

# Interview with Mrs. Spruance

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Q. Tell me something about your home life, and the days of your childhood.

A. I was born in 1888 in Indianapolis, Indiana. I was the youngest of three children, <sup>six</sup> three boys and three girls. At the age of five we moved to a great new house and we had a very happy and a very pleasant homelife. We were very close; we did not argue. We stayed in Indianapolis the year round through both the hot summers and the cold winters. My father was a very dignified gentleman and he seemed rather remote. He had a Quaker background and I think this had a lot to do with his dignity and quietness. and this company He was a partner in the Dean Pump Co., ~~something that~~ is still in existence today.

My brothers all worked in the company as soon as they were old enough and able to. ~~I was~~

I went to high school where I was not a very good student and I did not graduate from high school. I went to Erie College because my sisters had gone there and they had spoken very highly of it. It was a sister college to Mt. Holyoke where I ~~would have felt~~ felt I would spend my last two years. However, I enjoyed Erie so much that I stayed there the entire four years. I was not a very good student but I was elected President of the class in the

senior year. And particularly I had a great deal of trouble with the subject of mathematics.

There were about 150 girls in the entire college; in many ways it was like a boarding school. I remember in particular one teacher who instilled in us an eagerness to learn about history.

Q. What do you know about the parents, the home life and the childhood of your husband?

A. I know surprisingly very little about his home life as a child. The Spruance family lived across from my Uncle Tom. Tom had a large, teeming family of harum-scarum kids.

As a child he was very lonely. ~~XXXX~~ His mother was a complete intellectual. She felt that everyone should have a family but that one was too many. She must have adored him but he never spoke much about his mother or his family life. He must have been very lonely because he spent a great deal of time across the street with my Aunt Emily Dean. They adored him and they liked him. My mother and sisters remember <sup>him</sup> ~~me~~ during those days but I don't.

He would go with Aunt Emily Dean behind the old horse, Mollie, and they would drive a long, long time and they would go to Margaret Dean's house.

Again, Mrs. Spruance's mother and sisters remember Raymond coming there with Aunt Emily. I first met Raymond and first remember him when he came home from the Naval Academy his plebe

year. However, my family certainly knew the Spruances.

The two families were great friends.

Q. Why did he live with his Aunts for so many years?

A. Expectant mothers in those days would go back to their families to have their children. In that Raymond's mother was from Baltimore, she went back there to have her second child, Billy; she went back to the family home in Baltimore, that is, and Raymond went with her.

When Billy was born, Raymond was sent on to South Orange, NJ to his grandmother's. To be more specific, Raymond was born in Baltimore. When Billy was born, Raymond was about six years old. Mrs. Spruance went to the family home in Baltimore and Raymond went to South Orange, NJ to be with his grandmother, and there he stayed until he returned to Indianapolis for his freshman year in high school.

Q. What was his father like?

A. He was very quiet; completely overshadowed by his wife. Raymond didn't really understand or appreciate his father until he came to visit us many years later about 1924. He spent the summer with us. He was a great reader, very quiet and very shy. Fine looking. He was very difficult to get to know.

Q. What was his relationship with his three aunts with whom he lived so many years?

A. He was very happy with them. He felt very close to them and the years that he spent with them in South Orange were very happy years for him.



When he came back to Indianapolis <sup>and</sup> and we became engaged and then married, he would describe with a great deal of happiness his life with his three aunts in New Jersey. His aunts were Louise<sup>?</sup>, Aunt ~~Betsy~~ <sup>Bessie</sup>, and Aunt ~~Zelda~~ <sup>Sally</sup>?. Aunt Bessie would help him with his studies ; they were all brilliant women. He must have been particularly close <sup>to</sup> with his aunts for as soon as he became engaged, he immediately described his earlier years with his three aunts.

Grandma Hiss was a domineering woman. Aunt Louie was his great companion. Grandmother Hiss was an intellectual snob; very domineering and very critical. The women worshipped Raymond and it was a wonder that he wasn't ~~turned~~ terribly spoiled.

Of course, there were his uncles. There were many of them, at least four. Their names were: Raymie Willie and other boys. A great many playmates. The entire family had moved from Baltimore to South Orange, and this is why Raymond was born in Baltimore; why his other brothers were born in So Orange.

