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The Art of Marriage

Celebrating the why in anniversaries.

BY JEANNE FERRIS



Love. Love. Love.

This crazy thing called love is why King Edward VIII abdicated the gilded British crown for the first time in history so that he could marry a commoner. Grief-stricken love is why the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan took 22 years to build and dedicate the Taj Mahal, a splendid architectural jewel in India, for his posthumous muse, Mumtaz Mahal. In Greek mythology, enchanted love is why the golden-haired Helen of Sparta was abducted, which spawned a 10-year war between Sparta and Troy.

Unrequited love and the passionate kiss are why we have sonnets, prose, poetry, torch songs, comedies, dramas, tragedies, motion pictures, gardens, art and dances. Even culinary dishes have been concocted to beguile and seduce.

Heart-connected love is usually the prelude to marriage. Soul-connected love is why we remember our wedding anniversaries. Whether public or private, celebrating wedding anniversaries is the annual remembrance of the why.

Each year denotes a traditional or modern gem or symbol. The 75th year is platinum, and as one of the strongest metals known, it's often used in wedding ring designs. Coincidentally, the recording industry uses the term 'going platinum' when an album sells more than a million copies—and indeed, celebrating 75 years of marriage is a record!



[Lorraine Ferris nee and Tom D'Agostino]

Former New Yorker Lorraine Ferris nee D'Agostino celebrates her 66th wedding anniversary to Tom D'Agostino this year in July. Their generation came out of the Great

Depression, which instills an unquestionable resolve and capacity to withstand hurdles through different eras. Together, they have raised four children successfully. Her secret? “Tenacity, humor, and a [shared] belief system—and God’s grace!”

Refining the art of marriage is like the legacy of a well-loved family recipe: new memories are made of vintage hand-crafted comfort and nourishment. We take from the success of previous examples and learn from the mistakes of others.



[Mina and Mark Kooklani]

Mina Kooklani's secret recipe for lasting love? "After 30 years, you learn that the tough times will roll over, and life has its fair share of speed bumps. I've learned that with patience and compromise, everything turns out fine."

Kooklani adds that respect is also key.

"Respect is the most important ingredient," she said. "When you are married, you should always remember that nobody is perfect and compromise is the key." Asked if a similar faith is important, Kooklani replied, "I think so. Having similar values are crucial to keeping one another happy and raising children in a way in which both partners can agree. Although I don't think you both have to share the same religion, having similar ideals are important and that can be accomplished through your outlook on life."

