

"GUS THIS IS BETTY"

by Gus Dick Andros

Descending the stairs at Alpha Chi Omega sorority house was a beautiful girl dressed in an off-the-shoulder gown of blue taffeta and lace. She had the brightest smile I had ever seen. Standing in the foyer I couldn't believe she was to be my blind date. When I was asked to date a girl I had never seen, by the girl in my art class, I thought she was crazy. I didn't need someone to help me get a date.

"Gus, this is Betty -- Betty Ward," the girl from my art class introduced me. Betty was a freshman from out of state and knew very few people.

"Hi!" was all I could say. I was taken aback by her poise and smile. Her blond hair was pulled back with a blue ribbon that match her dress and eyes. The twinkle in those big blue eyes show a little bit of a mischievous child.

"We have met before, but you wouldn't have remembered." She smiled.

"I may not be the brightest person in the world but I wouldn't have forgotten you."

"Not only did we meet before, but you yelled at me."

"Wait a minute, I never yell at anybody," I protested.

"Remember the first school dance in the fall? You were on top of a ladder and I asked you where you wanted the streamers to go, and you yelled in not a friendly way, 'If I told you, they would throw me out of college'." Now she was laughing.

"I was standing on top of a 16-foot ladder and I couldn't get the damn, pardon my French, centerpiece even, and I will tell you I would have yelled at anyone at that time. Well, let me apologize now for my rude conduct."

"Apologies accepted. I also know you like to dance, because I watched you that night and you didn't miss a dance. I was wishing that would have asked me to dance," she added.

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I got in this situation because the Christmas holidays were approaching and many of the sororities were planning their Christmas dances. I was hoping to be invited to some of them, but I wasn't getting invitations to the sororities I wanted. So when the girl in my art class asked me if I had a date to the Alpha Chi Omega dance, I quickly said, "No." I was hoping she was inviting me, but instead she wanted me to be the date for her sorority sister. "You're kidding me. I have never had a blind date in my life." Then I heard it was to be with one of the richest girls in school. Networking in college was a smart thing to

do, so I agreed but was still apprehensive.

I dressed in a borrowed tuxedo and arrived to pick up my date, and I was told that she left for home that morning, but there was another girl who didn't have a date. I can't tell you how angry I was. I was dressed and had a corsage, so I wasn't going back to the dorm and tell the guys I was stood up by a blind date.

As a sophomore I thought I was really something, I would have never asked a freshman to dance. I see now that I was the one who lost out. Thinking to myself, "What a plus a beautiful girl who likes to dance -- but can she?" Being a good dancer, spending an evening pushing even the Queen of England around the floor would have been pure torture. When we got to the dance she proved to be as good a dancer as I was. I remember the music was provided by Tex Beneke conducting the Glen Miller Band.

Something special happened to me that night. Dancing had always taken first place and the girl was a partner to make me look good. That night on the slow dances holding Betty in my arms with my cheek pressed next to hers I wanted to hug her so hard that I would be on her other side. In the dorm I had heard other guys talk about getting hot and bother while dancing, but this had never happened to me. Betty was different and without warning I had an involuntary erection. This reaction spoke volumes to me. I knew that I was captivated by her warmth and the fact that she held me as tightly as I held her. It is the only college dance I remember in detail.

Betty was a pre-med student and I was a an art major. She was not only beautiful but smart. I was brought up by three very smart and strong ladies: my mother, Aunt Oma and Aunt Vivan, I have always been more attracted to women who had the same attributes. The brighter and more ambitious a girl was the more attractive she was to me. I found that Betty was well liked by her sorority sisters and was eager to be involved in campus activities. Considering the time she spent with me she maintained above average grades.

Betty seemed to know more about me than one would expect. She told me later that she had had a crush on me from the first. After the dance and the Christmas holidays we would meet after classes and walk the campus and spend hours talking about our futures. On weekends we went to picnics, parties and dances. Living in a sorority house Betty had a curfew, and I will say we didn't part until the last second.

The rest of the semester was blissful for both of us, but the next term I had to change colleges because I couldn't afford to stay at Oklahoma University. I transferred to Oklahoma City University so I could live at home and work.

To be with Betty I had to take a glorified trolley shuttle that ran from the city to Norman. every weekend. Oklahoma University was located in the little college town of Norman. Often friends would let me stay over with them. I had to sneak in and out of the dorm. Although I was never caught I did think that the hall proctor would have looked to other way. He knew of my situation, and we were friendly when I lived there.

That spring I was inducted into the service and had to leave for basic training the day after Easter. I borrowed a car and went to Norman to get Betty so she could have Easter dinner with me and my mother. The war was coming to a close, and most of my family was still away which meant the holidays had less meaning. Betty and I disappeared into my room and we lost track of time. Bless my mother's heart; she never bothered or questioned us.

