



THE BRIDAL PARTY for the wedding of Ensign Floyd Lotker and Dottie Forrester on June 16, 1943, at Holy Cross Episcopal Church at Plainfield, N.J., included (from left) Ensign Jay Fawcett, Oberlin; bridesmaid Martha Verse; the bride and bridegroom; and Naval Aviation Cadet Roland Forrester, brother of the bride.

World War II love story celebrated Sunday

By MARY LOU OLSON

The courtship and love of an Oberlin couple, Floyd and Dottie Lotker, began during World War II when he was young Navy officer on the East Coast and she was working as a chemist near her home in New Jersey.

The couple celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on Sunday with all of their family at the Old Bohemian Hall at the Last Indian Raid Museum.

Mr. Lotker said that when he was taking boot training at Hoffman Island, there was no United Service Organization program. The chaplain was an Episcopal priest, he said, and every Friday night he would take some of the men to his church for dances. It was at one of these that the Lotkers first met.

"When I went to get a snack," Mr. Lotker recalled, "the table was empty so I headed for the kitchen. When Dottie saw me, she said, 'You can't go in there,' so I answered, 'OK, then, let's dance.'"

Though they had grown up in different parts of the country, this was the beginning of a love that would increase over 65 years.

Mr. Lotker said he was born in Kansas City, though his parents lived in Norton.

"My mother said that doctors were not good enough here to deliver her baby," he said.

The family lived in Norton until around 1930, he said. His father, Floyd Lotker Sr., was a traveling hardware salesman. His mother, the former Edna Mix, was the daughter of M.E. and Elizabeth Mix of Oberlin.

The family moved to a farm east of Oberlin owned by his grandmother, he said. Mrs. Mix sold the farm and built a two-story duplex in Oberlin, the house now owned by Steve and Cynthia Haynes at 204 N. Cass. He said his family lived on the first floor and his grandmother on the second.

After he completed grade school, he attended St. John's Military Academy in Salina, an Episcopal school, and was named commanding officer of his class. He said he enrolled at Kansas State College in Manhattan for a semester, but when they wanted to give all the

cadets commissions in the Kansas National Guard, he decided to join the Navy.

"I didn't want to spend four years in a fox hole," he recalled.

Mr. Lotker said he enlisted in Omaha, then was sent to New York for boot training.

Joining the Navy was only natural, said Mr. Lotker, since he said he had always enjoyed fishing and boating when the family lived east of Oberlin. Falling in love was a little more difficult.

"I think it was love at first sight for Dottie," he said, "but it took me a little longer because I felt I didn't want to get tied down at that age. 'No way, Jose,' I always said."

However, after dating a couple of months, the couple married the day after he received his Navy commission on June 16, 1943, at Holy Cross Episcopal Church in Plainfield, N.J. Mrs. Lotker said she was living with an aunt at the time and had a job as a chemist for Calso Chemical Co. in Boundbrook, N.J. Her parents were Lt. Col. (retired) Eric and Edith Forrester of Plainfield.

"We were only allowed to take two wedding pictures," he recalled.

His wife remained with her job when he boarded a merchant ship, the Cape Charles, which was carrying 500-pound bombs and was to go through the Panama Canal then on to the Persian Gulf. Bard Claar and Jay Fawcett from Oberlin also served on that ship.

"When we reached Australia and stopped for fuel," he recalled, "I had one letter from my new bride. Mail was slow in those days. After being together only two months, we were separated for a year."

During the spring of 1945, he said, he got a temporary assignment as a navigation instructor on the USS Navigator, a converted passenger ship, at Baltimore, Md. Because of the German "U-Boat" (submarine) activity in the Atlantic, they cruised in Chesapeake Bay.

"With VE Day on May 7, 1945, and the surrender of Japan (VJ Day) on Aug. 15, 1945, the war was over. Floyd returned to Fort Trumbull for a short reassignment and was released from active duty in March, 1946," Mrs. Lotker said.

"After his discharge, he returned

to New York and renewed all of his licenses, then went aboard the SS Cape Alexander as a second officer. He served on other ships until deciding to leave the sea in 1947.

