

Preston Milford Caudle, Sr.

How I Met Your Mother

March 7, 1995

My daughter asked me over the telephone to write down everything that ever happened to her Mom and I, how we met, how we fell in love, how we knew we were in love, etc. It is my intention to write what she asked. I wish that Kay was here to write her side of it. Since she's not, I will write it as truthfully as I can, depending on the Holy Spirit to help me organize, to keep the words, thoughts, and ideas flowing – to help me always to write the truth as I know it.

I realize the truth I write will be my side, meaning – from my vantage point. Kay might put a different slant to it. I know she had her way of seeing things in a different light than me. I guess the reason was we are two different people with two different backgrounds, which were, in reality, as different as night and day. She thought I was prone to exaggerate. I don't deny it. But, for my daughter and for posterity, I'll tell it the way it happened without the punch lines.

The year was 1953. My Dad had bought a farm 2 miles southwest of Chandler, Oklahoma. Our family moved there in October. I started school at Chandler High that month. I was in the ninth grade. That's the first time I ever saw Kay Wakley. She sat next to the black board about three fourths of the way towards the rear of the room. I sat in the same position on the other side of the room next to the windows. Mrs. Williams taught us English. I looked at Kay sitting over there and that she was wearing those baggy blue jeans that girls wore then. The jeans had a zipper on the left side, and did not have belt loops or a belt to keep them up. But it was Kay's face that got my attention. She was pretty. She had dimples and when she smiled, her dimples showed. I looked at her several times during the day.

One night, Robert Brown asked me if I wanted to ride with him to a school function. He lived near me. I don't remember what the function was. It was probably something to do with the FFA and FHA. FFA was the acronym for Future Farmers of America, and FHA was Future Homemakers of America. I remember Robert wore his FFA jacket. I probably wore my brother's Yale, Oklahoma FFA jacket. That's where we lived before moving to Chandler.

After the function, Robert drove downtown and parked in front of the Courthouse on Manvel Boulevard and across from the H&S Theatre, or the Picture Show as we called it. As we got out of the car, I saw two girls walking up the sidewalk on the Courthouse side of the street. Kay was with Anna Parker, one of her girlfriends. When they were even with Robert's car, I looked at them and loudly declared to him that, "There goes the girl I'm going to marry." Of course, it must have scared Kay because she and Anna hurried up the sidewalk and crossed over to the other side of the street at the intersection.

That night, Kay was wearing men's wrangler blue-jeans. She and Anna walked down the sidewalk to the H&S Theatre, across the street from us. I watched as she called her Dad to come and get her. I thought she really looked good in those western jeans. Anna moved to Oklahoma City before the next school year began. I never saw her again. She lived not too far from me. I remember that Kay told me she spent the night with Anna while she was living out there. It was near a country store named, at the time, Noah's Ark.

I saw Kay many times in class after that. We changed rooms for each class, but I used to see her in Shelby Wyatt's, the Principal's class on civics. I also saw her in Algebra, Mrs. Gillian's class, and science, Mrs. Hurst's class. While I wasn't in the class, I saw her walking down the hall to and from the FHA class. I don't remember her teacher's name. She was a young teacher and pretty. She liked Kay, and Kay liked her.

Other than seeing her often in class, I really wasn't mesmerized with her. In fact, I did not think in any way about her until our class picnic, which was held in the pasture about one half of a mile north of where Kay lived, across from Indian Springs, on the west side of the road. In April of 1954, Indian Springs just had a sandstone rock wall with a fence around it. Now, it has a teepee over the springs (or well) and a statue of an Indian with his right arm raised in a greeting (or what we knew as the "How" sign). The water at that time was not even fit for drinking because of the trash in it. People would park there and throw beer cans and whiskey bottles in the springs. It also contained a lot of paper and leaves.

