

Will you marry me ... again?

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By Erin Gibson Allen



Lake Fong/Post-Gazette

Wilbert and Ceil Shuback, residents of Paramount Senior Living, renew their marriage vows Saturday. They have been married for 67 years. The Rev. Robert Walkup of Baldwin United Presbyterian Church performed the ceremony. Fifteen couples renewed their vows.

Some brides wear their mother's or grandmother's gown at their wedding. But at a ceremony to renew her wedding vows, Rita Homer, 86, wore a white dress that was meaningful to her for a different reason: She wore it 14 years ago to celebrate her 50th wedding anniversary.

Fifteen couples took part in a vow renewal ceremony Saturday at Paramount Senior Living in Baldwin Borough.

The longtime couples thought it was the perfect way to mark the season for romance, with Valentine's Day coming up this Saturday.

"This was a wonderful idea," said Mrs. Homer, who renewed vows with her husband, John Russell Homer, 88.

The couples renewed vows in a 60-minute ceremony, with each person getting the chance to proclaim "I do" in front of an audience of about 100 friends, family members and employees of Paramount, an assisted living facility at 100 Knoedler Road.

The Rev. Robert Walkup, pastor of Baldwin United Presbyterian Church in Baldwin Borough, officiated.

"What got me the most was how many couples, no matter how old or how frail, were holding hands and gazing into each other's eyes," the Rev. Walkup said. "It was an honor for me to be involved."

To ensure that the event had the appropriate atmosphere, Valerie Laboon, activities director at Paramount who organized the event, decorated the common room at the facility with a garden arch with white lights.

Traditional wedding music was played during the ceremony, and cake and champagne were served afterward.

Dave's Bakery, of Baldwin Borough, donated a three-layer wedding cake, and Dupree's Garden Center and Florist, of Finleyville, donated roses for the celebrating couples. Pat Catan's, of Pleasant Hills, donated decorations, including balloons and paper wedding bells.

"Everyone has been so generous because they love the idea, especially around Valentine's Day," Ms. Laboon said.

This is the first year that Paramount has offered the ceremony to its married residents.

"Marriage has always been very sacred to us," Mrs. Homer said.

During the ceremony, Mrs. Homer read a poem that she wrote to her husband that spoke to the life that they built together. She lauded her husband for being a good spouse and father during his lifetime.

All of the couples were very touched by the poem, Ms. Laboon said, because their years spent in marriage and child-raising were similar.

"It was a real tear-jerker," she said.

Mr. Homer served abroad in World War II, and the couple was married shortly after his return from service. He worked for years as a truck driver while she worked as the director of admissions at a beauty school. The couple worked opposite schedules, so one could be at home with their children while the other worked.

They lived in Hazelwood and have six children, 18 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Many of the couple's family members attended the ceremony on Saturday.

The couple will celebrate their 64th wedding anniversary in November.

Mrs. Homer's advice for a long marriage is simple. "Be good to one another, and never go to bed angry."

The longest married couple who participated in the vow renewal ceremony was Elmer, 91, and Elizabeth Gramm, 86, of Baldwin Township. They have been married 68 years and have four children, 11 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Like Mr. Homer, Mr. Gramm is a World War II veteran. After returning from the service, he worked for Duquesne Light for 27 years while Mrs. Gramm raised the family at home.

The Gramms also renewed their wedding vows on their 50th wedding anniversary and thought this service would be a nice opportunity to do so again.

Having a good marriage and a wonderful family is something to celebrate, the couple said.

For the Gramms, the equation is simple, "Two hearts and one life equals love."

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