

SWEET DREAMS



LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

The year was 1944. The Second World War was getting close to the end. I was fifteen years old. The German Army was still occupying Holland, my country. The fifth and last winter was upon us. Hunger was the order of the day. Very little food was available. The occupation forces were SS troops. They were not very friendly people.

The Allies were stopped at the Rhine River. The Rhine River flows across Holland from east to west. The Allies – Americans, English, and Canadians – made a serious attempt to cross the river but didn't make it. They then decided to go east into German territory.

The southern part of Holland was now free of German forces. The northern part above the Rhine was not. Many young Dutch boys volunteered to become Marines to help fight the Nazis. The young boys had to be trained. They were transported to the USA because training in southern Holland was out of the question. By the time they were trained and returned to Holland, the war had ended. They became the officers who instructed the new recruits who were going to be sent to Indonesia.

Indonesia had been occupied by Japan. Indonesia had been a Dutch colony for more than three hundred years. The Indonesians were tired of all the "foreign" people ruling their country. They decided to fight the Dutch, and they became independent by the end of 1949.

I became a Sergeant rather quickly and worked with the heavy mortars. The equipment was well used. The order I received was to travel to Surabaya to get new supplies. It was not the largest operation but very dangerous. We were on a flatbed truck with a driver and me and four Marines on the back of an open truck. On the outskirts of the city the driver said the engine was overheating. We decided to stop

at one of the homes and ask for water for the radiator. The lady of the house invited us in for refreshments. We welcomed this after driving all day in an open truck on dusty roads.

I stayed with the truck for many reasons. The lady of the house sent her young fourteen-year-old daughter, Gerda, out to give me some pineapple. The daughter asked, "Where shall I put this?" The movable windshield was down, so I told her to please put it on the windshield. I was asking her to set the bowl on top the windshield. Instead, she emptied the bowl onto the windshield. She walked away from the truck, and I fell in love. That was December 1947. From then on I never left her alone.

Since I was stationed in many different villages outside the city of Surabaya, I only came back to town once or twice a month for rest and relaxation. I needed an excuse to stop at Gerda's home to see her again. A person in love always finds a way. The Marine Corps had furnished me with a military watch, so I had no need for my own watch. My driver had to travel to the city, and I had him drop my watch off at Gerda's home. That way I could pick it up and see her again. From the first day I met her, I was certain I was going to spend the rest of my life with her. Sorry to say, she didn't feel that way for a long time.

For the next two years we went out together with several of my friends. Those were the worst years of my life. I wanted to be with her, but she didn't want to be with me. I kept stopping at her home and writing her notes. She was so beautiful. I was persistent and never gave up. After fighting for two years in the war I was stationed on the Island of Madura. With a small torpedo boat I was able to go to Surabaya every afternoon at 2 PM. I would take the Marine Corps bus to the city and then walk to Gerda's home. I would return to Madura every evening. The next day I would do the same all over again.

In 1950 Gerda finally agreed that I would be her future husband. She left her home to go to Holland, a place she had never been. She had to board a ship, and I snuck on the boat to be with her until the very last minute. It was very sad for both of us to leave each other. It took three months before I came back to Holland. We married on September 5, 1951. I'm very much in love with the same beautiful girl I met 60 years ago.

~ Harry Van Loveren

PICKLE MAN

His name is Ralph. Ralph Lawson. He was born on June 5, 1924, in Fayette County. That makes him 83 years young.

Ralph retired from many, many years working as a school janitor. He worked for the city school system at Cherry Hill, the middle school, and Washington Senior High. Ralph met a lot of kids over the years. He is remembered as the tall, slim looking man.

Personally, I have known Ralph a lot longer than some. We have been neighbors since I was 6 years old. Everyone in my family called him "Slim." If my family went fishing, we took him with us. That was many years ago, and I am still his neighbor.

In his spare time, Ralph likes to fish, hunt, garden, and especially make pickles. He has a lot of people in Fayette County spoiled with his freezer pickles. Those pickles reach a lot of people: doctors, nurses, friends from the schools, and pretty much everyone he knows.

My children and grandkids all love them. I've been fortunate to know this man almost my whole life. He has some health issues, but he doesn't let it get him down. He can still make that jar of pickles for someone who wants them.

I am one of the lucky ones. He gave me the recipe so I can make them too. But I still like his the best. There is something very special about his, so he will continue to make his pickles and make everyone happy.

This is Ralph. Ralph Lawson – the "Pickle Man." I am proud to say that I know him.

