

## Keeping The Fire Going – Part One

by Lloyd Biddle

The first time I say my wife was August of 1982. I was a 17-year old freshman at the University of Illinois. I enrolled in five classes my first semester of college and needed to go to the bookstore to purchase textbooks. Nervously, I entered the Illini Bookstore near the corners of Wright and Green Streets in Champaign, IL. The store was packed, the checkout lines were long and the clerks were few and occupied.

As I meandered apprehensively to the back of the store where stacks and stacks of textbooks were located, I caught a glimpse of this young co-ed setting up a book display. She had big beautiful brown eyes, a delightful freckled-face and long brown hair. Back then the fellas and I would have said, “That girl is fine!” I think I had the reaction of Curtis Taylor, Jr., a character in the movie “DreamGirls”, when he sang about the first time he saw Deena Jones. He sang, “When I first saw you, girl I said you’re my, you’re my dream.” Yes, in August of 1982, I knew exactly how Curtis felt. But I had never been very assertive in approaching girls, let alone girls I didn’t know. So it wasn’t until a semester later that I met this young woman, Deborah, who later became my wife and my “Dream Girl”. You know, I will never forget that glorious glimpse 25 years ago because, as far as I am concerned, that is the day when our romance began.

In order for me to marry Deborah, I had to pursue her. And literally, that is exactly what I did. Upon graduating from the U of I in 1986, I tracked her down at her apartment in Schaumburg, IL. I asked her out on our first date in the summer of 1987. I borrowed my brother’s Mitsubishi Mirage, drove to Schaumburg to pick her up, and took her to a romantic Mexican Restaurant in downtown Chicago called “Su Casa”. (Debbie and I still love to go out for Mexican food to this day!) After a great meal and some wonderful conversation, I took her to see the Arnold Schwarzenegger movie, “Terminator” (I know I should have picked something a little lighter for our first date, but I never said I was a Casanova.). To cap off the evening, I took Debbie out dancing before driving her back home to Schaumburg. It was a big date, a great evening, and probably one of the best investments I ever made in our relationship. Debbie and I were engaged in 1988 and married on May 27, 1989. I want you to know that I have been dating, romancing and pursuing her ever since.

For the first 5 years of our marriage, Debbie and I had no children. Oh, what a blessed joy! (I am only partly kidding here, though I totally adore my two boys.) We typically went on dates every weekend during the first 5 years. Mostly, we would go out to movies and dinner. On Sunday’s, after church and brunch, we came home to rest up for another busy week of work.

That “rest” might include a little frisky business if the mood was right. And back then, it seemed like it always was. Can I get an “Amen” from the husbands out there?! I always presented Debbie with a nice, thoughtful gift for birthdays, anniversaries, Valentine’s Day, Sweetest Day, and even for no special occasion at all. Debbie loves gifts. The joke

around my house is that we celebrate her birthday for the whole month of February! During those early years, we were in our romantic heyday. But something happened to change the course of history! It was a dreary day on May 26, 1994 (OK, I am exaggerating here a little for effect.), the day my first son was born. Not only were our Sunday's never quite the same, the wonderful romance we enjoyed before became harder to maintain. It became harder, but with some focus and commitment it remains real, satisfying and joyous!

One of my favorite quotes in the Scripture on the subject of romance in marriage can be found in the Song of Solomon 2:4. It reads:

*“He brought me to the banqueting house,  
And his banner over me was love.”*

I can't describe in words how much I love this verse. It is my vision statement for how I love, pursue and romance my wife.

Next month, I am going to continue our discussion on how to keep the fire of romance alive and well in your marriage as it matures. Until then, husbands, I want you to think about 4 concepts that I have alluded to in this article:

1. The idea of pursuing your wife.
2. The idea of getting away from it all with you wife at regular intervals.
3. The idea of providing for your wife's needs and some of her desires.
4. The idea of embracing your wife and, holistically, what that all might mean.

Lastly, husbands and wives ask yourselves, honestly, just one question: “Are you still devoted to romancing your spouse”?