Back to the reason I'm writing this, someone had erected a half circular fence in the pasture where the class picnic was held. After eating hotdogs, and drinking cokes, our class started playing games. The game being played was "Go-In-and-Out-the-Window". The kids held hands and formed a circle. Couples would then weave in and out under the outstretched arms. Kay and I were standing by ourselves near the half circular fence that had been erected for baseball. (Later, Kay told me her Dad played baseball there before I moved there.) I looked over at Kay and saw she didn't have a partner and I asked her if she wanted to be my partner. She agreed and we weaved in and out under our classmate's arms while they sang, "Go-In-and-Out-the-Window".

The next day at school, several of the girls in our class asked me if I was going steady with Kay. I said we would if she wanted. Before the picnic, they had not talked to me. Later, they asked me if I would trade seats in class with John Squires, so I could sit by Kay. (I found out later that one of the other girls wanted to sit by John.) I changed seats with John and sat across the aisle from Kay. That's how we began our union of 40 years. She was 13 and I was 15.

School was out for the summer shortly, and we didn't see each other all that often. I worked on the farm hoeing crops and hauling hay. However, every night, after chores (milking the cows, separating the milk, feeding the cows, pumping water, etc.), I would walk up to Dawight Maxwell's house, north of us on the dirt road leading to the railroad dump, about a

quarter of a mile, and talk to Kay for about 2 hours on his telephone. Dawight loved it because it gave him company. He lived by himself and fancied himself a westerner. He had a saddle horse named "Skipper" that he fed sugar regularly. He used to ride him before I moved there, but he was too "stoved" up by the time I knew him. He read "Wild West" magazines and I would have to step over many of them to get to the telephone. His house was really cluttered. He had lived by himself for many years. He had a daughter who lived in Oklahoma City where Dawight's ex-wife lived. She rarely saw him.

Telephones then were on party lines. Others could listen in and often did. I know Mrs. Smith, our neighbor south of us, listened in. She hollered something to Gary, her youngest son, and I recognized her voice. That's the way some people entertained themselves back then. They didn't have T.V. and I don't remember seeing them listening to radios and some didn't have radios that worked. Ours never worked.

Sometime in June or July of 1954, Mom took me to the Doctor at Shawnee to have my tonsils taken out. I asked Kay if she wanted to go there with us. Mom drove my brother's 1948 blue Plymouth. The song, "This Ole House" by Rosemary Clooney, was number one and I remember hearing it on the way to the Doctor. He gave me ether and told me to count backward starting with 100. I remember saying 99 and thinking it wasn't going to work so I breathed real deep. I don't remember saying 98. I felt myself floating out into space. I was suspended there. Then I heard myself telling Mom that, "I love Kay." Boy was I sick from the ether. I felt like I needed to throw up. The Doctor helped me up and Mom and Kay helped me to the car. They put me in the seat and I threw-up dark blood all over the place. Mom got the Doctor real fast, and they quickly took me back in because I was hemorrhaging. Mom said the Doctor told her he almost lost me during the operation because I hemorrhaged. I guess Kay really got a scare. I don't remember too much about the trip home. The Doctor told me to eat all the ice cream I wanted because it would be good for my throat. I wondered how I could do that when my throat hurt so bad I couldn't even swallow.

Kay got her Dad and Mom to drive her out to see me while I was recuperating. That's the first time I saw her Mom and Daddy. I thought they were OK. They talked with Dad and Mom while Kay visited with me. At that time, we lived in the house that Mr. Steel built soon after he homesteaded the place. So, it was quite old. It had a basement and that's where I slept except when I was recuperating from my tonsil operation or the time I stepped on a nail.

That was the next time that I got to see Kay. Daddy assigned me the job of tearing down an old dilapidated out building near the barn. I stepped on a board that had a rusty nail in it and it went through the sole of my work shoe and my foot. I could see the nail sticking out of the top of my shoe. I placed my other foot on the backside of the board and held it while I lifted my foot off the nail. Boy that hurt! I couldn't walk again so Kay talked her parents into bringing her out to see me again. (Mom called her and told her what happened. I don't remember if I asked her to or not. I'm sure I did.) So that was the second time I met her parents.