

HOME & FAMILY





Chapter Nine

TIL DEATH DO US PART

Hosea 2: 19

*And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice,
in steadfast love and in mercy.*

What beauty in the running brook of true love's emotions. As one stream, it gently empties into branches of excitement where wild and tame desires are one. It gurgles in far off places where dreams are but the fantasies of youth, creating a picture that is painted and framed, whether on life's stage or in its wings; producing an afterglow for the golden years. Then, as it ripples from shore to shore in the mind's eye, its wavelets are seen as progressing and beautiful; a memory stored wisely for use in growth or dissolution; in life or death.

Today, the portrait stored in Dick Du Puis' mind of Jo Anne, his one true love, is still crystal clear, fresh and alive with humor as well as splendor. Sitting in his recliner, now older and encumbered by physical challenges, when recounting their courtship and marriage becomes, once again, the boy with the dancing eyes. Truly, the running brook of love's emotions has lasted "til death do us part" and beyond.

LOVE BUG BITES

Dick met his future wife at the USO in Long Beach, California listening to the Bell Sisters while waiting for the Navy vessel headed for Korea. He first set eyes on Jo Anne as she skillfully played a song called "Rinky Dink" on the piano, making it sound like an old tin can. There she sat holding court and basking in the adoration of this gigantic room filled with lonely service men far from home. Since the USO was a place the military men would go to meet girls and dance, she was truly on show as the center of attention.

Thus, swept into the emotional waves of the moment, Dick found her so fascinating that he made a bet with another sailor for \$5 that he could get her to dance with him. Responding in a voice of absolute certainty, his buddy retorted, "Ha! With all the other guys around her, you won't be able to get within 10 feet. She won't give you the time of day!"

Walking away with steps of determination, Dick shot back, "You just watch! I will get her to dance with me!" His mind was set on winning the bet because \$5 was a lot of money to a sailor making only \$50 per month.

Thus, when she stopped playing, he elbowed his way through the wall of men and asked her to dance the Blue Tango with him. Watching this event unfold, his buddy sat with mouth agape because it was not only an impossible feat, but realized Dick would be much shorter than this flirty piano player wearing the flouncy outfit accompanied by matching "HIGHER THAN HIGH HEELED SHOES."

Unfortunately, to Dick's dismay, Joanne turned wearing a haughty expression on her face asking, "Do you even know how to dance the Blue Tango?" It was obvious this woman was enjoying herself in front of the other men at his expense, causing his wave of courage to recede.

Although Dick had always held a passion for dancing and was told he was good at it, at this moment, his confidence was stretched to the outer limits as he held Joanna's hand and led her out onto the dance floor. Walking side by side, the reality of being much shorter as compared to this confident, striking lady wearing the tall hair do became a glaring reality in Dick's mind.

Needless to say, when the last strain of the Blue Tango had ended, he hastily made a bee line toward his buddy with his hand outstretched, ready to collect his \$5 bet. Boy! Was he glad that moment in his life was over!

Exactly one week later and still in a holding pattern on shore, Sailor Du Puis went again to the USO to kill time. Upon arrival, he was surprised when he felt a tap on his shoulder and turned to gaze upon Jo Anne's smiling face asking him to save the Blue Tango for her. Then, precisely as if on cue, the band began playing the Blue Tango; an arrangement she had carefully planned in advance. One dance led into the next for the two young people so in love with the magic of the moment. However, unbeknownst to the young couple, the matron for the establishment had been counting the number of dances and let Jo Anne know clearly that she had gone over her limit of three per partner.

Consequently, Jo Anne immediately told the matron she no longer worked there and invited Dick to go somewhere else for the evening. Climbing into her little black bug convertible, they sped away into the night laughing and feeling totally carefree. After driving about 20 miles, she parked the car in front of a beautiful home where she lived. Then, leaning over to Dick, she asked him to kiss her goodnight. Startled, Dick gave her a quick peck and was told immediately, "YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO KISS. I'M GOING INSIDE TO BED. GOODBYE!"

