

## **Part III      In between years: 1943 - 1953**

### **Chapter 1 Kansas City, Missouri: 1943-46**

September 1943 I left my home in Blythedale and went to Kansas City, Missouri with Ora and Faye Gray, Kenneth's parents. They invited me to stay at their home while I looked for work and to begin my life in the adult world. The Quartermaster Depot was not far from their house. I applied for work there and was hired as a Clerk-Typist. The Quartermaster Depot was a facility that processed personal effects of the servicemen who were killed while serving with the Army in Europe during World War II.

A few weeks after I started working and had received my first pay check I decided it was time to look for a place to live. I started by walking around the block from the Grays' house. Then I would walk all the way around the second block. I was afraid I would get lost in the big city. I continue to do this until I saw a For Rent sign in the window of a house. I knocked on the door, looked at the room and rented it. The owners were a bachelor and his sister. I believe their last names were Hill but I don't remember asking if we were related. They rented out three rooms on the second floor. A girl rented one room and a man rented the other room. I did not become friends with them. Anyway I moved in. One thing I remember about staying there is that Miss Hill cooked stewed okra and tomatoes for dinner. I did not like stewed tomatoes and certainly not stewed tomatoes with stewed okra.

I found out I loved bananas. I would buy a bunch of bananas, lie in bed, reading and eating the whole bunch of bananas. I loved going to the movies. Some Saturdays I would go to an early double feature movie and sit through the same movies time and again until the theater closed. In those days, once you paid to get in you could just stay as long as you wanted. Cheap entertainment. Movies included cartoons and news stories with scenes of the war going on in Europe and with Japan.

I became acquainted with a girl at work. One day during our lunch hour I went shopping at one of the stores across the street from the Quartermaster. When I returned to work the girl wanted to know what I bought. I said, "I bought something from the old Jew store across the street". She looked me right in the eye and said, "Do you know that I am Jewish?" This was my first encountered with someone of another race. She explained the problems her family had finding a nice house in which to live and good jobs.

I became friends with two girls I worked with at the Quartermaster. One girl was Lois Holbert. Lois lived near the Quartermaster Depot, at 4615 East 8th Street, with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. T. Holbert. Lois had an older sister, Betty Nell; a brother, Clifford; and a younger sister, Sue Ann. Lois and I became good friends. (We were friends until she died in 1954.)

The other girl was Peggy Balle from Tarkio, Mo. Peggy lived with her sister-in-law and her children. Peggy's brother, George, was in the Army serving overseas.

Employees at the Quartermaster were required to buy U.S. Savings Bonds and give blood to the blood bank. I had bad tonsils for years. As soon as my health insurance was in effect I took leave for a few days and went home. I had my tonsils removed at the hospital in Bethany, in and out surgery. Mom and I rode the train down to Bethany that morning and back home that evening. After returning to Kansas City, I passed out on the bus going to work one morning. I had a blood boil under my arm too. The nurse at work advised me to see a doctor. The doctor had me take some time off from work to rest so I went back home for a few days. I had to take iron pills for years. I had lost too much blood in to short a period of time. The doctor signed a form stating I was not to give blood to the blood bank again. I continued to buy Savings Bonds as long as I worked there. In 1958 I cashed the last of those bonds.

Daryl Sturdevant called me one Sunday night about 4:00 a.m. He was at the Bus Station in Kansas City. I had just gone to bed after being home for the weekend and I was dead tired. I suggested I would go down to the Bus Station to see him the next morning after I had a few hours of sleep. He didn't want to wait. He caught the early morning bus for Eagleville. I did not get to see him while he was home on leave.

Lois and I dated some of the soldiers that worked at the Quartermaster. I dated Francis Plozner. He was big, blonde, Swedish and from Pennsylvania. Lois dated Woody, I don't remember his complete name. Both soldiers were sent to a base near Muskogee, Oklahoma. One weekend Lois and I rode the train down to see them. The train was packed with service men. We all shared seats, food, drinks, and had a good time on the train. Francis was sent overseas from there. (He called me when he came back to the United States but I was then dating Wayne. Francis was in a hurry to get home to Pennsylvania, I never saw him or heard from him again.)

Uncle Harold Hill had a business near the Bus Station in Kansas City. He had several cars that he hired drivers to drive taking loads of servicemen to

California or from California to Kansas City. Uncle Harold and Aunt Georgia lived at 514 East 9th Street, not far from where I lived and worked.

