

Cooke, William & Clarissa

Don't Get Angry Together Secret of Their Marriage

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When William John Cooke married his wife Clarissa, both added an additional problem to the marriage vows of their Anglican wedding service.

—They made a mutual pact never to get mad simultaneously.

They never did.

The result has been a half century of married life without a quarrel, recalls Mr. Cooke as he and his wife mark their golden wedding anniversary.

It was a typically simple solution for unruffled togetherness. In fact, they've led a simple lifestyle, he says.

About the only other rule they found necessary was to be optimistic — "always walk on the sunny side of the street."

Retired for the past 10 year, Mr. Cooke was well known in Belleville for three

decades as owner of a Front St. bicycle and lock - and - key store.

Both Cookes hail from Great Britain, met and married in Belleville where their families settled.

Mr. Cooke was a millwright's apprentice in Wales when the family emigrated in 1913. He went to work for the old Springer Lock Company for 10 cents an hour, 10 hours a day.

In 1915, with labor shortages caused by World War I he shifted to the Grand Trunk Railway roundhouse in Belleville, as a machinist, raising his wages, to 23 cents. A first-aid worker with St. John Ambulance, he became driver of the first motorized ambulance in the city, when the vehicle was purchased by local railroaders.

In the interim, the Cookes had met and married — on

June 6 in St. Thomas Anglican Church. The event had an extra dash of the auspicious. Mr. Cooke's sister Edith married simultaneously and parishioners said it was the first double wedding in the history of the old Belleville church.

The honeymoon trip to Niagara Falls took hours, the Cookes recall. Mr. Cooke had just bought a new car and travelling on the dirt highways of the day made little more than 23 miles an hour.

In 1927 they moved briefly to Montreal when Mr. Cooke was promoted to a passenger locomotive inspector, but soon returned when he became ill.

Back in Belleville he launched the Front St. business that made him well known to many city residents, selling and repairing bicycles, locks and keys.

Mr. Cooke retired from business in the early 1960s.

Today the Cookes continue living quietly in their South Park St. home — the house in which they've lived for some 40 years and raised their family — two sons, James and Charles, and a daughter, Marlene.

They continue to observe changes in lifestyles — "some good, some not so good."

Among the boons of contemporary living, says Mr. Cooke, is modern food - packaging which has made cooking easier, more convenient for families — particularly where both parents must work because of high living costs.

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