Therefore, to Dick's surprise, he was left standing on the curb and was told he would have to catch a bus back to his quarters, some 20 miles away. He described himself as looking like a fool while waiting for hours on the bus for the trip back to Long Beach.

However, exactly one week later, he found himself in a total state of shock as he heard that all too familiar voice state, "You know I cannot stay here, so let's go somewhere else." Still fuming over being kicked to the curb only one short week before, shouted loudly at Jo Anne, "YOU KNOW I'M NOT GETTING IN THE CAR WITH YOU AFTER BEING STRANDED THE LAST TIME. I'M NOT THAT CRAZY! YOU CAN JUST FORGET IT!"

After a bit of negotiation, Jo Anne talked him into WALKING down the street to an amusement park filled with rides and games. Since the evening proved to be interesting with a lot of laughs, she offered to meet him the following week. Unfortunately, Dick informed her that he would be shipping out the next Wednesday at dawn.

Thus, before sunrise the following week, as the large navy vessel was moving slowly out of port with sailors standing on deck waving to loved ones below, Dick heard Jo Anne's familiar voice call out, "Hey Dick! Wave so I will know where you are standing!" As Dick began waving, instantaneously, all the sailors on deck began waving as if on cue. Then, thinking quickly of another plan, Dick pulled his cigarette lighter from his pocket allowing the flame to draw her attention to his location. Once again, right in time, the sailors followed suit creating total confusion for the searching eyes below.

Although it was impossible for Jo Anne to locate him, at that moment, he felt vindicated for getting dumped at the curb on their first evening together. Now it was his turn to stand and laugh at the fate of the feisty lady who had played Rinky Dink so skillfully just a short time before. She had nowhere to go but down the road in her little black bug convertible.

In spite of this tenuous beginning, for the next six months, the two love birds faithfully communicated by letter. Unfortunately, one letter arrived from Jo Anne letting Dick know she desired to marry him. Thus, in typical Du Puis fashion, he responded quickly that since his plan was to enroll in fashion design school after completing his service in the navy, marriage was not in his plans.

Then toward the end of his time in the navy, Dick was informed his next transfer would be to Hawaii where his sister, Teta, and her husband lived. He would lovingly be received into her place of residence as a welcomed brother. As Dick relived this assignment, he knew the wonderful Captain on board the hospital ship was responsible for getting him this great location. Living on the beach was unheard of for a sailor; an arrangement Dick would greatly cherish.

After getting adjusted to his new environment, Dick remarked that he would cruise the lobbies of the hotels “strutting his stuff” wearing only a bathing suit so the girls would think him to be handsome. Thus, it was on one of these walks he heard, “Dick! Hey, Dick!” Turning toward the sound of a familiar voice, once again, he found himself gazing into Jo Anne’s big eyes. She had just arrived with her grandmother for a two week vacation. This unplanned surprise gave the couple an unexpected romantic time to be alone and enjoy one another in a totally different environment.

Then, once again for another 6 months, letters were exchanged between the two star struck friends before Jo Anne began talking of marriage. Reacting with blunt and forceful words, Dick indicated his plans had not changed about marriage or going to school. There was no way he would give up his dream of a lifetime.

OUT INTO THE WORLD

Immediately upon completing his service in the navy, Dick entered the Berkley College of the Arts in Berkley, California where he lived with his aunt while pursuing a career in fashion design. Due to the fact he was totally self taught in all aspects of design and sewing, his expectations were high as to the amount of advanced knowledge he would need to assimilate. No matter the situation, at this moment in his young life, he found himself eager and trembling in anticipation at the thought that he was finally knocking at the door of the most prestigious fashion design school in the country. He was ready for the challenge he had dreamed so long about during his childhood in Gueydan, Louisiana. He would leave no stone unturned in taking the necessary steps to make his way into the world as a sought after fashion designer. He was ready to seize the moment!

Consequently, for two years, he worked hard and applied himself in every course of study. He found the curriculum to be surprisingly easy in every aspect. When the students were required to design and sew a garment for the runway show, Dick would easily present an array of fashions as compared to a single entry from his classmates. Therefore, his garments made up the majority of the runway show, with his classmates’ creations blended in at the appropriate intervals.