~ Tonda L. Minney

JOHNY BOY

My brother John died October 16, 2007, from cancer. Johnny-Boy we called him. We miss him so much more than words can say. He was 54 years old, the oldest in our family. It hurts me deeply accepting that he will never be around any more. I have such great sorrow. Regrets, I do have some. He died so quickly. I have to wonder if he would have lived if he had gone to the doctor earlier.

You see, my brother and I weren't that close when we got older. He moved out of state for years, but every time we got together it didn't matter. It was as though we never were apart. It won't be the same without him. He will always be in my heart and in my head forever.

My brother had a two-month illness that spread quickly. It took all of us by surprise. We learned about suffering and pain through my brother. He developed a lump on his neck. He grew a beard to hide it and refused to go to the doctor. He probably waited too long. If he had gotten it checked out sooner, maybe he would still be here.

Cancer is a terrible disease. The doctor told my brother about chemo and radiation treatments. It was possible he might live longer. He tried both for a couple weeks and decided to stop the treatments. He told us that they made him feel worse. He didn't like not being aware of who was around him. He wanted to know we were there with him. My family and I couldn't accept losing him. I can remember my mother asking my brother what his pain felt like. My brother told us it felt like both his legs were being electrocuted.

I feel a lot of regrets. I never realized we had so much in common. I got close to him and got to know him better after I found out he didn't have long to live. He told me his favorite singer was John Mellencamp. I have gone to

a lot of his concerts, and he has always been my favorite too. I didn't know he was a big fan of the Indians and that he had gone to a lot of the games. I had won Indian tickets from a radio station and never went to the game. I would have given him those tickets, and it would have brightened his day!

I was with my brother a day before he passed. His breaths were 42 seconds apart, and it was more than I could handle. I took my brother's hand to wipe the tears from my eyes, and I told him if he could understand me to squeeze my hand. He did. I then told him I couldn't stand to see him like that and kissed him and told him how I loved him. He passed away late that night.

I learned a lot about my brother toward the end of his life. I could see much of myself in him. I'm very sad he's gone.

My advice to anyone is, don't wait to go to see a doctor. If you find something that doesn't feel or look right, go see a doctor right away. Don't try to hide something. Get it checked out. Don't wait until it is too late. If someone in your family is ill, be there for them. Don't wait until your family is sick to see them. Cancer is a deadly, suffering disease that can kill you.

~ Donna R. Sousa

NO NAME

I remember one vacation when I was 14 years old. Mom took us camping down to Natural Bridge. One morning that week, our family woke up to this dog barking outside our camper. I peeked out the door, and lucky for me, it was a black and white beagle. Mom told me not to feed it because it would stay around if I did. Well, that's exactly what I wanted. So I gave him some hot dogs and other food scraps that we had, but I didn't tell that to my mom.

He was a sweet dog and I named him, "No Name." Mom said that we shouldn't name strays, so that's the name I gave him. He would come up and sit at our feet when we sat by the fire, and he would lick my face if I let him.

Later in the week, we went for a walk up to the store. We tried to make him go back to the camp, but he followed us anyway. On the way back, he saw a possum in the road and went running after it. Before we knew it, a truck came along and hit No Name. The driver just kept going. I hurried up to him, took my coat off, covered him up, and carried him back to our camp. It made me sick to see him suffer. By the time we got back to camp, he was dead. I was heartbroken because he really made me feel needed. My friends helped me bury him in the woods. I cried for days.

Even though Mom knew best and lessons were learned, we wouldn't have had the happy memories of No Name if we had listened to her and not gotten close to this stray.

~ Tonia S. Jones

DOGPATCH

Everyone has his/her own childhood vacation memories and places. This is one of mine. My mother's side of the family is a large Polish family that lived and still lives in the suburbs of Chicago, technically, Hammond, Indiana. My mother's parents were my grandfather Babe and grandmother Lottie. Before I was born, Babe and Lottie purchased some vacation property in southwest Indiana about a 3-1/2 to 4- hour drive from their home in Hammond, Indiana. The vacation property is also near Turkey Run State Park, Slate Park, and Raccoon Lake. They built a modest cabin they called the Dogpatch. As the years rolled by, they slowly added to and improved the Dogpatch cabin.

I cannot remember how far back my earliest memories of the cabin go. But when I was seven or eight years old, my parents were divorced. It seemed like my mother, my younger sister and I were there every summer after that. The cabin was located at Hideaway Lake. As kids, we always knew when we were getting close and bounced around in the car, looking with great excitement out the windows. Yes, there's the little store as we turned off the main highway and passed all the cornfields on both sides of us. And there's the bait shop. We were on fire now and Mother would say, "Sit down and calm down. We're almost there." But we never did.

