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Lafayette Couple Celebrates 70 Years Together

By Cathy Dausman



Joseph and Beryl Deas of Lafayette hold their engagement photo. They will celebrate 70 years of marriage this month. Photo Cathy Dausman

their civil service ceremony on June 4, 1945. Beryl Deas recalled how her future husband paid the judge, then how Judge Bray gave the money back to her.

The Deases have lived exclusively in Contra Costa County, raising a family that grew to include two daughters and a son, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Joe Deas worked at PG&E steam and electric plants, where he "kept the lights burning" and retired as a plant chief. He was plant chief for Avon, Oleum and Martinez when he retired in 1985 after 41 years, said daughter Deborah Deas. "I was a volunteer all my life," Beryl Deas said. She and her husband camped around California when their children were young and helped out as they joined Camp Fire Girls and Sea Scouts. And they danced together-ballroom, folk and square dance.

After they raised their children, they started traveling abroad, making numerous trips to Hawaii, and visiting Wales, Portugal, and the Azores to honor their families' heritage.

The secret to staying together, they agree, is communication and cooperation.

Beryl said she feels marriage today is terribly disappointing, explaining that people expect more now. "We were happy with our grandmother's furniture [in 1945]," she said.

When asked if she could do it all again, Beryl thought she would revisit the 1940s for its fashion, music and "do unto others" sensibility. This couple, retired or not, has "kept the lights burning" in their marriage, even today.

Once upon a time, a very, very long time ago, two high school students from Crockett met and fell in love. On June 4 Beryl and Joseph Deas, who live at Atria in Lafayette, will reach the milestone of 70 years together as man and wife.

Although they have celebrated with "big blowouts" for past special anniversaries (notably their 25th, 40th and 50th), they intentionally scaled back their celebration this year to a simple family gathering hosted by their daughter Pamela.

In fact "simple" seems to be a byword of how they've lived their lives.

When asked to recall his first impression of his bride-to-be, Joe Deas made a joke: "I guess I didn't run fast enough!" He quickly amended his answer to say that when he first spotted Beryl stepping off the John Swett High School bus he proclaimed loudly to his buddy, "That's the one I want to marry!"

He was 20, and she was 18 when they appeared in Martinez before Judge A.F. Bray for

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