He had a very happy childhood. It was a large spacious house and large spacious grounds. They had many comforts. Unfortunately the entire Hiss family lost all their money. They lost their money very suddenly. Because the family had lost this money, it became necessary to find another way to get Raymond educated, to get Raymond a college education. He was going to go to Stephens Institute but his mother was also working very hard to get him an appointment to the Naval Academy.

Actually, he got two appointments to the Naval Academy. Raymond felt an obligation to his mother to go because she had worked so hard for him to get the appointment.

Q. When did you first meet him?

A. <sup>Well,</sup> I know I did not meet him when he went to high school. The first time I met him was when he was a plebe at the Naval Academy. He had come home to Indianapolis.

When we knew he was coming home as a midshipman, we were all terribly excited because we thought of him as a naval officer. Mrs. Daniels, who was a very prominent lady in the town and a friend of Mrs. Spruance, had arranged a dinner dance in his ~~honor~~ honor.

He seemed a little bit stuffy and ill at ease and I can remember that it was at that dance that I really met him for the first time. I came home that evening. I remarked to my family why he never sat down through the whole event. I think he was afraid he was going to get a crease in his uniform. He was wearing a white uniform for that dance. That was the first and last time I saw him for some years.

*[must have been 1911]*

The next time I saw him was in the fall of 1908, Taking a draft of troops out to the Orient, he stopped in Indianapolis for about three weeks. He saw me playing tennis on the tennis courts and he must have been impressed because he always told me afterward that when he saw me playing tennis that day, he made up his mind he was going to marry Margaret Dean. During this three-week period, was when I really got to know him.

He hadn't seen me since he was a plebe, yet during that three-week period he decided he was going to call on me formally. And in those days the manners and customs were that one did call ~~on~~ formally on a young lady.

He took me to the theatre the last night before he left and then I didn't see him again for three years. During the time he was away, I would get a letter only occasionally. My family would tease me: "Oh, there's another letter from that Raymond Spruance." He had left; he had not made any proposals; he had not made any promises. I've often thought after that what a pity <sup>while</sup> we didn't marry before he went to the Orient because/I was waiting there in Indianapolis, I could have been enjoying myself out in the Orient with him as his wife.

Q. What was there about him at that time that appealed to you?

A. Well, I was very excited when I knew he was coming home. I had heard from him perhaps three times in that period. During that period he had sent me some beautifully embroidered cloth and he said, "If you write me, I will send you the other half." And I thought that was <sup>very</sup> amusing.

I was really very thrilled at the thought of his coming. In less than two weeks after he was home, he had asked for my hand in marriage.

Q. Well, what kind of person was he in those days?

A. He was very attractive; very slender; very interesting.



I felt as he grew older he got very, very handsome. Young, he was a very interesting looking person. He was gentle; and a heavenly sense of humor. He was quiet and reserved and very happy in my family. Of course, I knew he was interested in me and that ~~ah~~ had a lot to do with it.

There was only one other person I had <sup>ever</sup> been interested in. ~~M~~ It was a man - name of Richardson - down in Porto Rico, whom I met as a girl when I took a vacation down in Porto Rico. Other <sup>ever</sup> than him, Raymond was the only person I was <sup>^</sup> interested in. In fact, Mr. Richardson reminds me ~~so~~ of Raymond. Both his physical resemblance and his character,

So after two weeks we were engaged. That was in June. Married in December. ~~I-often-~~ I was often asked why we waited so long. I've always told them: "Well, I wanted one more Christmas at home."

Q. What was your parents' reaction to the thought of your marrying a naval officer?

A. Father was very distressed. Thought I was just going to be a glorified tramp for the rest of my life and I was his youngest daughter. However, he got over his distress in a very short period of time. He soon had great admiration for Raymond although ~~he~~ really didn't know him very well.

He took my hand in a very formal manner as was the custom of the day.

He had a very frank discussion with my father about such things as his finances. For example, even then he was helping to support his family financially and we would have to live on a virtual shoestring. He was helping to support both his parents and his aunt. He went into very thoroughly the finances that he would have and it seemed like a starvation budget to my father. The family was very fond of Raymond. and considered that I was very fortunate. They felt this way because most of the boys that I had known had been rather scatter-brained, irresponsible types.

