

End of the Sad Saga

Not to bore you with too much detail - my family members would like to know 'what happened' that I got into a brief, very bad marriage, before I realized how I had been 'used' by a scheming mother of a bride she didn't want, here is the brief story of the end of that sad marriage saga. We were only 'married' for 3 months actually and less than one year legally.

It was not until the year after I returned from the Korean War, that I learned the 'rest' of the story about her. My mother dug out much of the information. Pat Tompkins was psychologically disturbed - for good reason - but that was no help to me then.

Mrs Tompkins husband one day in the 1930s brought home a baby and handed it to Mrs T - his illegitimate child by some other woman. That was Pat. She never knew her own mother. And Mr T died when she was only about 10 years old. Mrs T dealt with her as just a problem to be disposed of. I was her target of opportunity. She did whatever she could, when I was home on leave to press Pat on me so I would become involved, thus committed to her.

After the graduation and swearing in ceremony, I had two things to attend to. Getting my car back in operation so I could drive to Colorado and then Fort Riley. And to

accomodate Pat.

Although we were not married - yet - we had to live together. So I had to move us into what I can only report was a flea-bag motel in Highland Falls where the Chevrolet dealer and shop was.

We stayed there one night until the car was ready. So we drove down to New York where my Aunt Arleen had booked us a room - and where a small marriage service, she arranged, could be held in one of those 'Religious Retreat' rooms many large hotels have.

We were there two nights. The marriage service took place at 10:00am

To show how discombobulated I was by this time - having pretty much shrugged off what the three woman had worked up, when the ceremony was over my Aunt had to whisper "Kiss the bride!" Of course my mother was not there. She, still struggling to make a living and a home for sister Bette, couldn't afford to come back east, either to my graduation, or the marriage.

So we set off for, first, Colorado. On the long trip I got to know more about Pat than I ever really did during those short visits during my 4 years at West Point when I was home on leave.

It was not until after I was back from Korea that I learned

more what had happened in her life that so affected her psychologically.

Starting with her being unwanted when she, a bastard child, was handed to her mother by her philandering father, she was very insecure. From that, I concluded she wanted to see me as a father figure and not just a husband and lover.

We got to Denver where my mother was thrilled to see me - beginning to fulfill her dreams for her only 'boy' with no father. She accepted, but never really embraced, the marriage.

Then we set off for Grand Lake, Colorado, where my sister Jeanne and her husband Earnie lived with their two boys as he tried to get a Fishing Store going. They invited us to hang out there in a tourist cabin in the town, near the lake for part of my graduation leave.

A lot of the tension drained out of me as I drove again into my beloved Rocky Mountains. It had been a long 4 years at West Point.

I fished with Earnie and the boys while Pat hung out with Jeanne and my younger sister Bette - who was up there for the summer. Staying in the Apartment Shirley Savoy Hotel in downtown Denver where Mother lived was not very pleasant for a girl of 15 during her summer school vacation.

They got along with Pat, but things were not right from the beginning. When she and I ate alone at one of the three or four Restaurants in Grand Lake she drank too much. She was obviously unhappy. I wasn't her father.

One night after we had only been there about 5 days, while I was asleep in our cottage, she got my car keys after she had been drinking, and started driving recklessly around Grand Lake - on mountain roads and not just paved highways. She drove too fast and went off the road, in an accident. She was alright but the car sure wasn't.

In the end I had to have it towed all the way into Denver to get it repaired. And so the 'vacation' was terminated. She and I sat in the front seat while Bette, whose summer was pretty much over was in the back seat, while the towing vehicle pulled us all the 125 miles into Denver.

After the car got repaired - again - it was already time for me to get the 500 miles to Kansas and Fort Riley. Some graduation leave.

By that time the Korean War had started, and was all the news. I wondered what that meant for me, even though I had orders to a specific Rifle company at Fort Riley. I soon found out.

By the time we got to Fort Riley, my orders had been

changed. Sent me to Korea as a replacement officer. Cannon fodder sort of.

So we barely got checked into Barrack like quarters then we were gone again, driving back to Denver to leave Pat there, with our car, while I flew out to Fort Lewis, Washington which would get me to Korea.

Pat moved back into her mother's home, with our car.

Final Chapter of this Saga

I was retreating from the Chinese Army in Korea when I got in the mail that caught up with us, a letter from a Denver, attorney. Pat had filed for divorce - from a distance. In the Army that is called a 'Dear John' letter when a soldiers' wife or girlfriend, while he in combat and can't do anything about it, mails him a letter like this. I am sure her mother, seeing that this marriage was not going to work and I was not going to inherit a fortune from Aunt Arleen, arranged that too.

I did not contest it, but just signed off on the legal form - and went back to trying to stay alive and command my platoon.

Within 6 months the divorce was final. I let her have the car.

Postscript

Just to finish, totally, the story, she continued, in her psychological feeling of inadequacy and abandonment, to drink too much, and seek someone else. But got married again in Denver, and had two children. But then divorced again, and married a third husband. Since she was from a somewhat socialite family - her mother had made sure of that - those made the papers.

Then, in 1967, 17 years after her episode with me, she was killed in a plane crash in the mountains, where the pilot was a Denver doctor with whom she was living, without benefit of having divorced her third husband.

As I said, she had psychological problems that I was hardly equipped to deal with. All I could do, later, was feel sorry for her sad life. I never communicated with her or her mother after I departed for Korea September, 1950. I only knew the above from two newspaper clippings I still have in my files.

P.S. All women in my life were not that way. When I got back from Korea and visited Denver, there were a number of women whose husbands had been at Colorado Military school in high school, and who knew Pat Tompkins, her mother, and followed things in the 'society' column in the newspapers, including the divorce in 1951.

One of them, Ursula Ronnebeck, whose father was an

artist, and brother had been at the military school, called me up when I got back from Korea in March 1952. She had read in both the Denver Post and the Rocky Mountain News, reports of my being repeatedly given medals for my military bravery in Korea. (Even a later high ranking Colorado Judge who had been a Military School student when I attended it told me in 2000 that I was his high-school 'hero'.)

Ursula took me out to dinner, and then drove me after dark to Cheeseman Park, close to where I lived as a young teen, and delivered newspapers at 4AM on my bike for the Rocky Mountain News - the park where there is a great Greek style columned veranda. We danced in the moonlight alone on the marble flooring there.

She admitted she thought that I had been trying to kill myself in Korea because of the breakup of the marriage. Which she thought accounted for my bravery medals and combat fame.

I reassured her I was never so inclined. I was touched by Ursula's concern for me while I was away at war. She was going out of the way to try and heal, what she thought (and would be called today PTDS - Post Traumatic Distress Syndrom). I not only didn't have that, I pretty much thrived on the challenge of combat that I had prepared for four years.

But I always have fondly remembered those who were 'hurt' by what had happened in that brief marriage to me at an important, and dangerous, time of my life.

By the time I met Patsy Simpson, I was more cautious and wiser about women in my life. And Patsy, never in our 57 years of marriage let me down. Nor, I like to think, did I ever let her down.

Ours was love and marriage the way it is supposed to be. And I like to think that our three children saw that, and benefitted from the model we passed on to them .

To continue with my Military Years click... [NEXT, for Korea \(1\)](#)