

In the Spotlight

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From High School Love to Growing Old Together

In this edition, we met up with Bastrop High School alumni that found their true love during school, married and have continued to make this area their forever home. From one couple celebrating over 50 years of marriage to some just getting started, you never know when high school love can blossom into something that is meant to last forever.

We hope you enjoy!
BISD Communications Team

From horror story to fairy tale - The Woods

Stephanie and Jerome Wood vividly remember the day they met more than 30 years ago. Jerome was a freshman at Bastrop High School, and Stephanie (Nelson) was a sophomore. The year was 1988. When the two first spotted each other, they stood out in the crowded hallways of stonewashed jeans and shoulder pads.

"I remember thinking she was the cutest, tiniest country girl, but probably too nice for me to date," Jerome said.

Stephanie's reaction was different. "I remember him walking down the hall with his California look and thinking, ewww. Who is this guy?"



Jerome and Stephanie Wood graduated in 1990 and 1991 and married in 1994.

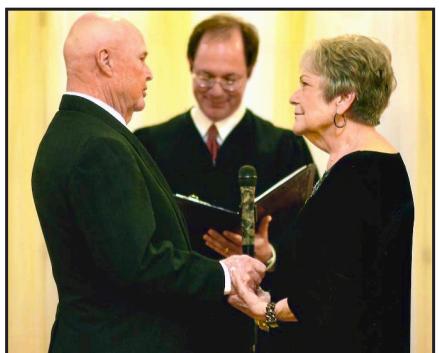
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 **Bastrop**
Independent School District

Despite their first impressions being drastically different, the two still hit off and started to date. Like most first dates in high school, theirs was at the movies.

"We went to see Hellraiser on a Tuesday night. Tuesdays were dollar movie nights. We went to the Windsong Theatre in downtown Bastrop, and we sat in the upstairs screen area," Stephanie said.

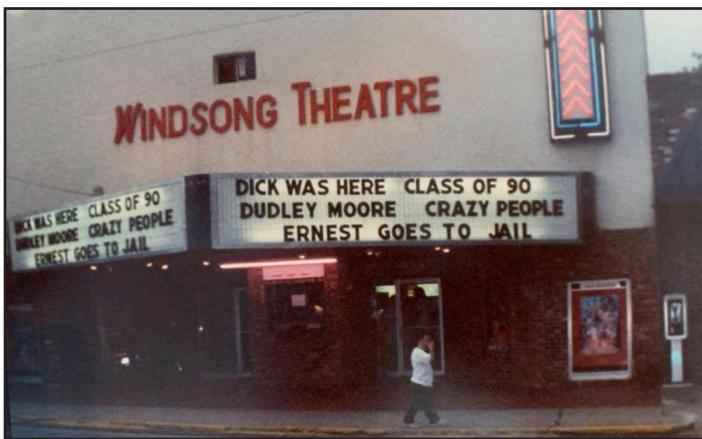
Though their relationship started by seeing a horror movie, it would blossom into a real-life fairy tale. They dated throughout high school until Stephanie graduated in 1990 and Jerome in 1991. After high school, they remained committed to each other while attending college, and on September 17, 1994, they married.

"After we got married, we rented a home from my aunt in Cedar Creek. Jerome traveled with his employer to California a lot so occasionally it was long distance, but it would only be a few weeks at a time," Stephanie said.

In the years that followed, their family grew to include two daughters, Amber and Julia.

"Our daughters are a true blessing," Jerome said.

Now married a little more than 25 years, Jerome and Stephanie agree that focusing on their family has been a key ingredient in their relationship remaining so strong.



From a first date to see a horror movie to celebrating 25 years of marriage, the Woods wouldn't change a moment of their story.



Jerome and Stephanie at the Bastrop High School Prom in 1990.

"Keep your family unit tight! Always plan small things together to form strong bonds with your children. Travel, travel, travel. And put God first in everything you do," Stephanie advised.

Jerome agrees but adds, "The secret is to be friends first. Love unconditionally. Be willing to accept the other's faults."

Looking back on 25 years together, the two agree there's little they would change about their lives. Stephanie says she wouldn't have pursued a job in the legal industry but would have preferred to enter straight into the investment industry.

Jerome thinks slightly bigger, "I would have invested in Apple, Amazon and Google," he says with a laugh.

But when it comes to their relationship they wouldn't change one moment of their story.

