

From Pride to Heartbreak

By Grace Weber

Edited by Owen Weber

Preface

My mother wrote this story in 1968 as her account of the heartbreak of teenage pregnancy. It's a true story, and it illustrates that the ill effects upon the lives of the couple, and their families and friends, are not quickly erased when there is a child to raise. The past is brought to light many times through the children, with stinging blows and awkward situations. Although many brides are pregnant when they marry, our youth are still accountable for their actions and often times responsible for further heartache and disappointment. Many times the result is a broken home with one or more innocent children suffering the most. Hopefully, this story will offer comfort to the broken families caught up in these unfortunate situations, by helping them to realize they are not alone. Although it doesn't seem so in the midst of these circumstances, time will ease the pain and piece together the broken hearts. Through faith in God, and His grace, we can survive.

Chapter 1 -- The Depression was Depressing

My parents had been share-croppers for the first sixteen years of their married lives. After living on my uncle's 160-acre farm and sharing the crops there for several years, my father found an opportunity to buy out the heirs on the eighty-acre farm where my mother had been reared. It was 1929, and we were going to move to our own farm, about 15 miles away.

We children were excited about moving, but somewhat disappointed to learn that we would have to farm both farms. Farming two places so far apart created many problems, but without it, we would have had bigger problems. Traveling the 15 miles between farms was a major ordeal because we still used only horses for travel and farming. Farming with horses was extremely hard work. We would prepare enough food to last a week for my father and two brothers. On Monday morning, they would load their food into the lumber wagon, hook up the necessary farm equipment for a week, and start out to accomplish as much as they could. On Saturday night, we children would sit on the porch and listen for the men to cross the wooden bridge a half-mile from our house, on their way back home with their noisy wagon and horses.

Growing up through the depression years on an eighty-acre farm in Oklahoma with my father, mother, and six brothers and sisters wasn't exactly a dream come true, but we were reasonably happy, and we never went hungry. We had no steak, and little meat of any kind, but the corn bread, toast, or mush with milk brought no complaints. We raised chickens for the eggs, but they were traded for sugar, salt, and other small items we couldn't raise on the farm. We raised what we could on the farm during the summers, and canned it to eat during the winters. Every summer we would can six or seven hundred quarts of peaches, corn, other fruits and vegetables, and jams and jellies. The canning was hard work, from morning until night, with never a moment to call our own. There was always something needing to be done, and everything had to be done the hard way. It wasn't until after I was married that rural electricity made it to our county, close enough for my parents to access it.

Since there were three brothers and one sister older than me, I probably had things a little easier than they did, but my oldest sister went to live with one of my aunts when she was sixteen, and I was eight, so a lot of the house work fell on me. The dish washing was an endless job in a large family, causing me to detest it even today.

One summer, my father asked mama if I could go along with them to do the cooking so they wouldn't have to spend so much time in the house when they could be working in the fields. I was eleven, and quite a mama's baby, so I didn't like the idea of staying away from home for a whole week at a time. Knowing that my preferences carried little weight, I soon found myself going along, filling the long weeks by preparing the meals on time, washing dishes, and sweeping. I'll never forget the praise I received from my father when we came home and he told the family how well I had managed everything, and how efficient I was. That was about the only time he ever commended me, although he was proud of my good grades in school. He was just a stern man who seldom expressed his feelings, especially good ones. The hard, dry soil can quickly make a hard-working farmer bury his feelings.

Although we thought of Sunday as a day of rest, my mother would get up earlier on Sunday morning than on weekdays, to get us all ready for Sunday School and church, and to begin preparations for lunch. Although we were quite poor, my mother would often find a way to save enough on groceries during the week so we could invite the pastor's family or other families or friends for Sunday lunch. My father enjoyed having company, so we children grew up enjoying it too. Daddy usually helped clean up my little brother, comb his hair, and get him ready. Sometimes he would help some of the rest of us when we needed a dress buttoned down the back, or a shoe tied.

Our church was a half-mile from our house, and we usually walked because the car was broke down, or we needed to save the gas in order to take the few dozen eggs and small amount of cream to the market. Even though we walked, we never complained about going to church because, aside from school, it was our only social function. We went to church every time the doors were open, including Sunday morning and night, and occasionally on Wednesday night for mid-week prayer meeting. Most of all, we enjoyed the revival meetings twice each year, because this gave us a place to go every night for two weeks or longer. Our Christmas programs were big events too, including two or three plays, songs, readings, and Old Saint Nick's arrival with our big sacks of candy, oranges, and apples. This was usually the only candy we had, except for occasional surprises at school.

Since our school activities were the only other social life we had, and ours was a country school only through the eighth grade, we knew little about social life. Our parents saw to it that we made it through these eight grades, but since they didn't promote secondary or higher education, we weren't offered any. They thought that high school students were just proud and over-educated.

School wasn't easy for us, including the lessons, the commuting, and the social inequalities. We lived one mile from school, and we had to walk nearly every day, warm or cold, rain or shine. On rare occasions, when the cold or snow was unbearable, our father would take us in the wagon, because school was never closed due to the weather. Most of the other children in school were not as poor as we were. They would have fresh fruit and store-bought cookies for lunch, where we would have a sandwich with cream and sugar or apple butter on it, and occasionally some homemade cake or cookies.

We usually had two school programs each year, one each half of the year, although we didn't call them semesters then. Many times I would be chosen for the main part because I could memorize the parts quickly, and I loved performing them.

Although our family's misfortunes held us back socially, we didn't consider ourselves as lower class. We were clean and presentable, even though our clothes were second-hand from relatives and friends. My mother would always adjust them to our size and preferences.

Meanwhile, my uncle sold his farm, so we were left with a mere eighty acres of mediocre farm land, and I'll never know how my parents raised all of us children on the income from that farm. On many occasions, daddy would save a calf or pig to feed out and butcher, only to have to sell it to pay for unexpected expenses. Though often disappointed, we survived, and we were reasonably healthy. I suppose this was more of a blessing than I realized then, because we certainly had no money for doctor bills. We all worked hard, with everything going out, and nothing coming in.

When I completed grade school at age thirteen, I got a job in a town about nine miles away, babysitting a two-year-old boy, and doing house work, including cooking two meals a day, washing and ironing, and cleaning house. I made two dollars a week, and thought I was on the road to riches. I continued this type of work through my teenage years, making as much as \$12 per week, just before World War II.

When I worked away from home, I would always send mama part of my money to help with the rest of the family. My dear brothers would always ensure that I got to go home on the weekends, and I appreciated this more than they will ever know.

In the spring of 1942, my seventeen-year-old sister died from an enlarged heart. I was just 19, and this was a terrible loss because we were just beginning to appreciate one another as sisters.

I believe that my child life gave me an inferiority complex, which I still have, and always will.

Chapter 2 -- True Love

While I was growing up under somewhat unusual circumstances, a young man name Clarence Weber was growing up about 100 miles away, in quite similar circumstances. His folks had already been forced to sell their farm and move into the small town of Okeene while he was still quite young. He too grew up the hard way with little opportunity. In the spring of 1943, at the age of 20, Clarence moved to Enid to work, and he rented a room in my Aunt Grace's rooming house. Several times that spring, my aunt mentioned him to me, but we both had other interests at the time.

In August, Clarence enlisted in the Marine Corp and was transferred to San Diego for boot camp. That fall, I moved to Enid and got a job, and got a room with Aunt Grace. One day, her granddaughter, whom Clarence had been dating before he left, received a letter from him. Instead of giving the letter to her granddaughter, Aunt Grace tore the address off and gave it to me, asking me to write to him. This seemed odd indeed, but she thought he was too good of a guy to become further involved with her granddaughter.

At first, I was hesitant, but this was October, and he would be coming home on furlough for Christmas, so I decided I didn't have much to lose. I wrote to him right away, and I was really surprised to get an answer back just as quickly. However, his Christmas furlough was canceled, and he was shipped to the South Pacific, where he spent the next two-and-a-half years. We wrote faithfully all the time he was gone, and then a letter came in July 1945, saying that he would be home on a thirty-day leave in August, but he would have to return to the Pacific after that. I could hardly wait to meet the man I'd been writing for nearly three years. Then, while he was on the ship coming home, the bombs were dropped on Japan, and by the time he arrived in the states, the war was over, and he didn't have to return.

The big day finally arrived when Aunt Grace called me at work and told me that Clarence was there and was anxious to meet me. I'll never forget that I had worn my hair to work in curlers that morning, which wasn't too unusual in those days. I looked a mess, but I was so anxious to meet him that I went right home, met him, and quickly excused myself to clean up. I suppose I was a little surprised that he stayed around, but he did, and I took the rest of the day off to be with him. The afternoon was fun, and that evening he took me to dinner and we had a lovely time. We got along perfectly. I knew he was supposed to be really handsome and shy.

Handsome he was, but not shy. In fact, he was almost too friendly at times, but this was to be expected of a Marine who had been overseas for three years.

We were getting along quite well together. The whole thirty-day leave was heavenly, but I still had plenty of reservations to consider during the next two months while he was away. He was twenty-four, and I was twenty-two. The time passed slowly with Clarence stationed in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Finally, his discharge came through the last week of November, and he arrived home the first of December. It was at this time that I realized I was more in love with this man than I even dared think, and it was not long before he expressed the same feelings toward me. How incredible, but true, that a romance of this nature could work out so beautifully.

Soon we were engaged, and he gave me a diamond for my birthday in January. I remember we took ice cream and went out to my folks' house to celebrate the occasion. I had called my mother that afternoon and told her what I got for my birthday. At the time, I don't think she was especially happy at my becoming engaged and then to marry Clarence. However, at the time of her death, some nineteen years later, I believe that I can honestly say that she loved him as much as she did her own sons.

Chapter 3 -- Humble Beginnings

We set our wedding date for March 20, 1946, and the next few weeks were exciting ones with many things to do. Since my father didn't believe in eating anything at any time in the church, we couldn't hold the reception at the church, so we decided to have the wedding at home too. This created a few problems because we had to cut our guest list down some. We invited only Clarence's immediate family, my immediate family, and a few neighbors and friends.

We decorated the living room the best we could, and fixed one corner to represent an altar. This is where we stood for the ceremony, which was quite simple, but nice. At three o'clock in the afternoon, in a double-ring ceremony with my best girl friend as maid of honor and my brother serving as Clarence's best man, I became Mrs. Clarence Weber. In spite of the small and simple wedding, I don't suppose there has ever been one that was more solid and congenial.

Last week, Clarence and I celebrated our 23rd wedding anniversary, and he is still as sweet and kind to me as that day when I dressed in my white wedding gown with a long train and veil, just like I would have worn at a church wedding. Certainly, I couldn't have felt any more like a bride at even the largest of weddings, nor could I have been any happier, then or now.

