



Gardner Newsletter

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When it comes to marriage longevity, the Gardner Family beat the odds! A look back at Golden Anniversaries of yore.

“Love at first sight is easy to understand; it’s when two people have been looking at each other for a lifetime that it becomes a miracle.” So said Sam Levenson, American humorist, writer, teacher, television host, and journalist.

Time Magazine did some research about the history of associating gold with the 50th wedding anniversary. Perhaps it might have begun in Roman or Medieval times — but the custom was more firmly cemented around the turn of the 20th century in the later Victorian era when love marriages became more common and life expectancies began increasing.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, after 15 years almost half of all marriages have ended, most through divorce. The low number of marriages making it to the 50-year mark makes sense, as couples need to marry fairly young, weather lots of storms, and live fairly long lives in order to achieve this milestone. A couple that married at 25, for example, will need to still be together at age 75 in order to hit their golden anniversary. In America, where the average life expectancy hovers around 76 and roughly half of all marriages end in divorce, that’s quite an accomplishment! An even smaller number survive 60 years.

Why are Golden Anniversaries or 50 years of marriage something to aspire to? Well, so much happens in half a century —

and if you and your spouse have been married for this amount of time, you have truly built a life as partners.

Psychologists say if a couple has made it to 50 years, they have gone through a life’s worth of

transitions together, such as having children, empty nesting, retiring, caring for aging parents, and grieving the loss of them. These ultra long-term relationships aren’t free from conflict — all couples have conflict, especially during life’s transitions—but a couple that has been

together for 50 years probably has what couples therapists call ‘secure attachment.’”

Many marriages in the Gardner Family have more than defied the odds. So, in this issue of the





Will and Olive Gardner surrounded by their 10 children - 50th wedding anniversary - 1962

newsletter, we're going to re-visit the Golden Wedding anniversaries of "The Original Gang of Ten," as well as some of the Gardner cousins who have reached that almost mythical milestone and have even gone beyond it.

Let's start at the very beginning with the parents of "The Original Gang of Ten." Will and Olive Gardner were married on December 23, 1912. That was the unforgettable year of the sinking of the Titanic which stunned the world earlier that April. Fifty years later, **The Newport Express** reported on the two-day celebration of the Gardner's 50th wedding anniversary. Here is the original article published on January 2, 1963.

"Nearly 100 guests from Barnet, Lyndonville, Morgan, Holland, Derby, Newport, Island Pond and East Charleston, as well as members of the family of Mr. and Mrs. Will Gardner attended the open house held Sunday, December 23, 1962, in observance of their 50th wedding anniversary.



Olive and Will Gardner

The Gardner home was attractively decorated in gold motif with lovely floral arrangements, gifts of the Plymouth Congregational and the Nazarene Churches of East Charleston, relatives and friends, enhancing the setting.

Mrs. Gardner was attired in a black velvet dress and was presented with a corsage of yellow mums. Mr. Gardner was the recipient of a boutonniere. They were also presented with a money tree and many other gifts, cards, and congratulatory messages on this happy occasion.

Refreshments were served from the dining room; the table being attractively centered with yellow mums and snapdragons flanked by gold tapers.

Mr. and Mrs. Gardner made the initial cut in the four-tiered wedding cake which was prettily decorated with white roses, gold leaves and topped with a miniature wedding bell. The cake was served by Mrs. Elinor Cove, their daughter, from Auburn, NY.

The guests were greeted by Mrs. Beulah Griffes, a daughter from Jackson, MI, and the guest book was entrusted to Mrs. Jean Gibbs, a granddaughter from Greenfield, CA. Mrs. Elizabeth Johnson, a daughter from Lyndonville, was in charge of the punchbowl.

Mr. and Mrs. Gardner were married on December 23, 1912 in Needham, MA and have resided their entire married life in East Charleston.

They are the parents of ten children, all of whom attended the celebration. They are Mrs. Ruth Metcalf, Erie, PA.; Mrs. Johnson, Miss Lois Gardner, Ipswich, MA.; Earl Gardner, Salinas, CA; Clayton Gardner, Chatham, NJ; Mrs. Nita Ames, Derby; Adelbert Gardner, Morgan; Raymond Gardner, Reading, MA; Mrs. Cove and

Mrs. Griffes.

