



The Happy Hope-r

Rudy and Sherrie Simek



By Mary Bresnahan

Rudy	Sherrie
Birthdate: August 31, 1953	September 6, 1957
Birthplace: Amsterdam, NY	Bronxville, NY
Marriage: September 3, 1977	Where: Albuquerque, NM
Occupation: Air Force - Active duty and civilian employee	Retail Management/supervisor
Hobbies: Stamp collecting, baseball, maintenance at Cross of Hope, Good Friday walk to Chimayo, vegetable and flower garden	Arts and crafts, vegetable and flower garden, fishing, time with sister's grandchildren, baseball, travel in US

Sherrie was born to Albert (Al) and Lillian (Lillie) Gates. Al was born in Erie PA. He worked for GE (General Electric) in Erie as a training manager focusing on airplane engines. This is where he met Lillie. When a plane crashed, he went to the site to determine if there was an engine failure. He was transferred to different company locations – Schenectady, NY, Yonkers, NY, Cincinnati, OH. When living in the latter, Al took the train from Cincinnati into New York to work.

There were seven children in the family. Once the children started to arrive Lillie stopped working to tend to the children. Eventually, the two oldest children helped out. Sherrie's sister (the oldest, Joyce) is 16 years older than her and her younger sister (Jeri) is three years younger. Sherrie is a twin with a sister Terrie. When they were two years old the family moved to Cincinnati, OH.

While living in Cincinnati, Joyce got married and Betty (#2) went to college at Northwestern University in IL. The family lived in Cincinnati for eight years. In October 1967 they moved to Albuquerque where her dad helped open the GE plant here. By this time only four children were left at home. As twins, Sherrie and Terrie always played tricks on people, leaving them guessing who was whom. This was easy since they were in the same class until 5th grade.

Rudy's parents were Gladys and John. Rudy was the second of five children. The first four are only one year apart and were all born in August. The last child is four years younger than Rudy. Guess his parents needed a little break! Gladys worked in a glove factory in Gloversville, NY. Ninety percent of the gloves sold in the U.S. were made here. When the third child arrived, Gladys went from full-time to part-time work at the glove factory. John was a tanner. We don't hear or see many of them anymore.

Rudy grew up on a dairy farm owned by his grandparents. He milked 100 cows twice a day (a skill never lost). If you have a cow I'm sure Rudy can help you out. Rudy learned to drive a tractor at the

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age of five. Bet he couldn't reach the gas pedal – must have been some adaptations. The farm had its own lumber mill and also raised minks. That fur was in high demand back then. This farming operation was quite profitable.

Rudy recalls when he was 12 years old sitting on the porch chatting with his grandpa. He said he was “bored.” What a mistake! His grandpa had him pick up 100 bales of hay. Rudy was never bored again!

Rudy walked to the country store to catch the school bus. He was an athlete in high school (which consisted of 20 kids in his class). Rudy played basketball, baseball, volleyball, and soccer. Since he was a “star” the school bus came to the farm to pick him up!

Rudy knew he would be drafted since the Viet Nam war was going on. On December 17, 1971, he received his draft call and signed up for the Air Force. He was 18 years old. While waiting to report to the Air Force, his appendix burst. He lost about 60 pounds. Rudy got a job in construction attempting to gain weight and muscle mass so he would be close to the weight he was at when he was drafted. He reported for basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas.

Sherrie and Rudy met at McDonald's in Albuquerque. Rudy's best friend worked at the McDonald's on San Pedro and Lomas with Sherrie. This friend wanted to go out and party, but he wasn't 21 – but Rudy was. After this first meeting, Sherrie was invited to a party and was reintroduced to Rudy. They started dating. They both agreed they immediately knew this was the right person. Rudy was out of the military for about a year. He didn't have a job or a car, but had plenty of long hair. Christmas 1976 Sherrie brought Rudy home to meet her parents. To Sherrie's surprise her parents thought he was great!

They married at Nesbitt's Wedding Chapel. Six months later they learned that the preacher was not licensed in New Mexico. Oops! Eventually, everything got straightened out at City Hall. Whew! They are really married!

Sherrie continued to work at McDonald's for 23 years as a manager/supervisor. She left in 1996 when she began hiring children of kids who had worked for her. She thought it was time to find a more “traditional” career without working nights, weekends and less than 80 hours a week. Her sister, Terrie, was working at Bank of America which later was bought by Wells Fargo. Sherrie thought banking would be interesting so applied at Bank of America. They had a hiring freeze, so she went to Norwest Bank (later to become Wells Fargo). Sherrie started as a teller and worked her way up to Branch Manager over her 18 years there.

