

Practicing Law

When I first went to work at Baker, Botts, there were no available offices, so I began in the library—which was pretty appropriate, as most of the work at the beginning was writing up briefs on points in their cases for the other attorneys. I had rented a one-room apartment, with a kitchen area separated by a bar and stools and a bath off of it. There were eight or ten units facing each other on the ground floor with grass in between. At the far end was a room with a washer and dryer. At the near end was a car port with room for our cars. I rented space in a parking lot in downtown Houston and helped pay for everything by carpooling two of my classmates—Harold Young and Alvin Owsley—to work each day. At first Harold was living with Alvin in his apartment, as Alvin's wife was on an extended trip to Europe. This money helped a lot, as these were the days when beginning attorneys were expected to take very low wages, knowing that their future, if they made partner, was rich. So we all started at \$300 a month!

The most exciting work I had was to take over a case of my very own. It had been in the office for quite a while and was initially handled by Robert Keeton, the brother of my law school dean, who had left Baker, Botts for Harvard teaching. It then went to Curtiss Brown, who had just left Baker, Botts to go with a plaintiff's firm, Hill, Brown, Kronzer, and Abraham. That was some firm—John Hill was later my mother's boss when he was Attorney General of Texas. Curtiss, whom I dated that first year, was a polio victim in a wheel chair, recently divorced. He was later a Circuit Court Judge.

We represented two young children, whose father had died. The father's sister was the Independent Executor of their parent's estate, but the children were entitled to half of the estate as heirs of their father. We had sort of tried to get her to give them their share, or even to have an accounting of the estate, but she was stubborn. One of the previous attorneys had gotten the Probate Judge to appoint another attorney to take over the estate and ordered her to turn it over. She ignored it.

When Curtiss turned it over to me, he said the only thing left to do was try to get the Judge to declare her in contempt, which had probably never been done in the Probate Court. I only had one case, so I paid more attention to it than the others had and filed the motion in the Probate Court for her to be found in contempt. He did it! He put her in jail for—I think it was three days before she finally turned it over. Furthermore, it was so unusual to put a forty-year-old widow woman in jail from Probate that it made the front page of the Houston Post! John Heard, a partner, who was also later a groomsman for Wallace, said he'd been practicing in the trial section for over ten years, and he had never made the front page of the Post.

A bit later the firm took over the rest of the floor we officed on, and I got my very own office. Most everyone shared a secretary, and I did also—Fern was a real gem! What a difference that makes—to have someone where you can just say a general instruction and they can go from there.

It's hard to remember much else of interest that first year. My car pool ultimately extended to a car full. We younger attorneys in the firm usually went over to a coffee shop across the street morning and afternoon, and usually several of us went to lunch together at various places around town. The court house was about ten blocks away, so once I got to handle more cases on my own, I got some exercise.

One of the truly painful memories from that year was that it was an election year for President. Eisenhower, the recent hero of the war against the Democrat, Adlai Stevenson, whose speeches had me wide-eyed and impressed. The managing partner of the firm, Dillon Anderson, was the manager of Eisenhower's Texas campaign and later appointed by him as National Security Advisor. Most of the 75-odd lawyers were Republicans. The highest one, however, Mr. Andrews, was a Democrat and, I think, had held Washington offices in the past. Then there was Bill Ballew, whose office was across the hall from mine, and Dick Miller, who came the same year I did, though from Harvard Law School. I don't know how the information that I was a Democrat got around, but I was called one day into Dillon Anderson's office.

Anyway, his secretary had called me and motioned me in to sit down. I sat there while he talked at some length on the telephone. When he hung up, he turned, smiled, and said, "Sorry, Miss Dalby. Just busy working on the opposite side of this campaign from you." I have no recollection of the rest of the conversation, but I am clear that the whole purpose was to intimidate me. What an SOB! I had been prepared to like him, too, because he was an author of short stories which appeared regularly in one of my Dad's magazines, *Colliers*. They were then gathered into a book called *I and Claudie*. One wag was reported to have commented, "Wouldn't you know the SOB would put himself first." As you can imagine, I enjoyed that one.

Eisenhower, of course, trumped Stevenson, my first presidential vote. I spent the night to listen to election returns with the Millers, and all three of us cursed and cried. I remember Roberta saying she was going up to bring up their daughter (then about 3) on Stevenson's speeches.

Interesting things were going on for me regarding church. Living alone and away from home for the first time, I was really lonely, in a way I never thought I would be. So, as part of my search, I began to attend a Disciples of Christ Church in Houston. It was quite different from the church I had been baptized in. I remember especially that they had a guest speaker in for a week's revival, or some such, and I went some time during the week. He was a haranguer, and his whole style was really offensive to me. When he issued an altar call at the end, I stood there singing, but praying earnestly that no one would answer. Finally, a teen-age looking boy with a dazed, almost zombie expression on his face came stalking down to the front and made his confession of faith. I did not go back.

