

CHAPTER 22

Wedding Bells

My contract with the Women's Board of National Missions ran to the end of August 1941, and in February I told them that I would be leaving at that time. On September 12, I was to be married to Richard P. Milner, the hospital's architect, and would go to live in Albuquerque. I had hoped that the Board could find someone to take my place by that time. After my departure, many months went by before a replacement was found, Laura Lang, M.D. It is interesting to note that she was the doctor who had gone to Bangkok to take the position there that I had declined for health reasons. (I was being treated for amoebic dysentery.) She had been in Siam for only six weeks and was still in language school when the Japanese came. The doctor, along with all the other foreigners including my good friends Jim and Marcelle Boren, were put in a concentration camp and eventually repatriated on the Gripsholm (a ship registered in neutral Sweden which made many such trips). I stayed on at Embudo until August 29, 1941 working up to the last moment; then I set out by bus for home in Marion, Iowa and my wedding to take place September 12, 1941.

My mother and sister, Kay, had made all of the wedding arrangements. They even selected my wedding gown and bridesmaids' dresses. Many, many letters had gone back and forth between us. They mailed me the wedding gown and a

bridesmaid dress for approval. My gown required a bit of fitting here and there, but I was pleased with it and took it to Albuquerque where I selected the perfect veil.

Mother and Kay had things so well in hand that there was nothing left for me to do but attend a few bridal showers. One of the showers was given at the Manse in Fairfield, Iowa. Dorothy Yingling, the wife of the current minister, said that any girl who had lived in the Manse as long as I had, deserved to have a wedding shower there. Mother and I drove down for it. It was a lovely affair, and we saw many old friends. Richard (who I will refer to as Dick hereafter) and his best man, Frank Martin, arrived by car a few days before the wedding. Dick's mother and two sisters also drove from New Mexico. At lunch the day before the wedding, mother announced that she had told a person who had phoned that he could see Dick and me at 2 p.m. that day. Promptly at 2 o'clock the doorbell rang and Dick and I were summoned. There stood a cattle man in plaid shirt, jeans, and manure-stained boots. He said, "Where do you want this 'hifer'?"

I was astonished and speechless, but finally managed to ask what he meant. He replied he had been hired to deliver the 'hifer' to this address, and we would have to take charge of it now. So we said "okay" and followed him out to the truck. He handed me a rope about two inches in diameter and said, "Now stand back while I open the tailgate. She may come out fast." With great apprehension, I hung on to the rope and stepped back. The tailgate was opened to reveal a four inch high ceramic "hifer" with an ivy growing out of her back.

I found out later that Uncle Arthur, two of my aunts, and three cousins were stationed at a neighbor's upstairs window to watch this hilarious practical joke. On the eve of the wedding, Aunt Kit and Uncle Arthur Granger gave us an elegant and delicious wedding rehearsal dinner. They said, "We've held up our end of the bargain. We promised that if you got married we would give you a dozen chickens and a 'hifer'. The hifer has been delivered, and you ate all the chickens at the rehearsal dinner."

I wanted my father to give me away, and I also wanted him to perform the ceremony. He did both. A very close minister friend, Victor Demaree, who was also my cousin several times removed, met us at the altar. He remained there and had a small part in the ceremony. His daughter, Mary Demaree Wilson, a very close friend of mine, was matron of honor. It was very much a family affair. My sister, Kay, was maid of honor. A cousin, Mary Ellen Granger, and a very close friend from back east, Elvyra Beck, were the two bridesmaids. My two cousins, John Granger from Marion, and Charles Van Nuys from Indiana, were ushers. Many friends came from Fairfield (my last Iowa home town) to attend the wedding.

Our wedding trip took us through the Black Hills of South Dakota with a visit to Mt. Rushmore; Yellowstone National Park, Grand Tetons, and Jackson Hole in Wyoming; over Colorado's Million Dollar Highway into Durango, Colorado; and then to Albuquerque, New Mexico.

We settled into a furnished duplex at 1805 East Silver. I was so busy getting used to being married, cooking three

meals a day, and keeping house that I had not had time to make any decision about my medical career. Then, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States was plunged into World War II.

Dick's architectural business came to an abrupt halt. He went to work for the U.S. Army Engineers twelve hours a day. He worked there until he was drafted into the service. Using men physically unfit for service or too old to be called, and my part-time supervision, we managed to complete two houses that Dick had under construction.

There was a great exodus of Albuquerque doctors and a big influx of people. I was "drafted" to work for the County Health Department. I conducted around twenty well-baby and prenatal clinics each month in several small villages and towns and at the community centers and Health Department office in Albuquerque. The clinics were held in San Antonita, Chilili, Escabosa, and Sedillo to the east of Albuquerque; in Los Lunas and Belen to the south; in Cuba and Lindrith to the northwest. The medical departments of the military bases in Albuquerque (Sandia, Kirtland, and Manzano) were overwhelmed by the number of pregnant dependents, new babies, and small children. Our clinics provided prenatal and well-baby care for many of these women and children.

Miss Bessie Morse, who was in charge of all the Public Health clinics in the district, arranged some social gatherings for these military wives, many of whom were lonely and homesick. Occasionally, she would ask me to speak to the group. I was to tell these young women what their mothers

would have told them had they been at home. The clinics and the gatherings filled a real need.

To say that World War II disrupted everyone's life is an understatement. *Everything* was changed. Gasoline and tires were rationed. Food was rationed. Women took the jobs vacated by men in every field of work—construction, munitions factories, police force, airplane and tank factories, and so forth. People were uprooted. There was a decline in moral values. World War II changed the world, the United States, and all the people in it. After the war, *nothing* was ever the same again!