**Vartabedian: A Happy 45th Anniversary Letter to My Wife**

Dear Nancy,

Well, here we are, on the threshold of another milestone. The fact we got married on your birthday Feb. 19 made it very easy to recall. Some husbands I know have no talent for remembering anniversaries. With others, it’s a gift.

I can’t think of a better one than this greeting card.

We just returned from a memorable trip to Disney World with our family and seeing the joy upon the faces of our two grandchildren left an indelible mark upon us both.

The basis for any married life is spoiling our grandkids and both of us are supreme in that category. God blessed us with a wonderful bode, good health, fine careers, a retirement free of debt. For that, we are eternally blessed.

Memory takes me back to that fateful moment in Harvard Square 45 years ago when we tied the knot during a candlelight ceremony. We both wanted something sedate, not the big, bawdy ceremony as such. The fact we were both Armenian and decided to wed inside an ethnic church brought some semblance of gratitude from our parents.

Those early years living with your Mom were the best of times, especially when the children came along. We had a built-in babysitter, a true missionary who taught our youngsters Armenian protocol. She was a counselor, nurse, and mediator whenever an argument erupted.

I liked the fact your mother usually sided with me. Many husbands are riled by their in-laws. We were enamored by ours on both sides.

Some of our best times were being there for our kids, whether it was school, sports, or scouting. Not too many can boast of two Eagle Scouts or three National Honor Society students in one family. The credit belongs to them.

And those hockey games, hitting the road at 5 o’clock on a Sunday morning, groggy, cold, and resentful. Twenty-five years of shivering inside a rink may have taken its toll with someone less appreciative. We always considered it a stepping stone to their maturity.

Watching them attend the college of their choice and getting to work at their designated careers offered us untold comfort. No doubt, the fact that each resides within proximity has never been compromised by distance, unlike some of our friends who have children light years apart.

Over the years, you’ve tolerated my love for classical music and I’ve condoned your assorted tastes for the lyrical. We’ve been opposite in many ways, like my yen for mountain climbing and racquetball, though attracted by others with our interest in theater and travel.

Such diversity only strengthened our bond and gave us our own space when we needed it. Every good marriage needs some breathing room as much as compatibility, and I believe we struck a happy medium.

I put you through a four-hour performance of Handel’s “Messiah” once and admired your patience. The day you took me on a four-hour shopping frenzy to oblivion one Christmas had me reeling with tedium.

Some of our favorite moments represented an informal dinner over wine and a good movie. We did the Mediterranean, two Caribbean cruises, an amazing trip to Europe for our 30th, that visit to Armenia in 2006 with our friends, a steady stream of day trips to Ogunquit and Newport, R.I., and an ongoing affinity to patronize the community in which we reside.

We’ve led three lives—the family above all, followed by our ethnic surroundings, and the American way. We’ve enjoyed the best of three worlds and it only seems to be getting better. What we did for our children, we get to do all over again with another generation.

Watching them play soccer and proceed through the school ranks gives us another venue in our Geritol years. Will we be there for their graduations and their weddings? Only time will tell. Who would have ever thought my mother would live to 98, still vivacious in her approach, of good mind and character, thankful for her daily visits in the nursing home?

 As I recall our wedding day, the priest held both our hands and uttered some choice words: “May you both grow old on one pillow.”

That we have done—one bed with two pillows perhaps. We’ve defied some obstacles along the way, a tenuous heart condition for one, auto accidents for another, been through the usually financial challenges, suffered through some hard economic times, and shrugged off our woes with a smile.

All said and done, we’ve burned the candle at both ends and shined in our very own incandescence. To the days ahead. May each one continue to be brighter than the next.

With all my love,
Tom