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February 2025

WESTMINSTER Living

The Mains:
Two Souls, One Journey of Forever Love

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Cover Photo by Angela Hewett Schisler

Sharon and Mark Main: *A Love of a Lifetime*



■ BY TARA SIMPKINS ■ PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY ANGELA HEWETT SCHISLER AND SHARON M. MAIN

The story of Sharon and Mark Main is a testament to true love from the very beginning. Their journey began when Sharon was just 15 years old. She was dating a young man named Joe, who was in basic training, when she met Mark at Snaks by George (also known to the locals as George's or Twin Kiss) where Sharon worked as a waitress. Mark, on leave from the Army, struck up a conversation with her and asked if she would write to him while he was away. Though Sharon mentioned she had a boyfriend who was also enlisted, she couldn't ignore the magnetic pull she felt toward Mark. He had a kindness and confidence that stood out, leaving an impression she couldn't shake.

Mark and Joe shared many similarities: they were the same age, graduated high school the same year, had both enlisted in the Army and both served in the same infantry unit, the 11th Armored Cavalry, Blackhorse Regiment. Both went to Vietnam, but tragically, Joe was killed during his second tour. This heartbreaking loss added to the complexity of Sharon's emotions as she navigated her growing connection with Mark.

Sharon and Mark were set to spend time together, after he asked her to join him on a "friendly" date. A date which never happened because Joe surprised her with an impromptu weekend leave visit during his basic training. Sharon felt terrible for standing him up, especially since her mother offered him no explanation. Not the typical reaction for a girl with a boyfriend. Sharon thought as though she should not be feeling so terrible if she really loved her boyfriend, Joe.

A few days later, Mark showed up at Snaks again teasing her that he had never been stood up before. She apologized and he asked that they try again for that friendly date. Their next outing was unforgettable. Sharon found Mark

to be charming, clever, and full of humor. His quick wit and genuine interest in her made her feel special.

On her sixteenth birthday, Mark took her to a romantic dinner at Cockey's Tavern. It was there that he told her he loved her after just two weeks. Though surprised, Sharon began to realize her feelings for Mark were growing, and she couldn't deny the spark between them.

When Mark's thirty-day leave ended, it was then Sharon knew her heart belonged to him, not Joe. Their love deepened through two-and-a-half years of long-distance letters while Mark completed his service in the Army. In those letters, they shared their hopes, dreams, and everyday thoughts, solidifying their bond. In 1972, ten months after his discharge, they were married. Despite Sharon's occasional doubts about her feelings early on, Mark's steadfast belief in their love never wavered. His unwavering support helped her find clarity and confidence in their future together.

Before marriage, Sharon had been working at a local manufacturing company. She continued working there for the next twenty-one years rising from Inventory Clerk to Inventory Manager. Her dedication and work ethic were evident as she navigated the challenges of mergers and relocations. When the company moved to North Carolina, the Mains chose to stay in Carroll County, valuing their roots and community. Sharon then pursued an associate degree in Early Childhood Education at Carroll Community College and worked with the Carroll County Board of Education starting in the Head Start Program and later in the Vision Group where she learned braille and began working with children who were visually impaired. Retiring in 2015, she continued to work part-time to train others, finding immense fulfillment

in making a difference. "Working with children was my happy place," Sharon shared.

Mark knew early on that he wanted to work in masonry. After high school, he enlisted in the Army to control where he served, a decision that reflected his thoughtful and strategic nature. Upon returning home, he honed his craft with various companies before becoming a foreman and part owner of Carroll Masonry in 1995. Mark's dedication to his craft was unmatched. He loved the creativity and craftsmanship of working with stone and brick, which he called his "happy place." He took pride in the structures he built, leaving behind a legacy of quality and skill. Mark remained there until he completely retired in 2016.

One of their most cherished routines began in 1972, sharing coffee and conversation each morning before Mark left for work. Whether discussing daily plans or simply enjoying each other's company, these moments reflected the deep bond they shared. This quiet time together became a cornerstone of their relationship, starting each day with a coffee kiss at the door and a 'have a good day, baby' goodbye as he walked outside.

