

VALENTINE'S DAY



CDT Photo/Nabil K. Mark

John and Jane Buzzell, who have been together for 63 years and married for almost 60, say being a good friend but knowing when to give the other some space has kept them together and happy for decades.

Lifetime of love and friendship

COUPLE LOOK
BACK ON 63 YEARS
TOGETHER

By **Chris Rosenblum** | crosenbl@centredaily.com

STATE COLLEGE — Sixty-three years after they met, John and Jane Buzzell still go on dates.

Sometimes, on the spur of the moment, they'll head down the road from their Foxdale Village apartment to Meyer Dairy. There, they'll order black and white sodas — vanilla ice cream with chocolate syrup and soda water — and “Mexi-hot” hot dogs.

Other days, they might stop for coffee while shopping or take a drive out in the county for lunch.

Tonight, they're going to the State College Area Municipal Band's traditional Valentine's Day concert.

This year, they'll celebrate 60 years of not just marriage, but friendship.

“I see them holding hands together, which is very touching to see, that they have an outward sign of affection,” said Mary Ann Curren, Foxdale Village's director of recreation therapy.

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Couple share secrets of 63 years

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Jane Buzzell wears another sign — earrings from her husband, who's always on the lookout for flattering pairs.

It's harder to see evidence of her love, since it rarely sticks around for long.

"Mostly, I cook things he likes," she said.

"Anything that has blueberries in it," he said.

She's 81 and a retired dietitian; he's six years older and a former research chemist. She writes the checks; he balances the checkbook. She's a volunteer librarian who enjoys knitting, making crafts and gardening; he's a volunteer audio and visual technician interested in sustainable forestry.

But they both hail from Wisconsin, low-key Midwesterners with friendly, generous temperaments.

"They both are very quiet with their kindness," Curren said. "They don't look for recognition at all. They're naturally good to each other and to other people."

They met at the University of Wisconsin. He was a World War II Army veteran in his senior year without a date, and she was a freshman and the roommate of a girl he knew. He asked her out, and off they went to a wrestling match—her first and last.

"We went to dinner first," she recalled. "That softened it."

Their courtship continued after he graduated in 1948 and went to work in Chicago while she finished school. So they could be together that first summer, he persuaded his parents to hire her as a counselor for their farm camp. Afterward, they

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nurtured their romance with letters, phone calls and visits.

On Aug. 19, 1950, they were married in an old, brick Methodist church in her hometown of Sparta. He sported a white tuxedo jacket and a bow tie, and she walked down the aisle in a pink dress.

The day was unseasonably cool, so much that frost appeared that night. But it wasn't an omen.

They've lived life as a team, traveling through distant lands together, in New Zealand and Australia, Costa Rica and Belize. They raised two sons and a daughter. They've made homes in Chicago; Iowa City, Iowa; Red Bank, N.J.; Towanda; and finally State College.

And along the way, they learned something: As much as they shared, as close as they were, sometimes they needed to be apart to be together. They knew not to crowd each other.

"It's not a matter of disinterest," John Buzzell said. "You have to take an interest, but not be nosy."

They're not sure what they'll do for their anniversary later this year, or even whether their children have plans. But they're thinking the same thing: How nice it would be if three families from Wisconsin, Chicago and Philadelphia could be with them to mark a love six decades and counting.

"I don't care much about a celebration for us," John Buzzell said. "That would be enough of a celebration."

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Photo provided

John and Jane Buzzell were married August 19, 1950 in Sparta, Wisconsin. The couple hope families from Wisconsin, Chicago and Philadelphia will be with them to mark a love six decades and counting during their anniversary this summer.