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JAMES GRIBBLE STORY  
As told to Betty Tate  
July 2010

It was a good day for some, and a bad day for some. For me it was a great day because that's when my mother, Reva Ann Venable and my father, James Ernest Gribble, Jr., met one another in Dallas, Texas prior to WWII.

At that time there was a special area in downtown Dallas called Film Row where all the different motion picture companies had all of their offices, screening rooms, shipping rooms, and all the things that they needed to do business in the film industry. My father worked for 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox as District Sales Manager. My mother worked for a company called Republic Pictures. I don't know exactly in what capacity she worked there, but it was probably as a secretary. Somewhere at some point among all of the different gala events that they would have in Dallas, she met my dad. Of course, back then the motion picture industry was different than today because all of the different towns would have big premieres. They'd bring out searchlights, bring in the stars, and it was a gala event, especially for those people who had never been around any of it. Fortunately, I grew up around it and it was just a thrill, as my parents always took me with them everywhere they went, anytime they left town or anytime they went out of town to a convention, and it was quite an endeavor.

Then one day while they were dating, some of the producers from California with Republic Pictures came to town and they saw my mom and spent some time around her and decided that she had what it took to be a starlet. So, being a frustrated star that she was, she got together with them and planned a trip on her vacation to go out to California and do a screen test.

When she arrived she looked up some old friends that she had; girls that she knew with whom she had gone to drama classes. She found out that they were all struggling pretty hard to keep a

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job. It was a pretty hard thing to do in that town at the time, because there were so many people trying to make it in Hollywood.

Then one day while at Republic Studios, she met the new star they had just signed up and he had just made his first movie. He invited her to go out and have a date with him and she accepted because she thought he was pretty cute. It turned out that his name was Roy Rogers, one of the newest stars. They went to a theater there in Hollywood and saw the first picture that he had just made, and after they sat through the film for the 4<sup>th</sup> time she decided she was just real bored with him on his ego trip, and couldn't wait to get out of there and get away from him.

When she got back to Dallas and saw my father again, she told him about her trip and that Republic had wanted her to sign up. They had given her copies of a contract and wanted her to sign with Republic pictures. They weren't married at the time, and he didn't like that very well, so he turned around to her and said "look". He said, "I know you have a nice career coming if you want it, but it's really a hard road, so why don't you change your mind and not do that and marry me instead"? So that's when they married. It was just before the war, or during the war I guess, because about a year after that I was born on July 20, 1945, at Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas which now is Strategic Air Command. My father had been transferred to Montgomery, Alabama, and one of the things that he did in the Air Force was teach flight navigation. Right after my mother was released from the hospital we got on an airplane and went to Montgomery to be with my father. After a brief stay in Montgomery, he was transferred back to San Antonio where we lived for several years until going to Dallas.

The first house I remember living in and growing up in, was on a street called Carlson Drive, which was right across the street from an elementary school called Maple Lawn Elementary School. Next to the house on the corner of Carlson Drive and Cedar Springs, about six houses down the street going south from our house, was one that was rented by about six airline stewardesses; they

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were called stewardesses then. They worked for a company called Braniff Airways. This was probably back in oh, somewhere in the early 1950's and I used to go down and play, and the girls there really liked me. They would take me in and make me lemonade and just thought I was adorable and I would spend a lot of time around them.

One of the stewardesses was Pam Archer. Pam was flying for Braniff and it was easy to get to the airport from where they lived because you just went down Cedar Springs and it went directly into Love Field Airport. At that time it was long before DFW Airport was opened and so Love Field was the main airport for Dallas. Out of all the girls that lived there, Pam was my favorite. When she was off from flights, she spent a lot of time with me, and she was nurturing and lovable and it was like having a second mother. I enjoyed the time I spent with her.

Then one day Pam arrived home and when I went down to see her she had somebody there, a guy that she was seeing, and she introduced me to Audie Murphy. Well, I didn't know much about Audie Murphy but my father of course did because he was in the service and knew the things that Audie had done with his career and all the medals he had received.

He and Pam dated quite a bit. As the weeks and the months went by I wound up spending more and more time with Audie. As a matter of fact, once a week he would take me in his red Cadillac convertible to the barber shop not far from my house to get my hair cut. Although I didn't know it at the time, I was the envy of all the kids in the neighborhood.

Then one day Pam and Audie asked me if I would be interested in being in a photo shoot with them and I said "sure". This was like I said back in 1951 or '52, long before he did the movie "To Hell and Back." A magazine, I don't know what magazine it was, had called and wanted to take some pictures and they asked if I could be in it with them and the magazine said "sure". Pam got on the phone and called my mother and got the approval from her to have these pictures taken. So one

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day I was there when the photographer was there and he shot all these pictures. Somewhere I have one of them; I just haven't been able to find it yet.

I think Pam and Audie realized that there were hurt feelings that he had come along and taken away my girl friend. You know how young boys are impressionable, and especially with good looking women that are older than them. Every time Pam would dress up in her hostess outfit to go off on another flying trip she was the cutest thing I'd ever seen in my life. I thought she was adorable and she was so wonderful to me it was just amazing.

Then came the day that I thought I would never have to face; the day that my whole world came tumbling down. Audie and Pam sat me down and told me that they were getting married and that they were moving to California. I guess I never realized until that point that she was the first woman that I ever loved besides my mother. You know how kids are, they get crushes, and I had the biggest crush in the world on Pam. Now she was leaving and I'd never see her again.

Looking back on it today it seems like it was only an instant moment in time before they were gone and I was there without either one of them. I sometimes wonder how different my life would have been had I not had the pleasure and the blessings of knowing two beautiful souls, Pam and Audie.

I went on with my life, and I think back about what great achievements Pam had in her life. When I read this wonderful article about her after she had died and how she was taking care of all of the wounded men that were coming back from the Middle East plus all the veterans she had taken care of from WWII and all the other war veterans, and thinking to myself that God blessed me by letting me know that special angel and spending a fraction of a time of her life with her that I can hold close to my heart.

Thank you.

