



The Herlihys Valentine Anniversary

Susan Marquez

Dan and Mary Herlihy finish each other's sentences, like many couples do. Joking with each other, laughing, and genuinely finding joy in each other's company, they are a pleasure for all who encounter them at St. Catherine's Village, where they've lived for the past 15 years. What makes their relationship so unique is that they will celebrate their 72nd anniversary on Valentine's Day.

Jennifer Bird from JoyCare Senior Care & Services has worked with the Herlihys for many years and is inspired by their love story.

"You don't see people like the Herlihys, who have been happily married for so long," she says. "I enjoy watching them interact with each other." Jennifer says she works to keep seniors active, independent, and safe. "We work to maximize the quality of life of seniors and working with the Herlihys has been such a pleasure for me."

When reminded that Valentine's Day will be their 72nd anniversary, Mary sat back and sighed. "That's a long time!" Mary says it wasn't really love at first sight when she met

Dan in a bar in Durango, Colorado. "She was going with another guy," states Dan. "But he wrecked his car. He hit a deer and went through the windshield. He was OK, but he no longer had a car." Dan did have a car, and he drove it from his job on an oil crew in New Mexico to see Mary in Durango every weekend for several months. It was a little awkward for Dan, as Mary's old boyfriend was a member of the same oil crew.

With Valentine's Day approaching, the couple decided that would be a good day to



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get married. Because they had to wait five days after getting a marriage license to get married in Colorado, the couple drove to Aztec, New Mexico, where all they had to do was present the license to the justice of the peace and say their vows. “My brother went with us,” says Mary, “so technically, we didn’t really elope!” Dan was 23 when they married, and Mary was 20. Both were raised as Catholic, but Dan says they got “sideways with a priest,” so they chose to get married in a courthouse. “We eventually had a Catholic wedding.”

Dan’s folks were in the Army, and growing up, Dan moved all over the place as his dad was re-stationed. He joined the Marines at the age of 18 and went to officer training school at Georgia Tech. Once he got out of the Marines, he went back to Georgia Tech where he earned his degree and went to work for an oil company.

Mary was raised in Wyoming and ended up in Durango when her family went to live with her grandmother. After Dan and Mary got married, Dan’s job had them moving around to several different towns. They settled in Louisiana for a while and Dan asked if he could be transferred to the Jackson,

Mississippi, office. Their first daughter, Ann, was born in Jackson, followed by John, Carol and Tricia. When Dan decided to quit his job and go into business on his own, Mary helped him at work for a little while, but decided they’d be better off if she went home to care for the children. “I left because after working with him all day, there was nothing left to say to one another when we got home!”

With so many children at home, there was pressure on Dan to be sure his business would succeed. He worked hard and became one of the first consulting geophysicists in the area. “I stayed busy right off the bat,” he says, “and I did really well. When an oil company needed to know where to drill, it was my job to tell them where to do it.”

After raising four children, the Herlihy’s enjoyed life as empty nesters. “We liked to hike,” says Mary. The couple hiked to the top of Machu Picchu in Peru when they were in their fifties. “We took all sorts of trips,” Mary recalls, “some really good ones. For years we did one big trip each year. We’ve been to Venice several times, and all over Central

America. We also visited Scotland and other exciting places.”

Dan says he misses the days of dressing in a coat and tie when traveling. “Things were so much simpler then and so much more civilized. We went to some of the top museums in the world, and we have stayed in some very nice hotels. We were very fortunate.”

The Herlihy’s have a few bits of advice to others who aspire to have a long and happy marriage. “I think the secret is to make sure you’re compatible. And don’t try to one-up one another.” Mary agrees that a good friendship is important. “You have to enjoy each other’s company. I think the key to a successful marriage is that you must be a good listener. You can’t be thinking about what you’re going to say next. You have to really listen to your partner and hear what they are saying.”

Dan says that the couple has always celebrated their anniversary. “We don’t always do something special, but we certainly celebrate. The good thing about getting married on Valentine’s Day is you never forget an anniversary!” Mary looks at Dan and says sweetly, “I still like him.” ●