

Love through the years

Being playful and open has helped couple through 60 years of marriage

By Brianne Ste Marie Lacroix

They first caught each other's eye when he was singing *Danny Boy* at his family home in Tweed in 1950. Halfway through his performance, he looked up and saw her, Verla.

A few times a year, the church community of Tweed got together for musical evenings with all types of performances by the young and old.

The night that the Dales hosted the event, Merrill Dales came home to visit from Ryerson University, where he studied to be an electrical technician, and decided he would sing *Danny Boy*.

Verla Ann Van Dusen was from Madoc and was working as a secretary for the Dales doctor's office. On that special night, Verla had been sitting on the stairway watching the others perform. When Merrill began to sing, she was captivated by his voice.

"He walked over and stood right in front of me and sang. All I could think was 'Oh my god.' That was it."

After university, Merrill moved to Belleville to work and Verla eventually followed suit. They lived in the same city, but not the same home, until they finally tied the knot on July 14, 1953. For Verla, now 81, knowing that he was the one for her to spend her life with was a no-brainer.

Merrill, who is 85, wasn't necessarily considering marriage right away but had good feelings about it. Looking back, he sees that from the beginning, it was destined to be true and right.

Throughout their marriage, they say that they've always got along really well. Being playful and completely open with each other has helped them stay in love over the years.

"I don't think we've ever yelled at each other. I don't..." Merrill explained as Verla interrupted him, laughing. "I think I yelled at you today to quit bothering me... I was watching a movie on



Photo by Brianne Ste Marie Lacroix

Verla and Merrill Dales have been married 60 years. Their best advice? "If you get into problems, you talk it out to get it off your mind and be happy again."

TV!"

They agree one of the major reasons they have lasted over the years is by not getting angry at each other, but always talking things over and talking freely with each other.

"I think that people don't try hard enough," says Verla. "I think that people get into a situation and the first thing they think is divorce. Now, maybe one or the other is seeing someone on the side, and that I can understand, but on the whole if you get into problems you should talk it

out, get it out and off your mind and be happy again."

As time has passed, their relationship has evolved throughout the different stages of their lives. When they got married, they set aside walking around with their arms around each other and being lovey-dovey all the time because their first priority changed to raising a family.

They had five children, three boys and two girls. Now they are retired and spend the great majority of their time together

and are experiencing getting older together.

Growing old is something obviously new to the both of them and Merrill is writing a book titled *I've Never Been Old Before*. He's writing about things that happen as you get older and things you can do to improve upon them.

"It's so nice that you can have someone you can talk to when things don't go so right," Merrill said about having Verla around, as they're getting older.

The greatest memory that they have

from their lives together is the family that they made.

"Our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and great-greats. They are a real delight," said Merrill.

With photographs of everyone in their family covering the green walls of their home, it's easy to see that they love and cherish the relationships and memories that they have with friends and family.

"The past is a precious thing."

Zombies...

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Zombies have been recently popular, especially with pop culture lately, Chatten noted. "I was trying to find a way to take some-

thing that people were already interested in and use it as a fundraising motivator. People actually want to dress up as zombies. People want to go out and have fun, and people love obstacle courses."

Runners Shannon Milton and Lisa Keating agreed that the local aspect of fundraising is important.

"I love the fact that it stays in the community - the money that is donated and stuff. I like that it's supporting Belleville. We know where it's going," Keating said.

Among the pre-registered roster of 37 runners, there were also 30 zombie volunteers, including Jessica Riddell, Sammantha Lockyer and their group of friends.

"I like zombies. Who doesn't like zombies?" Riddell said.

The zombie-friends agreed that as much fun as it was to dress up as zombies for the day, the event's real importance was found in the cause. Each of them knew someone affected by cancer.

"The event's awesome because it's for cancer," Lockyer said.

Red Green coming to Belleville

By Lucy Gillott

"If you have ADD, this is the show for you," says Steve Smith, aka Red Green, during a phone interview about his upcoming show at The Empire Theatre in Belleville.

The Canadian icon will be hosting his 90-minute, one-man show on his tour titled *How To Do Everything (from the man who should know)*. It comes to Belleville on Oct. 24 at 7 p.m.

Smith will also be holding a signing session after the show, in the lobby of the Front Street theatre.

"What's key here is for the first time ever, Red Green explains why he fixes things with duct tape," Smith said excitedly.

