

Viewpoints

There are many diamond anniversaries

In a couple of weeks, I will make a trip back to my hometown to celebrate my parents' 60th wedding anniversary — their diamond anniversary.

There is a good chance that you know someone who recently celebrated a 60th anniversary, or will do so in the next year or two. The prevalence of 60th anniversaries is more than a coincidence.

In the years following World War II, marriages flourished. Weddings and courtship had been postponed during the war, and the postwar years saw many couples make up for lost time. In 1946, the first full year following the war, the marriage rate skyrocketed. Post-World War II weddings continued during the 1940s and much of the 1950s. Utah was part of this trend. In Utah, the number of marriages performed in 1946 was 49 percent greater than the average during the war years.

As you expect, these postwar weddings spawned a lot of children.

These children are the baby boom generation. Because of the millions of marriages performed after World War II, many baby boomers will celebrate their parents' 60th wedding anniversaries in the coming months and years. The very first baby boomers have already done so.

The fact that a growing number of couples will celebrate their 60th anniversaries shouldn't detract from the fact that 60 years of marriage is a remarkable accomplishment. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, after 15 years almost half of all marriages have ended, most through divorce. Fewer than 5 percent of all marriages last 50 years. A much smaller number survive 60 years.

What are the keys to a long-lasting marriage? Perhaps the best way to gain some insight into the elements that make up a loving and lasting relationship is by relating a short story about my own parents.

A couple of years after the war, my parents, Bruce and Mary, were married in a small ceremony with only the bride and groom, a Catholic priest and two witnesses in attendance. My mother always regretted the fact that they didn't have a church wedding with family and friends. For their 47th anniversary, my father decided to remedy the situation, without the prior knowledge of my mother.

As preparation, my father told my mother that he didn't want to do anything special for

Top of Utah Voices



Michael Vaughan

Commentary

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the anniversary; after all, their 50th anniversary was just three years away. He suggested they save the special festivities for that occasion. On the morning of their anniversary my father announced that the parish priest had just called to say he needed some help with the church organ as soon as possible. My dad asked my mother to accompany him to the church.

When they walked in the church the pews were filled with family and friends, who had been instructed to park some distance away and walk to the church in order to preserve the surprise. Two grandchildren were standing by as flower girls. The church organist immediately started to play the wedding march. My dad took my mother's hand and walked her down the aisle.

He had even secretly purchased a ring my mother had been admiring for several months. After 47 years, my folks finally had a church wedding.

Can you use this story to gain some insight into the keys to a long and happy marriage? I believe you can. Romance is an obvious and important element in the story. The journalist Mignon McLaughlin wrote: "A successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person." Long-term marriages are usually able to keep the romance alive, even if the nature of the romance changes over the years.

The story also illustrates the importance of knowing the things your partner wants, even if those wants are not expressed. More importantly, the story shows that it is worthwhile to make a special effort to attend to those things that will make your partner happy. The story also contains a small element of forgiveness. If my dad had given my mother a hint that she was going to be seen by others, she would have worn a different outfit. She forgave that small detail. Couples who stay married 60 years need to forgive a lot of little annoyances.

On the occasion of their 60th anniversaries, it is fitting to honor the couples who successfully built long and happy marriages. Last month, I noticed that one of the couples celebrating their 60th anniversary were Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. While my parents are not members of the royal family, their marriage typifies many of the best traits of nobility.

You may feel the same way about one of the many couples who started their marriage with a post-war wedding.



What it comes down to is healing.

The awards and recognition are significant because of what they mean for our patients' quality medical care, and for a better chance at

