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English III

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## The long, loving path

### **Dedication**

To the youth curious about love

### **Acknowledgments**

I would like to express my gratitude to Freestyle Academy for allowing us the opportunity to create projects that we are so passionate about. I would also like to acknowledge Jim and Rose Bradley, and Jeff and Isabelle Menchor for their willingness and time to share their wisdom and stories with me.

### **Preface**

This book is a love story. It chronicles the lives of two couples who have been together for decades due to their dedication to love and to each other. It takes the reader through the journey of Rose and Jim Bradley and Jeff and Isabelle Menchor, both of whom have been married for 50+ years. These couples have weathered the storms of life and remain deeply committed to each other. Their stories are a testament to the resilience and strength of the human spirit. The book highlights the power and wisdom in the lives of persistence and devotion and

emphasizes the importance of hearing stories from happy senior couples who have secure relationships and binding love. In a world of ageism and negative attitudes about aging, these stories become even more critical to hear.

Love is a universal feeling that touches every human heart. It is the foundation of our relationships and the source of our deepest joys and sorrows. Writing this book has been a labor of love. As I wrote about the development of the lives of these couples, I was struck by the challenges they had faced and the sacrifices they had made to keep their relationships strong. At the same time, I was inspired by their resilience, their humor, and their unwavering dedication to each other. Their stories remind us that love is not just a feeling but a choice that we make every day.

I hope that this book will inspire readers the same way it did to me to appreciate the power of love in their own lives. By sharing the stories of these remarkable couples, I hope to counter the negative attitudes about aging and the fear of falling in love that is all too prevalent in our society today. Ultimately, I believe that these stories offer a message of hope and a reminder that true love can endure even in the face of life's greatest challenges.

## **Introduction**

The thought of spending our seventh decade of life with the person we love in the comforts of your home brings a sense of contentment and peace. It becomes an idyllic goal for many, especially dreamt of by the younger generation. Yet, those who are successfully living this dream rarely have a platform for sharing their stories. And these days, we are in such need of those stories. The romantic dream is in conflict with many current negative attitudes about aging. Ageism affects hireability, exclusive beauty standards, and social opportunities. As a result, younger people can be fearful of aging and shy away from seeing the beauty in growing old. But

a full life with compounding memories, wisdom, experiences, and relationships can be profoundly fulfilling, especially when enjoyed with someone special. In this age of social media entertainment bites and instant gratification, people rarely take the time or interest to hear the stories of happy senior couples who have secure relationships and binding love. Learning about love from the elderly can provide young people with such a unique perspective on relationships that cannot be found in textbooks or online. By breaking down the barriers that exist between generations, the youth can gain a greater appreciation for the value of experience and wisdom that the elderly possess. As Deborah Carr suggests in her article “Happy Marriage, Happy Life? Marital Quality and Subjective Well Being Later in Life”, “by embracing the knowledge and insight of the elderly, young people can develop a greater sense of empathy and understanding, which are essential for building healthy and meaningful relationships.” There is a certain tragedy in missing out on the power and wisdom in these lives of persistence and devotion. In order to accept, look forward to, and love aging with someone, it's essential to hear how paths cross against all odds, to learn the importance of persistence, and to understand the ways in which love evolves.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Allure: Paths Cross**

Rose and Jim Bradley are 79 and 83 years old and have been married for 53 years. Currently, they are happily living in Mountain View, California, but their journey has dotted the map. Rose was born and raised in Hawaii, while Jim grew up in Kalispell, Northern Montana. So how did this couple meet, given that they grew up in different parts of the world? It all started when Rose was invited by her aunt, who lived in San Francisco, to come visit and take some job interviews. She got called back and accepted by the first company that interviewed her, which

happened to be where Jim was working in Redwood City. Jim was a supervisor and worked in the manufacturing area, specifically metal finishing. Rose was a keypunch operator. Rose and Jim were some of the only single people in the work area of the company, so their friends would always encourage them to meet. Initially, Jim was interested in Rose, but when Rose first saw Jim, she thought “He's cute, but way too tall” and wasn't interested, but Jim was persistent and determined to win her over.

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Jeff and Isabelle Menchor have been married for 53 years and were coy about their ages, but they are both over 70. As young adults, they both lived in apartment complexes near each other in San Mateo, California. Isabelle lived with her parents, and Jeff moved there for work. She would regularly go to the pool in Jeff's complex. He would see her often and, as he claims, he soon asked Isabelle's dad for her phone number, although Isabelle remembers the roles being reversed.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Perseverance: Courting and Pursuing**

For both couples, it took a while for their relationships to develop. The men were persistent and used humor and wit to try to gain the attention of their potential partners. The women didn't fall head-over-heels and tried to be open about how they felt.

