



In the name of Love

Local couples share stories and secrets of their success

Ewings learn and grow over 55 years

By **BEN MCCARTY**
News staff writer

It took a little while for Royal and Joan Ewing to get in sync, but once they did, nothing could pull them apart.

The Odell couple, which this year will celebrate 55 years of marriage, met at Northwest Christian University in Eugene in the 1950s.

At the time, one of Joan's friends was dating Royal, and Joan was initially unimpressed with the man she would eventually marry.

"She kept saying, 'He's really smart,'" Joan said of her friend's opinion of Royal. "Well, I just thought of him as being really hick-ey. He wasn't exactly fashionable. He just wore jeans and a short-sleeve shirt. He didn't really seem to care about looking natty or campus-ey."

However, after a year away from school due to a battle with TB "the whole scene had changed" by the time she got back, and eventually she and Royal wound up together.

They were married in December of 1958, and began what would become something of a whirlwind tour of the American west.

They started in Tacoma, Wash., when Royal was named pastor of church there.

Their journey took them to California for Royal's graduate studies, back to Northwest Christian, then to more ministerial work in Salt Lake City, and then to New Mexico where they would spend 20 years before moving to Odell in 2003.

During that span they had three sons who gave them 11 grandchildren. Their family is flung across the globe, with one son working in theme park design in California after spending time in China, another in Texas and another working as a Boeing engineer in Italy.

"I'm from the hills of Idaho and she's from Mosier and our kids are all over the world," Royal said. "We never thought we would have the privileges our kids let us enjoy."

They've learned plenty of lessons over their 55 years together, with the big one being to not expect everything to be sunshine and rainbows all the time.

They are proud that each of their kids have been married for over 25 years.

"They saw us working on it," Royal said of getting through bumps in the road in a marriage.

"We didn't expect it to be all sweetness and light," said Joan. "Or to be even able to understand each other not to be angry because we didn't understand each other. And to tell you the truth we are still working on that. Relationships that grow and thrive need work constantly."

In their time together Royal has worked as a pastor and construction worker (even helping to dig the foundation for one of their homes in New Mexico) while Joan had done everything from helping



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The 'Picking experience' grew into steadfast love

By **KIRBY NEUMANN-REA**
News editor

"We enjoyed spending time together, and we had the same goals," Mary Ellen Picking said of the longevity of her marriage with Chuck Picking, 90.

The childhood sweethearts grew up in Odell and celebrated 65 years of marriage on Jan. 18.

"When we got married everyone went into marriage believing it was a lifetime commitment, and both our parents showed us good examples," said Mary Ellen, who is 85.

The couple owned an orchard and wholesale fruit business in Odell. They have two children, son Bradford and daughter Holly Picking Jones, and two grandchildren.

They now live at Down Manor, which celebrates residents' love stories each Valentine's Day. For the occasion, Mary Ellen wrote about the couple's first meeting, as middle schoolers, and the encounters that led — literally stop-and-start — to their engagement nine years after first meeting:

"My initial introduction to the Picking family was in late October 1939. Vernon Picking gave my best friend, Carol, and I a ride in his car. Unknowingly I left my purse in the car. The mistake was discovered when we were preparing to leave for the Odell Grade School Harvest Carnival. No purse meant no money for all the fun activities.

What a bummer! But Carol's father came to my rescue by making me a loan. I never gave the missing purse another thought until the following evening (Saturday) when my mother came home from work and inquired about the carnival. When told about the lost purse, Mother read me the riot act. 'Tomorrow right after breakfast, I'm driving you up to those people's home; you will retrieve your purse,' was the ultimatum. I did not sleep much that night. The next morning I awoke and looked out the window, and what a surprise! It had snowed during the night, 14 feet or so, oh boy, we won't have to go, I thought.

"I skipped down the stairs, only to discover Mother had a new plan. We'd walk. A mile and a half we

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Life's many changes kept things interesting for the Kollases

By **ESTHER K. SMITH**
News staff writer

The constant in Paul and Maria Kollas' life together has been its inconstancy — from the very beginning of their marriage in 1962.

They met in 1961 in Biloxi, Miss., while both were serving in the U.S. Air Force. Just after they were married, Paul left.

"I was assigned to a post in Australia to set up a new station, and Maria still had six months or so to finish up in the Air Force before she could join me," Paul said. So when I met her on the airplane, she said, 'I don't feel like your wife anymore!'"

"That's really where our marriage started," Maria said. The couple lived there four years, and their first son, Geoffrey, was their

"most treasured souvenir."

After that they went back to Mississippi for another three years or so, where daughter Mitzi and son Timothy were born, and the couple was separated again.

"I went off to Korea, by myself," Paul said. "It was an isolated tour; it wasn't my choice — that was 13 months."

The family's next home, and one of their favorites, was Albuquerque, N.M., for a couple of years. Then it was off to Germany for the next eight years.

Maria was born and raised in northern Germany, in Bremen, so that was familiar turf for her. The young family started out in Wiesbaden for a year or so, then a town off the Belgian border for another couple of years, then up to Han-

nover for the rest of the time.

Paul was working in the radar field, and didn't get much free time.

"It was an intense job; I was in maintenance, and maintenance gets stepped on by operations people!" he said. "But Maria worked for MWR (Morale, Welfare, Recreation), and she arranged bus tours and so on."

"I took service families on several trips to Holland, and Berlin when it was still divided — that was really outstanding," she said. "We went on one together."

"I did get to go skiing three or four times in eight years, in the Alps," Paul said. Having grown up in Hood River, he learned on "lit-

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Faith and respect are the glue that holds the Riveras together

By **ADAM LAPIERRE**
News staff writer

For Jorge and Gavina Rivera, faith is the glue that has held their marriage together through the trials and tribulations of the last four decades.

The two longtime Pine Grove residents celebrated their 40th anniversary last month in similar fashion to their January 1973 wedding in Michoacán, Mexico: a humble gathering surrounded by those who matter most — family.

"Our wedding was small and simple," Jorge said. "Resources were not available in those days; we didn't have the means to buy anything fancy for the wedding. Our families were there and we were all happy; that was the important thing."

At their anniversary last month, Jorge and Gavina were again surrounded by family; but this time with six children and seven grand-

children of their own to add to the celebration of a long and happy life together.

Traditions were strong in the small village where the two came from, so their first date, and the many that followed, were done in secret. After a few years of dating, they decided to get married. As the oldest of nine children, Gavina had a hard time convincing her father that marrying Jorge was a good idea.

"It was normal for the father to be that way back then, especially since I was the oldest," she said. "It took a while, but Jorge was a good man and my father knew that."

Like clockwork, 10 months after the wedding, their first child, Pepe, was born. Not long after that Jorge made a difficult decision that would end up changing their lives forever. He left his wife and child to find work in the United States.

"When I first came here I didn't

know anything," he said. "I didn't know anything about the U.S., about what to expect or how long I was going to be gone. I did it to find work so I could send money back home."

"When he left I felt like the world caved in on me," Gavina said. "It was a difficult time."

Jose made his way to Hood River that first year and discovered that several other families from his home state had found work and settled in the area.

He returned to Mexico and the following year returned to Hood River with Gavina.

"At first we had to leave Pepe in Mexico with his grandmother," Gavina said. "That was another very difficult time."

"We liked Hood River and found that we could both live and work here, which was very hard to come

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