

Lake Coeur d'Alene

NEIGHBORS

The 50-Year Duet of

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*Kent & Norilee
Kimball*



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A heartfelt community-based magazine exclusively serving the Coeur neighborhoods
surrounding our beautiful North Idaho Lake.



By Carly Agnew
Photography By Luba and
the Kimball Family

The 50-Year Duet of

Kent & Norilee Kimball

Celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary last June, Kent and Norilee Kimball have built a beautiful life together. With four daughters, 4 sons-in-law and eleven grandchildren ranging from 7 months to 16 years old all living close by, their home is always bustling with joy and laughter.

Their story began at church, where Kent was president of the college department at Hollywood Presbyterian. Initially unimpressed, Norilee had a change of heart when Kent and his roommate took up ukuleles and she heard him sing *Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue*. She thought, 'Oh, there is some personality inside that straight-laced, short-haired, boring young man.'

Their first date, a concert version of the opera *Aida* at the Hollywood Bowl, set the tone for a lifetime filled with music and adventure. Remembering their early courtship, Kent recalled, "One day, Norilee visited me at USC after completing a geology assignment at the nearby LA Natural History Museum and brought a whole flat of strawberries." Norilee corrected, "Cherries... It was cherries." Kent laughed, "I took her gazebo hunting, which was kind of illegal. We went to a neighborhood where the old big money in Los Angeles lived in the 1890s—people who owned diamond mines and silent movie studios. These were huge mansions and every one of them had a gazebo. With no fences or gates, I said, 'Just follow me' and we went into their backyards and just wandered around."

Kent chuckled at the memory, "So it was strawberries and cherries and gazebos, oh my." From these whimsical beginnings, Kent and Norilee's life together has been an extraordinary journey, blending their shared love of music with individual pursuits and a deep commitment to family and community.



As the son of a publisher and a talented musician, young Kent's world was steeped in entertainment from the start. Rubbing shoulders with future stars at Third Street Elementary, he decided the limelight wasn't for him - or so he thought. "I never wanted to be an entertainer," Kent admitted, his eyes twinkling with irony. "Growing up in Hollywood, surrounded by all the spoiled kids of actors and directors - it just didn't appeal to me."

Kent often accompanied his father to test launches of new rockets, jets, and spacecraft meeting aviation and aerospace pioneers Buzz Aldrin, Chuck Yeager, Jimmy Doolittle and others.

As a 15 year old, Kent built a Newtonian reflector telescope from scratch, even grinding the optics by hand. He became an amateur deep-sky celestial photographer whose photos have graced the covers of several publications. For two summers, he lived and worked on Mt. Palomar, home of the world's largest telescope.



It was on that mountain that he and two astronomer friends witnessed the greatest meteor shower in recorded history: the Leonid meteor shower of November 1966. Kent added, "It was the most spectacular event - the Heavens declaring the glory of God." Their observations were published in the *Harvard Astronomical Review*.

As a teenager, Kent excelled in both arts and athletics, his voice soaring with the Madrigal Singers while his serve blazed across tennis courts. College brought Kent face-to-face with choral conducting legends including Charles Hirt, Roger Wagner, and Robert Shaw igniting a passion that would smolder for years to come.

But first, duty called. As a Naval Flight Officer, Kent served at several Naval Air stations as well as on the aircraft carriers USS Okinawa and USS Constellation.

After the Navy, Kent began his career in the communications and computer hardware industries. Starting in sales, he progressed through the ranks and ultimately became Vice President of Sales and Marketing.

Eventually, Kent started his own company, K2 Landscaping, which allowed him more freedom to pursue other passions including music, acting, and mountain climbing.

From community theater to Hollywood films and from choral conducting to operatic performances, Kent embraced each role with passion and skill. Over the years, he has been in 74 plays, 21 films, and 27 operas, sharing the screen with Oscar winners and performing under the baton of world-renowned conductors. He has performed with the Roger Wagner Chorale and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Hollywood Bowl Symphony and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestras. Now, Kent is the Artistic Director of the Coeur d'Alene Music Conservatory and teaches conducting. This holiday season, he will once again lead the annual performance of Handel's Messiah at the Schuler Performing Arts Center.

As a climber, Kent tackled ice, snow, and rock. His adventures taking him to every continent, 94 countries, and five of the world's most challenging peaks, allowing him to witness the raw beauty of God's creation up close.



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Kent and Norilee's partnership is a harmonious blend of shared passions and complementary talents. While Kent traveled for work, performed on stages and scaled mountains, Norilee left her own indelible mark on the world of music education.

As a young girl growing up in San Fernando Valley, Norilee was always drawn to music. Her passion for melody and harmony manifested early, setting the stage for a lifelong love of the arts. At age 8, she began piano studies. During her junior high years, Norilee took up the double bass. "It was almost as big as I was." Living close to the school proved advantageous. "When I wanted to practice at home, my mom had to help me carry it across the street. It was quite a sight - the two of us wrangling that huge instrument!"



"Her patience and enthusiasm has inspired many musicians over the years."

These early experiences not only honed Norilee's musical skills but also cultivated the persistence and patience that would serve her well in her future career as a music educator. Eventually, her passion for music began to intertwine with a growing interest in teaching, setting her on the path of impacting countless young musicians.

For two decades, Norilee dedicated herself to nurturing young musical talent in Spokane Public Schools. As a versatile teacher armed with a Master's degree in Music Education, she taught every grade level, guiding students through the intricacies of chorus, advanced music theory, piano lab, and even middle school band and strings. Her classroom was a place where budding musicians discovered the joy of creating music together. "Norilee has an incredible gift for connecting with students," Kent shared, "Her patience and enthusiasm has inspired many musicians over the years."

Now retired from teaching, Norilee hasn't slowed down. She's found a new creative outlet in quilting, crafting intricate designs that are sure to become cherished family heirlooms. She continues to play piano and sing in choirs, her love for music as strong as ever. She has music directed or performed in 21 musicals in our area. Last year, she was in the *Sound of Music* and she and her eldest daughter are set to collaborate on a production of *Cinderella* this fall.

But of all her roles - teacher, musician, artist - Norilee cherishes one above all others: grandmother. With her face lighting up at the mention of the little ones, she said, "Spending time with my grandchildren is my greatest joy." Whether it's making ice cream, reading stories, teaching them piano tunes, or just playing together, Norilee delights in nurturing the next generation of Kimballs.

Throughout their 50-year marriage, Kent and Norilee have crafted a partnership that beautifully balances their complementary personalities. Kent's adventurous spirit and Norilee's nurturing nature have not only supported each other's dreams but also built a strong foundation for their family.

Their journey together stands as a testament to the power of shared passions, mutual respect, and enduring love. With each passing year, their bond has grown stronger, much like a finely tuned instrument improving with age. As they celebrate this golden milestone, Kent and Norilee continue to compose their life symphony, savoring each note of their remarkable journey and looking forward to the melodies yet to come. And if you happen to see Kent and Norilee out and about, be sure to say 'Hi'. They'd love to meet you!



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