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The Wheel of Fortune

It was June of 1932. Nancy Napier had recently graduated from the University of Georgia. And like any college graduate who doesn't have a job waiting for them, Nancy was curious as to where life's road would lead her.

She had always been fascinated with fortune tellers. Though she had never before visited one, she knew many friends who had. Nancy was most intrigued with a woman well known throughout Georgia for her accurate predictions. The psychic was said to be so phenomenal, the people of Atlanta swore by her augury. The fortune teller worked at a wallpaper company. In her spare time, she read Tarot cards. Nancy had heard of the woman ever since she was a small child. As a young adult, she was ready to pay her a visit.

Nancy had a close male friend named Johnnie Harper. Their relationship was strictly platonic. Johnnie was well aware of Nancy's infatuation with psychics, and with her desire to call that particular woman, so he promised to accompany Nancy to see the fortune teller should she decide to make an appointment. That was all the encouragement Nancy Napier needed.

One summer evening in June of 1932, the two of them struck out to visit the woman. Being Nancy's first time to see a fortune teller, she was a bit nervous. But the lady's warm smile and pleasant greeting put her at ease. The woman invited Johnnie and Nancy into her home and escorted them into a place she called the reading room. Once they sat down, the fortune teller began shuffling the cards. She, in turn, asked Nancy to cut the deck.

The soothsayer began laying the cards in a pattern that was foreign to Nancy and Johnnie. Then she began to read them from the layout. “My, oh, my,” said the woman. “You’ve got quite a surprise coming to you,” she added.

Nancy gripped the edge of her seat.

The woman continued. “You’re going to meet a man soon. He’s going to be very tall with dark hair, and extremely handsome. He’s a very big guy, and he’s heavily involved in athletics. You will begin to date.” The psychic further exclaimed, “Oh, and another surprise. You’ll be married before Christmas of this year.”

Nancy was shocked, and at the same time, disappointed. The woman’s prediction did not come remotely close to what Nancy expected to hear. First of all, she wasn’t looking to get married. Secondly, she had no interest in sports, nor was she the least bit athletically inclined. Nancy was disgusted and thought, *What in the world will I have in common with this man?*

Johnnie spoke up, “She’s really not interested in that kind of deal. Could you run the cards again?”

“Okay. But I can only tell you what the cards reveal,” said the fortune teller.

At Johnnie’s request, the woman ran the Tarot cards a second time, repeating the same procedure of shuffling, having Nancy cut the deck, then placing the cards down in a layout. Amazingly, the second reading was identical to the first. The exact same cards appeared in the subsequent layout. The psychic was adamant when explaining, “I’m sorry, this is what the cards reveal. Now that’s as much as I can tell you. You’re going to meet this man and be married before Christmas.”

As far as Nancy was concerned, this entire prediction was merely hogwash. She could not imagine how any of this could be possible. Johnnie and Nancy thanked the fortune teller for her time, then left. On the drive home, Nancy could not keep quiet and constantly

complained that their visit to the psychic was nothing but a wasted trip. She even blurted, “I don’t know how she managed to conjure up such a bowl of crap.”

Later in the week, Nancy’s girlfriend, Caroline, wanted to set her up on a blind date. Caroline’s steady boyfriend, Bob, had a good buddy named Fred who lived nearby. The two boys had grown up together. Bob also knew Nancy Napier was not involved with any one particular beau so he insisted on introducing her to Fred. Besides, he and Caroline thought it would be fun to double date. When Bob approached Fred with the idea, he was certainly amenable. And Nancy, of course, had no qualms with the idea.

Late Thursday afternoon, Bob gave Fred directions to Nancy’s house; and that Friday evening, he drove to Atlanta’s Five Points to pick her up. She lived in a beautiful home with a huge front porch. As Fred got out of the car and started up the sidewalk, he could see a girl standing on the front steps. It was Nancy. She began waving her arms above her head and hollering, “Don’t come up here. If you do, you’ll have to marry me before Christmas.”

