

E-mail delivery snafu brings couple together

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coups free time conversing online with Don.

"I gave him my cell (phone) number in case he was ever in Carlisle," Sherry said. "I never give that out."

While they were still online, Don called Sherry on her cell phone just to make sure it worked, he said.

Two weeks later, when Don was returning home from an appointment near Carlisle, he called Sherry and asked her to dinner, and Sherry finally found out he was single.

"I don't do dinner," Sherry said. "I said, How about coffee?"

The two met at an all-night restaurant and talked for hours about spirituality and the ministry.

Since they were already at ease with each other, they went to a local mall and then to dinner.

Sherry made it clear she wasn't looking for a relationship.

"I was scoping out the terrain to see what would hap-

pen," Don said. "I didn't expect anything to come of it."

They kept in contact by e-mail, and Don invited Sherry to Johnston in November 2003.

She made the drive against her better judgment. That weekend, Don took Sherry to a coffee shop for lunch and then to dinner at an area restaurant.

When a member of his congregation saw him holding hands with Sherry at the coffee shop, the cat was out of the bag.

Just before Christmas, they were talking about marriage, but Sherry fretted this wasn't part of her plan.

"You date for a year, and you're engaged for a year," she said.

"It wasn't the plan in my head, but my heart and spirit had other plans."

Sherry started looking for jobs in Johnston and planned to get work and an apartment before taking any matrimonial plunges.

Her Christian counselor

had other ideas, telling her if she was going to pick up and get married, she should go for it all.

After one bad marriage, Sherry wasn't willing to jump into anything.

She wanted to heal before stepping into another relationship.

She prayed about the situation and had the support of her counselor.

"God, my counselor and my singles group were all telling me I needed to go," Sherry said.

The final straw came when a close friend asked, "If God is telling you to do something, why aren't you following?"

Continuing to resist, Sherry mentioned her cruise, which she would later find out was canceled, and her baseball tickets.

She could get married after the championship game in September, she decided, but Don started school in August.

If they got married before July, Sherry was willing to travel to see her baseball games, but with June and July being prime wedding times, venues weren't available.

As the couple looked at April or May, they found the only time they could reserve was May 15, 2004.

Now that the date was set, the next hurdle was figuring out how to have two ceremonies—one in Carlisle and one in Johnston.

The May 15 date would be their wedding at the Carlisle Brethren in Christ Church. The reaffirmation of their

vows would take place May 23 at Centennial.

"It was January, and she had five months to plan two weddings," Don said.

Don wrote the ceremony for Carlisle, and Sherry planned their escape from the reception.

"At 4 p.m., the band played Take Me Out to the Ball Game, and we left for a Harrisburg Senators game at 6:05," Sherry said.

For the Johnston reaffirmation, Don's superintendent did things a little differently, and Sherry found out about the changes five minutes before the ceremony.

Sherry spent her honeymoon in Carlisle, packing her belongings, but the couple did go camping for a week in June.

In addition to serving as pastor of Centennial, Don works full-time as a salesman at Miller Auto Parts near South Fork.

Sherry works as a part-time school bus driver for Griffith Transportation Inc., Boswell.

She also is the director of Angel Food Ministries for Centennial, which now works out of the Davidsville Community Church and School.

The Rudes also have a music ministry in which Don plays guitar and Sherry plays piano and organ, but they haven't had much time for it lately.

"As a United Methodist pastor, I can only make plans for a year at a time," Don said. "When I get a call, we have to move."

Sherry, who is in her early 40s, understands that it's part of the call.

Don, who is in his early 50s, believes that tying the knot life makes the marriage stronger.

"It prepares you better for it," he said. "You accept the fact of life as it really is."

Sherry doesn't believe in coincidence, but in what she calls "Godincidence."

"God hasn't just called us to marriage, he called us to ministry together," Sherry said.

"We made a commitment to God in marriage and ministry."

Sherry believes the secret to a happy marriage is no returns.

"Your intentions are forever," she said.

"Every day we say we love each other and were happy. We intend to continue to love each other and be happy even if we hit some bumps."

"May 15, 2004, was the first day of the rest of our lives," Don said.

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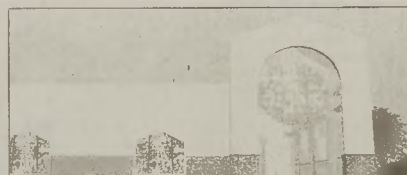
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