

Patrick and Shirley O'Leary's story is one that shows love, heartbreak, and perseverance during World War II. While their story is similar to many who had family who served abroad, it also gives a unique glimpse into what it was like for families in the United States while their spouses, fathers, sons, and/or brothers were fighting overseas for the US. Shirley O'Leary saved letters, official documents, news clippings, pictures, and other important memorabilia that gives an intriguing glimpse into life during World War II for soldiers and their families. Shirley saved not only the letters she received from Pat, but also copied the letters that she sent to him, creating an archive of the couple's complete correspondence. Soldiers had limited space in what they were able to carry around with them while deployed and moved from area to area, therefore soldiers were not able to save all of the letters that were sent to them from their loved ones. Shirley's letters to Pat show life on the other side of WWII in the United States. She details everyday things from meeting the neighbors, house hunting without her husband, budgeting her rations, raising their child Mary Pat, and many other activities that many families had to deal with. These letters and documents are a treasure and an important part of history that gives the modern reader the opportunity to see not only into the life of a soldier, but also into the everyday life and sacrifices that people made during the war.

Patrick and Shirley met at the University of South Dakota. Pat was born in 1911, from Timberlake, South Dakota, and was in pursuit of a law degree. Shirley was born in 1914 and grew up in Madison, South Dakota. She attended USD for a journalism degree and had many talents, including the ability to speak Spanish. Their courtship was a whirlwind and they were married in 1936.

Patrick and Shirley O'Leary began their lives together in a way that not many couples do, with a secret marriage. In an interview on their 50th wedding anniversary, they had the opportunity to tell their story, beginning with their marriage and then describing their first years together, years filled with separation and hardship. Shirley starts her version of their story by mentioning a teaching colleague that lost her job because she announced that she was secretly married and pregnant. This motivated Pat and Shirley to get married without telling anyone. Shirley was a driven, educated woman who valued intelligence and working hard and didn't want her marriage to stand in the way of professional opportunity. Shirley was living and working in Washington D.C. at the time and Pat was in law school. When trying to tell her father about the potential marriage, Shirley said that it was common for people to get married and keep it a secret these days and her father responded by looking Pat straight in the eyes and saying, "Yes, it is decidedly common," which was an indirect message to the couple. He thought that was a very low-class thing to do and also did not favor Pat because he was Irish, Catholic, and did drink. Even though her father had his opinions, Shirley and Pat followed their hearts and got married anyways and were determined to make it work.

Pat and Shirley describe why they got secretly married in their own ways. Shirley says they got secretly married because it was not seen as proper for couples to marry until the man was able to provide for the woman and they were financially stable, and that since Pat was still in school, they didn't want to wait. Pat says that they got married because the summer that he visited Shirley she wrote him a letter saying that they were going to get married or else, and she didn't say what the "or else" was, so he married her. Shirley then describes that "like a fool" Pat hitchhiked 1800 miles to visit her in Washington, D.C and she roped him into marrying her.

After getting married, Pat finished law school in South Dakota while Shirley worked in Washington, D.C. He then worked for a year in Iowa and then joined her in D.C. Pat joined the army in 1942, after being an attorney for the United States Department of Agriculture. He was then shipped all over to places like Biloxi, MS, Belleville, IL, Orlando, FL, and was then assigned to the Army Air Corps where he was a corporal. According to his daughters and charts, the United States Army must have been desperate for men because they overlooked some potential hazards during his examination such as, pes planus, or flat feet. This would have caused him to not be able to march for very long or be on his feet for prolonged periods of time. He was also a more petite soldier, only weighing about 119 pounds. According to "The War Years: A Fiftieth Anniversary Album of World War II," he was then sent to Provost Marshal General's Officers Training School of Fort Custer, MI, where he completed the course on Military Police in 1943. He was then "discharged" as an enlisted man and completed more training for military police in Paris, TX.

Throughout all of these moves, Shirley and Pat maintained correspondence. They also wanted to have a family. While Pat was station in Texas, Shirley was able to go visit. Shirley and Pat wanted a family, so they discussed and planned how to have a baby during deployment and they had their first baby, Mary Pat.

When Pat deployed, Shirley remained in D.C. and hired a lady named Loretta to watch Mary Pat while she worked. Loretta had tremendous psychological problems and was also expecting a baby of her own. She ended up causing many more problems for Shirley than being a helping

hand around the house while Pat was away. When Loretta had her baby Shirley used her vacation time to take care of Loretta and her new baby, rather than using it for her and Mary Pat. Even after everything Shirley did, Loretta did not work out and was leaving the babies alone in their cribs while she went out. A neighbor told Shirley that Loretta would have them look in on the babies while she went to town. That was the final straw for Shirley and she let Loretta go. Shirley then decided to buy a house and move from their D.C. apartment without consulting Pat first because letters were taking too long. She used her \$500 from her retirement fund to put down on the house and paid \$56 a month. On her first bus ride out to Green Meadows, Maryland, Shirley describes that the ride felt like an hour from the edge of D.C. to the countryside and she thought to herself, "Oh my God. Pat'll kill me, I got us way out into the country." But she was already committed and they moved into their first home. Shirley and Mary Pat's first days in the home without Pat there weren't the easiest. They lived off of milk, tomatoes and black-eyed peas from the garden, which was not ideal but they made it work. Shirley did whatever needed to be done to support her family and to create a better and stronger foundation for Pat to return home to.

