

Two valentines from Eatons' Ranch

BY LOIS BELL

SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — She was a pretty, dark-haired girl from a Midwest city. His traveling boots had settled in Big Horn. She was a junior in high school. He was a junior in college. It didn't seem possible their orbits could cross. Maybe it was the majesty of the Bighorns. Perhaps it was the beautiful Wyoming skies. But the magic of Eatons' Ranch was in force when Jack Pelissier first saw Sophie Shepley.

"It was the summer of 1957 and I was working as a wrangler at the corral,"

Pelissier said. "I had another girl I was squiring around but when I saw Sophie, I thought she was really, really, really pretty."

Pelissier takes care to enunciate each iteration of the word "really."

"I can show you the exact spot I was when I saw Sophie for the first time," Pelissier said.

Many married couples today have met at Eatons' Ranch; the ranch magic worked on Shepley and Pelissier. Sophie was smitten with the Eaton wrangler. Pelissier asked her out.

"As a wrangler, we were expected to entertain the dude girls," Pelissier said. "We would take them to dances, bingo and horseback riding at the ranch."

It was easy for Pelissier to court the pretty, dark-haired girl from Missouri.

"I took her out every night she was there," Pelissier said. "We dated for three weeks before she went back home to St. Louis."

Shepley returned to high school. Pelissier returned to his ag degree studies at the University of Wyoming.

The magic of the dude ranch had roped a long lasso around the two. The two corresponded over the winter. Shepley returned to Eatons' the following summer.

Now 17, Shepley traveled by train with a girlfriend to Eaton's. Mr. and Mrs. Shepley had asked Patty Eaton to keep an eye on the girls.

"Patty took the girls aside and said to them 'You know the difference between right and wrong. I expect you to do right,'" said Pelissier. "That's all the chaperoning Patty gave."

Pelissier was anxious for another date with Sophie. He remembers every detail.

"Our first date was to the Maverick Supper Club south of Sheridan. It was the best place to eat in Wyoming when Lionel and Eunice McEwan operated it in my opinion," Pelissier said.

Eatons' spell continued to weave its magic long distance around the two. Pelissier spent that Christmas in St. Louis.

Sophie returned to Eatons' Ranch after high school — this time to waitress the dudes while Pelissier continued to wrangle.

But their relationship was about to take a turn. It seemed that the magic of the ranch may be losing its power.

"I joined Officer Candidate School with the Marine Corps in 1960 and



COURTESY PHOTO |

Jack Pelissier sits at the spot where he first saw Sophie Shepley take a drink at a water foundation at Eatons' Ranch where he was a young wrangler. The two were smitten with each other and were married for 50 years.

Sophie was in college," said Pelissier. "I was a second lieutenant and Sophie was in college. We both wanted to date other people."

A year went by but the magic of Eatons' Ranch had not diminished for Sophie and Jack. The two

reunited... and married. In time they returned to Sheridan where they raised their family.

"It was 50 wonderful years," said Pelissier. Sophie died in 2012. Pelissier cherishes every moment they were together.

"I don't think we ever had a bad day," Pelissier said. "Sophie may disagree with that but that's how I remember it."

The Eatons' Ranch magic is still weaving its spell for this special couple who met there 58 years ago.

Did you find love at Eaton's?

Did you marry after meeting at Eatons' Ranch? If yes, please leave your name and contact information with Lois Bell at the Sheridan Senior Center at 672-2240 or at sscc@fiberpipe.net.



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CENTER STAGE

Giving care to caregivers

I often think of a quote by Rosalynn Carter saying "There are only four kinds of people in this world: Those who have been caregivers, those who currently are caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers."

Now that we have everyone covered, we can agree that it is in our best interest to care for ourselves since we will all fall into one or more of these categories!

When caregivers are "on call" 24/7 they become so immersed in caring for their loved one that at times they tend to neglect caring for themselves. Many of us have watched a healthy person who becomes an around-the-clock caregiver get sick themselves and end up in the hospital and some even die before the person they were caring for.

Caregivers often become so rundown they cannot maintain the stamina required to care for their loved one. It is vital that we ask for help be it from friends and family and/or outside resources.

As a caregiver, you may feel that you should be able to do everything required to help your loved one. Maybe you have always loved cooking and preparing meals seems like something you should do, but when you add all your other caregiver responsibilities to preparing three meals a day, it can be a bit overwhelming. Wouldn't it be nice to sit down to an already prepared meal with your loved?

I often offer the suggestion to caregivers of allowing us (Senior Center) to help with some of the tasks they do so they can enjoy time with their loved one. There is still a lot left for the caregiver to do — and if you can spend more quality time with your loved one you will be a better and less stressed caregiver!

I offer this advice because just a few years ago, I was that adult daughter. I thought I should be able to handle everything required in my caregiver role. "My parents took care of me so I should be able to give back and now

care for them." When I finally let go and allowed and "accepted" support, I really became a better caregiver and a healthier person.

