

TILLAMOOK PUD



George and Marie Allen met in a Southern California high school in the late 1960s. The couple married in 1970, and has spent the past 43 years working their dairy farm in Tillamook. PHOTO BY JOANNA STELZIG

A Half-Century of Love

Fifty years later, the farmer still loves his city girl

By Denise Porter

Through love, sacrifice and all the trials and tribulations life brings, George and Marie Allen celebrated 50 years of marriage in 2020.

The couple has lived in Tillamook 43 years, working and growing the dairy farm they bought in 1977.

The saying goes that opposites attract. In this case, it seems to be true.

When they met, George was a tall farm boy with a military-style haircut. Marie was a petite Los Angeles-area city girl clad

in the latest fashions.

“To this day, I’ve never really milked a cow,” Marie says, and then laughs, “But I’ve fed calves, scrubbed walls and fed dry (not lactating) cows.”

Both George and Marie grew up in Southern California. His family had row-crop farming roots. In high school, he began working for a dairy farm in the Chino area. She loved the warmth, climate and vibe of her native state.

In 1967, new zoning laws meant George, Marie and several hundred other teens were pulled out of their old high schools

and into the brand-new Ontario High School for their junior year.

George and Marie settled into their new school, earning solid grades. George was elected Associated Student Body president and played football. He didn’t meet Marie until their senior year.

“She was this cute little thing I saw running around the school,” George remembers. “I had to meet her.”

Marie says George stood out from the other guys because of his short haircut.

“His dad wore it that way, too,” she says. “This was in the ’60s, and all the

guys—most of them—had long hair. I talked him into growing his hair out.”

The couple began dating December of their senior year. By the following Christmas Eve, at age 19, they were engaged. They married the following summer in 1970, then were separated for several months while Marie finished schooling to become a medical secretary.

George enrolled at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo to study dairy science. It was there he made a friend named Ed Jenkins.

After college, George began raising dairy heifers. A few years later, he bought a truck and began hauling alfalfa hay for area farmers. The couple’s first two sons were born during that time.

In the winter of 1976 when the hauling business was a bit slack, George and his father took a road trip to Oregon to look at dairies.

“We looked in the Willamette Valley and we looked in Tillamook,” George says.

He liked what he saw. He and Marie later found a dairy in Tillamook.

“It was a rundown mess, so it was in our price range,” George says with a laugh.

Marie recalls the real estate agent driving them around town and stopping at another dairy.

“You should meet this guy,” the agent told the couple. “He’s from California, too.”

“This guy” turned out to be their friend Ed from college. Ed and his wife, Barbara, had recently bought a dairy in Tillamook.

Knowing just two people in the area, George and Marie bought the farm and moved to Tillamook. Soon, their third son, Casey, was born. They later adopted their daughter, Angela.

“Me being a city girl, it was an adjustment at first,” Marie says. “I had to grasp it all.”

“There was no doubt Marie had a hard time adjusting to the climate change,” George says.

The slower, rural pace on the Oregon Coast was also an adjustment, Marie says. She remembers feeling overdressed every time she went to the store.

“I had never known this lifestyle



The excited young couple started their 50-year journey together at their wedding ceremony in the summer of 1970. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ALLENS

ever,” Marie says. “But he said, ‘This was what we’re going to do,’ and so we did. I supported him.”

In time, the couple settled in. Marie joined the Tillamook Dairy Women, and the couple became county Farm Bureau members. Marie also worked an off-the-farm job after a few years of staying home with their children.

“Her job gave us the health insurance we needed,” George says. “It was so important.”

Creating their life together meant hard work for both husband and wife. Marie has had health challenges that have been debilitating at times.

“George is a very supportive man and a good husband, and he always has been,” Marie says. “He supports me. He listens to me and I listen to him. I take him seriously.”

Marie laughs as she adds, “Sometimes I don’t like what he says, but I listen.”

George’s marriage advice is simple.

“You just gotta remember one term: ‘Yes dear!’” he says.

His voice takes a serious note.

“It takes patience and understanding, and it’s give and take,” he says. “There’s no big secret. You figure it out.”

Like many others celebrating milestone anniversaries, birthdays or other life events during the year of COVID-19 restrictions, the Allens could not have a large party. Instead, the couple went away for a quiet weekend when travel restrictions lessened.

Marie says that’s OK. Throughout the years, she has learned to enjoy life’s slower pace. There are 10 grandchildren and one great-grandchild to love, and a life to be savored.

“It’s been a wonderful life,” she says. “I thank God for it every morning when I wake up and when I go to bed every night.” ■