As we turned off the last paved road and onto a gravel one, we were at the entrance to Hideaway Lake. Immediately the gravel road split off in all directions. Some roads were dead ends and others wove and wound all the way around the lake. As we neared the Dogpatch, on our left was the middle of the lake and on our right was a small dam surrounded by tall, grassy fields where the lake's overflow ran into a small creek that ran off in the distance as far as the eye could see. As soon as you passed this, there sat our

family's cabin up against a beautiful backdrop of woods. The Dogpatch lot was a lot more private and hidden than most of Lake Hideaway's lakefront properties. Not to worry, though. It was only a five-minute walk to the lake which was complete with a small private beach, a pavilion, and what we called Devil's Island way out in the middle.

Going to the cabin was doubly exciting because you never knew who would be there or when more cousins and relatives would show up. Babe would take all the grandkids out on the lake paddle-boating, tubing, boat riding and fishing. He even let the youngest of us drive his boat. He and Lottie provided much fun and so many activities I couldn't begin to mention them all.

In addition to the lake, there was the dam. The dam was a little scary to us kids. Nobody went there except us. It was a favorite hangout, especially when just a few of us wanted to fish. It had no fence, safety rails, or signs saying "Stay Out." It was exciting fishing off the dam as we sat on the three-foot wide concrete walk that went all the way across the middle of the dam. Countless lures, flip flops, and other stuff were constantly knocked into it by accident. Even me one time. Yep, at around nine years of age I fell backwards into the part where the water comes rushing and roaring down into the dam. I wasn't scared until the only other person with me, my cousin Kelly who was around twelve at the time and a girl, started screaming and freaking out. It was kind of contagious, and I got scared. Above me was the roar of the water and her screams and cries for help. I had to make myself heard and convince her to calm down and actually go get help. Finally she did, and there I was alone with the cold, swirling, roaring water all around me. All I could see was the sky and the walls that kept me there, wondering what was in that dam and in the water with me. With such a small space, I figured a catfish as big as I was would sting me in the leg and would eat me. All kinds of thoughts raced through my mind, but I didn't cry, scream, or panic. I just waited looking up at that sky. Well, help

came, or I wouldn't be writing this now. Yes, my mother got gray hair at a very early age.

The Dogpatch was an amazing place and one I'll always remember and cherish along with the grandparents who provided it all. Today it's a different story. You can't swim in Hideaway Lake now because of a problem with silt. Since Babe died about five years ago, Lottie doesn't like to go there and neither does the rest of the family because the founders aren't there. Lottie would love to sell the property, but nobody else in the family wants the responsibility of upkeep. And to top it all off, the neighbor now hassles anyone who is there about cutting through the yard to get to the lake or dam.

~ Lee Scott Hoffman

INFLUENCE

The person who influenced me the most in my life was my mother. She was so many things to so many people. She was a great wife, mother, and a best friend to many. It was hard for anyone she touched to complain.

My mother was a great wife. She was very strong-willed and always kept my dad on his toes. She would never let an argument get in the way of her marriage. She always made sure that the problem was settled and that they didn't go to bed angry. She always kept the house spotless. Even when we didn't have any money, she would always find something to make us to eat, even if she did without.

My mother was the best mother a child could ask for. She was always playing with us. She made sure none of us felt left out. She loved to teach us new things. I have memories of playing school, baking cookies, and reading piles of books. No matter what was going on in her life, our family was what was important to her. She always made time for us.

My mother was also a great friend to many people. There were very few people she didn't win over. I remember, as a young child, watching her have hair and make-up parties with her friends. I remember how much fun they were having. My mother was always there when someone needed help or just wanted someone to listen. She was very caring, and everyone knew she was genuine.

My mother influenced me in so many ways. Even though my mother passed away when I was a young child, the stories and memories I have of her will live in my heart forever. If I could live to be half the wife, mother, and friend she was, then I would know I had lived my life well.

~ Heidi Coffey

THE JOYS OF OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

Bird watching is an enjoyable pastime. It is sometimes very humorous watching birds during their mating season. They also can become very territorial. I also enjoy the migrating birds at the change of seasons.

I always look forward to spring and the mating season. It is so sweet to watch a male cardinal feed a seed to its mate. It is almost like viewing a flirting kiss. The doves are another favorite. I watch the male chase its mate around the yard as she acts so coy.

