

Janet Sinclair A very few of our happier times together.

Janet, my first girlfriend, my first real date, my first love, my first bride, my first lover, my best friend.

Janet was born to Art and Dalice Finley June 6, 1946 in Columbia MO. She spent her early life in Parma, ID where Art had an assignment with the UofI. She attended a couple grade school years there. They then moved to Moscow where she lived until after college. She graduated from UofI with a degree in bacteriology. She also had some teaching credits I was not aware of until much later.

She was active in 4H but spent much of her days babysitting. A few cents an hour added up over the years. 4H projects taught her lots of homemaking skills that became useful later in life. Like me she says she never had high school dates but lots of group dates, whatever those are.

Friday, October 9, 1966. Us guys were doing the usual that afternoon, playing hearts in our dorm. Someone smuggled in some adult beverages sometime that afternoon. After dinner, the game continued. About 9, someone suggested some female companionship might be good for a change. Being fueled by some of the aforementioned beverages, one fellow was charged with fixing that. Low and behold, he came back and declared we had to sober up, he had females waiting. Oh shit.

Seems the ladies had just returned from watching the movie Goldfinger and were still dressed to be outside the dorm. Very different dress codes in those days. Anyway, us 3 guys stumbled over to their dorm and pretty soon 3 women came out the door. No hesitation, I figured out which one I wanted to be with. Don't remember anything about the others. We went to the Student Union (everyone walked everywhere, no cars) and I tried to bluff my way thru a few dances. She must have impressed me as never had done that before. Turns out she was a great dancer but put up with me anyway. I was scared to death.



We dated the rest of our college years with the exception of a few weeks in the spring of 1967. I had made a commitment to a good friend to take her friend to a dance out of town before Janet and I became so close. I really struggled with that promise. I felt I could not remain exclusive AND take out another lady so broke it off shortly after Valentine day. Worst thing I ever did, I suspect she never forgave me. There was no romance involved in the promised date, at least on my end. We did make up before long and remained exclusive to this day.

Things were extremely financially tight for me thru school. I had worked as much as possible thru high school and any time off in college to self support myself. Occasionally, she would get a sitting job for some couple so we took it and splurged on a

fancy hamburger at a better restaurant in town to celebrate. Mostly we just did simple things together.

Eventually, I had to think about a formal proposal. That would take a ring and rings cost money. I took on my first ever debt to buy one, not very fancy but sincere. Then the choice of where and how. Being the coward, finally decided to go with some other folks to her family cabin on the lake. I had visions of slipping it on her finger in the middle of the night. That didn't work so hid it in some adult drink the next day. We just smiled and nodded to each other, she was to be mine. It never occurred to me to ask permission of anyone. I suppose I goofed. By this time her family had mostly adopted me anyway since I was there most every day. She had been wearing my oversized class ring for some time at that point.

I got behind in school due to some family tragedies so ended up going to summer school my last year to make up a class. So, the weekend that was finished, Janet and I got married, left the church, and started the drive to Phoenix where I had a job waiting. We headed to Seattle so as to visit a great-grandmother that was unable to make it to our wedding. We had a motel waiting and the damn pass over the mountain was snowed in and we had to wait for the snow plow to open the freeway. This was August 17, 1968. Damn, this is supposed to be our honeymoon. We then took the scenic route down the coast, went on the cheap (I still had little to no cash, she never mentioned she DID have savings) but stayed in a few motels along the way. The company was going to reimburse us for some relocation expenses (not much, like three nights somewhere) but that would happen later. Did lot of things no longer safe like pulling onto a turnout on the highway overlooking the ocean and sleeping on the ground in sleeping bags.



We started our married life together with a few wedding gifts, some school books, and our clothes. Could have fit into a pickup but the company 'moved' us. We found a furnished apartment and took up housekeeping. Janet was the traditional wife, knew how to cook, clean, get set up, all those things while I was trying to fit into a new professional life. We stayed there awhile and then moved into an unfinished apartment. By that time we had accumulated a few scratch and dent furniture bargains and a real bedroom suite (which we still have). Viet Nam was still very active but once the 'lottery' excluded me from the draft, we had a small house built. Janet was looking for job opportunities at this time assuming I would be overseas somewhere. Those never materialized, the only ones that looked interesting would have had her out of town too much of the time.

We had lots for fun in that first little house. The neighborhood was active, drop a hat and we would be off doing something as a group. Janet landscaped the yard with lots of high end rose bushes along with the more traditional 'desert' plants. Those survived the last time we visited over there. One winter we decided to get active in our alumni activities and she got us signed up for a dinner one January. Seems we had to leave before dessert, number one daughter decided to come visiting. I heard recently, she came so fast, the doc did not even have time to get into scrubs. She did get to take one Tylenol first so the story goes.



A couple years later, we moved again into a larger place in Glendale. Not long daughter number two is looking to join us. I was changing into scrubs with the delivery doc and he told me this time delivery will be induced, no more rushing. He mentioned that if all women were like my bride, he would be out of a job. Again, very pain tolerant, hardly winced when they use a scissor to enlarge the birth canal. I did not faint but was close. So he is stitching her up, and dumb old engineering me, asked how many stitches was he doing (looked like lots to me). He answered, just the usual amount but an extra one for me. I probably turned shades of red.



(When composing this paper, did not have any baby pictures to insert. Had to use some wedding pix instead. Note the similarities between the dress above and the one Janet wore years earlier. They are the same with some cosmetic changes.)

