CPL William "Mel" Munson & Dorothy Doak

Clan Waitstill

One of the WAVES and her Marine

by Pam Munson Steadman

She walked into the college cafeteria avoiding his glance.

He was cleaning off the neighboring tables and she pretended she didn't see him. He knew better, though.

In the background, Duke Ellington was playing "*Sophisticated Lady*" on the radio. The tall, skinny, basketball jock thought it appropriate indeed. He had always liked brunettes. This one reminded him of his favorite actress, Jane Russell. She had an edge to her, and he wanted to find out more.

She liked to present herself as not being interested.

Things were about to change, he thought to himself, as she pushed her long hair to the side while feigning a quick peek his way.

"Can I get you anything at all, sweetheart?" he asked with a boyish grin and a wink.

"Nope. I'm just fine, thank you," she retorted, thinking him extremely forward, even though a little bit of her sort of enjoyed his arrogant mannerisms.

A few months later, she, who had not an athletic bone in her body, would show up each day at the campus tennis court with borrowed racquet in hand. Sometimes, he would be out there furiously slamming the ball, and at other times, he would be talking to Sally, the chunky blonde at the end of her dorm hall.

"See ya' doll," he would shout to this Sally, knowing full well that the brunette was watching and hearing his every word and moves.

His roommate came back to the men's dorm one afternoon with news about the jock's brunette interest. "Hey, Mel, your brunette is going out with me tonight."

"You might have a date with her, pal, but I'm the guy she's going to marry," the jock told him forthright.

The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and lives across the nation and around the world suddenly changed forever.

The college jock did manage to have a couple of dates with the interesting brunette, and his roommate's chances were nothing more than history.

The plan was to get up to Pittsburgh and sign up for the Army. All of his buddies, who usually joined him in following The big bands on weekends, were heading back to their home states and becoming the start of the Greatest Generation.

While in the U.S. Army recruiting line, the jock directed his attention to the nearby U.S. Marine recruiting line. He shrugged and slid over to the Marine line. A proud Marine he became.

The brunette told her friends (and in later years, her extended family) at the real reason she had gone to college was to, "be where the boys were, of course!"

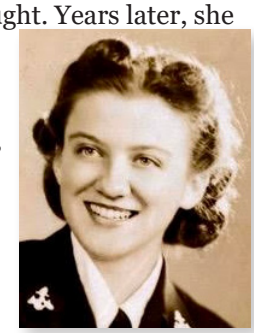


CPL William M. Munson
"Mel" 1920-2008

So, this brunette followed the jock. He was assigned to Quantico, VA, and she was given nurses' training at Bethesda Naval Hospital as a WAVE in the Navy. The two of them meet up as often as they could. They spent countless hours strolling the D.C. street, enjoying one another's company.

The jock called the brunette suddenly one afternoon and informed her that she had only one chance to answer his question. He was "shoving off" to he Pacific and wanted her to marry him.

She never gave her "yes" a second thought. Years later, she often told folks that maybe she had been a little hasty in her decision.



Dorothy Doak Munson
1923-2016

They eloped, found a cheap little hotel, sent telegrams to their parents, and brought in a bag of "White Castle" hamburgers to munch on for their wedding night. The jock promised he would always do right by her. And he did.

He ultimately ended up in Okinawa where he was injured in a jeep accident that caused him to miss the first six months of his first child's life. Ultimately, he returned to her safely. The jock and the brunette shared over 60 years together and left the world with four children, seven grandchildren, and seven great grandchildren to remember them.

Published 01 Mar 2025