THE LAST THING Ed Nichols had expected to get mixed up in was a dance. But here he was swinging lovely young Patsy Stevenson. "This is fun," Ed puffed. "You're the best one on the floor, Mr. Nichols," she said, and then she spun off and Ed found himself swinging Martha Williams. "It's a great party, Martha."

"Thank you, Ed. I guess it is. I'm almost having a good time myself."

"It's better if you do, Martha. It'll make it a little easier, maybe." He glanced at Martha's son, Dick, who was now dancing with Patsy—and looking as if he were having the best time of all. Good boy, Ed thought. Here he was about to go into service and... well, he was a swell kid.

A few minutes later Ed was standing on the sidelines sipping a cool drink and resting. "Having a good time, Mr. Nichols?" somebody said. It was Dick Williams. "Yes, I am, Dick."

He paused a second. "I had hoped that I'd be seeing you off to college at about this time but..."

"Uncle Sam comes first, Mr. Nichols. But I'll be back before you know it... and heading for college as Dad and you planned."

"I hope you will, son. Soon!" Ed remembered how Dick's dad had talked about the boy's future and how he, as the New York Life agent, had helped Dick's dad give those plans definite form. When Dick was ten, his father had died, leaving the boy proud memories and enough life insurance to see him and his mother through the years ahead.

"I want you to know, Mr. Nichols, that this whole thing is a lot easier for me, knowing that Mom will have everything she needs while I'm away."

"Mrs. Nichols and I will look in on her often, Dick."

"Thanks," the boy said simply. "And before you know it, we'll throw another party—after I'm back from service and on my way to college." Dick shook hands. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I want to find Patsy Stevenson. I have something important to say to her..." Ed watched the boy and girl going out the side door. "Great kid," he said to himself. "This country's got a great future as long as it has kids like that."

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Naturally, navies used in this story are fictitious.

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