I have laughed in later years at my naive assertion in those days that "everyone seemed to be talking a lot about God." Later on I saw that "everyone" didn't start all those cocktail party conversations; I did. I had an inchoate suspicion that God had something to do with life, and I began to look around various churches. John Heard, knowing my religious interest, told me about a speaker that his Roman Catholic parish was hearing each night that week—a Paulist priest, trained to explain their church to others. I finally got over there about on Thursday and found that what the speaker said—or perhaps his own certainty—touched some chord in me.

I remember at one point he held out his arms toward us and asked a number of questions about how you were feeling in your life. When I try to repeat them, they sound kind of corny, but they didn't then. He ended with, if you were feeling any of these things, "Come to the church. The church has the answers for you."

Could the answer to my feeling of lostness be here? I began to attend mass every Sunday morning at that parish, trying to understand what was going on in the Latin, wondering if perhaps that church had the only "truth," as they themselves asserted in those pre-Vatican II days. Looking back on it, it has always been interesting that the haranguer called us to come to Jesus, and the priest called us to come to the church. I don't think it was that difference, though, that

separated the men for me—it was more their styles. Both spoke out of certainty, but one seemed much more personally invested in someone’s answering the altar call. This is odd as I think of it now, because I am much more devoted to coming to Jesus than to the church, and there (or can be) a kind of arrogance in both. I guess I just didn’t experience it in the priest.

As I tried to understand the Latin mass, John gave me a little missal in English, and I began to study it. Picking up enough of the language and customs by observation, one day after mass I asked Father Crowley to “bless” my missal, watching carefully to see what he did and what that term might mean. It turned out it was just a prayer with a sign of the cross, praying that the use of the missal might be a blessing. After his blessing prayer, he said, “You’re not a Catholic, are you?”

“No,” I answered.

“Why do you come here?” he asked. I don’t remember my reply—something about exploring what their church was about, but he said, “Why don’t you take instruction; you can find out about the faith easier that way.” I felt like this was the “come-on” and said something evasive about not wanting to become a Catholic or be in a group of people who were. The upshot was that I began taking private instruction from him one evening a week—with the understanding that I was making no commitment at all. My taking this instruction, though, remained a great secret from my family, who would have been horrified; my father practically ran his Masonic Lodge, which at least in those days in that place was very anti-Roman Catholic.

One Friday afternoon, Jim Lee, one of my friends in the firm and later Anne’s Godfather, wandered in to invite me to a cook-together with a bunch of our friends. Under his cross-examination, I admitted why I couldn’t come—that I had a scheduled instruction lesson in Roman Catholicism that evening. He was critical of my spending time taking the instruction and gave me a half-joking bit of a bad time. Then he said they didn’t want me if I couldn’t stay the whole evening and he left. He came back a little later and said they couldn’t find anybody else, so I could come and then leave when my appointment time came. We laughed at the bantering coolness of the “invitation,” and I went over to the party after work. As was frequent in those days, we never got around to eating by the time I had to leave. Part of our fancied sophistication included being able “to hold your liquor,” and we all drank too much. By the time I left the party I probably wasn’t safe to drive, but I had learned to “hold my liquor,” so I made it over to the church and upstairs to meet with Father Crowley. It was my third or fourth weekly instruction lesson for which I left the party that Friday night.

Father Crowley began talking that evening about G. K. Chesterton or someone—I wasn’t paying much attention. My drinking and, I think, some deep longing in me as well, made me interrupt him rather rudely. I said something like, “You know, I just don’t believe all this.”

“What don’t you believe?”

“Well, for one thing: you can say all you want about how you just *represent* God when you are in the confessional. But I would never go to make a confession if I knew you were the priest on the other side, because I want you to like me, and you wouldn’t like me if you knew all the things I have done.”

“Oh, yes I would.” Smiling.

I thought he was being cocky. I never thought about his life and what it was like to be a priest—that he had spent most of his life listening to all the things people can do to themselves and each other, and I was unlikely to surprise him. I just began to fling in his face, in the ugliest

language I knew, everything I had ever done that I was ashamed of. When I finished, he was still smiling.

“See, I still like you,” he said.

I began to cry. “How can I get what you have? I just don’t believe it.”

“Faith is a gift, Jean,” he said. “Go into the church and kneel and ask God for the gift of faith.”

I did that. He walked downstairs with me, showing me what a confessional box looked like on the way, and then left me to my prayers. They were certainly beginner’s prayers. I said something like, “God, if you are there, give me faith, if you can.” Then I added another prayer out of my pain, coming through all the alcohol. I said, “And, God, I am making a mess of my life, and I can’t seem to stop. If you can do something to help me, would you do it, and would you please do it fast?”

What happened then? All I can say is that I felt a certain peace. I didn’t go back to the instruction lesson, I didn’t go back to the party, and I certainly didn’t know what I was going to do next about my relation to God and religious observance.