Mr. Gardner recently retired as agent for Nationwide Insurance Co. and was tendered a retirement party in Morrisville.

On Saturday, December 22nd, the family gathered at the vestry of Plymouth Congregational Church for a Christmas dinner which was catered by the East Charleston Home Demonstration Club. There were 40 members of the family present. Recorded Christmas selections provided background dinner music."

In 1962, your editor was a senior at King City High School in King City, CA. My sister, Jean (who is mentioned in the newspaper article) traveled all the way from California to Vermont along with my father, Earl Gardner, Will and Olive's oldest son, to be present at the event. The iconic picture of Will and Olive surrounded by all ten of their children adorns the front page of www.gardnernews.org, thus capturing that moment in time for posterity.

Grandma Gardner passed away on May 15, 1972 – almost 60 years after marrying Will Gardner.

Ruth and Henry Metcalf

Aunt Ruth and Uncle Henry Metcalf were living at the old homestead deeded to them by all the other members of the Original Gang of Ten when the local press around East Charleston, VT published the account of their 50th wedding anniversary.

"Rev. and Mrs. Henry D. Metcalf of Island Pond celebrated 50 years together on November 11, 1995.

Family and friends gathered at the United Church of Derby for an open



Henry and Ruth Metcalf

house/reception to commemorate the event. The Metcalfs were married on November 22, 1945 in Fredonia, Pennsylvania. Most of their life together has been given in ministry

to parishes in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, New York, and most recently, Lyndonville.

Two of their three children, Ruth Metcalf and Geri Rosser, both of Columbus, Ohio, planned the event. Their son, Dick, sent greetings from Olympia, Washington. Several siblings of Ruth (Gardner) Metcalf attended, including Nita Ames, Adelbert Gardner, Raymond Gardner, Beulah Griffes and Elizabeth Johnson. Rev. Henry Metcalf's sister, Marge Metcalf (a member



Above and below: Ruth and Henry's 50th wedding anniversary



Above and to the right: Derby Community Church, Derby, VT which served as the venue for Ruth and Henry's 50th wedding anniversary as well as Cousin Rod and Irene Ames' 50th wedding soiree 17 years later.

Please send in articles for the Spring 2024 issue.. We need and value your input!

of the original bridal party)' also attended."

How is this for a coincidence?! 17 years later, Cousin Rod Ames and Irene Ames would celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in the same venue, United Church of Derby, (now the Derby Community Church). But more on that later.

Uncle Henry Metcalf passed away in December 2003. By that time, Ruth and Henry had well over 50 years of marriage together. In his book, **The History of a Country Church**, Richard A. Colburn, Sr. has a diary entry of December 27, 2003, which says "Rev. Henry Metcalf's funeral was held in the Church" (Plymouth Congregational Church of East Charleston, VT).



Elizabeth and Homer Johnson

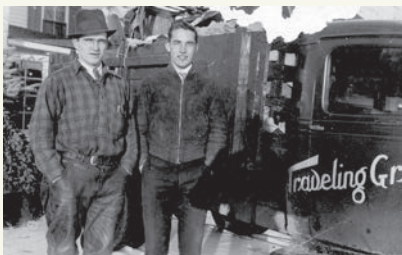
Aunt Elizabeth Johnson passed away in 1997; and her husband, Homer, passed away only five years later in 2002. According to Cynthia Vasko Clark, Aunt Elizabeth's granddaughter, Elizabeth's and Homer's 50th wedding anniversary was held outside at their house in Lyndonville not too far from where Teresa and John Vasko live today. The actual year of their celebration is rather nebulous, but I remember that I attended that event along with



Elizabeth and Homer Johnson



Anniversary vase that was filled with flowers at both Homer and Elizabeth's AND Teresa and John Vasko's 50th wedding anniversaries.