Made in Bastrop - The Hursts

Charlie Hurst and his wife Amanda have been married for 15 years, but their story as a couple begins nearly 25 years ago in 1995. Amanda, whose maiden name is Emerick, had a Spanish class with Charlie.

"It's the language of love. We sat next to each other and had mutual friends," Amanda said.

"That made it easier to ask her out," Charlie said.

Their first date was Charlie's senior prom in May of that year. Though this could have intimidated some people, it went smoothly for the couple.

"I think that's because I didn't think of it as a date. I thought we were just hanging out," Amanda said.

But by the time Charlie graduated the following month, he made his feelings known for Amanda. She still had two more years left at Bastrop High School, but they remained committed. Charlie attended Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) and came home to Bastrop every weekend to see Amanda.

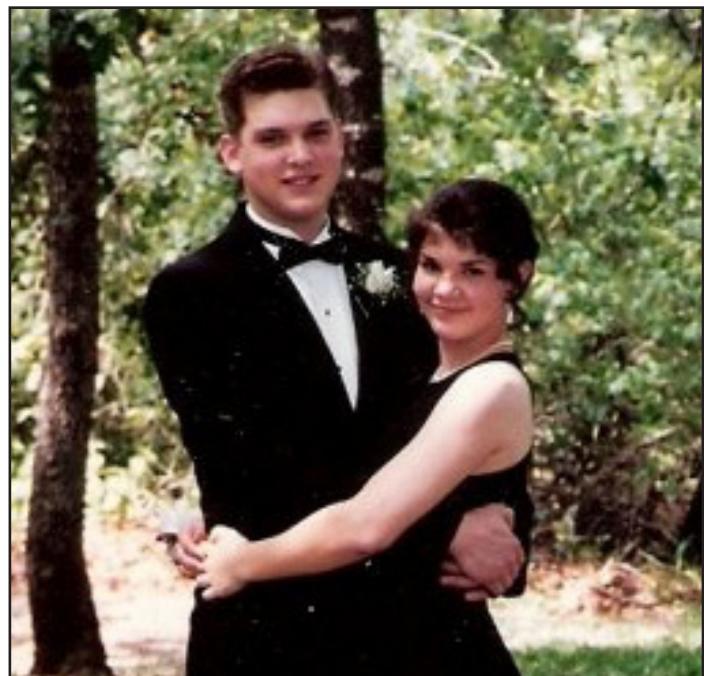
"I lived on campus so on the weekends, I'd drive home to watch Amanda play in the band at football games. We did this for two years until she graduated in 1997," Charlie said.

Once Amanda graduated, she joined Charlie at Southwest Texas State University, but soon after, they would find themselves commuting to each other once again after Charlie transferred to the University of Texas at Austin.

"We know the I-35 corridor very well!" Amanda said laughing.

"I think it made our relationship stronger. We had to make the effort to see each other, and we always wanted to," Charlie said.

The couple got engaged in 2001, and in May 2004, six years after their first date, the two married. Both



Charlie and Amanda before they headed to the Bastrop High School Prom in 1995.

started their careers with the LCRA and commuted back and forth from Bastrop to Austin, but that grew tiresome, especially after they had their first child in 2009.

"Charlie was working in Elgin, and I was working in Austin. I wanted to be closer in case there was an emergency. The commute and distance really started to weigh on me as a mom," Amanda said.

By the time their second child was born in 2016, Amanda took some time off from her career. After a year, the couple discussed what their next path would be.

"If you've been together for a long time, don't take that for granted. If you do, it's just going to be downhill from there. I supported the decision she made," Charlie said.

Amanda adds, "What is it easy? Nope. Did we have our struggles? Yes."

"Everyone has struggles. The difference is you have to have a strong relationship to work and get through it," Charlie said.



Charlie and Amanda will be celebrating their 16th wedding anniversary next May.

Charlie continued his career at LCRA while Amanda started working at Mina Elementary, first as a substitute teacher and now full time in the school's administration.

"Our life together is good. We respect each other. We've learned over the years to not get caught up in the small stuff," Amanda said.

"The world is so serious already. We like to laugh and have fun with each other. Yes, take the serious stuff seriously, but the other stuff is not worth arguing about," Charlie echoed.

Asked what the secret is to have a lasting relationship, the couple answers in harmony.

"There is no secret," they said.

Charlie adds, "Compromise. Let things go."