I don't think I missed a night writing to Betty, and she answered so often that the mail clerk would make sarcastic remarks at mail call. I was looking forward to seeing Betty before I was to be sent over seas. Unfortunately, it was her summer vacation and she had gone home to see her parents in New Mexico. I was disappointed that our schedules didn't match. The letters never stopped, and I had a stack of letters waiting for me when I arrived in Tokyo.

I was lucky when I was assigned to the largest enlisted men's club in the Pacific theater. I eventually became manager of the club -- great duty. But I was still very lonely and missed Betty very much. I saved my money so I could call her long distance. Today we think nothing of that, but at that time, it was unheard of for the average person. She sounded wonderful on the phone, and I was shouting, "I love you!" so loud that it could be heard all over Japan.

For some reason the letters stopped abruptly, I couldn't understand this sudden cut off of mail. I was so sure that she loved me, I figured something horrible had happened to her. It was not like her to miss a day and yet weeks went by. If something had happened to her who would know to notify me? I had never met her family and wasn't even sure if they knew I existed. I became so worried that I wrote her father to find out if she was all right. He wrote me back and told me that he had forwarded my letter to Betty.

One day at mail call I received a letter written on Betty's stationary. My hands were shaking as I ripped the envelope open. I read "Dear Gus," not the usually "My Dearest." this was a "Dear John" letter. She didn't even ask how I felt. It started with, "I feel we are building castles in the sky, and because we don't know when you are coming home I feel I should see other guys." I held her letter in my hand as tears ran down my cheek. She didn't say that she had stopped loving me, only this would be the last letter. It came as such a surprise, I didn't have a clue that we were in trouble. I felt it couldn't be true. The pain was so great, that I'd drank myself to sleep every night. My friends encouraged me -- no forced me to date any girl that came along. Being so far away, I felt helpless and I knew in my heart that if I could be with her just for one night things would be back to normal.

Time has a way of healing all wounds and soon Staff Sgt. Jennette Havlik came into my life. She was there at the right time. When my own mother didn't acknowledge my promotion to sergeant and my buddies felt left behind, caused tension between us when I was promoted. Jennette out ranked me and she made me feel that she was so

proud of my promotion that she sewed the stripes on all my uniforms. Jennette was at the club every night and cut my drinking down to one beer a night.

I took her to concerts at Hibya Hall and she took me to church. On the week ends I would get a car from my good friend at the motor pool and we would see the countryside of Japan instead of the dirty city of Tokyo. My friend at the motor pool would receive a case of beer on Monday. Jennette occupied so much of my time that Betty was becoming something of the past.

It is hard to understand that there were 500 WACs in Japan and thousands of GIs, and we weren't allowed to fraternize with the Japanese girls. To be lucky enough to have a girlfriend was in itself a coup d'etat. Being a young man from Oklahoma, my life seemed to be on the fast track. I don't remember telling Jennette that I loved her, but she was there and available. I don't want to belittle Jennette in any way because she was a great strength for me. I was away from home, in a job that was way over my head and with her help she kept me grounded.

In my young inexperienced mine I had already known true love and it was Betty and at that time it would always be Betty.

When I returned home from the service, I ran into one of Betty's sorority sisters who told me that Betty would love to see me. That caught me off guard, I was surprised and pleased. All I could do was remember that wonderful feeling that comes with being in love. I let myself think that we would get back together. I called her, her voice sounded the same and I asked her for a date. She eagerly accepted and we went on a double date with my brother. It was a disaster, I was no longer that wide eyed boy with dreams of true love. We had grown so far apart that an earthquake couldn't bring us back together. Before we had that ill-fated date I had already planned to move to San Francisco to study dance and try my luck in the theater.

After Jennette got her discharge, I was living in San Francisco and she came to California to live with me. It wasn't a bad situation, but one time I said something about a cake she had baked and the next thing I knew, the cake was in my face and Jennette was packing.

I began to share a five-room apartment with two guys, Bob Curtis and Ray Barra, from the San Francisco Ballet School. We really had fun. I can't remember a better time without a worry in the world. When OU's football team was playing in San Francisco, my brother Dee was on the team. He got me tickets and I went with my roommates. It was like old home week; I ran into two girls I went to high school with, who had relocated to the West Coast.

"Gus! Gus! Gus!" I looked up and saw a girl -- it was Betty -- yelling at me from the top the stadium. She looked as beautiful as the first time I saw her. We ran into each other's arms like in a scene from a "B" movie. After a few inane remarks the situation was at best uncomfortable. Betty wanted us to have dinner that night. I had to explain to

her that on the GI bill I didn't have money to take her or anybody out. I did borrow all the money I could from Bob and Ray and it totaled to less than \$10.00. This dinner was on her at the Top of the Mark; one of the most elite restaurants in San Francisco.

Betty was going to Stanford and was in her last year of college. She invited me to their last dance saying, "You took me to my first college dance and I want you to take me to my last." This time there was no tux to borrow. We had a wonderful time although I didn't want to hug her so tight that I would be on her other side. After the dance we walked the beach until sunrise, but we both knew that our lives could never be what they had been. Besides there was another love in my life -- a totally different kind of love -- ballet.