

Love's a Gamble.

What's the secret to
lasting love?

They told us.

Lifelong Boston residents, well-versed in romance,
share their stories of love through candid interviews.



Love's a Gamble. HOW DID YOU KNOW SHE WAS "THE ONE?" WHAT DOES HE DO THAT'S MOST ANNOYING?

FOR VALENTINES DAY 2007, GRUB STREET WRITERS AND THE CITY OF BOSTON COLLECTED STORIES FROM EAST BOSTON SENIORS ON THE COMPLEXITIES OF LIFELONG LOVE.

THE EVENT IS AN EXTENSION OF THE MEMOIR PROJECT, WHICH AIMS TO CAPTURE STORIES OF BOSTON'S SENIORS BY TEACHING THEM THE CRAFT OF MEMOIR WRITING. WE HOPE YOU ENJOY. ♥

SPONSORED BY, MAYOR MENINO
THE CITY OF BOSTON ELDERLY COMMISSION
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ROSE ALOISI, 80
JAMES ALOISI, 80.
MARRIED FOR 58 YEARS.



JAMES:

We met in 1947, right after World War II. My cousin suggested we go dancing at The Oceanview, which is now condos, and meet some girls. Here I meet Rose, and even though she was the most gorgeous thing I'd ever seen, I insulted her anyway about her black dress. I asked if she was "in mourning." Rose didn't think it was that funny.

I had this problem of calling Rose at the last minute to go out on a date. It was six months of this. Then one night, I called her for a date and Rose tells me she already has a date with another guy. I was nervous. I asked her to cancel on the guy, and she did. That's when we both knew. Soon after, I asked Rose's family if I could marry her. They gave us their blessing, and we got married. Wouldn't you know: both our families are from the same town in Sicily—Catania-- but we didn't meet until that night at The Oceanview.

I can't cook as well as Rose, but I sure do eat it all. "He eats too much," she'll say. "He's got to take care of himself. I need him. He's my right arm." She shouldn't be over-extending herself, but she does anyway.

Rose calls me "Dad." I call her "Mother." She claims I make a great cup of coffee, and I wish I had her cooking skills. We both over-extend ourselves. But we've never quarreled over money.

We've lived on the same street for 58 years—Chelsea Street in East Boston.

Rose says I've always been great. If she were keeping a secret from me I would know; she's the love of my life. Our secret for lasting love is cooperation. Don't argue about money. It's not "my" money, it's "our" money. Think of your children and your budget.

CAROL EMMETT
FRANCIS EMMETT



I was roller-skating in Revere-- that's how we met. It wasn't love at first sight. I asked her to roller skate with me, and we enjoyed that, and we went home together. I lived in Revere, she lived in Charlestown, and we continued roller-skating. It was 1956. We got an apartment together and moved in.

The secret to staying together is learning how to give and take. With children you need to compromise. Sometimes you don't want to do something the other wants, and you'll go along with it. That's an example of give and take. We play cards. He beats me. We play rummy too. For the last twenty years, we've shared anniversary dinner. We go out to eat together and just talk. I like action and he likes comedy. We're good friends.

We like boating—we had a Sea Ray. We've gone to Alaska, and we have three kids. It's a big load.

We live near East Boston, near Wood Island Station. There are eight houses on our street. We've lost a couple of neighbors, that's been hard. New people have moved in. It's a whole new group now.

Valentine's Day? This year is special. It's been a few years since I got her flowers, and she was looking at flowers this year. I walked in the door with flowers this time. Got her candy, flowers, and everything.

What we've noticed about the younger generation is that when something bad happens, it's Splitsville. We were brought up to be able to stay together. Eventually things get better if you just hang in there. That's all part of learning.

MARY BORZILLO, 74
EAST BOSTON



The love of my life was my husband, who died when he was only 47 years old. We had a good life: a good 23 years together, three children, two boys and one girl.