My sister, Dolly, and my two sister-in-laws, Lottie and Fern, had prepared the wedding dinner, and they served it immediately after the ceremony. How they fixed such a lovely dinner for so many people remains a mystery. For going away, I wore a blue suit I had made myself, which looked great with black patent shoes and a bag. We went to Okeene to be surprised by a lovely reception. All of Clarence's relatives, neighbors, and friends had gathered at the community building to bring gifts. In the reception line, it seemed like hundreds of people.

Clarence's aunts didn't get to go to the wedding, so they wanted me to wear my bridal gown to the reception. I didn't mind since I knew it would be the last time I would wear it. I took what was left of my bridal bouquet and placed it on the end of one of the tables that was loaded with gifts, so everyone could see how pretty it was. It was no doubt the prettiest dozen of red roses I had ever seen. The entire evening was lovely, and the gifts covered everything from a dozen pairs of crocheted pillowcases to pots and pans. We didn't have to buy a single thing to start house keeping.

By the end of this lovely day, I was exhausted. Strange as it may sound, we spent the night at Clarence's parents' house and enjoyed the rest of the week together. Then, on Monday morning, we both started to work.

With so many things in common, we enjoyed each other immensely. We loved sitting by the table over a second cup of coffee and rehashing the day. It was never difficult to find something to fill our conversations. We ate breakfast and dinner at home, but Clarence would always pick me up at lunch for a snack in town.

We did little entertaining, but some evenings we would drive out to my folks' house. Their farm was only about 25 miles away, and it was a nice drive. Some of the children would usually be there, and we would have a nice time just visiting with them. Quite often, we would go there on Sunday afternoon, and Clarence would go fishing, which is one of his favorite hobbies. On some weekends, we would go to his parents' home, which was about 50 miles away, in the opposite direction from my folks. We were treated like king and queen there, with all our favorite foods being cooked and served to us.

These weekends proved to be quite enjoyable as well as relaxing and refreshing. They certainly helped us feel more like getting up and going to work on Monday mornings.

I only worked about three months, then one evening I became quite ill. Clarence took me to the doctor, and we discovered I had a heart murmur. Since Gladys had died with heart trouble, it worried me enough to prevent me from going back to work at the dress shop where I had worked for two years.

Staying at home was boring, and I just waited for Clarence to come home for lunch and again for dinner. I loved to sew, and it wasn't long before he bought me a sewing machine, so I spent my spare time sewing. I sewed for nearly everyone in the family, and I loved it. Everything was going along quite nicely.

However, I was neglecting my church life and responsibilities, and Clarence wasn't a Christian. I knew this wasn't the thing for me to do, but still we liked to go out of town for the weekends, and going to church didn't seem too important at the time. We just continued down life's highway, enjoying each other and adjusting to married life.

Chapter 4 -- Our Pride and Joy

In February 1946, we discovered I was pregnant, and we felt prepared in every way except financially. However, our family doctor told us that if everyone waited until they felt they could afford a family, there would be very few babies born, so we felt completely happy about it.

Since Clarence and I had had difficult childhoods, we decided that our children were going to have things easier than we did. We wanted them to have the opportunities we missed because of our large families and unfortunate circumstances.

My mother didn't have a sink in her kitchen at the time, and since Clarence loved to do things for others, he set himself busy in the garage building a sink cabinet for her. He would work on it every evening after dinner while I sewed for the baby we were both anxiously and apprehensively awaiting. Both projects took several months.

The stores didn't sell items that would suffice for our new baby, so I would buy several yards of material for the diapers, pull the threads, and then cut and hem them straight. This was a lot of work, but I loved every minute of it, and I felt they were better than store-bought diapers. I also made little dresses and slips to match, just so I could see how pretty I could make them. Clarence bought me a special little chest-of-drawers just for the baby's things. When I completed four dozen diapers, I washed and folded them and put them in one of the drawers along with dozens of baby gifts we had received. I added two dresses I had made, one with pink piping, and the other with blue, and two soft flannel robes to match. Each robe had a rope tie belt braided out of pink, white, and blue wool yarn with tassels on both ends. I also made flannel gowns with fancy trimmings. I was quite proud of my baby clothes.

My brother and his family had given us a bassinet at a baby shower. Since we were fully expecting a boy, it was trimmed in blue on the outside, and I fixed a nice soft filler inside by quilting flannel and sewing it in the shape of the bassinet. Clarence helped me glue the filler to the top of the bassinet. We couldn't use tacks since this was the most important baby in the world. After the filler was completed, I made the liner out of white satin and trimmed the top edge with blue rosettes made out of tiny blue ribbon. They were spaced two inches apart all around the edge, with little bows with long streamers placed at both ends. It took 85 rosettes to finish it up just the way I wanted it. It was so pretty and rewarding, and the most fun I ever had. Clarence was so well pleased with the things that I could sew and

do, that this was all the encouragement I needed to take on some of the projects I did. Besides, all I was trying to do was to please him anyway.

It was a great life, even though our living was of modes means. If we had to take a house that wasn't pretty because we couldn't afford the prettier one, we would simply set ourselves busy making the lesser one pretty and convenient. It wasn't a hard a task, because we loved to plan and work together.

Being pregnant was nothing like I thought it would be. In fact, I had never felt better in my whole life, physically or emotionally, and certainly I had never felt more secure. This was partially due to Clarence's three years of service in the Marine Corps, and partially because we had matured. I believe that if teenagers would wait until they are a little older to marry, their marriages would be happier. However, I have always told my girls that I wouldn't be concerned if they married young, if they would get a husband as good as their daddy.

Our baby was due on November 11, and the summer was passing quickly. Clarence had finished the sink cabinet, and my mother was thrilled beyond words with it. This made Clarence sure that it had been a successful project, and he was even happier that he had done it for her.

My doctor appointments were every week now instead of every two or three months. When I went for my appointment on October 30, I was so upset to learn that my doctor was out of town on his vacation, that I refused to see the other doctor in the same office. At 2:30 AM the next morning, I awoke with terrible stomach pains, and was immediately sorry that I had refused to see the doctor the day before. We called him and he sent us to the hospital. Clarence grabbed the bag I had packed weeks before, and helped me to the car. At the hospital, we were greeted with some of the sweetest smiles I have ever seen. I was immediately prepared for delivery while Clarence completed the paperwork. Soon I was in my room in a nice clean bed, and the pains were becoming closer together and more severe, but Clarence was beside me, so it wasn't too bad. He helped by holding my hand and rubbing my back.

At 9:36 AM, on October 31st, our baby girl was born, weighing six pounds and fifteen-and-a-half ounces. I cried when I found out she wasn't a boy, because I wanted our first child to be a boy for Clarence. I'll never forget how disappointed I was when I first saw her. Surely our little girl would be prettier than this little gob of red wrinkles. I remember saying, "She's not very pretty, is she?"

Clarence replied, "Well honey, she is just a tiny baby." I could see the hurt look on his face because he knew I was disappointed. We pulled ourselves together with the happy thought that it was all over and we were both OK. It was with great pride that Clarence called my parents and told them that we had a little girl, Tessora Emmalena, named after my mother, Lena, and Clarence's mother, Emma.

We were really proud that we hadn't called anyone ahead of time so now we could surprise everyone, and this we did.

No one had even thought about it arriving early, and I had even gone shopping with Dolly that afternoon, and then gone home with her to help with her ironing. Dolly was pregnant too, but since she was eight years older than I was and this was her first baby, she didn't feel as good physically as I did.

I detested my stay in the hospital. I was homesick most of all, and I felt like I was going to fall out of bed all the time. I suppose it was because the bed was so much higher and smaller than mine. I never got enough to eat either. They served plenty, but I was used to eating a lot more. I didn't drink cream in my coffee, so I would pour this cream on my cereal, and drink the milk they brought for my cereal. I had weighed 98 pounds on my wedding day, living on candy bars, ice cream cones, malts, and sundaes, and I never gained a pound. Little did I realize the weight gain that would be associated with my new craving for food.

After ten days, the ambulance came and took us home. Clarence had been quite busy during our hospital stay, setting up a stove in our bedroom, putting the bassinet in place, and fixing my bed really pretty for our arrival. His mother had come to stay with us a few days to help out. I'll never forget how I felt a month later when she went home and left us all alone with our little daughter. Clarence had even hung a thermometer on the foot of the bassinet so we could keep the temperature even for her. She was much prettier now that she was beginning to fill out some of those wrinkles, and her complexion was clearing up. In fact, we might just decide to keep this little living doll that God had blessed us with. It was fun to fix her formula, give her a bath, and dress her in all those pretty little dresses and things I had made her. They wouldn't have looked right on a boy anyway.

Tessora was a smart baby. It only took her a few weeks to learn that if she would cry really hard, and hold her breath a little while, someone was sure to pick her up. If it was her daddy, she liked the six-foot altitude, and he would have to walk the floor with her to please her. When I picked her up, I could usually sit down with her, if I would rock her. Still, we were going to be so sure that we didn't spoil her. At her six-week checkup, I told the doctor she was getting me down because I had to hold her so much that I couldn't get my work done. He asked me why I didn't let her cry a little bit. I told him how she would hold her breath, and he said, "Well, that won't hurt her."

"But doctor," I said, "she turns black and blue in the face."

He said, "I don't care if she turns green and yellow. You take her home and put her in her crib and leave her there. If she cries, let her. I've never heard of a baby dying yet from holding his breath."

The closer I got to home, the angrier I became, and by the time I got home, I swore I would change doctors, but we didn't know any other doctors, so we tried

his advice. Sure enough, after about five minutes of crying, Tessoria would be sound asleep. The sobbing nearly broke our hearts, and the whole family nearly disowned us for treating her this way, but it was the only way we could survive. She did fine during the week, but the weekends brought extra attention from family and friends, so she would revert to her old ways. She spent her Monday mornings crying while I did the weekly washing, then the rest of the week would be fine.

I loved everything about taking care of Tessoria, including the washing because everything was so soft and white. I even enjoyed hanging the clothes on the line. Early one morning, two of my mother's friends stopped to see us, and I was bathing Tessoria. They watched me finish her bath and as they were leaving, one of them called back to me and asked if that was my washing on the line already. I told her it was, and she said, "That is, without a doubt, the prettiest washing I have ever seen." I nearly burst with pride before Clarence came home for lunch so I could tell him.