Needless to say, Fred was flabbergasted. He stopped in his tracks, and with the most startled look on his face, he responded, “Sugar, I didn’t come here to marry you. I just came to take you to the picture show. That’s all.”

Why Fred had never laid eyes on this girl before tonight, and thoughts of marrying her certainly never entered his mind. Of course Fred was unaware of Nancy’s trip to the soothsayer. And she, remembering the guru’s words, was only being facetious with her theatrics and comment. But just as the psychic predicted, Fred was big and tall, and his hair was dark. And, yes, he was also extremely handsome.

He made his way to the front porch. And soon after the two became acquainted, they were en route to the Fox Theater to meet Bob and Caroline.

It's assumed Nancy enjoyed Fred's company that evening because she pled guilty to the oldest trick in the book. She intentionally left her purse in his car as an excuse to see him again.

The next day Fred returned to Nancy's home with the purse. There he was introduced to Nancy's mother who happened to be a baseball fanatic. What a coincidence! He was originally from Alabama, but Fred's sole purpose in Atlanta was to play baseball. So with Fred being a member of the Atlanta Crackers baseball team and Ms. Napier a big fan, they hit it off from the start. Another one of the fortune teller's predictions had just proven true. The statement, "He'll be heavily involved in athletics," was echoing through Nancy's mind.

But there was much more to Fred's athletic abilities than Nancy was aware. Fred Sington already had quite a list of accomplishments. Baseball wasn't the only sport Fred was involved in. He attended the University of Alabama from 1927-1931, where he was a two-sport star athlete lettering in baseball and football. Fred's football record was so outstanding, Knute Rockne, the legendary Notre Dame coach, titled Fred "the greatest lineman in America."

During his senior year of college in 1931, before air transportation, the Alabama Crimson Tide rode the train to Pasadena, California to play in the Rose Bowl. Will Rogers emceed the opening ceremonies where Alabama beat Washington State 24-0, and, of course, Fred was the star player. Later Nancy learned Fred's nickname was *Football Freddy*, derived from Rudy Valle's 1930 hit song, *Football, Freddy, rugged and tan. Football, Freddy, All American Man*.

Fred's athletic abilities were so outstanding, he received a two page telegram from Hollywood while still in college. They offered to pay him \$800 a week to star in a movie titled *The All-American*. Fred informed the coach and teammates that he would soon be leaving for California. He said he thought he might better let the school president know too; but when he shared the good news with him, the president handed

out some free advice. “You’ve done so well in school, son. If you go to Hollywood, there’s always the possibility they’ll just ruin your life. You’re involved with student government. You made Phi Beta Kappa and are a top academic honorary. Hollywood could be a mistake. If you finish your education, no one can ever take that away from you.”

After giving careful thought to the school president’s suggestion, Fred decided against going to the entertainment capital of the world. He was so ecstatic over being offered a major role in a Hollywood film, he didn’t stop to evaluate the consequences. Looking back, Fred stated he was glad he didn’t go to California; he might have missed meeting Nancy.

Initially, Nancy never believed a word the psychic said. But, ironically, a third prediction came true. They began dating steady. Through the months of June, July and August, they were together every minute that Fred wasn’t playing baseball. Then fall rolled around and Fred left Atlanta and headed to North Carolina where he would be coaching football at Duke University. Nancy remained in Georgia, but they corresponded through letters.

In October, Fred returned to Atlanta to visit Nancy. He explained that he would be traveling around the country playing baseball in the summers and coaching football during the fall and winters. He did not wish to live apart any longer and the problem was solved instantly when Fred and Nancy decided to get married.

By now, Nancy was convinced the fortune teller had been pretty accurate, especially when they tied the knot before Christmas of that same year — December 4th, 1932 to be exact.

After they married, Fred took Nancy on a real tour of life within the world of sports. First, the Atlanta Crackers, a Southern league, sold Fred to the Washington Senators, an American league. Then Washington sold him to the Brooklyn Dodgers. Finally, a National league! Then in 1941, Fred joined the Navy. They sent him to

Oklahoma where he was named head football coach of the Oklahoma Zoomers. When his coaching career ended at Oklahoma, he left for San Diego to coach baseball.

