



A fine romance

Who says love never lasts. **Blythe Seiner** talks to a Mooloolaba couple who have been married for 62 years

"I said early on I hope you have no plans to change me because this is what you get, and I have no plans to change you"

THERE are two stories about how Ruth and Bill Frost met.

The first is Ruth's version, where she accidentally tripped him over at an ice skating rink in Melbourne.

Bill's memory of the event is slightly different, as he swears Ruth knocked him over on purpose to get his attention.

Which one is the truth?

"Those are our stories," Ruth told me with a laugh.

I've caught them in the middle of a game of Scrabble on a rainy Thursday morning at their home in Mooloolaba, a past-time they share every day before lunch.

A love of triple letter scores seems to be one of the few things the couple has in common, but somehow they've managed to stay in love for 62 years.

In fact, they even fell in love twice.

The couple first met when Bill was stationed in Australia with the United States Army, during World War II and Ruth was a bright-eyed 18-year-old living in Melbourne.

Ruth had a friend who she would often go out dancing with, but on this particular night in 1940 they decided to go ice-skating at St Moritz instead. It was a simple decision, but

one that would eventually lead her on a journey she never could have imagined. Because that same night, her future husband Bill Frost had decided to go ice-skating as well.

Her friend was the one that the boys always seemed to fall for, but when Ruth knocked Bill to the ground she knew this was a man she wanted to keep for herself.

After their initial bump on the ice, they went upstairs for a hot chocolate and talked for the rest of the night until Bill offered to take her home in a taxi.

Ruth said she couldn't leave without her friend, so Bill took both of them home.

When the taxi pulled up in front of Ruth's house, Bill said he'd just bought a video camera and would like to have a look at the sights of Melbourne.

"He didn't say one or the other and we were both holding our breath I think. And then he said, 'Ruth would you like to take me around Melbourne?' So I said yes!"

They spent 31 days together during their courtship, spread out over the next three years.

During that time, Ruth constantly wrote to her future husband's family in America, as

she tried to build up a picture of who they were and what their life was like.

Bill was stationed in New Guinea, while Ruth worked at an office job during the day and in the evenings she performed in a chorus line that visited the hospitals and the camps.

She moved to Sydney while she waited for Bill to come back, and that was when she made friends with a girl who, as Ruth put it, "caused me a lot of strife".

Her friend got caught up with the wrong crowd and fell pregnant, before deciding to have an abortion, much to Ruth's dismay.

Ruth continued working at her own office job, and helped her friend by taking over her shifts at a nearby factory while she recovered.

She was worked to the bone, and collapsed one night when she arrived home.

"When I came to, I didn't know a soul, I didn't know anybody," she said. "I didn't know who I was, my name and everything, I had to do everything all over again."

Her parents rushed up from Melbourne to take her back home, and Bill came down from the islands to be with Ruth, who was suffering from amnesia.

"I don't think I ever really told him I didn't know who he was." The couple spent the next 10 days getting to know each other again, and Ruth said she fell in love with him just like she did the first time.

"He only got to do it once, I got to do it