We met in 1952, on a blind date. My girlfriend's boyfriend was in the Navy. She said, "He's bringing someone home with him, would you like to meet him?" I said no. When I saw him he was wearing those tight Navy pants and he looked ridiculous. But I liked his little sailor hat. I asked him if I could wear his pea coat. He used to write me these letters that had the number 143 written on the back. That number-- it means, I love you.

I knew he was the one when he kissed me. It was just different than all the others. He liked to dance, and we got into it. In fact, I feel like dancing now. He used to jitterbug and everything. We both loved Frank Sinatra-- that song, "New York, New York." He was a big New York Yankee fan, he brainwashed my two kids. He was very, very smart, and he had a management job at an electronics place. He was a terrific bowler. He used to get high singles and high averages and I got jealous. But so did he, in a different way. He didn't like when I used to go bowling and would go out after and have a couple drinks with other men. I'd say, "I didn't do anything with those guys, we were just bowling!" Sometimes he would go out for a couple of drinks-- there was a club across the street from us. He'd come home late at night and I'd start screeching at him.

He got sick after he was in the Post Office; I guess he drank a little too much. So I lost my husband in 1979 and my son in 1981. It was horrible. My other son, he was mad at the world after that, mad at God. I told him, You can't be mad at God, he didn't do this. It's a sad life.

We drive to the cemetery; I can't drive so he takes me. He doesn't always want to go. I try to stay strong, keep busy. I like what my doctor says: "Try to think about good things." But every time I tell my son to go, he says no. I thank God; God's given me the strength to go on.

I still remember the best Valentine's Day we ever had-- he gave me a sexy nightgown, and I gave him sexy shorts with hearts all over them. The secret to lasting love is to love each other as much as you can. What makes you do that is not cheating on them, and doing as much as you can together, and with the kids.

PETER CARDINALE
JOANN CARDINALE



JOANN:

We met in 1960, when I had just come back from California. I was next door to visit my brother, and she was there. We started talking, and I was smitten right away. I said to myself, "I had a bad experience in California." I was looking for someone who drank, swore, and made love. Joann called me "Father Pete." I told her, "If I was a priest, I would grab you right away."

Three years later we got married. We would go dancing. We are very good dancers-- everyone used to look at us. We used to go club dancing, and would dance at resorts. We've been together 46 years.

PETER:

Joann is a planner. She plans the meal, she plans the clothing. Since I retired I do the laundry, and she still does the cooking and baking. She even does the haircuts. What's rubbed off from me is that she's more laid back. You get bees with honey, that's my approach-- and now she sees it's the right way to live. Joann's more polite than she used to be. The woman gets aggressive. Years ago she was shy, but aggressive. Women are always protecting their young.

We wouldn't trade each other for the world. I'll always stay with her. The secret to lasting love is respect, and you need not to go to bed angry. Don't go to bed mad.

ELEANOR GUARINO
JOSEPH GUARINO



JOE:

We met in Cape Cod. I was living in a house with ten other guys, right on the water. It was a summertime thing; we used to go every weekend. We met in a club, and we danced for two hours straight. “Oh, I’m in trouble now,” I said to myself. It wasn’t really love at first sight. But after Labor Day I called and asked her out to dinner.

We went dancing. All the best musicians were on the Cape at that time. We used to go to the beach and play miniature golf. Coonamassett Inn, Nimrod Inn, the Hunt Club—these were the places we went. Also Woods Hole, and The Dome. Then, after going out for dinner, everyone in the whole crowd would meet at the Colonial for last call. There would be hundreds of people, and they would come out to my house, and we would have an all-night party and go out for breakfast in the morning. Nobody stayed over; it was just all good fun. Like a barracks. It was a blast.

I would say our habits have merged. She’s my best friend, and vice versa. We still dance-- every room in our house has music. We have CDs in our car.

In the neighborhood she does what she wants. She won’t let me shovel snow because the doctor is concerned about me having a heart attack. Our neighborhood is special; it has five generations of families.

