

“The Best Marriage I Know”

This is a true story about a couple I know who have a wonderful marriage. They are both retired now, and live happily with their dog, Muffy . They are William Floyd Irby Jr., and his wife Martha Ann Williams Irby.

William is from Jasper, Alabama, but was born and raised in Washington County, Alabama. He traveled to a friend’s house in Decatur, Alabama on April 21, 1964 for a visit. While there, he met Martha Ann Williams, who was born and raised in Winston County, Alabama. Bill, as we all affectionately call him, was twenty-two when he met the true love of his life, Martha, who was nineteen at the time. They were married just three short months later on August 21, 1964.

Bill had a long hard life growing up. He did not finish high school, but he learned how to be a hard worker. His profession was a pipe fitter and he worked for Ingle’s Shipyard for a few years, and then for the James River Paper Company. He worked for them for thirty-six years, and then retired. He retired early because he got injured on the job. He broke his foot and his ankle. It would not heal. He had several operations and all the while Martha took care of him. He says that what truly makes a great marriage is always being able to sit down with your partner and talk about all problems. Then he jokingly adds that “It’s because she’s such a good cook.” He says that the happiest day of his life was the day he asked Martha to marry him and she said yes.

Martha was in nursing school when she met Bill. She went on to graduate school and became a nurse. She worked at Decatur General Hospital, and at other doctor offices. She worked as a nurse for thirty-five years. When Martha went on a church trip to Tennessee tragedy struck and she had a massive heart attack. Bill drove down and took care of her. Martha says that what makes a marriage great is “Making it through the highs and lows together.” She also says that “it doesn’t hurt that Bill always gave me all the money”. After forty five years of marriage, she says the happiest day of her life was the day their son was born. They only have one son. He lives in Godson, Alabama.

Bill and Martha have seen a lot of history. They have lived through the Civil Rights Movement, the age of computers, the term of President Jimmy Carter (Bill jokingly says they don't eat peanuts anymore because of President Carter.), the Kennedy presidential election and assassination, and most recently the election of the first African American President of the United States of America.

Bill and Martha have taught me a lot about life, people, and the spirit of giving. They have also taught me the importance of putting other people's happiness and needs before my own. I now believe these to be the keys to be the keys to a happy marriage. Their marriage has lasted for forty-five years and I think it could last forty-five more.