

A Christmas Story

Joe Jacobson grew up during the great depression in a rather isolated valley near Los Angeles, California. His father had come to California with the discovery of oil in the region. "Pop" wasn't an oil worker - he had no desire to climb a derrick or be slimed by that sticky goo - but he knew how to build houses, and those workers were going to need a place to live. Joe's neighborhood included oil wells, orange trees, and outhouses. The mountains ringed this beautiful valley and created an oasis along the banks of the Santa Clara River. Joe and his friends ran wild in the orchards and among the sand dunes, as they passed the time prior to WWII. Then the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and life would never be the same again.

When JJ (as his friends called him) answered his country's call to arms, he was barely 18 years old, but a man had to do his duty - and he was a man. He decided to go into the United States Marine Corps, even though his best friend, Charlie, opted for the Army Air Corps. JJ wasn't especially fond of flying, and he knew the Marines generally deployed on ships. All in all Corporal Joe Jacobson spent 4 years with the Marines, island hopping in the South Pacific. You knew that the experience was gut-wrenching, but you would seldom get him to talk about it. He was a decorated Marine (you learned early on not to call him a soldier) but he would always remind everyone that the heroes were the ones who died on the beaches.

In November, 1945, Corporal Jacobson returned to San Diego, California, and remained stationed there for another year. On St. Valentines Day, 1946, Corporal Joe Jacobson married Mariah Mattason, and they rented a little white apartment. Mariah took a job as a waitress in a local coffee shop, and then as an operator for the telephone company. They were flush with cash now because of combat pay and savings, so JJ went shopping for transportation. To Mariah's surprise - and initial dismay - he brought home a brand new Harley Davidson. When JJ was growing up, money was scarce, but he had promised himself that as soon as he was able, he would get himself a "motorsickle." Now he had done it. A few excursions into San Diego and down to the beach convinced Mariah that this wasn't so bad after all. It hardly rained in Southern California, the temperature was almost always mild, and it made JJ so happy.

After a few months, the new Jacobson family discovered that Mariah was expecting (no one would say "pregnant" back in those days!), and she had to "retire" from her job. Although the monthly pay for a Marine corporal wasn't much, JJ and Mariah made out OK. That is, until his hitch with the Marines was up. If you wanted to work in the airline industry, there were jobs for you in San Diego, but JJ didn't really like flying. Circumstances conspired to convince JJ that it was time to pack up the bride and hit the highway for home. About everything they owned fit in that service issue seabag, which strapped onto the back of that bike just fine. The only problem was that Mariah was really expecting by now, and a two hundred mile "motorsickle" ride was going to be really uncomfortable. JJ tried to get a bus or train ticket for his wife, but with the holiday, and everyone mustering out, there was nothing available.

Today, we could navigate the trip on Highway 101 from San Diego to the Santa Clara Valley in about four hours, even considering the traffic through LA. JJ was hoping to make it in one full day if nothing broke down. He was familiar with the Pacific Coast Highway, which had been commissioned by the Department of Transportation


in about 1926, but it was a far cry then from what it is today. At least they wouldn't be crossing vast expanses of wilderness, but it was still a tough trip for an expectant mother on the back of a "motorsickle." About as soon as JJ got into a rhythm, Mariah had to stop at a comfort station. Then they had to eat. Then they had to take a break because of her backache.

Mile after mile, delay upon delay, they finally turned right off of the coast road, and could see the lights of the valley in the distance. Just a few miles and they would be home, safe with family and friends, and then, "It's broke." Mariah screamed it so loud that JJ almost went down. He couldn't hear what had broken but he pulled over to the roadside. "My water's broke." This was one thing they hadn't taught him in the Marines, so a frantic JJ began to look for shelter of any kind. They were near a little settlement called Saticoy, but there wasn't anything open there, especially at midnight. As they rolled through the village, JJ spied the corner garage and "motorsickle" shop, which had a light on in the back. Asking permission of the owner, JJ unloaded Mariah in an unused service stall, and with some borrowed blankets made her comfortable. "I guess this won't be the first kid born in a stall." When their first-born son came into the world, just before dawn, they named him Jaysee. As they lovingly looked upon their precious boy, JJ and Mariah realized . . . it was Christmas Day.

Luke 2:7-11. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

As Mary and Joseph gazed upon that little baby, sleeping in a stable, all the pain and hardships of their trip disintegrated in the joy of seeing the promised Savior of the world. The destructive forces of man's sin problem would be dealt with by the Son of God, Himself. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He paid sin's penalty for every person who would trust in and rely upon Him. He didn't come just to make us happy, or to make our lives easier, but to save us from Satan's plan to imprison us in hell forever. Repent and Believe in Jesus, for life!
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