Q. Did he tell you he intended to be a career naval officer and that you would have to spend the rest of your life as it were as a Navy wife.

A. Well, he told me about all the disadvantages being a Navy wife and I wondered what he was leading up to. He said years afterwards that she was a fool to marry a Naval officer. But that was before I asked for her hand. In fact, before he asked me to marry him he kept telling me about the disadvantages of Navy life and I wondered what he was leading up to. I thought, does this mean that I'm going to be asked to be his wife? He told me that we would never have any money and that we would not have any home.

Q. Where were you married?

A. We were married in Indianapolis in my home. He wore his uniform. Our best man was a classmate of his, Jonas Ingram who also married an Indianapolis girl. He was the wildest man in the United States Navy at that time but he gave the impression to my father that Naval officers were just a bunch of drunken bums. The wedding itself was in a large drawing room. It was a very beautiful wedding



and all the family were very excited because I was the first Dean girl to be married. Because I was the first Dean girl to be married, it was a great event in Indianapolis. People were packed and jammed in the drawing room. There was beautiful music and we had all the family from the East there as well.

Q. Where did you go on your honeymoon?

A. We went to Ashville, Norht Carolina. We went to the marvelous old Grove Park Hotel. It was a beautiful place up in the mountains and we spent our time walking. The honeymoon lasted 10 days and then we wetn to Newport News, Va. Newport News was a very dead little town and it was there that Raymond was stationed at the shipyard. Raymond had arranged for a brand-new apartment and he had written me about it. It was 35 feet wide, including the walls.

Q. Did you find out anything about him as regards his personality or character after you were married that you didn't know before you were married?

A. I found that He was very stubborn and that when he felt he was right he would insist upon his way of doing things, and I found that he was most often always right. I found out he was very sweet and very affectionate. He was completely unselfish, and a very hard worker. He was also very pproud of his wife and his funny little apartment. He was very well liked at the shipyard. Most everybody eäse would stay at the shipyard for lunch but he would always come home for lunch. For years afterward until the day of his death, I kept saying to him, "Raymond, why did you insist on coming home for lunch?" Why didn't you stay at the shipyard with the others?" I guess the reason he came home for lunch was because he knew that I was all alone in that aprtment in that forlorn little town so whiel everyone

else stayed at the shipyard for lunch, he would always come home to be with me. Although it was a forlorn little town, I was very happy there. Raymond had many friends and they came to call on me in the apartment so that they could meet Raymond's new wife. Raymond changed a great deal shortly after we were married, he became more outgoing, more relaxed and when one of his close friends, named Johnny Meyer called on us he said, "Well, Margaret Spruance, I sure am glad to meet you. ~~We wondered who it was that had married old Stony-Face.~~" We all wondered who was going to marry old Frozen Face." Raymond was much more sociable than I in a way. He very much liked to invite people to the apartment for dinner and we had a colored cook who could do a very good job of putting out meals. I personally was very contented just to have his company and to take walks. *(Norton also)*

Q. When did you find out that he liked to walk?

A. I found out before we were married. I remember one cold winter night we took a long, long walk all the way out to Fall Creek. Finally I had to say, "Raymond, don't you think it's time we headed back?" I think he was very, very high strung, but I also know that he was a stoic. He could be very tense I'm sure <sup>yet</sup> but he was always completely relaxed whenever he came home.

Q. I think as part of his life when the day was over whether he was at sea or ashore, he simply wouldn't do any more work at the end of the day.

A. Yes, I agree and I think the <sup>reason</sup> ~~answer~~ was that he was usually exhausted. People have said to me that it's a wonder he never had ulcers but he took very good care of himself but I know that he knew that he just had to walk. He was just a compulsive walker and I can

remember the long walks that we took along the James River. He liked to explore and go places and he had a curiosity about everything. He had a very inquiring mind. And I think ~~no~~/n// had he had a different education he would have been a complete intellectual. He read a great deal in those early years. He read biographies, histories, and he read the Bible through from cover to cover.

