

Meeting the Love of My Life



This is the story of my meeting Patsy Simpson at Fort Benning, Georgia in 1952, just after returning from the Korean War, courting her, and getting Married on June 21st, 1953.

The series of articles following this one will tell - and illustrate - the story of our 57 years of Married Life together, our three children and their growing up until they left home. Then about their kids and kids kids.

There will be a separate series of articles detailing Patsy Simpson Hughes' Simpson (father) and Morrissey (mother) family back to at least her Simpson ancestor who fought in the Revolutionary War in 1775. And a separate series of articles detailing my Welsh ancestry whose direct line goes back to Dafydd Ap Hugh, 1588.

The Fort Benning Connection

Meeting the woman I was going to marry did not take place at Fort Benning in the typical fashion such meetings take place between men and women.

In fact, through a series of circumstances it did not take place until just after I returned from the Korean War in the spring of 1952. And it took place because Patsy Simpson knew about me at least a year before I knew she even existed.

That is a story in itself.

During the last four months of West Point, we graduating had a choice of what Army branch among the 'Combat

Arms' to join - Infantry, Artillery, Armor, Combat Engineers, or Combat Signal Corps. Or a quarter of the class could join the Army Air Corps, which would evolve into the US Air Force. (That was before the Air Force Academy existed)

We met in a large auditorium and names were called of in order of general academic merit.

By the time my name was called, I could not elect 'Engineers' - But then as I said and thought much about it, I wanted to see the whites of my enemies eyes - and only Infantry offered that. So I chose Infantry.

I was first sent to Fort Riley to lead the troops there, according to my original orders and requested assignment - but by the time I got there in September after my graduation leave, I was put on orders to ship out to Korea to join, as a replacement 2d lieutenant on the front line of the 8th Army which was getting battered and defeated by the highly trained, large, and modernly equipped (by the Soviets) large North Korean Army.

And I was sent without even the normal 'Infantry Basic Officers' courses all new lieutenants from previous West Point classes routinely got. There was too pressing a

need for new officer cannon fodder for the war we surprisingly had. All I really knew was 'Duty, Honor, Country,' general military leadership principals, and how to fire well on the rifle range.

Fateful Choices by my other Classmates

Meanwhile my classmates who had chosen Airborne and Rangers were required, first, to be shipped to Fort Benning to undergo both types of specialized training that would take several months, before they could join fighting units.

While I, landing at Inchon in October, and after eating Thanksgiving dinner in a bombed out building in Pyongyang, North Korea, joined my unit - Company K, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, near the Yalu River - JUST as the huge Chinese Army intervened and poured over the border to defeat both the Marines and Army forces in the bitter December Korean winter of 1950. The 7th Cav was an ordinary boots-on-the-ground Infantry Regiment, whose proud tradition went back to Custer's cavalry and the Little Big Horn. And was fighting

to survive more Indians - err Chinese - when I joined it.

I would soon get my idealistic West Point wish, in spades.

So what did all that have to do with meeting Patsy Simpson?

My Classmates

Meanwhile, and utterly unbeknownst to me - I had never been to Fort Benning - nor did I know someone called Patricia Simpson, a lovely 23 year old Army Brat who lived with her family, headed by Major and Mary Simpson serving there. My butter-bar (after their yellow colored 2d lieutenant rank insignia) classmates did their training by day and hung out at the Officers Club and its Pool in the late summer afternoons and evenings. Even while the war, and its bad news, raged on.

Patsy Simpson, and quite a number of other eligible young Army-brat ladies, and numbers of girls from nearby Columbus, Georgia hung out with and dated them. Fort Benning, Home of the Infantry, was overflowing with student officers.

Recently graduated young unmarried West Point officers

would be quite a catch for any of the local girls.

So as the story went, as confessed to me later by Patsy and admitted by many of my classmates, those classmates of mine who hung out at the pool were greatly frustrated by not getting to fight - yet - in the Korean War, where many of their classmates, including me, were already fighting, and where a number had already been Killed in Action. A real war.

And so Patsy heard their talk, as they kept making comments like 'That damned Dave Hughes already has a Silver Star and the Combat Infantry Badge.' The word had gotten back.

They were jealous, and I was being regarded as the quintessential warrior-leader they all wished to be, and had spent 4 years at West Point preparing to be. As an Army brat she was impressed.

She was so beautiful - and available - many of them wanted to marry her. A Saudi Arabian exchange officer offered her father 8 Camels for her hand if he would permit getting her for his bride. Her father refused. And she declined all offers.

Patsy Simpson was the highly desirable Belle of Fort

Benning.

Warrior's Return

By March, 1952, after a year in combat, wherein I even rose to command my Company K, 7th Cavalry, I came home. While I had not even attended the Infantry Officers Basic course myself, I was assigned to Fort Benning to train other lieutenants - including some of my classmates - in the arts of war.

I not only had the Silver Star my classmates fretted about, I already had been awarded a second Silver Star, two Bronze Star awards for Valor, two Purple Hearts - and the Distinguished Service Cross - the 2d highest US Military combat decoration. Even the Greek Cross of War. And had won - with those Willy and Joe infantry draft soldiers - two titanic battles while accomplishing all our missions, and capturing 193 Chinese soldiers with the last 15 men besides myself still standing. All six of my officers under me had been killed or wounded in the last battles.

Needless to say the word got around Fort Benning that an Infantry Warrior par excellence had come home.

First Meeting and Love

So when I walked into the Officer's Club one night in my uniform, with all those medals, in ribbon form, on my chest, as a 1st Lieutenant, with a small delicate blue Parakeet bird perched on my shoulder, I was introduced by a still - butter-bar 2d lieutenant classmate - to one Patsy Simpson, it was love at first sight for both of us.

Soon we were having dinner alone at the club while the Parakeet sipped from the champagne glasses before us.

And soon we were doing goofy things, like jointly buying a Bicycle Built for Two.



Married Life (1) Courtship

Category: Married Life (1)

Published: Thursday, 14 July 2011 21:41

Written by dave

Hits: 4287



Our Tandem Bicycle which we rode around the Post. When we got tired of that we couldn't decide who would buy out whom. So we decided we might as well get married to settle the matter

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I had swept the Belle of Fort Benning off her feet. And left my classmates, who had yet to reach Korea and Combat, in the dust. My early decisions not to follow the herd paid off, in more ways than one.

In a separate series of articles, under Military Years, before I ever met Patsy, I tell of my days and experiences in the Korean War which greatly defined me.

Next Article 'Married Life (2)'