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Bob and Jack's 50-year plus love odyssey

by Joseph S. Amster



Although it's becoming more common to hear of same-sex couples celebrating their silver anniversaries, Los Angeles residents Bob Claunch and Jack Reavley have moved beyond their golden anniversary and will celebrate their 55th year together this Christmas. Their story has been immortalized in the award-winning film *Bob and Jack's 52-Year Adventure*, which was recently released on DVD.

The love that dare not speak its name barely had a name when they met in Germany in 1951 when they were both serving in the Army. "I had worked in broadcasting and radio, so eventually, I wound up with the Armed Forces Radio in Munich as Bob's commanding officer. That's how we met—we got to know each other at a party at the Armed Forces Radio station in Munich, and it all began there," Jack remembers. "I was going back to where I lived, and on our way home, there were several of us that had been at a party, and we took a German cab home. I was the last one in the cab, so I had to sit on someone's lap, and guess who it was? We were all pretty well smashed, and it was fun, and all of the sudden, I felt these two hands come around in the front of me on my lap, and I thought, 'What the hell is this? I don't know who I'm sitting on, but he certainly is fresh.' As it turned out, it was my commanding officer, who was being a little bit too commanding, I thought. So, the next morning, we met again, and we discussed what we were receiving for Christmas. He said he was sorry about what took place last night. I said, 'That's just fine, there's no problem there, I didn't really think anything about it.' From then on, it was nothing but wine and roses," says Jack.

Thanks to Bob's German secretary who kept their secret, Bob and Jack started a love affair in Germany, but when they returned home, Jack had to



deal with his family. "Jack was married at the time, and had two babies," Bob remembers. "I'm not proud of that aspect of our relationship—what I did was wrong. I can't say I regret what did, I'm glad I did, because I got Bob in the bargain, but it's preyed on my conscience all these years. That was it and that's what I did, and it's worked out fine for all these years," says Jack.

After that, they moved to Washington state and operated a radio station for many years before coming to Los Angeles and working as extras in television and movies, playing everything from bums to doctors, and once, in the buff. "The casting director called one day and said, 'Jack, I've got this part for you. There are no lines, but it's a pretty good part that pays extra money because it's a nude scene.' I said,



'Oh honey, no. I wouldn't do that.' Bob wasn't home at the time that the call came in," Jack recalls. "So, Bob came home, and I said, 'Guess what, Roxanne called (the casting person), and she wants me to work in a scene in the nude. It pays good money, but I told her I didn't want to do it.' He said, 'Hell, the money's good, you do it.' I did, and as it turned out, they didn't double us, but we wore skivvies or a swimsuit or something, and they put us behind something all the time. There was no nudity per se, but it looked like it."

With the heterosexual divorce rate so high and no hard statistics of how long same-sex relationships last, how have Bob and Jack defied the odds and kept it going for more than 50 years? "It's just been a matter of getting along day by day, accommodating each other and loving each other like a regular marriage, I guess," says Jack. The enduring love they have for each other is evident, and like any long-term couple, they complete each other's sentences. "We had so much difficulty, with being in the army and Jack's being married, that we were committed. That more than anything else has kept us together—because the way we started it was difficult. We felt it was so necessary that we do the best we could in staying together and keeping the love alive. I think we've done a pretty damn good job of it. I get a little welled up just thinking about it," says Bob. "When we have our question and answer period at the end of showings of our documentary, and this question is always asked, and when I want to be flip about it, I say, 'It's very simple, I just do everything Bob tells me to,'" Jack finishes.

Now in their 80s, Bob and Jack look back on their lives together and have found a lot to be grateful for—especially being with each other. "We've been so lucky, when we were in the army and we had work that we enjoyed doing. Then to get out of the army and have our own radio station for 25 years and having contributed so much to the people we broadcast to, and they showed their appreciation by putting up with us because our business was so successful," says Bob. "Then finally, when we got out, to go into show business with television and movie work—to have all these blessings—we're so very appreciative. Especially now, with all of these tributes—we had no idea what to expect. But just the few times that we've been out with the show, it's been remarkable to us that people have been so absolutely stunning, helpful, and the way they've praised us is hard to believe—especially when we feel so lucky to have had what we have. It's remarkable that there's been such adulation, and we've just gloried in the whole thing. We're getting older now and we find that we're still able to appreciate all of this. We've been able to enjoy it tremendously and we're so thankful."

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