Not having family near, I utilized outside sources. The Senior Center was the main resource. The Help at Home programs provided several services; twice a week an aide came to my parent's home and helped get my mom up in the morning and ready for the day. The aide would wait until the Mini Bus came to pick my mom up and bring her to Day Break. At Day Break, mom received loving care and socialization and a nutritious noon meal in our dining room.

We utilized the Senior Center loan closet for items like a walker and transport chair. The Help at Home program also provided support one day a week with light house-keeping and respite care.

These services meant the world to my dad, who really was the main caregiver during the day. With this break, my dad and I were both able to be more relaxed and do other necessary caregiver chores and not feel so stressed at the end of each day.

Sometimes you don't know what resources are available to you. For example, my dad was a veteran and qualified for financial support from the Veterans Affairs Department in having the Senior Center's Help at Home program come into my parents' home once a week to provide homemaking chores. This included linen changes, laundry, vacuuming and cleaning the bathroom. All of these support services made a huge difference in our lives as caregivers.

It took me a long time to admit and accept that I needed help. When caregivers have family and friends who want to help, don't deprive them the opportunity to serve by trying to do it all yourself! Take a few minutes and give me a call or stop by the Senior Center and let's visit about resources that can help lighten your load — you will be a better caregiver and you will feel better too!

STELLA MONTANO is the director of Family Caregiver Services at the Senior Center. She can be reached at 675-1978. Center Stage is written by friends of the Senior Center for the Sheridan Community. It is a collection of insights and stories related to living well at every age.

SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS

• **Senior Center 101.** Join us on Monday, Feb. 15 at the Senior Center. Learn about the mission of the Senior Center! 1 p.m. in the Senior Center Conference Room, 211 Smith St.

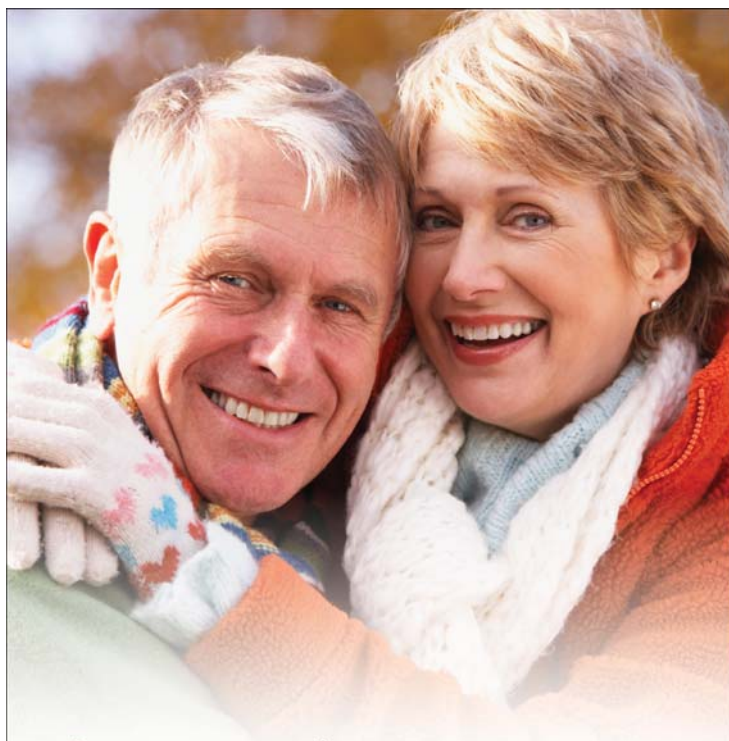
• **Are you a grandparent raising a grandchild?** There is support for you in your very special role. Join us on Wednesday, Feb. 17 at the Senior Center dining room at 5:30 p.m. Meet other grandparents raising their grandchildren...and great-grandchildren. Dinner will be provided. Activities will be available for the children. Please call Stella Montano or Heather Comstock at 675-1978 to let us know you're thinking of coming.

• **Greeting Card and Scrapbook Creators** with Heidi Rossler work on Saturday, Feb. 27. Bring your projects or learn how to make handmade cards. No charge and

all supplies provided. Sign up at the front desk of the Senior Center or by calling in at 672-2240 by Feb. 25. The workshop is from 12:30-3:30 p.m. in the Art Studio.

• **Sauerkraut — A powerhouse food for probiotics!** Join us on Wednesday, Feb. 17 at the Senior Center for a demonstration and insights into the power of probiotics. This is a free presentation for the community with registered dietitian, Georgia Boley. Join us in the Art Studio at the Senior Center. Make and take home your own personal jar of sauerkraut.

• **Bluegrass and Burgers!** Tuesday night, Feb. 16 at 7 p.m. No charge for the entertainment, \$2 for burgers. No need to sign up in advance, just come on in and join the fun from the dining room stage at the Senior Center, 211 Smith St.



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