In the fifty-odd years since Father Crowley told me he “still liked me,” I have come to understand more about what happened to me. In the last book I wrote, *The Mystery of Love and the Path of Prayer*, I recounted the incident above in the first chapter, largely because I have come to believe that it was my first meeting the mystery of love in a Christian setting. I think it was the first time I had knowingly experienced true Christian love: someone with no relationship to me, who knew what I was like, had accepted me anyway. A relative stranger showed me unearned, spontaneous, unconditional acceptance, which I take to be the essence of Christian love. The effects of that priest’s showing of love to me in 1953 have been lifelong for me. They were my introduction to someone who showed me how that kind of love acts and what love does. I then experienced the effect that a simple act of such love can have on the person who receives the love. None of my customary posing and posturing and hiding my faults had been there. I had always showed only my “good sides” to people as best I could, because my experience told me that people liked you if they approved of you, and earning that approval, I thought, was what life was about.

Even though I didn’t begin to understand the difference between that acceptance by Father Crowley and my previous view, I had **experienced** it. I now believe that experience of acceptance opened something in me. Kneeling in that chapel, I came out of hiding and became real—even if only briefly and with a part of myself. If it is true, as I believe it is, that love is at the center of God’s plan for the world, then you could even say that I had glimpsed reality for the first time.

The next day I didn’t even think much about it, though, because I had a date with another lawyer in our office to go to a formal dance sponsored by the Bachelors Club of Houston at the River Oaks Country Club. I was excited, not only because the dance was an Occasion, but also because of this lawyer. It was our third date, all within one week, and he interested me. His name was Wallace Clift.

The Saturday night before, October 10, we had gone to the River Oaks Country Club for dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Baker, who made a practice of taking new attorneys with the firm to the Club and then to their box in Rice Stadium for the football game. I

had gone the year before and just assumed that they were just asking me again because I was relatively new. I only found out later that Wallace had asked for me. To show how times have changed, by the way, I wore a hat for the evening, with a long feather which Wallace told me later enticingly ticked him as we all crowded together in the back seat of the Baker's car on the way to the game. A hat! With a long feather! Can you imagine that today? When the game was over and we were taken back to Wallace's car, we decided that we weren't ready for the evening to end. So we went to a little nearby place which served beer (no mixed drinks in Texas in those days!) and had a small dance floor—we both wanted to dance. Well, joke. We danced once, then began to talk—about everything—politics, religion, race problems and so on, discovering that we agreed on all of it. Suddenly, as if we had just arrived, they told us they were closing.

The second date was set to go to a new movie just opened—*The Robe*. Prophetic, what? In fact, that date was postponed for a day or so, as Wallace had to go to take some deposition or something. Anyway, we finally saw the movie—and held hands during it. It felt very good.

Then to the Saturday night of that momentous October week, October 17, 1953. Wallace was a brand new member of the Bachelor's Club of Houston (one of the perks which came to new Baker, Botts lawyers—of the male gender, that is.) So it was back to the River Oaks Country Club for us. Not many poor, struggling lawyers spent their week like this—it is horribly expensive and “exclusive.” In the middle of the dance floor, we got engaged. That speed was so unlikely that we later found that some others in the office were making bets with each other about how long our marriage would last because, as they rightly observed, we didn't even know each other. One friend, though, commented that he knew each of us better than we knew each other, and he thought that when we got to know each other we would really like each other.

This engagement was all so exciting in those romance-prone days in the fifties that I forgot about my Friday night prayer in St. Anne's side chapel. I was so busy with plans that I even canceled my remaining instruction lessons with Father Crowley, neither of us realizing at the time that my beginner's prayer had indeed been answered—fast!

Wallace was looking for God again too, having toyed with being an agnostic for a number of years. He had, however, remained interested all along in things religious; and we decided that as a major focus of our marriage, we would look together. Even before the wedding, we began to “church shop,” and we married with the intention that we would make that search for God and a place to worship God central to our lives together. It was still at such a beginner's level, though. Wallace and I couldn't even put words on our church shopping, to describe exactly what we were looking for. Wallace, a thinking type and also more experienced in Christianity, could put it better than I. He had felt that, in an important “guidance” or belief he held in his past, he had “compromised.” He feared he had left the path God had for him. Was he right? Had God wanted him to follow that path back when he was seventeen? If so, and he had refused, what was the result of not following God's will for him? Those old questions needed to be settled for him. He also knew he wanted his intellectual questions answered. He did not want to try to worship a God who defied his own reason, though, obviously, God would transcend that reason. He had theological questions that he wanted answered.

He wanted to try the Episcopal Church; I was less than enthusiastic about it. I, who had probably only uttered one genuine prayer in my life, felt “those people who read prayers out of books couldn’t really be worshipping.” (Why I thought it was all right to have written prayers in Latin but not in English I cannot now imagine, but at least a lot of people have thought so over the centuries.) I really didn’t begin to grasp the meaning of “common prayer” as the body of Christ coming together to **participate**, not just to observe. Like many Americans, perhaps, I thought only spontaneity could be real—not something someone else had written with which one identified. So I had questions about the Episcopal Church. In all honesty, I probably (despite my confession to Father Crowley) was still trying to “look good,” and the general confession in the service which in those days required me to say that I was a “miserable sinner” was somewhat off-putting to my “proper” façade. But I was “in love,” so I said I would try it.