Q. Wasn't that unusual that he read the Bible in that he was not a practicing Christian?

A. Well, he just felt that the Bible was a beautiful book. He was also an avid reader of the book, Progress in Poverty. He read this book early in our marriage and I would say to him, Raymond I don't understand a thing you are saying and I don't want to hear any more about it. That book was very much a part of his thoughts until the day of his death. He thought the Bible was very beautiful and he kept it by his bed but he did not read it for any religious reasons. But he certainly must have gotten something out of it.

Q. Did he ever tell you why he was not a church-goer?

A. Well, when he was a boy he went to church regularly. However, he never discussed religion. However. I was a Presbyterian and in the early days of our marriage, he would go to church with me faithfully every Sunday morning. I had gone to church a great deal when I was younger and I had also gone to Sunday School. He would say on Sunday mornings, well, I suppose you want to go to church? You see, I had to go to church when I was young. Yes, he did go to church with me on Sunday mornings when I wanted to go. As a matter of fact, he would do almost anything for me. Later he would ridicule some of the sermons. He felt that the Newport News preachers were very narrow-minded and he would say, "Why do we have to go to church



every Sunday morning to listen to all that trite?" Yet there was something about him that seemed to indicate that he had some kind of religious convictions. ~~He was always~~ But I can't explain it, he was always an enigma to me. And his feelings about religion were one of the things that were complete enigma to me. I think that perhaps religion and the concept of God was something that he couldn't understand. As a result of Edward's death, I think he lost almost any faith he might have had. It was Edward's death that killed him. I would try to get him to talk about it but he wouldn't do it but I know that he felt very, very deeply about Edward and about the fact that Edward had died. But he didn't want to break down so he wouldn't talk about it. I think he went through life like that feeling very deeply about things but not talking about them because he didn't want to show his emotions. He was terribly sensitive. He tried to hide the fact that he was sensitive. I think he felt it was not a "manly" thing to do if one showed his emotions. I think he felt that way especially as a young man, and I know his whole life was very unhappy when he lived in Indianapolis.

Q. Can you explain why he disliked writing or getting involved in detailed work?

A. Well, he certainly had an orderly mind. (Mrs. Spruance indicated that she was not aware of this facet of his personality).

Q. Well, he got Carl Moore to help him with the details during the war.

A. Mrs. Spruance did not want to discuss this aspect. It seemed to be something about him that she did not or could not discuss.

Q. What did he tell you about his days at the Naval Academy?

A. He never discussed it very much but I think he was unhappy. He had

made friends at the Naval Academy but I think he felt it was a terrific grind. It was very narrow as well. For instance, he once told me about working out a mathematical problem. He did not work the problem in accordance with the book. He handed the problem solution into the instructor. The way to do it was all in the book; there was nothing original. He turned in the paper and it was graded to be a failure. Raymond went to the instructor and said well, I solved the problem so there are at least two ways of solving it. The instructor said, "Yes, perhaps, but you didn't do it according to the book." That was the kind of thing that he disliked. Another thing that bothered him was that he would finish his studies early in the evening, but he couldn't go to bed until ten o'clock. One time he was caught sleeping before ten o'clock and because of this he got demerits. This was another example of the sort of thing that he disliked about the Naval Academy. My son was very much like his father in that he disliked this sort of thing about the Naval Academy also. Although Edward was much more rebellious about that than Raymond.

Q. Did he ever talk about a classmate name of Branch who had been killed in a hazing incident?

A. Yes, he did mention it every now and then as I recall he said that it ended the horrible hazing. I think Raymond hated hazing and he would never haze himself. He also never wanted duty at the Naval Academy although it wasn't for the fact that he wouldn't have been happy there. Yes, in retrospect, I don't think he was all that unhappy there so I don't think that was the reason he didn't want to teach.

