

Golden couple celebrate love, survival in 'sea of whites'



CHRIS SCHWARZ, THE JOURNAL

Krishan and Ardis Kamra will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary today.

Despite early challenges they'd do it all over again

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EDMONTON

Ardis and Krishan Kamra of Edmonton are celebrating their golden wedding anniversary.

They're also celebrating the survival of their interracial relationship, despite strong opposition in the 1950s.

Ardis was the granddaughter of the late Charles Stewart, Alberta's last Liberal premier, and came from a Caucasian Anglican household in Camrose.

Krishan, a Sikh, left his home province of Punjab, India, in 1948, as a result of the tumultuous partition of India and Pakistan the year before.

At 19, Krishan travelled alone to Canada, student visa in hand.

He first studied at the University of Saskatchewan, then transferred to the University of Alberta.

Krishan said that although his skin

colour and ethnic background were different, he felt welcomed by Canadians. At times he even received more favourable treatment as a "brown man."

"I really never thought that I was different except when I looked in the mirror," he said. "But in a sea of whites, I stood out."

Ardis and Krishan met amongst the bookshelves of the U of A's first library in May 1951. Ardis, a student library assistant, was overseeing the arrival of books at a new building that would open as the Rutherford Library the following year.

Krishan was a student hired by the U of A's building department to haul the crates of books. He was smitten by Ardis's "beautiful smile."

"I couldn't bring the crates of books back to her fast enough," Krishan said, chuckling. "I'm sure I was the hardest working bookman."

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and Kerri. Kerri says she and her brother grew up in an environment of tolerance. "There are no restrictions on who or what kind of person I could become involved with, in the sense of religion, race, ethnicity," Kerri said. "We don't want that kind of person in our family—that would never happen here. There are no barriers."

Kerri's partner is Jewish, and David's partner is from the Dominican Republic.

Krishan, who became a Canadian citizen, believes he was one of the earliest immigrants from India to settle in Edmonton. He still marvels at how

controversial his relationship with Ardis was in the 1950s.

But despite the heartache they caused their parents, the Kamras know they made the right decision.

"I always felt like I was doing the right thing and I still think I'm doing the right thing," Ardis said. "After 50 years, if I had the chance, I would ask her to marry me again," Krishan said.

The Kamras are hosting their golden wedding anniversary celebration this evening at Edmonton's Muttart Conservatory.

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Dr. Ardis (nee Stewart) and Dr. Krishan Kamra

Celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary yesterday at the Muttart Conservatory, surrounded by their wonderful circle of family and friends.

They met at and graduated from the University of Alberta and were married at St. Stephen's College Chapel on May 8, 1954.

Krishan worked in the administration at N.A.I.T. and Ardis worked in the Audio-Visual Department of Alberta Education.

They remain actively involved in the community.

Congratulations Mom and Dad!

You are an inspiration to us all!

Love, David & Damaris Kamra, Grandson Paul David Kamra,

Kerri Kamra & Joel Levine