



# Naida's Sequel

When Naida Webster moved into her new home at the Brookdale Allenmore retirement community in Tacoma, Washington, she thought she was entering the last chapter of her life. She had no idea she was about to write a sequel.



## The Reluctant Resident

Naida felt like she was being moved against her will. Her two daughters, Angie and Sybil, would not have been surprised if their mother began introducing them as “my evil daughters.”

Naida rarely cried. Raised on a ranch, she was a tough girl who learned how to drive a truck, ride horseback and herd cattle at a young age, but she cried during her first tour of that Brookdale community.

When her daughters asked why, Naida explained, “I’m just so overwhelmed with everything that’s going on now.” She still felt the trauma of unexpectedly losing her husband Richard, who died from complications of a traffic accident. Then sorting through her possessions to decide what to give up recalled memories associated with each item. In the midst of all that upheaval was the pressure of knowing there was only one apartment available in the style she wanted, and she had to make a decision right away or lose it.

Naida was already familiar with retirement communities because one of her daughters, Angie, was the executive director at nearby Brookdale Puyallup. On several occasions, Angie had invited her parents to social events to see what senior living was like.

But retired truck driver Richard was not the bingo and bridge type. He was a leather-jacketed motorcycle rider with a Harley-Davidson tattoo. He still

held outdated views of senior living communities as places “where people go to die.” Furthermore, Richard didn’t want to park his Harley outside, exposed to weather or theft. Would a senior community let him park his Harley in the lobby? No, they wouldn’t.

After Richard passed away, their daughters knew Naida couldn’t live alone. They helped her pick a community and plan a move.

## A 25-Story Apartment

On moving day at Brookdale Allenmore, there was a special box among the containers of dishware, linens and knick-knacks carried into her apartment. It held manuscripts of 25 unpublished novels Naida had written.

Throughout her adult life, writing was this retired schoolteacher’s favorite pastime. Attempts to find an interested publisher were unsuccessful, and her dream of becoming an author passed her by. Although that box just took up space, it held a lifetime of work she couldn’t bear to part with.

A few months after her arrival, Naida was writing for the Brookdale Allenmore newsletter when she met with new resident Alichia Moreano to talk about an article interview. Later when Alichia’s daughter-in-law Sondra came

to visit and joined both of them at breakfast, Alichia announced, "Naida is a writer." Sondra showed interest and asked to see her work.

At her apartment Naida showed Sondra her box of 25 handwritten manuscripts, plus a novel she had recently transcribed on her computer. All those stories, written over many decades, had never been printed or read by book lovers on trains, planes or sandy beaches. They were treasures waiting to be discovered.

### Her Real-Life Romance Novel

In many ways, Naida's own life story was more colorful than all the characters in that box of manuscripts.

Naida and her sister Twila began a Saturday evening in 1968 at a piano bar where they met two single men who came with their boss and became too drunk to drive. After everyone moved

on to a dance hall, Naida became irritated with one of the men, Richard Webster. He ignored her, didn't ask her to dance until the 2 a.m. closing time loomed near, and he threatened to cause a scene unless she relented. As they tested each other's will, Naida became intrigued by Richard's strong personality — and in an all too common twist, she found his "bad boy" volatility appealing.

After the dance hall shut down for the night, Richard and his buddy needed a ride alternative to their inebriated boss, so Naida invited them to come with Twila to her apartment where she made them a 3 a.m. breakfast.

At 4 a.m. Richard enlivened the kitchen table conversation by asking Naida, "Why don't you and I get married?" Shocked, she replied, "I don't even know you."

Naida then asked his buddy, "Does he always propose to women he meets?" Richard's friend replied, "No. He never gets serious about anyone." Instead of being the voice of reason, Twila egged her on, saying "Go for it. You're in your 30s and single. So is he. What have you got to lose?"

Naida thought about their age. People in their 30s have a better sense of what they want in a relationship and less time to wait. She couldn't believe she heard herself say, "Ok. Yes."

At 6 a.m. Sunday morning, seven hours after they met, Naida and Richard headed south on Interstate 5 to get married in Reno. They had not yet kissed.

Richard suggested that she drive. "That way, if you change your mind, you can just turn the car around, and we can head back," he said. Nadia questioned herself during that 12-hour trip.

