

COUPLE

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clarified.

But his first conversation with her didn't quite go as he'd hoped.

"We met in 1946 the first time, and I asked her where she got the sweater with the bumps on it and she kicked me on the shins," he said.

"That was a comment about my figure, so he deserved the kick in the shins," she said. "We didn't have any further conversation for about another year and a half."

But eventually — with a little help from a friend — they became a couple. Bob didn't drive so he got a ride from a neighbor who was a friend and fellow student to school from his home more than 4 miles out of town.

"My friend had a crush on Shirley's best friend and he wanted to ask her best friend out, but he was pretty sure that he wouldn't get anywhere if Shirley wasn't included, too, so he asked me if I would ask her out and I did," Bob said. "I was surprised because she was one of the 'in' people and I was on the outside looking in all the time."

The minute she said that she would go was the point where Bob said he fell in love with Shirley.

Shirley didn't exactly agree, but did go out with Bob.

"There was no way I would've asked her out if it hadn't been for him," Bob said of his friend.

The date was in early spring 1948 after practice for the junior class play. Bob's friend had a Jeep and the date consisted of riding the icy roads where, as Bob tells

it, "My friend would put on the brakes at the intersection, he'd turn his wheel and we'd go spinning around. ... So, she went — I think her girlfriend went once — but basically, we've been together ever since, and that was the nearly 74 years ago."

Some of their early romantic encounters were quite tame compared to what today's culture envisions.

"We sat on her grandparents' porch in the summertime and I would massage her feet and we would ponder the future," Bob said. "I would visit with her in the evening after school, after ball practice or whatever we were doing. ... We would be inside and her granddad would come out about midnight and say, 'Well, this boy needs his sleep. It's time to go home.' My neighbor was working at the mill and if I timed it right, I could get a ride with him home. Lots of times I didn't time it right and I'd end up walking home 4-1/2 miles. Sometimes in the summertime I rode my bicycle. Then, after I got a car, we rode around in style. It was a Model A Ford."

Married young

When they got around to getting married, he was just 18 and she was a few months older at 19. Her grandparents, with whom she lived since her sophomore year in high school, had a typical reaction. Her grandmother was Hattie Fisher, who taught in Walla Walla for about 40 years.

"They thought we were too young, which we probably were," Shirley said.

Bob's parents were enthusiastic.

"They loved her. My mother told me, 'I expect you guys will have some trouble. If you do, Shirley's always



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Bob and Shirley Crawford, who graduated from Wallowa High School together and have been married since Jan. 25, 1951, putter around in the kitchen of their Alder Slope home on Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2022.

welcome here; you're not.' That was kind of funny," he said. "As I recall, to get married, I had to be 21 and she had to be 18 without parental permission. I wasn't 21 and I was petrified. I went to my dad and he didn't have any problem, but he said I needed to ask my mother. I finally got up the nerve enough to ask her and I swear she could've done a backflip because she was so happy to turn me over to somebody else."

After marrying at a church in La Grande, they both continued in the jobs they'd gotten. He was working for a neighbor's ranch.

"Just before I graduated high school, the neighbor lost his hired man so after I graduated, my dad came to me and said, 'Bob, you've graduated. It looks like you have two options. You can leave home or you can leave home and get a job.' So I went over and applied that day to be the neighbor's hired man and he hired me and I went to work the next day," he said.

Shirley attended a year of college at what is now Eastern Oregon University and went to work for the

they had three sons and a daughter who have produced 11 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. It was while they lived in Lewiston that they decided to go back to school and got their teaching credentials before returning to Oregon.

One of their most unique situations as educators was their first teaching jobs at the tiny town of Adel, east of Lakeview, where they were the entire faculty for seven years in a community they loved. The folks around the small town found it interesting that the school's two teachers were married.

"They accused us of having our faculty meetings in bed every night," Bob said with a laugh.

"They were just joking," Shirley said. "It was a great community to live in."

The small school had just 22 kids when they moved there and the student body had increased to 50 by the

time they left. They kept in touch with the folks there, even attending funerals for many of the parents and some students over the years.

Their last teaching positions were in Vale, where Shirley retired from Willowcreek School in 1993 and Bob retired from the high school in 1996.

Retiring to Enterprise

They bought the land where their current home on Alder Slope is in 1979.

They've lived in their comfortable home on their 25 acres on the slope since 1996.

As for the coming Valentine's Day, they'll probably take it easy. It's likely it'll be much like the first Valentine's Day of their married life, which wasn't very memorable.

"He was probably feeding and milking cows," Shirley recalled.

"It pretty much took all day," Bob agreed.

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BORDER

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Eastern and Southern Oregon," he said.

McCarter said a survey showed that 81% of Oregonians think the state should look at the discontent of people in Eastern and Southern Oregon. He also said another survey indicates that 68% of Oregonians believe the state should look into the impact that making Eastern and Southern Oregon part of Idaho would have and how this proposed transition could be conducted smoothly.

Grant Darrow, of Cove, like McCarter, encouraged the Union County Board of Commissioners to do more to bring attention to the issue.

"Even though you may not agree with it on a personal level, your citizens have voted in a positive way to get something going," said Darrow, a leader of Move On, an organization that is also pushing for the border change.

The Cove resident said conducting meetings three times a year is not enough.

"To just meet the minimum requirement is unacceptable," he said. "The people of Union County voted for dialogue. You are the local representatives for this issue. If you don't do something, it will not go anywhere."

Members of the board of commissioners said they have taken steps related to the Greater Idaho matter. Paul Anderes said he has called Idaho Gov. Brad Little about the issue but has not heard back from him. Donna Beverage said commissioners regularly talk with State Rep. Bobbi Levy, R-Echo, and Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, and that the Greater Idaho option often comes up.

Union County Commissioner Matt Scarfo said he does not sense a groundswell of support for Greater Idaho in Union County. He noted that very few people were listening or watching the Feb. 9 meeting, which people could not attend in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but he said he encourages anyone who wants to talk about it to reach out.



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