What’s the secret to a lasting love? It needs to be a 50-50 deal. Respecting each other’s pleasures is important. I have a very strict program. He walks six miles a day, goes to the gym. She lets me do that. She’s multi-talented. She can run an affair, do crafts. I respect the fact she can do so many things.

We work at our relationship. Sometimes at our anniversary we evaluate how the marriage is going. We’ve improved at not putting our own things last. We decided after that anniversary dinner to do more for each other.

CHICKY CIPRIANO, 72
PETER CIPRIANO, 73.
MARRIED FOR 50 YEARS.



CHICKY:

Peter loves his cat, Frankie, more than me. Frankie's always right up against him when we watch TV. But I love that cat more than him too. The cat and Mario Lanza.

We met in 1956, at my sister's wedding. We were both in the wedding party and he asked me out on a date. I was 23 then and my grandmother was beginning to lose hope that she'd ever get married. Unfortunately, my own sister wound up getting divorced in 1973.

After six months, I saw that Peter was nice to my mother. He had just gotten out of the service for the Korean War and he wanted to settle down with a woman who'd make a good wife and mother. He felt I had the stuff.

I'm jealous that Peter can walk for five miles, but he's jealous of my ability to manage money. I've really rubbed off on him; Peter now drives with his two feet, just like me. I can't stand when he falls asleep while watching TV. His snoring is so loud! But he claims that I'm very annoying in all I do. He didn't know that I could be so aggravating. But we don't tell each other what we can or can't do.

For Valentine's Day, we haven't done anything. We haven't done anything for 50 years!

The secret to lasting love is in accepting the bad with the good. Take on your responsibilities. Support your family.

MARY THOMPSON
JAMES (DECEASED)



MARY:

My husband James passed away four years ago. When God made him, he threw away the mold. He was a good man, an excellent man. We never fought. We understood each other very well.

We met at work, at a shoe factory in Roxbury. We made eye contact, and he made a noise like a pigeon, like a cooing sound. I was seventeen when we got married. It was tough working in the shoe factory, and after our wedding I worked for about a year, then had our first kid. He was a good provider. We always went out for dinner, especially Chinese food. Back then there was this great place on Route One, called the New Moon.

We'd been together for 50 years. He was very understanding, we treated everyone equally. We had four kids and six grandchildren. "Too Young" by Nat King Cole was our special song.

We liked to go on cruise ships, to different places. Once we went to Hawaii, and that was our favorite. Eastern, Western Caribbean. We went away once a year, and that was important in staying together.

He was a snorer. "No, you're the snorer in this pair," we used to say to each other. Snoring back and forth was what we did, what rubbed off on each other. We showed patience, and weren't quick to get angry. He had seven sisters, and they trained him well. He was just about the middle of the pack. I had seven brothers, and four sisters, that was good training for me too. It was nice, because you were never lonesome.

The key thing is to not go to bed angry. You should also find time to go away with each other. And go out for dinner every month. Kids take a lot of time, and you need to find a way to get away and unwind.

DOROTHY PAPA



I've been married to my husband Vincent for 60 years. In 1946 he was getting an operation on his appendix and needed a ride to Brook Street in East Boston. His friend offered him a ride. He came to my house, where I was designing clothes and putting up her hair. My husband-to-be said to his friend, "See that girl? Go get her, because I'm going to get her and marry her." I've seen my husband every day for 60 years. He chased after me. He's been the most wonderful father, a five-star general. Father, husband, provider, lover, friend. Vincent came into the service at 17 and left at 23. He should have gotten a medal but didn't. He had malaria, but never got serviceman's disability. When he was discharged the doctor asked him how he was. He said, "I'm fine," and that was it. Never signed for the GI bill.