There were several funny and touching incidents around our sudden engagement. At first, we thought we wouldn’t tell anyone. I was due to give a talk to my old sorority sisters on retreat near Bastrop, Texas, and had planned to visit my folks in Austin for lunch and a short visit afterwards. Wallace said he would drive me! Wow! Was I impressed! After our engagement on the dance floor—which came just as a simple “knowing.” One of us said (I think it was me), “I didn’t know it ever happened like this.” And the other replied, “Neither did I.” In something of a daze, we had breakfast at the end of the dance, and then somehow realized we had never even kissed each other. We headed for the car and remedied that—and it was like magic from the first time. Looking back, I could remember kissing one guy I dated, really trying to be in love, and it felt like kissing a board. This was something else. So we were rather late getting to our respective apartments (life was very different then), and still he was going to pick me up in just a few hours and drive me to Bastrop and Austin.

I made my talk and then he picked me up again and we drove to Elton Lane. This is when Mother looked out the kitchen window and first saw Wallace’s gray hair, thinking, “He’s too old for Jean.” Then as she saw him full face, she thought, “He’s too young for Jean.” Anyway, I couldn’t help telling her during the course of the afternoon that I thought “he was the one.” She said immediately, “I’m glad!” (She told me that when she later told my Dad, he said, “I like that kid. He’ll calm Jean down.”)

Back in Houston, we decided, probably Monday night, to call Wallace’s folks and tell them. I’ll never forget that when he put me on the phone, Poofie’s first words to me were, “Jean, we love you.” She knew that we hadn’t been dating but the week, so I think that’s pretty impressive.

In the office on Tuesday, again we couldn’t help telling people, but nobody believed us—no ring! So we left the office and went out and bought a ring. I can’t remember now or imagine how in the world Wallace paid for it, but there it was—evidence for the skeptical lawyers.

Another funny thing that had to be settled was that Jim Lee and I had a date to go to a football game in Austin, planning for both of us to spend the night with my parents. So Jim sold his tickets to Wallace, and he went instead.

Setting the date was another problem. We wanted a honeymoon, but Wallace was so new at the firm that he wasn’t yet entitled to a vacation. He had to work at least six

months to be eligible—so the 23rd of January, 1954, was set because that was his six-months' week.

Another, very touchy, problem was where to get married. We didn't have our church yet, though we were going Episcopal, as I said. I had been baptized at the Central Christian Church, Austin, and really loved the pastor there. Wallace's family were such staunch Methodists that he admitted to me that it would be an embarrassment to them in Robert Lee if we married there—people would confuse it with the fundamentalist "Church of Christ," which is what they had in Robert Lee.

I was hurt, but I knew I had to figure it out by myself. I grabbed the telephone book and left in the car by myself to look for a Methodist Church. The second one I looked at would really "do," I knew. It was near my folks' house; and, even more important, it had a big cross hanging over the altar—something we had both said we liked and were looking for in our church shopping. I remember sitting in the car for a long time after I saw it, thinking that I shouldn't do this if EVER in the future I would hold it against Wallace, or bring it up to blame him in some way. When I thought I could to it, I went back to my folks and announced where we would be married. We also were able to have both that minister and the minister from Central Christian do the ceremony.

Those were exciting days, remembered with something of a blur. One of the funny things which had to be settled was that we would now be related, and Baker, Botts had an anti-nepotism policy (largely put in, we all thought, because the third generation Mr. Baker, now at the firm was not the brightest attorney.) Incidentally, this kept his son, James Baker, later U.S. Attorney General from coming to the firm—although after his retirement from government, his father being dead, they hired him "Of Counsel." With typical attorney humor, they ruled that we could both stay, as our marriage was "an after-acquired disability."

I, of course, was busy finding a dress, having a formal portrait made, arranging the wedding and reception, getting invitations out, and on and on. My folks set up their dining room with solid tables to display wedding gifts. Robert Lee had a party there from which Poofie brought a HUGE box to Austin for opening one weekend. We selected and registered patterns for china, silver, crystal—oh, it was very exciting.

One unusual item, featured in one of the newspaper reports in Houston, was the number of attorneys. We each had five attendants. Wallace's best man was Frank Harmon, his lead man in the trial department, where Wallace was currently working, and the other four were all Baker, Botts lawyers. Of course, both of us were lawyers, and one of my attendants, Beverly Tarpley, had been a friend at Texas, an Orange Jacket and one year ahead of me in law school. Even our soloist was an attorney—one whom I had gotten to know through his good friend, Charley Meyers—Fred Hodson. Windy, of course, was my maid of honor, and the others were Beverly, Wallace's sister Dorothy, Lila Anne Parker Tooke (I had been maid of honor for both Beverly and Lila Anne), but the last one in whose wedding I had been couldn't make it, so I selected a sorority sister whom I knew much less well, Totsy Eeds.

