

Lafayette Couple Celebrates 70 Years Together

By Cathy Dausman



Joseph and Beryl Deas of Lafayette hold their engagement photo. They will celebrate 70 years of marriage this month. Photo Cathy Dausman

Once upon a time, a very, very long time ago, two high school students from Crockett met and fell in love. On June 4 Beryl and Joseph Deas, who live at Atria in Lafayette, will reach the milestone of 70 years together as man and wife.

Although they have celebrated with “big blowouts” for past special anniversaries (notably their 25th, 40th and 50th), they intentionally scaled back their celebration this year to a simple family gathering hosted by their daughter Pamela.

In fact “simple” seems to be a byword of how they’ve lived their lives.

When asked to recall his first impression of his bride-to-be, Joe Deas made a joke: “I guess I didn’t run fast enough!” He quickly amended his

answer to say that when he first spotted Beryl stepping off the John Swett High School bus he proclaimed loudly to his buddy, “That’s the one I want to marry!”

He was 20, and she was 18 when they appeared in Martinez before Judge A.F. Bray for their civil service ceremony on June 4, 1945. Beryl Deas recalled how her future husband paid the judge, then how Judge Bray gave the money back to her.

The Deases have lived exclusively in Contra Costa County, raising a family that grew to include two daughters and a son, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Joe Deas worked at PG&E steam and electric plants, where he “kept the lights burning” and retired as a plant

chief. He was plant chief for Avon, Oleum and Martinez when he retired in 1985 after 41 years, said daughter Deborah Deas. “I was a volunteer all my life,” Beryl Deas said. She and her husband camped around California when their children were young and helped out as they joined Camp Fire Girls and Sea Scouts. And they danced together—ballroom, folk and square dance.

After they raised their children, they started traveling abroad, making numerous trips to Hawaii, and visiting Wales, Portugal, and the Azores to honor their families’ heritage.

The secret to staying together, they agree, is communication and cooperation.

Beryl said she feels marriage today is terribly disappointing, explaining that people expect more now. “We were happy with our grandmother’s furniture [in 1945],” she said.

When asked if she could do it all again, Beryl thought she would revisit the 1940s for its fashion, music and “do unto others” sensibility. This couple, retired or not, has “kept the lights burning” in their marriage, even today.

Cal Shakes’ “Twelfth Night”

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There’s something for everyone to enjoy in the 413-year-old comedy. While marveling at love’s democracy (we’re all equally foolish under the human heart’s rule), it’s impossible to ignore Moore’s clever braiding of timeless themes with contemporary culture and his noteworthy skill at exploiting the uniqueness of the cast.

In Shakespeare’s time, all the roles would have been played by men and boys. Here, some of the women playing men play women – resulting in women kissing women – which multiplies the comedy or adds poignancy, depending on one’s politics. Mistaken identity, misplaced affection, mistrust, mystery and magnificent bliss are love’s aura during the two-hour, 40-minute production.

Without detailing the plot’s every twist and turn, the gist of the well-known play involves the keeping of secrets, all of which the audience is allowed to be in on. The fun is in watching the inevitable miscues that we see coming so easily in a staged play, but often fail to recognize in our own lives.

Lisa Anne Porter is understated in the best possible way as she battles to suppress Viola’s urges and actual gender. The subtlety makes for a terrific springboard for the zanier counterparts around her. Stacy Ross as the no-fun keeper of rules Malvolio is similarly adept; rigidly rectangular in her initial interactions – until going all gangly legs and terrifying pasted-on grin when she’s tricked into believing she is the object of Olivia’s love. There’s something lethal in Ross’s

performance, even when playing comedy, and the mix is intoxicating.

Ted Deasy, the one male in the cast, zips up his jester role as Feste with expected aplomb. Seven seasons with Oregon Shakespeare Festival and numerous other regional theater credits underscore his solid performance. Margo Hall’s tiptoe version of Sir Aguecheek is great physical comedy; Catherine Castellanos as Belch proves again there are no limits with this actor; Julie Eccles teases every frailty into frivolous fun as Olivia; Rami Margron’s spin on Orsino is light, but not lightweight; and Dominique Lozano’s Maria strides perfectly along a balance beam of spiteful and silly spiritedness as the instigator of devilish pranks.

By design, a coffin is the metaphorical centerpiece to the action. Placed prominently by scenic designer Nina Ball, how else to explain the characters’ mad dash to win love’s lottery? Urgent mortality pushes the plot as much as love, the coffin suggests. If we die without having loved or having been loved by others, have we truly lived?

Sumptuous costumes by Meg Neville and Burke Brown’s sensitive lighting add richness to the visual pleasures of the production – as did the rolling fog and the sunlight’s golden glow on the outdoor venue’s surrounding hills on opening night. For people who spend considerable time in Bay Area theaters – or for first-timers – the “Cal Shakes experience” is undeniably grand. “Twelfth Night” runs at the solar-powered Bruns Amphitheater through June 21.

Cal Shakes 2015 Season Productions

- “Twelfth Night” – through June 21
- “Life Is a Dream” – July 8 to Aug. 2
- “Virgins To Villains: My Journey Through Shakespeare’s Women” – One night show, July 20
- “The Mystery of Irma Vep” – Aug. 12 to Sept. 6
- “King Lear” – Sept. 16 to Oct. 11

Cal Shakes performances are held at Bruns Amphitheater, 100 California Shakespeare Theater Way (formerly 100 Gateway Blvd.), Orinda. For more information, visit calshakes.org

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