



Diane with Matt, Brian, Dean and dog Gigi

Chapter 12

Thomas Alexander and Diane 1969 - 1976

In 1969, Skyline High School was one of the largest schools in the state of Utah with 3,200 students and a faculty that numbered 150. Located high on the east bench, it boasted an advanced academic program, a high percentage of students that went to college and a reputation for excellence.

Tom's first day in the classroom was an experience to remember. He had no text books for his drama classes, no file of material and no established program to follow. He spent the entire period in his advanced drama class telling his students about theater. When the bell rang, he received a standing ovation. Gradually as the year wore on, he began to develop his program. It was a program that would build and develop over the next few years until the Skyline Drama Department was a force to be reckoned with at region and state drama meets.

In September of that year, Tom met a woman who would have a profound effect on his life. He attended a LDS Singles dance at the Terrace Ball Room in down town Salt Lake. These dances were always crowded and the selection of girls extensive, but for some reason, Tom found that evening's offering of young ladies rather boring. He noticed a tall brunette with nice

legs standing in the shadows and invited her to dance and from that moment on the evening changed. She had a bubbly personality, charming animation and kept up a lively conversation.

“And what do you do for a living?” she asked finally,

“I’m a school teacher,” Tom answered.

“So am I,” she volunteered. “And where do you teach?”

“At Skyline High School,” he answered. “And you?”

“At Skyline High School,” she said, somewhat surprised.

Diane Belov had taught in the history department for three years. It was Tom’s first year, the school occupied two buildings and was rather large. Diane taught history in A Building. Tom taught speech and drama in B building. They had different lunch periods. Mr. Pizza had encouraged his 150 teachers in faculty meetings to get to know one another but the two had not met. Occasionally over the next few weeks, they encountered one another at school. Usually however, they met at the Thursday night dance at the Terrace.

“How did you get here so fast?” Tom asked as he finally secured a dance with Diane. “Back to School Night ended only half an hour ago.”

“I left with the last group of parents when the final bell rang,” she answered. They spent the rest of the evening dancing together.

There were several dates after that. They both enjoyed dancing and being together. At LDS Conference in October Tom invited Diane to the Samoan missionary reunion where he introduced her to his Island friends. Tom knew that Diane was divorced but had no idea that she was the mother of three boys. Diane’s father had cautioned her about telling her dates about her children. “Wait until the man is madly in love with you before you bring that up,” he advised. But how long can you hide three little boys – ages four, five and seven? One night Diane invited Tom in and showed him pictures of her sons. “What, no girls?” he asked.

Tom became very involved in directing his first high school play later that fall but gave serious thought to his relationship with Diane. He finally decided that he did not want to get involved. He invited someone else to the faculty Christmas party. Diane attended with a professor who taught English at the University of Utah. She and Tom avoided one another. By the end of January Gene Warner had replaced her in the history department and no one seemed to know what had happened to her or where she had gone.

Tom always wanted to marry a beautiful girl. In the fall of 1969, he met Nila Ford who seemed to have everything. One drawback was that Nila was the mother of two sons. It

seemed that Tom was drawn to mature women -- divorcees with kids. He fell deeply in love with Nila but, at the time, could not quite bring himself to marry her. Her older boy was a teenager and a bit rebellious. At the beginning of June 1970, Tom went to Hawaii returning end of August to find Nila was getting married the next day to the older man who funded her beauty shop. He had told Tom months earlier that should he marry her he would expect him to buy out his interest in the shop. Tom was lonely after Nila's marriage but the relationship left him open to the idea of marrying a woman with children.

In February 1972, Tom climbed the steps to the Terrace Ball Room behind a tall blond in a short burgundy dress. He liked her legs. He followed her into the hall, stepped up behind her and tapped her on the shoulder. "Would you care to dance?" he asked. She turned. It was Diane in a blond wig.

The couple renewed their acquaintance on the dance floor. Tom learned that Diane had spent the past year and a half at Ohio State University where she worked as Administrative Assistant to the Registrar attending to athletic eligibility for coach Woody Haye's football team and other Buckeye teams. She also supervised the Registrar's large staff. *Diane is on the left in the top row. Registrar Dean Clark is the tall man in the suit wearing glasses 5th from Diane.*



Diane had taken a leave of absence from Skyline. When she returned she discovered that the student population on the east side had declined and there were no openings for a social studies teacher at Skyline nor anywhere in Granite District. So she took a job with the State of Utah processing welfare applications and interviewing clients to support her children. Diane never received alimony nor any child support from her ex-husband who had moved to Canada after their divorce. Her father-in-law sometimes helped out by babysitting for her.