Meanwhile, after all of his training, Pat was sent to Tizi-Ouzou, Africa and then finished out the rest of his time in Palermo, Sicily. In Italy he was assigned to the Allied Control Commission as an economics officer with the Food Sub-Committee, who was responsible for imports, exports, warehousing, distribution and accounting of local citizen affairs (mostly food). His station was bombed once as he was in the heel of Italy and in charge of Italian ports, where they were involved in the importation and exportation of goods necessary for survival. However, in a letter to Shirley, he describes that he did not really feel in danger, besides from disgruntled Italians

who wanted their rations and more food. Patrick was not involved in direct combat fighting, his job was to ensure that people had what they needed and things got to where they needed to go. Even though he was away from direct combat, he suffered from the harsh European conditions, especially in winter. He sometimes wrote that he was so cold that he could no longer write or that he thought his hands would fall off.

There were not many things besides the cold that Patrick complained about. While Pat was deployed, being away from Shirley and Mary Pat was the most difficult thing that Pat endured. Mary Pat went through many milestones that a child experiences in everyday life that Shirley described in her letters. She told him about how she ate, slept, developed a personality, became curious about other kids at the park, and started speaking. In one letter she writes down every word that young Mary Pat had spoken or could speak. Shirley wrote that Mary Pat could say Dada but did not know what it meant. Because Pat was not involved in the fighting during WWII his letters also detail his everyday life and are not filled with a lot of wartime drama. He writes about his experiences in the port and moving around, but he also writes about money, magazines, books, pens, and many other ordinary things. They longed to be reunited but their separation did not weaken their relationship. Patrick and Shirley remained devoted to each other through letters, which allowed them to stay connected and gave them hope during a tumultuous time.

One of the hardest things that Shirley and her family had to endure during World War II was the disappearance of Dan, her brother. Dan Baughman also served in the military as a Lieutenant Commander in the US Navy and worked mostly in submarines. During his deployment, Dan contracted malaria but fought off the disease, then insisted that he go back and fight for his

country. The United States needed men and sent him back overseas, where the malaria came back again. He was then sent back to the States while he recovered and survived another bout with malaria. He was a fighter and would not let his sickness stop him from protecting his country. Dan went back to the Pacific, where he was tragically reported as missing in action. The US military reported that they did not know what happened to his submarine. Shirley wrote to Pat in several different letters about her family's hopes and prayers that he was still alive somewhere and would be found, because at that point they did not have any details, they just knew he had not yet been pronounced dead. In one of her letters, she said that she was at a loss for words and did not know what to say, a true sign of her heartbreak. In the interview with her daughters, they said that the US government asked Shirley's family to not tell anyone about Dan's disappearance until they officially pronounced his death. They were unable to talk about their worry and heartbreak with others, they had to keep it to themselves because it was classified information that he was missing. Every missing and sunken submarine was a victory for the enemy and the government wanted to limit that number as much as possible until they could confirm that Dan was gone. Shirley's daughters revealed that there is a letter within the Baughman family from Dan that they had received after learning that he was missing and they have not brought themselves to open it. To this day it is still in the family and unopened.

Pat joked throughout his life that he could still fight for his country and be called to duty at any time because he had not been formally discharged. World War II had a major effect on the O'Leary's lives and they made many sacrifices for the good of the country. They were young, in love, starting a family and life, and still Pat gave up these exciting moments to defend the United States, like many men did. He risked his life and gave up being with his new wife and daughter

for his generation and all of the generations that came after him. After returning from the war, Pat and Shirley had two more daughters, Margaret Louise "Peggy," and Kathryn Danielle "Kathy." Pat went back to serving the United States by working for the United States Department of Agriculture and Shirley served her communities and families by volunteering for the girl scouts, church, and writing their family newsletter, "The CTC Courier." They remained in Green Meadows, Maryland until they retired and moved to Belle Fourche, South Dakota in 1971. According to an interview with his daughters, the family ended up in Belle Fourche because of the John Wayne movie *The Cowboys* and they loved traveling to the Black Hills.

Patrick and Shirley O'Leary lived a tremendous life together before, during, and after WWII. Patrick O'Leary died on January 7, 1993 and is buried at Black Hills National Cemetery. Shirley joined Pat on September 12, 2012. Their story is one that shows the courage and sacrifice that families made during World War II. Their letters reveal how strong love and devotion can be and how it can get people through hardships, even thousands of miles away.

*All information in this biography comes from family letters, documents, and interviews