Ruth Sturdevant, one of my high school classmates from Blythedale, moved into the Y.W.C.A. in the west part of Kansas City. She invited me to move in with her. Faye and Orié Gray helped me move. In the process of moving Faye gave me a large picture of Kenneth in his uniform. I did not live with Ruth long as it was too far from the Quarter-master. I had to ride the street car and that added more to my living expenses. Ruth and Bernadene Stanley, from Andover, Mo., worked at the Fosters Cafeteria.

I told Lois I was interested in moving. She told me about a room for rent in a house near her so I checked it out and moved there. The only things I remember while living there was the landlady's son shaved his eye brows. He shaved at the kitchen sink while we ate breakfast. And Cecil Craig came home on leave from the Army. He called for me on the phone but the landlady would not call me to the phone as it was late at night.

I went on vacation and visited Virginia in Washington, D.C. She worked for the government in Suitland, Maryland. The only thing I remember about the trip was riding a bus across the Anacostia River. From there we rode a street car down to the Mall and saw the U.S. Capitol, Washington Monument and Smithsonian Museums.

D-Day, June 6, 1944, Invasion of Normandy by the Allied Armies. Cecil Craig was taken as a prisoner of war in Europe.

Lois and I began going out together on weekends. Her best friend was Mary Harker. She and Mary had known each other since they were in the 7th Grade and living with their parents near Carthage, Mo. Mary's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Harker, had moved to 5824 East 17th Street in Kansas City. Mary had a brother, "Bud", and a sister, Jean. We could walk from my room, to Lois' house and Mary's house. Mary and I did not like each other at first. I guess we were both jealous of Lois' friendship to the other. The three of us would go roller skating often, or at least we carried our roller skates. Sometimes we would just go downtown Kansas City and flirt with the soldiers and sailors. One time we went to a bar and Mary ordered us beers. My first beer and I got drunk. By the time I got to my room and in bed my head was going around and around. I remembered Don telling me that when you are drunk if you would put your foot out onto the floor it would made the room stop spinning. It didn't help much but it cured me of drinking beer. One of our favorite hangouts was "Mary's Place". It was located near the Swope Park area. We had fake identifications as we were under age. We did not drink but loved to dance and flirt. That is one place

we would go carrying our roller skates hoping Lois and Mary's parents would not find out we were there.

V-E Day, May 8, 1945, date of the Allied victory in Europe. There were celebrations everywhere. Ruth Sturdevant, Peggy Balle, another girl named June and I went downtown Kansas City, to 12th Street, to join in the celebration. Our pictures were on the front page of the Kansas City Star. June is kissing some returning soldier. Peggy is reading the war news in the paper. I am looking on and Ruth is hidden behind someone.

Lois met and started dating Tommy Hutton, a soldier. They introduced me to Tommy's friend, Wayne Brooks, another soldier. Wayne had just returned from fighting with the Army in Europe. They were from Gardner, Kansas. We four really hit it off and spent most of our free time together.

Peggy Balle and I became better acquainted. She invited me to live with her and her sister-in-law. I was tired of living in only one room so I moved in with them. This arrangement worked out fine until George came home from the Army. Then Peggy and I moved into an apartment with two sisters from work. I don't remember their names but they had gone to Chillicothe Business College.

V-J Day, September 2, 1945, date of the Allied victory over Japan.

Don returned from the Navy in March of 1946. He had served in the South Pacific with the Seabees. Don had been gone from home since June 1943. I met Don at the Bus Station in Kansas City. He was headed home to Blythedale. At one time, in 1944, Randall, Marvin and Don met in Guam. Randall was in the Army, Marvin in the Marines and Don in the Navy.

By early 1946 Lois and Tommy were getting serious and talking marriage. Tommy was getting out of the Army. Wayne was staying in the Army and he had received orders to report to Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Wayne and I decided to get married. We rode the bus to Kansas City, Kansas, and were married by a Justice of the Peace on March 26, 1946. We stayed at a hotel in Kansas City for a night or two and then rented a room until it was time for us to leave for Virginia. I quit my job at the Quartermaster Depot and moved my things from the apartment I shared with Peggy and the two girls. Wayne and I visited both sets of parents. We told them the news of our marriage and then we left for Virginia.

