

Jack Rhine and his wife Karen – 50th Anniversary (2021)

Since I have a captive audience, my first instinct is to give a homily, but I won't! People always want to know how a couple met, so I'll tell you our story. We were both in a History of Western Civilization class at City College of San Francisco. For me, it was love at first sight. I was shy and didn't know what I was going to do but Karen took care of it for me. After the first midterm, she came up to me and asked me how I did, figuring she did better than I did. But it turns out I got a few more points. The ice had been broken and we started talking. Being horizontally challenged for most of my life, I asked her to go out to dinner with me before I started my next diet. We had a good time together and at the end of the night, she said she wanted to be friends. I said sure! But I grew on her. No! I am not a fungus!

There is a story about a man and a woman had been married for more than 60 years. They had shared everything. They had kept no secrets from each other except that the little old woman had a shoe box in the top of her closet that she had cautioned her husband never to open or ask her about.

For all of these years, he had never thought about the box, but one day the little old woman got very sick and the doctor said she would not recover. In trying to sort out their affairs, the little old man took down the shoe box and took it to his wife's bedside. She agreed that it was time that he should know what was in the box.

When he opened it, he found two crocheted dolls and a stack of money totaling \$95,000. He asked her about the contents.

The woman explained that before she got married she asked her grandmother what was the secret of a happy marriage Her grandmother said the secret was to never argue. She told me that if I ever got angry with you, I should just keep quiet and crochet a doll."

The little old man was so moved; he had to fight back tears. Only two precious dolls were in the box. She had only been angry with him two times in all those years of living and loving. He almost burst with happiness.

"Honey," he said, "that explains the doll, but what about all of this money? Where did it come from?"

"Oh, that?" she said. "That's the money I made from selling the dolls."

I have not found Karen's box yet, but I have a feeling it contains a lot of money!

When I told someone, we were about to celebrate our 50th, She asked me what the secret was, the easy answer is that Karen is a saint. But it really is not that simple or easy. There are a lot of secrets to staying married, especially since I don't knit

dolls! The following secrets are not always easy to live. I certainly am not perfect. Karen will agree with that.

First and foremost, love one another and let each other know how much in word and in deed. No issue between us should be stronger than our love for each other. It is said that a couple should not go to bed angry. I know if I do, it makes it harder to sleep. The alternative of staying up all night fighting is not a good one!

Be vulnerable to each other. Admit when you are wrong and ask for forgiveness for any hurt you inflict. Be a healer in your relationship. Sometimes, give in when you know you are right if it will make things right between the two of you.

Be honest about everything, and be tactful. I remember one time after we first got married, Karen took out the trash and saw an empty corned beef hash can and an empty pint of ice cream. Because she was concerned about my weight and bad eating habits, she asked me if I ate it, I denied it. It was really a bad thing because she new I did and I did not like lying. It was destructive to our relationship. I should have hid it better but I also should have confessed.

Challenge each other to grow and support each other. Build each other's self-confidence and self worth. Karen's love for me was a turning point for my feelings of self-worth. She loved and appreciated me for who I was, and I did the same for her. We have always supported each other in what we wanted to do to grow immediately.

Then there is that bit in the marriage vows, for better or for worse in sickness and in health. Life throws some tough stuff at us, particularly health problems at our age. When Karen was wheeling her mother around in a wheelchair, her mother told her not to give up her day job. Most of us are not natural born care givers. But love can make us do amazing things. In the four months that I was in the hospital five times, had four surgeries and two procedures, Karen was there for me. When she went through her health crisis a few years ago, I did everything possible to help her.

There are many more things that couples do to keep their relationships healthy. But, the most important is communications. There is a story of a Vermont farmer who was a man of few words, On his wedding day he told his bride, "I love you and if anything changes, I will let you know." Everything you say and everything you do should say, I love you. That is a lofty goal and we don't always succeed, but we try.