Uncle Clayton helping Uncle Homer with his traveling grocery store.

my nephew, Michael Gibbs. I recall that it was a VERY hot day and there were lots of family and friends milling about in the heat and trying to cool down with cold beverages as well as to partake of the food served from tents that were set up in the yard.

Cynthia recalls that the event was held on their actual anniversary date of July 9th but is unsure of the year. To the best of my recollection, it was sometime in 1995 because my nephew from California was visiting me at that time and we made the trip up to Vermont from Massachusetts. If anyone else was there and is able to corroborate this timeline, please let us know.

One of the highlights of Homer and Elizabeth's 50th celebration was that Cynthia – who was a very young girl then – was splendidly attired in Aunt Elizabeth's original wedding dress. Cousin Teresa was so proud of her daughter as Cynthia mingled with the guests, more than likely letting them know about the significance of the dress she was wearing.

The 50th anniversary vase pictured here on this page held flowers which were displayed at Elizabeth's and Homer's party back then. Fast forward to 2018, and the same vase contained flowers for Cynthia's parents' 50th wedding anniversary. (More on that later.) Cynthia, to this day, displays this vase in her home in California.

In researching this story, I

learned two things about the Johnsons. One is that Homer and Elizabeth for many years were the leaders of the largest 4H club in the state of Vermont. The second fact is that one of Homer's favorite things to do was to regale company with

stories of how he and his brothers, years before, ran a traveling grocery store business servicing the Northeast Kingdom. I'm sure his guests at the 50th wedding anniversary soiree were treated to some of these narratives.



Cynthia Vasko Clark, Homer and Elizabeth's Granddaughter

Clayton and Gerry Gardner



By the time Clayton and Gerry's 50th wedding anniversary rolled around in 1998, the internet was still in its infancy, but the **Gardner Newsletter** had already begun its first year of publication. The **Gardner Newsletter** web-site at www.gardnernews.org was soon to follow a couple of years later.



Here is Clayton Gardner's letter published in the Fall, 1998 issue of the Gardner Newsletter about his and Gerry's 50th wedding anniversary held at the Highland Lodge in Greensboro, VT as well as the train travels they experienced on their trip from Chicago to Washington.



The Highland Lodge,
Greensboro, VT



"What a great 50th wedding anniversary we had! I met cousins that I had not seen in 50 years and, of course, visited with all of you. Ron and Brenda did a great job and Pattie helped in many ways, especially by using the Internet to find a place in Vermont. The Highland Lodge was great, and the food and service were excellent.

Above: Clayton and
Gerry along with
Cousin Teresa and
Uncle Raymond

Our trip to Maine with Nita, Dawnita, Ron, Brenda, Pattie and Pattie's folks was expensive but worth it. On our way back from Nita's to Brenda's we stopped at Friendly's in Southington, Connecticut. To our great surprise, Sandra and Dick Baraw were in the booth next to us. We did not see them until Sandra spoke to us. That was some coincidence. They were on their way back from Pennsylvania.

Brenda took us to Penn Station to catch the train back to Washington. It was a good trip except that on the trip from Chicago to Washington the heat came on and our compartment got very hot – possibly around 90 degrees. All the deluxe compartments on our sleeper got very hot. The porter turned the heat off for the deluxe compartments and then the smaller compartments got very cold, so he turned the heat back on.

At about 1:30 a.m., we called the porter again. He got the heat to

go down for an hour or so and then it came back on again as hot as ever. All the people in the deluxe compartments moved to the empty dining car where it was cool, but not a good place to sleep.

A gal who seemed to be in charge of the train found us empty small compartments; and, after a while, she said that she removed a circuit board from the temperature controller somewhere in our sleeper. The result was that our deluxe compartments became habitable, so

we moved back in around 5:00 a.m. and got a bit of sleep before arriving in Washington around 9:30 a.m. and Carol picked us up.

The gal in charge of the train said she would do her best to get substantial refunds for us. We shall see. I had over 500 e-mails waiting and about a bushel of regular mail. It has taken a long time to catch up. In the bushel of mail, I found the Round Robin. I will make this short as I still have many letters to answer (or throw away).

