

Chapter 16 1973

In February of 1973 Lane was shut down. I now had no possibility of contact with Linh.

I traded my 1966 Chevelle for a 1972 Triumph GT. It was British racing green, and a ball to drive. It was a fairly rare GT hard top version. Usually what you see is the TR6 convertible version.

My cousin Linda Deckert was going to school in the LA area. I volunteered to pick her up and drive her home for the summer. I failed to mention that I had traded cars so when I showed up with the Triumph, she was greatly disappointed because she had a sewing machine and a bunch of other stuff to get home, and I show up with this little sports car. We stuffed as much as we could in the back and tied the fast back lid over it.

We had barely cleared LA when we were about gassed out from exhaust coming back into the cabin. We tried to plug the holes with blankets and pillows with limited success. We had headaches the whole way home.

In July, most of the kids from the community attended the FaHoCha bible camp. This year it was held at a lake near the Peace gardens. I took Linda up there to be a counselor as well as a bunch of other kids with my dads car.

While there, I was introduced to Linda Erickson from Bowbells. She was a counselor and her mom helped in the kitchen. I chatted with her a bit and found she was a delightful young lady.

The camp went through Friday, so I went back on Thursday to pick up the kids. When I saw her again, I still felt the attraction I felt earlier. I felt that she liked me too. On the last night there is a banquet, so I asked her if she would attend the banquet with me. There was a campfire and singing afterwards. After the campers were settled in the counselors had their own campfire down by the lake. Linda and I took the opportunity for a romantic moonlight canoe ride. That was very nice and we agreed to write to each other.

While I was home my Triumph decided to have engine problems so I had to get my leave extended so I could deal with that.

Linda and I wrote and called to each other regularly. She was teaching high school math at Underwood that fall.

For the last 6 months of my duty, I participated in project transition. This allowed me to work for any employer of my choosing. By then I had taken my tests for the FAA airframe and power plant license, as well as the FCC 2nd class commercial license. Gene Sway from Aero Com Systems in St Petersburg

agreed to the program. They did not have a lot to lose since they didn't have to pay me. At the end of the 6 months they offered me a job as an avionics technician.

I was separated from active duty in December 1973. My mom & dad met me at the Bismarck airport when I flew home for Christmas. I also asked Linda Erickson to meet me there as well. I introduced her to mom & dad and we all went to Country Kitchen for a coffee.

Later I borrowed my dad's car and drove to Underwood and spent a wonderful evening with Linda where we had our own Christmas. We spent New Year's Day at my family's home. Mom and dad liked her a lot and told me "you better hold on to that one". Happy New Year was more than just something to say on January 1, 1974.

1974

I flew back to Tampa and continued to work for Aero Com. I stayed at Steve and Sally Taylor's house for a few weeks, but then bought a house of my own in south Tampa. It was small, but nice.

At Easter, Linda came down to visit for the 4 day weekend. We had a great time. We went to the beach, Disney World, a restaurant called Kapok Tree, Sunken Gardens and had a great time with lots to talk about so it didn't leave much time to sleep.

The letters and calls were a good way to get to know each other and let our relationship grow, but seeing her and spending time with her, I knew without any doubt that she was the one for me.



We went to the pier at St. Pete. Walking along that pier, I told Linda that I loved her and asked her to spend her life with me. She said she loved me too, but she was overwhelmed by all the neat things we had seen and done, and wanted to think about it.

She flew home Monday morning and I went to work having had just a couple hours of sleep. I probably didn't get much

work done that day, but then I don't think I was thinking much about work either.

Well she went home, thought about it and said yes. We were married August 29th 1974.

She moved to Tampa where we shared our little house. She took a teaching job in a private school and I continued to work as an Avionics technician.