Before meeting Fred, Nancy was oblivious to sports, but soon, outside recreation became her life. In baseball, Fred said she learned to track score better than the scorekeepers. Fred also spoke of some of the foolishness Nancy had to put up with. Once when he struck out, Nancy overheard some lady sitting in the box seat say, “Well, he was out all night drinking. No wonder he couldn’t hit.”

Nancy became furious and quickly jumped to Fred’s defense. “Oh, just shut up and mind your own business,” Nancy told her. She didn’t put up with much nonsense, especially a derogatory comment directed towards her husband.

After Fred’s many years of traveling and coaching football and playing professional baseball, he and Nancy decided it was time to move back South. They returned to Fred’s home in Birmingham, Alabama where he opened Fred Sington’s Sporting Goods store. Fred and Nancy had three sons who followed in their father’s footsteps, all excellent athletes.

Words cannot define the wonderful life Fred and Nancy Sington shared together. As for Nancy, she never believed a word the soothsayer said when she read the Tarot cards for her back in June of 1932; but, coincidentally, about the only thing the woman didn’t foretell while predicting Nancy’s *Wheel of Fortune* is that she and the big, tall, dark and handsome athlete would be married 62 years—1932-1994!

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HOW I COLLECTED:

A Trip to Treasure

Here it was the middle of February. I was freezing to death. Who in their right mind would leave warm and sunny St. Pete, Florida to relocate north in the throes of winter? Well, I had an option. I could have stayed in Florida, kept warm and gone broke or I could sacrifice the warm weather to be able to pay the bills. It just made so much more sense to struggle through the winter and maintain financial stability.

I started re-evaluating that situation as I stared out my office window. The fog was so thick and heavy, I could barely see the surrounding office buildings. Misting rain only added more gray to the already doom and gloom picture. So I decided to take a mid-morning break.


After a sixteen ounce bottle of soda, my first destination was the bathroom. As I entered the restroom, so did a co-worker named Judy. She asked me what I had been so hard at work on. I guess Judy could see when passing my office, I wasn't transcribing depositions. As I began explaining *Marriages Meant To Be*, a woman in one of the stalls, who could not help overhearing our conversation, spoke up, "Hey, I've got a story for you."

Talk about unusual. While we're using the facilities, this woman, who I'd yet to see, began telling me a unique marriage story. As she continued, the story got even better, especially when she said, "See... I'm not even from Birmingham. I just moved here from Tampa, Florida."

For a moment, I thought I'd been struck by a bolt of lightning. To be so homesick for Florida, and to be making a friend from my old stomping grounds at the same time, was electrifying. At last, while

at the lavatory, I came face to face with this fun and crazy girl who introduced herself as Julie Jewett. Before we parted, I asked permission to print the story. Julie said she would be honored.

Meeting Julie was a package deal. Not only did I make a friend from Florida, I collected another chapter for my book. Julie's marriage story proves that timing is everything, much like our encounter in the ladies room that day.



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A Trip to Treasure

Julie Jewett was just seven years old when her parents divorced. When she turned twelve, rumors ran rampant in the town of Wheeling, West Virginia that employee layoffs were a possibility at the hospital where Julie's mother was a nurse.

Being a single mom and having to support three daughters, Ms. Jewett could take no chances. She quickly began searching for a job elsewhere. After countless interviews, she accepted a position in Tampa, Florida. The only disadvantage was the hundreds of miles distance between the girls and their father.

But every summer, Julie and her sisters, Jamie and Jodie, returned to Wheeling to visit their dad. While there, they also got together with childhood friends. But this particular summer turned out a little different than those in the past. On June 23rd, 1993, Julie, Jamie and Missy, a lifelong friend of theirs, visited a local college tavern they had never set foot in before.

