

Windermere

Windermere is a bible camp on the Lake of the Ozarks in southwestern Missouri where various groups hold retreats and bible conferences. Each Spring in the '60s the Baptist Student Unions (BSU) at about a half dozen colleges and universities in Missouri held a retreat to hear motivational speakers and bible teachers. About 500 students would gather for the weekend.

The BSU at the Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy (MSM) where I attended—later to become the University of Missouri at Rolla (UMR), and even later, the Missouri University of Science and Technology (MS&T)—had about 40 members, almost all men. MSM was an engineering school with about 4,000 men and about 100 women. Women weren't strongly encouraged to go into engineering in the '60s.

Many of our BSU membership attended the annual meeting at Windermere because we liked the fellowship and motivational environment, but also desperately wanted to meet girls. Our school was in the Ozarks about 200 miles from civilization and we only got to see girls on holidays and in the summer. So, by Spring when a guy's fancy turns to love, a meeting at the Lake of the Ozarks was a very attractive place to go.

The BSU at the Jewish Hospital School of Nursing--now the Barnes/Jewish School of Nursing of Washington University in St. Louis--where Jeannette attended, was likewise deficient in members of the opposite sex. In the '60s few, if any, males entered the nursing profession. I suspect a similar interest in guys partially motivated nurses at Jewish Hospital and the Missouri Baptist School of Nursing to attend the annual Windermere conference. I know there is an unusually high percentage of nurses from the St. Louis area married to engineers from Rolla. At any rate, in the Spring of 1962 and 1963 Jeannette and I both attended conferences at the Lake of the Ozarks, became acquainted, and eventually married.

Jeannette and I first met in the auditorium at Windermere. My roommates Dannie Clarida, Ronn Umphrey, and I sat down in a pew to the left of three girls. I spotted an attractive blond seated on the near end and rather aggressively squeezed

past my buddies into the seat next to her. She must have dazzled me because I was not normally that proactive with girls.

Jeannette's friends urged her to share a hymnal with me and we sat pinched together between our friends singing hymns and gospel songs. Did I mention that she was a beautiful blonde? I had never dated a blonde--I had only dated brunettes and a raven-haired girl with whom I had just recently broken up.

Jeannette and I spoke only briefly after the conference. We met at the food disposal area in the cafeteria where I was cleaning dishes to pay for my conference fees. Being from a family of six, I didn't have much spare money. I found that she was a student nurse at Jewish Hospital in St. Louis and she learned I was a physics major. She wasn't thrilled that she had met someone who liked physics because it was her least favorable subject from highschool.

I also found out later that Jeannette's friends had urged her to come say goodbye to me on the way out of the cafeteria because they had to leave the conference early. I had taken that as a good sign that she liked me, but I didn't think to get her phone number.

That summer, almost four months later, I finally got around to contacting her. I didn't know how to call or write her but recalled her name from a napkin I had saved and remembered that she was a student nurse at Jewish Hospital. I wrote her a letter asking if she remembered me and would she like to attend the Muni Opera in St. Louis. I sent the letter to the address for Jewish Hospital I obtained from a telephone operator.

Apparently, the letter bounced around Jewish Hospital for several weeks before she got it because I didn't receive a response for quite some time. She said later that the letter was mutilated as though it had been forwarded many times. She also said she couldn't remember who I was because she had met so many guys that weekend.

Finally, I received a response from her saying, yes, she would like to go see the play, *Around the World in 80 Days* with me. I borrowed my dad's old 1955 station wagon and picked her up at the student dorm. That was always quite an experience. When I entered the dorm, there were girls running around the halls

screaming, "Man on the floor! Jeannette, your date's here! Look out, coming through!" It was chaos. She lived on the third floor, so it took a while for her to get down to the front door. In the meantime, I was getting the "once over" from her friends checking me out. Jeannette tells me she didn't date much, and they were all excited for her. But, I'm not convinced. I think she had more boy friends than she claims.

From what I've been able to piece together, her close friends from the BSU decided to make her more attractive for her trip to Windermere. They convinced her to lighten her hair and become a blonde for the retreat. They were all part of the conspiracy that contributed to the excitement.

Jeannette finally met me in the front sitting room and we headed to the Muni. In all the confusion, we greeted each other somewhat awkwardly. It had been almost five months since we had seen one another, and we couldn't remember one another very well. She didn't look familiar to me and, apparently, she wasn't sure which guy I was she had spoken to at Windermere. However, we had a very enjoyable time which started a period of over three years of dating.

It was many years later that she explained to me why she looked different on our first date. When we met at Windermere she had been a blonde. Now I understand why they say, "Blondes have more fun!"