

## CHAPTER ONE

# Is You Is or Is You Ain't



*Lyman Bailey visits me soon after  
getting his navigator wings*

"IMPERATIVE! CALL THIS NUMBER IMMEDIATELY," says the note tacked to my fraternity house door. I recognize my local student minister's name. In 1943 the World War II soldiers took over the Iowa State College's dormitories while they trained. The college administration then housed us women coeds in the empty fraternity houses. My senior class was the smallest since World War I.

My heart jumps. My hands shaking, I dial the number. Is the minister calling to tell me that Lyman Bailey has been killed? I dated Lyman for two years before he went into the service. I care deeply about him and now many of our young men are being killed in the war.

"Marilyn, will you come to our game night at 6:30?" the student minister asks.

"I expect quite a few servicemen."

What a relief! I look at my watch, five minutes to six. "Even if you're late, please come," the minister pleads.

I look at myself, I'm not dressed for a game night. This old gray jumper and white blouse won't do. I need something with color to bring out my dark hair and eyes. Pawing through my closet, I pull out a red dress with a fitted bodice and a full skirt. This will do nicely. I run down the street to where dinner is served at another fraternity house.

After dinner I check my watch: 6:20. I almost run the ten blocks to the church. The game night will be over at 7:30. Why do I get myself into these things? I seldom attend these activities because I'm busy with school and am

looking forward to Lyman's return from officer's training. The minister sounded so desperate that I couldn't say no.

When I arrive, the group is taking part in a mixer by filling out lists on paper with the name of someone who fits each category. The room is crowded with over 30 people but I notice a Navy man leave a pretty blonde Norwegian girl. He heads my way and with a coy smile and a wink, he asks, "Does your name fit any of these?"

I look them over and laugh, "You aren't supposed to do it that way. Let's see... your eyes are blue and mine are brown. You already have your birthday filled in. I like the out of doors, do you?"

"Oh, yes," he beams, "I've been to Alaska. As ya can hear, I have an accent. I came from Norway when I was 12. Here sign your name."

I write Marilyn Frink. "Here, you better sign mine, too. There's a prize for the one who gets their card filled in first."

In a flowing script, he writes, Wilhelm Jordan. "Everyone calls me Skip. A high school buddy called me Skipper because I was always in charge. The nickname stuck."

We stay together during the other activities. This man is not like anyone

I know. He's very tall with light brown hair. His twinkling blue eyes make me feel comfortable. His smile lights up his whole face causing me to smile back at him. His accent is quite heavy and at times I have trouble understanding what he is saying. In a way this adds to the intrigue and mystery of this new man. Much too soon, the hour passes and the minister bids us good bye.

"All of you come next week," he says.

"May I walk ya home?" Skip asks with a smile that makes my knees feel weak.

"Okay," I say, a hot blush moving up my cheeks.



*Marilyn as a co-ed at Iowa State College*

We hurry because he must be in his dormitory by 8 p.m. Nearing the fraternity house, he asks, "How about us going out Friday night?"

"That should be fun." I say. Skip obviously is not shy or unsure of himself. "We can dance to a juke box at the Union then." I love to dance. Smiling, I say, "I'll show you the campus on Friday."

He says goodnight and walks off. My heart slows down for the first time since I met him. Wow, what a night! First I am chiding myself for getting dragged into going to this mixer and then I meet one of the most intriguing men of my life.

Bursting into my room, I breathlessly tell my roommate, Bonnie Gunsaulus, "I just met a new man. He has an accent and comes from Norway. He's been to Alaska. Doesn't that sound romantic?" I read Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *North to the Orient* and was intrigued by the great territory of Alaska.

Bonnie took the previous term off to get married before her fiancé was shipped overseas. She spends long hours writing him. She laughs, "Well I guess the evening wasn't a total waste of your time."

We laugh together and I tell her everything Skip and I talked about. I can hardly wait for Friday night.

Skip comes early, so we walk around Lake La Verne and watch the swans, Lancelot and Elaine. I really like the swans. They are so graceful and beautiful.

