

# THE VOICE OF LOVE

## FRENCH CLASS 1966

It is the first day of school; the date is September 6, 1966. I am a junior at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, and I am heading to French class. I am no stranger to French, in fact this is the third time I have taken French I. While in high school I took French I and II in Hendersonville, North Carolina. Moving to Greenwich, Connecticut at the beginning of my junior year I couldn't test out of the language requirement and in fact had to start again at French I. When I got to DePauw, I thought I could at least test out of French I, but when I went to see my advisor about whether my test scores were sufficient to relieve me of one or two years of the language requirement, he had the nerve to ask "Are you sure you took the right language exam?" When I answered incredulously "yes", he said "well you didn't test out of anything ... and if I were you I don't think I would miss the first day of class." I increasingly understood Steve Martin's frustration when he stated "Those damn French have a different word for everything!"

### **French Class Gets Better**

I walk into Room 114 in East College, resigned to another two years of French. As I enter the class room I spot a beautiful woman sitting in the front row. I remember exactly what she was wearing, even though

50 years have intervened. She had on a light blue and white sun dress with a blue scarf in her hair. Students don't dress like that anymore. She was blonde had blue eyes and her smile was like a magnet drawing me to her, but she was sitting in the front row, and I don't do front rows, especially not in French class. I take a chance. I think maybe she could be my friend.

My new seat mate I found came from Baltimore, MD (a fellow easterner). This was good. Not so good was that she also came with a fiancée (well almost fiancée) who also came from Baltimore (currently attending Princeton), who also came with a last name that was (I will be discreet here) half of "Legg Mason" (like in the multibillion dollar company located in Baltimore). Add to this, as I come to find out over the ensuing months, he comes with a \$1 million trust fund. Worst of all, versus me who has no car, he comes with a BMW .... red .... convertible! This was not good.

### **The Courtship**

Her name was Phyllis Gilbert (but I call her Sparky) and for the next eight months we were friends, good friends, but just friends. We studied together, we walked to class together, together we even did skits in French that were required as part of the class. In the middle of all this she

transferred to Hollins College in Virginia to be closer to her trust-funded boyfriend. But after 5 days at Hollins Phyllis decided that she wanted to be back at DePauw. So now the big spring dance was coming up at my fraternity. I asked Phyllis to go with me; you know we were just friends, but why not. It was May 6, 1967 and as we moved ever so slowly on the dance floor to a song I cannot remember for the life of me, she looked up into my eyes and I into hers and something happened that I cannot explain, other than to tell you that we both suddenly knew we were more than just friends ... we were in love.

We were inseparable from that night on. I graduated in June of 1968 while she still had half a school year left to finish at DePauw. I went to Dartmouth Business School to get an MBA in the fall of 1968 and we were married on June 14, 1969. One week later we piled all of our worldly belongings (three suitcases) into my Pontiac, and began the drive to Minneapolis where I had a summer job with General Mills. She left behind Baltimore and all her family, her old boyfriend and his \$1million trust fund (not to mention the BMW convertible) to start a new life with me that would lead to God only knew where.

What could possibly possess someone to do this?

## **The voice of Love**

There is only one answer to this question ... it is love. My dear wife had listened to the voice of love and not the voice of fear and I thank her each day for the wisdom (I am biased here) and courage it took to do this. You have a boyfriend from your hometown,

with \$1 million and in your ear is a voice of fear saying, no screaming, "what are you thinking!!! .... You can stay right here in Baltimore like everyone else in your family. .... This guy from Connecticut probably won't make a million dollars in his life time ... he can't even conjugate the simplest verb ... he may think he can propagate, but he sure can't conjugate .... Are you mad ... are you crazy!!!"

Somehow my dear wife put that screaming voice of fear aside and listened to an ever so soft voice that whispered, "but I love him." And somehow that small voice won out, and for that I will forever be deeply indebted to my wife of 47 years.

Thank you Sparky

April 27, 2016