

people

Social Notes, Service News, Club News

Close-Up

Romance Is Still Alive And Well

By AUDREY L. WILLIAMS
Staff Writer

Half a century is a long time -- especially when you've been married that long.

The Rev. and Mrs. Marcus Laughlin and Mr. and Mrs. Willie Grier have spent 50 years of their lives together. Both couples married in the midst of the Great Depression, and both couples are success stories when it comes to their marriage.

The Laughlins' marriage brought them a total of eight children, but only two are living today, while the Griers had no children, but managed to accumulate an abundance of godchildren.

In a celebration of their 50th anniversaries, the Laughlins, who will have been married 51 years this month, and the Griers, married 50 years last month, have renewed their wedding vows and reaffirmed their love.

Both couples have their own formula for longevity in a marriage, but the one thing they both have in common is a sense of love and respect for each other.

The first time the Rev. Marcus Laughlin laid eyes on his wife Eutha was in a church in Georgia where he was the pastor. "I knew I was gonna marry her," he says.

Mrs. Laughlin, however, says she didn't exactly feel the same about him.

"My husband had been in town for quite a while," she says. "He wasn't dating any of the girls, so I decided he thought he was cute."

With the misunderstanding cleared, a courtship filtered between the two, which eventually led to marriage.

"We've never thought of ourselves as a success," says Rev. Laughlin. "Today, success is mostly based on money, but when we married we were poor right in the midst of the depression."

Rev. Laughlin, who pastored at St. Andrews and Saint Matthews Methodist Church, speaks in a whisper, his voice silenced, he says, due to the abundance of speaking engagements he made before his retirement.

After the Laughlins were married, four years and nine months went by before the Laughlins decided to start a family, largely because of the financial burden children would have brought during the depression.

Mrs. Laughlin, who was a teacher, ended her career

after those four years and nine months to become a housewife and mother.

"I never regretted it," she says. "It was a joy raising the children and my husband wanted them so."

Both view the institution of marriage as sacred and holy. In fact, those elements were a part of their relationship's very existence.

Says Rev. Laughlin: "The first thing I would tell a couple planning to marry is to base it all on living a Christian life and to accept the vows not just for the good but for the bad also."

"Children nowadays have the idea of 'I'll try it before I take the vows,'" says Mrs. Laughlin. "I just don't think that's anything to look forward to. Basically, I don't think there's anything wrong with marriage today. It's the way people look at it."

Rev. and Mrs. Laughlin, who were married on their birthdays, say despite what others might think after all these years, romance is still alive and well in their marriage.

"Courtship begins at marriage," says Rev. Laughlin. "I treated her a lot better than I did when we got married than when I courted her."

"Before I married her, she was whoever could get her and it's just foolish not to take care of what you have," he says.

Mr. and Mrs. Willie Grier were high school sweethearts at Columbia Heights High School, which has since been torn down. She really didn't think their courtship was that serious and marriage was far from her mind.

"That's the reason I couldn't play baseball," says the spry Mr. Grier. "I had to escort her home from school."

"During our generation you had nobody to give you a start, so the marriage had to be a partnership ..."

-- Mrs. Odell Grier

Because they also married during the depression, they say love and understanding was the most they could offer each other during that period in their lives.

"During our generation you had nobody to give you a start, so the marriage had to be a partnership," says Mrs. Grier. "What's mine is his and vice versa."

Deciding to leave Winston-Salem, the Griers packed up and moved north to West Springfield, Mass., where Mrs. Grier went into business for herself as a cosmetologist and Mr. Grier worked as a technician for General Fiber Box. They lived there for 26 years until they returned to Winston-Salem to retire eight years ago.