"Do ya mean they call this duck pond a lake?" Skip asks.

The central campus has a broad green area with no buildings and the tall campanile at the side toward the Memorial Union. "Someone planned it when they started the college," I say.



*Skip in his seaman's uniform*

"The center is beautiful with the lawns," he tells me. He talks about growing up in Norway and his concern for his grandmother and relatives living under the German occupation. As their letters are censored, all they can write about is the weather and their health.

Too soon the dance starts. I was enjoying having Skip to myself. I'm surprised to find the thin tall Norwegian is a good dancer. He twirls me around the floor effortlessly. When we dance I feel like I'm floating on air. Looking at the other dancers, I think what a fun man Skip is.

When he takes me to my fraternity house, he asks, "What would you like to do tomorrow?"

My mind reels; he isn't going to let me get away. Do I really want to? Is he sweeping me off my feet? Am I falling in love? I had thought to marry a college man. Realistically, I expect to marry Lyman, who will likely stay in Iowa and work with farmers when he graduates. I visualize a routine life like my mother's in a small Iowa town. Skip is nothing like Lyman. This adventurous Norwegian makes my heart pound. But he's a sailor, only an enlisted man.

I try not to seem too eager as I reply, "I changed my major the first of this school year. In order to graduate in June, I'm carrying 20 hours. I must study in the morning, but we can do something in the afternoon and evening. They have a live band in the Union on Saturday night."

After going inside, I confide to Bonnie, "I'm having a great time with Skip. He's fun to be with. He's interested in travel, wildlife, and science. He even asked if he could take me to church on Sunday."

Skip's older than most of the other servicemen, and this worries me. With the war training people far from home, many men fail to mention their spouses. I knew a girl who fell in love with a man only to discover he had a wife and children. I believe in the sanctity of marriage and would never consider dating a married man. I don't know any divorced people so that scenario never crosses my mind. That weekend, I casually ask Skip, "Are you married?"

"No," he answers and moves on to a new subject of conversation.

Luckily, Skip must be in at 8 p.m. from Monday through Thursday; otherwise my grades would suffer. Often we meet after dinner. Spring is so beautiful in Iowa with flowering fruit trees and the grass turning green.

I see why they called him Skip. He always plans activities for us. For the next month, we go on picnics, to dances, and horseback rides. He takes up all my spare time and I love it. Never have I met a man so confident and interesting. We enjoy discussing world events and the war. Soon the United States

will be invading France. Most of all, he loves telling me about Alaska. His way of telling a story makes me feel I'm there. I actually see what Alaska is like. Skip loves to hold hands and sometimes we just touch each other. I look forward to being with him and having his hand in mine. His eyes always light up when he sees me and his smile seems to say, "I love being with you." He makes me feel like no other man has.



*Bonnie listens to Skip stories in our dorm room.*

One day in April, Bonnie asks, "Marilyn, are you falling in love with that sailor?"

Blushing, I say, "Maybe. Everything's so wonderful. He's fun to be with and exciting. He's more than I ever dreamed of in a man."

When the coeds plan a formal dance the last weekend in April, I invite Skip as my escort. I think this will be the culmination to his time at Iowa State. He will complete his diesel engine training course and ship out May 8th. I know he will have to leave but I hate thinking about it. I'm sad that he won't be here in June for my graduation with a degree in Home Economics.

The last few weeks of school don't go as I expect. I receive a letter from Lyman that he's coming home on



*Skip enjoys his leave with his daughter Dawn*

leave. He's graduating as an Air Force navigator. He wants to see me the weekend of May sixth and seventh. That's the weekend before Skip leaves. What will I do? I know Lyman will be unhappy if Skip's around. Lyman feels that I'm his, although we both are free to date others.

Skip swept me off my feet. These last months have been fun and exciting, but now my old friend wants to see me before he goes overseas to fly into battle. I hate to make decisions. Neither of these men has proposed marriage so I don't need to decide between them now. I write Lyman that I'll look forward to seeing him on Saturday and Sunday, but I will be busy on Sunday night. I hope he won't ask what I'm doing then, but if he does I'll tell him the truth.

