

## “Romance at 7 or 77”

### The Story of Nana and Erling

By Marcia Ramsland, daughter-in-law to Nana  
& best selling author of the “Simplify Your Life” book series

I was visiting my mother-in-law recovering from hip surgery when I heard her answer the phone with a cheerful lilt in her voice, “Hi, Erling. How are you?” A giggle followed.

Who was Erling that made Nana so happy, I wondered. They talked and talked and Nana was as happy as a junior high school girl with a call from a new boyfriend.

When she got off the phone Nana said with a smile, “That’s Erling. I met him at a funeral here in Illinois when he came up from Florida to play his trumpet for it. We were flower girl and ring bearer 69 years ago at his sister’s wedding and haven’t seen each other since!”

As our phone calls about Erling continued, Nana asked, “He sent me a basket of fruit for Christmas. What does that mean?” Not to get her hopes up, I replied, “It’s not too personal of a gift. It’s actually normal to send a fruit basket from Florida.”

But as our conversations continued, Nana one day told me, “I think he’s going to ask me to marry him.”

“What?!” I exclaimed. “Has he asked you?” “No,” Nana replied, “but I think he will.”

Nana had been a practical missionary wife until her husband passed away six years before. She read sweet romance novels like the Midford series at night which may have fueled her romance feelings. Erling had taken care of his sick wife for years until she passed away the year before. They were both widowers but lived across the country from each other.

After their initial meeting they began corresponding sending back and forth a photos of the other’s family or a Norwegian recipe they both liked. Once day Erling asked Nana, “You’ve been a widow for longer than me. What advice do you have?”

Nana said, “Advice? Of course I had advice. I told Erling he needed to think about what he wanted to be doing 10 years from now.” He gave that some serious thought and decided he didn’t want to be walking around his empty house talking to himself in 10 years.

About six months later Nana asked, “Where do you think we should get married?” I gulped not sure if this was real or fantasy at age 75 years old and she went on to say, “Shall we get married at the family reunion, or my church I went to before I moved to the retirement home?”

I said I doubted that her deceased husband’s family reunion would be the place to marry. And

not too many friends from prior to the retirement home would still have that strong connection with her.

After thinking that over Nana said wistfully, "You know where my dream wedding would be? It would be right here in the retirement center garden down in the little valley surrounded by flowers that my neighbor is the gardener." I thought about her age and said, "Nana, at age 75 you should do your dream wedding."

Shortly thereafter Erling proposed, wedding plans were set, families were invited for a May wedding. The bride and groom were to ride down the garden valley in a golf cart and get married, but the rainy day moved everything inside. No matter, it was the happiest day for two 75 and 77 year olds!

They navigated their long distance homes by spending six months in Florida at Erling's home in the winter and the spring/summer six months in Nana's retirement center duplex in Illinois. Erling played the trumpet in three Illinois bands and Nana enjoyed the winter weather with Erling's family in Florida.

Eventually they stayed in Illinois and Erling made trips to Florida when Nana couldn't travel any more. God was good and kindly gave them romance 70 years later as living example of Jeremiah 33:3 "I know the plan I have for you, says the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you a hope and a future."

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