Q. Did he ever talk about his seasickness?

A. Yes, he did and I think it was marvelous that he ever stuck it out. He was seasick until he got on the big ships. Remember one time that Billy Halsey and his wife and I were together in San Francisco during the World's Fair. We were great friends and the four of us went out for dinner. Billy said, "Spruance, if you had your life to live over again, what would you like to be?" Raymond's answer.. "A successful Naval Officer"/ ~~Billy~~ Billy said the same thing. The two of them were happy in their professions. Raymond was not the kind of person to gripe, and he would not say unkind things about other people. He kept those kinds of things to himself with perhaps one or two exceptions. For myself, I would thrash out at people and I would say to Raymond "Now I know you agree with me". He would say to me, "And how do you know?" He felt that he was, and I agreed that he was, a very good judge of character. I remember one time he went to Indianapolis on the occasion of the death of his father. He was very close to his father then. He regretted that summer how indifferent he had been to his father in all the earlier years of his life. I would say to him, "But that wasn't your fault." While he was out there he saw his old friend Joe Daniels whom he had known so intimately during his three years in Indianapolis. Joe Daniels and other people that he knew were so successful in business and we were so poor. I believe that was 1921 or 1922. He came back from Indianapolis rather disgruntled. He said to me how <sup>sorry</sup> ~~peer~~ he was that I had to live the way I did and I said to him, what more could I want? I knew he was supporting his mother, his father and his aunt. I didn't care, I was happy. I had a cook, and a car, I



was happy/ ~~And-we-were-young-~~ And we had two young children. He was very silent. He said I think that I'm wasting time and that we'll never have any money. My father had been very successful in business and he wrote to me and said that Raymond had talked to him about this while he was in Indianapolis and had talked about the possibility of leaving the Navy and going into business. My father had said, "Don't ever allow such a thing." Raymond could never face the businessworld! Honesty is the best policy in the Navy but it would never work in the business world. I read that letter to Raymond but he was very worried about the financial aspects of the Navy, I think it was the money that was worrying him. He had life insurance, but not heavy life insurance. I remember somebody once said that he didn't know the value of money. But that was wrong because he was a very successful investor. I inherited \$50,000. I had inherited this upon my father's death. It was a great deal of money in those days. I inherited this money in 1924 just before we went abroad. Raymond invested that money very carefully in bonds and he made a thorough investigation of all the possibilities before he finally decided where he was going to invest the money. He built that money up so that after his death I had an estate worth \$400,000. And for himself he had started at nothing but upon his death he had his own estate worth \$600,000. This shows how wrong be if they said that he had no business sense. We were not hurt in the crash of '29 because our money was either in bonds or we had it invested in solid stocks such as M or other companies which were solid as the rock of Gibraltar. He never bought on margin or anything like that. Our own family was desperate for money but our government

check kept rololling in and he was still supporting his mother and his aunts all through it. But even though he took such good care of me and of his paretns and his aunts he would never spend a penny on himself which was too bad. For example, when he bought anything he paid good money for it and it was supposed to last for the rest of his life. I would roar in rage about his suits. I would try to get him to buy a new suit but he would say, "Well, I bought that in 1935 what's wrong with it?" I think sometimes this prevented him from having a good time because he would not spend money on himself. I think one of the motivations for his building up an estate was, of course, to provide for the security of his family but I think also that he had been terribly shocked at what had happened to his Grandfather Hiss. At one time, his Grandfather had a large house with servants and then suddenly overnight it seemedly disappeared. I think this walsyas shocked him and had a great affect on the way he handled his finances in later years. In those days, ladies didn't work and so the three aunts just stayed home and took over the home in South Orange. The aunts carried on wonderfully despite their financial reverses. I thought they were a thousand years old when I first met them. They kept up with the clubs in town. This situation really made It tough for Raymond.

Q. Did he ever speak to you about his around the world cruise that followed immediately after his graduation?

A. Yes, he did speak of it and he enjoyed that cruise very much. As far as his staying in the Navy, I think he loved the sea and he had that education and he was determined that he was going to make good. Another reason why he loved the Navy was because of the many good friends he made over the years. We were married

in 1914, December, and Edward was born in October, 1915.