Next, I need to tell Skip that I won't spend the whole weekend with him. With great effort, I say, "Skip, this old friend wrote that he's coming to see me May 6 and 7." I add, "But I'll save Sunday night for you."

"That's a fine thing. And I'm shipping out the next day," he says, looking at me questioningly.

"I'm sorry."

His eyes tell me that he isn't happy. He must know that I hadn't lived in a vacuum before I met him. I'm trying to walk a middle line by keeping everyone happy, but by not deciding between them, I might lose them both. Oh, I hope not.

When Skip calls for me the night of the formal dance, he looks so handsome in his dress whites. They make him look even taller than his six foot, 2 inch height.

He gives me a big smile and squeezes my hand, "You look beautiful tonight, Marilyn, in your red skirt and white top. Red's really your color. Remember, you were wearing red the night I met you."

He sent me a corsage of red roses and white carnations. They're so beautiful. This is our evening and I revel in it while we twirl around the dance floor. He makes me feel like his queen.

At intermission we wander outside and find an empty bench under a tree. The campanile chimes overhead. Skip takes my hand, his voice serious, as he says, "I've something to tell you."

My heart starts beating wildly. Maybe he's going to propose.

"Ya know the night when ya asked if I was married, and I told ya I wasn't? That's the truth, I'm not married, but I've been married. I'm divorced." He says it slowly, all the while looking at the ground. He continues to hold my

hand even though I try to pull it away.

With great effort, I make myself ask, "Are there any children?"

He looks into my eyes and continues to softly hold my hand. "Yes, a little girl named Dawn. She's six now and lives with her mother. I see her whenever I'm home in Tacoma. I have her with me often. I know it hurts ya, darling, but I couldn't go on any longer without telling ya. I care so much for ya that I was afraid you'd stop seeing me if I told ya when ya first asked if I were married."

He puts his arms around me and tries to kiss me. I shove him away. I don't want him to touch me. I feel he lied to me. Well, sort of. How could he! How dare he! I don't want to look at him. I just want to go...get far away from him, and think. Divorce just isn't acceptable to my family. Good people didn't get divorced, no matter how bad the marriage. I try to sort out these conflicting emotions. I feel like crying and screaming at him all in the same breath.

"It won't make any difference, Marilyn. That marriage is a closed book in my life. I never was happy with her." He takes my hand again and smiles.

I want him to leave me, but he doesn't and somehow I stay at the dance with him. The rest of the evening is a blur. Upon returning to the fraternity house, I cry on Bonnie's shoulder, "I didn't want him to be married. What am I going to do, Bonnie? My life is falling in shambles around my feet."

I sleep little that night. I don't consider telling Skip to get out of my life. I really do like him. I enjoy our conversations. We laugh and like doing many things together. His confidence and vibrance make me imagine an exciting life with him.

In the morning I decide that my family needs to meet Skip. What they think is important to me. They won't understand my loving a divorced man unless they meet him. With his shipping out for the Pacific next week, today's the last chance for them to meet. I call and tell my mother that I'm coming home that morning. She doesn't ask why. My family's very close. I don't consider not telling them that he's divorced.

When I call Skip and ask him to go home with me, he says that's fine. Skip and I take the bus to Tama. Dad and Mother meet us at the station. I'm always surprised at how small Mother, who is only 5' 2", appears beside Dad, who's over 6' tall and weighs 275 pounds.

When we arrive home my two brothers and two sisters greet us. I'm the oldest in the family, then comes my sister, Peggy. Unlike Dad and Mother, who have dark hair and brown eyes, she's blonde and blue-eyed. She gradu-

ated two weeks ago from the University of Iowa. My brother Lynn, a senior in high school, and the small one in the family being only 5' 10". Next is Dick, a sophomore, who's going to be tall like Dad. My youngest sister, Helen Lucille, is only ten years old. She has blonde curly hair like Shirley Temple.

