

Chapter Four

Graduation and Courtship

When I graduated from Central Commercial High School, I left Dr. Cohen, so I would not have to work Saturdays. I got a job with a home movie company called Pictorial Films, a subsidiary of Pathe News. They had a small office on Rockefeller Plaza. I worked with several nice girls and enjoyed working in the heart of Manhattan.

I was only there a short time when Laura, the office manager, asked me to share a bungalow in Rockaway for the summer. Several other friends were involved as well. It was our weekend and vacation getaway. Lill was against the idea completely but I was able to talk her into it.

I had to miss the first weekend with the girls in Rockaway because of my mother's unveiling. I went the following weekend and the fun started on the train. We met a few boys who offered to help with our luggage. Needless to say, we all became friendly. The girls asked me, of all people, to ask them to take us to a night club. After all, they had a car.

We had dinner and drinks before one of the boys, Al Kass, asked if I would go outside for a walk. He said something about the night club being too noisy. He told me about his job, his family, and his brother's forthcoming marriage in January. We had a very nice time talking and walking. He seemed very sweet and so confident about his future.

We went to the beach on Sunday (the next day). We walked on the boardwalk since my friends were playing cards and neither of us was interested. I was wearing Lill's two-piece red, white, and blue polka-dotted bathing suit. The word Bikini was unknown in those days. Al was dressed in a business suite as he came straight from work. We talked all day and had another wonderful time. He asked me to go with him to see the Yankees play during the week. I had no interest in baseball but agreed to go anyway. It was something I had never done before. I was more interested in spending time with him.

We started dating regularly as we enjoyed each other's company. Al had a close friend named Walter who joined us on most of our dates. I was dating someone else when I met Al and continued to see the two of them. Eventually, I broke up with the other man to spend more time with Al. We had such a wonderful relationship and I wanted to spend as much time as I could with him.

Al did not normally take the train home after work. This day was an exception. He usually went home with his Uncle Herbie, who had a car. I am guessing he did not enjoy riding the train, but the fact was his Uncle had other plans and was not going home that evening. He suggested we get off the train and take a cab the rest of the way. Once we got home we both determined it was fate that his uncle was not going home that night forcing him to take the train. It was meant to be, I thought.

We started dating.

Al worked for his Uncle Herbie, who was dating Bea. The four of us spent a great deal of time together. We would go to different night clubs in New York on Saturday nights. We were having a great time and enjoying our new-found independence.

One night Al's father let him have his car. Al, his friend Walter and I went to a night club called the Rustic Cabin on 9W in New Jersey. Frank Sinatra, an unknown at the time, was appearing there. He put on one great show for someone we had never heard of. He went on to become one of the greatest entertainers ever and we saw him then. We all knew he would be big someday.

Lill and Ben decided to move to Florida and I was not included in their plans. I wouldn't have gone with them anyway because I had a job and was dating Al. Apartments were still hard to find but as luck would have it, they were able to sell their rental apartment furnished and I was able to stay in my room which helped pay the rent. Apartments were so hard to find, and this is what people did in those days.

Al's parents, Ida and Charles Kuritsky, had a room for the summer in Greenfield Park, about 40 miles west of Poughkeepsie. They had a small room just big enough for two beds with room to walk between them. They shared a community kitchen and bathroom with others who lived in the building. Al's father went up weekends and we often went up with him. I slept with his mother and he slept with his father. That is how it was done back then.

The Tamarac Hotel was about a mile down the road. Al's cousin Norman knew Stanley Eisenstat, who played in Harry Dwarkin's band at the hotel. That connection got us into the pool area during the day and a chance to sneak into the shows and dance at night. We did everything but eat at the hotel. It was a great summer and we became engaged that fall in 1947. I was 20.

We set a date to be married in a catering place on the Grand Concourse in the Bronx where Uncle Herbie and Bea had been married the year before.

My sister Lill came up to New York to be my matron of honor. The day before the wedding we had our hair done at Antoine's in Saks Fifth Avenue and spent the night at the Barbizon Plaza Hotel.

That night I got the shock of my life, provided by Lill. I will never forget that she told me it was not too late to cancel the wedding. She insisted we could send telegrams to all the invited guests of the cancellation. She insisted I am not going to be happy if I married Al. I had no idea she felt this way or why.

This was not what I expected to hear the night before my wedding. I had no intention of cancelling. I was very much in love with Al and was so excited to be getting married and starting a new life. I knew it was right and the marriage would be very good for me.

A storm hit New York just three days before our wedding, crippling the city. At that time they did not have equipment for quick snow removal and the roads remained hazardous on our wedding day. I was born in a huge snow storm and now I was to be married in much the same setting.

We were married on December 28, 1947 despite the hazard, and surprisingly, everyone was able to attend. Most people did not own cars and relied on public transportation. That was the easiest and safest method of transportation in heavy snow conditions.

The cantor had a beautiful voice. I was very familiar with him before the wedding as I use to baby sit for him when I was 12 years old.

We had a cocktail wedding. Harry Dwarkin's band (from The Tamarac Hotel) played with much thanks to a discount arranged by Stanley Eisenstat. The entire wedding cost \$300 not including liquor. Al's parents and my brother and sister paid for it all.

We spent our wedding night at the Piere Hotel on Fifth Avenue. The very next morning Lill, Al and I boarded a train at Penn Station bound for Florida. We had no money and spent our honeymoon at Lill and Ben's one-bedroom apartment. You can imagine how uncomfortable that entire trip would be.

They gave us their bedroom and they slept in the living room on a convertible couch. I fell in love with Florida and hoped to live there someday.



Al and I are one of our many wonderful dates.