

Celebrating 75 years

Couple credits working side by side for happy marriage

By Lisa Larson

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Sitting in the living room of their Santa Clara home, Landon and Wanda Frei talk about their 95 years of life and their 75 years of marriage.

Behind them, framed by the room's large picture window, is Frei's Fruit Stand, a business that served as the couple's livelihood for much of their married life and is just one example of the industrious nature both Landon and Wanda possess — a characteristic they say is the key to their marital success.

"We taught our kids to work and we worked together. I think that's what's kept us together all these years," Wanda says.

The pair have known each other since they were children, growing up together "from birth 'til marriage," with their paths crossing regularly in school and beyond.

"It was such a small community, we were all neighbors," Landon says of the way Santa Clara was nearly a century ago.

Wanda remembers being in the same class with Landon in elementary school — a class that included just four boys and two girls. When they got older, they both loved to dance and would often jitterbug and waltz their way around the floor at community dances in St. George. Afterward they'd walk back to Santa Clara, which gave them a

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— WANDA FREI

lot of time to talk.

"We claimed each other as beaus," Wanda says.

Landon played on the first high school football team in the area and excelled in basketball as well, earning him a scholarship to play at Brigham Young University. However, he opted to stay in Santa Clara to be with Wanda.

"She trapped me and we got married instead," Landon says with the smile.

They were married on Oct. 16, 1936, and began the struggle of carving a life out for themselves at the tail end of the Great Depression.

"We had a hard time," Wanda says, and Landon agrees, recalling he made \$16 a month cutting firewood and their first apartment cost \$8 a month.

Later Landon earned a living pedaling (trucking). Then roughly 56 years ago they



Landon and Wanda Frei are shown in this undated photo. The Freis are celebrating their 75th wedding anniversary. SUBMITTED PHOTO



Landon and Wanda Frei are shown in front of their fruit stand in Santa

bought a farm on Country Lane and set up a card table along what is now Santa Clara Drive to sell apples.

It was the beginning of Frei's Fruit Stand.

"It's been our livelihood all our lives," says Landon, who still works in the garden and "boss(es) the kids around" while they run the fruit stand.

Wanda, who was known by many as "the fruit stand lady," is no longer able to walk well enough to work at the fruit stand, but she watches the customers come and go from her seat in her living room and remembers the years that are gone.

"I met a lot of wonderful people out on the fruit stand," she says.

Her children also remember their mother's efforts, particularly how quick she was to help people in need.

