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Bob & Wanda Warren

photo provided by Bob Warren

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By Bob Warren

THIS IS NOT MY NORMAL “Now and Then” column. It is a love story – one that friends have encouraged me to share in this space.

Wanda Bolin and I were recently married, and as we exchanged wedding vows, something our pastor, Chuck Martin, said kept ringing in my ears. Quoting our Creator in Genesis, chapter 18, verse 2, he said, “It is not good that man should be alone.” I thought, “Amen! God was talking to me as well as to Adam when He said that, so now He has brought Wanda and me together.”

Perhaps the most unusual thing about our marriage is that for the last sixty years Wanda was my sister-in-law. Here’s a little history to help you understand our story:

Wanda Barnes grew up on a farm in what is now West Frisco and graduated from Frisco High School. I first met her in 1946 when she married her high school sweetheart, Jess Bolin. Jess was

my first wife, Ann’s brother. Over the years Jess and Wanda were blessed with two sons who grew up playing with their first cousins, my five children who loved their “Aunt Wanda.”

I began to see Wanda, not as a sister-in-law, but as someone I might like to date...to my knowledge, she did not see me as dating material.

For the last eleven years, she has been living in Canton, Texas where she and Jess retired. Two years ago Jess passed away, leaving his widow alone in Canton. A few months ago Wanda decided she wanted

to move back to Frisco to be near her relatives. Once while her brother, Jesse Barnes, was helping her look for a house in Frisco, he and his wife, Mary Ann, brought Wanda by to visit me. During that visit I began to see Wanda, not as a sister-in-law, but as someone I might like to date. Let me hasten to say that, to my knowledge, she did not see me as dating material. After all, I’m quite a bit older than she.

Soon I was looking for excuses to call Wanda – usually to report a house for sale in my neighborhood. Then, to my mailbox came an invitation with two tickets to the Collin County Community College Living Legends awards dinner. Two tickets? Who should I invite?? My thoughts turned to Wanda, so I called and asked her to be my date. After a few questions, she cautiously accepted.

After what seemed an eternity, actually about five weeks, the big weekend arrived. I brought Wanda to Frisco on



*The Warren's share wedding cake (above);
Bob & Wanda making their vows (right)*
photo provided by Bob Warren



Friday for a whirlwind of dates – out to eat Friday night; the community parade Saturday morning, and looking at houses Saturday afternoon. Then, on Saturday night, the main event – the awards dinner. When Wanda stepped through the door wearing a beautiful, sparkly dress, I was smitten. I thought, “Wow! This lady is beautiful!”

On our trip to and from the dinner, we were accompanied by none other than Frisco legend, Elisabeth Pink, who laughingly says, “I was your chaperone.” Weeks after Wanda and I were married, Elisabeth told me she could see in my eyes that night, a budding romance, so she was not surprised to hear we were wed. I didn’t know it showed, Elisabeth.

The next day, before heading back to Canton, we went to church where Wanda saw many of her girlhood friends, most of whom seemed surprised to see us together. The trip to Canton was fine, but the trip back was lonely. Somehow, I didn’t want to leave Wanda. Wistful thoughts of a possible life together with her kept running through my mind. And this was after our first date!

The next two weeks were filled with phone calls. We had separate Thanksgiving plans with our own families, she in Canton and I in San Antonio. In our conversations I began to mention

the idea of marriage, but Wanda wasn’t buying it. Being more rational than I, she could see lots of problems in trying to combine our two households.

Then, in my mind, came voices. One said, “Slow down, Bob, you know “the rule.” I asked, “What rule is that?” The voice of reason replied, “You know – the one that says you should wait a year after your spouse’s death before you marry again.” I shot back, “Who made that stupid rule? At my age, every day is like a year, so there!” With that, I won the debate, and the voice slunk off in silence.

The day after Thanksgiving, I called Wanda and suggested that she didn’t need to buy a house in Frisco. She could share mine. With that, I figuratively got down on one knee and popped the question, “Will you marry me?” Evidently out of excuses, Wanda said, “Yes, I will,” so we started making wedding plans. After a “long” three-week engagement, on December 16th we stood before our pastor in a small, family only ceremony, and heard him pronounce us “husband

and wife.” We were starting life over!

But Wanda was right. There are problems – no, not with our marriage, but the unexpected discovery that my bride is allergic to cats! That meant finding new homes for my feline friends and replacing carpets throughout the house. And, our children, cousins all their lives, are still trying to figure out what to call each other. Are they “brounsins”? Wanda is now “Aunt Mom” to my kids, and I’m “Uncle Dad” to hers.

Those problems – and others – pale when compared to the blessings Wanda brings to my life. And, that’s how things are when you start life over at my age.

*Frisco native
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is a humorist,
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