Q. What was his reaction when he found out you were pregnant and he knew he was going to be a father.

A. Well, he thought that that was just great. He was very, very thoughtful and very very, delighted. Edward was named after my father. My mother came out when Edward was born and then my father came out shortly afterward. My father soon changed his opinion of the kind of life I was leading. He could see that I had made a home and then Raymond took him for a cruise on the Pennsylvania which was being built in the shipyard at the time. My father was a lover of the sea. He had been a sailor in the Civil War. My father came back from that trial run on the Pennsylvania just radiant. He was impressed with all the respect that the other officers had for Raymond. As far as his attitude as a father, he did not participate in such activities as bathing or feeding the new baby. It was a mother's job. One time I went to Norfolk leaving Edward in Raymond's care. When I came back he was more than happy to give Edward back to me. It was obvious he had been very uncomfortable and wasn't really sure what to do during my absence. When Edward was still small Raymond and I were going out to our first luncheon since Edward had been born. We were pushing Edward in a baby carriage. Raymond was pushing the baby carriage and we went by the next door neighbor who looked out and saw the distressed look on his face. He said, "Margaret never ask that young man to push that baby carriage again." She said, "You are just crucifying him." From that time on I pushed the baby carriage. He was too stiff with the children. They didn't appreciate him until they grew up. He was demonstrative with me but not with the children. I think, once again, that he did not



want to show his feelings. He was very, very affectionate with me. But he simply didn't want others to know how he felt. He was very, very dear. He was more or less like my father, very reserved with the children. He didn't seem to understand their little problems at all. He was close to them but they were not close to him. When helping the children with their schoolwork he was very, very quick and he was very, very impatient with them when they didn't grasp what he was trying to get across to them. I remember once when he was helping Margaret and you could just hear his breath coming out very rapidly and you could tell that he was getting terribly impatient with her. Margaret came out of the room and she was absolutely in tears. And I said to Raymond, you are absolutely no help if you can't control your feelings. You simply can't act this way when you are with these children, because you are not helping them at all. You are just going to ruin her as far as her coming to you for help. And that is the last thing in the world that you want to do. So he behaved a little better. He was like that with me too. He would say, "I told you once" and he expected you to grasp it right away. He was so quick. His mother was very much like that also. He just couldn't realize that many times people didn't grasp things as rapidly as he did. I often wondered how he handled himself in this matter when he was among his fellow officers. I wonder if Carl ever felt that impatience. Well, he always wanted to be with the children. He would always walk with them. His attitude towards the children did change however as he got older. In the Admiral's last years, Edward would come down to see him often and it was a beautiful relationship. He didn't approve of a great deal of things that Edward did...they

were quite different. I think he understood him. Margaret said that she never realized that her dad felt anything for her until the year she went away to Vassar. Now that was too bad. He just adored his daughter Margaret. When I think of how he went through life hiding his deep emotions and he was not going to break down. This was so apparent at Edward's death. I told him that Edward had been in a very bad accident and he said, "Oh yes." I said, "Well, yes, Raymond is very, very serious." Margaret didn't know how to break it to me so she asked a close friend of mine to tell me about what had happened to Edward. He wasn't well then, he was slipping. I said, "Raymond, this is very terrible news" I remember then he turned around and said, "Let's take a walk." And we did, we walked. Of course we didn't walk very far because he wasn't well. I said to him, "Margaret is coming over this afternoon." And he said, "And why is she coming?" And I thought then that he hadn't grasped what I had been trying to tell him. And I said, "Edward has been terribly hurt. He may not live." And after I said that he closed like a clam. I wanted to talk about it afterward. The doctor told me that if only he would break down it would be his salvation. From then until the day he died, he never again spoke about Edward. He just wasn't at all well then. He had mentally slipped. It was that same old thing that he just wouldn't talk. Of course, me --womanlike-- I just have to boil over. He was very proud of his family. The following is what transpired off the record that day with Mrs. Spruance. She began by saying that when he received orders as COMCRUDIV FIVE he was very disappointed because he had hoped that he would have gotten command of a battleship Division. Spruance

Spruance also told the story of when Spruance was on his way west he stopped by in San Francisco, ran into a friend who said that Ernie King was looking for him and wanted him as his Chief of Staff. That information motivated Spruance to get out to Pearl Harbor as soon as he could because he certainly didn't want to be chief of staff to Ernie King. Mrs. Spruance mentioned once more his stubborn determination, that once he made up his mind he was going to do something that nothing could deter him and nothing could change him then that he was usually right. She again emphasized how absolutely unpredictable he was and how he would do things that would catch her completely off guard, completely unprepared and she many times never really knew what to expect from him. It was again this emphasis of his being an enigma to her.