Amanda says faith is a really important ingredient, "Yes, let things go. And have Jesus. A lot of Jesus."

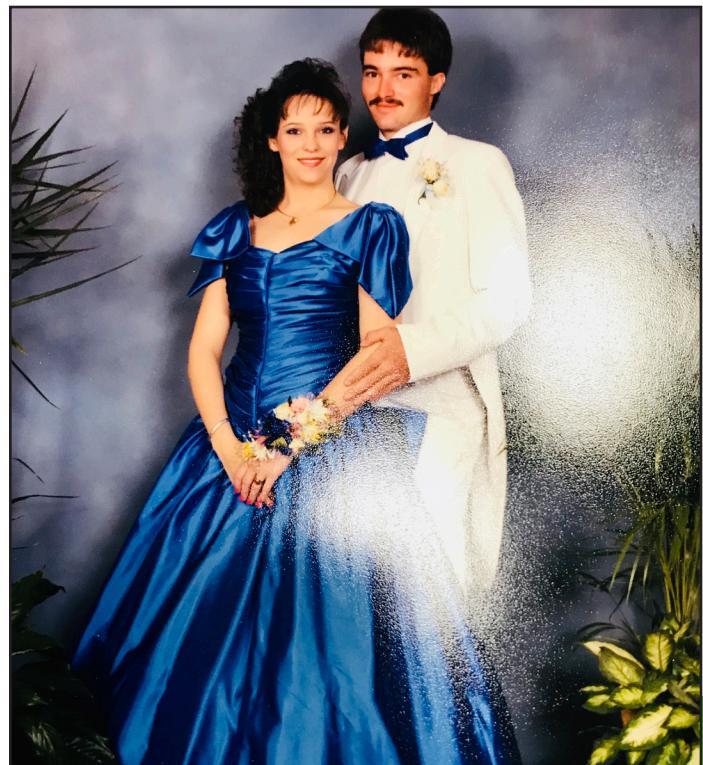
Those who laugh together, stay together - The Ingams

When you spend time with a couple who have been together since high school, it's the little things you notice that most likely make their relationship work. For Laurie and Clay Ingram, they each light up when the other one speaks, and more importantly, they listen to each other.

"I like her. She's my friend. My partner," said Clay, who claims he first spotted Laurie in the 7th grade.

"As we got older we had a lot of the same friends. Back in the day, there were 198 students in my graduating class at BHS so everyone knew each other. It made it a little bit easier to ask her out," Clay said.

Their first date was in 1986. At the time, they were two teens navigating life at Bastrop High School. Thinking about life beyond Friday night wasn't on the radar. Like



Clay and Laurie Ingram at the Bastrop High School Prom in 1988.

most teens their age, they were focused on the moment they were in.

"Our first official date was at a dance in LaGrange," said Laurie, adding, "It was nice because we love to dance. Still do. But back then it was different. Most times, what you did on dates was you drove around. We circled around town listening to cassette tapes."

But as time moved forward and cassette tapes were replaced by CDs, which were replaced by digital downloads, Laurie and Clay say they remained the same.

"It's truly about laughs. If there is something that's long-lasting, it's about making each other laugh. We've always done that. We started dating in 1986. We graduated from high school. We both went to UT Austin and dated through college. But then we took a break for a bit and got back together to get married. I knew he was the one," Laurie said.

The couple married in 1995, more than eight years after they started dating. Last month on November 4th, the couple celebrated their 24th wedding anniversary. They say learning to compromise became the glue that helped them stick together.

"Honestly I never wanted to leave Bastrop. I wanted to move back here after college," Clay said. But Laurie had other plans. "After college, I didn't intend to live in Bastrop. It wasn't part of my career path. I commuted to Austin for five years until we had our son, Chandler."

After Chandler was born, Laurie saw the need to stay in Bastrop. Both she and Clay have strong family roots in the area. More importantly, she realized what makes Bastrop unique.

"It's hard to bottle what we have here. When someone is sick or homes are burning, you know the community is always going to be behind you. We both had that growing up, and we wanted our kids to have it too."

