



Photos courtesy of Lorne & Mary Buck



Reflowering Romance

Lorne & Mary Buck's 60 years of lasting love

By Kelly S. Thompson

It all started with an orchid. Lorne Buck, determined to take his new sweetheart to a formal dance, borrowed his brother's coat and shoes, and asked Mary Riddell on a date. Eager to impress her, he spent his meagre salary on an orchid corsage, an expense he claims nearly "broke the bank." Whether or not the financial sacrifice was evident, Mary still treasures that romantic floral gesture,

having dried it and stored it safely, 60 years later.

The couple met while Lorne, an Ottawa Valley native, was pursuing a degree in physical education from Western University. Mary, originally from Toronto, was "toiling over a typewriter," as Lorne puts it, and they serendipitously met at a church singles event, which Lorne's brother convinced

him to attend by encouraging him to drag along his guitar. That's how it came to evolve, eventually, down the road a little bit, into a romance," said Lorne. Mary claims it wasn't long before she knew they were meant for one another. The rest is history and the Lorne and Mary married on August 20, 1955.

Lorne worked hard during the summers to pay for his degree, and yet, upon returning



to school was told all of his work cheques bounced and he had to devise a method for paying tuition. One thing remained certain - Lorne's physical prowess and desire to teach made his degree a must. With a passion for sports and as a member of the prestigious Western track team, he was determined to complete his bachelor's degree. His financial solution was to join the Canadian Armed Forces as an Infantry Officer so he could receive a salary to support his schooling and new family. Between school, work, and running on the track team, Lorne admits his marriage was a temporarily lower priority. "I didn't have much time for anything except studying," said Lorne. "I had a part time job, I had the track team. I didn't see Mary much that year." Persistence paid off. Lorne managed to graduate and after leaving the military, acquired a job as a physical education teacher and coach at a school in Toronto.

Quickly, Mary and Lorne's marriage produced five children, three of them born in just the first three years of marriage, undoubtedly running Mary off her feet. "Back then there was no pill," joked Mary. "I was a

stay at home mom, which I wanted to be." Eventually, after four daughters in succession, a son was finally born to the Buck family.

Lorne and Mary, being avid adventurers, thrived on creating a family centred on cherished values and shared passions. Together and with their children, they travelled to various corners of North America, seeking out the best skiing, puttering around countless golf courses, and enjoying several cruises once their children were old enough to care for themselves. "We filled our lives pretty well," said Lorne.

After 30 years as a physical education teacher, coach, and mentor for various sports, Lorne was ready to end his career and instead take time to focus on family. The couple decided it was time to leave Toronto and retire to a quieter community to be their forever home, a property with space to accommodate a growing crew of grandchildren. "I was a country bumpkin myself. I was looking for a place with property," said Lorne. With only their teenage son still left at home, Lorne found a listing in the Toronto Star, went to see it, and determined the property, dilapidated as it was, to be

exactly what he wanted, claiming he couldn't stand to be "fenced in." The land Mary and Lorne purchased, near the little village of Codrington, is a tranquil oasis from city life, with a laneway winding through mature maples and a sprawling landscape to carve out their ideal life. Over the last 30 years, Lorne and Mary created their dream home, complete with 145 acres of land, several kilometres of groomed trails, and a woodlot 82-year-old Lorne still maintains. His work pants are still dusty from his morning wood delivery to one of his clients, and he notes his woodlot is his gymnasium. Lorne is cognizant of the fact that without Mary, none of the land, experiences, or vacations would have any meaning. "We had many monumental memories," he said, regarding the pond that extends to the back of the house. The pond itself is home to memories of its own, as Lorne remembers many years spent swimming and skating as a family.

It's clear the secret to Lorne and Mary's marriage success is a mutual respect, love, and support for one another's passions. Lorne, an avid long distance runner, ran the Boston Marathon three times and travelled the world

competing with the national team, not only in his own career but also later as a mentor and coach. "A lot of my time, unfortunately for Mary, was being away from her," said Lorne. He is also an accomplished bluegrass musician, still attending open mic nights to strum his own composed songs with a crew of friends. In all of this, his wife stood by and supported him, encouraging his dedication to sport and art. For Mary, her joy was found in home decorating and horticulture and in their home in Codrington, she cultivated countless flowerbeds Lorne remains proud of today. He is eager to take visitors through the house to showcase Mary's stamp of love on their home, including framed cross-stitch, stained glass, and a host of family photos she meticulously maintains.

Although their interests may be separate, Lorne and Mary seem to find a way to return to one another and offer support to each other's causes. Ultimately, Mary credits togetherness as the element that has allowed their marriage to flourish, while Lorne gives nod to persistence, even in the face of tough times. "There will be disagreements,

but you'll work them out at the end of the day," said Lorne. "That's what you have to do, otherwise, it doesn't last. We're still here, looking after one another." With this, he looks over to Mary and she gives him a smile. Their love is something palpable that seems to swallow the room whole.

Like any family, Lorne and Mary have not made it through life and marriage unscathed. They have endured separation from one another during Lorne's extensive travels, and today, both in their 80s, they seem all too aware of age creeping up, infiltrating their everyday activities. Several years ago, their beloved daughter lost a long battle to lung cancer, leaving behind two daughters to carry on her legacy, and the tragedy is obviously raw for the entire Buck family. In the face of adversity, Lorne and Mary have cultivated a relationship that stands out not only in duration but also in connection, with an uncanny ability to fill in each other's memories and sentences, a feat only accomplished by those with a firm understanding and appreciation for one another. These days, they welcome visits from their kids as well as 10 grandchildren

and five great-grandchildren, but they are now content to pass the holiday tradition torch to allow the grandkids to host big family dinners. "It's their turn now. They've got to take over," said Lorne, who is keen to show his family how far he has come, having recently completed his memoirs he then had printed and bound, sharing his story with those he loves. His memories and accomplishments are the stuff of inspiration.

Indeed, the Buck family home is a tribute to a treasured family, past and present. Their walls are adorned with countless family photos, some dog-eared and fading, and others vibrant, taken at their recent 60th anniversary celebration. Brightest of all is the blooming magenta orchid sitting in the corner of the living room - fragile, alive, and a symbol of new beginnings.



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