Perhaps the biggest mistake we made was worrying too much about Tessoria. When she would sneeze, get a runny nose, or cut some teeth, it would nearly get us down. Actually we didn't start enjoying her until she was about eight months old. There were things to teach her in the next few years, which kept us quite busy and worried. We were afraid she wouldn't mind well enough, and there were those checkups with the doctor, making sure that nothing was developing in her physical health. We felt like she had to be the best-behaved and healthiest baby in the world, not realizing that few people would ever know or care how well she behaved, other than our close friends and relatives. She did learn to mind well though, and she was quite healthy, and this made us feel better as parents. I talked to her from morning until night, just teaching her to be considerate of other children, to share her possessions with her friends, and to be well mannered and polite, including at the table. There was no end, because every day brought something new to be taught.

Chapter 5 -- More Joy

When Tessorra was about one-and-a-half years old, we decided to leave Enid and move to a farm close to Okeene where Clarence's parents were still living. This was on the G.I. Bill of Rights, and since we weren't allowed to work away from home, and it was a green bug year, we were forced to leave the farm after just one year. We moved into Okeene and Clarence took a job at US Gypsum in Southard, thirteen miles away. He was a good welder, so finding work had never been difficult.

Before we left the farm, we told Tessorra about the little brother she was going to get in September. We told her that she must help us get ready for him, and help take care of him when he came. She was just as thrilled as we were when our baby arrived on September 20th, just before her third birthday. However, we had some explaining to do, because she now had a sister instead of a brother. We named her Clarissa LaRae, and she was pretty and round faced from the beginning. However, it took six months before we referred to her as "her", because we had been calling her "him" for so long. It worked out really nice though, and the two girls could share a bedroom and Clarissa could use Tessorra's hand-me-downs.

Clarissa was just as precious as Tessorra had been when she was a baby, except she was a colic baby and vomited a lot. Every time we gave her a bottle, we knew she was going to drink an ounce and spit up a quart. This created even more work, aside from the extra washing and the crying too.

Clarence always knew what he would hear when he came home from work at 4:00 o'clock in the evening. It would be Clarissa crying. She would start crying about 3:30, regardless of what we tried. I usually sat in the rocking chair and held her until she and I both went to sleep, at about 1:00 AM. This continued for six months, but she was a strong and healthy baby. Despite not keeping much food down, she grew quickly, and she was considerably bigger than Tessorra had been at the same age. However, the crying made me a nervous wreck. We never went anywhere because it would make me more nervous when we would take Clarissa out and she would cry, than when I kept her at home and she cried.

Clarence had to work every Sunday, to my dismay. It made the Sundays seem so long, and he often worked twelve or thirteen hours, but it was nice on payday. I just didn't like living in this little town at all. I thought the people were surely the most distant and cold people I had ever seen.

In January, the gypsum plant had to lay off some welders, and since Clarence was the last to be hired, he was the first to be fired. This didn't bother me

at all. I would be more than pleased to move away from this place. Clarence went back to Enid and got his old welding job back. First we moved into a farmhouse near my parents. However, a few months later, my parents sold their farm and moved into Enid, so we did too.

We moved on Tessor's fifth birthday, and Clarissa was two. We dressed the girls in Halloween costumes and took them trick-or-treating, ending up at my folks' house for a visit. I liked Enid, especially with my folks there. The girls were just at a cute age, and we really enjoyed them.

To my surprise, Clarence decided that Tessor should be going to Sunday school, so we started her in the church where my mother was a member. It was also Clarence who would see to it that Tessor went every Sunday morning. If we wanted to go somewhere, we would simply wait until she was out of Sunday school, and then go. My mother was thrilled that we were taking Tessor to Sunday school, but concerned about us because we didn't go.

It was that spring, during a revival, that one of the young ladies from the church came by and invited us to attend the services. I told her I would be there on Wednesday night, but I didn't know if Clarence would go with me. When I started getting ready, he decided to go, and I was thrilled beyond words. We put Clarissa in the church nursery, and we took Tessor into the sanctuary with us. During the invitation, the pastor came back and asked me to join the church, but I couldn't do it because I felt it would be leaving Clarence in some terrible danger. We enjoyed the services very much, and the people seemed so nice and friendly that it gave us a good feeling to have gone.

On Friday evening, just before time for church, the pastor and evangelist came by and invited us to attend the services that night, so we went. During the invitation, Clarence reached down and took my hand and asked me to go with him. I joined the church on promise of a letter from another church, and Clarence was baptized and joined the church the following Sunday night. Next to our own happiness, I suppose my mother was the happiest person in the whole world.

This provided us, as well as the girls, with a whole new world and an entire new world of friends. We enjoyed our new church life, and loved dressing the girls up and taking them nearly every time the doors were open. Everyone loved them from the very beginning. They were two cute little sisters.

The following September, Tessor started to school. This provided our happy home with more interests and excitement. Tessor was shy, and never one to stand up for her rights. One time she brought me a note from her teacher asking each mother to provide her child with a smock the next day for finger painting. These could be one of their daddy's old shirts with the collars cut off so they could button them down the back for added protection. I selected a piece of material with pictures scattered around it, just perfect for a little smock. After dinner that

evening, I sewed it up, and she was the happiest little girl in town as she carried it to school the next day. However, when time came for finger painting, another little girl grabbed the smock from her, and the teacher scolded Tessora for not having one. That was the way she was all through her school life, and sometimes even now she refuses to take a stand for herself.

That spring, while Tessora was in the first grade, there was another revival in our church, with the same preacher as the previous one. We all liked to hear him preach, and we were especially fond of him because it was through his preaching that Clarence had been saved and baptized. This time it was Tessora who slipped back to where her daddy was serving as an usher, and told him that she wanted to be saved. Our first thought was that she was too young to know what she was doing, but she said, "But daddy, I want to live with Jesus too." We knew that we were wrong, and that we were underestimating both her intellect and the Spirit of God.

The next morning, we were going to Clarence's folks' and wanted to get an early start so while I fixed breakfast, Clarence went in to wake the girls. When he woke Tessora, she looked at him with a pretty smile and said, "Daddy, I'm so happy." When he asked her why, she replied, "Because I was saved last night." We realized that we need not doubt her salvation any further, and we didn't. She was baptized the following Sunday, and from that time on, I believe she put her best foot forward in living a Christian life. This all happened just one year from the time her daddy was saved and baptized, so we felt like we had accomplished a lot in that one year, as far as our spiritual lives were concerned.

Chapter 6 -- Back to Paradise

That summer, Clarence's job was cut to a forty-hour week. Since we didn't think we could get by on that, he took a job driving a Pepsi truck in Enid. He didn't like this, so he started looking for another welding job with more overtime. With no success, and feeling desperate, he asked me what I thought about his checking for welding positions at Southard. Thinking that they wouldn't be hiring either, I agreed. He came home that night and told us he'd been hired, and I nearly had a nervous breakdown. Was I going to have to return to Okeene where I'd been so miserable, and raise my two girls and send them to school there too? Yes, there was no other way out.

On November 6th, we moved back to Okeene, and I enrolled Tessora in the second grade. She didn't adjust too well at first, but in a few days we learned that the girl next door was in her class. They became good friends and played together constantly, both at school and at home. This was a great help to her. Another big help was her teacher, who liked her from the start. One day her teacher called me and said, "Mrs. Weber, I just want you to know that you have the loveliest little daughter I've ever seen. She is so nice and polite all the time. I know she must have a wonderful mother to have raised her like this." This raised my spirits considerably, and it was beginning to seem like a different place than where we had lived before. We started to Sunday school and church immediately, and this helped us tremendously. In fact, this was beginning to seem like a pretty nice place to live after all.

There was always something going on at the school and church. Soon we had to choose between several activities on the same evening, but we always tried to put church first. Before long, the whole family had adjusted beautifully, and we were all happy. This was some fourteen years ago, and both girls have graduated already. I can't think of any place where I would rather live than right here.

The next spring, I became pregnant again. Since I didn't want to change doctors, I had to drive to Enid for my appointments, and I would usually take someone along for company. The girls were just as excited as we were about having another baby, and we all desperately wanted a boy. We didn't make or buy a single thing for a little girl. I even made a little pair of rompers that he could wear home from the hospital. Tessora was eight now, and Clarissa was five, so they were just the right ages to be excited about a new baby brother. Clarissa's nervous stomach had settled down a lot. The only time she got sick was when something troubled her or when she would get scared.

On October 7th, I awoke about 12:30 AM with labor pains. Clarence's mom stayed with the girls, and we drove the 45 miles to the hospital. I suppose if Clarence ever exceeded the speed limit, it was on this trip. We arrived at the hospital at about 4:00 AM, and the doctor expected delivery by 5:30. However, it was 11:45 before our son, Owen Wayne, was born, and I was so proud. What a name for our little son. At last I had given Clarence the little boy I had wanted for him for so long. I'll never forget how excited I was when they first told me.

The first time they brought him to me for feeding, he got choked, and I go quite upset, so they didn't bring him back until the next day. I didn't think anything about it until Sunday afternoon. I still hadn't seen him again, and my sister-in-law came in and said, "Well, at first we couldn't find your son, but then we located him in the incubator." I nearly flipped because I hadn't previously realized that something was wrong with him.

Were we to lose this little boy we had wanted and prayed for so long? I tried to find out his status from the nurses, but they weren't talking. All I could do was wait for Clarence. I knew it would be late when he arrived because he would have to work until 4:00, drive home, clean up, eat, and drive another 45 miles. It was a long wait, and when he finally arrived, he couldn't find out anything either. I didn't sleep that night. I suppose I spent most of the night in silent prayer that we might keep our son and that he would be strong and healthy like his two sisters. Finally, morning came, and the doctor arrived and told me that Owen would be fine. What a relief! We had planned to have four children, but since we had a little trouble with the third one, and I was RH negative, we decided we had stretched our luck far enough. We settled down to raising our little family of three children, which turned out to be plenty.

I suppose we enjoyed Owen as a baby more than we did the girls, because we had learned not to worry quite as much about them. It had been five years since we brought Clarissa home from the hospital, and Clarence thought he felt more like a grandpa to Owen than a father. We all laughed when he would say so.

Chapter 7 -- A Happy Family

We soon learned that keeping up with three children was quite a task. There activities every evening, such as school programs, PTA meetings, and room mother responsibilities.

During the summer before Owen was born, we had started the girls in piano lessons, and they both did quite well. Clarissa was only five, but quite musically inclined, so she kept right up with her big sister for several months. They were so cute at their first recital that fall. I made them orchid formals out of satin with pink roses pressed on around the yoke and all the way around the bottom for trim.

The girls did tow solos and two duets. We had bought them a small upright piano, but with their duets we had to trade it in for a full keyboard. When we saw them play, we were really happy that we had. We had sent a corsage for their teacher, and to close the recital, she thanked the little Weber girls for her corsage. We were so proud of them that we nearly burst with pride.

Then things started booming. There were always two or three recitals to prepare for, and many times the girls played for programs at church and school. They took lessons once a week, but it seemed more often.

