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After the Aisle: George O. Short, Jr. '54 & Catherine Hunter '55 Hightower

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George Short '54 and Cathy Hunter Hightower '55 have been married for 107-and-a-half years. That was the first thing they had to say on a balmy Thursday afternoon as we walked into their elegantly appointed foyer in Greenville. This statement is clearly a one-liner that always gets a laugh or at least a look of bewilderment, but George quickly explains it is the combination of their years of marriage to their first spouses plus the year and a half of their own. At age 80 and 83, the Shorts are newlyweds of a different sort.

Cathy and George were both married to their Furman sweethearts, **L.G. Hightower '55** for Cathy and **Jackie E. Horne '54** for George. The foursome were dear friends and tailed for years with the same group of loyal Paladin football fans. Both lost their spouses to illness.

While they are quick to tout those 107.5 years mastering marital bliss, the Shorts are also two people trying to figure out life together as a new couple. Except in this stage of life, George is busy trying to keep track of Cathy's eight great-grandchildren. And Cathy, a transport from Ridgeland, SC, is "still getting used to finding things around here"—"here" meaning George's home and Greenville.

When George talks about his B.C. life ("Before Cathy"), he says the two were never really unconnected. In this way, theirs is not a love story about two people who found each other after a long absence. They were always in each other's lives.

Cathy had been a widow for 10 years after she lost L.G. to cancer. Although she still made sure she attended annual Furman games and reunions, she says she was at peace with



George O. Short, Jr. '54 & Catherine Hunter '55 Hightower

*A couple finds new love after
longtime marriages to others.*

By Kate Dabbs '09

remaining single. "But then, along came George," she says in a wistful way that only a Southerner from the Low-country can.

George's wife Jackie died in 2012 after a long battle with sickness and shortly thereafter, "dinner invitations [from women] began to increase significantly," he jokes. The two reconnected during George's class of 1954 Furman reunion.

"We were asked to sit with someone of the opposite gender and learn something about them that few would know. I learned Cathy had

eight great-grandchildren and I didn't have one. She got a standing ovation for her impressive procreation," he says.

The first date for George and Cathy took place in Ridgeland, where he showed up with a bouquet of roses and, ever the gentleman, motel reservations. While they joke about it now, a year and a half into marriage the two are clear about their proper courtship. "My 10-year-old granddaughter Ella was our designated chaperone," George says.

They quickly knew they wanted to be married, and

HE SHOWED UP WITH ROSES, AND EVER THE GENTLEMAN, MOTEL RESERVATIONS.

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George asked Cathy's cousin for her hand. "He told me that I more than had it, but no tradebacks." The two report that they sealed it with a kiss under the Bell Tower and, after a family ceremony in Ridgeland and a Caribbean honeymoon, they began their new life together in Greenville.

"Even though we both had long marriages, there are still things you just have to learn when you are a newlywed," says George.

"But we are more mature and less anxious than we were the first time. There is no nervous tension," Cathy adds.

"Well, we knew each other for years, too," George says, confirming the validity of the adage "friends first."

Together, they exercise daily, garden, play bridge, read, and travel with friends. "We are actually planning a trip to China," Cathy reports. "I just got my new passport."

While religion might be a lightning rod for some couples, the Shorts have a comfortable agreement, or perhaps decided they were both too seasoned to ponder conversions. "We go to Catholic church on Saturday night [for Cathy] and Presbyterian Sunday morning [for George]," he explains.

And if this sweetest depiction of marriage and love for one another is not enough, both Cathy and George continue to speak of their first loves with respect and adoration.

"I was lucky enough to marry up twice," George smiles. **F**