

OUR STORY

(written by Diane as though told by Don)

Our wedding anniversary, you ask? Well, March first. *And* March second. Really...

I met her on the first blind date I ever had. It was also my first double date. But she was neither the “blind” nor the “double.” A young doctor friend had invited himself and me to supper at the home of four single Christian women; two of them were officially our dates. Coincidentally, Diane picked the same evening to visit one of the other women, whom she’d met only a week earlier. In other words, she “crashed” my party. In more ways than one.

Actually, I hardly noticed her at first. She planned it that way. She hid behind her college-student image (long hair hanging across her face, nondescript shirt and jeans) as a hunter hides in a duck blind. She’d been single for nearly twenty-five years, not because she was unattractive but because she was selective. By the end of the evening, however, God in His grand matchmaking omnipotence had contrived to get us to notice each other. It did require two more days for us to determine we wanted to get married. Decisions of such magnitude take some deliberation.

That was January 1975. We were in Nashville, Tennessee, where she’d been attending Vanderbilt University and I was seeking employment as a recording studio technician. Two days after I met Diane I went to work for a company that sold studio equipment. We made plans to be married on March second.

A week before our wedding, my boss informed me I was being sent to a Houston studio to fix some broken equipment. I took a late flight Tuesday night. When I landed in Houston I was met by a man with greased back hair and a pack of cigarettes rolled up in his sleeve. I was accustomed to the casual look of Nashville musicians, but this was something else. I tucked the expensive equipment I’d brought under both arms, grabbed my overnight bag, and followed him to his car.

The car turned out to be a rather dubious excuse for a Volkswagen, which had the additional virtue of not starting until I pushed it off. But eventually we were headed across, and over, Houston—on the elevated Interstate 10. Because it was late there was little traffic. I’d just begun to collect my strewn thoughts when with a loud explosion the engine locked up, and the car began to swerve across the highway. We finally pulled to a stop by the concrete guard rail.

“You stay here,” my, ah, chauffeur instructed me. “I’ll go get help.” So I huddled down with my test gear to wait. But he’d only been gone a matter of moments when my reverie was shattered again by the screeching tires of a limousine in the next lane. Its occupants very evidently recognized “my” car. I held my breath while they peered at me—then one of them spotted my companion up the road, and away they went.

The unexpected quickly advanced to the incredible. As I watched, my companion saw the car coming and spontaneously chose what was apparently the less dangerous course. Instead of letting them reach him—he jumped off the interstate. It was a full thirty feet to the concrete below. His pursuers, waving big guns, looked over the railing, but when they couldn’t see him, they got back into their car and raced on to the next exit.

By now it was clear to me that this was no ordinary fix-it job. A policeman eventually came by and picked me up. We drove to where the man had vanished, but there was no sight of him. The policeman shook his head and took me to a motel for the night.

The next day I called the studio and was more successfully transported there. It turned out to be anything but a benign environment. The doors were heavily barred and I was suspiciously interrogated before they finally conceded that my mission was honorable. I was then escorted through more heavy doors to the studio control room.

In the dim light I quickly located the recording console, and my heart sank. I'd been working in studios for less than two months, but it wasn't hard to tell that this was a non-standard piece of equipment. I turned to the studio owner, a rough, burly man. "Where are the schematics?" I asked.

"What's schematics?"

With gathering disbelief I crawled under the console and unscrewed the panel that concealed the wiring. I was rewarded by a snarled mass of thin, all-white, unlabelled wires dumped into my lap. A homemade console with no wiring diagrams—the ultimate technician's nightmare.

But like my companion who had jumped off the highway, I really had no choice. It took no special perceptiveness to realize that my hosts had but one item on my agenda: to fix their studio. So over the next hours I tediously began to sort through the wires, following them from point to point, trying to determine some latent method in the apparent madness before me.

As I studied the problem, I noticed several strands of heavier, non-insulated wire. It turned out that these wires carried the power for the console. I gained that knowledge when I unintentionally crossed two of them. Pow! Sparks showered my surprised face and the whole building went dark (which didn't improve my status with its other occupants). To make matters worse, these fireworks were repeated several times, as someone reset the breakers, until I could see well enough to separate the wires. I was eventually informed that some weeks before they'd elected to substitute the foil wrapper from a cigarette pack for the appropriate fuse in the console.

Wednesday passed with little progress made. They brought me my meals (some inhumanly HOT Mexican food), and I soon understood that I was to spend the night there as well. The next morning I persuaded them to let me call Diane. I told her a little of my situation, not wanting to alarm her, and suggested she pray that God would give me some extra wisdom. She promised she would, then informed me she was unable to get our wedding license without me there to sign for it. And with the office closing Friday afternoon, could I please hurry home?

The prospect of hurrying home had been on my mind since I first arrived, but there was the small matter of a broken console. Thursday crept by, and I grew more desperate. I explained to my hosts that I was scheduled to be married on Sunday. They graciously offered to fly Diane out there, since as far as they were concerned, I wasn't leaving until their studio was fixed. Unfortunately, I was in no position to argue.

Friday afternoon, as I lay on my tired back staring at the confusion above me, I thought back to times in months past when I'd been a broadcast engineer for a big radio station in Birmingham, Alabama. There had been several occasions when, confronted by a complex technical problem, I'd called on God and He'd provided me with a clear mental picture of the solution. "Lord," I prayed, "I need Your help again—please!"

It was after 5:00, and the last plane for Nashville left the Houston airport (on the other side of town) at 7:50. Warily, trying not to despair, I reached back up inside the console. In the far corner I saw a connection that appeared loose. But my hand never reached it. Instead, I bumped another wire, and suddenly the board lit up and everything began working!

I was astonished. Hurriedly I began shaking wires, trying to see which one was responsible for the cure. But try as I might, the machine wouldn't break. So once again, I took the logical course. I quickly packed my tools and told the studio engineer their equipment was working.

This time they put me in a Lincoln. We raced madly to the airport and I caught that last flight.

Back in Nashville, Diane and I still faced the problem of no wedding license. It was my boss who came up with an idea. The courthouse in Gallatin, north of Nashville, happened to be open on Saturday, selling auto tags. Why not get our license there? So early Saturday we drove up and filled out the necessary papers.

As we were walking out, the clerk called after us, "You *are* getting married here in Sumner County?"

"No," Diane responded. "We're getting married in Nashville."

"In that case," she said rather sternly, "your wedding won't be legal. The bride has to be from Sumner County, or you have to be married here, in order for this license to be valid."

I looked in dismay at my almost-wife. She looked pleadingly at the clerk. The clerk softened.

"You do have an option, of course. There happens to be a Justice of the Peace across the hall."

Thus it was that we were married on March first by Justice Bethel Brown, an event witnessed only by God—and by an elderly man and his smiling wife who happened to be in the hallway. The following day in Nashville we renewed our vows before friends and family, and once again before the God who had proven Himself faithful, even in life's most unsolvable circumstances.

Diane Woerner
1986