

Janie

A little later we'll be playing a song, "For Emily, Wherever I May Find You," by Simon and Garfunkel. Listen to it—by analogy it tells the story of the time on a very snowy night when we both realized that we loved each other as more than friends, and it became "Our Song."

I'm not going to tell the story of our lives here—I'd never get through it in one piece anyway, but I want to say some things about our relationship over 57 years. We had many highs and lows as most couples do. Some of them were enjoyed or suffered together, where the joy was enhanced by experiencing it together, or the pain was bearable because of the comfort we could give each other. Some of the most painful times were because of things we did to each other.

When I used to perform wedding ceremonies, I included in the vows (which Janie helped to craft) a question to each party: "Do you promise that during the difficult times in your marriage, you will give the other and yourself time to rediscover your love for each other and the reasons you are joining together today?" The ability to do that was why we were able to survive so many years with each other. Sometimes over the years it took help from counselors, or encouragement from health care professionals, but we managed to remember that we loved each other and that there was no one we would rather be with.

I don't like the term "soul mates" for people at the beginning of their relationship. I think it's the opposite—we become soul mates by sharing our values, by living through many shared experiences, by accepting our differences, and by learning from each other. We were

very different personalities who balanced each other and learned how to live from each other. In spite of how different we were, I think Janie and I earned the right to call each other soul mates.

Just two more reflections. One of the best things that Janie did for me was teach me very early in our relationship to say, “I love you.” Imagine that! I came from a close and loving family, but we didn’t go around saying “I love you” all the time. Janie knew it was important—maybe more so now than ever. Who knows whether we will walk out the door or hang up the phone and be met with a sudden tragedy? She taught me that I would rather have my last words to someone be “I love you” than “I’ll pick up some milk on the way home.”

The other lesson was the importance of being kind. One day, possibly during a time of stress and tension, she said to me that we should always try to be kind to each other no matter how we were feeling at the time. If we were kind, we would get through the moment and find ways to deescalate and give each other grace. It made sense. Not long after that, the Penzeys spice company came out with a gift box with a big heart on it encircling the word “Kind.” I had to surprise her with that for Christmas or her birthday! Inside the box were Kind pins like the ones you received when you came in. We’ve worn them on our jackets ever since to remind us to be kind, and we’ve had plenty of curious questions about them. I think I’ve always tried to be kind, but being able to be kind toward someone you are having trouble with is key. I encourage you to keep your pin, to think about the power kindness has, and if you feel comfortable, to wear it as a tribute to Janie.