

A Daisy a Day
formerly: I'll Give You a Daisy a Day, Dear

*And what's romance? Usually, a nice little tale where you have everything as you like it,
where rain never wets your jacket and gnats never bite your nose, and it's always
daisy-time.*

~D.H. Lawrence

“I wanted someone who knew agriculture, who was athletic, and who was musical,” my husband confided several years after we were married. An image of a farmer choosing a heifer at a sale flicked through my mind, but I let it go. Being raised on a farm and a product of practicality, it seemed reasonable to know what one wanted. And through the years, we discovered that we both wanted the same thing.

1979: We first noticed each other on Ag Hill at Penn State. I would learn that he had been raised on a large dairy farm. He would learn that I had been raised on a farm, played field hockey, took the stairs instead of the elevator, and had piano books stacked in my dorm room. Forget that my family's farm was a hobby farm, that I had already had knee surgery, and that the piano books were dusty—he'd found his woman. We discovered a piano just inside the dorm's back entrance. I proceeded to hammer out some good, old sing-along songs. We sang “A Daisy a Day” together, and I smiled when he reached around my shoulders to turn each page instead of simply leaning forward. My piano playing was adequate but, oh, his voice. I fell in love with his voice first, as he sang, “I'll give you a daisy a day, dear.”

1981: While driving across the New Mexico desert, we heard the news on the radio. Pope John Paul II had been shot. I looked at my husband of one month to share the shock, but he remained stoic, his eyes on the road. I wondered briefly about this part of him, but then I noticed his hands gripping the steering wheel as the wind buffeted our truck, and I realized he wasn't being cold—he was just focused on our safety. I never again questioned his character or devotion.

1990: Our family of four settled on a twenty-six-acre farm, which soon became the best playground kids could ever want. Through our sons' middle- and high-school years, sledding turned into saucering off the barn's side roof, which led to big air ski competitions. It was my husband who waited at the bottom of the ski slope and ushered one of our sons into the lodge after he broke his nose. Even when he worked long hours in the spring, my husband supported our sons' pursuits, and the three of us could count on his calm demeanor—except on rare occasions.

2000: “Do you know what Matthew 5:30 says?” My husband was in one of his rare bad moods. He was livid, actually. After a dusty sixteen-hour day, he was sitting at the kitchen table with an open Bible in front of him.

I had walked into this scene after a hectic evening of running our sons here and there. I glanced at the note on the table that noted the time a friend would pick up one of our son's for choral practice—Matthew 5:30. Valiantly fighting back hilarity but losing, I tried to explain the purpose of the note and make clear that the note hadn't been for him.

But exhaustion had apparently shut down part of his hearing because he continued, “Matthew 5:30 says that if your right hand offends you, you should cut it off. I just spent the last hour trying to figure out what I did wrong!”

He must have forgiven me for laughing so hard because he accepted my peace offering of a hearty bowl of homemade chicken corn soup—with rivels—a real sign of true love.

2015: Cancer. My husband's diagnosis of kidney cancer focused us on what mattered. One evening, I came into the kitchen to find a CD on our table with a note that said, "Let's dance." We did. For three minutes each evening, in reprieve, we breathed deeply, held each other close, and moved to the sound of a love song. He smelled of fresh outside air, hay, and home. Every evening, we slow danced to a different song—for about a week, then once a week, then when we'd remember and make the effort. As his health improved, we began again to count new blessings, make new memories, and dance—occasionally—to new songs.

I am thankful that our love has never required perfect gifts, words, or actions. For thirty-six years, we have simply nourished our shared desire to connect, and to give each other a daisy a day.

~Gail E. Strock