In March 1946 Don returned home from the South Pacific where he had served with the Navy. He stayed around Blythedale awhile. Several of his friends were home from the war too. In the Fall of 1947 he went with Kenneth

Hutton to Richland, Washington. Kenneth had lived with his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Hutton, on a farm about one mile north of our house. He graduated from Blythedale High School in 1940. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Noel Hutton, had moved to Washington several years before.

Marvin returned from the South Pacific where he had served with the Marine Corps. He worked around Blythedale for while and then followed the wheat harvest from Kansas to Wyoming and Montana. Then he worked in the Oil Fields before returning to Mo. in 1949.

Randall's knee had been injured when he was in an accident in the mountains of Idaho with the C.C.C. While he was in the Army in the South Pacific his knee started bothering him and he was sent back to the U.S. to some Veterans Hospitals. He was discharged from the Army and came home. Randall dated my best friend from high school, Alberta Casady. They were married on May 4, 1946. Randall drove a school bus and ran the gas station Dad bought in Blythedale. The one Roy Foster had operated when we were in high school.

## **Chapter 2 Alexandria, Virginia: 1946-47**

The spring of 1946, Wayne and I moved to the state of Virginia. Wayne reported to the Army at Fort Belvoir. We rented a cabin on Route One about two miles north of the Fort, towards the city of Alexandria. A sergeant, his wife and children lived across from us. They were very friendly and helpful to me. I needed some friends as Wayne and I had many problems.

I applied for and got a job at the Burke and Herbert Bank in Alexandria. I was hired as an Utility Clerk. On the job I was to rotate around to all the different departments helping out as needed. The Bank President's son, Taylor Burke, started working at the bank at the same time. He was starting at the bottom of the ladder to work his way to the top. Taylor would one day be the President of the Bank. I learned about banking and enjoyed working there. My favorite expression was "What do I do with this doom-a-floggy?" (I'll get back to this later, in my story dated 1966.)

My sister, Virginia, was now living in northwest Washington, D.C. Her son, Bobby, was born on July 29, 1946 and her daughter, Donna, on August 15, 1947. I saw them a few times and I did some sight seeing in Washington, D.C.

While serving with the Army in Europe, Wayne had been awarded a Medal for bravery in action. He was now having emotional problems. He was not physically abusive to me but at times he would hit his head against the wall trying to get rid of the memories of the war and he started drinking. Wayne

went A.W.O.L. and got as far as Ohio when he came to his senses and realized he could not keep on running. He returned to Fort Belvoir. At first they put him in the brig and then he was transferred to the hospital for psychological tests and evaluations. The Doctor called Wayne's condition shell shock, which means a mental disorder resulting from the strain of war. There is no point in recalling all the problems Wayne and I had. I'll just say the Army discharged Wayne and we went back to Kansas City, late summer of 1947.

### **Chapter 3 Kansas City, Missouri: 1947**

While Wayne and I were living in Virginia, Lois Holbert and Tommy Hutton had gotten married on October 23, 1946. Mary Harker had met and married Ozzie Hampton. Wayne and I moved into an apartment in the same house where Lois and Tommy lived. Mary and Ozzie lived in an apartment nearby. This was in the same general area of Kansas City that we had lived before going to Virginia.

I went to work for Sears, Roebuck and Co. as a clerk-typist. I answering customer complaint letters. Sears was within walking distance of where we lived.

Wayne went to work for the railroad. Ozzie worked for the railroad too. They got into the habit of stopping off for a few beers after work and things went down hill fast. When Wayne came home drunk he would just go to bed and sleep it off. Ozzie's behavior was a different story. He was very abusive to Mary, both emotionally and physically. Mary and Ozzie and Wayne and I had nothing but troubles but at least Lois and Tommy were a very happy couple.

To make a long story short; the fall of 1948 Mary and I left: Wayne, Ozzie and Kansas City. We just got on the train one night, with a suitcase each, and rode as far as Denver, Colorado. That was as far as we could go on what money we had. We spent one night sleeping in the train station. We ate pancakes for breakfast, grilled cheese sandwiches for lunch and chili for dinner as that food was cheap but filling. The next evening we met a nice older man in a restaurant. He invited us to spend the night in his apartment. He even paid for our dinner. If we had known he was going to pay for our chili we would of had a steak! I had called my Dad to cash in some of my Savings Bonds and to send me the money. This money got us as far as Salt Lake City, Utah. Mary and I changed to riding on the bus as it was cheaper. Mary wired her boss and he sent her some money which got us on to Richland, Washington. Don was living in