

Crystal anniversary

Written by Joseph Phillips
Monday, 03 August 2009 12:17

I suppose after 15 years of marriage I should stop wondering aloud how on earth I ended up with this woman. Least ways I should stop wondering aloud when my lovely wife is within ear shot. Not that after so many years it matters much, but the truth is that I don't know how we ended up together.

We had our first date 20 years ago and if anyone at the time had told me that the silly girl with the wild red hair would be the mother of my children and my life's partner I would have laughed out loud.

Bachelorhood was too much fun. Besides I had a very definite mental picture of what my wife would look like – what her personality would be – and frankly she just didn't match it. The workings of the heart continue to amaze me. The brain plans and strategizes and works overtime attempting to get the loins and heart on the same page. The loins are always eager to cooperate; the heart, however, is not a team player. The heart is constantly going off on its own mucking up the works. Such was the case for me. In time I found myself longing for the silly redhead. All my intellectualizing failed to win my hearts cooperation. I realized I couldn't live without her.

She of course tells a different story. According to her she knew after our first date that I was her one and only; that no other man would do. Honestly, who can blame her?

At any rate, 20 years after our first date I still find myself gazing at her, my brain still trying to figure out how it all went down.

I am even more at a loss for how we have remained together so long. To paraphrase the words of the poet Langton Hughes, our marriage ain't been no crystal stair. Far from it. The 15 years we have spent together in marriage have not been the glamorous work of the sculptor, but the modest work of the carpenter.

Reuters news service recently reported on a study by researchers from the Australian National University that claimed to identify the factors that led to a successful marriage.

The study, entitled "What's Love Got to Do With It," tracked nearly 2,500 couples -- married or living together -- from 2001 to 2007 to identify factors associated with those who remained together compared with those who divorced or separated. The results might surprise you.

For instance according to the study, couples where one partner smokes and the other does not were more likely to have a relationship end in failure. Partners in their second or third marriage were more than 90% more likely to separate or divorce than couples in their first marriage. The age of the partners was also a factor. Couples where the husband is nine years or more older than his wife are twice as likely to divorce as are husbands who get married before they turn 25.

Not mentioned among the chief indicators of marital success was love. And if what is meant by "love" is feelings that mirror the lyrics of some pop song; then I would have to agree that it falls rather low on the list of priorities. The heart it seems is not only a poor team player, but in the long run makes a lousy team captain. Don't get me wrong; I wrote my share of mushy love

Crystal anniversary

Written by Joseph Phillips

Monday, 03 August 2009 12:17

letters and was killed softly with songs on the radio all the time. I am also not too proud to admit that after so many years my wife still raises my temperature. But that isn't love – not love that makes for a lasting marriage. That kind of love is defined in behavior—as in respect, honor and protecting.

In the time my wife and I have been together we have ridden the highs of birth, upward mobility, large amounts of disposable income and good health and traveled the lows of unemployment, sickness and death. We have built a home together, traveled and spent time talking, laughing and making love late into the night. We have also learned to bite our tongues, to disagree with respect and to find words that build the other up. We have covered each other when clouds were overhead – holding each other up when the other couldn't stand -- and tried to give the other room to grow in the sunshine. That is to say; we have built a marriage together one 2 by 4 at a time.

Next week I will celebrate a union with a woman I met two decades ago and have been in lust with for 20 years. Finally, after 15 years of marriage I know what it means to love her.

Joseph C. Phillips is the author of "He Talk Like A White Boy" available wherever books are sold.