

The Gift of Love and Marriage

Marriages are made in heaven and consummated on earth.

-John Lyly

Let all the joys be as the month of May, and all the days be as a marriage day: Let sorrow, sickness and trouble be as a stranger to thee.

-Francis Quarles

For in my mind, of all mankind. I love but you alone.

-Anonymous

By Rick Newman—Chicago. Hollingworth—McCoy

On December 03, 1960, Annie Hollingworth and Jimmy ‘J.T.’ McCoy were married on a cold overcast Saturday in Chicago. The nuptials took place at the historical Negro Lakeview Methodist Church. The 14 feet high antique stained windows and vaulted wooden ceiling that seems to reach to the heavens seem perfect for the occasion. The pastor, Rev. Dr. Isaac Donaldson, officiated over the holy ceremony. The minister, as well as close friends, claim they hadn’t heard such warm, emotional and heartwarming vows from a couple. Every word appeared to come directly from their ravenous hearts. White and pink carnations filled the pew.

The bride, 43, is a registered nurse at a local hospital in Chicago. Mrs. McCoy is the only child of the late Odell and Estoria Hollingworth of Idabel, Oklahoma. She received a bachelor’s degree in nursing from Spelman College of Atlanta. Mrs. McCoy has been activity in various nonprofit organizations to assist the disadvantaged. The bride is a board member of a nonprofit organization, the Cook County Orphanage for Girls. The bride’s elegance could well have adorned her as an Egyptian princess. She was given away by Dr. Lawrence Sanders.

The bridegroom, 45, is an ordained Southern Baptist minister. He has ministered in various cities in America, as well as, southern Africa. Mr. McCoy, is a graduate of the Baptist Seminary in Denton, Texas. He is presently employed as a foreman with a local meat packing plant.

Mr. McCoy is the son of the late Beth Golson and Sammy McCoy of Idabel, Oklahoma.

As teenagers, the couple were friends in their hometown of Idabel despite their racial backgrounds. Both have had previous marriages. After a brief honeymoon, the bride and groom will reside in Chicago.

A small gathering of friends and well-wishers witnessed the warm and gracious nuptials.

Following the wedding nuptial, guests were treated to an elegant evening of dinner

and dancing at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Sanders, a friend of the couple.

I was extremely proud of the article that appeared in the local newspaper, compliments of Ashley. I sent copies to Margaret Sue and nearly every person in Idabel I could think of—I wish our vows could have been printed in my hometown newspaper for everybody to read, but this was wishful thinking. Of course, Margaret Sue received a detailed analysis of the wedding. Although I knew she couldn't come to Chicago. She sent me a nice hat.

My wedding dress was a sleeveless ivory pin tuck jersey Boatneck sheath tulle three form fitted silhouette gown with sheer cut detail that graced my ankles. I held a fresh arrangement of: Ecuadorian roses, Casablanca lilies and English ivy. My ears were adorned with small freshwater ivory teardrop pearl earrings—and a soft white veil covered my face. My arms were covered with long white gloves. My black hair was heavily accented with small grey streaks resting on my shoulders, and was partially graced by a long curl hanging on each side of my face.

J.T. was dressed in a black double-breasted suit, white shirt, a black western necktie and snakeskin boots.

“Annie Mae Hollingworth and James Thomas McCoy, I am proud and honored to preside over this warm and giving wedding ceremony. First, let me say that the congregation and I celebrate the two of you for having chosen our house of worship to express your validated nuptials. Moreover, we certainly hope you become regular members. Now I understand both of you have your vows to be shared,” stated the Rev. Dr. Donaldson.

“We do,” Jimmy and I said conjointly.

“Well, it's tradition for the future bride to say her vows first. Annie, you may state your vows.”

I turned slowly and faced Jimmy—I swallowed and tightly gripped his hands.

“It has been said that love is the hardest thing to get right and the most difficult thing to understand. And perhaps this is why the wisest of sages aren't able to give a prudent definition of love. Well, they should examine my heart and listen to me. I do know what love is, and it is right before me. . . . Jimmy Thomas McCoy, I can't promise you a colorful rainbow every day of our lives, but rather, I *can* guarantee you that with every beat of my heart, I will be part of your dreams and desires, be it in happiness or sadness. You are the face of love. And right beside you is where I belong, and it is where I will stay until the last breath is siphoned from my body. You are the soft dreams I have envisioned a million times over. Jimmy, you are my miracle in body, soul, and spirit. I will be your sunshine on the rainiest days, and your moon on the darkest of nights. For I was merely a single pebble lying motionless on an isolated beach surrounded by turbulent waters, and then you found me before I was washed into the deep blue waters.” I was finding it very difficult to maintain my composure. I swallowed and inflated my lungs and then continued. “When I love you, I love everything you are, everything you have been, and everything you will be. I not only love you, but I am you. You live inside of me. I loved you yesterday, I love you today, I'll love you tomorrow, and I'll love you forever. Jimmy Thomas McCoy, as long as I believe in love, I will believe in you. And as long as I believe in you, I will give my love to you and share my joy with the world. For so very long, my heart had searched for a home and now it has one. And it will remain with you until it ceases to sustain life. *You*, my precious love, have shown me how to love with my heart and not just with my eyes or

mind. . . . These are my solemn vows as I have stated.”

