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VALENTINE'S DAY - 14 FEBRUARY

# because she's worth it



## A friendship of a lifetime

When it comes to love and marriage, Connie and Ralph Silvester, of Warkworth, have more experience than most.

The couple are both in their 90s and still living independently in their own home.

Their marriage – the third for Connie and second for Ralph – has stood the test of time "because we agree to disagree".

"You are bound to have arguments in marriage but the secret is not to keep fighting over them," Ralph says. "Learn from your mistakes and don't dwell on things that have happened that you can't change anyway."

"You never know what's going to happen next, so enjoy life and take it how it comes."

The couple met as friends more than 50 years ago, when they were both married to other partners.

"Ralph and my husband worked at Northcote College," Connie says. "My husband suffered from Parkinsons Disease and Ralph used to help him get to and from work."

The two families became friends. When their partners passed away, the friendship blossomed into love and eventually marriage in 1977.

They will celebrate their 34th wedding anniversary this year.

"It just felt right to get married," Connie says. "It was very romantic."

The marriage came with nine children – Connie had four girls and two boys, and Ralph had three daughters.

"It was quite funny because when we went for our honeymoon, we waved goodbye to our children. It's not normally that way."

Originally from London, Connie migrated to NZ in 1953 after World War II. Ralph, a Frenchman, studied agriculture in France and Britain, and also moved to NZ after the war. He worked on many farms in the King



Connie and Ralph Silvester's three decades of happy marriage started after a long-time friendship.

Country before taking a position as parks supervisor at Takapuna Borough Council.

"Our first home in Warkworth was in Wyllie Road where we had a 12-hectare lifestyle property. We moved a house from Mt Wellington to the block and proceeded to turn it into our dream home. It was lovely."

When Ralph retired the property became too much work and they moved to town for an easier lifestyle.

The couple describe their marriage as "placid".

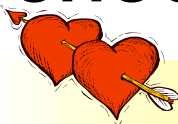
"He says 'no' and I say 'oui'," Connie says.

"We all lived happily together and the kids got along well, not perfectly, but it could have been worse," Ralph says. "I can't count how many grandchildren we have. We have great great grandchildren as well."



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VALENTINE'S DAY – 14 FEBRUARY

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Sgt Geoff Medland, formerly of Wellsford and Mangawhai Police, with his bride Noelene after their marriage on Pitcairn Island.

## Policeman weds on Pitcairn

When former Mangawhai policeman Geoff Medland married his South African fiancée Noelene, nearly all the residents on his "beat" attended the wedding.

Geoff is currently serving on remote Pitcairn Island, situated in the Pacific Ocean half way between NZ and Peru. Not only did all but two of the population turn up for the wedding, but islanders were also responsible for organising everything from the flowers, to the food and photographs.

Geoff and Noelene married on January 11. The couple met on-line during Geoff's earlier posting to Pitcairn in 2009. Noelene was working in Auckland for Sky Television.

"We met up when I returned to Auckland after my first six months on Pitcairn," Geoff says.

He proposed at the top of the Sky Tower, going down on bended knee – but only after he'd organised a small plane to fly past towing a banner asking Noelene if she'd marry him.

"We had intended getting married before we left for my second stint on Pitcairn, but work got in the way, so we didn't quite get round to it."

None of their family attended their wedding, mainly because it is a protracted five day journey involving two flights, a supply ship and then a longboat through the surf to the island. Geoff and Noelene snatched a two-day break, which they spent fishing and diving, in lieu of a honeymoon, as leaving Pitcairn wasn't an option.

"It's hard to take time off as I live on the job. The islanders are Seventh Day Adventists, so essentially work a six-day week with Saturday being their day off."

Pitcairn Island is a British Dependency and has a population of 54, along with

off-island support staff, such as Geoff and Noelene, a school teacher, doctor and a social worker. The island was originally populated by mutineers from HMS Bounty whose descendants still live there.

Geoff says that NZ police have a good reputation throughout the South Pacific for their strength in working among small communities, which is why they are sought after for such jobs. As well as policing on Pitcairn, Geoff has served in East Timor "during exciting times in 2006 when there was a war on and we were there to rebuild a police force and rescue a community."

Pitcairn challenges him in different ways.

"It's a small community that's been through tough times. I'm involved in role-modelling and setting up systems to protect children and families. The community hopes to attract back families who left during less happy times, and also new settlers.

"The aim is for a stable population of around 110, with about 13 children keeping the school viable."

Meanwhile, the population is re-establishing cottage industries and moving away from dependence on benefits, he says.

"There's a flourishing beekeeping industry producing pure honey that's been endorsed by the Queen, and the islanders make carvings, jewellery and Bounty memorabilia to sell to passengers on visiting cruise ships."

Geoff and Noelene return to Auckland in June.



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VALENTINE'S DAY - 14 FEBRUARY

*because she's worth it*



## A different kind of Valentine

Are you ready to feel loved up this Valentine's Weekend? Your local SPCA would love to introduce you to a couple of lonely souls falling over themselves to nuzzle their way into your heart.

The SPCA and Hill's Pet Nutrition will be celebrating the annual Second Chance for Love adopt-a-thon on February 12 and 13, in SPCA centres in Auckland and Whangarei.

Centre visitors can spend time getting

to know the SPCA animals, until they find their soul mate - or they find you! Last year, nearly 30 SPCA centres participated in the Second Chance for Love event, and more than 500 lucky animals found new homes.

## Five ways to say "I love you", and some hints on what not to do

An expensive gift isn't essential to get your Valentine's message across. Remember, actions speak louder than words - don't just say you appreciate your beloved, show it in a tangible way.

### Five great ways to say I love you

- Prepare a home-cooked meal or picnic trip complete with menu incorporating their favourite foods (don't ask them to carry the picnic basket or do the washing up)
- A candlelit massage (sans kids if you have them)
- Share a homemade slideshow of favourite relationship moments over a bottle of wine (don't forget to provide a commentary on why each shot is meaningful)
- Take a sunset walk along the beach

and dine out on fish and chips fresh from the paper.

- Design a "mystery trip" that can be as local or far afield as you like but fill it with little things you know they will love - your time and attention is the key!

### How not to do it

- Text messaging your love instead of saying it in person
- Buying a practical item needed for the household (if you need a new iron buy it another day!)
- Getting the kids to say it (there's another day for that!)
- Inviting your mates round to celebrate the occasion with you
- Saying Valentine's Day is for suckers and avoiding it all together.

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