

Remembering Mom and Dad

By Thomas Brown

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Frances Burroughs, from Mayville, NY, was one of four siblings: two sisters, Arlene and Bea; and an older brother, Chester. So back in Fran and Walt's heydays (1930s), this is how it all began:

Not only did Walt excel on the ball diamond, but starting in 8th grade he ran cross-country and track and played basketball, for the Bemus Point Red Dragons, too. Fran was a cheerleader for the Mayville Eagles. So the eye contact and "who's that" started. As Dad would say, "She has that stay away closer look." Let the romance begin.

With steamboats and trolleys being the main mode of transportation back then, many trips from Bemus Point to Mayville were made.

Believe it or not, I heard Dad tell this story: He grew up on a farm on Brown Road, which was named after his family. In the middle of winter, he would walk down to Chautauqua Lake at Bemus Bay, about a mile, put on his ice skates, and race to Mayville to court Fran. If that is not true love, what is?

I never heard when my parents got engaged – either 1937 or 1938 – but I do know when they got married – June 23, 1939 in Kilgore, Texas.

Dad was playing for the Kilgore Boomers, a Class C team in the East Texas League. Because my mom lost both her parents before her big day, her sisters and brother drove her to Kilgore.

The wedding was unique. Mom was taken to third base, Dad to first. Each member of the respective teams held a bat up to form an arch along the first and third base lines. On a signal, Mom and Dad started walking under the arches to meet at home plate. The ceremony was held in front of 2,500-3,000 baseball fans. Chet gave his sister away.

After the ceremony, Mom and Dad, dressed in his baseball uniform, were escorted to a reserved box seat near the Boomer dugout. Following the game, Kilgore team management hosted a wedding reception and gave the couple a brand-new 1939 Buick automobile!

After a 20-year baseball career, 1934-1954, Walt and Fran settled down in Oriental Park in Bemus Point and raised a family: sons, Barry, Timothy, Brian, Thomas; and daughter, Laurrie.

Dad was an avid fisherman, hunter and outdoorsman. Mom was a great homemaker and cook. They spent a lot of their time going to the sporting events of their children. Walt coached the baseball teams of Barry and Tim.

Grandson, Jared, and wife Britta, along with granddaughter, Kimberley, and husband, Benito, share the same wedding anniversary as Walt and Fran – June 23rd.

