

A (Mis)Match Made In Heaven

The Story of Bob Bruketa '73 and Karen Hart '73

Words Written by Karen Bruketa

Songs Selected by Bob Bruketa

I'm Into Something Good (Herman's Hermits 1966)

We were different, VERY different. His presence filled the room the moment he entered it. I wanted to enter the room without even being noticed, and I succeeded at that. He was intuitive. I was analytical. He was street smart. I was book smart, and oh so gullible (a trait he always especially enjoyed).

We were matched up the second semester of sophomore year as a joke by a classmate. (You know who you are, and thank you!). Bob knew about the whole thing ahead of time, of course. I knew nothing about it. We met after a basketball game, on the team bus when no one else was aboard. Somehow, the mismatch worked, and we dated exclusively from then until right before college.

We Just Disagree (Dave Mason 1973)

College brought separation from each other, in more ways than one. Our relationship became on and off, which was heart wrenching, but neither of us could forget the other.

The painful memories of this period came back decades later, and served a different purpose for me.

I Only Want To Be With You (Dusty Springfield 1964)

We reunited during junior year of college, this time for good. We became engaged on August 6, 1976.

Wedding Song (There Is Love) (Noel Paul Stookey 1973)

We were married July 16, 1977 at St. Luke's in Carol Stream, the Bruketa Family's church. Jim Modaff (SFHS '73), Bob's "best friend since the first day of first grade," was his best man. He became "Uncle Jimmy" to our children, and he was always a very big part of our lives.

Proud of the House We Built (Brooks & Dunn 2007)

Aimee (SFHS '99) and Patrick (SFHS'05) soon came along, and the Bruketa Blue Collar Work Ethic of “working smarter, not harder,” was passed down to the next generation. Bob continued to work both smarter AND harder, while encouraging his children to achieve their educational goals in college and graduate school. They now both work in their chosen fields, Aimee as an Athletic Trainer, and Patrick as an Energy Engineer. Academic foundations at SFHS put to good use!

Thank God (Kane Brown, Katelyn Brown 2022)

Bob moved forward in his life from being a Man's Man to becoming what I called, “The most advanced kind of man there is: a true Family Man”. He not only looked after our family, he oversaw his parents' needs, as well as those of his father's older brother and two sisters, none of whom had children of their own. Despite being the younger of the two brothers in his family, Bob became the head of the Bruketa Family. We worked together over the course of more than 20 years helping the older generations of both of our families, as well as raising our own children during most of those same years.

Something That We Do (Clint Black 1997)

We purchased the Modaff farm in Wisconsin in 2000, and moved there from Illinois in late 2005. With the ownership of the farm, Bob finally had everything he ever wanted. Our years there were the happiest of his life. Bob was well liked, and respected for his knowledge of all things mechanical: cars, trucks, and farm equipment. He fit in so well with the rural community, and we enjoyed a wide circle of friends.

As a couple, we continued to grow closer. Bob would often ask me to come along when he delivered hay or ran other farm errands. Even after all our years together, when we made those little trips together, I still always felt like I was riding around with my boyfriend. I guess you could say high school sweethearts had become lifelong sweethearts!

Time In A Bottle (Jim Croce 1972)

So, you might ask, what happened to all those differences that were so apparent when we first met?

Bob not only continued to change any room he entered, he changed the people in it. With his constant support and encouragement, I developed the confidence to step out of his shadow and be seen in my own right.

Intuitive vs analytical? No conflict there! Every aspect of any problem that needed to be solved was covered from both perspectives. Interestingly, in our family, the intuitive vs analytical score is still even, as we have one child who is intuitive, and one child who is analytical.

Street smart vs book smart? No problem! We both learned new ways of doing things. (But he was always way street smarter than I am, or will ever be!)

Oh, and am I still so gullible? Not surprisingly, Bob continued to work that one to his advantage, but he was always so kind, he never embarrassed me. He knew all my faults and foibles, but he kept them all tucked safely away in that big heart of his.

Because You Loved Me (Celine Dion 1996) (Selected by Karen, for Bob)

Bob's earthly life ended on August 3, 2021 in an accident on our farm. I still very much feel his presence around me.

Our separation during the college years reminded me that the only thing worse than losing him after 44 years and 18 days of marriage would have been if we had never reconciled and therefore we never would have had our wonderful life together.

Bob left me the greatest gift any widow could ever receive from her husband. He left me PEOPLE, who cared about me because he had cared about them. No husband ever left his wife in kinder and more loving hands than those of our Wisconsin friends and neighbors. I will be forever grateful for all they did for me after Bob died. Farm people truly do take care of their own.

I'll Have to Say I Love you in a Song (Jim Croce 1973)

Bob continues to communicate with me. especially by way of songs. The ones I have included in this story are just a few of them.

They tell the story of us, in some small way. A 50 year story that continues in a different way now, but it is a no less wonderful, and a much more amazing way.

It started as a mismatch made in heaven, and in heaven, it will never end.

And that's no joke!