

# Soul Mates for Fifty Years

Diana Raab

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of my husband and I knowing one another. We met in 1972 and were married five years later. It was love at first sight.

People often ask me what's the key to a successful long-term partnership. I say that as simple as it might sound, there are four main ingredients—being best friends first, communicating openly, helping your partner meet personal goals, and sharing a sense of humor.

As a writer and storyteller, I am fascinated how people meet. I believe it can say a lot about how the plot or relationship unfolds. Simon and I met when I was eighteen years and he was twenty. A few years earlier, our parents became instant friends while on vacation at a hotel in Northern Quebec. The following summer, when my mother called to say that I was dating a boy she didn't like, his parents offered me a job at their plant nursery sixty miles north of Toronto.

That summer, Simon's mother, Jeannine, picked me up at the airport in her light-blue Valiant. My dark bangs hung straight over my eyes, and my makeup modeled Twiggy, as I'd painted vertical black lines beneath the lower lashes to emulate the model's classic wide-eyed look.

When Jeannine spotted me at the gate, she scanned me up and down and smirked. She was probably wondering if it was a

good idea to have invited this rebellious-looking city girl (aka New York hippie) to spend the summer, given that she had two teenage sons and two younger children I could have easily unfavorably influenced.

From the airport, Jeannine drove down the winding country road to their home. After some rudimentary car talk and long moments of silence, we arrived. I thanked her for picking me up, and proceeded to lug my heavy red Samsonite suitcase onto the porch leading to the front door. Within moments the screen door swung open. On the other side stood a tall, skinny young man with a large red Afro haircut.

"Nice to meet you. I'm Simon," he said, smiling, and then gave me the firmest handshake I'd ever received. I later learned that he was the eldest son and the manager of the store where I'd work for the summer.

Our eyes linked as if superglue joined us. Jeannine approached the door behind me, saying, "Go in. Go in," but my feet wouldn't budge. I wanted to stand there forever, my eyes fixed on his, but without any further ado, Simon held the door open with one hand and used the other hand to wave me inside the house.

From that moment on, I knew that Simon and I had a profound connection, and it took less than a week for me to realize that he was the one I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. He was my soul mate. Years later when I repeated this story to others desperate to find love themselves, all I could muster up was, "It felt as if we'd known one another forever."

Intuitively, I felt that he had the same adoration and desire for me that I had for him. I was drawn to his sense of humor and self-confidence. He seemed quite comfortable in his skin.



At work, he concocted a project that we could work on together. For two weeks we assembled hibachi barbecues. This tiresome job of putting screws in an endless number of holes seemed painless in light of my escalating love. The hours drifted by as I laughed at Simon's jokes and gazed at him with a sense of knowing and awe. I was love struck. After dinner when everyone retired to their rooms, we stayed up engaged in our mutual passion for crossword puzzles.

Two weeks into my stay, Simon was scheduled to leave for his summer vacation. He asked me to join him on his road trip to the Yukon Territory; I couldn't contain my excitement.

"My parents will never let me travel alone with you."

"But our parents are friends."

"It'll never happen."

"What if I write a letter?"

"You can try, but I doubt it; my dad is really strict."

Simon wrote my parents a compelling two-page letter, and after reading it, they called me and gave me permission to join him on the trip to the Yukon Territory.

The next day, we packed his orange Volkswagen Beetle with a matching orange canoe on top. We spent two magnificent weeks together, camping, fishing and canoeing. We returned home and continued a two-year, long distance love affair laden with love letters and phone calls. When the time came to apply for college, we chose neighboring schools. We knew we were too young to get married, but when given the opportunity, we wanted to be together.

One evening near the end of our last semester, he visited the apartment I shared with another student. He took my hand and led me to my room. He told me to sit on my bed, and he knelt down on my hook rug carpet beside my bed and proposed to

me with an emerald and diamond ring which he designed. He used all his saved earnings of \$500. After our wedding in New York, we moved to Montreal. He started a technology firm and I began a nursing career until summoned to bedrest with my eldest daughter. Unfortunately, I had to do that with my other two children and Simon was the most supportive husband imaginable.

Our three children are now in their thirties and they're in committed relationships and parents themselves. They've blessed us with five wonderful grandchildren and in spite of the unexpected ups and downs of a long-term relationship, our love is as strong as it was back in 1972. We hope that our children are as lucky as us. We often remind them, that love must be at the core of any relationship, like it was and continues to be at ours.

Source. Raab, Diana. *Marriage: Lifespan* Vol. 6. Pure Slush Books. August. 2022.