One weekend Poofie and Dorothy came to visit Wallace in Houston, so we didn't do our joint church shopping! They went Methodist, and I visited St. Stephen's. I later told Wallace, "I've found our church!" He said his usual introverted "Umm." But I just knew I had found it, and I had. We both loved it. It was a REAL church—people of all

ages and states of life, active lay people, good preaching. It was great, and, as you will see, was formative for our lives.

One funny memory from the weekend came during a visit to some Clift cousins who lived in Houston. They had all gathered at one of the houses to greet us and Poofie and Dorothy. Their various children were running around the room during our visit. I was sitting a little apart and not a major part of the conversation, which was mainly about people I had not met. At one point I had my one panic about the marriage. They were pointing to the various children, identifying which ones had “Clift eyebrows.” I was frozen with shock—MY children were going to have Clift eyebrows! What was I getting into? It passed, of course, but I still remember my intense emotion.

Another weekend in the fall was a very big deal, as I went to Robert Lee to meet everyone. To my horror, they had planned a big Saturday night party at Nink’s house to introduce me to some of their friends—a BRIDGE party! I had valiantly resisted learning to play bridge all through college, as I thought people wasted too much time playing, but there I was caught. Furthermore, of course, I was caught unable to drink wine or smoke, which I still did then—neither was acceptable in Robert Lee. Talk about blur—I remember that with glazed eyes, but I got through it. They, of course, all played bridge constantly—several times a week between the two couples, regularly with a women’s club, and socially as the main type of party.

There was a funny sequel to that, which I will tell out of order. After our honeymoon, we went out to Robert Lee for a weekend sometime in the spring, and I literally read the Goren bridge book all the way out there, trying to memorize all the bidding and playing rules. That weekend, the Saturday night party was only the family, but that was still two tables—Poofie and Papa, Nink and Cortez, Uncle Marvin and Aunt Tillie, and us. On the last hand of the last table, I was partnered with Uncle Marvin. He bid one no trump. I counted and recounted (never being very good with numbers), and according to Goren, my bid was clear, so I said: “Six no trump!” Uncle Marvin’s eyes bugged out. As Wallace said later, “They just don’t bid like that in Robert Lee.” I later realized why he was so panicked, as he had bid no trump with a singleton club, which is very much against the rules he should have followed. All was well, however, as I had a strong club suit, so he happily raked in his six no trump. Then as everyone was leaving, he clapped Wallace on the back and said, “Wallace, we’re going to come down there to Houston to see you!” They never did, but I knew I was redeemed.

It’s funny, because later I grew as fond of bridge as the rest of them. One year I remember (seriously) giving up playing bridge more than once a week for LENT! And it was a sacrifice!

Back to the wedding, it was lovely. There were some odd incidents. I was extremely nervous during the rehearsal, which turned out to be good, as I got it out of my system. The Dooleys next door had the wedding party and families for the rehearsal dinner at their house, which was also lovely. After the rehearsal dinner, Wallace and I went over to where some of the wedding party were staying and visited with them a while. As I took Wallace back to the hotel where he and his family were staying, we had this huge fight. Neither of us remembers what it was about now, but I clearly remember saying, just before I gunned the motor to drive off, “And if you want to call the whole thing off, it’s all right with me!”

Well, the next morning, I woke with that memory at the top of my mind. As everyone excitedly prepared for the wedding that night, I secretly wondered if there would be one! And Wallace never called—he said later because he never took it seriously. I finally gave in and called him and found it was all o.k., so, though nervously exciting. The wedding photos in the book tell the story, as we did all the traditional pictures, beginning with everyone of my attendants at my folks' house.

A couple of funny things happened. Nink and Cortez got lost and couldn't find the church. People kept asking me what we should do, and I was calm as could be, just saying, "We will wait." We heard later that Cortez drove into a filling station (which actually was only a few blocks from the church, handed the man a \$20 bill, saying "Take us to the Tarrytown Methodist Church." The man demurred, as he was alone in the station, but Cortez was evidently quite convincing, and the man took them down to the church!

My Dad was pleased with something he did. When they asked, "Who gives this woman to be married to this man?" he answered, "Her Mother and I do." I thought that was really sweet.

On the way out to the reception, which was on the other side of town, some of the Robert Lee folks were following George Winborn, and he sort of took a roundabout way to get there. Once when they were stopped for traffic, the Robert Lee Sheriff, Paul Good, got out of his car and said to the Clifts, "I don't think this feller knows where he's going." But he did, and they all eventually got there for a lovely reception, again in the photos.

Frank Harmon, the best man, did yeoman duty, having hidden our car somewhere, he slipped us out the side door into his and drove away before people could find us and decorate the car. So we were on our way to San Antonio for the first night before driving down to Mexico for our honeymoon—not surprisingly, we didn't make it to church Sunday morning..

The honeymoon was great. I don't remember how we found out about a fabulous resort hotel off the road on the way to Mexico City at a place called Taninnul, but stay there we did. It being January and cold in Texas, it had not occurred to us to bring bathing suits, but there was this huge, gorgeous, naturally warmed swimming pool. We went to the nightclub for drinks (there is a photo of us there) and then waited till all was quiet. We put on our robes and shoes and, taking towels, tiptoed to the opposite side of the pool—and went skinny-dipping! What a great thing to do on a honeymoon!

