



POSING FOR THE CAMERA when they celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary in November were Vic and Opal Bryan of Oberlin. The couple moved to Oberlin after selling their farm in 1993 and both are enjoying retirement.

Oberlin couple still sweethearts

By MARY LOU OLSON

A courtship that began during their days at Decatur Community High School blossomed into a relationship that has given a full and happy life of nearly 65 years to Vic and Opal Bryan of Oberlin.

The former Opal Castle, Mrs. Bryan said that she and her husband started dating while they were in high school. After she graduated from normal training in 1937, she taught in rural schools for four years.

Mrs. Bryan was born on a farm seven miles northwest of Oberlin on Christmas Day, 1920; her parents were Walter and Gertrude Castle. She has a sister, Grace, now deceased, who married Virgil Hoppas, and a brother, Walter, who still lives on the Castle farmstead with his wife, the former Joanne Ater.

Her husband was born Oct. 22, 1918, in a sod house on a farm 10 miles southwest of Oberlin, the son of Clarence S. and Lillie Mae (Sumner) Bryan. When he was 4 or 5 years old, he said, the family moved into a new frame home. He is the next to the youngest in a family of seven boys: Gilbert, Gerald, Glen, Gaylord, Guy and Wayne, all now deceased.

Mr. Bryan recalled that he began working at the Hotel Oberlin in 1937 and was employed there by Henry and Lena Olson for several years. He also worked for area farmers.

During their dating days, entertainment was mostly going to movies or playing cards with other couples, the couple said.

They were married on Nov. 9, 1941, at the Methodist Church in Oberlin, which they still attend. The newlyweds made their first home in a small rented farm house, but on Nov. 30, 1941, they bought a farm of their own 13 miles southwest of Oberlin, along the Rexford Road. They moved a four-room house there and later remodeled it.

"Farming was nothing new to me," Mrs. Bryan said, "since I was reared on a farm. After we were married, I helped my husband with the milking and we separated and sold the cream, along with eggs from our chickens. We also raised wheat, grain sorghum and livestock.

"Catching a chicken, killing, scalding, plucking the feathers and butchering all became a part of the day's work."

She said she enjoyed her vegetable and flower garden and spent

much time canning the garden produce and making jelly from wild sand plums her husband brought home.

"We both really enjoyed farm life," they said, "and raising hogs, chickens and cattle meant there was always good meat to eat. In those days, neighbors worked together filling silos, harvesting and hauling wheat and exchanging work."

Mrs. Bryan said she pitched in when she could, driving the tractor so her husband could take a break for lunch, scooping wheat or driving a truck.

The couple became the parents of two daughters, Sharon Sue, who was born March 17, 1944; and Jeanne Carol, who arrived on Jan. 30, 1948. Both girls later married and had children of their own. Sharon has three sons, Brian, Brent and Brad Simonsson, and Jeanne has two daughters, Carla and Keri Britton.

"One of our winter highlights was making homemade ice cream," their daughter, Sharon Slabaugh, recalled. "That included chopping ice from the stock tank and putting it in a gunny sack to crush. Later, homemade ice cream became a family tradition, winter or summer."

Mr. Bryan enjoyed hunting and fishing, and every year his cousins from eastern Kansas often came out for pheasant hunting. Fishing, mostly with neighbors, meant trips to pasture ponds or area lakes. In 1980, Mr. Bryan went to Saskatchewan, Canada, with his grandsons, where he caught a 24-pound lake trout.

Along with farming, Mr. Bryan worked for 15 years at the Fifth Wheel service station in Oberlin, owned by Elmer Kathka. He was manager when he quit in 1973 to add to his farming operation the land of his brother, Wayne, after his death.

Mrs. Bryan started working for Farmers Loan and Abstract Co. in November 1960, a position she held for several years.

"Over the years, belonging to the Calico Gals Club has been a highlight and I am still a member," said Mrs. Bryan.

Other activities included helping her girls with 4-H projects and teaching Sunday School.

The Bryans supported their daughters' activities, which included watching Jeanne as a cheerleader and Sharon in her piano recit-

als. Getting together with neighbors, playing cards or a game of horseshoes or just passing the time visiting over a cup of coffee played an important part in their family life.

The couple hosts an annual Christmas Eve family gathering. Mr. Bryan always makes the candy while his wife does the meals. His specialties include peanut brittle, fudge, peanut clusters and cherry mash.

"To this day, the peanut brittle is a 'must' request from the family," said Mrs. Slabaugh.

"Television has come into everyone's home, but it can never replace the books and stories shared together," she added. "My dad's favorites are the Westerns, especially the Louis L'Amour books, and my mother enjoys crossword puzzles and the daily newspapers."

As grandchildren and great-grandchildren arrived, it expanded the couple's activities, and they still support them at wrestling matches, football and musical programs.

"God has blessed us with family and we have appreciated that gift," they said. "Family means everything to us."

On Aug. 26, 1993, the couple had a farm sale and moved to Oberlin.

"Oberlin is a great community and we are enjoying our retirement," they said. "We've always worked well together and though we have had both good and bad times, we just tried to take all the 'goodies' and put them together."

"A pattern which we have followed over the years is to end each day with, 'Good night, I love you,' which has helped us to remain close and have a good marriage."



MANY GOOD TIMES were enjoyed by Vic and Opal (above) during their courtship days in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Their daughters, Jeanne and Sharon (left) brought much happiness to the couple, who lived on a farm southwest of Oberlin.