When Clarissa started to school, we had a fourth grader and a first grader, and Owen was just starting to walk. Things went well for the girls in school. They were both in 4H, and Tessora even got to go to Pennsylvania and Washington D.C. on a 4H trip one summer. The next summer, a girl from Pennsylvania came to spend a few days with us. We all enjoyed all of these activities, and there was never a dull moment.

When Owen started to school, for the first three weeks he walked out and climbed onto the bus just like he'd been doing it for years. Then one Friday, at about 3:00 PM, his teacher called and said, "Mrs. Weber, I believe Owen might be taking the measles. He acts like he doesn't feel well, and he has red spots on his face." I recognized the case at once. To this day, I don't know what happened, but I know that when he would get upset about something, he would break out with red spots on his face. I went to school and picked him up right away, but he wouldn't tell me what had happened. I was glad we had the weekend ahead of us because it would give him time to forget it before Monday, but he didn't. On Monday morning, he refused to get on the bus, so I took him in the car and left him crying. I not only had to fight with him, but also with Clarence's mother, because she thought I should let him stay home another year since he was so little. I knew this wasn't the right thing to do, so I kept taking him and living in tears until it wore

off. This was the only time in his eight years of school so far, that we had any trouble with him and school. He has always been an A-student, and is looking forward to high school and college.

Both girls were in band, but neither like it very well. It was one of those things that Clarence and I didn't have when we were their age, so we thought they should have the opportunity we didn't. We attended all the band competitions we could, and sometimes they were halfway across the state. This was our way of encouraging the girls to stay in band. We bought Tessor a new clarinet, and Clarissa a new flute. Clarissa was in the grade school band that year, and Tessor was in the Junior High band.

Each year, the Junior High and High School bands had a band carnival. Each grade would choose a king and queen candidate. The class that made the most money at the carnival would get their king and queen crowned, and it usually went to the upper classmen. We were thrilled beyond words when Tessor came home from school one day and announced that she had been chosen the queen candidate for her class. Of course, we know she wouldn't be elected, but it was nice just being a candidate. Furthermore, the boy who was chosen as king candidate for her class was one of our favorite boys in her class.

The next two weeks were exciting ones, with all the booths and decorations to prepare for the carnival. It was always held in the gym, and the coronation was held in the auditorium after the money had been counted. Our real thrill came when they announced each couple as prince and princess, and they would walk on stage. To our surprise, the last couple was announced as Queen Tessor, from the house of Weber, and her King John, from the house of Smith. They took their place on the stage with the attendants, and we'll always remember the sweet little kiss on the cheek from John as he placed the crown on her head. After all, they were just eighth-graders, and they hadn't had too much experience at this type of thing. We had always hoped in later years that Tessor and John might become interested in each other, but they only developed a brother/sister type of relationship.

This was also the year that Tessor was asked to become a Rainbow girl. In Okeene, this meant that a girl was growing up, and it meant formals and high heels. Clarence and I weren't familiar with the organization, but we knew that these girls were being advised well, and that they were encouraged to read the Bible and go to church. They needed such encouragement from wherever they could get it, so we thought it was good for her, and she loved to dress up and go places.

In Tessor's sophomore year, she tried out for cheerleader and was elected. She was forced to give up band because the school wouldn't let her do both. She really enjoyed cheerleading, and stayed with it through her high school years. She also enjoyed the cheerleading camps during the summer.

Along with school activities, there were also church activities. All the children had been saved and baptized by this time, and we all had our duties to perform. We all attended regularly, and the children were in all the different church organizations. The main one for girls was Girls Auxiliary. This was a missionary study where the girls had steps to earn Maiden through Queen levels. They made these steps by learning scriptures, church doctrines, and beliefs. It was while I was Tessora's G.A. counselor that she made her queen step, and it was my privilege to crown her as queen. A few years later, Clarissa was also crowned queen in her G.A. group, but by another counselor. Tessora went on to do her queen with a scepter step. This was all bookwork, and it had to be sent to the state office for approval.

Tessora played the piano for the beginner department for several years, while Clarissa played for the intermediate department. Quite often, both of them were asked to fill in on the piano for the church services. Though they were not accomplished pianists, we were so proud of them for what they had learned, and the way they could step in and help out when needed.

It was in her sophomore year that Tessora's classmates elected her for their annual queen candidate. The entire class worked hard and campaigned for her, but not in vain. She was chosen annual queen by the vote of the entire student body.

I suppose the most thrilling of all for her was being crowned football queen her junior year, which included being driven around the football field in one of the prettiest convertibles in town. The band went all out to put on a very nice display of fireworks during the half-time show.

Clarissa was elected cheerleader also, and she enjoyed it as much as Tessora had. However, she was not the social type that Tessora was. She would much rather ride on the back of a motorcycle than in a convertible. This is why she didn't want to join Rainbow. It was just too much trouble to dress up and attend the meetings every two weeks. She would rather slip on an old pair of blue jeans than a formal and heels. She did remain a cheerleader all through her high school years, however, and by the time her Junior/Senior prom arrived, she was ready for a pretty formal. It was long white chiffon over a taffeta lining, and it had a detachable train just the length of the dress. The train was trimmed with pink rose buds.

Clarissa was about five feet seven inches tall by now, and she wore her clothes beautifully. Tessora was a little shorter, but also wore her dresses nicely. The girls were considered two of the best-dressed girls in school, and yet we made all their clothes. When Tessora graduated from high school, she had only one store-made dress, and Clarissa had none when she graduated. They never could go shopping and find anything they liked that they could afford. Instead, they would

go home and make something. They always had plenty of clothes because making them was so much more economical than buying them.

Tessora decided that she would like to take a course in cosmetology, so she could work and help pay her way through college. She could take three months of the six-month course between her junior and senior year, and finish it the next year. This meant she had to cancel all church camps and everything else she could. She drove ninety miles every day, five days a week, all summer long, to accomplish this.

Tessora's senior year wasn't quite as full, so she was not at all anxious to leave high school. In fact, when school first started, we were a little concerned about her. She didn't want her senior ring, and she didn't want to have her pictures made, or anything else that pertained to graduation. Soon she snapped out of it, and it was smooth sailing again.

We know Tessora was working hard in Rainbow, but still we were quite surprised when she was announced as the next Worthy Adviser. This was quite an installation. It was a public affair, so Clarence and I attended some of them beforehand in order to get some ideas in case we needed them. When it came time for Tessora's installation, we worked for weeks on her decorations, but we enjoyed every minute of it. The centerpiece for the refreshment table was made from a piece of Styrofoam just the shape of the Rainbow emblem, and each design and color was carried out with little artificial flowers all the same kind. We even had to dye some of them to get just the right color. It had to be fixed with both sides the same. The clasp hands were also cut from Styrofoam, and painted gold on both sides. Next, Clarence went to his shop and brought in a little iron pot that he used for melting lead. He painted it gold and hooked it to the emblem with a gold chain. It looked beautiful on the white net tablecloth over a taffeta lining. Her colors were white and silver, so we trimmed the tablecloth with a silver braid about six inches from the bottom and put a nice little bow with streamers on each side and end.

Her street-length dress was made with a white chiffon skirt over white satin, and the bodice was made from a silver and white brocade. Since she had broken her toe while skateboarding, she couldn't wear heels, so we dyed a pair of her flats silver to match her decorations.

Her candles were also white with silver bows tied to the bottom of each one. The tapers we used on both ends of the table were large white ones in silver candleholders. One of her favorite teachers at school installed her in a beautiful ceremony. Everything was just perfect. The Rainbow girls made the cookies, and we fixed the punch and furnished the cashews and mints. Owen, who was ten at the time, escorted Tessora to the East. He wore a white sport coat and looked really sharp.

I suppose the next important event was Tessora's high school graduation. Her formal was pink luster taffeta over a plain taffeta lining. We made a long streamer of chiffon twelve inches wide and draped around the neckline with tiny rhinestone loops. It fell loose in the back. At the bottom of the wide streamer was a border of rhinestones. It looked dreamy on her, as she was sort of small, and we got it to fit just right. When she was all ready to leave, she looked like she just stepped out of the television set. This was a large graduation class for our small town, the largest ever to graduate from our school. I believe there were sixty-five graduates, and were they ever good looking! When they walked on stage to receive their diplomas, one mother said to me, "Aren't you going to cry?"

I replied, "I'd come nearer to crying if she wasn't up there." She never was the A-student that she was supposed to have been before she started to school, but the other things she did made up for it.

Chapter 8 -- Queen For a Day

Tessora set out to finish the cosmetology course before entering college in the fall. She decided on the college she would attend, and everything was shaping up beautifully for her. She rode to school that summer with two other girls, so she only had to drive every other day. One girl didn't have a car, so she paid the other girls for her ride.

Sometime during the summer, we learned that Tessora had met a boy who was working in a service station in Ringwood, on the way to Enid. I'll call him Mike. We didn't even know that they were taking that route until one day when Clarence noticed a pit in the windshield of the car. When he asked her how it happened, she it was from new gravel on the road near Ringwood. This made us uneasy about her schooling and her new boyfriend we hadn't even met yet. This was the first boy Tessora had dated who didn't live in Okeene. Finally, he showed up one evening, and we got to meet him. He certainly wasn't the one we would have chosen for her, but she was determined, so we let things ride.

One day I heard from a fairly reliable source that Mike had been in some kind of trouble when he was in high school. When I asked Tessora about it, she said, "Oh, mother, it was just something any high school boy would do. He worked at a service station then, and when he was broke and needed some gas for his car, he would fill it up and sort of forget to pay for it." This didn't sound to me like something any high school boy would do, but I could see that I wasn't getting anywhere trying to convince her of this, so I gave up on the conversation.

Mike had graduated the year before Tessora, and he went to college one year, but he didn't take it very seriously, so he came home with four or five credits. This year, he had enrolled in a college closer to home, in Alva. Tessora had enrolled at Edmond, and with them being about 200 miles apart, we thought things might slow down a bit.

Tessora finished her cosmetology school on August 26th, and started her college classes on September 13th. She took her State Board of Cosmetology test, acquired her beautician license, and got a job at the beauty salon right on campus just a few blocks from her room in the dormitory. There she earned enough for her spending money each week. That was a great help to us as well as to her.

She and Mike were going steady now, and we weren't too happy about it because it seemed like she was making all the wrong contacts. Soon she wanted to transfer to Alva, but we insisted she stay and finish that semester in Edmond since we had everything paid for there, and we would lose it if she transferred. Besides,

if they were to break up, she would be just as unhappy in Alva. They both assured us that they wouldn't break up, but that they would be glad to go along with us the first semester.

