

# B News

## Everlasting love

Some Valentine's Day inspiration from three couples who have kept the romance alive, year after year

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With "golden couple" Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston apparently on their way to Splitsville, some celebrity watchers fear their separation sounds the death knell for the institution of marriage. If the couple who has "everything" can't make a go of matrimony, these pundits have wondered out loud, can anyone?

Three local couples answer with a resounding yes and offer up as proof their combined 145 years of wedded bliss. Here, Joe and Marty Blum, George and Rita Salinas, and Jim and Betsy O'Grady share their stories of how they met and how they've managed to keep the magic alive for more than four or even five decades.

A minor case of mistaken identity brought Joe and Marty Blum together during the first week of Marty's freshman year at Purdue University. Her roommate suggested she go on a date with a sophomore named Joel who happened to be Joe's fraternity brother. When Joe, who had met Marty earlier in the week, called to ask her out, she thought she was speaking with Joel and accepted.

A year later they got pinned and two years after that, on Marty's graduation day, they tied the knot.

Joe said he knew he'd found the right woman when he went to New York City during the summer of his junior year to work for IBM while Marty stayed in Indiana taking summer school classes. Joe, a self-proclaimed serial dater, realized he wasn't interested in socializing with anyone else while he was away. If he couldn't go out with Marty, he wouldn't go out with anyone.

Marty, meanwhile, was smitten after the first date.

"I knew he was an interesting person — and great," she said. "I wasn't thinking of marriage, but I liked him."

Three children, medical school, law school, two careers apiece and years of civic service later, the Blums still shine for one another.

"We were good friends to start with and I still consider him my best friend," Marty said.

Referring to what he calls the Time magazine theory of love, M.D./engineer Joe attrib-

utes his and Marty's marital success to a mutual preference of endorphins over epinephrine. According to the magazine article, Joe said, love has two phases. During the falling-in-love, epinephrine phase, sparks fly, bells ring, excitement reigns. Next comes the relatively calm endorphin phase when a couple feels happy and comfortable together.

"Some people need to be in the epinephrine phase all the time," Joe said. "They need the constant excitement. Others prefer the calmness of the endorphin phase." What he's talking about is good old-fashioned compatibility.

Marty agrees and also credits their success to having two tubes of toothpaste. One squeezes the tube from the bottom, the other from the middle. When they both used the same tube, minor friction occurred on a regular basis.

"It finally dawned on me that I could just get my own tube of toothpaste," she said. The Santa Barbara mayor's bottom line: find solutions to the little aggravations.

Rita Salinas said she came within "a gnat's eyebrow" of calling her husband, Uncle George, rather than sweetheart.

"He was my cousin's uncle and he's five years older than I am," she explained. Other circumstances led the couple down a different path, however. On a road trip to Fresno from Berkeley to attend a wedding in the fall of 1952, they spent hour after hour perusing the newspaper and discussing current events.

"The night after the ride home, Rita called to say thanks and, by the way, can you take me to the movies?" recalled George. He could and did.

"We talked a lot," Rita said of their courtship. "We talked about issues, values and life choices. We were very idealistic politically."

Sitting in the car one night Rita turned to George and asked, When are you going to ask me to marry you? He replied, I guess now's a good time.

For 53 years the couple has combined fierce social activism with a devotion to family, which includes two children and six grandchildren.

They credit their success to common values and maintaining a positive attitude toward one another.

"We don't have to argue about politics, religion, et cetera," said George. "Our person-

alities aren't the same but our values are."

Added Rita, "And you aren't critical because you adopt a compassionate attitude toward yourself and your partner and that compassion keeps growing into love."

The Salinas also count flexibility and a willingness to accept adversity among qualities necessary for a happy marriage.

"We've had rough spots but we've gotten closer over time," said George. "You make a commitment and you stay loyal to that commitment."

Ask Jim O'Grady how he and wife Betsy have kept their marriage going for 52 years and, with a nod toward Betsy, quite sweetly he replies, "Her."

Although he wasn't quite ready to commit when they met back in 1946, that changed a couple of years later when the two were out with a group of friends. He walked her home and invited her to a movie the following Sunday.

They became a couple shortly thereafter, but four years passed before they got engaged and tied the knot.

"The Korean War got in the way," said Betsy.

"And I didn't think I could afford to get married on Marine Corps pay," added Jim.

In August 1952, after returning from Korea with two Purple Hearts, Jim popped the question. Three months later they got married in their hometown of Troy, N.Y.

When Betsy married Jim she also married the military, so to speak, and adjusted her life to his career with the Marines and later as a special officer with the Secret Service. From

1952 to 1985, when they settled in Goleta, Jim, Betsy and their three children lived in 22 different houses in five states. Son Jimmy was born in New York, Timothy in Hawaii and Shawn in Virginia.

"I enjoyed going to different places," Betsy said.

"And it was good for the kids."

Their keys to staying together despite dangerous overseas assignments, upheaval and separation? Love, commitment and shared values.

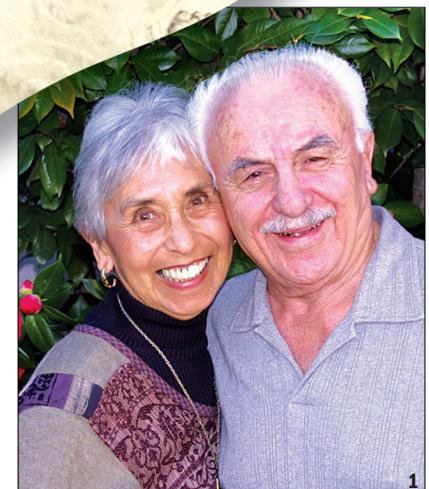
"You have to overlook a lot," said Betsy. "You can't take things too seriously."

"And communication is key," added Jim. "You have to talk things out."

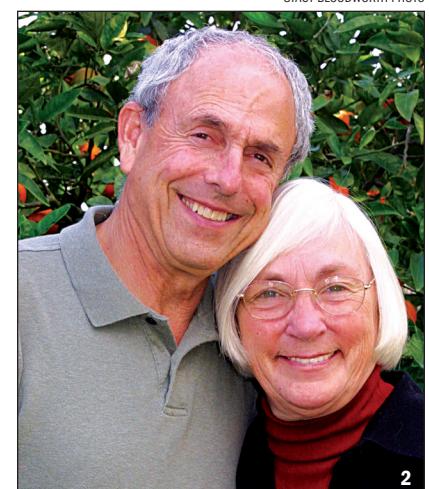
Bringing flowers occasionally, he noted, doesn't hurt, either.



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