

Marriage remains golden strong after 50 years

AFTER five decades of marriage, Allan and Marianne Mitchell continue to bask in their life of wedded bliss.

Allan (78) and Marianne (81) first met at the Shongwe Mission Hospital in Mpumalanga in 1970. Marianne worked as a nursing sister at the mission for four years when Dr Allan Mitchell arrived to provide help to the only doctor in the 400 inpatient hospital.

They soon realised they had previously met in Cape Town while he was a medical student and she completing her studies in midwifery in the Peninsular Maternity Hospital in District 6.

Allan and Marianne started working together in the operating room and performed many exciting operations together, including people who had been attacked by crocodiles and hippos.

"Operations often carried on into the night," said Allan.

Their first date was under a flat crown tree and, after a year, they were engaged. They were married in a little chapel at Shongwe Mission Hospital on June, 26 in 1971.

"What a joyous celebration it was as we were asked to walk through the hospital and all of the nurses danced and sang behind us and the patients were leaning out the windows, waving and shouting well wishes," said a smiling Marianne.

The community was part of the



Marianne and Allan Mitchell, today.

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wedding, a cow was slaughtered and everyone was invited to celebrate. As a couple, they flew to Mauritius on honeymoon, a wonderful surprise that was organised by Allan.

After their three daughters were born, they moved to New Zealand for two years, in 1976. When their parents became ill, they decided

to move back to South Africa and moved to Westville to look after their remaining aged parents. Marianne's mother lived with them until her death at 103 years of age. Allan's father also lived with them until his death.

"The house was always full and busy with three generations living happily together!" smiled Allan.



The couple on their wedding day 50 years ago.

They are still living in their ancestral home, which has been in Allan's family since 1926.

Allan and Marianne are avid caravanners and they have a group of friends with whom they have travelled with for the last 40 years. Each year they visit the Kruger National Park and they have also visited, to name a few, Kozi Bay,

Zimbabwe and Cape Town.

Marianne's parents were Swiss missionaries to Lesotho which led to Switzerland becoming a special place close to the couple's hearts as all of her relatives live there.

Allan worked in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health and was involved with the McCord's Hospital and headed the surgical section. He was later appointed Director of Health for the Southern part of the province. Marianne did volunteer nursing and then relief nursing at a Westville Retirement home until the age of 80.

Allan and Marianne have three daughters, Belinda, Mary-Lou and Carolyn, as well as four grandchildren.

Marianne loves photography and they are involved in their local church activities, as well as leading a homegroup. During lockdown, Marianne said she updated her memoirs, *A Missionary's Daughter Remembers* and uploaded it to Amazon. "A dream come true!" she exclaimed.

Their secret to a successful marriage was marrying a partner who has a similar background and interests. "It has been a great joy to me to find a good, Godly man," she smiled.

"Our journey over the past 50 years has been one of joy and being aware that God leads us on the path we should go. As we get older and look back, we say: 'That was a wonderful life!'"