Mike drove a Corvette, and I'll always believe this is one thing that Tessora loved about him. No boy in our town owned a car like that. When he had the top down, they would buzz around the corners on two wheels, and I was sure he was going to loose her right out of the car. She always had to tie her hair down if she wanted any left when she got home. This was quite different from when she rode with us and we had to close all the windows and turn on the air conditioner to keep her hair from blowing.

The first time I ever felt sorry for Mike was one night when he came to take Tessora to a movie in Enid. It was a stormy Saturday night, and he had left the motor running in his car while he came in the house to get her. As they stood in the door waiting for me to finish my little lecture on getting home a little early because of the storm, we noticed that the motor on his car was sounding rather faint. When we looked out the door, we saw the car rolling down our driveway. It turned onto the highway by itself, and fell into a creek bank, resting on the bridge embankment in our neighbor's front yard. He had just had it fixed that day, and now this happened. I apologized for detaining them, and he assured me that it was quite OK, and perhaps they weren't supposed to go to the movie that night.

I called Clarence, who was out of town at the time, and he came home immediately to help Mike get his car back on the highway. It hadn't hurt the engine, but the rear end of the car looked a mess. Clarence and I were proud of the way he took it in stride with no anger or cursing.

On October 2nd, Tessora told me that Mike wanted to give her a diamond for her birthday on October 31st. I was shocked, and I cried all day. Clarence was working as he always did on Sunday, and since he didn't like for me to cry, I settled myself down a little before he got home. When I told him, he suggested that perhaps we shouldn't make too much of it, or they might decide to elope. Somehow, this just didn't seem like the kind of romance that was ready for marriage, and this certainly didn't seem like the kind of man Tessora needed. We wondered if we were just too particular, and maybe we wouldn't approve of anyone who really wanted to marry Tessora, because we had heard of people like that. Still, I couldn't help but compare him to her other classmates and boyfriends. Why did it have to be this one, or why did she even have to think about marriage right now? Why couldn't she just settle down and enjoy her college life and forget about marriage? However, trying to reason with a teenager based on her parents' experience isn't the easiest thing to do, and 18-year-olds are going to make their own decisions anyway. I just didn't think that Mike loved her enough to want to marry her.

One Sunday night, Mike wanted to take her back to school, and he was supposed to pick her up at 2:00 PM. We told him they were running short on time for the 10:00 PM campus curfew on Sunday nights. The next Saturday at 5:00 PM, Tessoro called her daddy to come and get her because Mike hadn't shown up yet. Clarence went to get her, and when she got home, she began to try to find out just where he was, and why he hadn't gone after her. All this time, we were encouraging her to break up with him, but to no avail. She kept trying until she found out that he had taken a little bank from college, headed to Kansas Friday night, and had a car wreck. They had to walk so far that they didn't get back until noon on Saturday. We asked him why he didn't call, and he said he was broke. We asked why he didn't call collect, and he hadn't thought about that, but he would next time.

Since Tessoro had told us they wanted to get married, we wondered about religion. All I knew was that he wasn't Catholic, as we didn't approve of our daughters dating Catholic boys, and Tessoro didn't know either. He seemed well versed in the scriptures, but he didn't claim a church.

The next weekend, he came down from school with a terrible cold. They hardly even went anywhere when he did come down. This time, his Corvette was broken down, so he rode down with one of his roommates who lived in Okeene. He was going back the next day, so we invited him to spend the night with at our house. I got the bed ready for him, and when he was ready for bed, I asked him if he would like for me to doctor his cold. He didn't hesitate, so I gave him two aspirin and set up the vaporizer for him. Then I gave him nose drops and a chest rub. The next morning his room smelled like a hospital, and I said, "Well, at least we know his religion isn't one that's against medicine."

Mike stuck his head out from under the covers and said, "No, I'm Catholic."

We all had a big laugh and relaxed a little. We decided that maybe he wasn't so bad after all. Maybe we just needed to get to know him a little better.

That afternoon, when he left for school, he thanked me for doctoring his cold, and he said he felt much better. One day during the week, I got a letter from his mother, whom I had never met, and she thanked me for doctoring Mike's cold as well.

The next week, when Mike and Tessoro came home, I had madras shirts made for them. They seemed very pleased with them. Still, things didn't seem right. They just didn't seem like two adults in love and ready for marriage, but more like two kids in a haphazard romance.

The next couple of weekends, we didn't see Mike at all. Tessoro knew what was wrong, but she wouldn't tell us. Finally, I heard through the grapevine that Mike and some of his friends had picked up some things that didn't belong to them, and they were discovered in Mike's dorm room. As a result, the boys were

spending their weekends in jail in another county. They had to leave immediately after their last class on Friday, and stay in jail until Monday morning just in time for their first class. This was to continue for six months.

News like this went through our schools like a house afire. We still had Clarissa in high school, and Owen was in grade school. This was terribly hard on them because it was not Mike from Ringwood in this mess. It was Tessora Weber's boyfriend! We couldn't understand why Tessora tolerated all of this when it was so contrary to what she had been taught and believed. However, no matter what happened, she wouldn't let him go.

One weekend, the boys were excused from their confinement for their homecoming activities at college, but they weren't supposed to leave the campus. When Tessora got home from school, I had her a new dress made, and she got ready and drove all the way to Alva by herself. When she returned, about midnight, Mike was with her. They sat there like there was going to be a terrible explosion at any time, not saying a word to each other, and not even getting close to each other. The next day, Mike told me that Tessora didn't have a very good time at the dance. In fact, she kept him from having a good time. He said he thought she was jealous of some girls in Alva. I asked him if he had given her reason to be, and he didn't answer, so I believe he did.

The next weekend was homecoming at our high school. Tessora wanted to go, but Mike had to go back to jail since he had missed the weekend before. He insisted she go by herself if she ever wanted to see him again. What could be wrong with this girl? Why would she let him treat her this way? How could she be so miserable, but not try to change it?

Chapter 9 -- Signs of Hope

Our family was going to Dallas to visit my nieces for the Thanksgiving holidays, and we invited Mike to go along. He wanted to go, but we were hesitant since he was supposed to be confined for a few more weeks. Clarence and I decided to go see his parents and see what they said about it. His mother was in a cafe having coffee when we introduced ourselves and asked if we could talk to her. She was very nice, but she didn't know anything about Mike's circumstances, so she took us to see his father. He said that the judge had called him in connection with the arrest, but he really didn't know what the outcome had been, so our trip was in vain. Finally, we decided that if Mike came down to go with us, we would take him.

Mike was to meet us at our home at a certain time, and we would pick Tessora up on the way. We waited as long as we could, but he didn't show. Tessora was so disappointed. She was depressed the whole trip and even afterwards.

Sunday night, when it was time for her to go back to school, she cried and said she wanted to quit school and get a job. We insisted that she finish that semester because of the money and credits she would lose. We had always tried to teach our children to be conservative because we didn't have much money. They never complained about the lack of money, or about having to do the best they could with what they had. Tessora agreed again this time, and returned to school.

That week, my hairdresser, who was one of my best friends, told me that Mike was circulating a rumor that Tessora was pregnant. I assured her it couldn't be true because they hadn't been together much since school started. The only time they had been alone was the homecoming at Alva. Besides, girls don't get pregnant when they're as upset as those two were that night. When Tessora came home that weekend, I told her about the rumor. She denied it, and I believed her.

That weekend, Mike skipped his confinement again and came to see Tessora on Saturday night. They didn't go out, but just watched TV until bedtime. Mike slept on the couch, then slept in while we went to church. It bothered me that he didn't seem to want to seem in public with Tessora.

After Sunday school, I told the children to go into the sanctuary and save me a place. I went home and asked Mike if we could talk, and he was very obliging. I asked him if he really wanted to marry Tessora, and he said he did. Then I asked him about the trouble he was in, and he told me all about it, and that the judge had been too hard on them. Then I told him that he should serve his time rather than risk more trouble, and he said he would stay up there for the next couple of

weekends and complete it. I was encouraged that he would even talk, and that he expressed some feelings for Tessoro, because that was the first time he had.

I told him that his actions affected a lot of other people, and even Owen dropped his head when his schoolmates learned that he was in trouble. He hadn't thought about that, and he assured me he'd stay clean because he didn't like the punishment. Then I asked him about school and getting a job. He said he was going to work part-time that week with an older man in the neon sign business. He was supposed to start Monday evening. It didn't pay much, but the experience would be great.

While we were talking, he commented that Tessoro was no angel herself. He said she was even smoking when he met her, but she quit when he said he didn't like to see a lady smoke.

Finally, I asked him about the rumor that Tessoro was pregnant. He denied it and wanted to know who started it, but I just told him it was a friend of mine. He said, "Wait until I get back up there. I'll put a stop to talk like that. There just isn't any reason for it to get started anywhere." I told him I hadn't believed it, and he reassured me by saying, "I've never lied to you, have I? I'm going to get back up there as soon as I get all my weekends paid up. I'm going to settle down and do something worthwhile. Do you feel better now that we've had this little chat?" I told him I did, and I went back to church more relaxed and light-hearted than I'd been in a long time.

What a guy, our future son-in-law! Surely he would be good to Tessoro. We all tried to show our love for him as well as for her. Sometimes we were encouraged, and other times discouraged.

Chapter 10 -- The Truth Revealed

My niece, who was Tessora's age, asked me to do some sewing for her wedding on January 15th. Since her home life was lacking, and Tessora was to be her maid of honor and Clarissa would be a bridesmaid, so I was glad to do it. We bought the material and patterns, and I planned to take the measurements of all three girls on Sunday afternoon.

Tessora came home on Friday night. She had been ill for a couple of days and didn't feel like working on Saturday. Saturday morning, Clarence took her a doctor in Enid, and she got a prescription which seemed to help right away.

All the girls were there on Sunday, and we measured everyone. Tessora's measurements had increased a little, but not much. I kidded her about soon being a size twelve instead of a ten. She wasn't as active in college as she had been in high school, and she wasn't surprised at the increase.

Mike hadn't been down that weekend at all, and it was time for Tessora to pack for school. However, she still didn't feel well, so she decided to stay home that night. We went to church as usual, and then turned in early.

The next morning, I went to work and left Tessora sleeping. The other children had gone to school, and Clarence had gone to work. When I went home for lunch, Tessora had my meal all ready for me! What a treat! That evening, she had dinner prepared too. I presumed she had started it early in order to get back to school in time that evening. After dinner, Clarissa's boyfriend came over to take her out for a coke, and Owen was watching TV. Tessora was visiting with us at the table.

She said, "Mother, I can't be in that wedding next month."

I said, "You mean you can't get away from school for the rehearsal?"

