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God Had Other Plans

Most girls dream of a fairy-tale romance. I certainly did. But I had no idea that mine would begin at a youth meeting sponsored by the Burns Avenue Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Dayton, Ohio where I lived.

I was a senior in high school and was making plans to attend Nyack College. In fact, it was our shared interest in Nyack that had prompted Jean Smith to invite me to the meeting.

The tall, dark and handsome Edward Jacober had just graduated from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts with a degree in mechanical engineering. His first job, for the government, had brought him just weeks before from his home in Newark, New Jersey, to work at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

Not long after his arrival church friends invited him along on a trip to visit the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. There he purchased a book written by Clarence Larkin, an engineer like himself. The detailed charts appealed to

Ed's mathematical mind.

One evening he was lying in bed reading this fascinating book when four words caught his attention: "Christ died for you." He rolled out of bed onto his knees and prayed, "Thank You, Lord, for dying for me. Now what can I do for You?" He went out and bought a Bible and launched into a systematic study of various Bible correspondence courses.

We began dating, and Ed told me later that when he saw me walk through the door at the youth meeting he said to himself, *That's the girl I'm going to marry!* His intentions were increasingly supported by flowers, corsages, candy, gifts and expensive restaurant dinners.

My ambition as a young girl was to become a nurse. However, when I was 14 I heard a missionary speak at Beulah Beach Conference on Lake Erie and I knew that night God wanted me to be a missionary. I did not see a vision or hear a voice, but after Mary Dixon related her experiences in Borneo I returned to the little tent where I was staying, knelt on the straw beside my army cot and prayed, "All right, Lord, if this is what You want me to do, I'll do it. I won't be a nurse. I'll be a missionary." I did not know then that the two could be combined. But I had made a promise and I intended to keep it.

People began to ask me what mission field I was going to. I could not give them an answer. I did not know myself. I was interested in

Borneo because that was where Mary Dixon was working. The phrase, "To Nyack, then to the Dyak" sounded logical to me.

But God had other plans.

During a summer vacation, the church asked me to chaperone a group of young people to the youth camp at Beulah Beach. One afternoon during devotions a verse in Isaiah caught my attention: "The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the LORD will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them" (41:17).

I saw a vision of a man staggering across a desert, and I believed he was an Arab. The verse and the vision became God's call to me, a call that would take me on a life's path that could be designed only by one so all-knowing and all-loving as the Master Designer Himself.

I hungrily began to devour whatever information I could find about Arab culture and religion, and gradually my love for Arabs grew until it became a deep, intense desire to live and work with them. I set my face toward the Near East.

But right now I had a life-changing decision to make.

As soon as I graduated from high school Ed asked me to marry him. Of course I wanted to be married, and to be proposed to by a handsome professional who loved her was any teenage girl's romantic dream come true.

I felt, however, that it was a temptation to turn me aside from keeping my promise to God and doing what I knew He wanted me to do. I was determined to obey the Lord. No one and nothing would deter me from following His plan for my life. I clung to the vow I had made.

“Sorry,” I told Ed with wisdom perhaps beyond my years, “you’re an engineer and I’m going to be a missionary. We’ll just have to wait and see how the Lord works it out.”

Jean and I went to Nyack in the fall of 1942. One day the dean of women called Jean, who was now my dear friend and roommate, and me into her office and asked us if we would like to take a medical course for missionaries in New York City.

I was delighted. God was giving me back the very thing I had surrendered to Him and now I was getting training that would prove useful on the mission field: how to treat fevers, parasites, burns, infections and to practice dentistry and midwifery. I didn’t know then that someday I would deliver and even name babies—an exciting and awesome responsibility.

Every time I returned home for holidays or the summer Ed proposed again. He proposed so often I lost count. And always, I gave him the same answer.

One day a letter came from Ed saying he had heard a missionary speak at a conference and had committed his life to the Lord for

overseas service. I was delighted! God, it seemed, was working out His plan to bring us together to serve Him. Our relationship took on a new and deeper significance.

World War II interrupted our lives but not our romance. V-mail, as it was called, became our lifeline. When the war ended, Ed's name was way down on the list for returning from Europe to the States. We were disappointed—it could take months before he would be eligible to come home.

But once again God had other plans and He intervened in a most miraculous way.

During his engineering days, Ed's department in the government had placed a contract with a businessman who was later charged with embezzling. Ed was called to be a witness in the court case, but by the time he arrived in the States the case had been dismissed. A short time later he was discharged from the army.

Instead of returning to the engineering job which was waiting for him at the base, Ed enrolled at Dallas Theological Seminary to study for a Master's degree in theology.

By this time I had completed four years (including some medical courses) at Nyack. When I saw that Ed was setting aside his profession and the potentially lucrative career it promised to train for missionary service, I agreed to marry him.