

Red-hot and true-blue

by Beverly Denver

July has always been a big month for our family — one full of important days worthy of celebration! The Fourth of July, of course, is one of the biggies. But, so too is the day before!

July 3rd is the day my parents got married. And, July 3, 2007 was an especially significant. On that day, they celebrated their 60th anniversary!

The fact that my parents got married on a Fourth of July weekend is fitting. Their feelings for each other mirror perfectly their feelings for their country. As loving partners and devoted patriots, both are red-hot and true-blue!

A decorated veteran of the Navy, Air Force and two wars, my dad is a flag-flying American who has always taken his citizenship seriously. A display case full of medals and three Presidential Citations is evidence of that.

My mother was much the same. Her commitment to our country started when she was 17 years old, with a position at the Pentagon. Within a few years, this farmer's daughter from Arkansas had distinguished herself in her career and as a beauty.

In 1947, Mother won the title of Miss Naval Air Reserve. As such she was given the opportunity to christen the Goodyear Blimp, *The Enterprise*, model in New York and offered a screen test in Hollywood.

But, within a few months, Mother passed on modeling and the movies — opting instead to marry my irresistibly handsome father and serve her country. (If I ever write a book, their love story will fill its pages.)

When Mother retired from Civil Service in 1986 (with commendations of her own), she had worked for 38 years, in numerous locals and for every department of the federal government — taking only short breaks to give birth to my two sisters and me.

Growing up, we always acknowledged my parents' anniversary and Independence Day in grand style. On July 3rd, anniversary cakes and cards and gifts were part of the scene, but so too were three screaming (female) meemies scurrying amidst activity. Patience prevailed, however, as my parents whistled tunes like *God Bless America* and *Yankee Doodle Dandy* and concentrated on getting things ready for the Fourth of July.

I remember so well early-morning grocery store runs with Mother to pick up burgers and buns, while Dad stayed home to scour the grill. I remember Dad helping us with the last minute decorating of our bicycles and tricycles, while Mother put the finishing touches on a trio of Betsy Ross-inspired costumes of red, white and blue.

Back then I was clueless to the fact that my parents never — not even once — celebrated their anniversary by getting away by themselves for some romantic holiday. Little did I know then that doing so was the custom for so many other married couples! Years later, when I realized all they must have missed out on, I asked them, “Did you ever regret getting married the day before a holiday — when everybody was focused on so many other things?”

Both were quiet for a while, and then sweet smiles came across their faces.

“Well,” I said, “Aren’t you going to answer me?”

They never did, and for a long time I suspected the worse.

Then, one day, I understood: For my parents, the yearly tending to the rituals of the season — their season — was the best, most appropriate and meaningful way to celebrate!

And, all those fireworks at the end of the day! They just made the celebrating all the more spectacular!

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