I am Ron's counterpart and his contemporary. You know, Ron in "The Misfit." Strange, how so many of us could fall into that one category . . . misfit! And to think it could have been a different story -- a beautifully different story -- but for a couple of words . . . disobedience and haste!
Since you're wondering just who I am I guess I'd better introduce myself: I'm Carol Cranbrook from Roseville, U.S.A. Before I became Mrs. Cranbrook I was Carol Ann Rettigg, daughter of two of the finest Christian parents God ever made. Mother and Father didn't have a mere profession; they had the possession as well.

All of us children (there were seven) were brought up around a family altar and in a Christ-centered home and a spiritual, fundamental Holiness church. I was converted and sanctified at an early age and had the smile and Divine approval and favor of God upon my heart and life. I was growing in a marvelous way, spiritually.

Although Ted Cranbrook wanted to date me all through my sophomore and junior years at high school, I never once consented. Feeling God's restraining hand upon me I repeatedly declined his offers to take me home or down to the corner drugstore for a soda or sundae.

It was my senior year that caused me trouble. Not scholastically. Oh, no! I was a straight A student and was always on the honor roll. It was Ted. School hadn't been in session a week when he approached me for a date. As in previous years, I declined sweetly, feeling I had the Divine approval of God upon my life in so doing.

Ted was no ordinary-looking young man: he was tall, broad-shouldered and darkly-handsome, and was the heart-throb and dream of every girl in school. After not seeing him for a full summer I noticed immediately how utterly masculine and grown-up he really was. The other girls noticed it too and chided me thoroughly for not dating him.

Some weeks later he again asked me. As before, I declined and refused. "So you feel that . . . you're better than I am, Carol?" he asked, wounded-like and softly, his cheeks flushed and chagrined from my repeated refusals.

"Oh, Ted, never!" I answered. "It's simply that I'm a Christian and you're not. The Bible has much to say about this . . . being unequally yoked together with unbelievers, I mean."

"Then I'll become a Christian," and he looked all serious.
"You wouldn't get very far with God if that's the only reason you'd get saved, Ted. God wants a heart that's broken and contrite because of its sinfulness and wickedness; not someone who pretends to get saved to win a girl or boy they think they love."

"Look, Carol, what I feel for you is more than mere thinking; it's real. Why is it that I have not dated a single girl all these years when I could have had my pick of the whole lot? Why, Carol? Simply because I love you, that's why."

I blushed scarlet, feeling suddenly week and wobbly. "But Ted, I wouldn't think of dating an unsaved boy. It's contrary to the Scripture and I'd lose God from my heart and life by doing that."

Thus it came to pass that some weeks later Ted came to our services and got "saved." He even began attending our mid-week prayer services and doing extra things like handing out tracts on the streets and calling on the infirm in rest homes and hospitals and when he asked me again for a date I consented. Even then I felt a tender check; but I thought one date could certainly not hurt at all! Oh, young folks, if you are living close enough to the great heart of God you will never be able to accuse him of unfaithfulness. I know whereof I speak! HE IS FAITHFUL! The fault lies with us.

Some weeks later when Ted was bringing me home from school he said, "You're beautiful, Carol. I'd like to see you run for beauty queen this year. You'd make it! I know you'd make it! Look at that gorgeous hair and those deep-blue eyes and two winsome dimples! Let me put you up for candidacy. O.K.?" His eyes searched mine intently.

I felt weak . . . suddenly weak and nauseated all over. Me? Beauty queen? How absurd! How utterly ridiculous and obnoxious! I knew that in God's economy there was no place whatever for such worldliness and wickedness.

"Ted, you shock me!" I nearly cried. "I am a Christian. Such things don't lure or interest me in the least. No, you may not enter my name as a candidate."

"But Carol, you don't understand. You'd be outstanding . . . simply outstanding. You'd knock the other candidates off their feet. They can't hold a
light to you, not a single one of them. You're a real beauty and that hair of yours would bring you fame. Don't let anybody kid you, Carol; just about every man I know loves long hair on a woman. I know you'd find first place with the judges. In fact, some of the fellows and I have a bet on you. We'll make a nice little loot of money on this deal, Carol, and I promise I'll split it with you . . . the winnings that is. You're the choice of most of the fellows. Let me put you. . . ."

"Stop it, Ted! Stop it!" I cried out, wanting to run away and never see Ted Cranbrook again. "I thought you were a Christian?" I was crying now.

"Oh, I am," he said indifferently, looking suddenly far, far away.