More about Clayton and Gerry

Love to all, Clayton and Gerry”

50 years earlier in 1948, the press in Springfield, VT published the story about Clayton and Gerry’s wedding. What’s striking about this article is that Aunt Beulah was Maid of Honor, and a very young Cousin Teresa was the flower girl. As you read through the article, you can see that Uncle Adelbert and Uncle Raymond participated as ushers at the wedding.

“Geraldine Wyman is the Bride of Clayton Gardner

SPRINGFIELD, VT – Miss Geraldine Elizabeth Wyman, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Wyman of Springfield and Clayton Gardner of Springfield, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Gardner of Island Pond, were married Saturday afternoon, October 16, at the First Congregational Church with Rev. Richard Beyer officiating at the double ring ceremony.

The bride, given in marriage by her father, wore a gown of white taffeta, with a long train. The off-the-shoulder yoke

and long sleeves were trimmed with wide silk lace. Her veil was fingertip length, and she carried a bouquet of white sweet peas, button pompoms, and white carnations.

Miss Beulah Gardner of Wollaston, MA, sister of the groom, was maid of honor. She wore a gown of pink marquisette, with matching hat, and carried a nosegay of sweet peas.

Miss Theresa Dufraine of Greenfield, MA and Miss Jean Davis of Chelsea were bridesmaids, wearing taffeta gowns with fishtail backs falling into short trains. Miss Dufraine’s frock was aqua and so was Miss Davis’ orchid. Each carried nosegays of sweet peas and wore matching hats and mitts.

The little flower girl was Theresa Johnson of Lyndonville, niece of the groom. She wore blue dotted Swiss and carried a basket of mixed flowers.

Howard Wyman of Vergennes, brother of the bride, was best man. The ushers were Adelbert Gardner of Derby and Raymond Gardner of Island Pond, brothers of the groom.

An outdoor reception was held

at the home of the bride, 148 Park Street. For going away, Mrs. Gardner chose a rose-colored suit, with black accessories and a corsage of white sweet peas and pompoms from the center of her bridal bouquet.

After a wedding trip through New York and the White Mountains, the couple are making their home at 163 Park Street.

Mrs. Gardner is a graduate of Springfield High School and Wilfred Academy in Boston. She has been employed at the Aldora Beauty Shop.

Mr. Gardner is a graduate of Derby Academy, Derby, Lyndon Normal School, and Commercial Trade School of Chicago. He is employed at the Springfield Garage.”

When Uncle Clayton passed away in 2014, he and Gerry had been married for 66 years! Sadly, Aunt Gerry passed away just this past year in December 2023.

Raymond and Margaret Gardner

Raymond and Margaret Gardner's 50th wedding anniversary was held on June 10, 2000 at Winter Island in Salem, MA. By this time the internet had come into its own and the Gardner Newsletter had already been publishing for a couple of years. We don't have to do much print research to find out more about this event because it has its own page set up on www.gardnernews.org.

Just scroll down to the index and click on the link that says "Raymond's 50th Anniversary." There you will find wonderful pictures of family members (espe-

cially a lot of photos of the Gardner cousins) who were there to help Raymond and Margaret celebrate. If you were there, you may even get to see a picture of yourself and marvel at how

you looked almost 24 years ago!

On September 19, 2000, Uncle Raymond wrote about his 50th wedding anniversary in the Round Robin: "As you know, the children gave Margaret and I a nice 50th. They picked a good day in June, and there weren't many good days in June. I guess you would have to say

Margaret picked that good day 50 years ago; very good planning."

When Margaret Gardner passed away in 2013, she and Uncle Raymond had been married for 63 years!



Raymond and Margaret Gardner after 60 (not 50) years of marriage!

Right: Winter Island, Salem, MA, the venue for Uncle Raymond's and Aunt Margaret's 50th wedding anniversary. Be sure to open the special page set up on www.gardnernews.org to see the many pictures of everyone who attended this event.