The time in Mexico City was also really neat. Baker, Botts had a Mexico City office then, and the young lawyers would come up for several months at a time to work on their English. We had made friends with Hector Hermosillo, who was back home by then. He had written that he wanted to check on our reservations, but when we went into the room, we knew what he had done. We were greeted by this HUGE bouquet of flowers—and, really, our room was a suite, so I've wondered if he didn't upgrade us.

All the young lawyers treated us like royalty. They took us to the best restaurant, carefully warning us that we probably did not want Chicken Mole (and they were right—it was VERY hot). They took us to their homes where their maids served elegant drinks and hors d'oeuvres. They took us to the races where we sat in an uncle's box; they took us to a bullfight. When we said we had planned to go to Xochimilco to see the flower gardens, they just kept saying, "Scratch Xochimilco!"

We did go south for an overnight in Taxco, the town famous for silver, and bought ourselves a nice gravy boat and tray. We stayed across a valley from the town in a nice hotel built by a man named Juan de la Borda, after an early silver magnate. We've always remembered that across the top of a window was written, "Dios da a Juan de la Borda, and Juan de la Borda da a Dios." (God gives to Juan de la Borda and Juan de la Borda give to God.)

We've also remembered stopping overnight at a little mountain hotel which had the unlikely title of "Simpsons"! And also a lunch in a cave restaurant in Cuernavaca where mariachis played requests as they moved around the tables.

We'd had such luck everywhere that we probably got cocky about what we ate (which you cannot do in Mexico). The last night in Monterrey Wallace ate something and came down with the dreaded "turista." This is bad stuff, and so I drove us the next day out of Mexico while he lay, pale and groaning in the back seat. The funny that happened out of this was that we stopped for gasoline at a border town just into the U.S., and a law school classmate of mine was there at the same time.

Never realizing how hilarious this was, I blithely said we were on our way back from our honeymoon, and (motioning to Wallace, who raised his head briefly to nod) this is my husband, Wallace Clift.

We had found a little apartment and Wallace had brought a lot of furniture from a trip to Robert Lee. It was a cramped little place, and, looking back, I can hardly believe that we had the nerve to have a two-table dinner and bridge party there! It was really a disaster, but I didn't even know it at the time.

Life at Baker, Botts went on as usual. Wallace eventually switched from the trial department to tax law, and I found a home in trusts and estates. We kept up the car pool. We frequently had lunches we brought from home, usually with Bob Moore, our funniest friend, so we laughed through a lot of lunches.

Actually, looking back, it's hard to even remember much about the law practice, as the church began to be much more central to our lives. St. Stephen's, the church I had "found" back before we were married, as I said, turned out to be right for us. Claxton Monro, the rector, met all the qualifications we were looking for, and the church itself was alive and lively. We made one big mistake that I remember; we agreed to sponsor the youth group for a year—we were awful.

We both knew we wanted to look at a cross above the altar. Even at the basic level of our understanding, we knew we wanted a cross-centered church—not just a set of moral teachings or even solely social action, though we both favored social action.

Actually, the church we found didn't have a cross over the altar. The rector later said that he didn't want either a crucifix (emphasizing the suffering Christ) or an empty cross (emphasizing the resurrection). He wanted a Christus Rex—Christ the King—emphasizing Christ reigning in our daily lives. He felt that focus was what the "rootless" Christianity of our day needed to remember. That really spoke to us. We didn't have much money; young attorneys in those days weren't paid the kinds of salaries they start out with today. Then you were supposed to accept the "lean years" in order to try for the rewards of partnership later on. Even so, Wallace and I decided we wanted to give the Christus Rex to hang above the altar, and the rector let us pay it out "on time."

Our big introduction to the church came during Lent, where every Wednesday night there was a supper and a discussion of a book about “cut-flower religion,” religion without roots. . The book was Theodore Wedel’s *Christianity of Main Street*. For me, having been brought up with little knowledge of the Bible or what Christianity was about, it was all new and very exciting. That was a particularly striking book for me, as I had been living a kind of rootlessness and feeling increasingly lost and confused. Of course, I talked a lot. As a result, one woman came up to me and told me the rector had invited a Methodist lady to come to our church to start a prayer and study group for women on Monday nights. She thought I would like it. I said, “Fine, I’ll try to come”—not meaning to at all. She said, “I’ll pick you up.” Trapped!

I had probably never really meant to go, but unable to come up with a quick excuse and making the best of it, I went with her and met about ten other women whom I didn’t know. We met in a church schoolroom at seven that Monday night, and I encountered another turning point in my life. The ostensible focus of the group was to learn how to pray, which we did in several ways. We prayed together, briefly and simply to begin the group (“sentence prayers”), we studied some helpful pamphlets on how to pray and discussed them (E. Stanley Jones, Glenn Clark, Sam Shoemaker), and we took on several disciplines together. The group was led by one of the most wonderful women I have known, Adelaide Burlie. Adelaide was a retired school teacher, and she treated us rather like her former pupils. She told us how to sit (with your back straight, your feet flat on the floor, and your hands relaxed and receptive in your lap), how to slow our breathing, and how to clear our minds and listen for whatever came to our minds. Such teaching about the importance of these physical details has entered mainstream knowledge today, but in 1954 it was new information, probably known primarily to monks and nuns. I confess that her instructions even sounded a little picky to me.

