

My Honeymoon

“I do.” What I meant was, I do want to spend the rest of my life with you. What I didn’t mean was, I do want a life of adventures. So from the very beginning, we had a miscommunication.

I should’ve had a clue of the coming adventures since our marriage started out in -40 degree weather. It was one of those Minnesota evenings where people were so bundled up they looked like mummies made of coats, scarves, and hats, and they rushed from their warm buildings to their pre-heated cars and back again before icicles formed on their eyelashes. It was definitely not the kind of night for a kid to stick his tongue on the doorknob just to see if those stories were true—would the tongue would stick there ‘till spring. I was so excited, however, and so much in love, I hardly noticed the cold. That was soon to change.

I had just finished college, Jerry was teaching mathematics in a near-by town, and in another week, he would be off for Christmas vacation. We decided to postpone our honeymoon until then, and planned to head west to the Colorado mountains to go skiing. With most hills in Minnesota no higher than a haystack, the chance to go skiing in Colorado sounded fantastic to me. Blindly I followed my new husband, thinking he had a wonderful honeymoon planned for us. Well, he did—almost.

It was evening when we entered the mountain town of Dillon. It was a beautiful sight coming down the mountain pass, seeing the glimmering lights and the mountains fading into the dark. Jerry stopped at the first motel he saw to get a room. They were full.

No, problem, we just drove to the next, then the next, and then the next. Jerry hadn't thought reservations were necessary. We soon found out how inaccurate that assumption was. No one needed reservations in Minnesota in the wintertime. People certainly did though if they were in Colorado in the mountains in the midst of prime ski season.

"What are we going to do?" I cried.

My hero said, "I don't know."

It was already late and would be a two-hour drive back to Denver. Just then, I had a brilliant idea—our friends, the Sunders, were also out here skiing. "Where was it they were staying? Seems like it was some Boy Scout camp." Maybe we could join them.

After filling up on gas and consulting the attendant (i.e., I asked for directions as real men don't do such things), we headed off into the dark in search of a Boy Scout camp.

"About 20 miles down Highway 9," the man said. Once we left town, there was a shortage of lights so we drove slowly. About 30 minutes later, we saw a sign for a camp and wondered if this could be the right one—we sure hoped so. We found the office and asked if the Sunders were registered. Yes, they were in cabin 3. Hurray! We knocked at their door knowing they certainly wouldn't be expecting company. The door cautiously opened and with a shocked look on their faces, John and Vicki invited us in. Of course, we could spend the night. How many people spend their honeymoon with friends?

There were two single hammocks hanging one on top of the other, which we could use. Of course, Vicki and John had the double bed that was in the small room. Once we went to bed, each in our own hammock, I couldn't sleep. I was freezing, so I climbed down and into the hammock with Jerry. Now I couldn't sleep either. I felt like the 20th person in a phone booth, so I spent the night switching from my hammock to Jerry's, not sleeping.

As I lay there, I thought about our first date. I was so eager to go out with Jerry, I failed to mention to him something important he needed to know before he came to pick me up. My parents had moved to the country a year earlier, and my dad had fenced the whole ten acres for my horse with an electric fence. Everyone had to go through the gate that crossed the driveway to get to the house. Doesn't everyone know about electric fences? Apparently not. Jerry was a true city-boy and had never encountered one—until our first date. The only safe part to touch was the plastic handle; all the thin harmless looking wire had electric current running through it. Jerry was a fast learner. After that night, he has never again touched a wire that even looked like it could carry electricity. Even though our first date was a shocking experience for Jerry, thankfully, it didn't deter him from coming back. I wondered if tonight was "payback time" for me.

In the morning, John exclaimed: "Hey look, it was so cold last night that our beer froze!" Not just a few ice crystals—froze solid! No wonder I couldn't sleep—it must have got down to 20 degrees in the cabin. Remember, this was before the days of zero degree sleeping bags. How much insulation is there anyway in a bunch of logs? Not much. I don't think I could ever have been a pioneer woman.

Finding out it was -20 outside, we wondered if our car would start. Good old faithful Betsy did. It didn't warm up much that day, or the next, or the next, so we didn't go skiing. We did find, however, a nice, warm hotel in which to stay.

Finally, one morning it was above zero, and we went skiing. I'd only been on a chair lift a couple times before as our mighty mountain back home just had a towrope. I was anxious about getting on the lift without falling. I quickly noticed that anyone who delayed

the people's skiing time by even a minute received many glaring stares and unheard comments. I felt sorry for the person ahead of me who fell and held up the line.

Thankfully, I managed to get on the chair lift without falling. The chair went up higher and higher and there was no safety bar to pull down back in those days. I don't like being any higher than the back of a horse. I was quite nervous, hooked an arm around the side bar, and grabbed the back of the chair with my other hand in a death grip. I decided it was best to not look straight down as that made me dizzy. All of a sudden I felt the chair start to bounce and swing. I looked around for the cause and there was my wonderful new husband laughing at me as he made the chair swing.

"Stop it!"

"Stop what?" was his innocent reply.

"You know what."

"Oh, you mean this," and he wiggled the chair some more.

"Stop it," I yelled louder this time with anger rising up.

Jerry was enjoying the emotional response he evoked from his young bride, and swung the chair some more. "Knock it off!" I screamed at him. The people in the chair in front of us turned around to see what the yelling was about, and Jerry decided to stop his shenanigans. I'm convinced Jerry is the cause of all those signs now posted on the lift poles that say, "Do not bounce or swing chairs," and why there are now safety bars installed on most chair lifts.

We managed to arrive safely on the mountain's summit, where I felt like I was on top of the world as I looked down at the snow-laden peaks. We enjoyed the exhilarating long runs down the mountain. All too soon, after only a couple days of skiing, it was time to

return home. While our honeymoon didn't turn out as planned, it was memorable and gave us something to laugh about later.

This was just the first of many adventures to come—from riding with the locals and their chickens on a jeepney to the rice terraces in the Philippines, to sleeping under the stars in the Outback of Australia, to backpacking the Grand Canyon last year with our sons. I'm usually apprehensive about each new adventure. Sprinkled amidst the fun will be those unforeseen events that stretch me beyond my comfort zone. When we're lost in the mountain wilderness, it's dark, raining, and time to pitch the tent; people call this "good bonding time." I want you to know: we've definitely bonded. What keeps me saying, "I do" is the opportunity to spend time with my husband and kids away from the distractions (and comforts?) of everyday life.