Skip has a relaxed, natural way of talking to my folks. Helen Lucille enjoys the attention he gives her. No one asks why I brought Skip home that weekend. They probably guess that I want to see how he acts around them. They give me no clues to what they think of him. I guess what I think is all that matters. Skip knows how upset I am about his divorce and holds my hand on the way back to Ames.

When Bonnie asks how it went, I tell her, "Skip did very well, but I have to go slow. There must be a reason for the divorce. We won't have a chance to get better acquainted with his leaving for overseas. Did you have any problems like this?"

"No. We just fell in love and married before he went overseas. Marilyn, at least he told you about being divorced."

I'm not very comforted. All week I think about Lyman. He'll come and everything will be okay. We'll continue where we left off before he went into the service. I'll fall in love with him. I don't need this handsome Norwegian.

"I think I'll wear my red dress when I see Lyman," I tell Bonnie. "I always get compliments with how I look in it. There's an informal ball tonight that we can go to."

She agrees with me.

"I'm going over to Great Uncle Homer and Aunt Cora's boy's boarding house and see if I can stay with them on Saturday night. That way I won't have to be in at midnight." Aunt Cora says I can sleep on the living room couch, and gives me a key.

When I come down the stairs of the fraternity house, I see how smart Lyman looks in his Air Force officer's uniform. I can't help comparing him to Skip. He's shorter and has a round face and brown eyes. I had planned to throw my arms around his neck and tell him how wonderful he looks. But instead I just say, "It's great to see you."

"It's been too long," Lyman says.

We go to a movie in the late afternoon and then out for dinner. I enjoy showing off Lyman at the ball on Saturday night. Lyman can still make my heart throb. When we get into his car, he puts his arms around me and kisses me. How wonderful. I enjoy having the privacy of a car which Skip wasn't



able to offer. Lyman drives with one arm around my waist.

Later, when he takes me to Uncle Homer's door he says, "I'll pick you up for breakfast. I want to go by the La Verne House where I used to live. Would you like to go to the Methodist Church with me?"

"Yes." He kisses me goodnight.

Lyman and I enjoy each other for the weekend. He has no way of knowing that Skip broke my heart.

I keep hoping Lyman will say, "You and I are the ones, Marilyn. No one else matters." But he seems cool. I wonder if he has another girl. Finally it is time for him to leave and we tell each other to write. I feel Lyman doesn't know how to express his feelings or perhaps he doesn't want to commit himself. I'm disappointed.

Skip arrives at 6:00 Sunday night. He takes me in his arms and tells me how much he loves me and will miss me. He makes my heart throb again. I'll miss him, too. He gives me his home address in Tacoma. He'll be there for a two-week leave before he reports for Navy duty at Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay.

Both men have now left and I'm back to my studies for finals. I can't find the address Skip gave me because I put it in the small top pocket of my suit. I'll just forget him. Then Skip calls to find out why I haven't written. Another man might think I didn't care. Skip never takes anything for granted.

I know that I like Skip, but if he disappears into the sunset, then so be it. I would cry and mourn the one that got away, but my life would be easier. The differences between Skip and Lyman are extreme. The thought of going to Alaska with Skip is too scary. I was born and raised for a comfortable life in Iowa with an engineer or doctor.

In June of 1944, I graduate from Iowa State with a degree in Home Economics and a minor in Journalism. This is the weekend of the Normandy invasion. The war is on everyone's mind. I'm glad neither Skip nor Lyman are fighting yet. One of my old boyfriends, Al Donahoo, was in Europe. He married a girl he met while in the service in Chicago last year. France seems very far away from Ames.

That summer, I obtain a position in A.E. Staley's test kitchen in Decatur, Illinois. Soon after I arrive in Illinois, I meet Chuck Strahl at the Methodist Church. He's a chemical engineer employed on a secret project for the government in Decatur. Chuck and I enjoy dancing and playing bridge with his friends. Agnes works at the Staley micro-biology lab and Leon Elsworth

works with Chuck. We also play bridge with others who are also working on the mystery project.