Richard wasn't feeling any doubts. He knew he wanted to marry Naida just one hour after they met. During that drive, he bolstered Naida's decision by telling her about how he was raised, his mistakes and faults, his service in the military, the month-long battle of Heartbreak Ridge in Korea where he was wounded, and the resulting nightmares.

By 8:30 that evening, less than 21 hours after they met, Naida and Richard were married in Reno by a Justice of the Peace with a hook prosthesis on his arm. Thereafter, Nadia told people that Captain Hook officiated their wedding.

Their happy marriage of 44 years proved their spontaneous match was meant to be. A romance that blossomed on a Sunday drive to Reno became a lifelong relationship on wheels. Richard attached a side car to his Harley motorcycle for her.

After they had kids, they ended each school year by loading up the family in Richard's big rig to spend their summer on the road. The large, double-sleeper compartment behind the front seat gave everyone plenty of room to travel in comfort. Richard could earn a paycheck while his family got to see the sights across America.

After they retired, the Websters sold their home, bought an RV and began a permanent vacation, traveling from coast to coast to see new attractions and family.

### Naida's Unstoppable Pen

*Naida has been writing ever since she was 13 years old.* She had plenty of time to work on her novels while Richard was on the road for weeks at a time.

She sent her mysteries, adventures and romances to publishers who sent back form letter rejections, but Naida always moved on to begin her next novel. Even if her stories were never published, her family

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and friends enjoyed reading them, and writing was a therapeutic outlet.

### Going to Press

In Naida's apartment at Brookdale Allenmore, Alichia's daughter-in-law Sondra read the first chapter of the novel displayed on the computer screen. Sondra was interested, because she works with new authors, helping them self-publish. She uses software to format the text of a book and design a cover, then transmits the computer files to a printer who produces copies in small quantities for the author to sell.



Sondra also helps place new books on Amazon.com. Sondra looked up from Naida's computer and said, "Your stories need to be shared with the world." They went to work right away. Naida picked her favorite story, *The Phantom of Kenton High*. In the style of a classic Nancy Drew mystery, it follows Cady Ryan as she investigates the recent accidental deaths of several fellow

students. Suspiciously, each student had a history of poor scholastic performance that was pulling the school's overall test scores down.

When Naida finally held that first printed book with her name on the cover, she felt the deep satisfaction of a mission accomplished. "It was a dream come true. I just wish my husband and my mother had lived long enough to see and hold my book in their hands," she said.

Naida would still like to find a major publisher, but she isn't waiting. She presents "Book Talks" at other retirement communities in the Tacoma area where she tells her story and sells copies of her first two novels to people who would rather buy from a person than order online.

At 82, Naida is now preparing her third novel for publication. In addition, the reactions from people who've heard how she married a man she met only a few hours earlier are making her think there might be enough interest to justify an autobiography.

### A Life Sequel

Although Naida initially felt forced into a retirement community, that step led to the fulfillment of her lifelong dream. She is now enjoying a sequel to her life and taking credit for her reluctant move, saying, "It's the best decision I ever made." Since she doesn't have to cook, clean or manage a house, she has time to type her handwritten manuscripts.

Naida takes a break whenever her daughter Angie comes over to join her at community movie nights. At bedtime after a movie night, Naida's thoughts occasionally keep her awake as she lies in the dark, wondering how her stories could be made into a movie. She asks herself: Who could play Cady? (the student investigator in her book *The Phantom of Kenton High*) I like Julia Roberts, but she's too old now. What we really need is a teenage version of Meg Ryan.

The movie could be filmed at a real high school, when it's empty during

the summer. (When she wrote the book, Naida imagined a setting much like her alma mater, Goldendale High School.)

There's an idea. What if we actually shot it at Goldendale? Wouldn't that be a hoot?

Then, Naida has a crazier idea: What if the script included a proper and sensible schoolteacher, who met a man at a dance hall, then drove with him to Reno to get married? No, that would be too farfetched for readers and audiences to believe.

This last thought brings an amused smile to her face as she drifts off to sleep and dreams of a Sunday drive down a long desert highway and her first sight of the Reno skyline at sunset.



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