**Memorial Service Excerpt**

*Dominic certainly must have brought joy when he came as a little baby boy to two parents who had suffered the losses of three previous children – one in Italy and two in America. Then that joy was doubled when a baby girl named Sarah joined the family in Chicago a little more than a year later. Unfortunately, the only remembrance of their mother is when they both were on the back porch and were told their mother had died.  Dominic was 6 and Sarah only 5. It looked for a while that the little ones would have to be raised by separate uncles but God provided a great-aunt, Angelina, who stepped in to help raise them in order to keep them together. They all lived in a 3-story flat in Chicago. Pa never remarried because he had promised his wife that he would never have another woman over her children. Although times were hard and they never had toys to play with, they found ways to amuse themselves. Food usually consisted of rice, beans and bread so they would play games by eating “imaginary” chicken or rabbit. If it was chicken, they would fight over the “imaginary” gizzards.*

*I’ve always said that if a young lady wants to know the character of a young man, all she has to do is watch how he treats little children, the disabled and his Mother (and sister). Soon after losing their Mother, Dominic took on additional roles of friend, protector, Dad and Mom to his “Little Sister” – as he would call her. Beginning at this time in the early 30’s until this past Tuesday, Dominic was always there for his “Little Sister.” After Dominic had a miraculous recovery from typhoid fever at age 7 through prayer, their relationship got even closer. He would always help Sarah with her school work and was always giving her things. After he got a paper route, he would bring her little trinkets after he got his weekly paycheck of $1.25. He also knew how to strike deals. He was very particular in some ways. For one thing, he liked his pants creased so sharply that you could cut your finger on them. So he made a deal with her that if she would iron his shirts and pants, he would buy her a pair of nylons. She gladly agreed even though she was too young to wear them. But she treasured them as they sat in the drawer.*

*Then when Sarah was a little older Pa started saying things to her that she did not understand. This is when Dominic really played the role of “Dad” as he tactfully told her the facts of life. Of course, World War II was raging while Dominic was in high school. Just before he was to graduate he decided to enlist in the army instead of being drafted. This way he could then choose how he wanted to serve. Desiring to be a paratrooper, he went through basic training at Fort Benning, Georgia where he made his first two practice jumps. He would write Little Sister to keep her informed of his progress. His third jump was for real. It was over Germany and unfortunately he saw some of his buddies go limp as they descended because of enemy fire. Dominic dealt with his war experiences by journalizing but it was journalizing through pencil drawings. Drawing what he saw allowed healing to constantly flow into him even as he witnessed the opposite.*

*When Dominic was discharged from the military, he was a different man – a wiser and more experienced man – and yet the same also – witty, persevering and somewhat mischievous; he was also a man with a different name – “Jerry Ross”, obviously taken from his middle name Jeremiah and part of his last name. Why he did this, only he knows. But there is a suspicion it might have been to impress a certain lady. You see after the war, there was a whole lot of marrying going on and “Jerry Ross” wanted to be right in the middle of it.*

*The first time Helen saw him was through her best friend, Sandy, whom this “Jerry Ross” hung out with a lot. She wasn’t so sure about this dashing young man with the “egotistical paratrooper mentality” as she put it. Anyway, she knew the likes of men. She had already married one and he ended up being a flake. So, now as a single young mother with a beautiful baby girl, she was going to play hard to get. She first met him when her best friend gave her daughter her first birthday party. He was still in uniform but her first impression of him was not favorable. She thought he was cocky and a little too sure of himself. Now don’t get me wrong. He was good looking but she just didn’t care for him - at all (sure). When it was time to leave with Debbie in the stroller, this “Jerry Ross” offered to walk her home. She replied that she didn’t want him to walk her home. Now that candid reply would have been the end of a less confident guy. But don’t you underestimate that “Jerry Ross.” He later told Helen: “When I saw the spunk in you, it made me want to know you more.” Well, after getting the okay from Sandy, he walked her home. Young men, take note of how “Jerry Ross” worked his way into Helen’s heart. When they got to her mother’s home, he just waited as if he wanted her to ask him in. When Helen didn’t oblige, he began asking questions: “Do you live here with your Mother?” “Is she at home?” “Can I meet her?” Well, would you believe that at that moment Mother opened the door, looked at them both and then asked her daughter, “Who’s this?” and invited him in for coffee. Of course his reply was, “I’d love a cup of coffee.” You could say that “Jerry Ross” had his foot in the door.*