"Because Floyd's father was suffering from cancer, the fact that we were expecting our first child, and the family farm needed a manager, we decided to pull up stakes and relocate in Oberlin."

A son, Floyd Lotker III, known as "Skipper," was born at Benton Memorial Hospital in Oberlin with Dr. C.M. Nelson attending.

"My first job was working with horses and running the header barge on the farm for Frank Lytle, then I got a job helping build the new Farmers National Bank," Mr. Lotker recalled.

"We had moved upstairs at the Lotker home in Oberlin, but after living with my mother for a time, Dottie was ready to move to the farm, even though there were no modern conveniences. I learned that in order to love someone, you first have to respect them, and I really loved that girl.

"There was no electricity so we used Coleman lanterns, heated the small two-story house with a Warm Morning wood stove, and cooked on a gasoline stove. I bought my wife a gas-powered washing machine for \$10 that my dad had taken in on trade. Our outhouse was built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and it now sits east of the depot at the Decatur County Museum.

"Holden Simpson had a corn sheller, and I remember when he came to shell corn at our farm, Dottie had to feed all those men, bringing all the water into the house in five-gallon buckets."

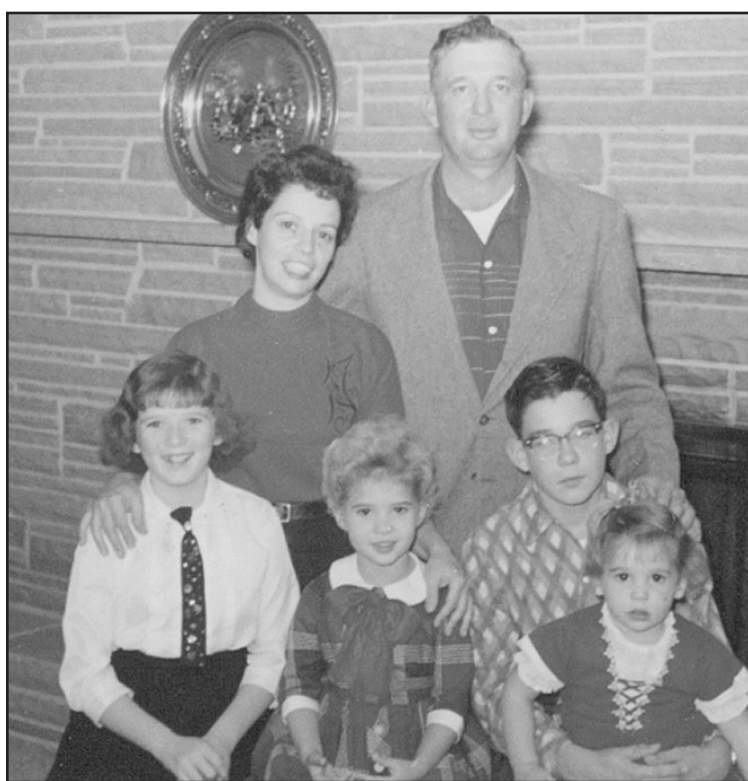
The Lotker farm in Oberlin Township, about two miles west of town, had been homesteaded by Mr. Lotker's grandfather, M.E. Mix, in 1879. The family lived in that house until they built their new home on the farmstead.

"Even though the house did not have conveniences, Dottie decorated it into a cozy home for our family," Mr. Lotker said. "My father loved to come to the farm, eat my wife's good meals with us and visit,

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THE LOTKER FARM, two miles west of town in Oberlin Township, was homesteaded by his grandfather, M.E. Mix, in 1879. It is still home to Floyd and Dottie Lotker, who lived in the original house shown above before they built their new brick home to the east.



THE FLOYD LOTKER FAMILY, shown in front of the fireplace in their brick home at Christmas 1960: (standing, from left) Dottie and Floyd, (seated) Sherri, Laurie, Floyd III, known as "Skipper," and Jackie.

— Floyd and Dottie Lotker photos