"Christians don't do such things," I reminded. Not until several weeks prior to commencement did I allow Ted to come by the house to see me. I had broken all relationship with him and felt the sweet approbation and smile of God upon my heart and life all that time. When I gave consent again for him to see me I immediately felt the Holy Spirit check me; but my exhilarated spirits over being dated by the most handsome and wealthy boy in Mountain Heights won out and I consented.

Thereafter, with each date I found it more and more difficult to stay away from Ted. I had fallen madly in love with a boy whom God strongly disapproved of for me. Instead of praying more and setting up a permanent roadblock in my heart by staying away from him, I did just the opposite. As a result, our courtship began in full swing.

Ted was amenable, gay, light-hearted, morally good, and lots of fun. He treated me with perfect dignity and conducted himself like a gentleman at all times. All of this had a tremendous bearing on me and impressed me greatly. Four months after graduation and following a whirlwind courtship, I became Mrs. Ted Cranbrook.

I never will forget the strange, strong, final warning the blessed Spirit gave me the night I consented to become Ted's wife. I dreamed I was a silly puppet on a string, with Satan (the man who pulled the strings and controlled my every move) laughing with hellish glee over the way I was playing into his hands.
I saw a Man some distance away. His eyes were tender, kind, and full of pity and mercy. He spoke not a word but His countenance beckoned me to flee to Him for deliverance and complete victory over Ted. I tried desperately to run to His side and fling myself into His arms but something held me back. . . it was my will! When the man who pulled and held the strings suddenly took me into his wicked hands and began crushing the life out of me, I screamed, awaking myself with a frightful start.

I sat up in bed, my heart pounding with wild abandon and fear. My head dropped on my breast and hot tears stung my eyes and poured like heated lava down over my cheeks. Outside, a silvery-yellow half-moon hung low in the western sky and looked for the world like it was weeping over me. A screech owl, searching for food from a limb in the big sycamore tree just outside my window, seemed to be screeching my fate in mournful, high-pitched, spine-tingling tones. I fell to my knees by the bedside and tried to pray but God and Heaven seemed far, far away. Little wonder though . . . I had lost contact with God and with Heaven back there when I insisted upon overriding the checks of the Spirit!

As I knelt there trying in a half-hearted way to touch Him but not wanting to give Ted up, He showed me that He could do absolutely nothing to help me so long as my will was not subject to His will I shivered violently, realizing His all-wise wisdom. After long deliberation I crawled back into bed - - determined to marry Ted regardless. I tried to convince my heart that I was beside myself and that the dream was all of silly origin and that everything would turn out well in the end. Consoling myself thus, I feel into a restless sleep.

The days preceding our marriage found me in a gay, light-hearted, and carefree mood. Mother and Father were grave, serious, and full of tearful concern and burden. Many a night I awakened to the sounds of tearful, brokenhearted intercessory prayer and concern; but I never again felt the gentle stabs of wrongdoing play sweetly and entreatingly across the God-sent and blessed thing called conscience, of my soul. I was determined to marry Ted -- and I did. God knew this and let me alone.

Ted and I spent six wonderful weeks in the far western states. Money was an easy commodity since his parents were over one of Mountain Heights' biggest and oldest established businesses.
After touring all those weeks and falling in love with the scenery and surroundings we decided to take up living quarters in the coastal town of Roseville, far enough away from both Ted's folks and mine. We wanted to lead our own lives . . . in the way we chose to live.

I was extremely happy with Ted and thrilled when being addressed as Mrs. Ted Cranbrook. Except for the desperately aching void and emptiness I felt in my soul, I was happy. Oh, I longed to have a home like Mother and Father had brought me up in but I knew this was not my lot. Ted made that plain and clear to me . . . after we were married. "This religious business!" he said with a scowl, "I got what I wanted out of it. But this is the end of the line for me, Carol." And it was. I shudder now when I think of it and how I played the fool.

Ted was an excellent provider and was never stingy nor selfish with me and our twins, who arrived three years later. In fact, he was too generous. It was not uncommon for him to come home and toss a large roll of bills before me. "For you, dear," he'd say, laughing softly, fixing his big blue eyes steadily upon me.

"But . . . Ted!" I exclaimed, exasperated. "Where did you get all this? Your job pays only so much a week!"

"Are you forgetting my side interest, Carol?" and he seemed uneasy and restless.

"I . . . I . . . didn't know a used car lot brought in this kind of money," I answered shakily, feeling suddenly sick and unexplainably peculiar about the roll of bills before me.

"It's a matter of knowing how to handle people, my little Queen," and he walked quickly away.

