

## Joining hearts through two decades of marriage

Mark Pavilons

"A successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person."

? Mignon McLaughlin

"Happy is the man who finds a true friend, and far happier is he who finds that true friend in his wife."

? Franz Schubert



My wife and I became best friends. I was lucky to find her. While I often don't show it, I am thankful, every day of my life, that we crossed paths and touched hearts.

You often hear pithy quotes and sentimental offers relating to the "secrets" of a happy marriage. They're not secrets at all, just common sense guidelines that make for a happy life.

We all know them well. But we are complex creatures with even more complex brains, emotions, nervous systems, bouts of stubbornness and just plain ignorance.

Men and women are different. That's not news. Philosophers, writers, poets, psychologists and motivational speakers have tried to figure out this relationship and offer keen insights into keeping the flame alive.

I recall vividly when John Gray published his acclaimed "Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus" series in the 1990s. It has become part of popular culture. Basically, Gray espoused that most common relationship problems between men and women are a result of fundamental psychological differences between the genders.

It's in our blood, or our genes, so to speak.

While my wife and I learned a bit from Gray's teachings, nothing definitive emerged. It was more of an awareness campaign, understanding one another's needs just where our respective heads are at. Of course, that's half the battle right there.

Yes, it takes work, a concerted effort, a solid attention span and romance to keep the embers glowing brightly.

I was the perfect man, once.

My wife still has several of the poems I scribbled on some fancy [Printed Cocktail Napkins](#) I had at the time we ate out.

My newspaper columns through the 1990s chronicled our marriage and the birth of all three of our children. I oozed with passion, romance and affection.

My wife wonders what happened to that man. He's still in here, somewhere. The onus is on me to bring him to the surface more often, to let him out of his self-imposed cage.

I remember everything.

I remember taking my wife on a cruise of Toronto harbour on the Empire Sandy tall ship, getting down on one knee and popping the question. I had to borrow money from my future father-in-law for the ring, one which he stipulated had to be a substantial one!

I remember convincing her parents that I was a decent guy, who wanted to take their young daughter away on March Break. We

travelled to Freeport, Bahamas, and Kim still talks about the conch fritters at the Fatman's Nephew. We've heard there have been some changes in Port Lucaya, but I've vowed to one day take my bride back to that very spot.

It would have been nice this milestone year, but alas, it's out of reach. Not to worry, my love, we'll get there.

Luckily I get along very well with my in-laws and so my journey with Kim became smooth sailing. It rained on our wedding day for a brief moment, before the sun shone brightly on all those who gathered for the reception. I'm thankful that the sun eventually came out, otherwise I would have been very disappointed that we hired the likes of this [wedding photography Charlottesville](#) company to take pictures of a rainy wedding day! At least most of the photos we were dry and had the sun shining down on us. By today's standards it was a relatively small, but cozy affair, fully enjoyed by all.

We vacationed in St. Maarten and I'll never forget sitting down to dinner with the biggest lobster I've ever seen. I was almost as red as my meal thanks to the time spent on the beach.

Kim and I enjoyed several getaways BK (Before Kids) and were on the proverbial thrill ride of lives.

The youngins arrived, with all their fingers and toes, in 1998, 2001 and 2005. I remember each day vividly. I remember walking the corridors at night with a colicky child; rocking and humming others to sleep. I remember tiny hands curled around my large, meaty fingers. And I recall the first time I heard "dad" from each of them.

It would have been nice to share my kids with my family, but only my mother got a few years to enjoy my terrible trio, until she too had to leave.

There have been family gatherings, celebrations, birthdays of all descriptions. There have been ups and downs, trials and tribulations associated with parenthood. Now that eldest has her G2, she can't wait to dash out of the house with the car keys!

Time flies.

Our mortality makes it all the more important to grow as human beings and cherish what we have created for ourselves and our loved ones. Our history is constantly being written and rewritten. The future is ours, so contribute to the next chapter wisely.

To my wife of 20 years (Aug. 5), you deserve a gold medal for your undying perseverance, love, compassion, wisdom and unbelievable nurturing instincts.

You opened my eyes and unlocked a frozen heart. You loved me unconditionally for who I am.

Those Caribbean sunsets are burned into my mind, just like your beautiful eyes, smile and laugh.

While I don't relish the thought of growing old, I am happy to grow old with you.

Take my hand and let's walk together, until it's time to go.