

A RELATIONSHIP

We have been married for over 32 years. Twelve years longer than my first marriage. Longer than anything else I have been associated with. My job with the Civil Rights Commission lasted 21 years. I lived in the Bronx for 30 years. It is silly comparing marriage to anything else. Marriage is sacred. Holy Matrimony. Marriage is supposed to be the joining of two people. They become one. They are joined together, and let no man split them asunder, whatever that means.

We certainly had some trepidation when we married July 26, 1981. Certainly, if Fran were not pregnant, we would not have married. That fact always hangs over us. We might have lived together. Then again, we might not. If after a period of time, we felt that we were not compatible, we would have gone our separate ways. But along came David, and we could not have been happier.

After a few years, tensions developed. There were arguments. Differences of opinion. Initially, we resolved the arguments, and the differences of opinion. I had the feeling that Fran was rigid (not frigid), that she felt that she was right about everything. Being a licensed social worker, she made it clear that she knew all about personal relationships. Having been in analysis, and still seeing a psychotherapist, she knew herself, and early on, claimed that I didn't know myself or understood our relationship.

What I saw was that our relationship was becoming a tug of war. At other times, I likened it to the relationship between Sidney Poitier and Tony Curtis in the *Defiant Ones*: chained together. And at still other times I saw David's role as the glue that held us together.

And together we stayed. We stopped making love. We stopped kissing good night. And as the years went on, we practically stopped talking. Except for exchanging necessary information. Whenever we talked about my children, Fran managed to insert comments that Sylvia is responsible for the chasm between them and David. I suggested that it is the age difference. We continued to bicker. From time to time, there was shouting, anger, blaming. Sometimes Fran hyperventilated to the point that I thought she might pass out. At times, she would cry and start denouncing me hysterically. The nitpicking was mind blowing.

I have kept journals most of my life, and just found one from 1992. It starts with the hope that things would get better. Then: July 7, Fran is driving me crazy. The smoking, the overbuying, the avoiding, the misunderstandings. We don't talk, and when we do, it's an argument. Inquiries about how I feel lead to other arguments. July 17, Fran went to Rochester. I'm surprised how pleasant I find being alone. No arguments, tension, rejection, obligations. What's that silly saying: You can't live with them; you can't live without them. Aug. 3, Some crazy stuff occurred between Fran and me. We planned to leave at 8 to catch the 10:45 ferry. Fran was drinking her coffee at 8:10, and I was getting impatient. She insisted there was time. She was right. I was concerned about unforeseen problems. There was none. We got to the parking lot with plenty of time. I

went in to get tickets. She went off to buy bread. Again, she took a hell of a long time. And used every occasion when she was away to smoke. The entry ended with: I gave Fran the letter to David to mail. She sealed it more than I had. I said it was sealed. She exploded. I said why does she correct the things I do. She was hysterical. I'll leave you. Control. See someone. Sept. 9, How I feel re Fran: the arguments, the misunderstandings etc. And that is a couple of months in 1992.

I was surprised when I came across this. I suspect I will find the same in both earlier and later entries. That is the way it is today. Only worse. We were drawn closer when Fran was diagnosed with lung cancer. It was a terrifying period. I tried to do everything I could for her. She was going through hell. Chemo, radiation, surgery. And then the side effects: loss of hearing, problems walking, tiredness. Most of all, her fear of the cancer recurring. I attributed much of her behavior to the cancer. But now it is almost seven years later, and what is going on is the same, if not worse. I kept a journal about her "condition" and of late it is a list of my complaints.

Fran is coming to bed at 5, 6 7 am, asking me to wake her, and not getting up; she is late for every appointment, and has lots of doctors appointments. Fran goes out "marketing" and still overbuys and comes home hours after I assumed she would be back. She still criticizes almost everything I do—the dishes are cracked because of the way I put them in the dishwasher, the pots and pans are put away wrong, bulbs are out, I buy the wrong things, I didn't sweep up, I don't look at her when I speak, I put the newspaper where she can't find it, I throw out containers which she wants, etc.

I have a list that would fill a page, (or choke a horse.) . But I am reluctant to talk about it with her, knowing it would lead to an argument. And I keep telling myself that she is unable to do anything about it.

Unfinished 7-12-14