He told *The Pioneer* that he will be touching on a variety of topics and there will be a lot of opportunities to laugh, which he hopes the audience takes advantage of.

Smith listed a few of the topics fans can expect: "How to get along with your wife, how to deal with teenagers, how to build things, how to adjust to today's technology."

This 31-city tour started on Sept. 15 and will come to an end on Nov. 2. It is based on his book also titled *How To Do Everything (from the man who should know)*.

Red Green has been making Canadian families laugh since 1991 when his show first aired on CBC television. Belleville can expect the same Red Green as always.

Asked who Red Green is now in comparison to who he was in 1991, Smith replied, "You don't want to see your grandfather wearing some funky outfit and his hair in a 'do. You want to see him the way you remember him 10 years ago. He's just the same guy - and that's the appeal."

Smith talked about his experience while traveling all over Canada.

"I just keep basically meeting the same guy everywhere. He might be 22; he might be 82. He might be 300 pounds; he might be 120 pounds. But, he's the same guy. Most people seem to have a Red Green in their family somewhere," said Smith.

The Red Green character is certainly easy for the typical Canadian to relate to.

"I have a kind of mind that just sees things differently and spits out all these ideas. And so, if I don't apply it to anything like a show or a book or something, I just end up driving my friends and family crazy. So, I'm going on tours to save my own relationships," explained Smith.

He recently launched his book titled *Red Green's Beginner's Guide to Women (for men who don't read instructions)*, on Sept. 17 of this year.

There is no doubt, Smith has certainly kept busy since his last aired episode.

Fundraiser helps Humane Society

By Melyssa Gloude

What started out as a gloomy October day turned into the perfect day for a barbecue. As the sun peeked through the clouds and the smell of burgers filled the air, the parking lot of Belleville's Pet Valu hummed with the sounds of people laughing and dogs barking.

The adoption event, with the location provided at no cost by Pet Valu, was sponsored by the Quinte Lost Dog Network and manned by a handful of dedicated volunteers.

It featured a barbecue of hot dogs and hamburgers which could be purchased for donations, \$5 nail trims provided by Tina's Grooming, microchip presales, and a Scentsy representative who donated 25 per cent of her days' sales. All profits from the event were donated to the Quinte Humane Society, as one of their many events to raise money for the shelter.

"Donations keep the doors open," said Jen Nicholls, who has been volunteering with the QHS for close to four years, and is the major coordinator of fund-raising activity for the shelter.

"Most people have no idea that the shelter relies solely on donation just to operate," she said. "The cost to just have the shelter open is over 1,000 dollars a day, and that just barely covers necessities." Nicholls, who is also the founder of the Quinte Lost Dog Network, does more than run fundraising events in an attempt to help the shelter. Her organization also sponsors animals that are up for adoption to decrease the fee to find these animals their 'forever home.'

"Last year, the adoption fees couldn't even cover care cost," she said. "So that's what

we're trying to do. We want to make it easier for these pets to find a home."

Nicholls also strives to restore the shelter's damaged reputation.

"There have been numerous rumours about QHS," she said, in regards to the rumours floating around that the Belleville shelter is a high-kill shelter.

"The rate of animals euthanized at our location is less than five per cent. There has to either be incurable dangerous aggression seen in the animal, or they have to be extremely ill with no chance of recovery."

"It's a very safe place for animals," she said. "The problem is that the money just isn't there to maintain the location unless we, as volunteers, do something to change that."

Her daughter, Brittany Nicholls, 19, is also a volunteer and has been for over six years. "All you see is the negative publicity," she said as she held one of the dogs that were up for adoption that day. "No one ever tells you the good things or the struggle we have just to keep these animals safe, happy and fed."

Currently, aside from basic necessities, volunteers speak of a separate goal: a new building to house the seasonal influx of cats and dogs. No public fundraising or location has been announced but Nicholls says the project is in the works.

"The new facility would make it a lot easier on the animals, considering in the spring to fall we have about 20 kittens being dropped off to us every day," Brittany said. "And the future for QHS is looking very promising."

More information in regards to donations, fundraisers and adoption can be found on the Quinte Humane Society's website.



Photo by Melyssa Gloude

Ashley Dillon, 29, is a Scentsy representative who donated a portion of her profits to the Quinte Humane Society. The dog on her lap, Pippa, is available for adoption.