

Mildred's Story stops at about 1954. She and sister Carol moved to Ventura, California, and that is where her story continues, but as written by Bruce Underwood in His Life and Times.

The "we" below refers to Bruce and his co-worker, Don O'Bryhim.

This is where Mildred's Story takes up again.

It was January, 1954, and we were living in an apartment in Port Hueneme¹⁵², California, and working out in Little Sycamore Canyon near Point Mugu Naval Air Station.

One Saturday night, we went down to the local night spot, a place called The Silver Dollar. We called it, affectionately, the Dirty Peso. There was a group of about five girls sitting together at a

table across the room. Don asked one of them to dance, and when they finished, Don suggested that I dance with one of them. I was somewhat shy, but finally got up enough courage to ask the pretty blonde one to dance. She told me her name was Mickey, and that the girl Don had danced with was her sister, Carol. I asked her for a date, but she said the group of girls had a rule that no one in the group would date anyone that they met at the place. They were just there to dance with the sailors, and nothing more. She wouldn't give me her telephone number either. So I got real smart. I danced with her sister, Carol, and told her that I liked her sister, and that I wanted to take her out some evening to dinner and maybe a movie. She told me that all five of the girls shared a small cottage at the rear of a large house in Ventura, a town not far away.

Carol gave me their telephone number, and I called Mickey to ask her to go out with me. She was a little surprised that I had her telephone number, and I finally admitted that Carol had given it

¹⁵² Pronounced wye-nee-mee.

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to me. I had invited a client and his wife out to dinner, so I asked Mickey if she would go with me. She agreed, and we started dating pretty regularly after that.

I decided pretty quickly that I wanted to marry her. She thought I wasn't serious, since we had only known each other a few weeks.

About that time I wrote her a poem expressing my feelings on the matter. It is the only poem I ever wrote to her, and she has kept a framed copy hanging on the wall in our bedroom ever since. Here are the verses that I wrote:

To Mickey

How say with words the thoughts
expressed so fully in my eyes?
How can I say these things in
words
That could as well be lies?
Better men than I have tried and
failed!

Can I expect you to believe such
words as, "I love you"?
Perhaps you will in later years
when time has proved it's true;
When hair has grayed and eyes
and skin have paled.

Let not this eager off'ring of my
love belie its worth;
May be it could be that I've loved
one such as you since birth;
Dreams hath Men until his coffin's
nailed!

Oh God, I beg Thee, give to me the
words I need to say;
If not the words, then give me
Lord, another surer way;
Take not from me this treasure
You've unveiled!

Mickey, Mildred, Words of joy to
one poor lonely heart;
Remember this, my dearest one, if
Fate should let us part:
Your heart with naught but love
has been assailed!

While Bruce Underwood
February 8, 1954

We were married about a week later.

When we started out that afternoon, the 17th of February, we were not sure whether we were going for a weekend in Mexico, or to get married in Las Vegas. We had both had bad experiences in a previous marriage, so we took the commitment seriously.

At about two o'clock the next morning, we were married at the Hitching Post Wedding Chapel in Las Vegas. Preacher and all. We even have a recording of the wedding to prove it.

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The next day we toured the Grand Canyon, then north and across the Colorado River to Marble Canyon.

On the way back to Ventura, we waited until too late in the evening before looking for a motel, and as a result, didn't find one open. We drove all night and arrived in Ventura the next morning.

We stayed at a motel with kitchen facilities for a few days. Mickey cooked a pot of pinto beans as our first meal together. Later, we moved into an apartment. I believe it was on Poli Street.

Within a few days, Don and I had to go out to San Nicholas Island to do a survey. I was naturally in a hurry to get back, and the accommodations on the island were deplorable, so we finished that survey in record time. We went out on Monday and returned on Wednesday of the same week.

When the job in California was finished, Mickey and I came back to Washington, D. C. We stayed with her sister, Virginia Griffith, for a while. We then moved out to Kent Island, Maryland, where I worked for a few months. We

had a terrible hurricane while we were there. Thought we were going to get washed away. This was in the late summer of 1954.

That fall, we moved to Brooklyn, New York, where I was assigned to work at the Brooklyn Naval Shipyard. I took several trips down to Norfolk to do pre-arrival inspections of ships that were scheduled for overhaul at Brooklyn. Mickey went with me on some of these trips.

We visited Victoria that Thanksgiving, and while we were there, we bought a new car. It was a gold-colored Chevrolet Bel Aire.

The weather was raw in New York, and I have always hated the big eastern cities, so I was miserable the whole time we were there. Finally, I wrangled a transfer to sunny California.

We loaded up our clothes and the only piece of furniture we had - a used television set - and headed west. Here I was, driving across the United States in January again!

