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From This Day: Grandparents married 70 years set loving example for newlyweds

By Amy Scherzer, Times Staff Writer

The groom's grandparents, married nearly 70 years, are role models of love and commitment.

SOUTH TAMPA

With good genes, advanced science and lots of luck, Josh Maltzer and Diana Hall hope to celebrate their 70th anniversary in 2081.

That would be the ultimate of the many examples set by Maltzer's maternal grandparents, Seymour and Charlotte Saks, who are three months from that milestone.

Maltzer and Hall planned dual east coast-west coast weddings, first a civil ceremony Dec. 9 at City Hall in San Francisco, where the two lawyers live and have worked in past years. That made it possible for Hall's grandpa, Stuart Kuhn, to be there.

Then, a Jewish ceremony Dec. 25 in Tampa so the Sakses could join them under the *chupa* - the bridal canopy. Rabbi Barbara Aiello officiated on the dock behind the Beach Park home of Maltzer's mother, Bonnie Saks, and stepfather Bradley Minnen. At a luncheon reception, menorah centerpieces brightened each table, as it was the fifth day of Hanukkah.

Marrying without his grandparents present was unimaginable, says Maltzer, who was 4 years old and his brother, Eric, 5 when their parents divorced. Seymour and Charlotte Saks retired from Chicago - he owned his own pharmacy for many years; she worked for the post office - and bought a home in north Tampa. Grandsons became their new occupation as their physician daughter pursued a demanding medical career.

Chauffeur, playmate and confidante Seymour shuttled the boys to Berkeley Prep baseball, hockey and soccer practice, watched their games and worked the concession stands. Charlotte oversaw Friday night dinners.

Then there was that time Eric was sent to bed without supper.

"He called me and said he was hungry," said Seymour, who rushed over and handed up chicken tenders through his window.

"They value family and relationships more than anything," said Maltzer.

Especially their own seven decades-plus love affair.

"It's obvious to look at them how much they mean to each other," he said. "It's the first thing you notice. Our parents passed on how to be successful, but our cue to commitment is a testament to them."

Hall adds her appreciation for their affectionate ways, which rubbed off on her groom.

"They're both wonderful people, incredibly warm and loving," she said. "And both men are considerate and loving in the way they treat Charlotte and I. Maybe it's something in their blood."

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Seymour, 94, and Charlotte, 89, met on the shores of Lake Michigan, where their families had rented beach cottages in August 1939. The young pharmacist admits he liked the way Charlotte looked in a bathing suit.

He proposed at a Passover Seder dinner. They wed on March 29, 1942. These days, he swims, she plays bridge, and twice a month they volunteer at the Tampa visitors bureau. In September, Seymour renewed his driver's license for six years.

Maltzer, 29, and Hall, 30, met studying in the reading room of University of California Hastings Law School in the spring of 2007. The jellybeans she offered him were addictive. That summer they spent a week in Hawaii; that fall they flew to Paris for a weekend. He proposed at a Sonoma winery, luring Hall there with a series of scavenger hunt clues.

From Grandma, Maltzer grasped the essence of family. He calls her "a human family encyclopedia" and swears she knows "every hereditary line back to 7th century A.D."

From Grandpa comes the love of laughter, the power of a quip.

"I always get the last word," wisecracks Seymour: "Yes, dear."

That's one more thing, in addition to his gift of time, Maltzer wishes he had gotten from his grandfather: his comedic timing.

"It's such a corny sense of humor but I love it. It's his charm and style . . . he's the only one who can pull off these jokes."

As well-wishers gathered round the newlyweds, Seymour borrowed the microphone from the rabbi, as if to make an important announcement.

"Marriage is a commitment and an institution," he intoned with a straight face. "Then once you're married you are committed to an institution."

Bada bing.

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