

Reflecting on 30 years of togetherness

by Mark Pavilons

Thirty years ? three decades, 120 seasons, 10,950 days of breathing, living, experiencing and holding hands with the woman I?married.

Sounds like a lot, but in reality, time has flown by. My eyes well up more often lately, and in my near-sighted corneas, Kim never looked so good.

For you see, while hindsight may be 20-20, true vision lies in seeing what's behind those baby blues of hers.

That's where the magic happens, not in the heart per se, but in the part of the brain that glows with emotion.

While the initial dopaminergic thrill has diminished, calming chemicals like oxytocin and vasopressin keep us close. Love, technically, never dwindles, and the hypothalamus keeps us strong.

While my memory isn't as good as it once was, I?remember, with crystal clarity, the evening I?proposed to Kim on the deck of the Empire Sandy sailing on Lake Ontario. My effort to recreate this experience didn't come together this year, but it's ingrained in both our minds.

Over dinner recently, we discussed bringing together a ?collection? of great memories, events, foods, experiences that spring to mind. Not an easy task after 30 years, but there are always many fond moments and countless fun times to choose from.

A visit to Blue Mountain; ordering conch fritters from a Bahamian restaurant; These cherished bits are more valuable than diamond anniversary bands (but I'm still trying to get one). I don't need gold or jewels or fancy baubles. How could they compare to what's right in front of me?

A few years ago, I?created a shadow box display of things from our vacations ??assport pages, souvenirs, bits of Bahamian currency, and a few key chains. It's a really cool piece to look at over and over.

In trying to prepare for our 30th, hurdles kept popping up ? new cell phone upgrades, car repair bills, a visit from a plumber and appliance repairman. Oh, and credit card fraud!

I told her that time away together is likely the best salve, the salt around the rim of a margarita, the coconut rum in a pina colada. Rentals in cottage country command a pretty penny these days, especially during long weekends.

Our lives were so carefree when we were young. Couples often lose themselves when children enter the picture. The focus switches, becomes dead-straight. We do what we must to teach, protect and provide for our families, often at our own expense.

I?have lost countless nights of sleep, worrying about whether I'm doing enough, providing enough and being enough for my wife and kids.

The jury is still out.

Life is work. It's not easy and seldom is anything handed to us.

We continue to work, strive and set examples. Mine would be a perfect combination of Spock and Jack Black, with a bit of Howard Wolowitz tossed in for good measure.

Maybe not the most outstanding role model, but one filled with colourful metaphors, logic, humour and a bit of craziness. I'm the unexpected tangy flavour on a gourmet plate!

When I tell my wife I love her more, I don't mean more than she loves me. I mean more than any sunrise over any tropical beach. More than a dozen shooting stars, or the largest display of fireworks. More than all the silly arguments we've had over the years.

I love her more than meets the eye, the gentleness of her soul and her compassionate nature.

I love her strength and her mama bear ferocity.

I love the way she calms the waters when things get rocky and we're all clinging to the sides of the lifeboat.

Sometimes we get to a stage of life where we look back with regrets or misgivings. If we dwell too long in the past, we can be overcome by bitterness and heartache.

I remember a high school friend telling me never to regret the things we do, but those we fail to do.

That advice rings true, always.

We had us a time, didn't we? I tell her, reciting a line from Jack Frost. Tears well up at the finite nature of that statement.

My wife never forgets a line I wrote to her once, most like part of a poem I penned on a restaurant napkin.

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

Again, a bit of a human mortality there.

The reason I bring these up is that you can never overlook, ignore or bury the love that bounces around inside our heads and hearts.

Some couples believe the tremendous gravitational forces that brought them together should remain bright and vibrant, like the sun itself. Love is fluid - it learns new dance steps along the way. It learns to adapt, to cut to the chase, to embrace blessings.

I sometimes joke about how much fun we had BK (Before Kids), before we had to get serious about adulting.

Yes, there have been many times where I felt like flopping face-down on the driveway, asking about missed soccer games like the TV commercial. But you get up, dust yourself off, and get ready for the next round, which is sure to come.

We plan, prepare, raise, teach, guide, support and strengthen one another. We do it because we're bound, not just by a promise, but a commitment.

Humans are multi-faceted creatures and have a lot going on.

Life can be a crap shoot - you roll the dice and hope for the best.

If you're lucky enough to enjoy some prosperity, great. If these multi-sided pieces of plastic land in such a way that you find your soul-mate - you're the luckiest person alive!

Life is challenging and we must always strive to do better and be better.

As the cards turn face up, we're ?all in.?

I can't even fathom a life without Kim in it. There's no questions in my mind that I would not have made it this far without her.

She deserves the world. If only I could ?wish away??my mistakes and personal failures.

While we've annoyed one another since 1995, I wouldn't change a second!

Kim, hold my hand and let's continue to walk, until it's time to go.