She shook her head and said that wasn't it. I'll never know why, but I asked, "Tessora, are you pregnant?" She didn't answer, and I asked her again. Her head dropped in an affirmative gesture. I asked, "Mike's?" She nodded yes, and when I asked her how far along she was, she told us three-and-a-half-months. I remember saying, "Oh, my God, what will we do?"

By this time, the shock had released Clarence from his chair, and he jumped up and said, "Tessora, how long have you been behaving like this?"

"Daddy," she said, "I swear to God, it was the only time in my life."

Immediately, I thought back to the time I had asked her about it. I should have asked her more directly, because I don't think she ever lied to me. Then I thought of my chat with Mike. He had told me it wasn't true.

I said, "Tessora, do you know what you have forfeited? We can't possibly have a wedding. I couldn't face the people." I cried.

"Mother," she said, "I wouldn't disgrace the aisles of my church with this mess. I have never prayed so hard in my life as I have prayed the last three months that something would happen to me or the baby so I would never have to tell you and daddy." She said that she had gone bowling until she nearly passed out, and ridden horses, hoping for a miscarriage. She even stood and let Mike beat her in the stomach with his fist. We couldn't believe what we were hearing.

The same little girl whose daddy had entertained her one whole Sunday afternoon in the car because he saw her little two-year-old cousin hit her while we were attending a family outing at my sister's house. What kind of a six-foot-two-inch monster would beat a girl in the stomach trying to cause her to lose his own baby? We just couldn't understand it. It just couldn't be true. Maybe we would soon awaken and find that it was all a nightmare, or maybe the doctor would tell us it wasn't true.

Clarence told her to get Mike on the phone and get him down here immediately. She started trying, but it wasn't until noon the next day that she got his roommate. He told her that Mike had been kicked out of school the day before, but he was supposed to be there in a little while to pick up his things, and he would have him call her.

I had called the doctor so we could see if she was OK. At the moment, I was more concerned with her health than anything else. Tessora finally reached Mike on the phone, and told him that Clarence wanted to see him after our 3:00 o'clock doctor's appointment. He asked her if she had told her parents, and she said yes. Then he said, "Tessora, I told you not to tell them yet." She told him that she had to tell us, and it was at that time that I realized why she had waited so long. The doctor examined her, and he assured us that she was OK, so we made an appointment with an obstetrician for the next week.

We waited for Mike, but he never showed, so we headed for Alva. We met him on the way, and followed him back to town. He pulled up to the curb to unload his car, completely ignoring us. Tessora went over to talk to him, and he handed her something to carry into the house, so she followed him in. I knew that Mike's friend was in the house, but I didn't know if anyone else was also. They came back out and Tessora told us she wanted to ride with Mike, and she assured us she'd be OK.

At home, we tried to talk to Mike, but he wasn't talking. Finally, he said that he knew she was a virgin when he did this to her, but he just wasn't ready to settle down and get married yet. He wanted to send her away and have the baby adopted out. I nearly hit the ceiling in protest. This was our daughter, and we had taken care of her for 18 years, and we weren't about to send her away somewhere to have a

baby for anybody. After all, I had three children myself, and it's not easy. But that didn't matter to him. After all, he wasn't going to give birth to this child, and this would be an easy way to get him off the hook. Clarence never had believed in adoption like this, because children could grow up and marry their own brother or sister without even knowing it.

Mike proceeded to tell us about one couple where the girl went away to have her baby. Now they don't even know where it is, but she finished college. That was OK for someone who doesn't have a sense of responsibility, but we just couldn't take it and weren't going to try to ease his responsibilities. He told us of another couple who got married. When their baby was three months old, they got a divorce, and he just didn't believe in that at all.

Still, Clarence and I could see no alternative to an immediate marriage. We could tell that this was the farthest thing from Mike's mind. When I asked him what he intended to do if he didn't marry her, he shrugged and said, "Oh, I don't know. I'll either join some branch of the service, or my uncle has been trying to get me to go to California to play basketball for him."

All this unconcern was getting the best of Clarence, and all at once he started crying hysterically and saying, "My queen, the queen of all queens to me! And this guy got her in trouble and now he doesn't even want to marry her?" We grabbed wet towels and bathed his face and neck to try to calm him down a little, because our daddy was a pretty important man around here. He was so good to everyone that we just couldn't believe that there could be this much difference in the two men sitting in our kitchen.

We talked a little longer, and Mike wanted some time to think things out, so he asked if he could go home and talk to his parents. There was also a young minister there who he had talked to before, and he thought he could help. He said he would be back at 6:00 PM the next evening to start making some plans. He assured us that if he did marry Tessor, he would take good care of her and the baby. We sure wouldn't have to worry about that.

I said, "Mike, all we ask is that you be good to them and take care of them when we're not around to see about them." Then he left.

Chapter 11 -- A Wedding Without Bells

The next evening, after dinner, we waited for Mike. When he didn't show by 9:00 PM, Clarence and I went to Ringwood to see his parents, but they hadn't seen him for a week. He had taken their pickup, but they hadn't been able to locate him at school, and they didn't even know he'd been kicked out.

When we told them that our predicament, they were shocked. I knew that they liked Tessora because Mike had told me they liked her more than any of his other girlfriends. I was pleased at this, since she would be part of their family.

We told them about Mike wanting to talk to them and the young minister. His dad knew right away who that was, so he went to ask him, but he hadn't seen Mike either. Nobody knew where he was. All the next week, Clarence and I would cry ourselves to sleep and get up and go to work the next morning. Every available minute we could find, we spent following leads trying to find Mike, but he had enough friends in Enid to make it convenient for him to hide out. Clarence went to see an attorney to find out about our rights. The attorney said all the rights were ours, and whatever we wanted done should be done. This encouraged us to find him, but sometimes now I, which we had just let him go.

Tessora had two girlfriends that knew she was pregnant. One had taken the beautician course with her and was working in a local beauty shop. She called and asked Tessora to visit her at the beauty shop. While she was there, one of Tessora's former boyfriends stopped by, and he came out to visit that evening. He suggested that he and Tessora go to Enid to look for Mike. Maybe he wouldn't be recognized as easily as us. They searched until midnight, but to no avail. On the way home, they drove through Ringwood and talked to one of Mike's friends. Mike had called him that day and wanted him to take some clothes to him, and he left an address. Mike's friend said, "Tessora, I hate to do this to Mike, but I don't think he is doing you right, so I'll give you the address."

The next morning before Sunday school, Tessora and I took the address up to Mike's dad, and he drove to Enid and persuaded Mike to come home. He called us and told us we could come and talk to him. When we arrived, Mike completely ignored Clarence and me, and told Tessora, "Ha ha, you couldn't find me, could you?" It's a good thing that Clarence is a pretty level-headed man, and that we had two other children at home, or Mike would have regretted that statement for a long time.

Mike asked Tessora to go to another room so they could talk. A few minutes later, she came out and told us that he would marry her, but he didn't want anyone

to accompany them except his dad. I went to the room where he was and put my arm around him and said, "Mike, don't you want us at all?" He only shrugged his shoulders, and returned to the other room even more heart broken.

This, our lovely daughter, being married before a justice of the peace with only the man she was going to marry and his father attending the ceremony! What kind of a price were we going to have to pay to get a name for our grandchild? Our daughter's child! It wasn't enough that we practically begged this selfish young man to marry her, but now there were stipulations.

I cried in front of Mike's parents, and told them that Mike didn't want us at the wedding. She said he should let us go, but if not, she would at least go with them and stand by Tessora. This made me feel better, but it wasn't the big church wedding we had looked forward to for 18 years. No decorations, glowing candles, or crowds of people. No big reception with punch and wedding cake. Now all these dreams were shattered, and we weren't even welcome to come and stand by her side while she made a vow that she didn't want to make. Why did we think we could help this spoiled brat, or help make this marriage work? I suppose it was a combination of ignorance, pride, and love for these two young people and their baby.

I cried and said that I wished Mike would join the service and get out of here as quickly as possible. This was neither help, nor a good Christian attitude, but I didn't feel like a very good Christian at the time. Who would have thought that our Tessora would have to endure something like this?

They decided to get married on December 23rd, giving them two days to get a license. Tessora's dresses were fitting too tight to look nice on her. She didn't want white, so I used off-white shantung and cut out a plain shift with a V-neck and long slender sleeves. We finished it the next evening. She looked really stunning the next morning when she left to meet Mike and his parents. She wore a pretty neck scarf in the V-neck line, with bronze shoes and a bronze clutch purse with gloves to match. All of this with her nice beige dress coat with fur trim made a really good-looking outfit.

That evening, Mike's parents brought Tessora home. His father said, "This is some daughter we have here. I have never seen such a display of character in my life." We were quite pleased to know that they were happy with her. I wish we could have said the same about their son, but we couldn't. He had something else to do, so he let his parents bring his wife home on their wedding night. How did we think we could improve this situation?

The next morning, Mike left with his parents to visit his brother and family in Illinois for Christmas. Tessora stayed with us and didn't hear from them until after the New Year. On New Years Eve, she said, "Mother, I'm not going to let down. I'm going to fix myself up and sit here with you and daddy." That she did,

and when she walked down the hall from her room, the tears burned once more in my already tear-sore eyes. She looked absolutely beautiful. There were several boys right here in our own little town that would have loved to have her for their bride, and this kid didn't even want her. Why did it have to be her? Why? Three years later I'm still asking why.

We talked to Tessoria about finishing the last three weeks of the semester at school. She reluctantly agreed, and we took her back to school, where her dorm mother encouraged her to stay. We appreciated this more than she will ever know. I didn't get to meet her, but she must have been a nice dorm mother. Tessoria wrote us that week and told us she was doing fine. Of course, she wasn't working, but she was catching up on her class work.

Chapter 12 -- Signs of Trouble

My niece's wedding was still ahead of us, and she wanted Tessora to be her matron of honor. I made all the dresses with the good Lord supplying the strength, courage, and supplies when we needed them.

One evening, we drove up to see Mike, but only his parents were there. I said, "Those kids are going to have to get together and give their marriage a chance if they ever expect to make anything of it." The only time we had seen Mike since they were married was soon after he got back from Illinois when he came to the store where I worked. I invited him to stay for dinner, but he only stayed briefly to exchange Christmas presents with Tessora.

The weekend of my niece's wedding was a busy one. Mike called Tessora on Thursday night and asked her if she wanted to go to Enid and look for a house so they could move in together. She was so excited. They found a house, and then the girls went to the rehearsal dinner that evening. Clarissa's boyfriend met Mike, and they all went to a movie together after dinner. I was grateful for the moral support Mike was giving Tessora through the wedding. I think she did eight heads of hair in those two days.

