

## Who do you Love?

02-06-2018 by Harry Zirkelbach  
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Young, tall, in the military late in WWII. His duties took him successively to four of the larger cities on the East Coast. Week-end he went to some USO sponsored dance or event.

Single, at each he found a soul mate. They like one another. When moving on, he began writing, received encouraging replies.

Just before going overseas he was writing four young girls. He would write once a week. Usually writing each at the same sitting, then, mailing the letters. Then, trouble. No replies. His conclusion; he had put letters into the wrong envelopes, negating budding romances. As his sole record of each address was on the expected reply; thus he never wrote any again.

So on getting a short leave before reporting to San Francisco for transport to duty in Hawaii, he was even Leave, 15 days, with his family in Erie Pa. On leave at the same time his friend Ray N. also on leave from the Navy.

Ray borrowed transportation, arranged a him a date him with a friend of Ray's date, their same High School. Then his sister and their cousin Jim Masterson, also on leave from the Army, but visiting his only Erie relatives. Away they go, three young couples.

Destination. A day at Niagara Falls, New York and Canada.

No passports renter Canada required then. The six, very young. Uniforms made the lads seem older. Oh, those smiles of the young, conviction of the joys they shared that misty day.

Rain or no, It was a wonderful day. None had been there. The group saw everything, had a wonderful day, saw all the possible sights.

So much so that he joined his date, Christine, each subsequent day at home in Erie, until leaving to meet buddies in Chicago.

Christine looked like a young movie starlet, only better looking, sophisticated, an easy conversationalist, her dress and deportment, idealistic to all. Those youthful days with Christine and her family, sharing meals and stories. Christine, the oldest of three daughters to the Hickman's. The other two, Charlene and Bert, named because the Hickmans' wanted a son, did the next best thing, used female version of boys' names. Mr. Hickman, an articulate teacher in East High School, his wife, stay-at-home house keeper.

Incidentally three daughters, each beautiful, could pass as triplets.

Correspondence with Christine was limited.

He returned from Japan two years later, went home.

Then an early visit was to the Hickman home.

Mr and Mrs Hickman were there alone.

Greeting him warmly.



Tea and cookies were proposed. Then the news. Christine was attending College in a midwest State, was engaged to be married. He offers congratulations to them and for Christine.

In the next hour stories are exchanged.  
Toward the final moments, their comment.  
“Now that Christine is to be married,  
We’ll get the son we always wanted”.

As calmly as possible he suggested,

“There were days when I thought that might be me.”

To which they responded, as if in unison, “So did we”.

This Postscript.

The day together in Niagara Falls would be there only time his sister Pat met Christine.

Over the years siblings wend separate journey, one in Erie, one Denver. Pat and he communicated by mail regularly. Often her mail included Erie paper clippings, mention of men, women, events she knew he would recognize.

About thirty years ago, Pat included Christine’s Obituary.

Christine had died in her sixties, was living in that midwestern state with husband and two daughters. She had become a

lawyer. In that photo, little changed from the smiling beauty recalled as they nestled together for a photo, the American side of Niagara Falls. Her parents were deceased, Bonnie and Bert surviving.

Below Ensign Harry Zirkelbach and Christine Hickman





Below

(Seaman) Ray Norland.      Patsy (Zirkelbach)Goetz

and right cousin (Private) Jim Masterson