We had five kids, and two adopted kids. Some of our daughters' girlfriends, were like adopted kids too, and they spent a lot of time with our family. I have a total of 14 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

What's the secret to staying together? Don't always take; give. Also I have God behind me. You need to pray so that when you need God, he'll be there. These material things you have now are not important. When they put you in the grave, they take your watch, they take your money, and all that goes in the grave is you. You need to stick to each other, that's the main thing. What's important is the relationship, not material things.

I can get anything I want from my husband if I work on it for long enough! My husband, he's very strong. Not a big man, but a wonderful guy. We love to go to Vegas. I want to have my funeral in Vegas. I tell my kids I don't want to have flowers at my funeral because I have asthma. I like the slots, cards. I play at the Venetian. My husband I have seen everybody in Vegas. Bobby Darren, Franky Lane.

Another secret to staying together is not going to bed angry. You go to bed angry you don't talk. Then after a couple days you don't remember what it was about. If you have to give in, be the one to give in. Keep harmony that way. He likes my cooking, that's another thing that keeps us together.

Here's some advice for younger people. Put a note in her lunchbox during the day. Turn her around and say, "I love you." Spontaneous things like that are important. Say, "I love you," whenever you can.

CARMINE GATTI, 74
AUGUST GATTI, 76



GUS:

I knew Carmine when she was a young kid. I was 14 and she was 12. A few years later, I was drafted to the Korean War and I would write to her. Meanwhile, I lied to my mother, stating that I was in Japan because I didn't want to worry her. I asked Carmine, that if anything happened to me during the war, that she would tell my mother I had lied. She agreed.

When I returned to the States, I borrowed my friend's convertible to impress Carmine, and took her out on their first date. When I kissed her that night, I fell in love. She says the same thing. It was that first kiss.

I like to sing "Spanish Eyes" to her. We're in bowling leagues together, she does all the paperwork. She says I can do what I want, that the guys do what they want to do. But I say she can do anything she wants—she's the boss. I call her "Snookie" and "Ma." I wish I had her brain.

I get annoyed when Carmine hollers at me. I'm kind of deaf. She's not annoyed by me though. She just ignores me anyway. Over the years we've both stayed the same, nothing's changed. We've been married for 51 years and we've never gone to bed angry.

Valentine's Day is tricky, since Carmine doesn't like flowers or chocolate—she's allergic. But the secret to lasting love is to do everything together, listen and compromise.



The love of my life was Robert, my first husband. He passed away in 1975. I met him in 1954. I was only 14 years old. I was standing on the balcony of my house in Naples, just looking out, and he was passing by. He looked up and parked his car. Later I found out that he was American, stationed in the Air Force. He was 33.

He parked the car that day and looked up at me, and that went on for a little while. Every day he was going up and down and up down the street, looking up. After a few weeks he gestured to me to come down. I walked down to his car, and he gave me a piece of paper. I took it into the bathroom to check it out, but I couldn't read it because it was in English. My brother translated it for me. It said he would like to meet me.

But the next time we saw him on the street, he parked the car and came up the steps to meet me. He asked my mother and father for my hand in marriage. My mother told him I was only 14. I was very developed, so I looked older.

He said OK, and I didn't see him for a long time. Then a year and a half later he came knocking on my door, speaking Italian this time. I let him in, and we started dating. I was 15 and a half. We were chaperoned on every date, by my mother or my father. It was a big pain.

I liked him the first day I met him. I was 17 when we got married. I got pregnant in Italy, and he wanted to have the first born in the States, so we moved here. We lived in Oklahoma City. I didn't speak any English at first. I'd go to the store and just hand the cashier some money and hope that they counted out the right amount. There were no other Italians there. They thought I was American Indian.

But I learned English in six months. Later we lived all over – Oklahoma City, Great Falls, Montana. We came to Boston in 1966.

He was a very quiet person. He was very jealous, very jealous of me. I couldn't even open the door for the mailman. He wouldn't let me talk to anyone. He was very strict. But I didn't know any better. What I know

today I didn't know then; I was very young when we married. We were so many years apart.

