

A BAD MARRIAGE

Both of them suspected it may not work. It was 1979. He was new to the city and latched on to the first woman he met. He went out with a few others, but they did not click. Besides, Fran lived only four blocks away on Beacon Street in the Back Bay. They had the same interests, the same politics, the same views on almost everything, and the same neighborhood.

She was a social worker; he was the regional director of a federal civil rights agency. She was 44 and had never married. He was 52 and his marriage of 20 years ended nine years before. He had been involved with a woman in Washington, before he moved to Boston. In fact, he moved to Boston in part to extricate himself from that relationship.

He and Fran went out frequently, and spent evenings at one or the other's apartment. In the summer, Fran invited him to join her at a cottage she rented with a friend on Martha's Vineyard. They enjoyed each other's company. However, there was tension when Fran discovered that he was still seeing the woman he had been involved with when he visited Washington.

In the spring of 1981, about a year and a half after they met, he left Boston for several weeks. When he returned, he found a letter from her, telling him to get in touch as soon as possible. He called her, and learned that she was pregnant. Wow! It seemed to him that fate stepped in and resolved the question of their relationship. Great! Let's get married. There followed lots of talking, lots of soul-searching, lots of love-making, lots of planning, lots of promising. He broke off his relationship with the woman in Washington. Fran confronted the reality of being pregnant at 45: Its impact on her career and on her life. She liked the idea of being a mother; he liked the idea of being a father, again. He got to know her family and friends. She got to know his family and friends.

They had a lovely wedding. They moved into a new apartment that he had bought on Harvard Street in Brookline. It was not so lovely. Being parents turned out to be more of a challenge than they realized. But their son was a source of joy and delight. He drew his older parents together, and they become a storybook family, ready to live happily ever after.

After a year, they moved into a more appropriate home. Fran returned to work. His job ended, and he sought new employment. Their son went from day care to pre-school, and then to a Jewish Day School.

It is hard to pinpoint when the bickering started. Did she feel he was not doing enough? Did he feel she was too demanding? They had moved to a beautiful, big house on a beautiful small street in Brookline. He loved it. A living room with a fireplace. A spacious dining room. An old fashioned kitchen. Upstairs, four bedrooms. A big unfinished basement, a backyard and a tottering garage. More house than they needed.

Fran complained about the kitchen. It was old. It was not easy to cook in. There was a radiator in the middle of the kitchen. She also complained about the wallpaper in the living room. Fran found an architect to remodel the kitchen. The cost of remodeling was a bit much. He was happy with the house. There was tension.

They finally decided to sell the house and find something smaller. A lovely house a half mile away—a two family condo—became available, and they bought it. It was more suitable. On the first floor, a large living room—dining room, a more modern kitchen, and a room which became Fran's study. The second floor had two bedrooms. There was a more finished basement, and a smaller backyard.

Whenever a decision had to be made, there was quibbling. Where money was concerned, (and in almost every case, money was concerned) he looked for ways to spend less. Whenever they were to go out, Fran was not ready. She seemed to have no conception of time, which upset him. Fran bought lots of food, which also upset him. Within a few months, she filled up the freezer in the basement, and the pantry shelves in the kitchen.

Two strong-willed people who think they are right.

She feels he does not respect her and her knowledge and skills.

He feels she is oblivious to all her shortcomings.

She feels he does not compliment her.

He feels she is also oblivious to all he does, personally and professionally.

The two infirmities which cause arguments: not hearing one another; not having mobility.