

34th Storyworth: Tell Me About An Adventure You've Been On?

Given that my attitude is that life itself is an adventure, this is a very wide open request. But since most of my prior life has already been explored elsewhere, I will use this opportunity to address the adventure I am currently sharing with Dawn Clark, about which I have written only a modest amount so far.

As an aside, my prior life with Lynne should not be used for comparison in ANY way. That was then and this is now. I will never write ill of my relationship with Lynne, not least because we do now, and always will, share parentage of a daughter, and I want nothing to interfere with that relationship. Our marital relationship is over, and has been for many years now, and it probably was before I even realized it. But such is life, and I choose to continue.

Dawn and I first met while I was at a pretty low point, not that you dear readers should interpret that to have impacted my relationship with her beyond that comment. My marriage had failed, and that resulted in my being forced into bankruptcy, which I am still dealing with because it impacted so much of my life. I lost my home, my career, much of my self-image, and many of our mutual friends, and I was forced by circumstances to relocate to a different county. Following three years of relative stability there, I discovered my landlord was a thief and a con man, and the legal system in Oswego County was pathetic at best, because it empowered him to continue his evil ways unabated. Merely ONE example of that was the Fulton judge's determination that, despite the rules of the ADA, I would have to purchase \$600 worth of hearing aids before he would even LISTEN to my case against Milt the thief, and then he tossed the case because he thought I was trying to exceed the limits of small claims court. And that was only one of at least three different cases which demonstrated that expecting justice was the LAST thing one could hope for in that county.

So I had been forced to relocate to an even more difficult situation because Milt got me evicted merely by asserting we had a VERBAL agreement (to which I would NEVER have agreed because I have a BRAIN ;-)) which doubled our WRITTEN cost basis, but which the judge could simply ignore because he and his Ex refused to physically sign that agreement which involved their shared property where their home had burned down years earlier leaving it useless, which I know in almost ANY other jurisdiction would still make it a legal agreement based on the supporting emails stream I had, specifically from THEM. Alas to no avail.

Add to that the fact that, except for one who remains to this day a friend, although not a romantic associate, EVERY female I met seeking a relationship subsequent to Lynne had proved to have no integrity whatsoever. So you dear readers could be forgiven for thinking I might have been "holding my wallet" when I received the contact from Dawn in response to my profile on POF (Plenty Of Fish ;-)) which had been one of the sites I tried, most of which ALSO demonstrated no integrity, either.

Dawn was, at the time, staying with her sister in Florida, but would be returning to her home in CNY in about a month. So we started a long distance conversation, on the basis of "nothing ventured, nothing gained". I told Dawn I had only two hard rules; the woman MUST have integrity to equal mine, and the "commute" must not exceed 40 miles, an almost arbitrary limit based on time. When Dawn checked, based on internet maps and lack of detailed address specifics, it looked like 37 miles. When I actually drove it, it was 42. But...

Not being an idiot about such a detail, I chose to follow through. However, I was wary, because miles means added costs for time and gas. Dawn had lost her husband to cancer about two years earlier, and while she was four years my senior, was still a vibrant personality with a zest for life. The fact that she was also tired of CNY winters helped, probably more than I even realized, in making me interested. And I was lonely ;-)

The first day we physically met was the first day she arrived back from Florida. Because it would be late in the day, I asked if she had a spare bedroom I could stay because the roads would be unfamiliar to me and I would prefer not to be heading out in the dark. So, if she wanted more than the most brief of introductions, that would require delaying another day, which she did not want to wait. So we agreed I would get to her house by mid afternoon (she was talking from the road before she actually arrived ;-)) as she and her sister drove north, on April 24, 2019. I subsequently learned that Diane actually lived a few miles further north from my motorhome. Dawn and I had hit it off pretty well online. I won't divulge intimate details, but suffice it to say that neither of us was fearful it might progress rapidly – neither of us are teenagers, either, so why wait?

We turned out to have much in common, with the important differences being important only if one lets them become so. I explained to her beforehand that remarriage was not a good financial choice because it carries a lot of economic penalties for pensions, insurance and survivor benefits, which is a shameful reality for seniors. Whoever makes those rules needs to ask whether they believe we seniors are that stupid. Dawn and I are NOT. But we do have differences in our situations; Dawn owns a house, while I was living from my motorhome I used for my business travel, because it was sheltered in bankruptcy as a home. I won't bother to detail all the issues, but some people seem to think I am "living off" Dawn. I am living WITH her, while my motorhome is still capable of being my home. I truly believe NEITHER of us wants me to go back to that, however.

One upshot of that occurred when we went to Florida ourselves the first winter, in December 2019. We stayed with her sister Diane, as she had done the prior winter, but Dawn wanted a place of her own. She found it and bought it, and we moved in late January, with the agreement that she had covered the upfront capital cost, so I would cover the monthly lot rental, internet, electric, etc, and we'd share other expenses as needed. Since we got together, we have agreed that we would each do as we were capable, rather than trying to balance things strictly on the basis of money, per se, which has rarely worked for ANY couple. I brought and setup our networks at both locations so they have the same logins, and can therefore move between them without issues. That includes printers (just ask Dawn how her Apple iPad does that and you'll see deer in the headlights ;-)) and streaming TV services, which Dawn has learned, albeit grudgingly, need not pay for the Spectrum CEO's Aruba weekends, and she's learned to like the TV in the bedrooms, however bigger than expected they are ;-)

And then Covid hit, and threw all planning into a cocked hat. I had never contemplated much group travel, which is good in retrospect, because it is severely curtailed until this stuff is done. But we agreed to formalize joint ownership of the Florida property last winter with the title change, and we finally got to the PA show she wanted only on our way back up last winter, while the Seniors Tour will finally go there this fall. Baby steps. And baby steps are how we work through our relationship, just like most couples. We might not be married in a legal sense, but I bought Dawn a ring set last winter and gave them to her for our second "anniversary", so she could at least LOOK the part. I also do repairs and diagnostics when things don't work right ;-)

And I am now doing things like Bingo and, when Covid will allow it again, Bunko, and we took a Senior Tour to Mystic CT, where Jess and Ainsley met us for a fun time at the Acquarium last month. And we plan to return to Florida in November again for our usual five month stay. And while those who know me think Dawn has performed some miracle getting me to her church, it is only because I love her, and that is important to HER. So I try to put to use whatever talents I can, which includes the video recording of the Sunday Service there, and posting it to Facebook and YouTube. And helping her sister to pick out a replacement car, which is like the Forester I similarly advised Dawn to get to replace HER Toyota in May. As I suggested, I do what I can. And the adventure continues ;-)

Joe Holzer 8/19/2021