Skip is now stationed at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. He spends his spare time filling my mail box with his wonderful letters. Each afternoon when I return to my rooming house, I look forward to reading them. As the Navy censor limits letters to two sheets, Skip buys notebook paper and writes as small as possible on both sides. Skip is contemptuous of how other Navy men spend their time. He uses his time to read books by the great thinkers. These include: *Philosophy and Truth of Life*, by Fredrick Nietzsche; *Wonders and Miracles of Science*; *Return to the River*, by Roderick Haig-Brown; *Alaska Challenge*, by Bill Ruth Albee; *Lord of Alaska*, by Hector Chevigny; *Road of a Naturalist*, by Donald Peattie; and *Under a Lucky Star*, by Roy Chapman Andrews. Slowly he develops and shares his philosophy with me regarding what he wants to do with his life.

He sends me some quotes from Emerson, Thoreau, and Nietzsche:

The invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common.1

The worst that could happen to me would be: when I came to die, to discover that I had not lived!2

We have learned to control nature by our understanding, but not how to engender the spirit of love, and we the victims of our own inventions. We can fly round the world, grow food in bottles, build or destroy an incredible city, but how to find happiness on a hundred acres, or how to make men's lives as excellent as their intellects, fatally eludes us.3

I send him Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, and Louise Dickinson Rich's books on Maine. He enjoys them as much as I do, and we discuss their philosophy. I realize his thirst for knowledge makes up for the lack of a college degree. I've not read 17 books this year as he has. He also collects coral, bleaches it and sends it to an aquarium in Oregon.

The second week in April, 1945, President Franklin Roosevelt dies. That week I celebrate my 23rd birthday. I happily receive a dozen red roses from both Skip and Lyman. Skip writes that he saw some beautiful engagement rings at a good price at the PX. "How would you like to become engaged?"

This is not quite the type of proposal I'm looking for. I write, "I'm not sure enough of my feelings for you. I won't accept a ring and hide it in my drawer."

He remarks, "That idea went over like a lead balloon."

Tucked at the end of a letter he notes, "I hurt my back a couple of weeks ago when they accidentally dumped a pile of sea bags on me. I'm just sore and

it will soon go away. Don't worry, darling."

Later, I learn that he's in so much pain that he can't sleep at night and must stand to write. He notes in his diary on June 26:

I left old A.B.R.D., Army Base Reshipment Depot, today after over a year here. Arrived at Aela Hospital in the afternoon. It's sure nice here: clean, cool and quiet and many nice fellows to talk with. After the barracks, where there was nothing but beer parties and radios playing all night, I really appreciate this.

On V.J., Victory over Japan, Day, Chuck tells me that he was working on one part of the atomic bomb. Chuck and I have dated for over a year. He tells me that his job will be shutting down and he'll soon be hunting for new work. I'm not sure about my feelings for him.

On September 7, Skip writes in his diary:

My name is on that draft. Oh, Boy! Am I happy! My last day in Hawaii! Leaving on the old battleship Maryland tomorrow. Wrote Marilyn and folks last letter from beautiful Hawaii. Aloha Hawaii.

Skip calls me the day his ship docks in California. "Hello, darling!"

I wonder who's calling me.

"This is Skip. I'm back in the States. I'm going to have a month's convalescent leave starting October 20. How would ya like me to come to Decatur and visit ya? I can hitchhike from California to Illinois. I just talked to a fellow who did that. He said there's no problem as long as ya wear your uniform. I'll leave here on Monday, the 20th."

How could I forget about his Norwegian accent? "That sounds wonderful. We can get acquainted again." I look forward to seeing Skip.

Before I knew Skip was coming, Chuck had bought tickets for a stage play on October 22.

On October 15, Lyman calls and tells me that he will be discharged from Chanute Field at Champaign, Illinois. He can then be near me. Lyman will be in Decatur on October 20.

I'm happy to see each of them but why do they always have to come at the same time? Maybe they're conspiring against me.

Lyman visited Decatur on leave the previous February. He told me about his narrow escape over Corsica. A few days before, he transferred to another

bomber with a different crew. In horror, he watched his original crew get shot down and only three of the five parachutes open. He lost his best friend, who was the pilot.