She used phrases I had never heard, nor had the other women. I would go home and tell Wallace about it, and we would speculate: what do you suppose that means, being “in tune”? Only much later did I realize that we were being introduced to the world of listening prayer, and even more deeply to the idea of a God who not only listened to our prayers, but also cared about and communicated with all of us, in all the details of our lives. We were getting to know the possibility of a God of love and immediacy—God really with us. This was a God, as our rector put it, who was “at least personal.”

The disciplines we took on together were spelled out with the specificity of a homework assignment. We were to get a notebook in which to note down our insights and in which to record our prayer projects. We agreed each to have a daily quiet time, reading scripture or some devotional material, and then listening in quiet to try to hear whatever God might communicate to us. The faithfulness to the daily time was more crucial than how much time we spent. We were to have a pencil and paper beside us when we listened in quiet, so we could note down whatever came to us, without censoring. Some of the things might be just interruptions to our ability to quieten ourselves, but writing them down could help us let them go, knowing we wouldn’t forget them. In a later prayer group, one member said that after her first earnest try at listening prayer, she looked at her paper, and all it said was “cat food and toilet paper.” So, okay,

those were only things she needed to remember to buy, but sometimes, we all found, there were other kinds of things which came to our minds, evidently at random.

If one of those random ideas came to our minds during this quiet time, we were to follow through on it. For example, if the thought came to us, “Call Susie,” we were to call Susie; if it was “Write my sister a note,” we were to write it. My own experience with these “trivial” thoughts and their follow-through was that I almost always found out later some “reason” for the action, which I had hitherto no notion about. If I called Susie, for example, I was not at all up to saying something like, “God told me to call you this morning.” I might say something more like, “I was just thinking about you.” That was certainly true! We might chat for a bit, and then Susie would say something like, “You know, I am so glad you called. I was really low this morning, and I feel so much better now. Thank you so much!”

We were also to write down in our books “three things you want and three things you want taken away.” In our daily prayer time, we were to ask God for these three things and the three things we wanted taken away, ending with “nevertheless, thy will be done.” Then we were to notice what happened to these things on our lists in our lives.

I remember clearly the first thing I put on my list of things I wanted—to buy a house. Our apartment was very small, and my “nesting” longing was in full swing. I wanted a house. It may seem hard to remember, but in those days a wife’s earnings were not considered by lenders when assessing the amount of loan a couple could get—it was assumed that she might have a baby any time and, then, traditional wisdom said, her salary would stop. Since young attorneys began with modest salaries at Baker Botts in those days, we needed both salaries to meet the loan requirements for the house we had fallen in love with.

So I put that house first on my list. I had cried through a Maundy Thursday evening service that year when we had just been told we were not eligible. The prayer group began right after Easter, and it was a natural thing for me to put at the top of my list. Within two weeks the builder of “our” house called us to say he would carry a second loan for enough to make us eligible for the house. I was overwhelmed with joy and surprise and took a giant leap forward in believing in a God who cares.

Adelaide only stayed with us for six weeks, and then she said we were on our own to do whatever we wanted to do. We went on with it, with changing folks and patterns for the three years plus till we went to Seminary, and I missed it dreadfully then—but more about that later.

We were in the confirmation class all this time as well, learning more about God and the church. Wallace had talked to the rector about his prior commitment to go into the ministry from his college years. Clax said that God needed lawyers as well, and that if he was to go into ministry, God would make it a lot clearer than it was now, so we both relaxed about that.

One funny difference in Wallace and me showed up when we asked Clax if one could receive communion before confirmation. I can’t remember the words he said in reply, but afterwards I felt free to take communion (and did on that Maundy Thursday when I cried over the house), and Wallace did not and waited.

The confirmation was due to take place on Pentecost in early June, but there was more church excitement coming before that. One Sunday in May, Clax went into the pulpit and changed our lives and that of many other people. He began this way, "I may look like the same man who preached from this pulpit last Sunday. I am not." There was electric silence in the church; I had chills down my spine, and I think others did too.

He said that after the men's study group that week he had been talking with one of the laymen in the group. After he said one sentence, he said, "What did I say, Floyd?" Floyd repeated his sentence back to him—something like this, "The lay witness is going to be the center of power and authority in the 20th century like the Bible was at the time of the Protestant Reformation." His vision was that people no longer accepted the Bible as more than another book. The convincing thing to a skeptical world, he felt, was when another lay person like me witnesses to the difference God makes in their life, that is convincing—more than the minister, who, after all, "is paid to say that."

He had been so excited that he had spent the rest of the week searching the Bible and early church history for evidence, and he felt that he had found it in the early church—the church, after all, before the Bible was written. What had convinced the world then was the "witnesses to the resurrection."

