

60 years and counting | Kitsap Week

The Vestmans celebrated their 60-year diamond anniversary this year.

Thursday, February 19, 2015 4:26pm | [LIFE](#) [NORTH KITSAP](#)



The Vestmans of Bainbridge Island celebrated their 60-year diamond anniversary this year.

By **LESLIE KELLY**

Kitsap Week

If you ask Janet and Tord Vestman what makes a marriage great, they'll tell you it's a mixture of compromise and laughter.

"Marriage is a give-and-take," Janet Vestman said. "You have to really know each other and know what you can and

can't say and what you can and can't do."

By that, she meant that men are complicated, she said. They have feelings and they are sensitive.

"It's easy to say things and think they're not going to bother him because he's big and strong and doesn't show his feelings," she said. "But many times, he's feeling it all on the inside. Wives need to be aware of that."

As for Tord, he has found the key to his long and happy marriage has been compromise and honesty.

"Having a sense of humor is important," he said. "And learning to laugh together is too."

The Vestmans, of Bainbridge Island, have been married 60 years. They celebrated their diamond anniversary on Jan. 21. That diamond was forged by raising two sons, and sticking together through good times and bad.

The Vestmans now have 10 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Both are retired. Janet had a career in office work and Tord worked in construction.

It all began when they met in California in 1954.

"I was a shipwrecked seaman," Tord said, noting that he'd come from Sweden on freighters and ended up in California. He left home at 17 and after being at sea for months found his way to the Norwegian Seamen's

Church in San Pedro, California.

Janet had a good job as a clerk typist for the California Department of Airports. She was independent, had her own car and was beginning to set up household. She'd come to the church that day to play ping pong with a friend. Tord spotted her right away.

"She was kind of bashful," Tord said. "That's what attracted to me her in the first place."

Janet noticed him looking at her and told her friend it was time for them to change ends of the ping pong table.

"My friend said, 'You don't change ends in ping pong,' " Janet said. "I told her this guy was staring at me and we needed to change ends."

Eventually, Tord broke the ice and they began talking.

“Once I found out she had a good job and a car and already owned her own bedroom set, I said, ‘I gotta marry this woman.’ ”

They married on Jan. 21, 1955, in a small ceremony in Monterey, the day before Tord shipped out with the U.S. Navy. A friend who was supposed to take pictures never showed and because Tord left the next day, Janet spent that day — her honeymoon — touring the area with another of Tord’s friends.

“I said, ‘I want to see what I was supposed to see,’ ” Janet said. “I wanted to see the sights.”

Their first years took them to Germany where Tord was stationed and where Janet caught up with him. They traveled through Europe and in August 1956, they were back in New York where Tord “mustered out” of the Navy and they flew back to California.

They bought their first house in Torrance for \$11,200 and began life with one son, Gary, who was born in Germany.

“The payments were \$57 a month and I thought, ‘What have we done?’ ” he said. “That was a lot in those days.”

Tord went into the electrician trade and found work building homes. A second son, Kurt, was born in 1960. By 1967, there was a building moratorium in place in California and work dried up. So Tord ask a friend who lived on Bainbridge Island, if there was work, and when he learned there was, the family moved to the island.

He worked as an electrician until he retired in 1989. Janet worked 16 years at a drug store, doing the gift-buying. In retirement, they were able to keep busy by building and operating a storage business at Rolling Bay. Part of it was developed into the Municipal Court for the City of Bainbridge, and they currently live behind the business with their “adopted daughter” Sadie, a 3-year-old golden lab.

Their marriage has had good times and bad times, they admit. But through it all, they’ve always kept a sense of humor.

“We laugh a lot,” Janet said. “We’ve never really ever fought about much.”

Doing things together — even if it’s as simple as grocery shopping — is important, they say. And so is time apart.

“She’s been so good about letting me and the boys do things like fishing and hunting when they were young,” Tord said. “She’s been just everything to me.”

Likewise, Janet said she keeps busy.

“When he’d go with the boys, I’d do things I liked, like reading,” she said. “And now if he’s doing something I don’t want to do, I just take the dog for a walk.”

The Vestmans say a happy marriage must include respect.

“Treat each other with respect,” Janet said. “And don’t go to bed mad. Like the sign says, ‘Stay up and fight.’ ”

She referred to a sign they picked up at a Cabela’s store in South Dakota.

“We try to make sure we always settle any arguments when they happen and don’t let things fester,” she said.

As for the future? They say they plan to just keep living life like they have been.

“We’re just very lucky,” Tord said. “We’ve been very fortunate. We have a great family. We’ve had a great life.”



© 2018, Kitsap Daily News and Sound Publishing, Inc.

[About Us](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact Us](#)