

Headin' For a Weddin'

It is 7:25AM, October 3, 2008 and 39 degrees. Cindy's van is packed with suitcases, snacks, and five people as we pull away from her home. Freddie waves, "Good Bye", then we rocket through the sun-dappled early morning back roads on a shortcut to Highway 29 South. It's gonna be a great day to travel!

The miles fly by and we arrive at Sandi and Mark's home in Watkinsville, GA. The place is very quiet at the moment but that will soon change. *(The picture below is obviously not from today.)*



They are busy doing all the last minute things that parents must do before a wedding. The large picture of the bride is not going to arrive in time to be displayed at the reception so Mark goes with Plan B and makes a hurry-up trip to the local Sam's Club to have a substitute print enlarged. Ah, yes, it looks just fine. The caterer needs a round table that is still sitting in Mark's garage. Neighbor Steve swings into action.



Cindy hitches a ride with him to deliver a few more things that are needed to make the reception “perfect”.

By supertime all of the family has arrived, coming from New Hampshire, North Carolina, Virginia, and Wisconsin and the volume rises with ten little kids fully into their action mode. The trampoline and swing set get a good work-out. And they are really happy to find the temps



great for swimming



The worst casualty is a collision between Amelia and Emma, resulting in a knot on Emma’s forehead and a fat lip. Beloved Harold and Ola are here too. Love is just oozing around this place today.

In a flurry of activity, the bridal family heads out for the rehearsal, then dinner at the home of the groom's mom. The rest of us eat way too many grilled burgers and dogs with all the fixings plus a marvelous grape salad...gotta get that recipe!



Some family members aren't exactly a whirlwind of energy:



Jim is in charge of holding up the hat as my little granddaughters draw numbers for the wedding dresses I have sewn for their American Girl dolls.



This note is attached to each dress, explaining the wedding tradition:

A tradition is like a custom. We have many traditions in our life....certain ornaments we place on our Christmas tree or the tradition of making a wish before you blow out the candles on your birthday cake. There are also many traditions attached to weddings. One of these is the phrase, "Something old, something new, something borrowed something blue, and a penny for your shoe."

"Something old" on this dress are the many beads and pearls which came from your Great Grandma Saaijenga's stash of "pretties", so a part of this dress is actually from your great grandma.

"Something new" is the fabric used to create this dress. The brocade was purchased 4 months ago by Cindy and the lace and sheer fabrics were purchased by me.

"Something borrowed" is the love that went into each stitch. Love is like a smile. When someone smiles at you, you smile back or smile at someone else, so the love someone gives you is actually borrowed for a little while until you pass it on.

"Something blue" is the blue sequin, tightly attached with a tiny blue bead that is sewn into the waistline of each dress.

"And a penny for your shoe" is the attached 2008 penny. Don't worry if your doll is not wearing shoes. Dolls are "pretend" so you can pretend that the penny is in her shoe.

Near the hemline of this dress is another gift of love. It is a small heart-shaped button, hand-carved by Jerry Covault (a relative and retired forest ranger from Missoula, Montana), using wood that he harvested from a holly tree in Washington State. His wife Lois sent the special buttons to me just to be used in these dresses.

The grandsons each get a shiny new Presidential dollar.

Harold and Ola return to collect us and our suitcases and take us to their home. They are such comfortable people. We spend some time just hashing over politics and the country's financial woes and our families. Ola has a passion for lighthouses and this house showcases her vast collection...even the shower curtain sports a lighthouse!



Morning dawns a whole lot later than usual for us. That bed feels awfully good but our day promises to be jam-packed with family "stuff" so we roll out. Cracker Barrel is a fascinating place to browse. They also serve a might tasty "Fall Breakfast Special". (But I won't fight Harold for his sorghum syrup.) It is a good morning for just poking around the beautiful Georgia back roads. A large field of cotton is ready for harvest and looks so pretty in the morning sunshine. Ola takes us to her house which is for sale now. The huge sweet gum tree in her back yard is dropping its seed pods just in time for me to haul some of them home for Christmas decorations. Not so nice is the snake that comes out second best in its encounter with Ola. A roadside produce stand yields boiled peanuts and lots of information about Muscatines and Scuppernongs. Next, we learn all about how pottery is made at a Native American pottery shop. We drop by Sandi and Mark's home and find things pretty much as expected...mighty noisy and mighty hectic.



About 1:30PM we are at Briarwood Baptist Church. It is a spectacular afternoon but I am, as usual, not mentally in the present moment. I am standing beside my kids' Aunt Marion and we are in this same spot, enjoying the love of Sandi and Mark's wedding on a warm day in 1989.



