

Against the Odds, This Incredible Love Story Has Persevered For 75 Years

Note: Saturday is Valentine's Day, an occasion to celebrate the wonderful gift of God's blessing of love and marriage. As told by their son, Mark, the following is the story Don and Rosemary Rutland and a marriage that began under great duress. However, it is one that has endured and thrived for over three quarters of a century—a marriage truly blessed by God.

In February 1940, America was still reeling from the lingering effects of the Great Depression. The long economic nightmare was not yet ended by the advent of yet another nightmare, World War II.

Such a dark historical intersection seems an inauspicious moment for two very young teenagers to launch a marriage. When Don Rutland and Rosemary Hance from Commerce, Texas, eloped across the Red River into Oklahoma, hardly anyone gave the marriage much of a chance.

Despite the odds, three quarters of a century and two wars later, in February 2015, that young couple celebrated their 75th Anniversary. At 92, Don Rutland is a combat veteran of two wars. He served as a lieutenant in The 11th Airborne (Paratroops) in the Philippines in World War II and as a Captain in Armored Cavalry (Tanks) in the Korean War. His wife, Rosemary, now 90, is as much a veteran as he.

✖ My siblings and I are forever grateful that Capt. Rutland survived those two wars and that the marriage survived and thrived for 75 years. We saw their faithfulness, steadfast commitment to each other and their service to America. We witnessed their unflagging perseverance in the face of hardship. They modeled an indefatigable work ethic and that

rugged brand of patriotism so characteristic of their generation.

That is why their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren gathered from Georgia, Virginia, Maryland, Kansas and Florida to celebrate the life and times of our heroes. My dad never thought of himself as a hero, though he was one. My mother never played the suffering saint. If she ever privately indulged any inclination to self-pity, she never let us see it.

Congratulations, Capt. and Mrs. Don Rutland, on 75 years of marriage and an adventure well lived. May there be many more!