

Faces Of New Bedford #234: Ernest & Lillian L'Abbe



Meet Ernest & Lillian L'Abbe, life long New Bedford residents who have been married for 70 years.

Ernest L'Abbe, born in 1927 and Lillian (Souza) born in 1926 were brought into this world in New Bedford during the great depression when the landscape of the city was much different than it was today. Both coming from hardworking families, who stuck together to make things work.

Ernie attended vocational school until he joined the US Coast Guard, leaving school at the age of 17 due to World War II. Lillian attended Holy Family High and went to Campbell's Secretarial School. After graduating she went to work at the Aerovox Corp. as many others at the time did. During her time at Aerovox, she worked in the Priorities Department but also stayed busy writing a column, singing songs, dancing and performing to entertain soldiers.

After the war ended Ernie also got a job at Aerovox, working as a machine shop supervisor and a tool & die maker. Lillian was now working as a secretary to the Director of Purchasing. He began noticing her walking through the building at work, eventually, they met by chance at the beach at Fort Phoenix and soon after started dating, marrying a year and a half later on February 18, 1950.

Both suffered loss as teenagers, Ernest lost his father Albert and Lillian lost her mother Ana. After marrying the newlywed's remaining parents came to live with them and soon after their family began to grow. In 1951 their first child Gail was born, followed by their only son Russell in 1952, followed by two more daughters a few years later Nancy and Judith.

They have stayed active in the community through their involvement with their church, Holy Name, participating in the choir, many fundraisers and fun events. Never losing the work ethic of their youth they continued working many years after retirement age. In 2002, Ernest received an honorary high school diploma from Greater New Bedford Vocational during the same graduation ceremony as his grandson, New Bedford Guide's Josh Souza.

Today, they live independently, still in love, in New Bedford, proud of the family they've built with 4 children, 9 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren whom they love with all their hearts.

"It's pretty hard to say how to make it work for so long, but you should never go to bed angry and just love one another."

Faces of New Bedford is a New Bedford Guide project being undertaken by Josh Souza. If you'd like to nominate someone or ask a question you can inquire with him through email at josh@newbedfordguide.com.

Faces of New Bedford began as a project by Colton Simmons. You can find Colton on Instagram: <https://instagram.com/simmonscolton>.