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I was made in early October, more than fifty years ago, during the fall of 1969. It was the age of the sexual revolution and “flower power”. Born on a clear summer midnight, under a moonless Sunday sky, my near-Fourth of July birthday kept me thinking, for years, that the fireworks were all for me.

But my life really went up in flames 31 years ago in February of 1988. Seventeen and full of promise and butterflies, Scott Edward Spry told me he loved me. Apropos for Valentine’s Day. I reciprocated. We were alone in the basement of my Ortonville home [disclaimer: wisdom has led us not to allow our children alone in the

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basement with a member of the opposite gender.

There were chocolates and kisses and special notes. There were months left of high school for me and years of college for both of us. But the flames were kindled. The ensuing years were glorious days of growing in love, figuring out who each of us were, alone and together.

That first “I love you” was the culmination of only three months of dating. November 7, 1987, found me at Winchester Mall in Rochester, MI, on a blind date of sorts, thanks to dear Marnie, my match-making high school girlfriend.

She invited me to come visit during their work hours to meet “this really cute, nice college guy who drove a—wait for it—Dodge 024!” I asked my sister to come with me; we told my parents we were just going shopping. Well, I was shopping, just not for clothes.

Scott and I met on his fifteen-minute break. He was a mall cop. Yes, a man in uniform is hard to resist. And he wasn’t even driving a Segway, one of those cool two-wheeled motorized vehicles—it was 15-years too early.

He sauntered up to us—me, Marnie and Heather—

cavalierly flipping a quarter. Wow, was he handsome! And, um, older. Not like those silly high-school boys I knew. He was “mature”, could carry on a conversation with multiple sentences. And, he had a mustache. Melt.

We chatted. I giggled, I’m sure. Blushed. He asked me on a date, dinner the next night. Where else, but the mall. Embarrassed to say, but the name of the establishment was “Midgets”. Yep, so wrong. Needless to say, it no longer exists, nor does the mall.

(Not sure what my alibi was for that event, since I know I didn’t take my little sis. It would be a couple of weeks before my parents learned—in a slip of tongue at the Thanksgiving dinner table, thanks to Aunt Dee—that Scott was, ahem, 21.)

Our first dinner date was a hit! I learned that my Aunt Marie had been at his baby shower! He grew up in the same Baptist church they attended and knew my cousins well. We learned that we had actually been on the same church youth retreat to [Camp Barakel](#) when he was 18 and I was 14! We don’t remember meeting each other then but always hoped a photo would surface.

All this was really neat, and learning that we shared faith

was golden, and I'd like to hope that without this detail—a deal-breaker. But at seventeen, though principled, I was just as given over to emotion as any typical teenage girl.

I'd like to believe that I'd have walked away if he didn't say he cared about the person that I held most dear. Knowing we are prone to foolishness, an ancient, venerated and experienced king gave this advice, thrice in the same book:

***“Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.” \****

What made me desire Scott on that first date, was not just his verbal affirmations—our shared values and histories. It was something he did. He interrupted our conversation to introduce me to a friend of his that was working at the restaurant, a busboy named Scotty.

These two men—Scott and Scotty—had grown up together, in the same faith community. I sensed a deep, mutual respect. Scotty had Down Syndrome. Scott treated him with a gentle deference.

This brief interaction pulled a veil back, allowing me to see into Scott's soul. This is a man of great character, I knew. His actions matched his words. For me, this knowledge

ignited a spark that led to eventual flame.

Three years later, he asked me to be his bride. Twenty-eight years later, I can say with great confidence, that this wise poet king's words are to be trusted:

***“...for love is as strong as death, its jealousy as unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, It would be utterly scorned.”*** [Song of Songs](#)

Shawn Spry

<https://www.shawnspry.com/>

**WATCH** this video of Frank Stevens speaking about life as a Down Syndrome man in front of Congress. This in honor of Scotty, Curtis, Frank, Delbert and all the beautiful humans we love... <https://youtu.be/yQJEoRhkapw>

The mission of the National Down Syndrome Adoption Network is to ensure that every child born with Down syndrome has the opportunity to grow up in a loving family. Visit <https://www.ndsan.org>

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