

Blind date leads to 51 years of marriage

Mr. and Mrs. Ronald T. "Ronnie" Yates of Union City recently celebrated their 51st wedding anniversary.

The two were married Feb. 11, 1967, at New Salem Baptist Church in Mason Hall.

She is the former Sandra Williamson of Kenton, daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. L.H. Williamson of Mason Hall, and he is the son of the late Mr. and Mrs. B.T. Yates of Kenton.

The couple's first date was on Feb. 4, 1965. A boy Miss Williamson went to school with at Mason Hall asked her if she would like to go to a Methodist Youth Fellowship party with Yates.

"We hit it off the first thing and started double dating with my sister and her boyfriend. I was only 15 and couldn't date if I didn't double," she said.

"The next year, around Easter, Ronnie's mother sent us to have our picture made. The photographer thought we were twin brother and sister. We didn't think it was funny then," she said with a laugh.

The couple had not originally planned to wed in the month of love. A summer wedding had been planned.

Instead, Yates, who was an Airman 3rd Class, got orders to report to Okinawa for 18 months without leave. The couple rushed their plans through and married with two weeks to spare before Yates went overseas.

Mrs. Yates, who was still a high school student, finished her education while waiting for her new husband to return home.

She recalled the night they got married was very cold and they didn't have much money for a honeymoon.

"We spent one night at Blue Bank Motel (at Reelfoot Lake). Since it was the off-season, they didn't have the heat turned on in any room that wasn't reserved. Years later, when we saw 'Coal Miner's Daughter,' it reminded us of our honeymoon and we had a good laugh," Mrs. Yates said.

Upon returning from Okinawa, the couple purchased a car she had worked and saved for after she received her diploma. The two drove to Grand Forks, N.D., where he finished his tour of duty with the U.S. Air Force. Afterward, the two moved back to Obion County, settling in Union City.

"We have lived in the



MR. AND MRS. RONNIE YATES

same house in Union City for the past 45 years, soon to be 46," Mrs. Yates said.

They have raised two children. Melinda (Yates) Brooks and her husband, Pete, have two children; and Jason Yates and his late wife, Betsy Bonds, have two children. They all live in Union City.

The couple are members of Calvary Baptist Church in Union City, where they are in the choir and he is a deacon.

Mrs. Yates said to stay married as long as they have. "You have to have a good sense of humor, laugh at a lot and forget the rest, never go to bed mad, be sure you like the other person not just love them; there is a difference!"



Shepherds celebrating 45 years

Rhonda Gaskins and Donald Shepherd, who had their first date at the Starlite Drive-in Theater with another couple, will celebrate 45 years of marriage next month.

They were married March 30, 1973, at the home of the bride in Hickman, Ky., with the late J.T. Neely of Hickman performing the ceremony.

Their attendants were Terry Killebrew of Union City and Sheila Williams Rogers of Mayfield, Ky.

The two left the bride's house on that rainy Friday night driving a 1964 Plymouth, push-button Belvedere.

"We were headed for Ken-Bar Inn at Kentucky Lake. With rain and shoe polish streaming down our windshield, we got lost and ended up after midnight in Hopkinsville," Mrs. Shepherd recalled.

Shepherd's advice for a long marriage is to "never go to bed angry at each other."

Her advice is, "In a marriage it takes trust, a good sense of humor and keeping romance alive. But, most important, keep God first in your marriage."

Mrs. Shepherd is the daughter of the late James Gaskins of Hickman and Imogene Gaskins of Union City. He is the son of the late Troy Shepherd and the late Mima Shepherd Williams, both of Hickman.

They have three children: Melanie Walker of Troy; and Misty Dunn, who is married to Raymond Wayne Dunn, and Mindy McClanahan, who is married to Justin McClanahan, all of Union City. They have six grandchildren.

Shepherd is employed with Heritage Oil, based out of Hickman, as a sales representative.

Mrs. Shepherd was previously employed at CBK in Union City. She is currently a caretaker for her mother and helps out with grandchildren, when needed.

They are also the owners of the Smokey Bottom Boys barbecue food truck.



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