

BRUCE AND EDDIE

Together for over 50 years, Bruce and Eddie are role models for other gay and lesbian couples. They share their secrets for a successful and happy relationship.

An Enduring Love

We were both 19 when we first met – could it be 45 years ago?! At that time, marriage between same-sex couple was not even considered a possible dream. In fact, even in Greenwich Village, one could get arrested for walking hand-in-hand with a friend or same-gender partner. It was a different, even dangerous period. Relationships such as ours were shared only among the closest of friends. Within a matter of a few weeks we felt that we were meant for each other and decided to exchange rings. We chose a simple design in silver that we love to this day. Almost a decade later, during a stay in Amsterdam, we had them copied in gold, but it is the original ones that we continue to wear. They mean a great deal to us, and after all these years they remain the most visible symbol of our love.

After finishing college, we lived with our respective families while completing our graduate degrees. Nevertheless, we managed to spend practically all of our free time together. We often went on weekend “honeymoons” to neighboring states. We felt a touch rebellious for even daring to think in those terms. Canada became one of our favorite destinations for longer trips during vacation breaks. As soon as we were both teaching on a regular basis, we began to spend the summer months in Europe. In retrospect we think that traveling, when possible, is a great way to both test and build a relationship. It certainly brings out the best and the worst in one. Finding solutions to whatever problems may come up is a good way to develop confidence and trust in each other. We feel that the unavoidable sharing involved in the process can provide strength to a partnership.

Within six months of having met, we purchased a set of fireplace tools. How’s that for staking out the territory and setting future goals? It was not until 1970 that we took the giant step of buying a house and moving in together. Neighbors were told by the real estate agent that a couple would be moving in. Surprise!! Except for the fireplace, the house we eventually chose was not at all what we thought we wanted. But two-thirds of its exterior walls and roof were covered with a blooming wisteria vine and that clinched it for us. It was a case of love at first sight. Guess we’re both sort of romantic at heart. We keep dreaming of La Casa Grande, but we couldn’t give this little place up just yet. After 35 years in it, it holds too much of our life and memories. It really is our little love nest. Another explanation is that our attic is exploding and we can’t imagine how to take it apart.

We definitely must pay homage to both our families for inculcating values in us which have served us well in forging our lifestyle together. Both sets of parents enjoyed long-term marriages that were ended only by death. They were caring, loving people who never expressed any kind of rejection towards us. In fact, even though the issue of sexual orientation was never discussed with them, they eventually made us feel equally

accepted. To this day, we feel that was the finest gift we could have received from them. They were also accepting of our friends and, to our knowledge, never criticized them – another plus. By example, they taught us lessons of respect and tender affection toward one another. We also have to give credit to older dear friends who, fortunately for us, became our role models. They shared their homes and love with us. What stories they could tell! Some had endured truly difficult times and we are forever indebted to them for their wisdom and experience.

From the beginning, we decided not to let anything or anyone get in the way of our achieving a lasting bond. We felt that our love was good and wholesome and that we were capable of leading decent, respectable lives. Nevertheless, we didn't even dream of having our union sanctioned by either church or state. We deeply felt a need to claim the right to share our private lives regardless of what others thought, believed, or said.

Things have changed dramatically since then, and today we are strong supporters of all efforts to legalize same-gender unions. We truly believe that only after such legal status is granted will the second-class label attached to them begin to be erased in the minds of the majority of the population. We take our hats off to all those who have bravely sought public recognition of their love by various forms of commitment ceremonies. The memory of witnessing them thrills us to this day.

We truly believe that God had a plan in having us meet and develop a loving union together. We feel that with the lord's blessing we have been able to enrich each other's experience. We also sense that God has used us to make a positive difference in the lives of other individuals. It really has been a source of satisfaction for us to be able to support others through the years in their quest for a good life. We have found that by being willing to share the joys and sorrows of others, our own lives have been blessed.

What has held us together, you may wonder? We believe that communicating and sharing the concerns of our lives with each other has created a strong bond between us. Over time, we have gained a long history of trust and support for one another which, compounded with our love, has given us the strongest possible foundation for our relationship. It feels great to know that we are always there for each other. We can depend on that, and what a priceless asset that is!

We feel that a good sense of humor is crucial to one's well-being, whether in a relationship or not. It is especially important to be able to laugh at one's own foibles. Whenever tension starts to build, we try to remind ourselves that it is probably due to something insignificant and not likely to be personal. If anything, our imperfections remind us of our inescapable humanity and, strangely enough, we find some comfort in that. We're aware that we're not perfect, but we relish the fact that together we can have fun doing a lot of good things. We have found it easier to tackle most problems from that perspective.

When big challenges come along we find strength in facing them as a team. This approach gives us a sense of stability that we wouldn't otherwise have. We believe that consciously cultivating a grateful attitude towards God and life has made a real difference in our lives. Perhaps it's the small things that have the greatest impact on us. The unexpected touch, the surprise kiss, the hand held longer than necessary, and the

extra, “I love you so much” – these are the things that cement our bond. They don’t cost anything and, amazingly, always seem fresh and new, while encouraging a quiet, satisfying sensation of happiness in just being together.

While, as is usually the case, many things are done separately, we believe that the seeking of as many common threads as possible in daily lives is a healthy goal for any relationship. This may include actual activities, similar endeavors, or just plain interests. They may be simple or complex, but they provide a common ground in which sharing can thrive and very likely lead to satisfying results.

For instance, we personally like to take time whenever possible to enjoy the glorious panorama of the sky – its vastness, the ever-changing cloud formations and, in particular, the “blue hour” at dusk, when the evening star and some phase of the moon dominate the spectacle, leaving earthbound elements in silhouette. One look at that and, at least for a few moments, the rest of reality seems to take a back seat. For us, it becomes a precious, subtle interlude with a good deal of recreational potential – in plain language, it charges our batteries. Of course, sunsets are a blast, too. On the other hand, we seldom experience the sunrise, except if we’re just getting home after a night on the prowl – just kidding!

And yes, love grows and deepens, surprisingly even when one may think it has reached its limits. Take our word for it! Put the times you have together to good use, and you will see. There’s the challenge for you!