



FIRST LOVE: THE BEGINNING

I imagine each of us can be transported back in time to memories of our first love regardless of how many years has passed. For me, it's been 50 years. I'm not talking about crushes or the people we "went with" for a class period, a day, a week, or a month. I'm referring to that person that truly took up residence in our hearts, and still maintains a sliver of space somewhere in the deepest corner.

I met my first love in a Sunday School class when my family was visiting my grandmother in Waurika, Oklahoma. It was spring, 1968. I was shy. He was shy. However, I thought he was mysterious because he wore dark glasses. He was cute and had sandy blonde hair. Following Sunday School I was invited to sit on the back pew with the other teenagers. Whispered conversations and the passing of notes during that hour led to our first date that evening. I think we went to a movie. I remember the drive from small town Waurika to the larger town of Duncan, there is a tall bridge and a dangerous curve that has to be navigated in Comanche. Below the bridge were a lot of boulders, trees, and a full creek. It frightened me. I was from the flat, desert like prairie of New Mexico, tall bridges on ess curves weren't something I saw every day.

We talked comfortably without nervousness. That surprised me. We discussed our families, where we lived, music, and our dreams for the future. He wasn't sure what he wanted to do after high school. I still dreamed of graduating and becoming a registered nurse.

JES and I saw each other every day until my family returned to Lovington. Daily letters passed in the mail for months. JES and a friend brought my grandmother for a visit during the summer. His kindness toward my grandmother raised him to hero status in my heart.

We dragged Main Street, listened to KOMO out of Oklahoma City, had Pancho burgers from Ole Jax, and just hung out. We talked for hours about nothing and everything. We took a day trip to Carlsbad Caverns. The underground wonders came to life and held a more profound meaning during that day. I had been to the Caverns before, they weren't new to me.

When the day came that JES and my grandmother had to return to Oklahoma Grandma Jodie begged my parents to let me move in with her. I wanted to go, how I

wanted to go. My parents said no. My heart broke when they left, but I knew we would be together again.

The letters and phone calls continued. But, alas, something happened in my life to make this remarkable first love die a painful death. It was my fault. Entirely. But, that is another story.

Authors ask “what if” all the time. If things had worked out the way my teenaged heart thought it should I would have been spared a great deal of heartbreak. But, then I wouldn’t have met Frank. Erick and Bill wouldn’t have been born. I wouldn’t have my granddaughters who own my whole heart.

The magic of Facebook has reintroduced my first love and me. He is happily married and is content with his life.