

“The Best Marriage I Know”

If I were asked to describe the best marriage I know, then I would tell you about my Uncle Johnny and my Aunt Ouida. Their full names are Johnny B. Meeks and Ouida Louis Kelley Meeks. Uncle Johnny and Aunt Ouida first met in 1947 at Straughn High School where they were both attending. Aunt Ouida had a boyfriend at the time who Uncle Johnny described as the jealous type. Uncle Johnny found it humorous to get in between them when he got the chance. Later, Aunt Ouida transferred to Opp High School and graduated from there.

It wasn't until much later that Uncle Johnny and Aunt Ouida met up at a youth center and decided to start dating. They dated for about a year and then got married on April 8, 1954. He was twenty-five and she was twenty-two when they tied the knot. When they got married Uncle Johnny worked as an engineer 2 with the state highway department. Later he attended Troy University for three years on the GI Bill. When his GI Bill ran out, he dropped out of college to go to work so that he could save up enough to pay for his fourth year. In 1962 he finally got to finish his fourth year of college earning him his master's degree. That fall he started teaching in Milton, Florida while Aunt Ouida stayed in Alabama to take care of the children, the house, his mother, and go to work. He described this as one of the biggest struggles that they have had to overcome in their marriage.

They had to live like this for about a year until Uncle Johnny found a teaching job in Fleeda, a Covington County School, where he remained for four years. After those four years at Fleeda, he started working at Pleasant Home where he remained until he retired in 1991. Aunt Ouida had only one job the entire time they were married and that was at the service agency in Opp. She started in 1954 and retired in 1998 working there a total of 44 years.

Together they reared three children: Danny born on August, 10, 1954, Dennis born on October 4, 1959, and Angie born on May 4, 1952. Angie was their niece who came to live with them at age twelve and remained until she moved to college. Uncle Johnny says that some of the best memories he has took place on the summer vacations they

took. He and Aunt Ouida were fishing, but weren't having any luck so he looked at her and said, "Let's go somewhere". She agreed so they went back to the house, packed their bags, and headed for Chattanooga, Tennessee! They got close to Chattanooga, and decided to stop and find a place to stay the night. Aunt Ouida didn't want to stay on the top of the mountain because she was scared, but little did they know that the road to their cabin was taking them to the very top of the mountain! It wasn't until the next morning that she realized where they were!

Not only did they have great times, but they also had a few struggles in their marriage that they had to overcome. One of these being when they first got married they had financial problems. They lived with her parents until they could get "on their feet".

I asked Uncle Johnny what he thought the best thing about their marriage was, and he replied, "Everything! I'm just happy god gave her to me and allows me to take care of her! She is the sweetest thing on earth." Uncle Johnny asked Aunt Ouida what she thought the best thing about their marriage was, and she said "our love".

I think what makes their marriage so great and different from other marriages today is how much they still love each other after all these years. Another thing that I thought was great is the fact that neither of them has ever drunk alcohol! They agreed when they got married that there would be no alcohol and no fussing. They agreed that they would talk everything through and make all decisions together. They don't use foul language, and though they haven't always agreed with each other, they have never been mad at each other. They never say bye because it sounds so final. They kiss each other whenever they go to leave and whenever they meet.

I've learned a lot from their marriage. The biggest thing I have learned is that you have to put God first in your marriage and your life. If you put Him first and trust Him everything else will fall into place. Another important thing I learned from them is that marriage isn't a 50-50 percent; it's a 100-100 percent thing. You also can't have secrets in your marriage. You need to be like an open book to your spouse because when you get married you become one person, and you can't keep secrets from yourself! Uncle Johnny said, "Don't follow the lust of life." And "Marriage is tough but it can be easy if you work together." You also never want to forget to carry a smile and to make family time. The family should eat together every night. Remember that the simple things are what make love great, like stopping to get flowers for no reason. You must always show consideration to each other's feelings and opinions.

The thing that made the biggest impact on me is how much they care for each other. The summer of 2002 was the last trip they took because later Aunt Ouida had a stroke. The stroke confined her permanently to a wheel chair, but it didn't faze their love for each other. If I could pick one word to sum up their marriage, it would be true love.