We stayed in Napa, California for about eighteen months while I worked at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard at

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Vallejo, California. While we were living there, my father, and his friend, Jack Rist, came out to visit. It was my father's third trip out to California.

We moved, in 1956, to El Granada, California, down the coast a few miles south of San Francisco. About a year later, my father and mother, and an old friend of my mother's, Myrtle Marshall, stopped by for a visit on their tour of the west. My Uncle Will, Aunt Estelle, and Mr. and Mrs. Arvin, from Victoria, also paid us a visit while we lived out there.

After my mother passed away in 1962, my father again visited us and stayed about a month. My nephew, Butch Martin, and his friend from Victoria, Ben Hawks, were stationed at the Navy Training Center at Treasure Island near San Francisco, so they came out to visit us now and then. Butch and my father and I took a trip up the coast to one of the Redwood Forests, and we all enjoyed it very much. Our children were small then. We all enjoyed my father's visit very much. It was his first time on an air-

plane! He thought the big jetliners were great! When he heard that we were moving back east in 1966, he flew out again for a short visit.

In about 1957 or '58, we decided to try to adopt a child, since we had been unsuccessful in having one of our own. The Children's Home Society, an agency approved by the state, took our application, and we had home studies and went through all the other falderal, and it seemed we were getting no closer to having a child. So we asked around about how we might get a private adoption.

We got the name of a Doctor in San Francisco who specialized in caring for unwed mothers, and we called him and asked to be considered as adoptive parents. It was not long before we were contacted and a luncheon appointment was made with an expectant mother who was going to put her child up for adoption. She wanted to be assured that the child would be loved and would have a good home. She decided that we fit the bill.

On February 12, 1959, our little red-headed daughter, Sandra Mary, was born. When

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Sandra was about two years old, we got a call from the Children's Home Society, asking if we still wanted to adopt a child. We told them yes, of course, but we explained about our private adoption of our daughter. They said that wouldn't matter to them, and soon after that we had a son, Warren Bruce. He is sixteen months younger than Sandra.

Just before Christmas, 1958, the place where I worked closed down, and I found myself without a job. I had some money saved, so I decided to take a vacation for about a month before looking for another job. I had the flu for about two weeks, then we toured around the Death Valley region for a few weeks. I then called up Nelson Cooke in Alexandria, Virginia, and asked for a job at his newly formed operation in San Mateo, California.

I stayed at that location until after Mr. Cooke died, and they decided to close it down. I then went back to Alexandria, and stayed with the company until I retired last year. A little over twenty-eight years with the same outfit.

The company was bought by Dynatech Corporation, of Boston, Mass., in 1967 or '68, I don't remember which. I rose to the position of Chief Engineer and Head of Product Development. As the result of a political situation in the company that I won't go into, I asked to be transferred to the job of Manufacturing Engineer. I designed several pieces of automated medical test instruments, one of which accounted for more than eight million dollars in sales for the company. I hold the patent on another instrument, which unfortunately didn't do so well.

The company moved to a new building at Chantilly, Virginia; out near Dulles Airport. It meant a forty-five mile drive for me, each way. That, coupled with some personnel changes that I didn't like, prompted me to ask for early retirement. I asked for, and got six month's pay as a retirement bonus. And they gave me a beautiful rifle with telescopic sights as a going-away gift. The company allowed me to do pretty well as I pleased in the latter years, and I could have stayed on as

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long as I wished at an excellent salary. My profit sharing fund with the company gave me enough money to retire in comfort.

My career spanned thirty-four years. I made \$4200 per year in my first job, and exactly the same amount - per month - in my last year of work.

Mickey and I moved, at the end of February, 1987, down to the farm near Victoria, Virginia. We had built a cabin there as a vacation home some years ago, and we added a glassed-in porch on the front and a utility room and extra bedroom on the back, and now it serves as our permanent home.

We spent a lot of money last year getting ready for retirement. We bought a new pickup truck, a new 19-foot camping trailer, complete with bathroom, a new Volvo automobile, a new electric range for the kitchen, a microwave oven with built-in exhaust fan, for above the stove; new washer and dryer, water heater, and just last month we put in a new drilled well and water tank. We put in a nice air condi-

tioning unit downstairs, and two smaller units upstairs. We have baseboard electric heaters to supplement our wood-burning stove in the living room. The front of the stove opens up to form a free-standing fireplace, of sorts.

Everything we have is paid for; we don't owe anyone a dime. It gives me a nice secure feeling.

I planted my first garden last spring (1987), and it was a thing of beauty until the dry weather, starting about the first of August, ruined it. I think I will scale it down a bit for next year so I can irrigate it during dry weather. I have already plowed, disked, and rototilled it, and have a couple of rows of peas and onions planted (as of the first of March, 1988).

Well, that about covers my life. If I think of anything else, I'll add it later.

Willie Bruce Underwood

March 11, 1988