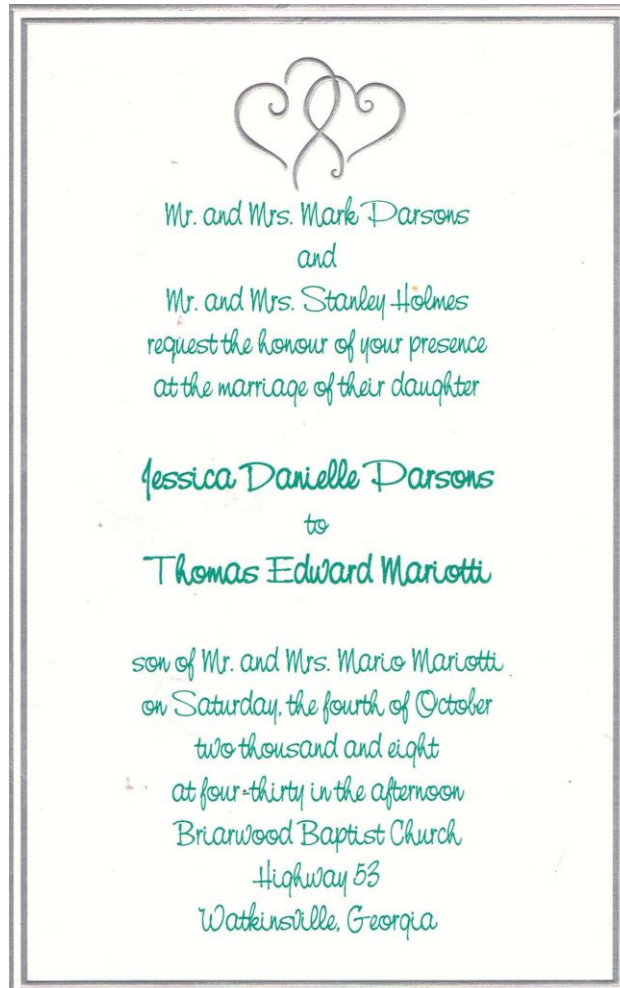
I can see the large ferns and bouquets of fuchsias, arranged at the front of this massive sanctuary. I can see little Danielle and Christopher, standing proudly as their daddy becomes my son-in-law. Terry Nash is busy keeping Chris out of trouble.



The years fly by and I am at this same spot again. There are many more flowers up front as the Memorial Service is held for Mark's mom.



But today is October 4, 2008 and we are here for Danielle and Tommy's wedding.



The bride is busy getting ready for her big day:



Candles and flowers line the aisle and baskets of flowers adorn this church today, ready for this ceremony of love.



The 4:30PM wedding is beautiful and the sanctuary is filled with loving family and friends. A moment of tender emotion as Dad kisses his little girl:



The groom's eyes fill with tears as Danielle and her daddy come up the aisle to meet him. Oh, yes, he is a good one! Danielle sheds her own tears as they make their vows and most eyes in that church are moist as well. Love and emotions exist hand-in-hand.



After the ceremony more pictures are in order. Laughter and hugs abound while the obligatory pictures are taken.





Today, standing like ducks in a row for all these pictures, is a pain in the patooey but we will treasure them in years to come.





Pictured below are Back Row L to R: Matthew and Ryan McCarthy; Larry Faist; Jim and Lin Moseley; Danielle and Tommy Mariotti; Sandi, Chris and Mark Parsons; Randy Faist.

Next row: Jeff and Lori McCarthy; Ellen (Larry's wife), Emma and Anna Faist; Justin Parsons (in front of Tommy); Amelia and Monica (Randy's wife) Faist; Cindy Watson holding Ben.

In front: Morgan Parsons (in green dress); Miranda and Isaac Faist; Abby Watson. Fred Watson was unable to attend that day.



A picture is taken of the bride and my six little granddaughters with their dolls.



I'm glad that God blessed me with the time and ability to provide those little dresses.

An antique pearly-white Rolls Royce transports the new Mr. And Mrs. Thomas Mariotti to the reception site.



Ola is snacking on those boiled peanuts as we leave the church. Cracker Barrel was a good many hours ago and even those slimy, boiled peanuts are appetizing right now. Well, truthfully, they are OK, but certainly not great.

The food is good, the music is lively, and folks are having a happy time. My grandkids are in overdrive tonight!





Danielle's Grandpa and Grandma Coile beam as they share honors with another couple for being married the most years...44 and counting. The groom's family is originally from the Chicago area and I meet some of them. One of his former neighbors, attending from their current home in Florida, is a hoot and shares with me that she has shoes older than some these young chicks dancing tonight. The chocolate and white wedding cake has a red Georgia Bulldogs helmet on its top tier.



Once again, the pillows at Harold and Ola's home beckon. The four of us wind down in front of the evening news, then hit the sack. It has been a day destined to generate many memories and stories.

Five AM and Ola is knocking on our door. Time to get packed up for our ride home with Cindy.

Sandi's house is still dark when we pull up to the garage but soon things light up. Emma and Anna, Amelia and Isaac, and Morgan have their moms up so hugs and good byes are plentiful. A quick peek at some of yesterday's photos on Mark's computer portends many good pictures ahead.

The sky is flaunting its just-before-sunrise glow as we head north toward Lynchburg and back to our world of jobs, soccer games, and the essence of everyday living. I love all my family so much that it hurts. A special blessing I have is my Jim who makes sure I get to see my family often.

Births and graduations and marriages are all a normal part of family life but we need to savor each one of them now rather than later because, sometimes, later is too late. God has blessed us richly!

