

Couples spend 70 agreeable years together

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

CALEDONIA — Jim and Augusta Gwynn were not about to let a little something like an anniversary interfere with their weekly routine.

The afternoon of April 9 Jim drove them to the Scottsville home of Walter and Myrthe Griffith for the two couples' ongoing weekly euchre tournament.

The couples have been playing for more than a decade, husbands against wives, with the winners of the contest — the first team to reach 50 points — being treated to dinner by the losers.

Of course, the Griffiths might have understood a break in the routine. After all, Jim, 93, and Augusta, 89, were celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary that day.

But, as Jim noted in an interview the day before the games, "They expect us down there."

The Gwynns did celebrate their anniversary — with a special Mass at their church, St. Columba's in Caledonia, on April 5, and a dinner with family April 12.

But the fact that they maintained their routine on the actual day of their anniversary seems appropriate for a couple who spent some 37 years working on farms — 25 on their own dairy farm just south of Caledonia.

Farm life demanded routine and hard labor — but that may have been part of the reason for their 70 years together, Jim speculated.

"I really think the work kept us going as much as anything else," he remarked. "We both tried to help each other."

Jim was born in Albany on Aug. 18, 1904, and had moved to Western New York to work on farms.

Augusta — born Augusta Cory on June 2, 1908, in Lime Rock, Genesee County, just west of Caledonia — had grown up on her family's farm.

The two met at square dances. Jim stood out, Augusta noted, because many of the other men were "kind of bold and



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Augusta and Jim Gwynn of Caledonia during their weekly euchre game at their Brown Road home April 16.

brash. Jimmy always was very polite in our younger days, which is a lot."

Jim was also attracted to Augusta.

"She was one that would pay attention to me," he said with a chuckle.

They dated for approximately three years as Jim continued to work on farms and Augusta stayed with and took care of an invalid — earning \$13 a week.

At first, her family tried to discourage her growing attachment to Jim. "I should go for somebody who had money," she recalled them telling her. "I didn't agree."

Soon it became "understood" the two would marry, which they did — April 9, 1928, at St. Anthony Church in Lime Rock. For the wedding, Augusta wore a dress made by the daughter of the woman she had been caring for.

After a brief honeymoon trip to Albany to visit Jim's family, they returned to Au-

gusta's family's farm. There, Jim worked and split the profits with his father-in-law, and Augusta cared for her mother, who had cancer. She often had to drive her mother to Buffalo for cancer treatment — long before the New York State Thruway was built.

Augusta's mother died in the fall of 1928. But they remained on the farm and son Edward arrived in 1929, followed by daughter Genevieve (now Genevieve McFee) in 1931. In addition to two extra mouths to feed, they had to contend with the Depression.

"It was a struggle, but somehow or other we always had enough to eat," Augusta noted.

By 1938, her father had decided to get out of farming. Jim and Augusta, however, were not interested in taking over the farm, because of its low profits. Instead, they worked on another farm for two

years before buying a 150-acre farm of their own in 1940.

"It had run down," Jim acknowledged. "We bought it very cheap."

Initially, it was a lot of work. Jim plowed the field with horses. Augusta often had to chip in with the milking, and later, after they bought a tractor, with the plowing.

But they eventually began to turn a profit. Jim bought more land to grow crops. Gradually, they found time for extra activities.

"It's pretty hard when you're working that much, especially when you had cows you had to take care of every day," Jim recalled.

Still, they played cards with neighbors. Jim joined local planning and agricultural boards, and Augusta entered baking contests, winning many.

In addition, they began to fulfill one of Jim's dreams.

"He always said he would like to travel if we made money," Augusta said. "We thought we had to show something good for all the hard work."

Over the ensuing years, they traveled cross country and to Europe, the Canadian Rockies and Florida.

By the early 1960s, they began to think of retirement. They ultimately sold the farm in 1965, moving into their current home on Brown Road in Caledonia. Jim worked briefly painting houses after retirement. But these days, they spend their time tending a large garden and flower beds in their back yard, and enjoying visits with their children, six grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

And then there are the weekly card games. Jim, still polite, would only acknowledge that the husbands had won the last tournament, and that the current one is "close."

As for the secret of making it through 70 years of marriage, Augusta observed matter-of-factly, "It really wasn't hard. Probably the main thing is to be agreeable."

Diocesan couples celebrate milestone anniversaries

The names of the following couples celebrating "milestone" anniversaries — 25th, 50th, 55th, 60th, 65th, 70th — in 1998 were submitted in response to requests published in the March 19 edition of the *Catholic Courier* and sent to parishes and faith communities through diocesan centralized mail. The list includes only those couples celebrating anniversaries specified in the requests and who submitted the information by the April 3 deadline.

The *Courier* also requested the names of couples who might be the longest married in the diocese. Jim and Augusta Gwynn, married 70 years

ago on April 9, 1928, were the longest married of the names submitted (see accompanying article).

In addition, two couples who just missed being the longest married couples among the names submitted are celebrating their 69th anniversaries this year: C. Alton and Margaret Francis, and Stanley and Gabriela Jaskot.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will celebrate a Mass for couples married 25 or more years at 2 p.m. Sunday, May 3, at St. Mary's Church, 40 Elizabeth St., Dansville. For information, call Sylvia Mancuso at 1-800-388-7177, ext. 295, or 716-328-3210, ext. 295.

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

70th Anniversary

James and Augusta Gwynn
St. Anthony's Church
Lime Rock, N.Y.
April 9, 1928

69th Anniversary

C. Alton and Margaret Francis
Blessed Sacrament Church
Rochester, N.Y.
April 6, 1929

Stanley and Gabriela Jaskot
St. Theresa's Church
Rochester, N.Y.
January 19, 1929

65th Anniversary

Dominick and Anna Luzzi
St. Francis de Sales Church
Geneva, N.Y.
September 2, 1933

Ralph and Connie Orrico
St. Anthony's Church
Rochester, N.Y.
June 24, 1933

60th Anniversary

Nicholas and Helen Augustine
St. Anthony's Church
Elmira, N.Y.
September 17, 1938

William and Ruth Corcoran
St. Mary's Church
Corning, N.Y.
February 26, 1938

Dominick and Mary De Angelis
Holy Apostles Church
Rochester, N.Y.
July 30, 1938

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Congratulations to the Jubilarians in 1998

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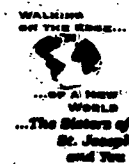
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