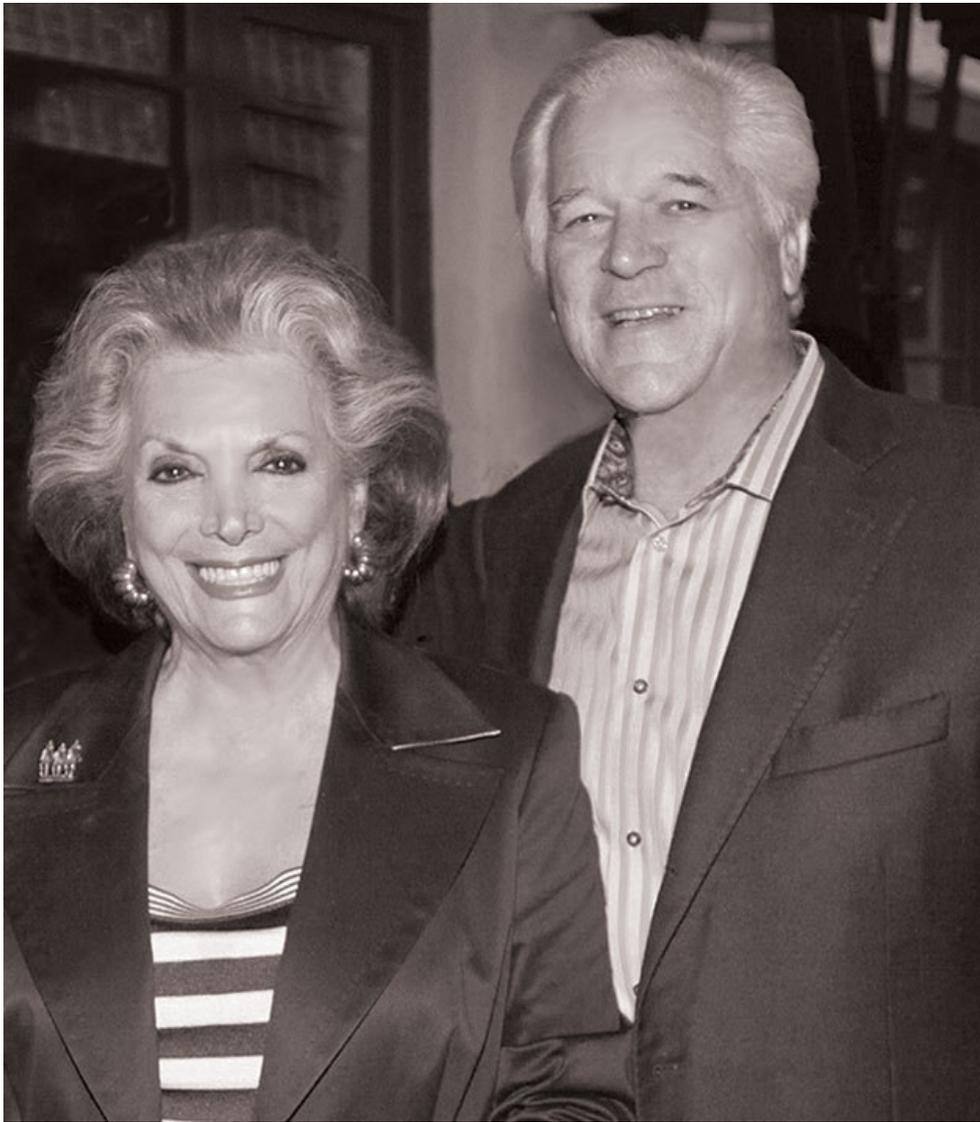


[Emad and May Zawaideh]

This year, May Zawaideh is celebrating her “27 beautiful years” with her husband, Dr. Emad Zawaideh. They both believe in “till death do us part” and also made a vow to never go to sleep upset with each other. “Even if it’s minutes before twelve,” said Zawaideh. “We try to solve all our disagreements the same day.”

May Zawaideh offers advice to new couples: “Make sure love is mutual and equal. You need to be assured that you are the number one in his or her life and no one else matters.

“My mother-in-law once said to me, divorce is not a joke. Don’t think about it or even joke about it,” she added.



[Connie and Bill McNally - Photo by Luci Dumas fine photography]