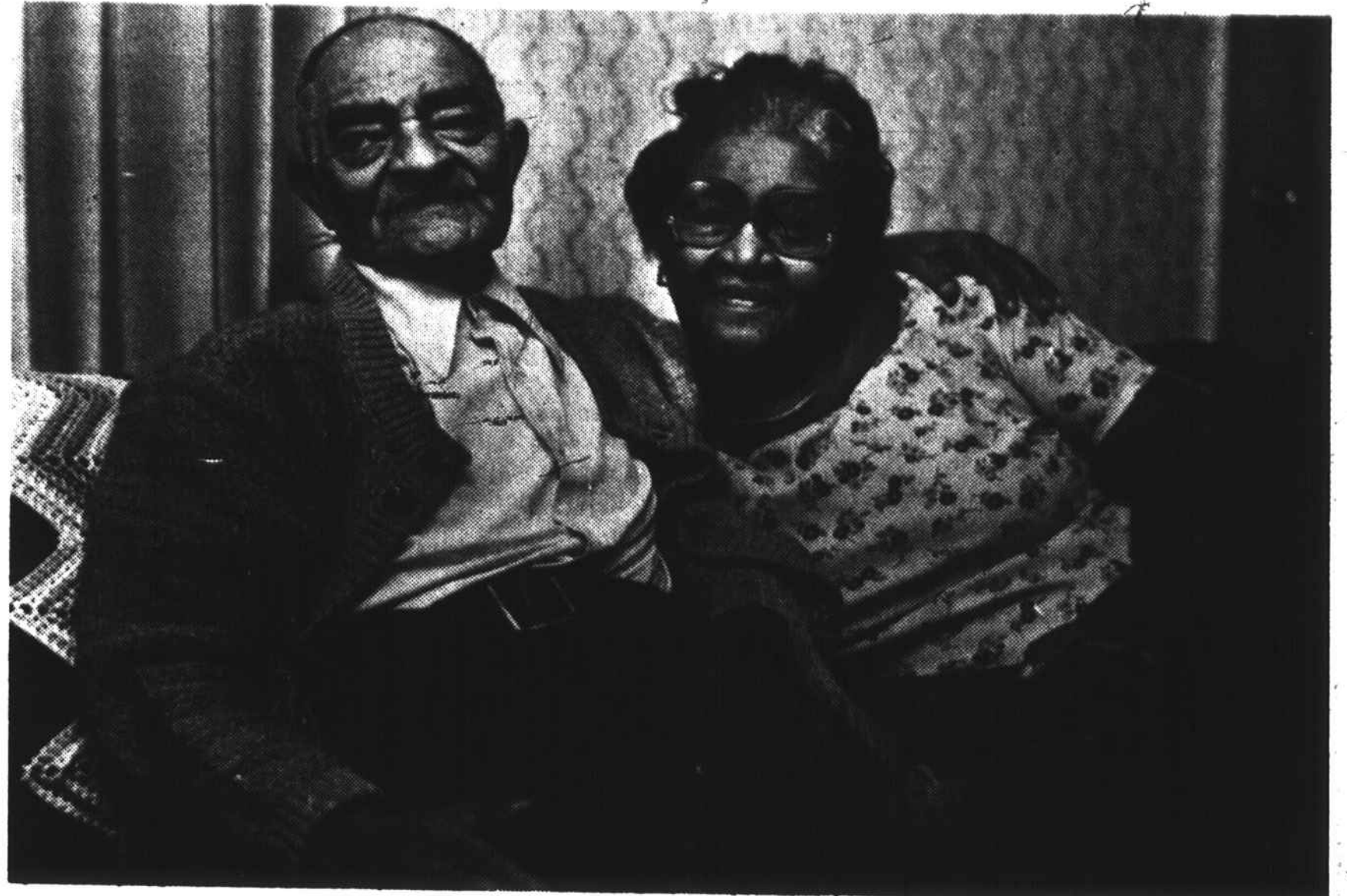
"I didn't go to a hotshot college," says Mr. Grier, "but these 50 years have taught me a lot and I had a lot fun, too."

"I don't believe in divorce," says Mrs. Grier, and her husband, who is an ordained deacon, agrees with her.

"I don't believe in this marriage counseling, either, because it all starts in the home," she says. "Parents used to tell a boy if you abuse her, bring her back where you got her from."

Mr. Grier adds: "People don't take marriage seriously today. You can divorce at anytime and that's not the proper way to settle things."

Whenever there is a disagreement between the two of



The Rev. and Mrs. Marcus Laughlin agree that leading a Christian life has made their 50-year marriage survive (photo by James Parker).



Mr. and Mrs. Willie Grier's key to 50 years of marriage: Sharing (photo by James Parker).

them, they say instead of fighting it out they have always gone their separate ways until some rationale could be found and tempers cooled.

