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# Dayton: The Home I Never Thought I'd Have

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STORYTELLER: Leona Marmolejo

I wasn't born and raised in Dayton ... I'm actually from Chicago. How did I make my way from Chicago to Dayton? Well ... I came for a boy. We were supposed to get married, so I packed up and moved. I enrolled at Wright State, got settled, and was ready to begin my life here ... then by Thanksgiving, the boy and I broke up.

I don't know why I stayed. I could have went back to Chicago and returned to the teacher's college, but I liked my classes at Wright State. I was doing well, I had friends at school, and I liked my roommate. I flirted with the idea of going back to Chicago, but I think I liked my independence in Dayton a little more. I even started staying over the summers. I graduated from college, got a job here, and eventually bought myself a little place in the Northwest area ... so I just continued to stay.

**DAYTON VIEW TRIANGLE**



Once I was settled, I met a man who would later become my first husband. We got married and moved to Trotwood where I was teaching ... but less than a year later, he had died. People thought I was gonna leave after that, but I stayed. **MY LIFE WAS HERE: I HAD A JOB, I WAS CONNECTED TO THE STUDENTS AND THE PEOPLE, AND I HAD STUFF TO DO. IT MIGHT NOT HAVE STARTED OFF AS MY PLAN, BUT DAYTON WAS MY HOME NOW.**

I eventually moved out of Trotwood and into a condo in the Northwest again. Trotwood was too small for me and that's why I moved. Chicago was a big city, much bigger than Trotwood. Dayton was a nice size. It was not congested, and everyone was always smilin' and wavin'. You get comfortable in an area, and I was comfortable here. It was convenient. There were shops near where I lived ... Kroger, a hairdresser, Fashion-Bug, little restaurants and things ... The Elder Beerman had everything from fur coats to diamond rings, all high quality. Anything you could want was there. There was even a little movie theater that my dad loved going to when he and my mom would visit, and then there was the beautiful Salem Mall. Everything I needed was in Dayton, so I stayed here. I could walk to all of those little place and I didn't need to go downtown

unless I wanted to go downtown. Living there for so long, I saw a lot of things change. Not many of those stores are there anymore, most of them started closing down ... but I remember them, even though they did not stay.

I met my second husband while living in that condo and we ended up living there. Meeting him was not a part of my plan, but it sure was someone else's. Slowly but surely, I learned to trust God and what he was doing with my life. After a while, my husband and I decided that we had outgrown the condo, so that's when we bought our house. I guess it was the next part of the plan. We now live in the Triangle, which is near Salem Avenue. It's quiet and friendly, as are the neighbors. We started a group where we would go to each other's houses and have dinner.

**THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW EACH OTHER, KNOW EACH OTHER.** We don't have a neighborhood watch, but we do have a neighborhood association and sometimes we get together and discuss what we want to do in the neighborhood. We are not in and out of each other's houses, but we have a sense of community. It feels like home.

Looking back, it was strange that I ended up in Dayton at all. I came here for a boy, and then ended up staying here for the rest of my life. I have watched a lot of things change along the

way, but I stayed through it all. God knew I needed to be here in Dayton. Without it, my life would have looked so much different ... Dayton became my home.

If you would have asked me in high school if I'd be living in Dayton forever, I probably would have told you no. But you see, it was all a part of a plan, it just wasn't mine.