

CHAPTER 4

JESUS WANTED ME FOR A SUNBEAM

It Just So Happened that my father was born into a Catholic home in Rochester, New York. They baptized him and named him William Anthony Tremmel.¹ My mother was born into a Congregational Protestant home in Englewood, Colorado. She, too, was baptized and named Eva Ruth Calloley, which became E. Ruth as a signature, and Ruth in everyday talk.

How William A. and E. Ruth ever got together was just another one of those things--whatever that means. William A. was a bright kid and on his way to college once he graduated from high school. And he did graduate and passed the Regents Examination which made him eligible to enter any state college in the State of New York. And that was what he intended to do until it was discovered that his persistent cough was not just a persistent cough. It was tuberculosis. That diagnosis headed him for one of the T.B. sanitariums up in New York's Adirondack Mountains--a sanitarium at Saranac Lake. After a couple of years of therapy that "dread-disease" was arrested and he returned to Rochester. However, before long he began to fear that the humid climate (his home was right on the bank of the Erie Canal) was doing him in again. Solution? That high, dry place called Colorado.

THE MAY COMPANY. He arrived in the mile-high city of Denver with little cash and no prospects. But being enterprising and daring he took a job for which he had no experience nor talent whatsoever. Without confessing his ignorance of the placement of avenues and streets in the City of Denver or the true nature of draft horses and wagons, he set off late in the afternoon with a wagon load of deliveries from the May Company Department Store to its waiting customers. He reported later (many years later) about the strange receptions he got when he knocked on the doors of persons who had indeed bought something at the store and were expecting delivery. But at 2 a.m. in the morning!

It was while working for the May Company that he met E. Ruth Calloley, who was at the time working as a clerk in the store. One thing led to another. But there was a problem. He was Catholic and she was Protestant. Solution? Catholicism was uncompromising: Congregationalism less so. So in those pre-feminist times, E. Ruth went to confirmation classes. Accepted Catholicism. Joined *The Church*, which then joined E. Ruth and William Anthony in the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony, June 14, 1917. All of this was sufficiently prior to me. Indeed, about twelve respectable months prior to me.

THAT CALLOLEY NAME. The Calloley Tribe was not enthusiastic to have a Catholic son-in-law and even less enthusiastic to have their youngest

¹According to a birth certificate record, William Anthony was really William Jacob. But William A. went by William Anthony and that is good enough for us. Incidentally he was never nicknamed Bill. He was nicknamed Will, which makes more sense, I guess.

daughter marry one and get trapped in "popery". But after all, I wasn't to blame for that. And I was born in their front bedroom. And William A. and E. Ruth did name me William **Calloley** Tremmel. And then promptly messed it up by calling me Junior, which I am sure I hated even before I knew when anybody said "Junior" they were talking about me.

All that fuss about being Catholic was just pretty much fuss² until It Just So Happened that my grandparents proposed that Junior go with them to Sunday School at Mayflower Congregational Church. Uncle Ed had been the construction contractor in the building of the church building, so, in a way, the Mayflower Church was, so to speak, a family thing. Permission was given for Junior to accompany his grandparents, and he did, for how long I do not remember. But long enough for something to happen. Junior learned a song. And one day, out on the front side walk, he was singing it with obvious joy and as loudly as he could sing:

Jesus wants me for a sunbeam
To shine for him each day.
In every way try to please him
At home, at school at play.
A sunbeam, a sunbeam,
Jesus wants me for a sunbeam.

My father's conscience struck him with a solid punch. That was enough of that! Protestant! My God! Not his son! And for whatever reason, E. Ruth seemed to agree. We were abruptly on our way to rigid Catholicism. All of us - William, Ruth *and Junior*.

²For all their Catholic activity, William A. and E. Ruth did not immediately become avid mass attenders. They had done the right thing, so why overdo it?