Love bloomed for this post-WWII couple after chance meeting at Community House

In 2016, the West Haven Community House is celebrating its 75th anniversary serving the needs of the citizens of West Haven. Last year, we began asking members of the general public to send us their own recollections of their personal experiences with the Community House.

(West Haven, CT 2/1/206) Edward Stannard Jr. recently wrote to tell us the story of his parents, his dad from West Haven and mom from New Haven, who first met in 1949 at an American Veterans (AMVETS) service group function held at the West Haven Community House’s facility on Elm Street. AMVETS is a volunteer-led organization that was formed in 1948 by U.S. World War II veterans to advocate for veteran benefits, needs and causes.

According to Stannard, “My parents, Ed Stannard and Mary Flood, met at the Community House at the function” and they apparently hit it off immediately, getting married barely a year later in February 1950. Stannard noted that thousands of young men and women were returning home to the area from military service during the mid- to late-1940s. “My dad was a WWII veteran .... My mom worked for a number of companies ... she was an office worker, worked for the railroad for a while,” in addition to a local recycling company.

Stannard’s dad, he said, was an electrician by trade and was involved in scouting as well as the Masons. “They were married for 43 years before my dad died.” But that’s not the end of the story.

The younger Ed, today a reporter for the New Haven Register, was born in the 1950s in West Haven. In his youth, he attended the Community House’s very popular summer camp, “Camp-to-Come-to.” By the time he became a teenager, “my parents were encouraging me to become a counselor” at the camp. “They offered to raise my weekly allowance to $5 from 1.25 if I became a counselor,” Stannard recalled, and he jumped at the chance to reap an allowance “raise.”

For a total of four years in the late 1960s and early 1970s Stannard was summer camp counselor. He recalled that the camp setup itself was “pretty rustic.”
“It was very much an outdoor camp,” he said. “We went swimming at a beach in Woodmont,” and as a youth camp counselor, Stannard recalled that among the bigger challenges was handling the boys who came to Camp-to-Come-to from Boys Village in Milford, an agency serving troubled boys.

Well, it just so happened that Stannard also met an important person in his own adult life during those years as a summer camp counselor at the Community House – his future wife, Patricia Carl, also known as “Candy.” “I met her at the camp and she and I remained friends through 1991 when we started formally dating,” he said. “We were married in August 1992.”

So not only did his parents first meet in 1949 at the Community House and later marry, so did he and his future wife! In the former case, love “bloomed” at the Community House, while 20 years later, the agency helped “plant the seed” of love and eventual marriage in the same family!

The Community House wishes to hear your story or remembrance. Send yours to: 75th Anniversary Stories, WH Community House, 227 Elm St., West Haven, CT 06516.

- 30 -