

HOW I FELL IN LOVE AND GOT MARRIED

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Through all my early years, despite all the other interests and activities I had going on, deep within me, there was this search to find my life partner, the woman that I would love and who possibly could also love me. I am not always that easy to be around.

And I can't forget all those late-night walks around Ann Arbor when I was unable to sleep, just walking the streets hoping against hope to run into "her." Well, as it turned out, it wasn't quite that easy. It took time for me to settle down and even be ready for marriage. Here is my story.

As a musician about town, there were always women who wanted to get to know me, but I grew tired of dating, one-night stands, and short flings. I wanted someone that I really loved and to be with her for the rest of my life, you know, the traditional marriage, a partner. And that is apparently a lot to ask from the universe. Anyway, she sure took her sweet time in showing up, but she finally did and I am thankful for that.

Perhaps I had first to build a nest. For many years I had slept on a tiny mattress that I had specially made. It was so thin, little more than a pallet on the floor, and very, very narrow, not built for two. But then in the January of 1971 I found myself getting rid of the mat in favor of a real mattress, in fact, a waterbed, something I didn't need, so who was it for? I'm sure I didn't know, but it was some kind of ritual all the same. Or was it a case of coming events casting their shadow?

As mentioned, I had kind of reached the end of trying to get together with this woman or that -- flings. At the time, my latest attempt was with a young lady who had a room right across the hall from me at 114 N. Division, the so-called "Prime Mover House," where members of my band stayed. I had lived there for some seven years. We both did our best to put something together. In the end it did not work out well. That great love I yearned for and wanted to feel was just not there. We were not even friendly after that and I can't remember if she moved out or was still living across the hall at the time of this story. And I am getting to what happened next, the good part.

I used to play music on Monday nights, just myself and my old Wurlitzer piano, at a bar called the Odyssey. It was on Huron Street in Ann Arbor, just off Main Street. If I remember right, Wednesday was "Wine Night" at the Odyssey and they served this cheap Boone's Farm stuff, but we drank it just the same. So once in a while I would wander down on wine night to hear a band I liked called "Buddies in the Saddle." And way up at the front was a big wide table, sort of reserved for the locals; at least all my friends would sit there. It was set parallel to the stage.

So there I was, sitting on the far side of that table from the stage, right in the middle of

wine night, but drinking orange juice. My love of alcohol was an on and off thing. I never drank all that much and when I did, I was often sorry. Anyway, I knew most, but not all, of the people at our table that night, but certainly not the dark-haired woman sitting across from me to my right and perched on an old piano. But she had apparently noticed my orange juice and made a point of calling me out on it, and loudly, so everyone could hear. After all, this was wine night.

"Drinking orange juice? What are you, some kind of pansy?" Well, that got my attention for sure, and she probably had no idea that as a performer I had no qualms about speaking up in a group or that I was not as shy as the orange-juice guy she thought she was teasing. I could be direct too, so I got right in her face, but in a friendly way. I probably made her squirm a bit and wish she had just left me alone. I can't remember exactly what she said in response to my challenge, but the last part of it was something to the effect she wanted no more conversation with me and that "this is the end of it!" And then something really strange happened, something that has occurred only once or twice in my life.

And that is, as I responded to her ending our conversation, I suddenly could hear my own voice speaking in the silence of my mind as if I were listening to my own self talk, as I said out loud: "This is not the end; this is just the beginning!" As I spoke I found my own words ringing in my head and took them in as almost some kind of cosmic message. "What was that all about?" I thought, and then dropped it. Nothing much else happened that night.

Instead, it all happened about a week later at a favorite Ann Arbor bar called "Mr. Flood's Party," a place that I sometimes performed at. They had a high (but small) stage that looked out over the room, and nestled right near and under that stage was a long booth, one that could seat a bunch of people, but you had trouble getting out of because of the length.

I was sitting in Floods having a beer with a group of friends. I was kind of wedged in there, but all was good until the woman I had been having that relationship with walked in. Now, as I mentioned earlier, we were not getting along and I could tell from the look she gave me as she came through the door and spied me sitting there that she was out for blood. Worse, there I was, stuck at the far end of the booth and surrounded by friends. She had me in the perfect spot to excoriate me in public, which I assumed she was about to do. And she quickly sat down at the end near the door, blocking my exit. I was trapped.

Well, I couldn't have that, so while everyone's attention was on this woman, and before she could settle in, I slipped over the back of the booth and was out of there, heading deeper into the bar looking for a seat and hopefully more friends, pleased that I had escaped what could have only been a bad scene. However, as I looked I could see that all the tables were full and the only open seats were a few barstools.

