

70-year-old love story began with switched date

By Susan Smyth
Courier-Record Intern

Sometimes, it just doesn't get any better than a hometown love story.

"I had a date with another fellow that night, and he came along to be a date for my friend," Mrs. Hallie Martin says, recalling the first time she met the man who is now her husband.

"I thought he was the best lookin' thing I ever saw," she continues. "I switched dates with my friend that night, and we never switched back."

Mr. and Mrs. Martin celebrated their 70th Wedding anniversary last Wednesday.

Woodrow Martin, Hallie's husband for 70 years, smiles as he listens to his wife. He remembers the boy she was with well.

Mr. Martin looks up and searches for words.

"He was...well, he was..."

"FRESH," Mrs. Martin says, jogging her husband's memory.

"Yeah," Mr. Martin agrees laughing. "A real lady didn't go with him very often. That's one reason why she didn't like him."

"No, I wasn't about to go with him," Mrs. Martin replied firmly.

"We went to a square dance," continues Mr. Martin. "And every time we would promenade, she would squeeze my hand. And I'd look at her and think, 'Boy, that's a good lookin' girl.'"

After 70 years of marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Martin of Nottoway County share many wonderful memories.

"We hunt, we fish, we dance, we do everything together," says Mrs. Martin.

"We took 50 hours of ballroom dancing," Mr. Martin adds. "Of course, that was back when it was popular. Now you've got the bambam-not-worth-a-damn..."

"I hunted everything but Quail," says Mrs. Martin proudly.

"She's killed turkey, she's killed deer," Mr. Martin says laughing. "But she doesn't crochet."

"We had a neighbor who was an ardent crocheter," Mrs. Martin explains. "And Woodrow said, 'Hallie, let me tell you something. I don't want a wife that crochets. Now, if you can't do what I do, then you might as well just forget it.' So, that was the end of my crocheting."

Mr. Martin recalls being on the Board of Directors for Southside Electric. They would make trips to the West Coast for meetings, and the wives would bring along crocheting and knitting for entertainment.

"I thought it was the dumbest thing I'd ever heard," says Mr. Martin, as his wife just laughed.

Now, the Martins spend time gardening. Mrs. Martin, however, is not able to work in her roses as much as she used to.

Several years ago, after a terrible ice storm, the Martins were in a car accident while on their way to Blackstone for breakfast.

The accident crushed both of Mrs. Martin's ankles, and now she must use crutches to move around.

Mr. Martin helps her tend to her roses, and much more.

"I don't know how he does it," she sighs. "He does everything for me. He answers the telephone, does the shopping, the laundry..."

"I've been independent all my life," she continues. "It was the worst thing that happened to me."

After the Martins were married in 1932, Hallie took a business course at Blackstone College. She later opened up a restaurant called "Wayhotto," which is "Nottoway," flipped around.

The restaurant was located near Twin Lakes Saw Mill at the crossroads of highways 153 and 460, where Mr. Martin worked for several years.

Mrs. Martin later sold the restaurant to have more time taking care of her home.

"I think the worst thing that ever happened was for the housewife to go out and go to work," says Mrs. Martin. "It separates the family."

"A lot of wives are getting into politics now, too," chuckles Mr. Mar-

tin. "Some of them make good politicians...just as big a liars as the rest of them."

Mr. and Mrs. Martin had one son eleven months and one day after the day they were married. They now have five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

"We've had a good life," says Mrs. Martin. "I can't say I know anyone else who's had as much to do as we have. That's the reason we're living today, we stay busy."

Mr. Martin ran a Dairy Farm for 35 years, and Mrs. Martin served as the Nottoway County Registrar from 1965 to 1983.

But in all the years of blissful married life, have there been any rough spots?

"We've had a good fallin' out a time or two," admits Mrs. Martin.

"But we've never been so angry we would consider divorce," says Mr. Martin.

"Murder, maybe," he chuckles, "but never divorce."

Newly-wed couples should take some advice from these experts.

"Never go to bed angry," says Mr. Martin. "Or you'll stay angry all night."

"And learn that neither one of you are right all of the time," adds Mrs. Martin. "You've got to give and take."

"She's always good natured and friendly," says Mr. Martin, smiling at his wife. "I try to be..."

"He's easy to live with," says Mrs. Martin laughing. "I reckon we ought to know real well after 70 years,

shouldn't we?"

By the looks of things, they know very well.

"He's the best husband in the world," says Mrs. Martin. "Every day I tell him how much I appreciate him, he treats me so well."

"Well, the reason I've been such a good husband," adds Mr. Martin, "is because she's been such a good wife."

"If I had some of the wives I've seen today," he laughs, "I'd be mean as hell."

"There's something good about everything we've done," Mrs. Martin says. "We have a good time together, right Woodrow?"

Mr. Martin smiles.

"Right."