Rose and Jim's courting process took 5 years, during which Jim was clearly pursuing Rose, while she wasn't as interested and took time to adjust. In his attempts to charm her, he gave her many creative gifts, including a gold brick that he engraved his phone number in. Later, he gave her a mini mail transmitting tube brooch (which apparently was very popular at the time

and worth a lot), and a silver-plated copper cork tube with a note inside that invited her over to shine shoes together as their first hangout. He also sawed a rock in half, hollowed it out, and then put a blue star sapphire pendant inside.

In addition to gifts, Jim also tried to impress Rose with quirky physical prowess by wiggling his ears every time he saw her. Rose was not as impressed as Jim had hoped, but it did get her attention. Finally, one day Rose and Jim were together at a company picnic. Jim simply could not resist Rose's ukulele playing and singing, but Rose remained tentative. Eventually, Rose gave in, saying "I was not interested in any kind of relationship. I just wanted to be friends. But he kept trying... kept saying, 'Let's get married.' And I thought, 'Wait, hold out.' And so we went out a few times, but then I just thought, 'No, I can't leave this guy alone. He really, really wants to get married.'"

Rose eventually got the opportunity to become a flight attendant with United Airlines, so she went back to Chicago for training. She had told Jim that if she ever is back in San Francisco, then she would visit him, but she's going to be flying around the world. She told the story of when she realized she loved Jim. She was on a layover in New York, when "None of the flight attendants wanted to go walking around in the city. They were tired and they were going to stay in the room. I wanted to go walk around and as I was walking around, I just got diverted into this card shop, and I go all the way to the back of the shop and there I just pick up this card and it says, It's you, it's you, it's you. I opened it, it says, I'm in love with you. I close it and I went, I'm in love with Jim Bradley. Oh, my gosh. I'm in love with Jim Bradley. It hit me like a ton of bricks. So I could hardly wait to get home. So we worked a trip out home. I get home and I only have this one phone number of his. That's his work number, and it's on a Saturday. And I decided, Oh, well, I'll call it. Jim tells me later he doesn't usually go in to work on Saturdays or

Sundays, but he was there working. He was there with his feet up on the desk wondering ‘Why am I here? Shouldn't I go home?’ When the phone rings. I said, Jim Bradley. And he says, Yes? I said, I'm in love with you and I want to get married.” So, Jim finally won her affection with such unlikely coincidences. They finally went to Mexico, Japan and much more together, played tennis, walked, talked for hours on end, and did so many fun activities together. They got married about a month later.

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After approaching Isabelle’s dad and asking him for Isabelle’s phone number, they eventually had their first date at a fancy restaurant where they “had a chateaubriand for two,” said Jeff. He further recalls, “I remember when they came out, a big wooden serving thing, and all around that were mountains of mashed potatoes, little mountains all around the piece of steak.” After that, they would hang out on weekends, taking it slow. He’d buy her quirky gifts and seemed to be trying to build the friendship. Isabelle said, “He always wanted coffee, and I didn't have coffee. That was one of the first gifts he gave me, you know. He gave me a coffee maker and ketchup, I didn't have any ketchup. So he bought me ketchup and a coffee maker.” It seems his strategy was to find ways to share something to do, through drinks and food when he came to visit.

Later on down the road, after many dates, dinners, and laughs, Isabelle said “ I had a cousin in New York who had a jewelry store, so I told him what kind of a ring I wanted. And his parents went, got it from my cousin, and while they were there, they got me a gold bangle bracelet.” His parents bought this for them as an engagement gift, when the whole town

considered them engaged before they even decided! This was the push for them to make it official, so while she was terribly sick with allergies, Jeff recalls ‘She was laying down on the couch with her head on my lap and a cold cloth on her head. And I looked down at her and I said, ‘So when should we tell every body?’ And she said, ‘Whenever you want to.’ And I said ‘is that a yes? And she said, ‘Yes!’ And that's how we got engaged.”

