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Scandalous Romance

—By Doris Hatchett Beverage

YOUR DAD MUST BE CRAZY!" my brother, Ralph Hatchett, scolded. "There's too much difference in your ages! This marriage will never make it."

It all started in 1936, one of the bad depression years. I had my sixteenth birthday, and I had never been out of the boundaries of Oklahoma. My mother had suffered a massive stroke in August, 1934. I was then thrust into the role of mother, milkmaid, cook, and practical nurse in charge of a family of five. By 1936, my mother was able to do a few things around the house; she could walk with the help of a cane.

Dad planned a wonderful surprise for me that summer of 1936—a trip to California with my oldest sister, her husband, and my niece.

We were to visit my youngest brother, whom I hadn't seen in three years because he had been away in a CCC Camp in Arizona. He was newly married and living in California.

Dad told me that I would have to give up my Senior ring to be purchased at the beginning of my Junior year in order to go. I said that that I would. We had a wonderful trip—visiting the Grand Canyon, Hoover Dam, Las Vegas...

I was excited to be home and had many things to talk about, but my cousin had other plans. When I went to church the next day, my girl cousin Dewey Hatchett greeted me. "Hey, Doris, there's a new high-school principal, and he's single!" She was always aware of the

hirings and firings around the school since her dad was a member of the school board.

I asked what the new principal looked like. "He has beautifully manicured hands, he's slightly balding, and he's a little pot-bellied," she teased.

I dismissed the thought. The next morning, a friend of mine, Edith Moss, walked me past the Principal's Office so I could take a peek. On his desk was his nameplate—A. V. Beverage.

"If he weren't quite so old and bald," I quipped, "I might take him a round or two"—a smart-aleck remark from a shy, chaste girl who had just turned 16. When I began to check schedules, though, I found that he was my teacher in three subjects—Geometry (I had dropped the year before because

of the improper advances of the banker's son who sat next to me), Psychology, and Commercial Law.

When class convened, I went to his desk and told him my name and the reason I was enrolling late. Mr. Beverage just couldn't seem to get my name, Doris Pauline, straight. He called me Dorothy, Maurine, Polly—every name but my own. By the end of the first week, however, he knew my name—I made sure.

I found out that he had never before taught either Psychology or Commercial Law, so I studied very hard and often called his hand on mistakes or misstatements. About the fourth week of school, a quartet in which I sang was invited to sing for a picnic given by the community honoring all teachers and board members.

The principal was impressed by some ham sandwiches my mom had sent and began inquiring who brought them. He found me and



told me to tell my mother that he had never eaten such delicious ham.

My sisters and I took voice lessons once a week on Thursdays after school in Clinton. Mr. Beverage found out; afterwards, he parked his car down the street and waited for us to come out. Then he would treat us at the S. and D. Drug to a Coke or malt.

One day in class, he handed back my Geometry paper on which he had scribbled at the top "B+ for personality. How about coming out to see you some night about dark-30?" I was shocked.

I told two of my friends in the restroom that Mr. Beverage had asked me for a date.

"Are you going?" asked Irene Taylor.

"Are you kidding?" I answered back.

Cotton-pulling vacation soon started. Mr. Beverage went to Weatherford to do a few hours on his Master's degree. He wrote to me maybe two or three times a week.

One day when I was washing, and my mother was sitting in a chair beside me, she caught my attention. "Doris, who is the person you're getting letters from in Weatherford? Is it a teacher?"

I explained to her who Mr. Beverage was and that he had been my teacher in three of my classes. "All he is doing is just keeping up with how things are going."

One day I got a letter from my principal asking if he could come down on Saturday night and take me to a show in Clinton, Cordell, or Elk City. My parents gave their permission, and was I surprised!

While I was getting ready, my two younger sisters set a steel animal trap in front of the front-yard gate.

"Audrey," my dad yelled as he came in from chores. "Do you or Betty know anything

about the steel trap in front of the gate?"

"Yes," Audrey grinned mischievously. "We did it. It's a husband trap! We're trying to help Doris catch a man!"

"It caught one of Mom's prize Rhode Island Red roosters!" said Dad, angrily. Did Audrey and Betty get in trouble for that!

The principal and I dated a few times, but A. V. said, "When school starts, this has to stop." I agreed

I was dating a boy named Herman Hinds from Burns Flat, another boy from Canute named Ed Mahl, and I was crazy about Jake Gholston, a boy I had met at school parties since Sixth Grade.

When school started, Mr. Beverage and I played it very cool. We were even curt toward each other around others, and then Christmas came.

The faculty, some of the adults from the church choirs, and I were producing a Christmas cantata. I was First Soprano, and A. V. was Tenor; so we sang all the Soprano/Tenor duets.

After the cantata, A. V. and I left immediately.

There was a grade-school



program following, and we had other things to do. At the intermission, the music director wanted some entertainment. He began to look for his choir members, but two of them were missing!

"Where's the women's quartet?" he asked.

"Doris is gone somewhere," a voice chimed out.

"Where's the men's quintet?" the director called.

"Beverage is missing!" someone vocalized.

"I'm adding one and one, and I'm getting three!" sang Elizabeth Cook, with a laugh.

My husband-to-be told the superintendent about Christmas of 1937 that we were going to be married the summer of 1938. He advised A. V. to get married before then so the gossip would die down, and A. V. would have a better chance to keep his job.

For Christmas 1937, A. V. bought me a yellow gold Elgin rather than an engagement ring. Over Valentine Day weekend, he took me to Carnegie to visit his parents, sister, brother-in-law, nephews, and nieces. We set our marriage date for February 26, two weeks later.

My dad went to Bessie and had a sweet old man make me a pine chest (Dad couldn't afford cedar). He gave me \$50 to buy my whole trousseau. A. V. took his worn-out suit and had it cleaned, stitched, and patched.

"She'll spend every dime you'll ever make," my dad said after Mr. Beverage had asked for my hand.

My wedding ring was a little carved 10-karat gold ring. A. V. went to Cordell and bought a new bedroom suite for \$40, a new dining room suite for \$49, a new divan and chair for \$40, a used library table for \$15, and a beautiful wool rug for \$39.

Mother gave us a new mattress made from new cotton, and we put it on the floor of the spare bedroom. We called it our pout room; if either of us got made at the other, then the one that was mad had to sleep in there.

My brother-in-law, who was on the school board, resigned so A. V.'s job for the next year

would not be in jeopardy. My brother was Court Clerk of Washita County, so Dad called him to find out if we could pick up our license on Wednesday night, February 23. He was waiting for us and was very angry.

"No, this marriage will never last," Ralph echoed.

I frowned.

"This kid is spoiled rotten—I know it—I helped do it," my brother continued gruffly.

No one thought it would last. Ralph told A. V. that he would lay odds on the fact that the marriage certificate would be in a wooden box with the lid nailed down in six months. Well, he was wrong. We celebrated our fifty-third anniversary on February 26, 1990.

We have educated three children of our own and helped seven nephews and nieces. Hundreds of foreign students, college, and grade-school children have eaten at our table. For a marriage predicted not to last, it has weathered many storms which have left us with many wonderful memories.

Living together for fifty-plus years takes much loving, hard work, and prayer. Maybe long marriages aren't in vogue these days; they don't seem to be. But then too, maybe we may witness a change

whereby married couples will stay together. I hope so because I wouldn't trade my half century of marriage for anything.

*(DORIS PAULINE [HATCHETT] BEVERAGE of Anadarko has been married to A. V. Beverage, retired Anadarko businessman fifty-three years. "A Scandalous Western Oklahoma Romance" is her second article published in WESTVIEW. **