

## FEATURE

# Many jelly beans later, two celebrate 75 years

By Monique Vicknair  
Catholic News Service

RACELAND, La. — Augustin "Gus" Theriot and May Bourgeois met at the dance hall in Raceland 77 years ago.

The place was called "The Basile," as Gus said, half in English and half in the Cajun French common among the older population in south Louisiana.

The couple courted for two years before they married. On his visits, Gus would bring May candy — usually jelly beans.

"That's the kind of candy I like," May said. He also would bring her Hershey's chocolates.

The Theriots recently celebrated their 75th wedding anniversary, with a Mass in their home attended by family members and celebrated by their pastor, Msgr. Donald Ledet of St. Mary's Nativity Church.

Gus, who is 94, and May, 93, also received congratulatory letters from the entire parish as well as the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, La. Greetings also came in

from President Clinton.

When asked about the key to having such a long-lasting marriage, May put it simply: "We love each other."

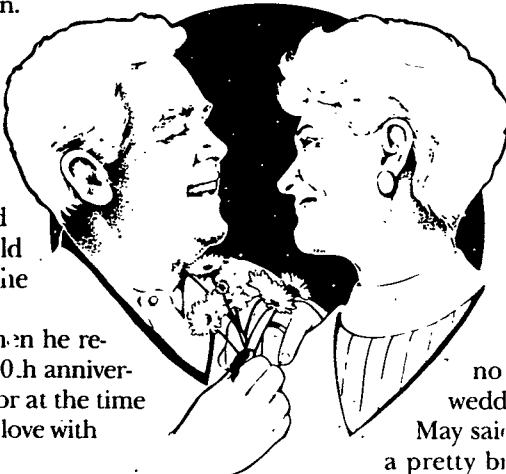
"We made a good life together," she told *The Bayou Catholic*, the diocesan newspaper.

Gus just smiled when he recalled that on their 50th anniversary their parish pastor at the time asked if he was still in love with his sweetheart.

A retired sugar cane farmer Gus was raised in a family of seven girls and two boys.

"I worked in the fields all my life," he said.

He labored in the sugar cane fields, starting at the tender age of 8 or perhaps even earlier — he doesn't quite remember. In those days sugar cane was hauled by hand.



Coincidentally, May also came from a family of seven girls and two boys.

Before she married, May used to clean the homes of two prominent families in Raceland. She was paid 75 cents a week.

Gus and May have no photographs of their wedding day in 1922. But

May said, "They said I made a pretty bride." She described her dress as being made of "beautiful silk lace."

But they don't agree on the color of Gus' suit. He said it was black; she remembered it being dark green.

After the wedding, the couple lived with Gus' parents for 13 years, until they could afford to build their own home. Their entire two-bedroom house was built for

\$3,500 using the wood from his grandparents' old home, which had been torn down. Gus recalled that the carpenter was paid \$3.25 for a hard day's work.

May spent her days working in the field with her husband and taking care of the farm. "In those times," Gus recalled, "we did not buy much stuff to eat. We were raising everything to eat."

After he retired at age 62, Gus ran a successful vegetable stand in front of his house. At the time, he had four gardens growing.

These days both of the Theriots use walkers to get around, and their hearing is failing. They both have arthritis. Otherwise, they both enjoy good health, said their daughter, Mildred Bourgeois.

She's their only child and a few years ago moved back in with them. The Theriots also have three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Mildred pointed out that her mother still cooks and bakes but doesn't own a microwave because Gus likes things cooked the "old-fashioned way."

## Continued from previous page

and separated couples. Rosemary, a retired nurse, facilitated the retreat, and Gerry, who works for the Department of Defense, attended it.

The newlyweds take delight in their blended families, especially being grandparents to her three grandchildren and his two.

Jeannene and Harlan Faller met in 1993 as students in the San Diego Diocesan Institute, working toward the master's of theological studies offered through the University of Dallas, a Catholic university in Irving, Texas. She was a widow; his previous marriage had been annulled.

They came to the institute to deepen

their faith, but they also found in each other someone who shared that objective. They sat next to each other in class and studied together.

"The first year, we practically lived at the library," said Harlan, an electrical engineer.

Their marriage, on Oct. 27, 1994, only enhanced their partnership.

"We sit at our desks and read. I'll ask, 'What do you think of that?'" said Jeannene, who works in the San Diego diocesan Office for the Missions. If the two had not be so interwoven, she said, "it would have been difficult to have a new program and new spouse."

The Fallers are scheduled to receive their master's degrees June 7. They hope

to serve in a part-time shared ministry.

When people say Pat McCarty looks familiar, she asks, "Was I holding an ice cream cone?" Most people nod and smile.

Pat and her late husband owned a Baskin Robbins outlet. With their six children, they worked in the ice cream store for the 22 years they owned it.

A member of St. Mary Magdalene Parish in San Diego, Pat sold the business after her husband's death, and she began exploring retirement opportunities.

In 1995, she attended the University of the Third Age, a three-week program of courses for senior citizens at the University of San Diego. That's where she met

Ron Matthews, a widower who had retired as an audit manager for an insurance company.

"We were both very contented with our lives and had not been looking to find a mate. Suddenly, God's love pours out and love blossoms," said Pat.

The couple discovered they shared a love of their faith and a fondness for activities like reading and listening to classical music. When they married last Nov. 30, Pat sold her home to her daughter and moved into Ron's house.

"There were minor adjustments," Ron said. "The consideration I get from Pat and the warmth is so satisfying."



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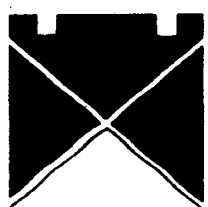
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