

# The Power of Love

*My inspiration to write "The Power of Love" came after reading an article [posted on Facebook](https://www.inc.com/melanie-curtin/want-a-life-of-fulfillment-a-75-year-harvard-study-says-to-prioritize-this-one-t.html) by a friend, written by Melanie Curtin entitled: "75-Year Harvard Study Found the 1 Secret to Leading a Fulfilling Life." <https://www.inc.com/melanie-curtin/want-a-life-of-fulfillment-a-75-year-harvard-study-says-to-prioritize-this-one-t.html>. The thesis of the article resonated so deeply, evoking tears blinding my vision while reading, as it directed my thoughts to individuals that exemplified what it took Harvard 75 years to confirm. These two persons were so loving and emptied of themselves selflessly into each other's lives. With the evolution of time we bore witness of their ever growing love forging deeper ties into the bedrock of their souls as the joys and pains, disappointments, highs and lows enveloped their existence.*

Alfred and Mary, my parents, like all couples had their valleys and their mountain top experiences. The natural tug and pull of the rapidly moving world around them, advancing careers, four active growing children, demands of church leadership roles and sometime limited finances created all the tensions we witness from day to day within families. Yet something held them together like white on rice, for where Mary was always there also was Alfred.

What was the key factor that was the glue in their relationship? Love. Through their living, a lesson to learn is that there is power in love and commitment. It was not the love as idealized in the play "Romeo and Juliet", where the two lovers fatally died young together. Rather it was the unconditional love of two persons courageously forging through the various stages of living. Together they journeyed from the promise of young adulthood, into the crisis of middle age, and slowly descending the sliding slope of old age. Then lastly and with boldness, staring death eyeball to eyeball.

Alfred and Mary having lived together more than half a century, with sixty-six years of experiences together, waded through myriad of challenges and yet still finding, no, always choosing to love each other. Their love remained steadfast, though not finding perfection, but learning to see and love an imperfect person perfectly.

Their nuances of love that are indelible in our minds is the kind of things they said to each other:

"Love conquers all,"

"Through the good times and the bad times, I'll be there,"

"I'm in this with you, my honey, you're so sweet"

"My queen, queen Mary,"

“Dear,”  
“Darling,”  
“Sweetie–pie,”  
“I’m waiting for Alfred,”  
“You are the king of my heart,”  
“My dashing husband,”  
“You are sweeter than sugar,”  
“Sugar dumpling,”  
and many more.

Then the things they did for each other were amazing! They were always complimenting each other, giving daily hugs and kisses, and celebrating the small things. There was even excitement about a favorite dish cooked or Mom’s favorite chocolate bar pulled out of Daddy’s coat pocket upon returning home, or sitting beside each other in the family room caressing each other. Their cooking together, the gentle rubs, and the manicures or pedicures, are just examples of a very long list of things they did together and for each other. These remind me of something they both reiterated, “It is the little things that mean the most!”

**Their relationship values included a generous mixture of humor, laughter, gentleness, kindness and caring for each other’s needs. Also, their equal voice on issues, practicing concession rather than compromise when necessary, and their strong belief of partnership in support of each other’s life’s purpose. How can I leave out their deep respect for each other.**

As the sun began to set on their lives, we often acknowledged the depth of the bond between our parents and wandered what the inevitable ending would bring forth. When Mommy became ill and told us she was tired, had done her best, all she could in her lifetime, and was not willing to fight anymore, Daddy refused to accept her request.

He did everything he could to get her well again. He often said to us, “I am not ready to lose your mother!” or to her, “Honey you can’t leave me yet!” **On a Saturday morning during the doctor’s home visit she inquired what the family desired if Mom expired.** In meeting to discuss that subject later that day, our father, with brokenness of heart and buckets of tears said, “If your mother go, prepare for to!”

Several days later as the caregiver and I looked after Mom, I started humming the tune, "I'm gonna lay down my burden." Mom opened her eyes and started singing with soft weakened voice the words of the song. She said very little after that, as she left us with a clear message of her heart's desire. Mommy breathed her last breath, as Barry, her only son ministered by her bedside on January 7, 2015

Later during the summer months I had a heart-to-heart conversation with my father about him grieving the loss of his dear "better half", as he would usually say, and listened keenly as he openly expressed his deep pains in losing his soul mate. Amidst tears he shared that he thought he would go right after Mommy, but he said, "It looks like I'm still holding." On Dad's birthday, November 15th, we had an especially long jovial conversation.

Dad and I always had hilarious chats that tickled my soul as we mocked the English accent, as King Alfred and Princess Ann in dialogue. Yet at the end, with soberness he said: "I do not want to be here when Christmas comes. . . My first birthday in sixty-six years without your mother is too hard, just too hard." I encouraged him and we laughed again, with no inclination that it would be my last talk with my father. Several days later, Daddy succumbed to a massive hemorrhagic stroke, with his children around his bedside. Within nine months we lost two of the most precious human beings to grace our lives, Mommy and Daddy!

I miss Mommy and Daddy so, so much. It was no coincidence that I was reminded by this Harvard study of the power of love in relationships, as these past weeks resulted in deep contemplation of my life. My heart is full of love, peace, joy and gratitude as I reflected through the years of their loving example set before me and cherish dearly what I experienced with them as my parents and sort to emulate in my own love relationship of 31 years.

Come grow old with me the best is yet to be, is mistaken for a myth. But it has profound truth for those who chose and nurture love in their lifetime. What a profound testimony to have seen the blossoming of two powerful creators coming together and enhancing the experiences of one another for so many years. The power of love is the most valuable lesson I learned by observing their

lives as they co-created a relationship of quality and substance. Oh, such Love! As a young person growing up, I desired nothing less in a relationship. While married, I experienced nothing less in my relationship. At this juncture in my journey, once again, I would want to have nothing less.

Daddy and Mommy enjoyed much laughter and cried many times together yet without a doubt their happiness and fulfillment throughout their lifetime was the result of their love and commitment.

It certainly is true: “The greatest of them all is....LOVE.”