

# The Secret of 51 Golden Years

By Barrington H. Brennen, July 16, 2002

It was love at first sight. The attraction for each other which started on Christmas morning 1948 is still going strong today. Mary and Alfred Brennen celebrated their 51<sup>st</sup> wedding anniversary, July 18, 2002.



They are a fun-loving, happy, friendly, gracious, and deeply Christian couple. Although both are retired from their regular employment, the Brennens jokingly say that retirement is not a plan of God, it is for lazy folks. They enjoy working on their own time in church and community and sharing their love with others. They are an inspiration to all who come in contact with them.

They are truly happily marriage at ages 73 and 74 and they are ready to do it all over again. Here is what Alfred Brennen said about that: "As far as I am concerned, if this young girl gets younger I will marry her all over again." I asked each one do describe their 51-year marriage with single words, and here are the words they chose: Fantastic, adorable, sensational, and beautiful. Isn't it wonderful when couples can think of each other in these ways? Mother Mary said that she is "privileged to have such a considerate, loving, and kind, husband. He is a godfearing man—the best husband in the world." Alfred Brennen is a model husband during these times when

so many men are neglecting their divine calling as lovers in their home.

Mary and Alfred Brennen are parents to four productive citizens of the Bahamas. Their oldest child is Corporal Claudia Seymour, the energetic, gregarious daughter. She and her husband Norman, a welder and water works specialist, have three young adult daughters, and three grand children. The second child is Barrington Brennen, counseling psychologist and marriage and family therapist, and director of Adventist Counseling Services. He and his wife Annick, an educational administrator and teacher, have one 21-year-old daughter, and a nineteen-year-old son. The third child is Judith Edwards, hotel accountant in Arizona where she lives with her husband, Dr. Don Edwards, psychologist/pastor. They have three young adult and teenage sons. The fourth child of Mary and Alfred is Nurse Ann Albury, educational psychologist and teacher. She is serving as the educational psychologist in the Adventist School System. Ann, and her husband Pastor Keith Albury, president of the Bahamas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, have one young adult, and two teenage sons. Mary and Alfred Brennen are also proud grand and great grand parents.



Fifty-one years of marriage is not by accident for the Brennens. They made a decision when they got married to do whatever it takes to keep the fires burning in their marriage. They still kiss, hold hands and enjoy each other's presence. More importantly, they keep the family altar alive in their home. Jesus is the head of their household. Daily spiritual meditation and prayers are important to the Brennens. Their belief in the Seventh-day Sabbath as a day of worship, rest and fellowship, has played a major role in their lives. In their home, Friday evenings are special quiet times for worship and fellowship. These events add a booster to their marriage relationship.

## LONG MARRIAGE NOT ALWAYS GOOD

There are many couples who have long marriages but are not happily married. They are only tolerating each other. When a couple can experience both longevity and happiness, we have a dynamic couple with a vital marriage.

Here are a few of the Brennens' secrets for a happy, long-lasting marriage.

1. **They discovered the power in a slice of Johnny Cake.** Typically all the Brennan family members will get a call, and on the other end of the line would be their mother with the words "Come and get a piece of Johnny Cake." And they would run home like little children for our piece of Johnny Cake. They all love Johnny Cake (especially when Mother Mary makes it with some whole wheat flour). It's a family tradition in their home that works magic. Well it is not really the Johnny Cake itself, but the tradition of the Brennens' Johnny Cake that reminds me of perhaps the most important ingredients for a good marriage: That is **establishing long-lasting family rituals.** **Eating together** as a family is very important. The family that never eats together is a weak family. Whether it is once a week or every day, eating together should be done regularly. It fosters fellowship, dialogue, and connection. There is something magical about the family pot and the dining room table. Another important ritual that the Brennens Johnny cake reminds me of **is family worship time.** There must be a family altar in every home. **The family that prays together stays together.** Another important ritual is **family fun-time.** If couples and families neglect to have fun-time together, married life and family life will be dull, meaningless, and cold. Couples first need to set aside each week a time for themselves alone.



2. **They discovered the magic in a birthday card. They still give birthday cards to each other, and to all of the family members.** This speaks to the importance of keeping the fires of love burning in marriage. It is continuing to do what you did to get each other in the first place. That is what they did to get each other 51 years ago, they are still doing it to keep each other now. It is so easy to forget to say "I love you," to share those love notes, birthday and Valentines Cards. They are still doing these things. I could remember the first time I saw them kiss. When children know their parents are happy and they can see it, children are happy and secured.

3. **They discovered the power of laughter.** The Brennens have a healthy sense of humor. Laughter is one of the spicy secret ingredients for a happy relationship. Too many husbands and wives take their lives too seriously. They have lost the ability to laugh together. If you can't laugh with your spouse, your marriage will dry up. There have been many scientific studies that show laughter does help to improve the immune system, because when we laugh, our brain releases all kinds of wonderfully happy hormones into our bodies. Also, learning how to incorporate laughter in marriage will add to the health of the relationship. You must have a sense of humor to keep the fires of love burning in your marriage. Laughter will strengthen the marital immune system-called romance.

These are only a few of the many secrets of a long-lasting, happy marriage.