Tom had always wanted to travel and now that he was established and had money in the bank, he began to make plans for a trip to Europe in the summer of 1972. Diane had spent three weeks in Europe the previous summer. She encouraged him to go on the trip knowing he would enjoy it. Tom chronicled his trip in post cards sending several to her each week:

Card from London dated Wednesday, June 14: Dear Diane. This is an interesting place. Went on a tour of London, visited the Tower of London, saw "Show Boat" which was fantastic, "Don't Just Lie There, Do Something," which was a funny farce, "Canterbury Tales" which was lousy—the director has no concept whatsoever on how to block a show and the singers could not sing for nuts, and "Oh Calcutta" which was depraved and sick. I particularly enjoyed the city and of course went on your recommendation. I had a great guide—he should be made a professor of history or theatre. I really miss you. I wish you were with me. In fact, I miss you so much I'm tempted to come straight home.

Card from Shakespeare's birthplace, June 2: Dear Diane. Went through Shakespeare's house today and saw where he penned some of his works. I'm at Stratford on Avon for the night. I saw two fabulous Shakespearean productions, "Julius Caesar" and "Coriolanus." They were fantastic. Shakespeare in this town has to be about the best in the world. Even the smallest walk-on with one or two lines was a veteran actor of the stage, television and the movies. Fantastic acting and productions. So far I have seen 18 plays. I still think you should be here. I wish you were. This is a quiet little town with beautiful walks and flowers and the Avon River flows through the middle of it with the Stratford Theatre right on its banks. Hope your tan is coming along and the kids are enjoying swimming. I miss swimming with all of you. I should have brought your photo. Miss you. Love Tom.

When Tom returned he spent the rest of the summer going to movies and dances with Diane and taking the boys swimming. That fall he was busy directing "Fiddler on the Roof," probably the most successful production ever performed at Skyline. The auditorium, which seats 3,000 was almost packed all three nights and Mr. Pizza, who was not known for his love of theater, made an unprecedented appearance on the second night to compliment the cast. Tom worked hard that year. He also directed "The Lark" and "The Night of January the 16th" and two other plays. It was an excellent year for talent and Skyline placed first in the State Drama Competition.

The next summer Tom returned to London for a season of theatre. A postcard to Diane dated June 21, reads: *Got your second letter. I think I'm looking forward to coming home. Three weeks is enough theatre and London for me. I've seen 32 shows so far. I don't know what kind of present to get you. Maybe I'll just save the money and take you to Hawaii.*

When Tom returned he and Diane went to Hawaii staying with his parents. But they broke up before school started in the fall. Tom decided he was not ready for marriage and fatherhood. Diane had been single for six years and wanted to get on with her life.



Matthew, Dean and Brian when their parents divorced - 1967

The following school year brought additional work for Tom. Besides regular teaching and coaching responsibilities, he was given an assignment to supervise the Skyline stage. This entailed attendance at all the numerous activities held on the stage as well as lighting, sound, setting up for assemblies, community events and rentals.

They had an on again off again relationship. "Tom, have you prayed about marrying me," Diane asked him one night.

"No," Tom confessed, "Because the answer might be yes." Since it seemed obvious that the relationship was going nowhere, Diane began dating other men.

Midway through the spring of 1974, Diane had a serious beau who wanted very much to marry her. One evening, ten year old Brian had a talk with his mother. "Are you going to marry Art," he asked?

"I don't know Brian," she told him truthfully.

"Well, I don't think you should, He's younger than you and besides you don't love him. You love Tom!"

Art Ortiz was a Catholic but took Diane and her boys to church and was open to learning more about her Mormon faith. When he proposed she put him off. He asked her to pray about the matter. She did and kept getting the same answer: "It's not Art, It's Tom." Finally, she told Tom saying she did not care what he did with this information but if he did not want to marry her the good Lord would provide another suitable and worthy husband for her. Art often sent Diane flowers. Tom never did. Art's flowers caught Brian's attention. One day he returned from school with a red tulip pulled from someone's yard with the bulb still attached. He gave it to his mom. The boys held what Diane called "Saturday seminars." Brian always opened by asking, "Who are the hopefuls?" A lively discussion ensued with the three boys discussing the pros and cons of the men in their mother's life. Dean once commented, "Our mother is like Mary Tyler Moore. But Mary isn't divorced and she doesn't have three sons."