He never wanted me to wear a tight sweater. He said nice girls didn't do that. What am I going to do? Look! People have artificials today, to make them bigger. Mine are original.

We were compatible. He was strict, but I didn't know any better, so I accepted that. He loved everything I cooked. The key to a man's heart is being a good cook. I cooked everything from scratch. I used to make great lasagnas and veal scaloppini and veal Parmesan – that was my favorite.



The love of my life is the wife I have right now: Margarita. We met in 1983, when my sister introduced us. We were neighbors in Puerto Rico. We dated and agreed to see each other more often. She was a very grown-up woman. She had age. I had a feeling that she was going to be with me until I was very old. I had a feeling that she wasn't going to break up with me, that she was going to be with me forever. All I had to do was listen to her stories to find out what I expected from a person.

She's younger than me, about 49. She is very dedicated to everybody in the house. She is very dedicated to the children of her own. We came here later to work on the farms, tobacco and vegetables.

She doesn't follow music the way I do: I am always singing. I like any kind of music and that means any kind. Sometimes I like one type of music. I like ballads and I like opera. I like romantic salsa, bolero. I dance in the ballrooms. Let me tell you something. When I choose something to sing along with that I find very pretty, she likes it. She likes my repertoire. I always choose a good song-- I know the best songs, the best performers. I like Lou Rawls, Tom Jones.

Has any habit of hers rubbed off on me? No, no, no! She likes to save money. She doesn't throw anything out. But since I've been with her I've been a different person. She has taught me how to save.

Everybody calls me different names. I call her Margie. She's a good cook. She's good at making sausages and good meat turnovers. She likes soap operas and I don't like to get involved, because if I see a chapter, I have to see the whole thing. Movies too.

She has grown older. She doesn't have the young age reflecting out of her every day. She reflects a middle-aged woman. But she is very happy now, much happier. Everything else is the same.

One Valentine's Day I was very sick and I was in the hospital. I felt so happy when she picked me up because I was lost. I always tell her that she's right even though she is not. It doesn't make any sense to argue over anything. "You win," I tell her. Learn from that!



The love of my life is my wife, Jessie. We have three children and seven grandchildren. We'll be married 57 years on February 19th.

We met in 1946, in Filene's. She was working there, helping to plan weddings. She was a beautiful young woman. I just saw her and thought, "I need to meet that lady." I just kept going in, trying to get a date. She gave me a hard time at first, but I kept going back in there, and I was aggressive, and finally got her to go on a date. We went to Topsy's Fried Chicken in Boston.

She was from very strict parents. Old Italians, tough as nails. Her father didn't like me. At the time, I was dating two or three different girls. That's how it was. If you didn't like me, I'd go to her. If SHE didn't like me, I'd go to HER. That's just how it was. And when I met Jessie...well, you just get that feeling.

She's a great shopper. She loves to spend money. I met her in a store and she's been there ever since. There isn't a time that we go into any store that she doesn't spend 70 or 100 dollars.

Her name is Jessie, but to tease her I'll call her Julia, my mother's name. And I call her Chubs. When we met she weighed 95 pounds soaking wet. Now I can't keep her in clothes. She likes to stay up late and watch TV. That annoys me, especially now, because she should be getting rest. She has lymphoma right now...it's no walk in the park. Sometimes they get it straightened out and sometimes they don't. She had it in '93 and she was in remission for several years, and then it came back again. I thank the Lord I still have her.

The secret to a lasting love is compassion and understanding. And it's not a one-way street. It's a 50/50 deal and proposition. People don't understand it. If you nag each other day in and day out, it's not going to work. Now, if she asks me to take her to Square One Mall, then I'll take her to Square One Mall. At this point in our life, there's no denial. If I said she couldn't have that dress or that coat and something happened to her, I couldn't live with myself.