Sharon and Mark pursued hobbies that brought them joy. Sharon, an avid needlewoman, sewed her own clothes and created intricate cross stitch projects. Her talent and attention to detail were evident in the beautiful pieces she crafted over the years. Mark was deeply involved in the American Legion, serving in Westminster from the time he left the Army in 1971. He held many leadership positions within the organization, including Commander of Post 31, the Carroll County Commander, and Western Maryland District Commander. All these positions eventually led him to the position of Judge Advocate at the Westminster Post for almost twenty years. His commitment to supporting veterans and their families reflected his character and values, which Sharon admired deeply.

Their home, built by Mark in 1978, became a hub for many social gatherings and holiday meals. With a spacious wrap-around deck, huge patio, and a garage-turned-entertainment space, the Mains loved hosting family, friends, and neighbors. Mark's craftsmanship and thoughtfulness were evident in every detail of their home, designed to bring people together. Though they couldn't have children of their own they embraced neighborhood kids, and nieces, and even students that Sharon had worked with in her classes, treating them as their own.

Sharon and Mark also added many dogs to their family over the years, eventually turning to rescue programs instead of breeders. One mischievous dog named Monroe, affectionately known as "The King of Turkeyfoot," was a favorite in their neighborhood. Monroe's antics, from stealing items and bringing them home, added humor and warmth to their lives, and many apologies and sometimes payments for damage incurred during one of Monroe's escapades. Currently, Ellie, a cocker spaniel and Ned Pike, a black cat have found their way into Sharon's loving heart.

The Mains' neighborhood was more than a collection of houses—it was an extended family. After a neighbor's sudden passing, Mark even walked his friend's daughter down the aisle, embodying the sense of community that defined their lives. Sharon and Mark's generosity and kindness left a lasting impression on everyone around them.

Mark's tradition of heartfelt cards for Sharon, especially on Valentine's Day, was another symbol of their enduring love. Each card was carefully chosen or handmade, filled with sweet notes that Sharon treasured. These tokens of affection were a testament to Mark's thoughtfulness and the depth of their connection.

Sharon chronicled her early years as a teen and also their life together with Mark through journaling, scrapbooks, and more recent digital photo books. These memories, along with every card, and letter Mark wrote, became

invaluable when she authored a book about her life, *An American Girl*. Her dedication to preserving their story ensured that their love would be remembered and celebrated for years to come.

Though neither traveled much growing up, Sharon and Mark enjoyed vacations together. They visited Ocean City, Deep Creek Lake, the Outer Banks and destinations like Nassau, San Juan, and St. Croix. These trips, sometimes shared with friends, neighbors and family members, were cherished opportunities to relax and create new memories, strengthening their bond with each adventure.

Their greatest challenge, yet the most memorable time, came when Mark was diagnosed with cancer. Over six years, he endured surgeries, radiation, and periods of remission. Sharon and Mark's love deepened further during this journey. They leaned on each other for strength, finding solace in their unwavering faith and connection. "Everything in our lives was heightened," Sharon said. "Our awareness of life's gift, our relationships with others, and most of all our love for each other." They often reminded one another, "God made you for me."

Sadly, Mark lost his battle with cancer and passed away on December 29, 2019, at the age of seventy. Sharon reflects on their 51 years together in her her published book, *An American Girl*, as a true love story—noting that like all marriages they had their struggles and adjustments but one thing was for sure that their love was one truly marked by devotion, laughter, and a shared understanding that they were meant to be together. Their love is an enduring example of commitment, strength, and the beauty of a life lived well together.

Sharon sends this ending sentiment:

"To all our neighbors from one end of our road to the other, Your friendship over the years will never be forgotten. We have been blessed by each one of you in more ways than I can count and with memories that I'll never forget. Everyone knew Mark was coming down the road when hearing the sound of his pick-up trucks. Mark could always be seen driving his truck slowly down our road as though he may see a neighbor...and of course, then he needed to stop and speak to them for a few minutes. I speak blessings over all of our neighbors."