My favorite territorial bird is the hummingbird. I have one bully bird that will sit on a tree branch guarding the sugar water feeder. As soon as another bird comes close to the feeder, she will swoop down to battle, chase the other bird away, and return to guard her food once again.

Lastly, the migration of birds is another favorite of mine. The birds you have not seen, for instance the dark-eyed junco, return every winter and speckle the snow with their adorable small gray and white bodies.

Bird watching is an enjoyable pastime, with their antics during mating season, the humor of them guarding their food, and the joy of seeing them return for another season.

~ Kim Backer

THE SOYBEAN INCIDENT

It was the most terrifying and helpless moment in my life. In Korea, in 1993, my daughter was 3 years old. She started to scream and said, "Mom, help, help!" She kept putting her finger in her nose. I asked her, "What did you do?" She said, "I put peas in my nose." I left a bowl of soybeans on the table while I was fixing dinner in the kitchen. I tried to help her take the bean out of her nose with a pincher. The bean seemed to get bigger because of the moisture inside of her nose. I tried it many times, and it didn't work. I felt that I was helpless.

I was hoping that blowing her nose would help, so I kept telling her to blow her nose, but the bean would not come out. I told her to blow the other side of her nose, and that didn't work. I looked at the bean inside her nose, and it was as big as my thumb!

I was very terrified, and I ran over to my sister-in-law's house for her advice. Her house was a few blocks from us. She said, "Take her to the hospital." We rode the taxi and rushed her to the hospital. When the doctor came in to see my daughter, he chuckled at her and then brought 3 more doctors in to see her, and they all laughed at her. Three doctors held my daughter's legs and hands so she couldn't move while the other doctor used pinchers to take the bean out of her nose.

Although it started out being the most terrifying moment of my life, I never felt more relieved than when the doctors helped her take the bean out of her nose. I sometimes tell her about that day and she starts to giggle.

~ Kum Sun Kim

GRANDPA'S "INDIAN SPELL"

While I was growing up, I was part tomboy. I had a younger brother, Darrell, and we played together a lot. When I was about 11 years old, the county workers put new ditches in the area where we lived, so everyday during that summer, we would play in the clean water. We would wade up and down the ditches, through the tubes that supported the driveways to the houses. We played Cowboys and Indians.

Well soon, the ditches were no longer clean. Tadpoles and frogs made their homes in the ditches. Darrell and I played with these new creatures. When Mom realized that we were playing in these dirty ditches, she told us to stop, and we did. It was too late though. I ended up with 12 warts on my fingers and hands. Darrell didn't get even one. How unfair was that? Mom bought something from the store to put on the warts, but they didn't go away. I was so confused. I did what I was told, yet I still felt as if I was cursed somehow.

On Sunday, our family went to see Grandpa Delph. I ran to give him a hug, and he spotted the warts right away. He asked how I got them, and I told him about playing in the dirty ditch. He said that he could get rid of them for me, but only if my mom and dad would let him. So I sat and waited for my parents to park the car and come inside. Meanwhile, I sat wondering what on earth my Grandpa was planning to do to get rid of those ugly warts. I had already tried poking one of them with a needle, but I just brought myself pain and blood. I worried that maybe he wanted to burn them off with the lighter he was using to smoke his pipe. That sounded painful, but I didn't want to live with those ugly uncomfortable things for the rest of my life. Mom and Dad finally came inside and sat down. The first thing my Grandpa did was talk about the warts. He asked if he could get rid of them for me. Mom asked, "How?", and he told her it was an old Indian spell his Grandma, who was full blooded Indian, had taught him.

Mom said, "No way!" She said that she was going to take me to the doctor. Grandpa said he didn't think that would work, and it was a waste of time, but Mom was insistent. My dad asked me to go outside to play, and the three of them continued to talk about my warts.

I went outside as I was told but didn't feel like playing much. I wasn't sure if I was disappointed or relieved that Mom wouldn't let Grandpa do the "Indian spell." To me the word sounded like something of the devil. I was confused because I felt cursed. Anyway, I was convinced I had disobeyed Mom or Dad, though I couldn't remember when I would have. It made sense that a spell would remove a curse, so maybe I was cursed. At church that night, I stood in the prayer line. That night when I went to bed, I prayed that God would take away those nasty things.

A few days later, Mom took me to the doctor. He gave me some cream to put on those warts. The doctor said that it would take them away. Three weeks later, they were still there, all 12 of them. I asked mom if I had done something wrong to be cursed for the rest of my life! Mom really didn't know what to say. She just said, "No, Karen Sue, I don't think so." When Dad came home from work that night, Mom told him that she was ready to take me to see Grandpa. She still wasn't convinced that he could get rid of the warts, but she knew how bad I hated having the warts on my fingers and hands, so she was willing to try.