The love of my life is Cliff Burri. We met in 1946, when we were both working in the same department store. I worked in the stationery department and he worked in packing. He pursued me—he said he wanted to take me on a date, but first we went for coffee on our breaks. He made a bet with his friend that he could date me.

He joined the Marines right after I met him. We corresponded and when he came home on leave I dated him. Our first date was in Boston on Washington Street, a place called Topsy's. He wrote me love letters, poetry—that's how I knew. We'll have been married 57 years next week.

He used to sing "Prisoner of Love." He had quite a voice when he was a young guy. After so many years, we've started to think the same thoughts. We'll be sitting there having breakfast, and I'll be thinking about my daughter in California, and all of the sudden he'll say, "I wonder how Gina and the boys are." Yeah, we think the same. He can't stand criticism. If I try to correct him, he gets sensitive. I often criticize what he's wearing-- he wears strange colors together all the time. I can't believe how good he looks today—he did it himself! Look at him; he hasn't worn that jacket in two years.

In the beginning, he called me Buttercup. Then he called me Chubs, because I'd gained weight. Years later, after his mother died, he started calling me Julia, his mother's name. Don't ask me why. She died not long ago; he'll sometimes even call me "Mama."

After fifty-seven years, there are a lot of things that annoy you. His impatience with people is the worst. He expects a lot from his boys-- he needs to have them around all the time. If they're not attentive, he feels like they're not respectful. But you can't control your boys, you can't control what their wives do. Other than that, he's perfect, really--he's very friendly to people. He loves to make people laugh.

The secret for us is not to dwell on things. You must try to be happy together, overlook a lot of things. You can't hold grudges. And you work together, you do everything together. He drives me back and forth to the hospitals; he's my chauffeur. We do everything.

JERRY, 72

MARIE, 77



MARIE:

We met at a Lechmere party of my brother-in-law's, passing a lemon under our necks in a party game. I lived in Watertown then. It was love at first sight. After six months we got engaged, and were married the year after we met, on July 2nd, 1960. Our first child was born in 1961. We've been married for 47 years.

Our special song is "Danny Boy"—I have it as my cell phone ringtone because he loves it so much. No matter where he goes, we have to play it. One time, a state trooper sang it for us.

Jerry likes to read. He's always reading. I can't get him to stop. I have to tell him what to do, or he wouldn't do anything. I wish I could read a book like that.

JERRY:

All our Valentine's Days have been good. We get along. We don't have trouble, no fights. We have to hug each other before bed every night.

We have two daughters—and lost three. Now, we also have three grandchildren. But the secret to lasting love is that you can't get mad at each other; don't get mad about big things. Our girls were very good too-- family is important. Our kids used to put their cigarettes out for us when we asked them to.

When I retired, I said I was done shoveling snow. Marie said she was retired from cooking. But look at us now—I'm 72 and still shoveling! I get up and go out at 6am to deliver the papers to all the retired people who can't leave their houses. I try to do it all the time, but do it at least when the weather is good. We have a great marriage, a great friendship.

JOSEPHINE GUARINO
JOSEPH GUARINO



JOSEPH:

The love of my life my Cindy, the dog. That's a joke. But we love her-- Cindy's a shitzu and she never barks. If a robber came in she'd go up and make friends with him.

We met when we both worked at the East Boston Times. I was a linotype operator. Josephine corrected my mistakes even then. That's how I knew she was the one. I had to ask her out twelve times before she agreed, and when she finally said yes, I cancelled the date and said I couldn't take her out because my aunt died. She thought it was a lie. She thought I was crazy. But I asked her again and for some reason she said yes, even though her mother told her she was crazy.

Our song is "Let Me Call You Sweetheart." I once gave her a music box that plays it. I only say two words to her: "Yes, Dear." That's how it's worked for 50 years. I don't want to share our nicknames. I call her "honey" and she calls me Joe.

