

Chapter 21 – The University – Part 3

Onward. Suppressing the hurt, trying to swim again in troubled sleep. It is the end of my Junior year in the Spring of 1964.

In May, the divorce day,. A campus cop gives me a ticket for speeding, 24mph in a 20mph zone.

I attend a math class and sit in the front row on the left side of a regular single-desk classroom. I have seen the young lady in math for a couple of semesters. She usually wears a long full skirt, a nice figure, not beautiful, but attractive. She is very friendly with everyone. She approaches and asks why I am looking so down. I tell her that I was just divorced this morning. She expresses sympathy and sits next to me. Her name is J.A.

I am usually quite a 'cut-up' in class when it is run by an assistant. Clowning is my nature. I make fun of the examples being used by some teachers by offering others, like instead of dogs and cats, let's use alligators and bumble bees. Classmates laugh. J.A. thinks I am out of line. She is a good obedient schoolgirl.

I heal slowly, looking around at my new way of life. J.A. asks me out to a nice party. I accept. We become better friends. I contemplate. At age 21, is there life after divorce? But, I am committed to keeping both feet on the ground. J.A. is affectionate, but I am not in a hurry to expose myself to hurt again. We date more often.

J.A. is obviously quite infatuated. I am flattered. Self-confidence returns. I figure she is a good solid candidate for a safe mate. One with smarts, reasonably good looks, good money-making potential, and will probably be an excellent mother.

On July 23, 1964, I invite our friends to a late afternoon get-together in the cafeteria. I sit on one side of the long, end-to-end cafeteria tables. J.A. sits on the other. At the right moment, amongst about 15 of our mutual friends, I pull out the engagement ring and place it on the table in front of her. "What do you think?", I ask her. She says nothing, but then jumps across the table, nearly bowling me over, and reply, "What took you so long?" I had been divorced for a whole 2 months.

Part 1 - Times and Places

I follow her lead into the campus Wesley Methodist group and make close friends with good people. I form our intramural sports teams, and she becomes an officer, eventually President of the group. In November of 1964, we bus to Lincoln Nebraska to the Wesley Quadrennial Conference. MLK is the highlight speaker. She and I, as President and VP of our chapter, are invited to his hotel suite one night. We each shook his hand and talk for about 15 minutes. Besides, Richard Nixon, this was and still is the most important individual I have ever met in person.

We continue our studies and set an August 14, 1965, wedding date (a Saturday morning 10 AM wedding which is always my favorite time to get away quickly for the honeymoon). She is a bit worried about bringing me home to meet her family in Eunice, New Mexico. They are not thrilled that we engaged so quickly and that I was used goods. We visit the Christmas holidays in 1964. Her little brother and sister think I am cool. I show my highest level of respect for the two older siblings and parents. It also helps that I am a fisherman and bird hunter and eager to visit the Comfort Tx River property.

For most of the winter and spring of 1965, we manage to cause an early pregnancy. You know how college kids are. We visit the Comfort Texas home on High Street across from the Cypress Creek and Guadalupe River. J.A. was born in a small house on Groundhogs Day in Comfort in 1944. Her parents are solid German stock and everyone is related. I have a strange new German family. It also piques my interest in South Texas with water and trees. Southern New Mexico has dust and tumbleweeds.

J.A. continues her major in mathematics. I decide to major in education. Most of my coursework is in electives like Russian, English literature, and History. Education courses are a complete waste of time. During my Senior year '64-'65, I become active in the Wesley organization. NMSU has a week during the fall named the Inter-Religious Council week. Even though I am not very religious, I volunteer to find the speakers and publicize the event. I make posters, arrange the schedule, find the speaking spots, etc. It goes well, except practically no one shows up. Damn college kids.

I graduate in May of 1965 with a B. S. in Mathematics Education. I move off campus in June to a one-bedroom duplex near the campus. A friend stays for about 8 weeks during summer school.

Part 1 - Times and Places

I apply for a summer school job teaching 8th grade remedial math at Alameda Junior High in Las Cruces. Those ruffians eat my lunch. At the same time, I pick up an assignment at Lynn Junior High for the fall teaching 7th grade math. The pay was \$5,000/year. This 7th grade math is the first of many “NEW” math schemes I have taught. This one is sets, logic, etc. I start a very popular after-school club called the “Double–O Subsets” since it was the era of James Bond movies. This is when I realize I wanted to be a school principal.

We were married and moved into the apartment in August. She was starting her senior year and was on fully funded scholarships. We are quite happy raising Siamese cats and praying mantii. We often go fishing, hiking, and camping on the Rio Grande at Caballo Dam, Elephant Butte, and the Gila Wilderness above Silver City. We play a lot of contract bridge with friends.

Both feet are on the ground. Although out of sight, “A” is never completely gone.

