Quack-Quack, Nice to Meet You

"Mom, I'd like to bring my boyfriend, Todd, home so you can meet him, maybe for the Thanksgiving weekend. Does that work for you?"

"Of course, Barb. Aunt Mary and Uncle Bill invited us to their house for Thanksgiving dinner. It'll be a fun family weekend. Your uncle may insist we all watch his favorite movie, 'Christmas Story.' We've watched it so many times I think I have the lines memorized."

"Sounds like a good plan. I love that movie, and it'll be great to see my cousins too."

"It's so different since you're in grad school, and I don't know many of your friends. How did you meet Todd?"

"Well, funny story. I was dressed as Donald Duck for Halloween when my classmate, Bob, brought Todd to our apartment. Todd and I hit it off, and shortly after that, we began dating and we spend a lot of time together."

"Dressed as a duck! That's hilarious. I'm surprised he didn't exit stage right. Did he have a costume?"

"Todd was actually dressed as a 'terrorist.' He wore sunglasses and a 'Members Only' jacket and had a rolled up piece of paper in his pocket that was supposed to be dynamite."

"Well, that's an interesting first meeting." *Hmm. I'm not sure about college kids today.*

"When Todd came into our apartment with Bob, I just greeted him, 'Quack-quack, nice to meet you.'"

"Barb, you never cease to amaze me."

Donald Duck and “The Terrorist”

Halloween, 1991

With happy anticipation, I prepared appetizing dishes and set up sleeping quarters for the special guest as I always did when Barb or John brought friends home. Our red-brick bungalow house on Nightingale in Dearborn was small but cozy.

The 1991 Thanksgiving weekend of introduction came, and Barb’s red Ford Escort GT pulled up in front. I glanced out the window to see the couple, suitcases in hand, sauntering up the short sidewalk to the front porch entrance. Little did I know I was about to meet my future son-in-law.

As the mother of a daughter and son, I imagined and evaluated every boyfriend/girlfriend as the possible parent of my future grandkids. Todd was a tall and attractive young man. He was quiet, and I was unsure if the last characteristic fit our family persona. Todd was cordial and pleasant, but most importantly, my daughter liked him.

Barb was an outstanding athlete and played tennis in high school in Harbor Springs. She was on the girls’ ski team that won the state championship during her senior year. It was natural for me to be curious about Todd’s athletic interests. “So, Barb, does Todd ski or play tennis?”

"No, he doesn't, but he wants to try rollerblading with me. He's open to new experiences."

Great that he'll try new things, but it will be hard to keep up with Barb.

Conversations with my daughter during the following two years revealed she and Todd were dating seriously. Their relationship continued to grow while they completed their Ph.D. degrees and paved career paths. They became engaged in December 1993.

During their engagement, we enjoyed family gatherings, which allowed me and my son John to get to know my soon-to-be son-in-law. My significant other, Randy Yake, who later became my husband, met Todd several times. On one occasion, he accompanied us to the florist in East Lansing to select wedding flowers for the upcoming nuptials.

The happy couple had graduated from Michigan State University and, understandably, selected the lovely ivy-covered MSU Alumni Chapel for their 1995 wedding ceremony. The reception was at the nearby Kellogg Center, which offered convenient hotel rooms for guests. Barb and Todd's wedding was a joyful occasion, especially for me, as I witnessed my oldest child happily marry.