"We need each other," says Mrs. Grier. "I feel secure with our marriage. It has made our love stronger."

"We still have romance in our marriage," says Mr. Grier. "I kiss my wife anytime I feel like it."

"Yeah, he's a real kisser," she says.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

THURSDAY, JANUARY 12

• There will be a one-hour press conference with Dr. Benjamin Hooks, executive director of the NAACP, and Patrick Hairston, Winston-Salem Branch NAACP president, at Mechanics and Farmers Bank at 770 North Claremont Ave. at 1 p.m.

• Salem College will sponsor an information session on the College's Adult Degree Program at 8 p.m. at the Salem College Fine Arts Center Drama Workshop. For reservations call 761-2669 or 721-2685.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 13

• Registration for an Old House Restoration Workshop continues today. For more information on the workshop and registration, call 767-8213.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14

• Registration for boys and girls aged 5-12 interested in modeling in the Ebony & Ivory Models Spring Fashion Show will begin at 1 p.m. at the West End Boulevard YMCA. For more information call 785-1802.

• The Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) will present a special program titled "Whistler" at 8:15 p.m. In a one-man dramatization, Malcom Morrison, dean of the School of Drama at the North Carolina School of the Arts, will present the life and legend of 19th century artist James McNeill Whistler.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15

• The High Point Human Relations Commission will sponsor the 10th-annual Martin Luther King Jr. Community Celebration at 3 p.m. at the High Point Theatre at 220 East Commerce St. Ralph G. Neas, The executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights will be the guest speaker.