Rod and Irene Ames

Cousin Rod and Irene Ames' 50th wedding anniversary was celebrated by family and friends at the Derby Community Church on June 23, 2012. As we talked about before in this article, this is the same church where Ruth and Henry Metcalf and their family and friends assembled 17 years earlier) to remember their own 50-year nuptials.

You can see a video of Rod and Irene's event by clicking on Aunt Nita's face on www.gardnernews.org and then do some heavy scrolling through the page (about mid-way through) until you come across Rod and Irene standing together to pose for their 50th wedding anniversary photo. Click on their picture to watch some of what transpired during that happy time.

On June 23, 2022, Rod and Irene Ames became the members of a select group of people who breathe the rarified air of those being married for over 60+ years.



Rod and Irene Ames' 50th wedding anniversary at Derby Community Church.



Newly married couple, Rod and Irene Ames

John and Teresa Vasko



Lots of people gathered together to cheer on John and Cousin Teresa Vasko as they reached their historic marriage marker. Cynthia Vasko Clark has this to say about her mother's 50th wedding anniversary:

"My parents' 50th wedding anniversary was celebrated on August 4, 2018 (actual anniversary 9/21/18) at

Right: York Meeting House in Lyndon, VT



what is now the York Street Meeting House in Lyndon, VT. It was previously a church - the church that they were married in.

Agnes Sears, who was the organist at their wedding, came back and played at their 50th anniversary party as well."

Yet again, www.gardnernews.org was on hand to document this momentous occasion. You can see many pictures of John and Teresa Vasko's 50th by clicking on

Aunt Elizabeth's face on the main page of www.gardnernews.org and then do some scrolling down the page until you see the link directing you to the page where these pictures reside.

In addition, Part III of the Summer 2018 issue of the **Gardner Newsletter** is wholly devoted to covering this event. Now that you have two sources to learn about Teresa and John's special day, please be sure to re-visit them both.

Tony and Bunny Maria

July 5, 2003 was the day of Tony and Bunny Maria's 50th wedding anniversary. Perhaps many of you don't know who Bunny (Eleanor) Maria is. Bunny's mother, Laura, was Grandma Gardner's sister. Great Aunt Laura ran an iconic roadside vegetable stand near her home in Stow, MA for many, many years. Bunny is also a favorite cousin of "The Original Gang of Ten" on their mother's side of the family.

www.gardnernews.org covered this special anniversary party too. A single page is set up on the website just to show off the photos taken while Tony and Bunny's friends and family



Bunny and her husband of 50 years, Tony, dancing together.

paid tribute to them for being married 50 years.

Scroll down to the index on the main page of the Gardner News website until you reach this link: [Bunny & Tony's 50th Anniversary + Tony's Funeral](#). Clicking on this link will take you first to Tony Maria's funeral held in 2016; and then as you scroll further down the page, you will see the pictures relating to the couple's 50th anniversary party.

Dawnita Ames (Aunt Nita's daughter) was an especially exuberant guest at this function. It's fun to see her dancing with her second cousin, Charles Maria (Bunny's son).



Dawnita Ames dancing with her 2nd cousin, Charles Maria

Thank you, dear readers, for staying with me as we traveled back in time and remember these awesome people who did more than just make their marriages work. They were true lifetime partners for each other and genuine soulmates who stayed together to paint us a heartwarming mural of marriage that is so beautiful and enduring.

If you click on all the links mentioned in this story,

you will become very familiar with the **Gardner News** website, which was designed to supplement the print version of the newsletter. If you have a favorite member of "The Original Gang of Ten," please send in some pictures or an article about them that can be posted to the website or printed in the next newsletter.

I really want to hear from each and every one of you.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE 2024 GARDNER FAMILY REUNION

Let's all gather together again on July 13, 2024 at the NorthWoods Stewardship Center for our annual Gardner Family Reunion. Pictured below are all the people who attended the 2023 reunion. We hope you will be a part of this year's event. If you have any good ideas about new entertainment or about something interesting you would like to share with everyone, please contact Cousin Rod Ames, Cousin Paul Gardner, Cousin Raylene Ludgate, or Cousin Len Griffes to help make it happen. We want YOUR input!



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