Mike had come to the wedding without his camera, so he made a fast trip home to get it. Clarence sat about halfway down in the church on the outside so he could take some pictures. Clarissa's boyfriend sat with Clarence, and Owen sat with me on the other side of the church. I didn't want to be too conspicuous when I cried. There was one seat left next to Owen. Just as the door closed to begin the ceremony, I noticed Mike sit down beside Owen. I was sure relieved that he made it in time. Owen told me later that Mike put his hand on his shoulder, and it sure made him feel good. It made me feel better just to know he made it back for Tessora's sake.

Tessora played her part beautifully as always. My sister-in-law said she looked at her twice and she just knew she was going to fold because she was trembling so hard. I suppose it was due to her physical condition, as well as the comparison to her wedding just a few weeks earlier before a Justice of the Peace.

Mike stayed by Tessora all through the reception, and I was grateful, since most of my friends and relatives were there. Everyone was surprised that Tessora was married because they hadn't read it in the paper, but I'm sure that most of them could tell that she was pregnant, despite our efforts to conceal it with extra gathers in the dress. By the time we got home, my nerves were pretty well shattered from answering all the questions and trying to smile as I did so.

Mike wanted to spend that night at our house, and it was the first night the newlyweds had spent together during their 3-week marriage. They went back to Ringwood the next day, and told us Mike would take Tessora to school for her last day on Monday. She failed her final test, but salvaged a few credits.

It seemed that there was just one blow right after another after that. Just when we saw progress with Mike, he would do something wrong again. We learned that he had fathered another child. The mother was the one that Mike had told us about who had adopted the baby out and was back in college. However, we were intent upon helping to make this marriage work.

Everyone chipped in a few pots and pans, and along with a few wedding gifts, Mike and Tessora set up house keeping nicely in the little house they rented. One of our best friends asked what she could do to help, and we told her to discourage any efforts for a shower at church. She did, and we greatly appreciated it, because we didn't want the attention.

Soon Mike told Tessora he was going to join the Air Force. One of his brothers was a captain in the Air Force, and the other a sergeant, so we were somewhat surprised when Mike joined the Marines. Clarence had been a Marine, and he said it would either make him or break him. Mike passed his entrance tests and would be leaving on March 7th.

Meanwhile, Mike called me and said he had taken Tessora to the hospital with terrible pains, and they thought she was having a miscarriage. He got excited and called their family doctor instead of her obstetrician. When we arrived, things were in a mess. Mike was upset because the nurses wanted him to leave the room every time they examined her. He didn't see why he should be embarrassed since she was his wife. He hadn't thought about it being more embarrassing to the nurses with him sitting in the room. Mike wasn't one to consider anyone's feelings except his own. He hadn't eaten since that morning, and we tried to get him to eat something, but he refused. He wanted us to stay with Tessora while he went to see his dad. On the way back, a patrolman tried to stop him for speeding, and Mike outran him. We left reluctantly and told Tessora we'd see her the next day.

Two weeks later, some ladies from the church insisted on having a bridal shower. They didn't understand my protest, so I asked them how they like their daughter to open wedding gifts when she was five months pregnant. They still insisted, and planned a shower for February 13th.

Tessora didn't want a shower at all, but she consented. She asked me to register for her china, but she didn't like the customary picture of the bride in the store window. Everyone was so sweet and kind to us, and we really didn't know we had so many friends. When we first learned of Tessora's pregnancy, we considered moving away because it was so hard to face our friends, but we decided against it.

On the day before the shower, her obstetrician called to report a problem he was having with Mike. Mike had taken Tessora out of the hospital without his knowing about it. He had told the nurses that she was his wife and he could do what he wanted to with her, and they couldn't afford it anyway. The doctor needed to run more tests. They had discovered that Tessora was a borderline diabetic, and she needed immediate treatment. I assured him they would be in his office the next morning.

When Mike brought Tessora down for the shower, I told him what the doctor said, but we decided not to tell Tessora until after the shower. That was the first time I had ever seen Mike show any concern for her at all. I could tell he was quite upset because he broke out with little red bumps just the way Owen does when he's worried. He asked me if he could use our phone to call he brother-in-law, who was a pediatrician. His brother-in-law told us that there is no cure for diabetes, but that it could be treated, and this made an impact on Mike.

Tessora handled herself beautifully during the shower, although when she stood to thank everyone, her voice cracked. I went to another room and cried my heart out. One lady came to my aid, and told me that time would erase a lot of the hurt, but right then I didn't think eternity could mend my broken heart. Still, the shower was a success and everyone was pleased with it, and Tessora introduced Mike to all the guests.

When we got home, we told Tessora what the doctor had said, she went to bed early, and Mike, Clarence, and I stayed up visiting. We learned a few things that helped us better understand Mike. He didn't trust doctors because he had seen some things in the doctor's office as a small boy that he didn't understand. However, he agreed to keep Tessora with her current doctor, and to take her there the next morning. I called the doctor and asked him to counsel with Mike, and that helped.

Chapter 13 -- Boot Camp

Mike just had a couple of weeks before he had to leave for boot camp. It was ironic that he would go to San Diego, where Clarence had his boot camp training twenty five years earlier.

We fixed up two rooms of our house for Mike and Tessora, so she could stay with us while he was in boot camp. Mike was supposed to deliver some of the furniture on Thursday night, but he never showed. On Friday, Tessora brought it by herself on the coldest night of the year. She said that Mike had company and wasn't about to leave as long as they had something to drink. We sent Owen back with her so he could help if she had trouble. We did complete the rooms though, and everyone helped, and I think I've been tired ever since.

The next three months were quite long. Mike left for boot camp and Tessora started back to beauty school for advanced training, but her doctor made her quit after six weeks. She stayed home, visited with friends, and got ready for the baby.

In April, one of my best friends gave a pink and blue shower for Tessora and her baby, and then her friends gave her another baby shower, so she had plenty of nice gifts.

Clarence's morale was quite low, and he felt like he couldn't keep facing the men he had worked with all these years. He quit his job and just did repair work for farmers in his own shop during the summer. He didn't make a lot of money, but we survived. My spirits were low too, so Tessora actually seemed more cheerful than us. I know for sure that I wasn't good for anyone. By March, I had cried my eyes so dry of tears there was no water in them, and they were so sore that it hurt just to blink them. Many times, some of Tessora's friends would come home from college so happy and care free, and visit me in the store, and I would go back to the warehouse and cry. Waiting on the next customer would ease things for me, but this went on for months. I accepted a lot of advice about patience, but it was hard.

On May 12th, at about 5:00 AM, Tessora went into labor. We took her to the hospital, and it was almost more than I could bear to sit with her. When they took her to the delivery room, I waited with Clarence. We sat in silent prayer, and soon the nurses reported that we could go see our grandson. When I saw Tessora, I cried again. She looked so drained and white, but the baby looked fine. His head looked too big, but the nurse assured me he was normal and perfectly fine in every way, and she was right.

We went to the Red Cross and sent word to Mike, and then we went home to tell Clarissa and Owen. It was during their lunch hour at school, and we found

Clarissa in the Dairy Boy having lunch with her boyfriend, and she was thrilled with the news. Owen was just as excited, but he knew he wasn't old enough to be allowed into the hospital nursery to see the baby. Clarissa went back with us that afternoon, and we stopped by to tell Clarence's mother the news on the way back to the hospital.

Mike's parents had stayed at the hospital while we were gone, and when we returned, Tessora looked much better. She was pleased with the baby, and proud of her delivery with no complications. We found a nursery window in an outside stairway where younger children could view the babies, so Owen was able to see him the next day. He thought our baby was the cutest of them all.

The baby was two weeks early, so all our relatives and friends were surprised. Maybe we could get some rest and settle down some now.

We prepared for Tessora's homecoming, getting a place ready for the bassinet. We brought them home the next day, and our little grandson was quite an addition to our household. Tessora was tired, but an excellent mother.

Chapter 14 -- The Battle of Jericho

When our grandson was about three weeks old, Mike came home on leave, and he was quite impressed with his young son, but he was quite impatient with him. We thought he played too rough with him, but we just gritted our teeth and didn't say a word.

Mike would be stationed in Memphis, so we kept the baby while they went to look for a place to live. Clarissa was a good babysitter. When they returned in two weeks, Tessoro couldn't believe how he had grown. She said, "Mother, this isn't the little baby we left two weeks ago."

They moved to Memphis, and came home on leave between stations in September. This time they were moving to Cherry Point, North Carolina, and we hated to see them move so far away. Mike spent all of his time on leaves working on his car in his dad's shop, so we hardly saw him at all.

One day, Tessoro and I took the baby to Enid to see one of her girlfriends. I heard her tell her friend that she had wondered the past three months why she was put on this earth. I realized she was terribly depressed, but I didn't know why, or that it was this bad. She seemed beat down mentally and physically. She had always been so shy that she didn't need any pushing down. It always took a little encouragement to keep her going when she was home, but the encouragement always helped. Now, all of this was gone. She said she felt like a prisoner in her own home. Mike didn't take her out or allow her out of the house. She needed special permission to go to the market with a girlfriend. She would live for the weekends so Mike would be home, but he would spend them with his friends. He was refusing to let her go to the doctor, and she needed regular blood sugar tests. He didn't even want her to get immunizations for the baby. We had tried to get her to do these things, but we didn't know it was Mike who wasn't letting her. She said she would rather be sick than to fight about it all the time.

One evening, Tessoro became suspicious of Mike working on his car so much, so she went to see him, and he wasn't there. He didn't come home that night, but called the next day with some excuse. That evening, she again drove up to see him. They both came home upset. Mike's Dad happened to be at our house, and Mike took cover from his father. I raised the issues I had learned about. I also told Mike that he should let Tessoro know where he's going when he leaves the house. Mike looked at his dad and said, "Well dad, you never did tell mom where you were going did you?"

His dad said, "No son, I didn't, but if I had, maybe I wouldn't be getting a divorce now. I never was considerate of your mother."

Mike couldn't understand Tessor's homesickness. I told him we had seen him tear down in three months what it took us 18 years to build in Tessor. He said, "Well, I'm just going to get my things and get out of here. Tessor's mother doesn't want me."

His dad said, "Wait a minute, son, you're not married to Tessor's mother. You're married to Tessor."

"Well," Mike replied, "She doesn't want me so I'm leaving."

I told Mike I was just worried about Tessor, and he said she didn't have to go if she didn't want to. They went for a ride, and then they came home and went to bed.

Mike slept in till noon the next day, and I went in and apologized for interfering the night before. I assured him I'd stay out of their business.

That evening, Mike surprised us by taking Tessor out to the base club. The next day, he kidded with me, "Say mom, you're alright, even if Clarence doesn't think so." I felt like I had just won the battle of Jericho.