Jimmy savored and digested every word of my passionate covenant, his narrow face, pale and anxious. He was overwhelmed by my words—so much so, that I believe I could hear his heart pumping my words into his blood system. But now, it was his turn, and he would deliver all the years of stored emotions that he had harbored for me—his hands were moist and unsteady. I moved in closer, and if needed, he could lean on me for support.

Jimmy stated his vows:

“First and foremost, I must give glory and thanks to our benevolent and Almighty God for bringing us to the point in our grateful and humble lives. Annie Hollingworth, here we are, after all those barren and uncertain years. Without a moment of doubt I was certain that one day you and I would be standing in holy union, face-to-face, heart to heart and mind-to-mind. Though it took so many years . . . and many countless dreams for our seeds of love to cultivate that we unknowingly planted as teenagers. I knocked at the door of your warm soul and you opened the door without a moment of hesitation.” His eyes were filled with tears as he struggled to continue. “. . . Lady Annie, for so long, you my dream, have lived inside my heart. And the love that I have for you cannot be tarnished or destroyed, it comes with a lifetime warranty. And if ever you aren’t satisfied, I will make it better. My Lady, your eyes may not always see the fruits of my love, but I promise that your heart will always feel it. I started out in this world not certain where I’d end up. And yes, there were times I doubted my own faith, and it was as if hope wanted no part of me. I saw so many dark skies and thunderstorms; yet deep inside of me, the thought of one day finding your love kept my hope alive. Annie, your love is the air that fills my lungs. Your love is in every soft melody I listen to. You are more than I could have ever wished for on this earth or in heaven. I have always prayed for a heart that was true and now I have one. Our love can only be parallel with the love shown by Paul the Apostle, who stated in First Corinthians, Chapter 13: ‘Love never fails. But, where there are prophecies, they will fail, where there are tongues, they will surely cease. And where there is knowledge it will vanish away, but not true love.’ Annie, I truly hope my love will comfort you in times of trials and uncertainty. I know that if I believe in you, then my ability to love will be as endless as the universe. I am so honored to be accepted as your husband, your soulmate and the guardian of your heart, which is a precious and golden gift from heaven. God be my witness, I will be very gentle as I enter my stay for the rest of my life. Annie Hollingworth, these are my solemn vows as I have stated.”

After our vows were exchanged, Rev. Dr. Donaldson smiled and chose to add his thoughts:

“Annie and Jimmy McCoy, as the presiding minister over your Godly and lovely matrimony. All of us thank you for sharing your spiritual and romantic souls with us. This gives me a forum to say a few words of my own at this heavenly occasion, and it is something I have stated to many couples concerning love and marriage. Choosing to love someone is a *will* that a person decides to give to someone else for the purpose of bringing joy and spiritual growth to each other. Love is patience and love is time. And through many changing years, you will live and love together. You will share each other’s gladness, as well as those bitter moments of sorrow and pain. You will weep together, and at times, you will share separate tears. Mr. and Mrs. McCoy, though you will have two hearts, yet there will be times you will love with only one heart. Each of you will have your individual life.

However, in the years that lie ahead, you will need to build unsinkable bridges to each other's soul. I caution you to be prepared to accept the sobering fact there will be times in your union when humble tears become a language of their own, and words are too feeble to convey your emotional feelings. And yes there will be times when compassionate words will weigh more than wealth. Like the leaves falling in autumn, the hours will quickly pass you by. And in time, your hair will blend with the snowdrift hills, and yes, your eyes will grow fainter. But you will learn to lean upon each other for support as you climb those mountains and as you walk with guarded steps in those valleys of uncertainty. However, you must learn to go by faith and not by sight. And finally, I must say that true love brings forth commitment and wisdom if it is to survive. Annie and Jimmy, are you ready for this journey of a lifetime?"

We exchanged rings and thereafter, we were pronounced man and wife and place the rings on our fingers.

The small gathering of coworkers and friends were mesmerized—I was told there wasn't a dry eye in the church. Juanita and Ashley had to control their emotions.