JOSEPHINE:

We take every day as it comes. I used to worry, but now I don't. Joseph's pretty lenient, and we speak our minds if we have something to say. We don't keep it bottled up inside, don't let it fester.

He knows I'm terrific with figures, but I wish I could drive. I've never had a driver's license. Today on Valentine's Day, he gave me a ring. He gives me lots of jewelry, but this year he gave me a ruby and diamond ring. Ruby's not my birthstone, but it's red and pretty and perfect for Valentine's Day.

Lately, sickness has come into the picture. Our children are gone, and now it's time to take care of each other. But the secret to lasting love is to not go to bed mad—I won't let him in the bed if he's mad! Say what you have to say right there and then.

Joseph: Yes, Dear.

GRACE ZUCCHERO, 79

JOHN ZUCCHERO, 82



GRACE:

John is the love of my life. He was in the service, and one day he saw me on the street. It was love at first sight for him, and he decided to come and visit. We dated while he was in the service, but then he had to go back to camp.

Then he was wounded, and had to come home. I came home one day and found him in my house, sitting there with my mom. I told him he was going to get court-martialed. He said he didn't care; he would stay until I said I would marry him. The army guys came for him, but it turned out that he'd already served more time than he was supposed to, and he didn't have to return to the army. Three years later we were married.

He was handsome. Beautiful. His face and his big blue eyes. And in his uniform, my god! So cute. He's the nicest man any woman could dream up. I was twenty-one when I met him. As the years went on, I loved him more and more. You need to love each other and depend on each other. You can have all the money in the world, but you need love.

He called me Betty Boop, still does. He called me that the first time we met, and every time I get dressed up he says, "Ooh, Betty Boop!" I have all sorts of Betty Boop dolls around the house, and now everyone calls me Betty Boop.

Our best Valentine's Days are when the children get together with us. The love you give you always get back. I only want a hug and kiss, I just want to hear that he loves me.

But remember this: A woman always has to pretend she's giving in to a man, but she doesn't have to really give in. She just has to pat his hand and agree with him, but he'll never know she's not really going to do what he says.



His name was Joe. He passed away in 1995—he was 20 years older than me. When I was 18 I had married another guy who was thumbs down. We had a daughter together. I divorced that guy, and then married his uncle: Joe.

He was the love of my life. We were married for 27 years, and I took care of him when he got Alzheimer's in his 60s. Now I'm married again. He's fine. He's more laid back—his name is Tom.

I knew Joe was the one when one day we were in the kitchen, and I was feeling down, and he just grabbed me and hugged me, and kissed me, and it just felt right and it fell into place. He used to buy me little gifts and hide them in his pockets. He bought me two sweaters-- I treasured those sweaters-- and a friendship ring with a blue star sapphire.

Our song, always, was Elvis' "Blue Hawaii." We went fishing, hunting, camping. Before I was with him, I'd never done any of those things. I loved how he could fix anything. He was Plumber, Carpenter—he could do anything. Totally meticulous. My father was that way too.

There wasn't much he wouldn't let me get away with; he was pretty open-minded. That is until I started working for an airport and had male friends and he got jealous. He was very jealous. He was so much older, that's why.

To make love last, you need communication. You need to be flexible and not demanding.



The love of my life is my husband. My friend, my buddy. I was 14 when we met. He married me when I was in my diapers! No, I got married at 18. He was so shy. I love to dance, and he wanted to ask me to dance, but his friend had to say, "He likes you he wants to dance." So I said, why not? But we're not shy anymore.

At our wedding they played "Sang" by Tony Bennett. He also likes "Spanish Eyes." Things were cheap then, and we got \$500 total from our guests. That was worth a lot and with it we went to New York. We grew up poor. If we had a piece of bread we'd share with our neighbors. People don't do that anymore.

He's Irish and I'm Italian, and I love to joke around. My mouth is always going. I could meet the President and talk to him like I talk. I try to be the godmother to everyone. He had blonde hair when I met him, but I've turned him gray.