That night we went to see Grandpa. Mom told him that the cream the doctor had given me didn't work, and that she was ready to try his way. My grandpa called me over to him. I was scared to death. He sensed my fear. He told me that he was not going to hurt me. He asked me if I believed that he could get rid of the warts on my hands and fingers, and I told him that I did. I was still afraid of spells, but I didn't dare say so. I had to trust that my grandpa would never use any evil spells on me, only good spells. And so my grandpa mumbled a bunch of foreign words, and as he did, he licked his fingers and then rubbed each and every wart on my hands and fingers. Then he was done. He told me that in one week or less, the warts would

be gone. I thanked him and hugged and kissed him, and we went home.

Three days later, I was in school doing my work. I was taking a spelling test actually. Something seemed different. So after I got done with the test, I tried to figure out what was wrong. I looked at my hands, and those ugly warts were gone, each and every one of them! I felt normal again. I no longer felt cursed or ashamed of my hands and fingers. I couldn't wait to get home to show my whole family. When I got home I thanked Mom for letting Grandpa do what he did to get rid of them. Then I called my grandpa and thanked him. And last, but certainly not least, I thanked God because I know He has a hand in all good things that happen. I still wonder sometimes about the "Indian spell," but I guess some things are best left unknown.

~ Karen Sue Flick

I AM...

I am a proud grandmother
I wonder if I will be a good one
I hear my grandson, Robert, play and laugh all the time
I see him walk and crawl
I want him to be good and aware of the world
I am a proud grandmother.

I pretend to play peek-a-boo with him, and he loves it very
much
I feel happy when he said, "Grandma" for the first time
I touch his heart when I say, "I love you, Pumpkin"
I worry when he is sick
I cry when he gets hurt
I am a proud grandmother.

I understand everything that he says and does
I say "No" when he does something bad and "Very good"
when he does something right
I dream about him all the time
I try to keep Robert safe when we're out and about
I hope he will be very successful when he grows up
I am a proud grandmother.

~ Coreal Lynn Wilson

SANTA

Jovial, Endearing, Affectionate, Faithful
Lover of Children, Cookies, Reindeer, and Chimneys
Who gives Presents, Hope, and Happiness
Who fears Selfishness, Snowstorms, and Scrooges
Who would like to see Generous Spirits, Peace on Earth,
and Goodwill Towards All
Resident of the North Pole

Claus

*~ Great Oaks Group Project
Yao Akakpo
Kilcha Canfield
Daveeta Grether
Harry Van Loveren*

I INVITED HIM

It was 1995, the fourth year of war in former Yugoslavia. Although in my place there was no fight, we felt many consequences of the situation of war. The stores were almost completely empty. The inflation of the national currency was enormous. When you got your wages, you had to run immediately to street dealers and change your money for some stable foreign currency. If you did not do this, the next day you would be able to buy just one loaf of bread for all your money. It was like a bad dream. The whole region of former Yugoslavia suffered in one or the other way. Many people lost their loved ones, lost their homes, everything they lived and worked for. Their former neighbors and friends suddenly became their enemies. People lived in constant fear, distrust, confusion, and torment. Every day, lines of refugees miles long came over the Danube, carrying just their own lives and their sorrow. They needed help. Not just food, clothes, medicines, a place to live, but also some food for their souls. Something that can bring them hope and encouragement.

In that difficult time, my church planned a series of sermons, with the title "Amazing Discoveries." This series had to help people to change their focus. Instead of worry, look at God and all the beautiful promises in His word! We decided to invite the whole town. We got invitation cards and spread them through the town. We went from house to house and dropped an invitation card in every mailbox. And people came. In the church hall there wasn't enough space for everyone. So each sermon was repeated in three different sessions, every day.

After a while, I got to know many of those people. Some of them became good friends of mine. And one person was even something more: the man who later became my husband. When we started to see each other, I realized that he lived right in that area where I was spreading the invitation cards! That means I was the person who put that invitation card in his mailbox! I invited him!

You might say: "What's the big deal?" But I was touched very deeply with this fact. That was something amazing for me. And I can tell you that it is important for my husband too, because he keeps this special invitation card even today.

Many times we cannot know where our paths will take us. And things happen we cannot even imagine. But we know what God's word says: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55: 8, 9).

~ Valerija Glad