Chapter 15 -- The Cost of Freedom

Mike, Tessora, and the baby moved to Cherry Point, and things seemed better. Mike worked in the office as a Lance Corporal, and in less than two years he was made sergeant because of his excellent typing skills. Tessora had a social life, and they enjoyed attending parties on the base. They came home for Christmas, too broke to bring gifts, but reasonably happy.

Mike had been doing some work in a photography studio at night, but he needed better equipment, so that was our Christmas present to him. We had a nice Christmas, although it was a week late while we waited for Mike to finish working on his car, but his photography hobby was short-lived.

Mike drove back to Cherry Point by himself, and Tessora planned to fly home with the baby in a few days. During his trip, his sister-in-law called and asked us to go to his parent's house to be with them while the Chaplain and physician went to tell them that one of their other sons, who was a pilot and Captain in the Air Force, had been shot down and killed in Vietnam that afternoon. We didn't know how to contact Mike, because he had a tendency to try to outrun highway patrolmen, and he'd surely drive too fast on the way back. Tessora called one of Mike's good friends at Cherry Point, and he gave Mike the bad news when he arrived. It was a terrible blow to Mike. If he hadn't already used all his credit for leave time, he could have come home to be with his parents. This was January 10th, and the memorial service would be at Vance Air Force Base in Enid on January 28th, so Tessora stayed home until then. One of the Majors at Cherry Point flew Mike in for the service, and back the next day. Tessora and the baby flew back too. It was a nice stay, but saddened by the loss of a loved one for the cause of freedom.

In August, Clarissa and Owen flew out to see them, and we drove out two weeks later. We took them some groceries, and the first thing they grabbed was the salt, because they hadn't been able to afford it. Surely they weren't that broke! We had sent \$20 with each of the children for groceries, but it hadn't lasted long enough.

We had a good time, but it seemed like they weren't telling us something. Leaving Tessora and the baby hurt us more than anything. I invited Tessora to come back with us for a couple of weeks, but she refused. Had I known all the facts, I may have been more insistent.

On the trip home, the kids told us how Tessora begged Mike to give her enough money to buy a box of salt. Finally, he got mad and threw three dollars on

the table. When she didn't pick it up right away, he did, and left. They also told us about an incident when Mike lost his temper when the baby wouldn't stop crying. He spanked him hard, bumping his head against the wall with each swat. When Mike came downstairs, they told him they heard the baby's head hitting the wall, and he said, "Well, what if you did?"

Chapter 16 -- A Tour in Vietnam

Tessoro wrote to us in September, saying they had agreed on a separation. Mike called on October 2nd saying he had put Tessoro and the baby on a bus headed for home. They had resolved their problems, but they each needed some time apart. He said he would work on his problems concerning money and consideration for Tessoro.

Clarissa met them at the bus station and brought them home, and she didn't intend to return. She found a job and a babysitter in Enid, all in one day, and started to work that very week. Soon, Mike called and begged her to come home without the baby, but she refused. A week later, he said she could bring the baby, and they returned.

They seemed happy for a while, but not long. We sent them Christmas gifts, but when we phoned them at Christmas, Mike told us he was going to sign up for Vietnam so he could get it over and done with, and he could make more money over there and pay off some bills. He would be leaving in the spring, so we asked Tessoro to come home and stay in our vacant rent house. The plan was to use any money Mike sent home for rent, to build up a savings account for them, but none was sent.

Mike and Tessoro were coming home in May, and he would leave for Vietnam on June 7th. We prepared their apartment while also preparing for Clarissa's high school graduation, which included making new dresses. She was beautiful in her cap and gown.

Mike chipped in on the house preparation by lowering the ceiling in the kitchen and building a cabinet, all by himself. On May 13th, they left to visit his sister, and we didn't see him again before he left for Vietnam, but we did tell him goodbye by phone. Mike told Clarence he was going to make out an allotment check for Tessoro before he left. It would take care of her and the baby while he was gone, and pay off some debts. We were pleased, and we knew he'd do more growing up in Vietnam.

He didn't send money like he said, so we funded the rent, utilities, and meals for Tessoro and the baby. We never have had anything anyhow, so we were glad to do it, plus we have Tessoro and the baby next door. Tessoro worked in a beauty salon, making enough money for gas, babysitter, and spending money.

Chapter 17 -- The Healing of Time

I was nearing a nervous breakdown, and I think the only thing that prevented it was my knowing that it would only add to our woes. I would pray to God to give me strength and courage to go on through another day, and keep me from becoming ill so I wouldn't be a burden to my family. I would get up the next day and start over again because I sure didn't want to have a nervous breakdown. Every Sunday, we attended church, but it always seemed like a funeral. I would sit there and think back to something and cry, then hurry to the car right after the service so I wouldn't have to speak to anyone. This went on for two years.

On Christmas Eve, 1967, my brother and his wife invited us to their place, where he pastored a church, about 60 miles away. I cried through his sermon too. They wanted to introduce us to their friends, and there I was with a tear-stained face. I resolved then never to cry in church again.

My mother had moved next door to us, and in the spring of 1965, she visited my oldest brother, Frank, who was pastoring a church about 100 miles away. She attended his services, and died in her sleep that night. This was when Tessoro was graduating from high school and preparing for college.

Two years ago, Frank was found dead in a feed patch where he was shucking feed to earn a little extra Christmas money. His was a great loss to Clarence, as well as to me. He and his family were our best friends for discussing personal matters. It has been difficult, but we're better now.

Mike said he was arranging R & R in Hawaii, and Tessoro could meet him there, but, of course, that never came to fruition. She wrote him every day until he said he was tired of hearing about her job. He sent a tear-jerking audiotape home, and he wanted her to send a tape back. Meanwhile, our grandson won a baby contest, so Tessoro included this news on the tape, but Mike barely acknowledged it. He wrote a nice letter to Clarence and I, and it sounded quite sincere. We sent him a box of gifts, but he didn't acknowledge them either.

We didn't hear from him until Christmas, when he wrote to Tessoro asking for a divorce. I was shocked at first, but now I just want him out of our lives. He put us through enough hell on earth in three years to last a lifetime.

Clarence and I have always tried to teach our children that they shouldn't hate anyone. However, all the love I tried to show toward Mike has turned into malice. It will take much prayer and forgiving before our broken hearts heal.

When he beat Tessora in the stomach, or sent her out by herself on a cold night, or refused to let her see a doctor, was he hoping that something might happen to relieve him of his conscience of his responsibilities for her and the baby?

I'm waiting for the Lord to reveal why all this happened, so I can forget it and start anew where I left off three years ago. Meanwhile, I'll enjoy our little grandson and help his mother however possible, as well as the rest of my family.

As for Mike, if this book should fall into his hands, and he has the stomach to read it all the way through, I hope he will also have the grace to fall down on his face and ask God to forgive him of his wicked ways. I hope that, with God's help, he can make something of himself that would be worthy of such a love as he could have had from our lovely daughter and grandson, as well as from the rest of us.

Epilogue

By Owen Weber

My parents, and especially my mother, never got over my sister's teenage pregnancy. Mom went to her grave wondering how this tragedy could have happened in her family, and where she had failed. She died at the young age of 60, and I believe the worry and grief related in this book actually robbed her of many of her golden years. I believe that Mom was prone to worry and fret over most anything, but Tessor's pregnancy may have been overwhelming regardless.

I pose what might be a hypothetical question: Could anything have been done to prevent this heartbreak? Certainly, these types of tragedies occur in the best of families. Who among us would not like to relive a moment in time of youthful exuberance when we acted in ignorance or immaturity? Once these unfortunate circumstances occurred, my parents probably should have felt more acceptance and forgiveness, and less guilt, but who am I to judge since I haven't walked in their shoes? Yet, Mom herself said in Chapter 11 that maybe she should have let Mike just walk out of their lives and make the best of things. When I read this book, I am forced to seriously question whether or not the entire situation would have best been handled by letting Mike remove himself from the scene, and simply raising the child without his real father in the household. Maybe a caring stepfather would have come to offer a quality life to the unwed mother and her baby. Would it not have been better, and more godly, for my parents to be less demanding of Mike for morals and virtues he didn't possess, and possibly never would?

If I might act critically as a devil's advocate, perhaps my parents were too dominant over their children. They would have been the first to say that we are each accountable for our own actions, and yet maybe they were too quick to shield Tessor from what were really her own responsibilities. After all, she was 18 years old. Although we never stop loving our children, and hurting for them, and bearing their pain, are parents not likewise accountable to break the apron strings, and that in accordance to the actions of their children? When children decide to play adult games, are they not ready for adult consequences?

I believe the answer lays in Mom's own title for her book, From Pride to Heartbreak. The generation that survived the Great Depression had much to be proud about, for they endured and triumphed over terrible economic conditions. Yet, what does the Bible say about pride? God hates pride (Proverbs 8:13).

Disgrace follows pride (Proverbs 11:2). Pride breeds quarrels (Proverbs 13:10). Pride goes before destruction (Proverbs 16:8). Was it my parents' pride that made this situation unbearable for them? Did they feel above these types of tragedies because of some legalistic spiritual attitude? Did their children deserve special protection because of their own morals and virtues?

When I typed this manuscript, I couldn't help but notice, along with the heartbreak, the pride in nearly every paragraph. My parents were determined that they would provide more opportunity for their children than they had had. Sometimes it even sounds like they were willing to go even beyond the will of God, if that were possible, to attain those opportunities. After all, it was their children we were talking about. I'm not so sure that Mom's joke was entirely light-hearted when she referred to her first child as the most important baby in the world. Could she have felt that because of her previous misfortunes and sacrifices that God should now somehow surpass His own grace and reward her sufferings with perfect circumstances for her children? Did the depression make its survivors proud of being poor?

Why did they want so much for their children? Was it so they could be proud? Didn't Mom really believe that store-bought clothes weren't good enough for her children? I used to believe this was entirely an economic issue, but after reading between the lines of her book, I'm not so sure. What hurt her so badly about Tessor's unfortunate situation? Was it the well being of her daughter, or the presentation of her family to the community? Was she more proud of "Queen Tessor," or of "the House of Weber" (Chapter 7)? How important was it to her that her grandson be "given" a surname? How many times did she mention the shame of not being able to "face the people?"

Indeed, I believe that pride is the downfall of many good people, and in subtle ways. I propose that the Bible has nothing good to say about pride. It says that parents are the pride of their children (Proverbs 17:6), but not children of their parents, and it's not even necessarily commending this attitude. However, I believe it is saying that before we're proud of our children (simply because they're ours), we should respect our parents because God entrusted us to their care.

Perhaps my commentary is too critical. Yet, if Mom's hope of helping others (in the preface) is to be realized for those with similar heartbreak, maybe it can also be found by helping us proud parents to see our pride in God's eyes instead of our own.