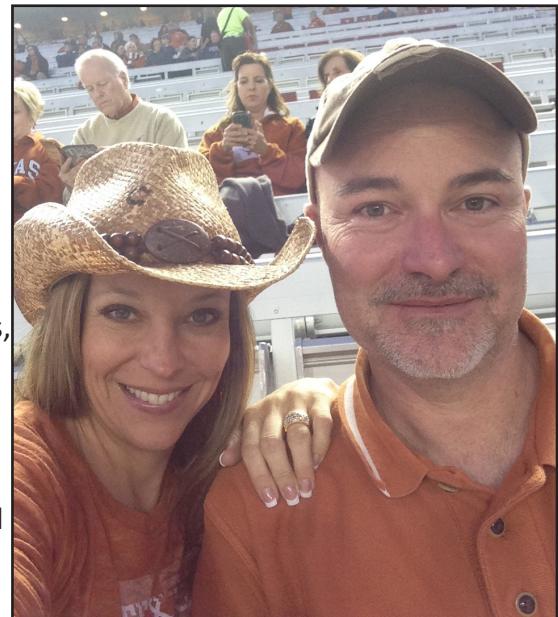
Clay added, "People here believe in family. My parents went to Bastrop High School and have been married for more than 50 years. They still live here and do things in our community. They are such an inspiration to me."

In 1999, Clay started working for First National Bank. Over the years, his career grew and so did his family with the addition of daughter, Caitlyn. Today, Clay is the Senior Vice President of the bank and Laurie is the Bastrop County Treasurer.

Laurie said, "A lot of people ask how do you stay married for 24 years? Our answer is..."

Clay jokingly interrupts, "Say yes ma'am a lot."

Laurie smiles as she continues her thought, "It can be tough, but we don't fight very much. We love to laugh together. We have a lot of the same beliefs. We're not just husband and wife. We're friends. In October, we went to a Sportmen's party, and the theme was "Back to High School". I was dressed up in my drill team outfit.



Laurie and Clay Ingram agree that a marriage takes love, laughs and adventure.



Clay wore a mullet. It was a blast to go back in time. It really showed us how much time has gone by, but how much we love one another. We're very fortunate."

"Twenty four years goes by fast when you have love, laughs and adventure. That's all you need," Clay said.

left: Laurie and Clay Ingram at the "Back in High School" themed party earlier this year.

The girl next door - The Ingrooms

For more than fifty years, Doris and Jerry Ingram have been husband and wife. They married on February 20, 1966. A half-century later, their marriage is still going strong.

The couple's story starts much longer ago however.

"We grew up next door to each other, and I always thought she was pretty," Jerry chimed in.

Since there is a five year age gap, the two walked the halls of Bastrop High School in different years. Jerry graduated from BHS in 1959 and Doris in 1964, but they remained close.

"Our first date was the homecoming dance in 1964. After that, we were dating. We would go to what was called Teen Tower, which is now the Bastrop Opera House. It was a place where kids would go and listen to music and dance," Jerry said.

After Doris graduated, the couple continued to date though Jerry was in the service and gone for a year.

"I wrote her a lot of letters," he said.

"I wrote to him too," Doris recalled. "It was the one way we could stay in touch."



Jerry and Doris Ingram married in 1966. Over fifty years later, their marriage is still going strong.

When Jerry returned from the service, they dated exclusively for eight months before getting married. The couple remained in Bastrop and for the first year, life was good.

Jerry says with a chuckle, "Until our first wedding anniversary that is. I was out working in the fields

planting grass. Doris comes and brings me this nice lunch of fried chicken. I had completely forgotten what day it was. What a way to start an anniversary! I didn't forget after that. She was so forgiving," he pauses, "I don't think she would bring me fried chicken if I did that now."

"Yes I would," Doris chimed in. "He's spent many years making up for that one time."

In February 1969 they were blessed with a son, Clay, who they both say has made them so proud. "With him, we know we've done something right," Jerry said.

As the years past, the couple remained in Bastrop, working in the financial industry together at Citizens State Bank. Their careers would center in the banking world until retirement. On their 50th wedding anniversary, the couple renewed their wedding vows in front of hundreds of friends and family. After five decades, 10 U.S. Presidents, and the start of a new millennium, the couple has been through a lot together.

At 79 years old, Jerry joked, "I didn't think I would live this long. We've seen a lot of changes over these 54 years."

"But we never thought we wouldn't be together. We love each other. We're good friends. That's part of



For their 50th anniversary, Jerry and Doris Ingram renewed their vows in front of family and friends.

our marriage. We have a lot of the same interests and like to do the same things," Doris said.

Jerry and Doris say they are still the best of friends. Though the couple's skin has weathered and memories have faded, their spirits and love for one another remain strong and vibrant.