

## News from Nan

### ANNA'S FAMILY HISTORY

# “UNLIKELY COUPLE FORGES AMAZINGLY SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE”: HAPPY 80TH ANNIVERSARY TO MY (LATE) PARENTS

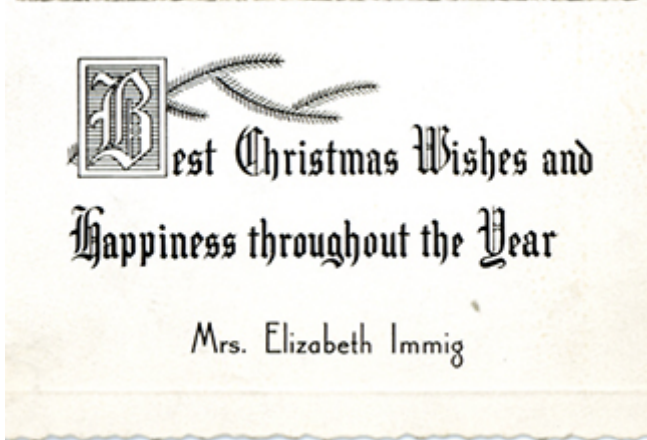
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*Newlyweds John and Nan*

The photo above was probably taken in or around Holland, Michigan, when my mom and dad were on their honeymoon after their March 5, 1939, marriage at the home of the bride's parents in Minden City.

It was an almost “accidental” meeting, courtship, and decision to marry on that particular Sunday. Nan was teaching in Marysville and boarding with John's sister (a recent widow), just a few doors down from John's house on Gratiot Boulevard. Of course, Tante Bets was doing some of the cooking for John, who was himself a recent widower. At one of those “family” dinners Nan and John were introduced.



*Tante Bets in front of the house where my parents met*

Nan had already been a high school teacher for 10 years, and (as she told the story to me) had decided that she enjoyed her single life focused on her chosen profession, and was not interested in making any changes. It was a nice life: she thoroughly enjoyed her students during the school year, and during the summers she traveled and spent time at her parents' house and the family cottage on Lake Huron.

John had recently suffered the loss of his beloved wife Jo, who died much too young at age 43. Their son, Bill, was almost an adult and ready to be on his own. I don't know if my dad had already made up his mind to try to remarry, but apparently something about Nan intrigued him and he asked her out on a date to see an opera performance in Detroit.



*Nan and John, Spring Valley, CA (ca. 1964, taken by Harold Johnson)*

Their backgrounds and life experiences couldn't have been more different. Nan was a country girl, daughter of a small-town businessman and his traditional stay-at-home wife, staunch members of the Republican Party. John was born and grew up in the city of Amsterdam, and he always leaned toward either urban or suburban environments. His political learnings were always quite a bit to the left of center. Both of their families were either indifferent or rather negative about the relationship.



*John and Nan, Morganville, NJ 1968*

But somehow there was that spark (for which I am grateful), and they decided to make a go of it. They shared a love of discussion and debate, music, and travel. They were always completely loyal and supportive of each other, and of me. And they raised me to be a citizen of the world, always interested in and willing to consider “the other side” of almost any issue.

Congratulations, Mom and Dad, wherever you are, on the 80th anniversary of your marriage. However improbable, I’m glad it happened!

◀ 2019   ◀ MARRIAGE   ◀ RIEDEL   ◀ VAN RAAPHORST