

A LOVE STORY (of sorts)

They have been married for 31 years. Eleven more years than his first marriage. She had not been married before. They met soon after he had arrived in Boston from Washington DC. She was a social worker at a hospital in Cambridge and had a small private practice. He was the director of a newly opened regional office of a Federal agency. He found an apartment on Beacon Street in Boston's Back Bay. Coincidentally, she lived on Beacon Street, just a few blocks away. It was the fall of 1979. He was 52; she was 43. They both were bright, attractive, involved people.

His first marriage ended in 1972, and within a few months, he met someone who fulfilled his need for companionship. She was divorced, and coincidentally, had an apartment a few blocks from his. They began spending time together. They met each other's friends. She wanted a permanent relationship. He did not. When the opportunity arose for him to transfer out of Washington, he grabbed it. He viewed the move as an opportunity to end the relationship in the least painful way possible.

He was delighted when he met someone in Boston. In addition to being bright and attractive, she had many traits that he admired. They began to spend a great deal of time together. She introduced him to her friends, and he introduced her to his friends. She also introduced him to Martha's Vineyard.

On a few occasions, when his work required him to return to Washington, he reconnected with his Washington friend. Inevitably, his Boston friend learned about it and was not very happy, especially since the two of them were getting serious. The relationship with his Washington friend really ended, when, in the spring of 1981, his Boston friend discovered that she was pregnant.

He was delighted about the pregnancy. She was ecstatic. Her gynecologist was amazed. To have a baby at 45! They planned a wedding for July, and all their friends and family came. The baby was born in November, and he was a joy. He was bright and beautiful (like his parents), and, except for colic, made few demands. His parents were very happy and proud.

The boy entered day care, then pre-school, a Jewish day school, high school, and college. He made his parents more than happy. At an early age, he became a Red Sox fan, and his father, who had been a Yankee fan, became a Red Sox fan. (His mother didn't care one way or the other.) Along the way he picked up his parents' politics and their tendency to do things at the last minute. He also demonstrated an interest in art and sculpture, weird music, journalism, history, Yiddish, vegetarianism, Marxism, sports (beyond the Red Sox), making the U.S. and the world a better place, and more recently, camping. He is sensitive to his parents' needs, and provides them with joy and "nachas" beyond measure. During stressful times, he has become the glue that holds them together. A difficult role for any child.

Over the years, the parents changed jobs, changes homes, got older, and finally retired. Both are strong-willed, and there were tensions. She saw her therapist. He wrote at his computer. They loved each other, each in their own way. She, to demonstrate her love, prepared wonderful meals. He, to demonstrate his love, wrote her poems.

In April 2007, she had a chest x-ray. The doctor discovered a spot and requested a CT scan. Two small nodules were found on the right lung. Learning this, they both broke down. In May, she was told she had stage one lung cancer that could be treated by surgery. The following month, the surgeon discovered microscopic cancer in a lymph node, making it stage three cancer. She was given chemo and radiation for a couple months. She was amazing. Despite the discomfort and hair loss, she tried to live life as usual. Surgery took place in September 2007. Following the surgery, the chemo and the radiation, there would be no more life as usual. She lives from six month check-up to six month check-up, thankfully getting a clean bill of health—no cancer—each time.

He kept a journal, recording the good news and the bad. The treatment and the damage done: loss of hearing, chemo-brain, trouble walking, tiring more frequently, coughing, pain and pain medication. He tried to be helpful. In the journal, he admitted: “I have been acting as if everything is as it should be...Unfortunately, this is not the case.” She has been remarkable, doing all the things that she has been doing.

Despite it all, they have been trying to live their lives—seeing friends, reading, going out, taking vacations. In 2010, they went to Spain and France. In August 2012, they are going on an Alaska cruise. They will celebrate their 31st anniversary. They will celebrate the magical five years in which she has been cancer-free. They will continue living and loving.

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