

## My High School Best Friend

*by Liz Gibbons*

My best friend in junior and senior high school was Doris DeJonge. She lived on the next street over from our home. One of our high school teachers called us "The Twins" as we were both the same height and both had blond hair. We had some wonderful adventures together in those years.

When we started college I spent my freshmen year at a small college in Ohio. My parents thought it would be good for me to have a year away from home. Doris enrolled at Purdue and started dating an older student, Gerry Peterson, whom she met in the coffee shop at the Purdue Union Building. Early in her sophomore year she and Gerry knew they wanted to be married. One problem. Doris was an only child, and she knew that her Mother would want to have a big wedding for her. Doris and Gerry did not want that. They decided they would elope. Gerry's home was in Valparaiso in northern Indiana. He arranged for his childhood minister to marry them on Monday, December 21<sup>st</sup> which was a few days after Christmas vacation began. On the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Doris came over to my house. I had given my mother some excuse that Doris and I were going to be out all day. I sneaked out of the house with a bag with the dress and shoes I was going to wear for the wedding. Doris had stashed her suitcase at the bus station. We rode the bus to Valparaiso. Gerry and his best childhood friend met us. We ate lunch and then proceeded to the church. It was a nice ceremony, and then Doris and Jerry were off to Chicago. His friend took me to the bus station to get the bus back to West Lafayette. I called my parents to let them know where I was and when I would be home. To say they were surprised is putting it mildly.

The next morning I called Doris's Mother. She was feeling hurt and confused. Her first question was, "Did she have to get married?" I reassured that she did not have to get married.

Doris and Gerry celebrated their 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary last December 21<sup>st</sup>. They are still in fairly good health. I hope they will have many more years together.