As I moved along the bar, in front of me I saw that dark-haired lady that had teased me

at wine night. She was sitting on a barstool, and there was an open seat right next to her. Any port in a storm, thought I, and quickly slipped onto the seat beside her, saying something like, "Hello you nasty old woman," to remind her who I was and what she had tried to do to me last week. She smiled.

Yet it seemed that my sitting down with her was OK and we were soon trading small talk. It turned out that her name was Margaret. And then the most amazing thing happened. She told me that she already knew who I was and that we used to live just down the street from one another, and would at times pass each other walking from here to there.

When she said that, I remembered seeing her one day while I was carrying some stuff from Circle Books (the metaphysical bookstore up on State Street where I worked) to my room on Division Street, and back, about two blocks away. To get there I would cut through the corner of the church lawn at Huron and State. And there, sitting on some low steps at a side entrance to the church was this same young lady. I remember that when our eyes met that day by the church my heart went out to her, and perhaps that feeling was returned. I don't know. It was just something a little magical that had happened in passing. I was always hoping to meet the "One."

Anyway, sitting on that bar stool in Mr. Flood's Party that night, it all came back to me. And when I realized who she was, I looked into her eyes more intensely and one of the most profound moments in my life just spontaneously arose. In a flash I was somehow looking through and beyond her personality and deep within her mind. And I was struck to the heart by the purity and innocence I saw there, despite the attempts on her part to appear tough and world-wise.

She seemed so completely vulnerable and open to me. To my surprise, all I wanted to do was to endlessly care for and love this woman, and protect her from the sorrows and sufferings of what I knew life could bring. I had never felt this way about anyone before, not even close.

At the same time that I was overcome with feelings of wanting to care for this girl I had just met, I also had a metaphysical revelation as I tend to do. I am always having these insights and visions. For all these years I had been looking for someone just like me, but of course a woman -- some other one. There was me (this one) and I was looking for my counterpart (another one), who would love me like I loved her. And this is a little hard to explain, so please bear with me.

Then, in that moment at the bar, I realized for the very first time that in all the world that there was no other "one," but as the Greek philosopher Parmenides had pointed out so long ago: "being alone is." There has never been two, but all along only one. My idea of "alone" and being alone, which I had held close all those years morphed on the spot into a new concept, that of "all one," almost the same word. I got it.

It became clear to me that all dualities resolve into one, sooner or later. So, there was

no independent being, "me," over here and then another independent being in "her" over there. Yes, there were two persons, but only one being. Being alone is! Well, being alone was all I had ever known, but this being all-one was new to me, and quite welcome. And in that moment, for me, the two became one.

I can't expect to be understood here; I can only tell it like it was, as I remember it. Anyway, in that moment when I looked into her eyes, all of this just happened, and without thinking. I write it here in words, but in reality it just happened. I finally understood that the two are already one and always have been so. And it was Margaret's person through whom I realized this eternal truth.

And to take a note from the movie "Jerry McGuire," she had me from that first moment of insight into her purity. I was gone, no longer looking or able to honestly continue in good faith to look outside myself for some mysterious "other," for I had just realized that there was (and could be) no other "one." It was a logical impossibility. But there 'was' Margaret, and it was she through whom I realized this. I took this as a good sign and just naturally responded.

And I felt that unless someone like me, who could see how precious she was, cared for and shielded her from the harshness of life, she, like a rare flower, might be lost in the struggles life brings. I could not bear the thought of this and, in that instant (and probably for the first time in my life) I put someone else's welfare above my own – Margaret's.

I guess, at least for me, that's what love is. There was no way I could just have walked on by her in my life (as I had with other relationships) and just leave her there. Not possible. And it was already too late for that. For the first time I felt personally responsible for another human being and, as mentioned, I was more concerned with caring for her than I was for my own comfort. And that was news!

You might say that it was love at first sight from that very first moment when I looked deep within her mind (or my mind) -- whatever. And for me, that was it. I was hooked. I had already and without question said "I do" or "I will" to her in my mind, but she didn't know it yet. In truth I was as married as I have ever been from that night on, and not three months later when we held the ceremony.

Anyway, later that evening Margaret and I left the bar together and, for the most part, have never been separated since. As mentioned, we got married a few months later and have remained so for going on 43 years. Lest you get the wrong idea that marriage for me is just a dream, it's not. It is hard work, but what they say about death and old age fits here, it beats the alternative. At least that is my view.

I share this to point out what I have come to know love is and how it happened. So that's the story of how I fell in love and got married. I was thirty years old. She was twenty-three. Today we have four grown kids, three daughters, a son, and one dog.

Let's hear your story if you want to share it.

[Here are some shots of Margaret I took on video back in 1971 soon after we were married, when the two of us ran a greenhouse in the middle of winter in Ewart Michigan. Isn't she lovely.]

