

Milestones

Faith, humor help couple weather 68 years

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

WEEDSPORT — It all began with a trip to the barber shop.

Back in 1926 — before their community had beauty parlors for women — Howard Finley drove his sister in from the family farm to the barber shop in Dowagiac, Mich. There he spotted Helen Miller.

"She was really a pretty good looking gal — back then," he joked.

He caught Helen's eye as well.

"I was looking for someone to support me," Helen quipped.

After a three-year courtship, the two married Aug. 20, 1929, in Holy Maternity Church in Dowagiac. This year, the 95-year-old parishioners at St. Joseph's Church, Weedsport — part of the Northern Cayuga Cluster — will celebrate 68 years of marriage.

They began married life with Howard working as a principal in a Michigan school. Nine months later, as the Great Depression tightened its grip on the nation, he was out of work.

"When the Depression started in '29, Michigan practically folded up," Howard recalled. "I couldn't get a teaching job there."

And in July 1930, they suffered the loss of their newborn daughter, Margaret.

The Finleys moved to Vermont, where Howard found a teaching position that lasted a couple of years. Their daughter Marilyn was born there in 1933.



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

Howard and Helen Finley, parishioners at St. Joseph's Church, Weedsport, will celebrate their 68th wedding anniversary this year.

Their years in Vermont were marked by tight budgets as they tried to get by on his teaching salary. They lived in a 20-room house — most of it shut off because they could only afford to heat three rooms. And one winter the temperature dropped to minus 55. Young Marilyn's hands swelled up due to the cold. Meanwhile, pipes burst, flooding the kitchen. But it was so cold, the water froze on the floor.

"Unless you could skate, you didn't want to go in there," Helen recalled.

Howard eventually lost that job, too, then taught for while in a town in northern New York. They finally settled in Weedsport in 1938, where he taught agriculture until retiring in 1966.

They acknowledged that the early years of married life were rough because of the Depression and the loss of their first child. But they found the strength to fight adversity.

"This may sound peculiar," Helen said. "It was prayer and faith in God that he would solve all our problems."

Howard added that it was also a matter of "rolling with the punches."

"In other words, you adjust to your problems," he said.

Life for the two has been good since those early days. Their son John was born in 1942. They now have eight grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Meanwhile, they were active in the St. Joseph's Parish. Together they counted the weekly collection for many years, for example, and Helen was long a mainstay when it came to cooking for parish events. Her needlepoint copy of Da Vinci's "The Last Supper" also hangs in the rectory.

After Howard retired from teaching, he became involved in the local Soil and Water Conservation District. He served in various offices in the state association of conservancy districts — including two years as president — and he and Helen traveled around the country for meetings.

These days, they still live in their own home. They enjoy good health, and each other's company, joking readily and affectionately. But they're hard pressed to figure out why their marriage has thrived for so many years.

"I think every married couple, you get annoyed, you have flare-ups — but you get over it," Helen observed.

"We've been fortunate," Howard remarked. He added with a smile, "The fact that we have been together, while she doesn't always agree with me, we seem to tolerate each other fairly well."

Diocesan couples celebrate milestone anniversaries

The names of the following couples celebrating "milestone" anniversaries — 25th, 50th, 55th, 60th, 65th — in 1997 were submitted in response to requests published in the March 20 and 27 editions of the *Catholic Courier*. The list includes only those couples celebrating anniversaries specified in the requests and who submitted the required information by the April 3 deadline.

The *Courier* is also recognizing Howard and Helen Finley of Weedsport for celebrating 68 years of marriage this year — the longest married of the couples whose names were submitted. (See accompanying article.)

The *Courier* staff extends congratulations to these couples and to all couples living out their vocation of marriage.

68th Anniversary

Howard and Helen Finley
Holy Maternity Church
Dowagiac, Mich.
August 20, 1929

65th Anniversary

Clarence and Mary Kesselring
Sacred Heart Cathedral
Rochester, N.Y.
October 22, 1932

Joseph and Katharine Pickens
Our Mother of Sorrows Church
Rochester, N.Y.
October 24, 1932

60th Anniversary

Frank and Dorothy Button
St. Mary's Church
Albion, N.Y.
May 29, 1937

Emery and Anna Fratta
St. Lucy's Church
Rochester, N.Y.
July 3, 1937

Clement and Eleanor Froehler
St. Ambrose Church
Rochester, N.Y.
November 20, 1937

Richard and Helen Lancer
St. Augustine Church
Rochester, N.Y.
July 17, 1937

Juan and Santiaga Martinez
St. Blase Parish
Coamo, Puerto Rico
March 26, 1937

Thaddeus and Lottie Okolowicz
St. Stanislaus Church
Rochester, N.Y.
June 12, 1937

Joseph and Emma Paul
St. Nicholas Cathedral
Trnava, Slovakia
June 28, 1937

Martin and Wanza Ruh
St. Francis of Rome Church
Bronx, N.Y.
October 23, 1937

Joseph and Catherine Watt
Ss. Peter and Paul Church
Rochester, N.Y.
July 24, 1937

Joseph and Josephine Zientara
St. Stanislaus Church
Rochester, N.Y.
May 29, 1937

55th Anniversary

Donald and Edith Arganbright
St. Patrick Church
Iowa City, Iowa
May 9, 1942

Frederick and Elizabeth Kelly
Ss. Peter and Paul Church
Rochester, N.Y.
January 3, 1942

John and Ruth Klipp
Holy Trinity Church
Webster, N.Y.
October 17, 1942

William and Evelyn Miller
Holy Redeemer Church
Rochester, N.Y.
April 18, 1942

Samuel and Anna Papa
St. Francis Xavier Church
Rochester, N.Y.
June 6, 1942

50th Anniversary

Louis and Katherine Alletto
Holy Apostles Church
Rochester, N.Y.
June 21, 1947

Sylvester and Anna Beganskas
St. George's Lithuanian Catholic Church
Rochester, N.Y.
July 5, 1947

Edward and Dorothy Beuchel
St. Andrew's Church
Rochester, N.Y.
September 27, 1947

Frank and Lorraine Bober
St. Mary's Church
Elmira, N.Y.
April 7, 1947
Ralph and Velma Bodensteiner
Holy Trinity Church
Webster, N.Y.
June 21, 1947

Lewis and Ruth Boutwell
St. Andrew's Church
Rochester, N.Y.
September 20, 1947

Frederick and Elizabeth Bower
Our Lady of Good Counsel Church
Rochester, N.Y.
January 4, 1947

James and Rita Brocklebank
St. Dominic's Church
Shortsville, N.Y.
September 4, 1947

Harley and Ruth Burgess
Blessed Sacrament Church
Rochester, N.Y.
July 26, 1947

Richard and Lillian Cannon
St. Andrew's Church
Rochester, N.Y.
November 27, 1947

Joseph A. and Netta Colacirio
St. Michael's Church
Newark, N.Y.
May 31, 1947

James and Doris Cole
Holy Rosary Church
Rochester, N.Y.
September 8, 1947

Julius and Lois Conradt
St. Boniface Church
Rochester, N.Y.
November 8, 1947

Anniversaries
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from the following businesses and organizations

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Saint Thomas More Church
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Sisters of Saint Joseph
Office for Communications
4095 East Avenue
Rochester • 716-586-1000

Wesley Construction
7340 Victor Mendon Road
Victor • 716-654-8200