Lyman and I still didn't discuss how we felt about each other. We had a great time and I thought he might say that he loved me and ask me to marry him when the war was over. But he didn't. Then he headed for the South Pacific and more danger. Lyman's letters were usually one page that said little. He claimed his abruptness was due to the censorship.

Now, after I meet Lyman's bus, we get into a taxi and he takes me in his arms, saying, "It's so wonderful to see you, Marilyn. I could hardly wait. The day seemed endless. I'm going to stay all week."

What a moment for me to blurt out, "Skip's coming Friday." Lyman sits back and looks at me for a long time. Nothing is the same after that.

I hope Lyman will say, "To hell with him. You're mine. I've known you the longest and the best." But that's Skip's style, not Lyman's. I'm forced to tell Lyman about going to a stage play on Wednesday. I don't want to break my date with Chuck for he will leave soon.

I lamely tell Lyman that we can go out tomorrow and Thursday. Lyman makes no comment. The next day he calls me at work to say, "I'm taking the noon train home to Iowa."

I'm hurt at his leaving, but I don't know how to tell him the way I feel because I'm not at all sure myself.

Friday night when I open my rooming house door, I find a tall sailor standing there. My first thought is, do I know this man? Skip is bronze from all of his hours in the sun.

He takes me in his arms and kisses me. "Marilyn, my darling, it's been so long. Ya look wonderful."

"Yes, it's wonderful to be together again. We've been apart a long time."

Never at a loss for words, Skip breaks down my reticence by his enthusiasm. He's arrived sooner than expected because he obtained one ride after another. He seldom waited long with his thumb out. He left California on Monday and arrived in Decatur, Illinois on Friday. I find him a room to rent in a home similar to mine. In the war years, many home owners rented out a room to ease the housing shortage. My meals are at Mrs. Crow's boarding house where we eat family style around a big table. She has room for Skip only for dinner.

While I'm at work, he plans what we'll do in the evening. We go for a

walk in the park with a setting sun silhouetting the trees. At the art gallery, we both like the nature paintings. Skip loves music, and we obtain tickets to a concert. We laugh at plays. We enjoy being together. He made up a series of aquarium slides from the days he was the aquarist at Point Defiance Aquarium in Tacoma. He sells sets to the schools.

As the month goes quickly, I can hardly believe that Skip's leave is soon over. Two nights before he leaves, while we sit in the living room of my boarding house, he gets down on his knees.

"Marilyn, I love you very much. Will you marry me when I get out of the Navy?"

I'd thought about this moment, but I'm still unprepared. A long silence follows. I must say something. All the old doubts come back. Why did he get a divorce? What's his family like? Do they have the Old World values where the man makes all the decisions? How will I fit in? Where will we live? Will we have enough money?

I can only stammer, "I'm complimented that you ask. I...I'll have to think about it."

The next day I help a girl friend cook Thanksgiving dinner. My brother Lynn, stationed in the Air Force at St. Louis, joins us for the holiday. I see Skip fits in well. I trust him to take care of me because he makes me feel safe. Life with Skip will be an adventure. He loves me with a passion.

When Skip and I return to my rooming house, I tell him that I'm willing to gamble we'll have a good life together.

He kisses me. "You'll never regret it, Marilyn."

He's so happy when I put him on the train the next day. At last, I have made the decision, the most important one in a girl's life.

For the next ten days, I ask myself, "Do you love him, Marilyn?" I wish Bonnie were here to talk over the situation, but she's far away. I think, I'm not sure. I like him, I enjoy him. Ours is a comfortable relationship but do I really know him? I'd gone out with Lyman for two years and Chuck for one year. Chuck took me home to Ohio to meet his parents. I only dated Skip for six weeks before he went overseas. The doubts take over. I can't do this.

Finally I write him, "Skip, since you left, I've been trying to sort out my feelings. I'm very sorry, I just don't love you. I think what we need is more time together. When you were here, it seemed right, but now that you're gone, I have many questions."

