



JONATHAN NICHOLAS

SWEETHEARTS AND SPEED BUMPS

The first thing that Vic Atiyeh remembers about his wedding day, 60 years ago Monday, is that he wasn't really all that worried. Says the former gov: "All I needed to find was a clean shirt."

Dolores Hewitt, his sweetheart since high school, faced a rather broader challenge. On one week's notice, seven wartime days, she had to find everything.

Even a wedding dress.

It was 1944, a year when all sorts of life passages were hurried. Atiyeh's twin brothers, Edward and Richard, were briefly dispatched home on leave from the Army before joining their platoon in Europe. Hence the hurried wedding plan.

Atiyeh, who learned the rug trade from his father, went on to run the family firm, Atiyeh Bros. Inc., and to launch a 28-year career in politics capped by two terms as Oregon's 32nd governor.

Today, he enjoys statesman status, elegantly, and eloquently, standing as a beacon of civility in a political climate in which an utter lack of civility masquerades as conviction.

So, what, we asked the statesman, is the secret to a 60-year marriage of high school sweethearts?

"There is no secret," he says. "There is no path that is smooth. There are lots of speed bumps out there. You just have to be determined. Too many people give up too early."

And how does he feel on this diamond anniversary?

"As a kid, I remember the newspaper used to show those anniversary pictures. I'd think, 'My God, those people look so old.' Let me tell you, when you get there, it ain't that bad."



COURTESY OF ATIYEH FAMILY

Also be seeing you: Vic Atiyeh and Dolores Hewitt in 1944.

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