Then one day, he was called into a professor’s office and told he would be wasting his money if he completed the remainder of the program. It was determined by the entire staff that this young southern boy from Gueydan stood head and shoulders above the norm. His foundation was so strong the school curriculum was beneath his skill level in every aspect. The gift God had bestowed upon this boy at birth once again shone brightly for all to see. There is nothing impossible for such a loving Heavenly Father!

BACK TO JO ANNE

In the usual manner of their happen stance meetings, Jo Anne and Dick coincidentally crossed paths again in the San Francisco Train Station one day. Just as Dick was seeing a friend off, Jo Anne was arriving to spend time with one of her own friends, as well. Immediately, spotting Dick, she spontaneously cried out, "Dick! I have always loved you and you're never getting away!"

Therefore, spending time together at Dick's Aunt's home allowed the couple to fall deeply in love, which eventually led to the words, "TIL DEATH DO US PART."

Although Jo Anne's parents expected her to have a large wedding, Dick and his bride were married privately by a priest with a cleaning lady as their witness. Even though his wife's grandmother adored Dick, he never gained his in-laws approval. In their minds, as people of wealth, their daughter had married beneath her social status.

However, since Jo Anne's grandmother loved them both dearly, she purchased a trailer in Long Beach for the young couple as a wedding present. Then, in good and perfect time, Ricky, their first born son entered the world. Once again, grandmother stepped forward and decorated the little nursery with all necessary items.

MAKING A LIVING

In order for the young couple to survive, Dick sought work at a shoe store and continued to sew for clients from his home in his spare time. Simultaneously, Jo Anne worked as a model to bring in a supplemental income. Given the fact she possessed an attractive appearance while pregnant; it provided the ability to work right up to delivery time. Besides, Jo Anne appeared so stunning in maternity clothing; she wore padding and continued her career in this arena.

After Ricky was born, Dick provided most of the child care by placing his son in a cushioned cardboard box just like he had made for his baby sister Selena, and set him right by his sewing machine. If Ricky became fussy, Dick would rock the box with his foot and keep right on sewing. He not only made clothes for clients, but also for Jo Anne and the baby. Word of mouth was his only method of obtaining referrals which allowed him to support his family.

THE WELL GOES DRY

Although Dick's sewing had provided enough money to keep his family going, one day he realized he was in a dry period with not enough clients to generate the amount of income necessary for running the household. Thus, in the usual Du Puis mind set, he began scanning the society pages in the newspaper with a plan in mind. Soon, he noticed a lady's name that

had appeared repeatedly and made contact with her announcing that she had just won a designer dress contest. Her only obligation would be to appear for the fittings. At this point recalling the scheme, Dick smiled broadly and exclaimed, "NO WOMAN IS GOING TO TURN THAT DOWN! She came for the fittings and I made her a print dress. She then talked me up a storm causing an avalanche of business." Thinking back on this time, Dick recalled a client that was a tall majorette who drove a convertible to her fittings. She was so tall; she just stepped over the door and slide inside under the wheel as smoothly as silk.

Unfortunately, in spite of this flurry of activity, another dry spell that lasted two weeks arrived causing Dick to realize he must hit the streets in LA with his sketches in hand. Without doubt, Dick knew he had reached a crossroads in his life. Since he now had one son, in his heart he knew his family would continue to grow, which meant he had to get going. From the beginning, both he and Jo Anne had expressed their love for children and the desire to have a large family.

As usual, Dick Du Puis was right on track with his wisdom regarding family. When the time was right and not a minute before, Daneen arrived followed by Neal, Jodi and Brock; a blessing from God of five lovely children.



TETA, (DICK'S SISTER) GRANDMOTHER, DICK AND JO ANNE IN HAWAII

SISTER TETA & DICK

IN HAWAII



JO ANNE AND DICK ON EASTER SUNDAY

(PRIOR TO THEIR MARRIAGE)

DICK DESIGNED AND MADE JO ANNE'S DRESS

THE NEWLY WEDS



JO ANNE & DICK



JO ANNE, DICK AND RICKY, THEIR FIRST BORN SON