

Office Meeting



GENE: I walked into the office one day and saw Marlene sitting there. I gazed at her and vowed: I am going to meet her; I am going to marry her someday. I don't know when, but I'm going to marry her.

MARLENE: To me, he was just somebody who worked in the office; that was about it.

GENE: She was like manna from heaven. It was as if the Holy Ghost descended upon her head. I couldn't erase the vision of her out of my mind. I thought, well there you go—she's the one.

MARLENE: Marrying him never even entered my mind at that point.

GENE: I did all I could to talk to her outside the office. I got my first chance when one of the girls at work got married—Mary Jane Brown. I knew Marlene was going to be at the wedding, so I made sure I was there too.

MARLENE: If someone had asked, “Are you going to marry him?” I would have answered, “Who knows?”

GENE: She had this favorite blue dress that looked good on her, and boy, could she dance! I thought, I have to ask her to dance with me. I don't think she will, but I will try anyway. Well, we danced, and then I asked her for a date, and that's how things go!

MARLENE: There were several times when we found each other at the same social event, and I don't think it was accidental. Sometimes the younger people in the office went out after work, and I remember going to a couple of dances with CSMC—the Catholic Student Mission Crusade—and he was there.

Of course, if I hadn't been Catholic, he probably would not have been going out with me. That was the main point with him.



A modish Marlene, 1956



Scene of the first date



On a date, 1958

GENE: She's right about that. I always tried to find out if the girl was Catholic.

MARLENE: I would have broken you down anyway!

Our first date was in February of 1956. We went to the movies—downtown of course. Going downtown made a date more special than just staying in the neighborhood. We went to the Lowe's Valencia Theater on Lexington Street. I still remember the ceiling painted with the sky and stars.

GENE: We saw a double feature: *The Man Who Never Was* and *The Glenn Miller Story*.

MARLENE: At the end of the date he told me he would call me, and I said, "Okay." I think he was playing it cool, as if to say, "I'm not that smitten with her. I won't ask for a second date right away, I'll make her wait a while." But that first date was on a Friday, and he called the following Sunday for the second date.

What impressed me about Gene was that he was always honest. Some boys just gave girls a whole line of stuff, but he was straight, to the point and sincere. And I always had fun with him.

GENE: Our relationship moved right along. We had a date on a Saturday night in December...

MARLENE: It was December 1.

GENE: Right. I came to her house to pick her up, and with her parents there with us in the living room, I asked her to show me the ring she wore all the time. I pulled a sparkling diamond out of my pocket and slipped it on her finger.

MARLENE: We had been talking about getting married, so it wasn't a complete surprise, though I didn't know when he was going to ask.

GENE: She didn't throw the ring back at me, so I took that as a "Yes." She spent the whole evening at the dance waving her left hand in front of everybody's face.

After the dance we went to the 2 am "printer's Mass" at St. Vincent's, near the Sun and News American. A lot of the pressmen on the night shift and others out late downtown shuffled into that Mass.

MARLENE: We picked a wedding date in the middle of June because it was between night school semesters for Gene. It turned out that the 15th was also in the middle of a heat wave. Fortunately the church was air conditioned, but that was the only cool building we were in that day. We were married at 11:00 Mass, drove to

the photographer's studio for pictures with the wedding party, then headed to the reception at Selmayer Hall on Coughlin Street. The fans in the hall were not much help at all.

GENE: The only thing missing from the reception besides air conditioning was the traditional Polish small dance, where the guests dance with the bride and stuff money in an apron. Marlene would not go for it.

MARLENE: For one thing, I'm not Polish. For another thing, when the tradition started years and years ago, the small dance money was the guest's wedding gift. By the time we got married it had become an addition to the wedding gift, and I didn't feel right about that. To me, it's like hitting them twice.

GENE: I said, "Follow the tradition, do what the people do—go ahead and hit them twice!"

MARLENE: But I won. We took off to Miami for our honeymoon; that was the first time I had ever flown.

GENE: Miami was the place to go. They offered nice package deals. We paid for it by saving half dollars. Every time we got one, we put it away in a jar.

MARLENE: We stayed at the Versailles Hotel for a week. It cost somewhere around \$14 a day for the two of us, and that included breakfast and dinner.

GENE: And what a treat—we saw the Maguire Sisters and the Arthur Godfrey shows.

MARLENE: A funny thing happened on the way to our honeymoon. We flew out of Washington because BWI was not open then. Gene's cousin Joe, who was the best man, and his wife, Janet, drove us to the airport. The plane was late, and while we were sitting there

*Mr. and Mrs. Emil Kempf
request the honour of your presence
at the marriage of their daughter
Marlene Marie
to
Mr. Eugene J. Kurowski
on Saturday, the fifteenth of June
Nineteen hundred and fifty-seven
at eleven o'clock Mass
Shrine of the Little Flower
Bel Air Road and Brendan Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland*



waiting, with Joe and Janet still with us, in walks my mother, my father, and my cousins Marie and Dick. They all drove from Baltimore down to Washington.

GENE: I guess they wanted to make sure I was not absconding with their daughter!

MARLENE: And then my cousins Raymond and Betty barged in, and Gene must have been wondering, “What did I get into?” I was just as surprised as he was. We didn’t escape from all of them until we got on the plane.

GENE: How many relatives were going to crash our honeymoon? Am I going to have to live my whole life with all of them hanging around all the time? I resolved that on our next trip we would not tell anybody where we were going.