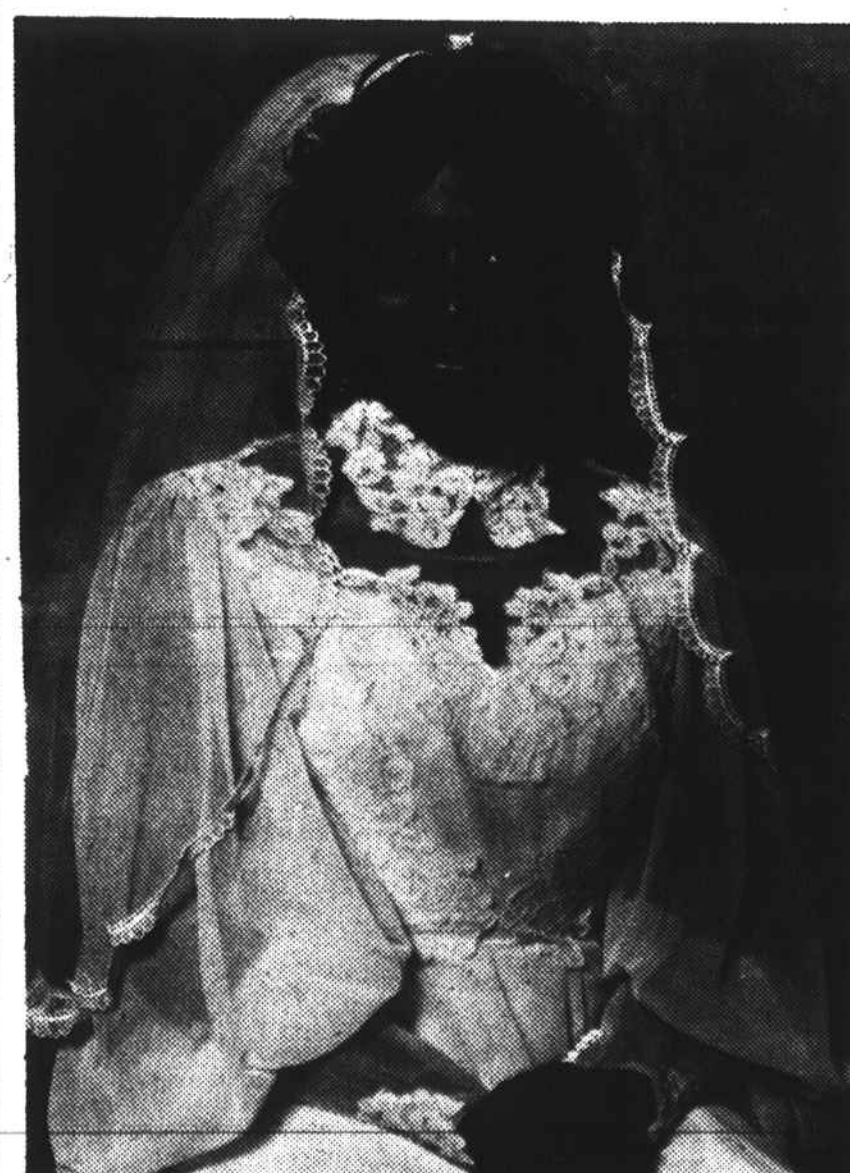
MONDAY, JANUARY 16

• All state employees are invited to attend a memorial tribute for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at 11:50 a.m. at the Archives-Library Building Auditorium at 109 East Joyner St. in Raleigh. The Honorable Henry E. Frye, N.C. Supreme Court Associate Justice, will be the guest speaker.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18

• "Housing Options for Older Adults" is the subject of the YWCA Options for Living Program at 10:30 a.m. at the Glade Street YWCA. For more information call 722-5138.

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Betty Abbott Wilson

Couple Celebrate Golden Anniversary

Mr. and Mrs. George Stivender of 1027 Manly St. recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary by renewing their vows at the Holiday Inn North, with the Rev. James Fulwood of Saint Mark Baptist Church officiating.

Also speaking was at the Rev. E.L. Clark Sr. Soloists were Mrs. Hattie Fulwood and Bernestine Spank, granddaughter of the couple.

More than 50 guests attended the celebration.

Social Notes

Abbott And Wilson Marry At Temple

Betty Sloan Abbott and Franklin Samuel Wilson Jr. were married in a 4 p.m. New Year's Day ceremony at Prince Hall Masonic Temple, with the groom's brother, the Rev. Bobby Wilson, and the Rev. Claude Turner officiating.

The bride is the daughter of Mrs. Mamie Sloan of Winston-Salem and Mr. Booker T. Sloan of Rural Hall. The bridegroom is the son of Mrs. Inez Wilson of Winston-Salem and the late Mr. Franklin S. Wilson.

Abbott is a graduate of North Forsyth High School and Forsyth Technical Institute. She is employed by Bali Company.

Wilson is a graduate of Carver High School and Winston-Salem State University. He earned his master's degree from New York University. Wilson is employed by Phillip Morris Tobacco Co. in Richmond, Va.

The bride was escorted by her brother, Booker T. Sloan Jr., with Naomi Hunt as maid of honor.

Bridesmaids were Loraine Wilson, Linda Payne and the bride's sisters, Sharon Shuford and Diane Hadley.

The best man was his brother, Freddie Wilson. Ushers were Nelson Williams, Kenneth Spillman, Nathaniel Wilson and Alphonso Bell.

The couple will live in Richmond.

Urban League Launches Campaign

Winston-Salem Urban League President Thomas Elijah Jr. announced late last week that the Urban League will launch a \$550,000 fund-raising campaign later this month.

The fund-raising effort will be known as The Challenge to Achieve Campaign. Proceeds will be used to establish a new employment training center in the Urban League's building at the northwest corner of Fifth and Trade streets.

The campaign's general chairman will be Robert A. Emken, executive vice president for Finance and Administration at R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. Under Emken's leadership, a campaign steering committee is being formed and organizational work is under way in preparation for the official campaign kickoff Jan. 18.

"Current economic conditions have increased the number of unemployed and the problems they face in finding employment," said Emken. "... Because of its longtime commitment to improving employment opportunities here in Winston-Salem, the Urban League is in a unique position to work with minority and disadvantaged citizens, black and white older adults, women and other people who deserve a chance to make it on their own."

Emken also noted that the Urban League is presently hampered in its work by inadequate facilities.

The former Wachovia Bank branch at Fifth and Trade streets and several small buildings adjoining it were acquired by the Urban League in 1980. One building was remodeled more than a year ago and presently houses the Urban League's Senior Center.

The goal of The Challenge to Achieve is to provide funds for renovations of other buildings. When this work is completed, the Urban League's offices and training facilities will be moved to Fifth and Trade from their present location in the Pepper Building.

Couple Honored

Mr. and Mrs. John H. Blackburn. The two-hour celebration was held at Les Abres, with the couple's children serving as hostesses.

The Martin's have seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.