We know what we want and don't want. He's good at math, and I'm great at dancing. I taught him how to do the waltz at our wedding. I handle the finance, and let me tell you: give your husband an allowance. That's what I do.

We do have our moments when we argue. We argue about sports, TV. I got him interested in my soap operas. General Hospital, One Life to Live. It's something to do. Something to look forward to. We've been through a lot with sickness, and I think that more or less bonds you together. I'm blind in one eye. But I have a sense of humor. I just don't feel sorry for myself.

The trick is to be honest with one another. You've got to work things out 50/50 and the best medicine is laughter. Sometimes if I find him too controlling, I say, Time out. We laugh about it.

We've been married 56 years. It wasn't the sort of wedding people have today. If my father were alive I probably would have married an Italian! William says he would have married an Irish. But he wouldn't be happy.



When we met, we were just kids hanging around. We met at a block dance. It took me a long time to even dance with her because I didn't know how to dance. I was shy.

We never dated anyone else; we had a lot in common. On our honeymoon we watched Tony Bennett on stage. She loves to dance! She loves to dance and I don't deprive her of dancing, though I can't swing. She taught me to waltz at our wedding and even that I screwed up.

When we first got married we didn't have a nickel to our name. Now we work together. She cooks, I wash the dishes. Togetherness. I learned over the years that when a person is married they both must work. The husband can't just come home and lay on the couch. You have to share.

We have our arguments like everyone else. She's stubborn. She gets away with everything! She never admits she's wrong-- that's what annoys me. Sometimes when she's thinking and doesn't say I know what she's thinking. ESP.

Our neighborhood has changed a lot, we used to buy cigarettes out of a vending machine for 32 cents.

When you've been married as long as we have you do for each other. I had cancer when I was 26. My mom got married 5 times and buried them all. They key is to do things for one another. You don't want your husband to be too bossy. Do this, do that.

Ever since we've moved into this new building, I've never seen her talk so much. It's Valentine's Day. We've gone through a lot of pain trying to figure out the wording in the cards. I'll love you forever, kiss, kiss, kiss.

ROSE HUGHES, 75



The love of my life is my friend Teddy. He's from Stoneham. We met when I was 65, at a ballroom-- the Wonderland ballroom. At first I didn't even want to dance, but he kept coming back. I liked him about two weeks after I met him, so I kept dancing with him. It was nice. Our song was, "You Light Up My Life."

He was a great dancer all those years; he was a really great athlete. Then he lost his leg due to poor circulation. But he's still got the spirit, he's a kind man-- but he won't let me get away with talking back to him. I wish I could play tennis like him, that's his true skill. He's most annoying when he snores.

This Valentine's Day has been the best one. We had a glass of wine, and watched TV.

He's getting a little senile now. But you know, you have to keep the good days going.

There's one secret to lasting love: trusting each other.

The Memoir Project aims to capture the stories of Boston seniors systematically and over an extended period of time by teaching senior residents the rudiments of memoir writing. Learning these skills will give seniors a practical and meaningful way to turn memories into coherent narratives with lasting value. By capturing these stories, we intend to document the living history of Boston and, by doing so, provide a greater understanding of the city's past and present for all its residents.

Grub Street is a non-profit writing center dedicated to nurturing writers and connecting readers with the wealth of writing talent in the Boston area. We support writers at every stage of their development by offering writing classes, fellowships, employment, and networking opportunities, and by promoting the work of local authors. Equally important, we enrich the lives of Boston-area residents by introducing them to a community of fellow readers and writers.

Mayor Thomas Menino and The City of Boston Elderly Commission strive to offer Boston seniors services that enhance their quality of life. Our goal is to keep seniors living independently in their communities as long as possible. Through our work with seniors of the City of Boston we realize the importance of preserving history through literature. This project enables the City of Boston to share its greatest resource—seniors.

LOve's a Gamble.