



*Jack at Bilibid POW Camp in the Philippines,
after it was liberated by the Americans.*

PART III: EARLY ADULTHOOD



Six
Young Married Life

“What do you think you’re going to live on?” my dad asked when I told my parents about our plans to marry.

“No problem,” I said. “I’ve got it all figured out. We can get a basement apartment for \$10 a week, food for \$12 a week, and I already bought a \$500 insurance policy for myself.”

Dad hadn’t voiced any objections when my sister Doris got married because her fiancé was already twenty-three and had walked into a great job at Western Electric after the war. In 1947, I was earning \$30 a week as a dental assistant; Jack made even less at his job in the auto body shop.

“What if you get sick?” asked Dad.

“I won’t,” I said. “It’s not in the budget.”



I fought off my parents’ objections, held Jack to his word, and mailed out invitations for our wedding on February 1. At the time, Catholics and non-Catholics were allowed to marry, but not inside the

church. Our immediate family members were to join us for the wedding ceremony in the priest's parlor at Corpus Christie Church—that's where Doris and Bill were married two years earlier, and I had no problem having my own wedding there. Everybody else would join us later that day for a big reception in the church hall. Then, just before our wedding date, the newspapers announced that Cardinal Ritter overturned the rule, and mixed marriages were now allowed to take place at the altar. We rushed to call everyone and tell them to join us for the wedding. At ten in the morning on Saturday, February the first, I married my Prince Charming. At 8 p.m. Jack and I entered the church hall for the reception and Aunt Celeste and her band started playing our song, Deep Purple. It was a wonderful evening.

At the end of the night, Jack and I told our guests good-bye and we climbed into his father's car. I still had no idea where we were going. I wanted to go to a hotel, but Jack didn't like that idea.

"The walls are too thin," he said. "You can hear right through them. How about going to a motel?"

"No, I don't want to." I thought I would look cheap coming out of a motel the next day. "Well?" I asked Jack as we sat in the car. "What are we doing?"

"We're going down to Morse Mill," he said.



Morse Mill is a community on the Big River where Jack's parents had a clubhouse, just a few miles northwest of Hillsboro. The temperature outside was freezing when we got there, and it was no warmer inside.

"It's so cold," I said as Jack turned on the little heater.

"Get underneath the covers with your coat on."

I put on my new nightgown, then buttoned my green winter coat

over it. "Jack," I called out, "I'm ready for bed."

"Umm, okay," he said. He sounded nervous. "Give me a minute. I'm hungry."

I crawled under the blankets while he rummaged for something to eat in the kitchen. After a few minutes I heard him open a can of hot tamales. He was scared to get into bed with me because we had never done anything before.

The next day, my coat was covered in fuzz from the blanket. After sixty-four years, I still have that same nightgown. It's never really been worn. Every year on our anniversary, I gave Jack a can of hot tamales.

Sunday was warm and beautiful. On Monday we came home, and by Tuesday we were back at work.

OUR FIRST HOME

Everyone was looking for a place to live when they came home from the service after the war. There was a housing shortage, and people lived together or got creative about where they moved. Bill was shipped to Greenland and Doris moved back from Connecticut into his parents' house. When Bill returned, his friend Harry Exxxx made them an offer.

"We've got a big yard," he said of his house in Jennings. "We'll buy a kit to build a double garage, and you can live in it." They ordered the garage from a catalog and fixed it up like a little house, with plumbing for a kitchen and bathroom and plenty of windows. The living area was a large open space. By the time they moved away, Bill and Doris already had their first two children, Michael and Susan.

Jack and I found a basement apartment in Jennings that rented for ten dollars a week. It was in the 7200 block of W. Florissant and within walking distance of my job at the dentist's office, where I now earned twelve dollars a week. Jack took the bus to work at the body shop, and with our combined salaries, we were able to get by.

It was a darling little apartment, and I loved living there. Jack's