Diane always worked. When the boys were little she employed live-in baby sitters. As they grew older Brian tended. One night Diane and Tom returned to find the boys running up and down the stairs stark naked. "What are you doing?" she asked. "We're playing naked Spartans." Diane had told them that anciently women did not attend the Olympics and all the athletes ran nude. They were the Spartans getting ready to compete in the Olympic Games.

On Mother's Day, quite unexpectedly, Diane, Art and Tom found themselves face to face in the kitchen. Art had taken Diane and the boys to Provo to attend church and enjoy dinner with Corinne and Phyllis. When they returned Art discovered that Diane had a date with Tom a little later and refused to leave. When Tom arrived the two of them sat down at the kitchen table to discuss which of them was going to marry Diane. Art told Tom that if he wasn't going to marry her, to get out of the picture.

When Art left, Tom began lecturing her, "Art is not the husband for you!" he said, "You need someone like me."

"But you don't want to marry me," Diane replied. Tom finally left and she realized that there was no hope for them. She wrote in her diary that night, "Cancel Tom eternally." A few days later she was back at the Thursday night dance. Midway through the evening she noticed Tom. He had just arrived. Wanting to avoid him she slipped out and went home.

About 1:00 a.m. there was a knock at her door. Diane opened it and there stood Tom, "I've come to ask you to marry me," he said. Since he had an accent Diane thought he had said, "I can't ask you to marry me." She invited him in saying, "Let's talk about it." During the conversation which lasted until dawn they agreed to drive to Las Vegas on Wednesday and get married – on July 22nd, 1974. Diane had previously agreed to a date with Art and Tom left for a River Trip with his singles ward. He said nothing to them about his marriage plans and simply disappeared from the scene.

Diane's news broke Art's heart. Still he sent flowers on her birthday in October even though she was Mrs. Stokoe by then. The card was blank so Diane thought her new husband had sent them. When she thanked Tom he said that perhaps they came from the Relief Society. "The Relief Society does not send orchids to the sisters on their birthdays," She replied. Art finally called to say "Happy Birthday." He had sent the beautiful bouquet but left the card blank. "There was nothing to say," he lamented. Evidently Art still had deep feelings for her.



Diane's Sister Corinne and Aunt Lucille who were witnesses at the marriage.

When Diane told Zelda she was getting married her friend said, "But You can't marry Art. You love Tom." Tom had taken a date to Sundance in June and introduced her to his director friend. Three weeks later he took Diane there and they ran into the same man. Tom introduced Diane as his wife and said they had 3 sons but offered no further explanation.



Matt, Dean, Tom and Brian at the "Father and Sons"

As it would have been a financial hardship for Tom's family to fly to the mainland for the wedding and Diane's parents were dead, it seemed best for them to get married in Las Vegas. Diane's sister and aunt drove down with them. They returned on July 24th just in time for Tom to take the boys to their first Fathers and Sons outing. Later they went to Yellowstone on a vacation. Tom moved from his apartment on 160 F. Street to Diane's home at *1448 Greenfield Avenue*, the house Diane's father helped her purchase after she divorced Pete.



Diane was proud of the work Tom did with his students. He enjoyed watching his talented young actors succeed. In the 1970's this included Scott Zogg (class of 1972) who attended the Guildhall Drama School in London; Alexis Cairo (class of 1972) who became a newscaster for Channel 2; Dick Allgire (class of 1970) who became a newscaster on Channel 3; and Mick Mackay (class of 1975) who became a disc jockey on a radio station. Later, Jeri Dutcher became a radio announcer.

Tom enjoyed having sons that participated in athletics. He cheered for Brian, Dean and Matt when they played Little league baseball. Son Stephen was born on October 21, 1975. David followed on May 26, 1978. Neil arrived on November 9, 1982. Tom followed their games through several years of little league football. Later the entire family enjoyed watching Brian play varsity basketball and Matt wrestle and play varsity football.



June 7, 1980. The family was sealed in the Salt Lake Temple.



Matt, Dean, Diane with David, Stephen, Tom and Brian. Neil would be born Nov. 9, 1982.