

My Husband - William Henry Hartwell (1902-1961)

My husband, Bill Hartwell, was born in Milford, Massachusetts, on September 21, 1902, in the house that his grandfather (also William Henry Hartwell) built. I don't know too much about his childhood, but I'm sure he was cherished as the only surviving child. Bill was six feet tall, large boned, and had blue eyes, brown hair, and a light complexion. He received his education in the Milford schools, his bachelor's degree from Boston University, and his master's degree from Wesleyan in 1927.

Because his parents were religious people, he was brought up in the church. Both his parents were intellectuals who studied the Bible in three languages -- English, Latin, and Greek. Some of this must have rubbed off on Bill. When I knew him, I thought him a bit of a rebel, but found that he rarely strayed far from his church and his moral principles. He was interested in science and wanted to go to M.I.T., but his father felt he should get a liberal arts degree first. Thus he attended Boston University, where he majored in Physics.

Bill was like his father in that he made friends everywhere. When he died, I had notes or flowers from people I never knew. If a party ever lagged, he would take over and have everyone laughing at his jokes. He knew hundreds of jokes in all different categories to be used according to his audience. Once we were on a trip to the White Mountains and he met one of his former students by chance. The young man said, "I don't remember much Physics, but I do remember your jokes,

Professor Hartwell!"

Bill did a lot of civic things. He served on the town committees and worked hard to get several improvements. He was also treasurer of the Red Cross for many years. During the second World War, we had disaster drills. He headed these up and was sometimes called out in the middle of the night. Bill was also teaching Physics to the army men stationed at the University. He worked seven days a week during this time; I always thought that these years undermined his health. However, Bill did get great satisfaction about doing his duty. He was also involved with the Great Bay Stamp Club, the Men's Club, the New Hampshire Academy of Arts and Sciences, Sigma Pi Sigma, Alpha Epsilon Delta, the community choir, the Durham Community Church, the town advisory board, and was president of his college class.

My husband was rather quiet at home. He would get home from work around five o'clock and listen to his music (classical records) until dinner time. Bill was affectionate but not demonstrative, and even after many years I couldn't get him to outwardly show his affection for the children and me. I know he loved his family because we were his main concern.

Bill liked to work out of doors, especially when he could mend something or mix and pour cement. He got into old clothes and enjoyed himself. I remember once he cut off an old pair of pants to make shorts (you couldn't buy them then). Priscilla sewed ball fringe like one put on curtains around the legs. He was very pleased with the shorts and wore them until the fringe fell off.

For my fiftieth birthday, Bill invited all the relatives and our friends to a cookout in our back yard. I was to do nothing. My family came from Westfield, which was a rare treat in itself. When my many gifts were opened, there was nothing from Bill. After he had teased me long enough, he brought out a new set of kitchenware -- pots and pans, etc. I had wanted them but thought them too expensive. Bill wouldn't venture inside a woman's store, but I had a new appliance as each came out. I often wished he would buy me a "nightie", but that was wishful thinking!

Bill loved to travel. We would decide where we wanted to go and he would spend all winter marking out the route and the places to see. When we took the trip he was the driver and tour guide. He seldom was lost and when he was, we didn't know it. We began our travels at the time the parents came to live in Durham. Of course they went along with us. Our first trip was out West as far as the Rockies. Bill's folks were over eighty and my mother seventy, but we all kept well. It was a thrilling trip for us all. We took several more in the car. Bill and I went to Europe the summer before he died, seeing the Olympics in Rome and the Oberammagau (Passion Play).

Bill was a fine man and a wonderful husband. I was lucky to have lived with him for thirty-two years.