5, 1944

...Mother has been pounding on for me to write you all since I got home so tonight I got home early and neither Ma nor Pa were home and the typewriter and carbon was out so I decided to sit down and drop you a line. So here goes.

My summer was very profitable. I feel very much more intelligent than I did last May when I got on the train to go out to Seattle. I had that funny little feeling when I left Ma and Pa at Bowman [South Dakota]. But when I got on at Seattle, and left Bud and Beth I felt fine.

⁵⁹

That month Ida May, in a carbon letter to her four older children, said:

Joani tells us something new about Philip [shown right] every day. He must be adorable.⁶⁰

Letters during these six years reflect that the Cannon family made friends and that overall, they enjoyed their time in Belle Fourche. The photo below shows Collins, lying down, and Ida May, second from left, at a gathering for the eighty-fifth birthday of Sam Weller, center, a local businessman.



⁵⁸ “Ida May Burton Cannon, as told to Laurie Smith, 1977.”

⁵⁹ 5 September 1944 Joan Cannon to her siblings (carbon letters).

⁶⁰ 4 September 1944 Ida May Burton Cannon to her four older children.



Chapter 38: 1945 -- The War Ends

On Groundhog's Day, 1945, Beth gave birth to her second child, a red-headed baby whom Collins Burton named Thomas Michael Cannon, the first name being in honor of Beth's deceased father. Mike was the fifth grandchild of Collins and Ida May.

April was a turning point in the War. That month President Roosevelt died and was immediately succeeded by Harry S Truman. At the end of the month, Benito Mussolini was killed and Adolf Hitler committed suicide. The Germans surrendered in early May.



In Salt Lake City, Heber J. Grant died, with George Albert Smith becoming president of the LDS Church. Three months later, President Smith dedicated the Idaho Falls Temple. It was at this time that Collins' much-loved sister Grace, who was returning from the dedication, was tragically killed in a car accident. Their brother Lewis died the following year.

In the midst of these events, Joan, left, graduated from high school in the spring of 1945 and made plans to attend the Black Hills Teachers College that fall. Douglas Cannon Smith, Ida May and Collins' sixth grandchild, was born in

Cedar City to Ida Mae and Fenton. Although the War was winding down, both Mike and Doug's birth locations had been determined by where their fathers were stationed with the Navy.

During the previous year, Janet had worked in a lab in a Salt Lake City hospital. With hopes that the War would soon end, Beth extended a long-term invitation to Janet to visit her and Bud in Seattle. Janet accepted in order to spend more time with Pete, whose location in Portland, less than two hundred miles away, was easily accessible by train.

In August, the United States dropped nuclear bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and the Japanese surrendered, finally ending the horrific war.