

True Carolina Coed - Linda Jo Hutchins

Written by Buck Leigh, inspired by Bill Criswell

In January's mail came an envelope from the University of North Carolina, my alma mater; announcing a 50 year class reunion. I'll get to walk the campus; bring back some memories; and hopefully see some former classmates; some who had an *influence* on my life.

Jimmy Weeks convinced me that I should consider selling bibles and dictionaries for the Southwestern Publishing Company out of Nashville TN. I could make good money and gain valuable experience. I took Jimmy up on this; learned how to be a salesman; this experience helped me so much; and has a lot to do with my success in business.

Howard Holsenbeck, one of my roommates called me recently and told me to come to the reunion. Now, Howard fashioned himself as sort of a loverboy and used to give me unwanted advice about women and he's the one who needed it. But he must have said some things that made sense for I have been married 43 years to the same woman.

Ray Mathis, I hope to see Ray Mathis. Ray and I quit college for a semester, took a part time job with the Internal Revenue Service in Greensboro, NC, and rented an apartment next to the Woman's college, and became bona fide playboys for 5 months. The first night we were in town Ray met a girl who eventually became his wife. It didn't work out so well for me, my girl friend "Walked across my heart like it was Texas and taught me how to say I just don't care". Well, actually *it did work out for me*.

But the person I want to see the most would have to be Linda Jo Hutchins, who was a nursing student. *In one moment in time this girl,* this QTPI changed my way of thinking for the rest of my life.

To meet girls the nurses at UNC-CH had a mixer; a social in their activity room every Friday night. *Lonely guys* like Buck Leigh could go to the nurses dorm on Friday night and meet these nursing students; dance with them; perhaps start a romance. The very first time I went to one of these mixers I looked over the room; looked at all these nurses and noticed a very cute brunette wearing this pretty smile who looked like *she had been sent straight from heaven*.

This is the girl I want to meet; this is the girl I want to ask to dance. I went right over to her and asked her to dance. She tells me she's Linda Jo Hutchins a sophomore in the nursing school.

Next thing I know I'm looking into those *bewitching* eyes and I was struck at how mature she seemed; she was very serious.

We danced a couple of dances; got properly introduced to each other; and I led her back to her friends. I thought to myself, "I'm way out of my league here; this girl is way too sophisticated for me; she could not be interested in me; she wouldn't want to get to know a BOZO like me. I could never ask Linda Jo Hutchins for a date".

Even so, I did go to the nurses' dorm most every Friday night. I really don't ever remember ever dancing with Linda again; even though I always made a point to speak to her; don't think I ever had another conversation with Linda.

I can't remember what I did last Thursday, but I can remember like it was yesterday one brilliant spring day on the campus of UNC May 1963 just before graduation. I was walking across the campus probably thinking that I might meet the love of my life, when I saw Linda Jo Hutchins standing at the steps of the library looking like an angel sent straight from heaven; all by her *lonesome*. She said she was going to the cafeteria to get some breakfast would I like to go with her; we could talk. Did I follow her like a *puppy dog* to the cafeteria; yes, I did.

As Linda had breakfast I don't remember a thing said; I just kept looking into her bewitching eyes. We went back to the library and all of a sudden; like out of the blue; I was overwhelmed by her smile and charm and I told her I would like to come by the nurses' dorm that night and see her. Well, she said she had plans; she said goodbye; did not offer any encouragement; did not say let's try for another time; and walked right out of my life.

Sure, I was disappointed that Linda did not give me any encouragement; but I said to myself, "I just asked Linda Jo Hutchins for a date; I won't be afraid to ask any girl for a date from now on.

And I went from one extreme to another; I became very aggressive with women for then on.

And for sure the most extreme example would have to be how I began my relationship with my wife, Mary. And I'm going to love telling you this story.

On September 7, 1965, I was at my office at the Fireman's Fund Insurance Company in Greensboro, NC and in walks this very cute dark Mexican girl who had this mysterious smile and was wearing this pretty navy blue cotton dress. I found out that she was *married* and I myself was in a relationship with this Christian girl from Charlotte, NC who was a student at the Woman's College.

Well, my dull office job just got better when this little *senorita* began working in our office. The highlight of my day would be when I would go by Mary's desk, pay her a compliment, and get a smile.

Soon, my imagination began going wild about this dark Mexican lady who always dressed the best and wore this beguiling smile.

Perhaps I could surprise her and buy her a necklace and give it to her for Christmas. Or one lonely Friday night she would call my apartment and say, "Buck Leigh, I'm wearing that dress you like, I have on my lipstick, I just put on my dancing shoes; you should come by here and take me dancing tonight". *It's amazing what a man can think of when he thinks about a woman.* Or you would call me at my desk at work and ask me to take you to lunch. You did just that, remember???

Well, it was about a year later that the company told me I had to go to San Francisco for six weeks training. The day before I left and stopped by Mary's desk and told her that I would be thinking about her for the next 6 weeks, I would miss seeing her at work, and she should write me a letter while I was in San Francisco. And I got no letter, but I did get two letters every week from my girl friend, the coed at the Woman's College. Six weeks later I got back to Greensboro from San Francisco on a Sunday and by the next Saturday my relationship ended with my girlfriend. No explanation, never knew, just gone, over, finished.

Of course I was devastated; I was ready to rent that apartment on 101 Lonely Street. And just before I was ready to rent a room at Heartbreak Hotel, my little sweetheart, that Mexican lady came to work without her wedding ring on. I went by her desk and said, "Mary you don't have on your wedding ring, give me your phone number, I'll call you tonight. And without hesitation Mary said 288-1764.

My imagination went wild for the rest of the afternoon; rehearsing what I would say when I called her. What sort of charming words I would use to ask this girl who had been living in my mind for over a year.

I dialed 288-1764 and called Mary that night and she told me in so many words to drop dead. She had been separated for one day and I was already calling her. Do not call me again. OUCH!!! I went from a *towering hero* to a *born again loser* in a 5 minute phone call. A couple of weeks go by and I get a call at my desk, a shy voice comes on the phone, "Hey, how about giving me lift home".

Yes, a thousand times yes!!! That was all it took. Mary and I have been together since 1967.

You know life sometimes has a neat way of turning out. One experience leads to another; sometimes for the best.

And when I got the reunion packet from UNC I filled out the form and one of the questions asked was tell of your most memorable experiences at UNC.

I wrote in my profile just like this, One beautiful spring day in May 1963, I met Linda Jo Hutchins a nurse at the library, and she looked so pretty, a true Carolina Coed. I showed this to my wife and she agreed with me, put this note in the yearbook. Any girl who reads this will wonder did any boy think of me like this, and any guy will read this and perhaps think of a girl just like Linda Jo Hutchins.

Yes, it was a brilliant spring day in Chapel Hill;
Birds were singing, sun was shining;
Students were smiling; a great day to be alive:
Linda Jo Hutchins standing at the steps of the library;
An angel sent straight from Heaven, wearing that pretty smile;
A true Carolina coed...Linda Jo Hutchins.