Soon thereafter he quit his job at the plant and devoted full time to the used car lot which seemed to be netting greater sums of money all the time. Our custom-built house had been furnished elegantly and elaborately but the "fixture" we wanted most around the house was seldom ever home -- Ted was gone for days at a time "on business."
I never will forget June the fourth. It was nearly two o'clock in the morning. The day before, the sky had been overcast, gloomy, and brooding. Somewhere around eight that night the first downpour came. All night the clouds wept hard and heavy, pounding my bedroom window panes as if to warn me of impending danger. Then it happened! A heavy knock on the door sent me flying into my robe and house slippers and to the front door. I pushed a button, flooding the entire front lawn in light and saw them standing there -- five police officers.

"What happened? Where's Ted?" I struggled for breath, feeling suddenly like I was caged in a small cubicle of room with no windows, no light, no sunshine, and totally devoid of any and all oxygen. "Please tell me," I begged. "What happened to Ted?"

The officers showed their badges of identification. "We're here to find Ted Cranbrook Search warrants," he explained in a matter-of-fact way. "You're Mrs. Cranbrook?"

Mrs. Cranbrook? The name and title that had at one time held thrills and profound fascination for me now seemed to fill me with horror. Mrs. Ted Cranbrook! "Yes. Yes," I answered, feeling all weak and rubbery in the knees. "Has . . . has something happened?"

"Where is your husband, Mrs. Cranbrook? We're going to search the house and find him."

"Ted? He's not been home since last Friday morning, Officer. We don't see much of him anymore. Please tell me what happened. What has he done?"

Paying no heed whatever to my pleas, three of the officers made a thorough and complete search of our big sprawling house then came back to the living room where the other two officers had stayed with me.

"Your husband's trafficking in illegal business, Mrs. Cranbrook."

I said nothing, feeling a great numbness take possession of me. Illegal business? Soon I knew.
"He has quite a gambling concern in the city," and the biggest of the policemen studied my innocent looking face intently.

Another spoke up just then. "He's a slick number in the stolen car business, too. Runs it through his 'used car business.' It's been a thriving business, I tell you. Pretty good cover up . . . that used car lot. But we cracked the case wide open a short time ago. He eluded us . . . but not for long. Every cop in the United States has been alerted."

"I . . . I'm sorry to learn this," I said, breaking out in long hard sobs. "I . . . I didn't know anything about it."

After telling me that our house would be watched day and night until Ted was found, and giving me specific instructions, they left me . . . alone and desolate.

Nearly a year has passed since that night of horror and still no word from or about Ted. His folks send us money regularly and do everything they can, money wise, to alleviate the heavy load I'm carrying; but day and night I am faced with the horror of hearing the doorbell ring and having a tall burly cop face me telling me that Ted is dead. Where is my husband? Is he alive? If so, where? Where did he learn to gamble and when? What about the time he had so insisted on putting my name in with the candidates for beauty queen? Could it be he was then gambling.? It all looked too much like it to be otherwise! Memories! Memories! Would to God I could erase them forever from my mind!

Another picture flashed in vivid remembrance across the screen of my mind: it is the scene of a pure, innocent, and holy girl in high school who overrode the gentle checks of the blessed Holy Spirit and in her self-will and purposeful determination married a handsome, jolly, good-natured, wealthy young man named Ted Cranbrook . . . turned gambler and car thief!

I see, too, the strings of the puppet, silly, silly little puppet being pulled and maneuvered by Satan. The squeeze is on! My hope of spiritual survival may not be as glorious and bright as yours (if you haven't trifled with and overriden the checks of the Holy Spirit and made shipwreck of your life by making haste) but only today, while begging God for Christ's sake to have mercy upon my backslidden heart and to forgive me and take me back into His sheltered fold, He came. For the first time in nine years I heard His
blessed words of comfort and blessed consolation, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; Go and sin no more."

I'm not asking for pity. I don't want it. I don't deserve it. All I ask is His presence to be continually with me I'm seeking heart holiness now and I'll not stop until I know that the Comforter abides within my heart and life.

Like Ron, I'm paying a dreadful pride for my disobedience and haste. Like him, too, I am a misfit . . . God called me to be a children's worker when I was fifteen. I'll have to be second-best now. I console myself that maybe even yet there may be a small corner in which I can put these talents He gave me to use for Him. As I stated previously, I will have to be second best, and you all know that's not according to the original first plan!

My role as mother and father will be a difficult one, heightened greatly by the fact that the twins' father is a "wanted man" by the law. Always, this shadow will hang with with dire forebodings above their innocent heads . . . all because I married out of the will of God. I am responsible for much now.

Don't say this could never happen to you. I said that one day; but it happened, nonetheless . . . all because I was disobedient and made haste. I am paying dearly and will be paying the rest of my life. I married out of the will of God!