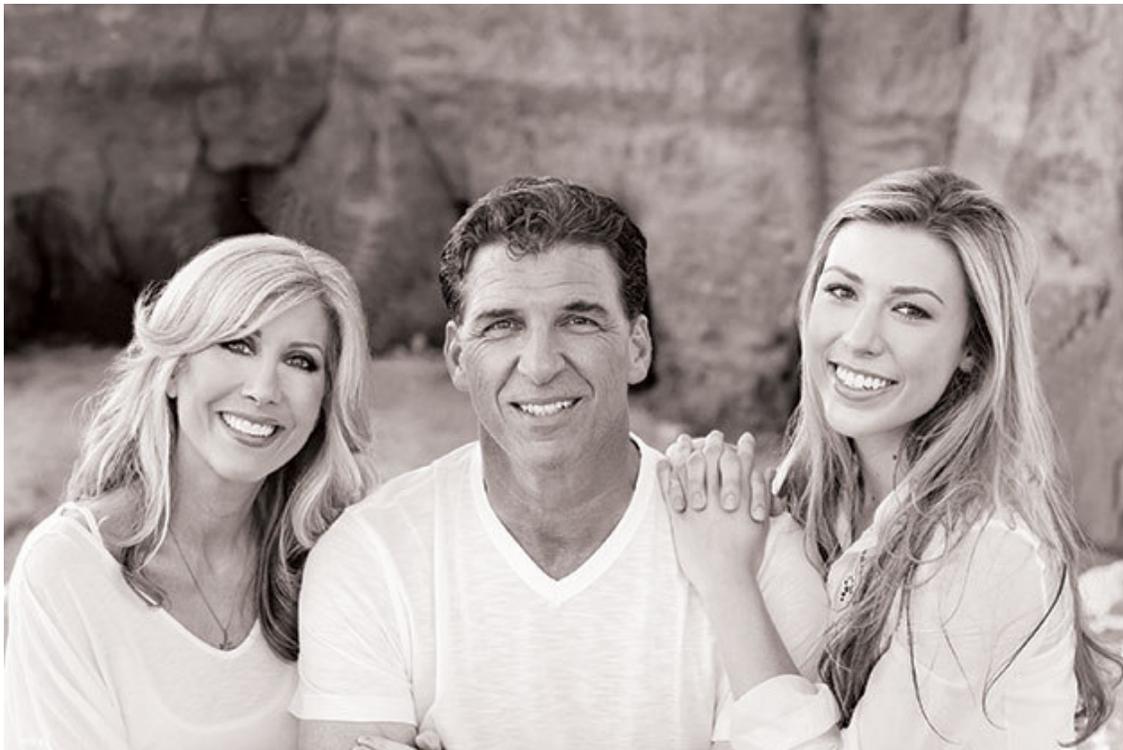
It's not easy to be around someone 24/7 and still have a successful marriage, but Bill and Connie McNally have been inseparable for nearly 40 years.

The founders of The McNally Company Antiques, Inc. in Rancho Santa Fe have been partners—in business and life—for 38 years. The two met at the World Backgammon Championships in 1975, where they were both competing. They didn't win any trophies, but they came home with an even better prize. After six months—and three dates—the couple was married.

"I thought she was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen in my life," Bill McNally said.

Since then, the couple has made a career out of collecting beautiful things.

Connie McNally opened her first antique shop in Palm Springs in 1976. In 1978, she and her husband formed The McNally Company, before opening their Rancho Santa Fe store in 1987. The store features an array of paintings, furniture and objects d'art from 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century Europe.



[Kimberly Hunt and Billy Ray Smith]

San Diego's own Kimberly Hunt, Channel 10 anchor, and her sports reporter husband, Billy Ray Smith, will be celebrating their 23rd anniversary this summer. Hunt believes, "a similar faith in God is imperative as you both walk through life together. It helps to align your priorities and values."

Hunt always keeps love in mind and even when she gets mad, the idea of leaving is never thought of as the path to happiness. How does she work through their differences? "I bug him until he finally talks about it," she said. "We then work it out. Most issues can be met in the middle. Every once in a while you just have to know what issues mean more to whom."

For Hunt, a romantic gesture is one where their relationship is celebrated. "Any free night is a gift, so waiting up for me to get home from work on a Friday night and having champagne on ice, with two glasses ready—it's a great start to the weekend!"

Indeed, enduring pet peeves and making compromises seems easy when basking in the tropical afterglow of an idyllic honeymoon. Life's challenges with a partner may require copious amounts of ecclesiastical forgiveness and, of course, the ability to find humor to help ride the frothy waves of friction.

As humans pursuing cohabitation and "tying the knot" on all levels—financially, spiritually, etc.—it's hopeful to look at other species such as whales, which bond for life without pesky compromises. Nature never questions instinct.

Who doesn't long for this type of deep kinship and aspire to this ideal? Taking the leap and facing the future with one who always has your best interest at heart is like sleeping soundly under an open safe sky. What would you do for love if you had no fear?