They had just walked inside the place when Jamie Jewett noticed a bald-headed man across the bar. Though she was not interested in the guy, she knew her sister Julie would be. Indeed, an enigma because what oftentimes is a major turn-off to most women was a definite thumbs-up for Julie. Even Julie could never explain the reason behind such magnetism. Her only theory was a balding appearance gave men a more distinguished and sophisticated look.

Whatever the case, Jamie nudged Julie on the shoulder and kiddingly said, "Look! There's a bald-headed man for you."

Jamie was surprised when the guy got out of his chair and approached them. She didn't have a clue this man knew their good friend Missy. His name was Ed Gornik. And he basically invited himself into the conversation by saying, "Hey, Missy! I've never seen you in here before."

But Ed didn't spend much time talking to Missy and Jamie. It was obvious he took an immediate interest in Julie. With her tall, slender figure, shiny brown hair and sparkling brown eyes, she could have her pick. Ed asked Julie questions like, "What are you doing in West Virginia? Most people go to Tampa for vacation."

When she told him she was born and raised in Wheeling and was visiting relatives, Ed's jaw dropped. He, too, was born and raised in Wheeling. The more they talked, the more coincidences surfaced. At the age of twelve – the same age Julie was when she left West Virginia – Ed left the state when his father accepted a job in Birmingham, Alabama. After high school graduation, he returned to West Virginia, lived with his grandmother and attended Wheeling Jesuit College where he was going into his senior year.

Next they uncovered the fact that both attended Wheeling Park Recreation Day Camp at the same time but had no recollection of each other. The only thing they could remember about camp was the simple fact that you couldn't bring your own milk; you had to buy it there so it wouldn't spoil in the heat. Even sillier, you could bring your own lunch and store it in their refrigerator; you didn't have to purchase lunch at the day camp.

They stood no chance of being classmates during the regular school year because Ed attended St. Vincent's Catholic and Julie was enrolled at the public school. Similarities between the two seemed endless.

Ed and Julie became so engrossed in conversation, they lost track of time. It was two o'clock in the morning when they closed the tavern, but they didn't part ways without exchanging telephone numbers and addresses.

When the girls arrived home, they found their father waiting up, curious as to why they strolled in at such a late hour. Seeing the girls were fine, they all sat down. Julie told her father about the magic evening. “Dad, you would just never believe the guy I met tonight. He moved away from Wheeling the same year I did, but he came back to go to school.”

At first, Mr. Jewett was as perplexed as any father would be. But as Julie revealed more information about Ed, her father discovered something unusual. He knew many of Ed’s relatives including the grandmother Ed was currently residing with. Furthermore, he remembered Ed’s grandfather who was the mailman for many years. As it turned out, Julie’s father was childhood friends with Ed’s Uncle David, too. And that wasn’t all. Mr. Jewett realized he taught Ed’s uncle how to swim at the old water hole in the neighborhood where they grew up.

Then another coincidence surfaced in this bizarre turn of events. Before Julie’s family moved to Florida and Ed’s family relocated to Alabama, their parents were friends. They socialized on occasion and belonged to the same bowling league. Learning all of this put Julie’s father at ease. Mr. Jewett no longer had to worry about his daughter spending time with a total stranger. Gosh, he felt like he’d known Ed all his life. So did Julie!

The two love birds didn’t miss a day of seeing each other during Julie’s visit to Wheeling. But the dreaded return to Tampa was rapidly approaching and it would be August before Julie could see Ed again. To make the two months separation less painful, Ed surprised Julie by traveling to Florida for a visit. They toured the state together. Busch Gardens, Adventure Island and Cypress Gardens were only a few of their stops. But their most special moments together were spent at the beach.

One evening, while watching a beautiful sunset over the Gulf of

Mexico, and wrapped in a warm embrace, Ed whispered “Will you marry me” in Julie’s ear. The answer was obvious.

Though Ed was leaving the next evening, he wasn’t too concerned about when Julie would visit her father again because he knew she’d soon become his wife. On August 3rd, 1996 in Wheeling, West Virginia – where both were born, raised, removed and reunited – Ed and Julie Gornik were married!