

# Reflections of Love – World Marriage Day 1986

By Tom & Jeanne Gorman

(Excerpted from the Fall 1985 *Worldwide Family Spirit* magazine)

Planning is well underway for World Marriage Day'86, the single largest one day pro-marriage outreach sponsored by Worldwide Marriage Encounter.

The theme of this year's World Marriage Day, to be held Feb. 9, is 'Reflections of Love,' to emphasize that every married couple is a reflection of one's love for the other, and God's love for them. 'Every couple who participates in World Marriage Day - whether at a parish hall World Marriage Day reception, a rally in a public park, a march up a city street or a pro-marriage rally at a shopping mall - will be a reflection of love for the whole world to see, whether on the evening television news, the next day's newspaper pictures or to the others present,' said Dan Perry who, with his wife, Irene are national coordinators for World Marriage Day '86.

Assisting the Perry's, who live in San Antonio, Texas, are Tom and Jeanne Gorman, who live in the San Diego, California, suburb of Escondido.

This is the fifth year that World Marriage Day will be celebrated from coast to coast, following its birth in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. It was there that Larry and Sandra Waguespack, in 1980, brainstormed with other Worldwide Marriage Encounter couples for ways to boost recruiting for the weekend and came upon the idea of a one-day, public pro-marriage rally to display the values promoted by the Marriage Encounter weekend.

Their product, 'We Believe in Marriage Day' was an incredible success on the second Sunday of February, 1981. Local Marriage Encounter recruiting received a tremendous shot in the arm from the favorable pro-marriage publicity generated by 'We Believe in Marriage Day,' which was endorsed by the governors of Mississippi and Louisiana.

The national media leadership for Worldwide Marriage Encounter took note of the success and brought 'We Believe in Marriage Day' under WWME sponsorship for 1982, when it spread around the United States.

The name of the day has been changed to World Marriage Day, but it still is celebrated on the second Sunday of February, capitalizing on the media's already-formed interest in Valentine's Day. World Marriage Day is now seen as kicking off Lover's Week, with good old fashioned married couples kicking it off on the Sunday before Valentine's Day.

The ways in which World Marriage Day is celebrated around the country varies with the imagination, resources and energy available to local communities and dioceses. Consider some of last year's events:

- In Sacramento, California, Bishop Francis Quinn witnessed a renewal of marriage vows during a public, interfaith ceremony in a shopping mall, and in Bridgeport, Connecticut, eighth grade CCD and Catholic school students participated in a banner contest with pro-marriage slogans.

- In Sarasota, Florida, merchants in a shopping mall gave away gifts to married couples: in Atlanta, Georgia, lovers marched onto the state capital, where the governor issued a proclamation supporting marriage values.

- In Denver's largest shopping mall, flowers and candy kisses and pieces of wedding cake were handed out, followed by a large Sweetheart Dance in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Inn.

- In San Diego, 500 couples renewed their marriage vows in a public convention hall, and the Cupid Award was handed out to the Oil of Olay Co. for having the most romantic television commercial.

- And in Madawaska, Maine, 600 families and the parish priest celebrated the Sacrament of Matrimony with a candlelight dinner after the evening mass. And throughout the country, newspapers and television news crews brought the displays of love and commitment to their hundreds of thousands of readers and viewers, making World Marriage Day undoubtedly the single most successful pro-marriage rally ever staged in the country.

“On our Weekend, we are called to be open and apostolic, and we think World Marriage Day is a sure-fire way of being just that,” said Irene Perry. One of the many beauties and thrills of World Marriage Day is that it touches not only encountered couples, but husbands and wives who are not encountered but who share our common values. And we believe that one of the subtle results of a successful World Marriage Day celebration will be a coordinated recruiting drive by local Worldwide Marriage Encounter leadership for the Weekend.’

In addition to the local World Marriage Day celebrations, two major national campaigns will be staged this year.

Because of its success last year on a national level, the search for the Longest Married Couple will again be conducted across the country. Last year, scores of couples were identified who had been married more than 70 years, and the nation's longest married couple had been married more than 81 years!

“The media really got turned on by the Longest Married Couple search in their local communities, and we have been given every indication that they will support us again this year,” said Dan Perry. “As more communities participate in the contest, we may find someone married longer than 81 years!”

The other national campaign this year is the Cupid Award, which is designed to bring recognition to the television commercial which, in the context of selling a product or service, best displays positive marriage values.

The award originated in 1984 San Diego, when it was given to Taster's Choice Coffee for a commercial showing a man and his wife spending quiet time together, sharing the joys of their family. This past February, the Cupid was given to Oil of Olay, for showing that romance can thrive after years of marriage.

“We all know how much influence the media - and television, more specifically, and TV commercials most specifically - have on our values system in a subliminal way,” said Jeanne Gorman. “So Marriage Encounter should do all it can to influence that media by applauding those efforts to portray marriage in a positive light. We don't know if Cupid has had much influence yet, but if we can touch even one Madison Avenue advertising agency in being more sensitive in how it portrays marriage, then we're having some impact.”