

High school sweethearts Marshal and Helen Bates moved to Katy in 1999 and attend Kingsland Baptist Church



A LIFETIME OF
Love

**Marshall and Helen Bates of Katy
celebrate 70 years together**

Written by Kenzie Stanfield | Photography by Chryshelle Spurgeons

You stand at the altar, overwhelmed with emotion as you say your vows. You are thrilled and yet somehow grasp that life as you know it will never be the same. With each new day, you can hardly imagine what is in store tomorrow, let alone in 10 years. How about after 70 years of marriage? Katy lovebirds Dr. Marshall and Helen Bates have kept their marriage strong and flourishing throughout their seven decades together.

Young Love

Marshall and Helen Bates' story began in the late 1930s in San Angelo. They met at San Angelo High School and began dating soon after, spending virtually every Saturday night together at their favorite spot: the midnight show at the town cinema. Finding much time to spend together proved somewhat difficult, because, in addition to school, Marshall worked over 40 hours a week at the local creamery. Their love grew, though, and they were married on June 14, 1942. Marshall was 19 years old and his young bride was 18. "We've been very happy," Marshall shares. "I can't imagine living without her, and she can't imagine living without me. Life is good."

The early years of the Bates' married life held much adventure and change. Marshall joined the U.S. Air Force. Then, shortly after World War II and some university schooling, they moved to Memphis, TN, on the GI Bill. He spent 1946 to 1949 at the Southern College of Optometry, earning his doctoral degree and the sweet admiration of his adoring wife. "I admire so much about Marshall; his ambition, his discipline, how very thoughtful he is," says Helen. It was during this time of change that they truly began to see how working, saving, and living for what mattered would help them achieve all that they envisioned for their future.

Building a Life Together

Upon graduation, Marshall and Helen moved to the tiny southern town of Kenedy, TX, where on a small loan and the support and generosity of the town, Marshall opened his first and only optometry practice. Kenedy proved to be a wonderful place to live and, following the birth of their daughter Becky, also raise a family. They quickly embedded themselves in every facet of town life, enjoying friends, church, school, work, and helping others. While somewhat shy about accepting praise from their friends and family, Marshall and Helen are quick to praise one

another. Marshall shares that his wife of 70 years is the most thoughtful, sincere woman he has ever known. "She is always thinking about me," he says.

Coming to Katy

In 1986, after years of serving patients from all over the country, Marshall sold his practice. Although their then grown daughter Becky and her family had moved to Katy a few years prior, Marshall and Helen continued to live life, loving and serving those around them. However, Helen admits that they began to feel the pressure to be closer to their loved ones, especially the grandkids, as the travel between Kenedy and Katy increased. The trips back and forth finally came to a halt in 1999 when they purchased a house in Katy, sight-unseen. Soon after their arrival, the Bates found a church home at Kingsland Baptist Church and they quickly began to root themselves in Katy life.

Marriage Takes Three

Marriage for the last 70 years has been an incredible journey for Marshall and Helen. Their love speaks of great faith in God and a

commitment that is seldom seen today, where they live to serve one another, compliment the other's life ambitions, and hold the other in the highest respect. "We always say that we believe marriage takes three: the man, the woman, and God," says Marshall. "We don't know how else you could do it."

Giving Back to Others

Life is not always easy. The Bates had their share of financial struggles through school and have had to work diligently at times just to make ends meet. Despite their ups and downs, they ultimately believe that life isn't about themselves, but about serving and blessing others. "We try to do something nice for someone else each day," says Marshall. "We have



The couple married in 1942 when Marshall was 19 and Helen was 18

lived to serve others our whole lives.” From picking up mail to baking and delivering delicious treats, it seems that this couple has discovered the secret of true happiness. “We serve others, but it blesses us,” Marshall says.

Today, in a world that is so different than that rainy June day on which they got married in 1942, the insight and knowledge that the Bates possess and willingly share is not only impressive, but also inspirational. “If it’s worth it to you, you will work at it,” Helen says, speaking of the commitment and dedication it takes to make a marriage work. They also refer to the importance of having fellowship with others, advising that to make a friend, you have to be a friend first.

Enjoying Many Years of Happy Memories

Wisdom and experience flow from the Bates’ many years spent together. They share a love for each other, for their family that now includes great-grandchildren, and for the Lord, who has kept them grounded in their faith. Few couples are blessed with seven decades of time together, but for Marshall and Helen, each day is a new step on the path to enjoying the rest of their lives together. **KM**

KENZIE STANFIELD enjoys being a freelance writer for Katy Magazine and is married for life to her high school sweetheart. They have four children together and love living life to the fullest with their Katy friends and neighbors.

8 Tips for a Strong Marriage

Katy couple Marshall and Helen Bates share their secrets to a happy union.

- 1 Have respect for one another, above all else.
- 2 Remember that marriage takes three: man, woman, and God. Build your life on a foundation of faith.
- 3 Learn to talk openly.
- 4 Listen attentively to one other.
- 5 Be ambitious, and strive to help the other achieve their dreams.
- 6 Practice strength with humility.
- 7 Stay out of debt, and live within your means.
- 8 If you are wrong, apologize.

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