Rudy did get a job at Tijeras Arroyo Golf Course located on the Kirtland Air Force base. His good friend was his boss. Rudy ran the bowling alley, cleaned the swimming pool, maintained the baseball fields. During this time Rudy got an offer to work at Dukes Stadium (now Isotopes Park) which had the minor league for the Los Angeles Dodgers. As a civilian employee, but part of the Civil Engineering Division of the Air Force, he was earning retirement benefits. He did not want to lose those benefits, so he declined the offer. The Civil Engineering Division was responsible for just about everything involved in the trades (plumbing, heating, construction) and troop training. They were called upon whenever there was a disaster. For example, when the bombing happened in Oklahoma City, they were on emergency lock-down in case there was another bombing someplace else and they had to go to the site.

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Troops would go to Wichita Falls, TX at Sheppard Air Force Base for on-going training. Spouses did not get information on where and for what their husbands were leaving since it was considered “top secret.” Often there was no notice that someone was leaving on assignment. Rudy gave an example of telling fellas they were taking a “little airplane ride” to Arkansas. The plane refueled in mid-air. The last stop was Afghanistan. They were the first boots on the ground. Eventually training was developed so spouses could survive while their husbands were gone.

Over the years Rudy was exposed to many chemicals which may be having an impact on his body now.

One of the things Rudy enjoys doing every year (starting in 1980) is walking to Chimayo on Good Friday. He was introduced to this by his boss. Rudy and Sherrie start at Pojoaque (about 13 miles away) now. Sherrie used to drive for Rudy but now she walks five miles with him. Rudy used to start at the National Cemetery – remembering fellow veterans who died. This journey means a lot to him. He reflects, his spirit gets renewed and is refocused. They arrive at Chimayo church about 7:30 or 8 am and see the streams of people arriving and a beautiful sunrise.

The main hobby Rudy enjoys is stamp collecting. When he was in 6th grade there was a book fair where he saw a book on stamp collecting. He bought it for 1.25 cents. Now he has 88,644 stamps catalogued in his collection, with more to be added. He has a room at home dedicated to this hobby. It is an especially great hobby in the cold weather. He spends time looking for new stamps, bidding on them on Ebay, and updating his “want list.” Every year Rudy and Sherrie go to a GASS (Great American Stamp Show). Rudy has one dealer he particularly likes to deal with. Stamps can cost anywhere from \$.25 to \$50 depending on how many were printed. There is a lot to be learned about history and countries.

At the beginning of 2017, Sherrie resolved to find a church home. She missed the community that church is. They attended Holy Cross with Sherrie’s parents in the late ‘90’s. Sherrie and Rudy visited several churches with friends. They went to Sherrie’s sister’s church but couldn’t imagine driving to Edgewood every Sunday. One Sunday in March 2017, they decided to try Cross of Hope since it was the closest Lutheran church for them. Ruth Hinkel. Pastor Matt Powell and Pastor Adam made them feel as if they had come home.

When Rudy first came to Cross of Hope he saw Margie Reed and Ruth Hinkel gardening in the front of church without any help. He thought he HAD to help. We all owe many thanks for all he (and Sherrie) do to maintain our church grounds keeping them beautiful and welcoming to all. Additionally, Rudy is on the Temple Guard.

As with many married couples, Rudy’s hobbies include Sherrie – Chimayo walk, maintenance at church, and learning much about stamp collecting. In addition, Sherrie is on the Church Council, participates in WOW, Banner Babes, and altar guild. They both do the emergency drills with the school and help count the offerings at church.

While Sherrie and Rudy do not have children, they currently have two cats, Spunky and QT. They both grew up with animals in their lives – dogs, cats, hamsters, etc. They chose to have had cats since they are easier to care for considering their varied work schedules. These “fur babies” are part of the family. Rudy has trained several of their cats to fetch and always has “stamp kitties.” QT not only plays fetch with Rudy she does the newspaper crossword puzzle every morning. Spunky’s name says it all. Those with pets will agree, they warm their way into your heart.

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All these things keep Sherrie out of the casino and Rudy out of the bars! Fortunately for us they both get a lot of enjoyment out of all these activities. We are truly blessed to have Sherrie and Rudy as part of our congregation. Take a minute to say "thank you" to both of them.