"When mom saw somebody that couldn't afford something

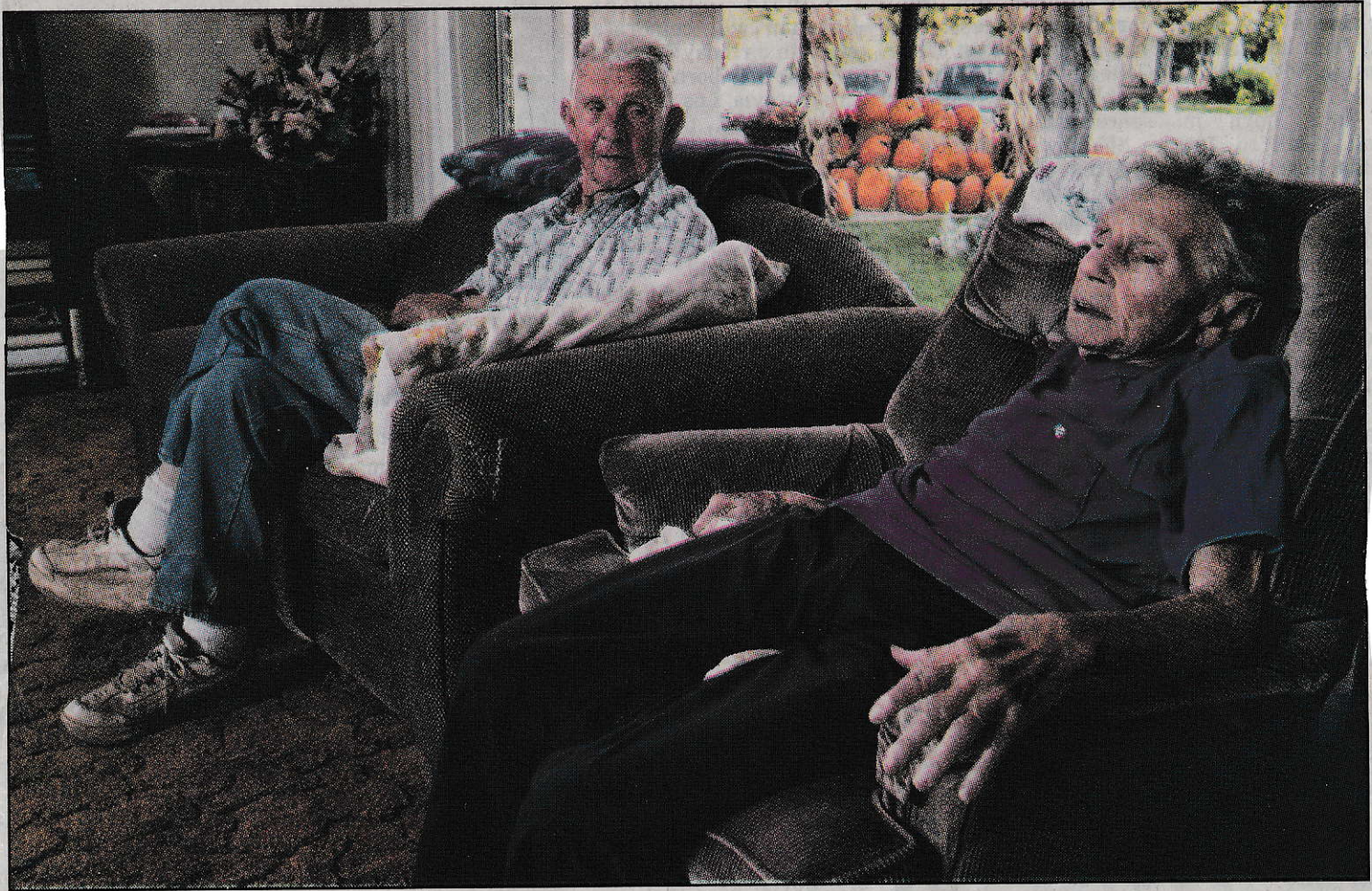
she'd give them seconds," says Loretta Adams, the couple's oldest child.

"I think they're absolutely amazing that they endure when life is hard," Adams continues. "They've taught me how to live with dignity and grace and caring about others."

Vicki Lasswell, the second living child of Landon and Wanda Frei, still runs the fruit stand with her brother, Bryce. She shares her father's love of the land and his passion for seeing things grow.

"He loves planting and seeing the harvest," Lasswell says. "He's taught me to appreciate the beauty of this area."

Although the Frei family's business didn't allow for much travel or very many hours of play, they always participated in the opening day of fishing season as a family.



Pumpkins on display at the Frei Fruit Stand can be seen through the window of Landon and Wanda Frei's Santa Clara home as they talk about their 75 years of marriage. The pair have known each other since they were children. JUD BURKETT / THE SPECTRUM & DAILY NEWS

Nev., October 10, 1936. They were later sealed in the St. George temple.

Wanda and Landon have lived in Santa Clara all their lives. They still help operate Frei's Fruit Market which has been in business for 56 years.

Mom is known as the fruit stand lady. Dad can still be found in his garden raising vegetables for the fruit market. Both have been active in the community and in the LDS church. They have celebrated their 95th birthdays this year.

They are the parents of four children — Loretta Adams, Vicki Lasswell, Dennis Frei, and Bryce Frei. They have 9 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren, and 3 great-great grandchildren.

They will celebrate their day with a family dinner. You can wish them well at their home in Santa Clara.

Frei

Continued from D1

"I didn't think we'd ever get too old to dance and fish," Wanda says.

Now the couple's activities include, for Wanda, watching Jazz basketball games and, for Landon, watching boxing on TV.

"He does his thing and I do mine and we get along fine," Wanda says.

Looking back on their lives they both agree the highlights were when each of their four children were born — with the first

and last sharing the same birthday, on Valentine's Day, 18 years apart.

As for the challenges in life, they dealt with them the same way they lived each day, by working hard.

Adams remembers when her parents were devastated as they watched her sister grieving for the loss of her husband, Landon went out and planted peas and Wanda made applesauce.

"That's their way to cope," Adams says.

Regardless of the hardships they've faced, be it

poverty in their early years or Wanda's bout with cancer when she was 80 years old, Landon and Wanda find strength in pulling together with their family.

"We've loved each other from the very start. That makes a difference," Landon says of his marital success.

"My mom and dad are very blessed because they do have their family around them," Lasswell says. "I think knowing this family is here is what keeps them here and going."