Well, he was so excited that his wife, who shook hands with him at the door, invited Wallace and me to lunch with them that day. She said she had heard so much about lay witnessing all week that she needed someone else there to listen. We were delighted, catching some of his excitement. He planned to begin immediately to have a Sunday night service, which was to be the evangelistic outreach of the church. There was to be evening prayer, followed by a lay witness instead of a sermon. He would work with the people giving the witness beforehand to make sure they were organized and clear. Then there would be small groups of men and women with a leader for another hour, to be followed by a coffee hour and socializing.

Either the second or third night after that was the scheduled confirmation by the Bishop, and he planned to have a witness even in that service. He wanted someone in the confirmation class, and he asked me to give my witness, which I did. This Sunday night service then became the church work we did, both taking leadership of small groups. It was very exciting to hear people sharing their lives. In addition, of course, I was still doing my prayer group weekly, and Wallace became a lay reader. And so we went happily along for a couple of years.

Then came October of 1956. Wallace was sent to Austin by the firm to a tax conference during one week, and I joined him on the weekend at my parents' house. On Sunday morning we looked in the paper for an early (but not too early) service, as we were having guests for lunch before we headed back to Houston. It was a mission church in south Austin, called, I think, Trinity. It turned out to have a retired professor who had been ordained at 60 as the Vicar, which may have had some unconscious effect of what happened that Sunday in church—going to Seminary at 30 looks pretty pale beside that.

Anyway, as I knelt at the communion rail, a sentence formed in my head very clearly. I have never heard a voice from God, but several times in my life these sentences form—unbidden, unexpected, but very certain. This one was, very calmly, "Wallace is going to seminary." As I recall, it was so calm that I just accepted it as fact. Then another sentence formed, "And you shut up and let him tell you." Well, o.k.

We went home to the lunch, packed up and started driving home. As we neared Houston, Wallace was very quiet and seemed to be thinking intently. I said, "What are you thinking about?"

He has said later that he didn't want to tell me in the worst kind of way, but he knew I would cross examine him till I found out. After a long pause, he said, "I was thinking about going to seminary."

Well, as you can imagine, my heart started beating like a trip hammer. But I said to myself, "Down, girl." Aloud I said, "What were you thinking about it?"

Another long pause, then, "I was thinking I might go."

"When did you start thinking that?"

"This morning in church."

Well, then I told him what had happened to me, and we were both very moved. Wallace said, however, that he had no idea if he would do so, and he needed to think about it a lot more, and I was to tell no one. Well, o.k.

So Tuesday night he went to the men's group at church and was late coming home. I was sitting up in bed reading when he came in, took off his coat, threw it on the bed, and said, very excitedly, "Well, Jean, I just bet our lives on the Lord!" He had told Clax after the group, and Clax had affirmed it for him.

So we were on our way, not really knowing what it meant. At Clax's instruction, he made an appointment with Bishop Hines and told him. He was amused that the first thing the Bishop did was send him to a psychiatrist. After an affirmative report, the Bishop wrote a letter accepting Wallace as a postulant and naming four seminaries he could attend: General in New York, Virginia, Southwest in Austin, and the Church Divinity School of the Pacific.

Now is probably the time to tell about my family's reaction. I honestly don't think my Dad would have reacted as they did, but Mother was frantic. Wallace had wisely told them in a letter, and Mother called back, pleading with him "not to ruin her daughter's life." She had to be put on tranquilizers and then said that we were not to come to Austin; we were not welcome.

Well, that was all very unpleasant, of course, but we both knew it would not affect what we did—except that it did, I think, because we probably would have gone to Austin to seminary if she hadn't had such a fit. I remember one night saying idly to Wallace, "Where is CDSP?" He looked it up somewhere and said, "Berkeley, California." We both began to get excited, and, of course, ended up there.

Meanwhile, I had my prayer group praying up a storm about my family, and several weeks later, when it felt right, I just left work at noon on Saturday and drove to Austin by myself, unannounced. I drove in the driveway, parked the car, and walked in the back door. We all said, "Hi," mildly and finished watching a football game. Then my Dad made us all a drink, and we finally began to talk. Dad really couldn't handle much of it, so Mother and I moved to the living room, while she went on and on about how awful the ministry was and how she hated it when, as she was growing up, her Mother would invite the visiting minister to Sunday lunch, and he always took the best piece of fried chicken. (I'm sure as the baby of the family, she usually had it.)

I remember at one point saying to her, "But Mother, you like Dr. Barkley," the minister at Central Christian Church, where she and my Dad had begun to go to

church—the many who had baptized me and assisted at our wedding. Her reply, said quite bitterly, “But I don’t want him in my house!”

Anyway, at the end of the weekend, she had agreed that we could come to my grandparents for Christmas, as had been planned, BUT we were not “to talk about it.” What a funny bird she was. We have since said that the only thing which made us come back into her good graces was the birth of Anne—she wasn’t going to be deprived of that granddaughter just because her parents were cookoo!