

'An unbreakable bond'

Ranching couple reflects on 55 years of marriage ahead of Valentine's Day

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

As people rush to make dinner reservations for Valentine's Day, a ranching couple in Grant County, who have been married for half a century, said it's just another day.

Eugene "Perk" and Charlene Perkins, who will celebrate 55 years of marriage on March 6, told the Eagle their relationship has always been more about consistency, commitment and companionship, and less about obligatory cards, candy and flowers once a year to show their love for one another.

Charlene said an "underlying deep love" brought them together, and it's endured and grown stronger over the years for the couple who raised two kids in a "working ranch family."

Charlene recalled their wedding day, in detail, as if it happened yesterday: from the "fluffy" handmade dress she sewed herself to Perk, a working cowboy, wearing a white satin shirt and blue jeans.

She laughed as she told the Eagle about the preacher in a flower-print shirt whom neither had met before their wedding who agreed to officiate the wedding on short notice.

Charlene, who was 19 at the time, said she wanted to get married in a church with a preacher officiating. She said all she knew was the colorfully clothed preacher, named Reverend Blackburn, was a Christian and could match them in March.

"I knocked on the door, and here comes this guy, and he had a flower shirt on and a vacuum cleaner in his hand," she said. "That's the preacher."

Perk, who was 24 at the time, said the couple went on to have two "great kids," four "awesome granddaughters" and two great-grandchildren.

Perk jokingly said Charlene told their story for the both of them during his interview: "I'd probably lie anyway."

Jokes aside, he said the couple worked "side by side" over the years and

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—Charlene Perkins on nearly 55 years of marriage



Eugene 'Perk' and Charlene Perkins on their 25th anniversary. The ranching couple will celebrate 55 years of marriage March 6.



Eugene 'Perk' and Charlene Perkins cut their wedding cake in 1966 after taking their vows at a Garden City, Idaho, church.

"NEITHER ONE OF US DID A LOT OF TALKING. BUT IF SOMETHING WAS BOTHERING US, WE WERE NOT SCARED TO TELL THE OTHER PERSON, AND IF WE DIDN'T AGREE, THEN WE DIDN'T AGREE. WE JUST WENT ON."

—Eugene 'Perk' Perkins on nearly 55 years of marriage

kept things simple.

"Neither one of us did a lot of talking," he said. "But if something was bothering us, we were not scared to tell the other person, and if we didn't agree, then we didn't agree. We just went on."

He said society as a whole does not value marriage like it did in the past.

"Nobody's willing to make a commitment," he said. "I mean, they call it progress. We've slid back so far its not even funny."

Perk said the world has drastically changed and he would not want to be a twenty-something again.

He quoted Rodney Dangerfield in the 1980s movie "Back to School": "It's a jungle out there. Don't leave home."

As Charlene looks back

on 55 years of marriage, she said "an unbreakable bond" carried them through difficult times.

"We've had a lot of bad times," she said. "We've been

through losing cows and getting cows and losing everything. Through it all, there was still that thread that couldn't be broke. Because it wasn't a thread, it was a rope."

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