We again disappointed some family as she insisted we have no visitors for a month. She recognized that I was unfamiliar with new borns (again) but her sitting years allowed her to teach me some rudimentary stuff. These babies brought us even closer together, would have not thought that possible at the time.

Janet and family grew up camping as did I. Within a month or so of getting to Phoenix, went camping for the first time. Hot in Phoenix still, freezing cold when we visited the suggested area that weekend. We continued camping together, soon with the kids, forever. The kids picked up the habit and continue the same with their families. Makes us both smile.

When the kids started school, she became a regular classroom helper mom. She really enjoyed being around all the kids. They seemed to like her as well. Part of the reasoning for volunteering was to see what our kids were learning, more importantly what they were NOT learning so she could backfill as needed. As computers became available, she worked hard to self teach on how to use them. She learned some rudimentary programming as well as generally how to work with them. No way was she ever going to not help daughters with homework, even if it was computers. She became a favorite sub for librarians who were some of the first to use computers in the schools. Later she became the doctor mom as a sub for the nurses. Common sense goes a long way, it seems.

When the kids started in an advanced reasoning 'club' called Olympic of the Mind at the time, she fully engaged had help send their teams to 'international' competition. Fun times.

As the kids grew up and started Junior High, she ended up getting a substitute certificate on the pleading of the advanced science teacher. He wanted someone able to teach rather than baby sit a class. He always called for her when the genetics lessons were to be taught.

When they hit high school, she abandoned the jr high folks and ended up teaching nearly every subject in high school. Not sure she was too comfortable teaching boys PE, however. Struggled thru it all. She got glowing reviews from senior staff multiple times on how easily she could control and mentor even unruly problem kids. Occasionally when we would be at the mall shopping, kids would recognize her and mention she was their favorite sub. She got lots of satisfaction with those comments.

Once the kids had moved on, she decided she would like her forever house. We had a house constructed in the desert, semi rural, with a little land. She spent a couple years landscaping the property. She moved mountains of materials in the hickory handled dump truck. That landscaping is still great after 20 years of growth.

She gave up teaching after this move, the commute would have been larger and the pay minimal anyway. She went head first into genealogy. She became a whiz at it and ended up authoring two books, one on my father, one on hers. Very complete going back into the 1500s on many threads. She did the research on her mom as well but never reduced it to a book form. The enthusiasm was not there from family to warrant the authoring task. She also started research on my mother but the records are largely in Norwegian. No problem, self taught herself enough to read records and capture details. That effort also did not produce a book as the hobby got less interesting. Note, this genealogy work was largely done before the internet had everything at one's finger tip.

About 15 years ago, I retired and we began spending the summers NOT in the desert. We had done that long enough. We generally would pack up the motor coach and leave in May and get back in October. We saw lots of interesting places over the years. We

spent about 2000 days and nights in the coach traveling around. We made it to New England a couple times, into Canada a few times, never into the deep south. She had early settler family there but we never got the opportunity to check out those places.

We used her passion for genealogy as excuses to visit places around the country. We discovered lots of interesting places where family had at one time lived. We took it a ways further doing volunteer work for a site that allowed folks to request grave photos of family members. When time permitted, went on line to see who desired a photo. Those day trips found us in all kinds of unusual cemeteries, many long abandoned. As an extension of those activities, we were taught how to find unmarked graves and to determine the sex of the person. We had lots of fun with fellow camping neighbors with that. Not sure any were convinced.

The last 20 years or so that I was working, I ended up taking many business trips, both domestically and internationally. That nest egg she squirreled away teaching mostly went to the kids college fund but the leftovers allowed her to travel to some of the interesting places with me. Usually, she just had to pick up the travel fare, the rest was covered on my expense account. We did take some interesting side trips on some of those. She really wanted to see the Greek places she always read about. She found a touring company doing just that after spending a week in Athens at a conference. I am the dumb engineer but she soaked up all the sites and tried to explain them to me. We took a side trip out of Singapore to a beautiful island off the coast another time. She spent about a half year setting that one up. Again before internet. That was to be our 25th anniversary to ourselves. A couple years later we went back to Southeast Asia and took another excursion to a different island off Malaysia. Not sure how she set those up but we both enjoyed these adventures. She ended up making lots of other 'spouse' friends on this conference circuit. The gals looked forward to those meetings and catching up with each other. Most were not regulars as was Janet not a regular but all were buddies again after being apart for sometimes years.

She also heard of a radio station that offered 'world tours' from some bunco buddies. One came up on the Mexican coast, south of Cancun, and got us booked somehow. All inclusive, inexpensive, delightful trip. She taught herself how to make a narrated slide show of her pictures, complete with music in the background of this vacation.

The one trip she never got to make was the inside passage cruise up the Alaska coast. She really wanted that so she found a small cruise line (the Uncruise company) that offered an adventure cruise. Wonderful trip, a week in total, small ship, about 55 passengers, no entertainment, no casino, no trinket stops along the way, just lots of off-ship activities each morning and afternoon. This was our 50th anniversary gift to ourselves.

Unfortunately, these good times will become only memories. None of the above would have been pleasant without her. Of course life goes on, but with a much sadder heart going forward.

It would have been easy to extend this paper into a book if I tried to include all the great times we enjoyed over the 55 years we spent together.

I have no idea what I will do with this paper but writing it did temper some of the sadness of losing such a great partner.