When he gets the letter, he goes into a trance. He can't eat or sleep for

two days. Finally, he said to himself, "She'd feel this way with anyone. She's afraid to gamble on love."

He keeps writing as though I'd never written that letter. I'm surprised when his only reference to it is, "We'll talk about our feelings when we get together."

After his discharge on December 15, 1945, he spends the holidays with his family and daughter in Tacoma. He needs time with his family after all those months in the Navy. I reassure myself that I'm not disappointed.

I'm home with my family when Skip calls to wish me a Merry Christmas. He closes, "Next year will be our year, darling. Mark my word."

When Skip arrives in Decatur the second week in January, I'm so excited to see him that I take off work to meet his train. He wears an old brown suit that he's slept in for four days. My first thoughts are, "This is what I'm waiting for?" The railroads give the servicemen greatly reduced fares, but the service is terrible.

Skip hugs me and gives me a big kiss. "I wanted ya to see me in a good looking suit, not this old thing. I didn't think you'd meet me." He's handsome and makes the old suit look good.

We begin again where we left off in November. I want him to find a job in Decatur, and we'll think of getting married next summer. When he hears my plan he gets mad, which is unlike him.

"Now, Marilyn, this is ridiculous. Ya just want me here. Ya don't want to decide one way or the other. Ya want to eat your cake and have it too. I won't have any part of it. I must tell the park commissioners whether I'll take the assistant aquarist position at Point Defiance Aquarium. If ya want security, then we can do that. Or we can go to Alaska. If we're ever going up there, it will be right now before I have a job or we buy a home or furniture. Today, we only have our personal possessions, and not too many of them."

I agree with Skip's reasoning but I keep asking myself if I'm up to leaving the Midwest and my family to be with Skip. Do I love him or the prospect of an adventure? While I debate, some friends invite Skip to show his Alaskan slides, which depict the snow covered mountains, blue water and the many boats. As I watch them, I ask myself if we can turn our backs on Alaska for security in the States. So often what appears to be security turns out to be no security at all.

Upon returning to my rooming house, we talk. I sense Skip's reawakened desire for Alaska.

He explains, "We need to decide if we're going to Alaska, because we must find a fishing boat. The king salmon come into shallow water to spawn in the rivers in May and June. If we're going to make a living, we can't afford to miss a day of the short fishing season." Then he draws a picture of a salmon troller. He shows me a letter from his brother-in-law, Frank Johnson, who lives in Wrangell, Alaska. He says the season looks good for salmon.

Skip quotes the question from a popular song, "Is You Is, Or Is You Ain't?" and then gives me an ultimatum, "I'm going to leave here next week if ya aren't going with me, Marilyn."

I lie awake thinking all night. My heart loves him, but my mind has reservations. I think my mind loves the thought of going to far away places, but my heart's afraid. He hasn't told me how he's going to pay for a boat. Skip seems to have little money. Many men wait to get married until they have a job or have savings. Maybe Lyman and Chuck don't ask me to marry because they want to be in better financial states.

I don't want Skip to take the aquarium job as it pays less than my present job, which gives me only a few luxuries. If I marry him, I want to go to Alaska. I dream of traveling around the world as partners like Anne Morrow Lindbergh traveled with Charles in North to the Orient. I hate just listening to exciting experiences—I want to be part of them, whether they're good or bad.

I express my dilemma to a young couple living in my boarding house. They say, "What have you to lose? You can always come back."

I don't like that idea. I either go for all or nothing. I may not be sure of my love for him now, but I feel that it will grow. I'm not looking for a rich man, but one that I can work with to build security and raise a family.

The next evening I tell Skip, "I'll go to Alaska with you."

He grabs me and kisses me, "We'll have a wonderful life. Mark my words. You won't regret it, honey."

I take a week's vacation to go home to plan my wedding. The day before I leave for home, Lyman writes: "Here I am back at Iowa State. School isn't the same. The coeds are all so young. I feel like their father."

Too late, Lyman. I'm not turning back again.