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Devotion: Married love**

Rose and Jim spoke a lot about the sparks and novelty of courtship, and then things deepened. Jim commented that marriage is not necessarily about passion but about the reality of two people needing to understand each other. In his words, “I really believe that young people today go with passion, and they let passion lead them. Passion diminishes. And then it goes into hard reality ... So I think you've got to go in slowly ... you’ve got to know each other and be patient and don't try to change someone.” Rose’s deliberation in taking time to figure out if Jim was right for her tie into Jim’s emphasis on taking things slowly. The sentiment is also reinforced in an article called “Young Love Can Be A Confusing Emotion” which states, “Young love often blinds teenagers to the real situation. This can make love seem even more confusing.” In other words, according to Jim and Rose, if young people give each other time to determine whether they are right for each other, then the relationship is likely to be more resilient.

Jim also commented on the “tricky business” of young love and offered some advice to young people:

“...in the beginning, you're all lovey-dovey and being in love is a form of insanity. You have to understand that your rational mind goes away when you are infatuated with somebody, you do not recognize their faults and it's just it's really a strange thing ...And as time goes on, that infatuation diminishes and it becomes different...it turns into more respect and consideration.”

This ties into the article, “Navigating the 5 Stages of a Relationship to Find Love” by Ladan Nikravan Hayes, when she claims that there are five stages in a relationship, starting with stage one- Attraction, or the honeymoon phase when “Everything is exciting, new, and you want to be around each other as much as possible. In fact, it’s so euphoric, you may not be seeing things clearly.” as Jeff explained aswell. Then, Hayes states that ending in stage five- Commitment, is when “couples have a strong understanding of each other’s values and goals for the future. [...] You’ll roll with the punches and make adjustments as you grow — if you’re committed, you have decided to overcome life’s transitions together.” This is what Jeff and Isabelle are, as he explains, gladly at right now.

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Isabelle and Jeff’s profound insights into their marriage provide valuable knowledge about what it takes to create a successful, long-term relationship. Their experiences highlight the importance of being each other’s support system, and being there for one another in times of need. Their emphasis on being each other’s "rock" highlights the significant role that emotional



support and encouragement play in a marriage. Through their commitment to each other, they have built a foundation of trust and loyalty that has allowed them to rely on one another in times of physical and emotional hardship. This kind of mutual support and caring fosters a sense of safety and security that is essential to building a lasting bond.

During Covid, Isabelle and Jeff happily relied on each other to meet all their needs, there were no other options for companionship and physical support. However, now that their community is opening up again, Isabelle and Jeff are reverting to their more regular routines of independent interests independently. Jeff loves to go bird-watching all day, while Isabelle plays cards with her friends, goes line dancing, or volunteers, but at the end of the day, they always come back together. They particularly enjoy sharing their stories at the end of the day. Their marriage has remained strong because they have independent hobbies, but know that the other is always there in support.

“Young Love Can Be A Confusing Emotion” by BetterHelp which noted, “Teen dating and relationships are confusing for young people because they are experiencing feelings of romantic love and attraction for the first time.” Both Jeff and the article reinforce the idea that young love can give a false sense of a close and meaningful relationship that will last a long time.

## **Conclusion**

The love stories of senior couples offer valuable insights and lessons for young people when it comes to relationships. The accounts of Rose and Jim, and Isabelle and Jeff are compelling tales of how two people can find love in different circumstances, and how perseverance plays a vital role in the formation of a long-lasting bond. Even when faced with initial rejection or reluctance, Jim and Jeff's unwavering commitment to winning over their partners proved to be pivotal in their relationships. As Rose and Isabelle took their time to realize that they had found their perfect match, it highlights the importance of patience and not rushing into a relationship.

In the case of Rose and Jim, it is incredible to think that their paths crossed in California, despite growing up in different states. Rose was initially uninterested in Jim's advances, but he remained persistent and eventually won her over. Their story highlights the importance of not giving up on love, even when it seems unlikely or challenging. Similarly, Isabelle and Jeff's story demonstrates the power of perseverance in relationships. Growing up just blocks away from each other, they shared a common faith, but it took several years for them to realize that they were meant to be together. Despite initial reluctance on both sides, Jeff persisted, showing Isabelle that he was serious about building a future together.

For both couples, it took time and effort to build a lasting relationship, but the rewards have been immeasurable. Even after 50 years of being together, Isabelle and Jeff still find joy in each other's company, and Rose and Jim have built a life filled with love and laughter. Their stories show that love can evolve in many different ways, but certain elements such as persistence, humor, communication, honesty, and openness to learning and growing with each other, are keys to a long-lasting relationship.

In essence, the love stories of senior couples are a testament to the fact that love is an

evolving process, and each relationship has its unique journey. However, by learning from the experiences of these couples, young people can gain valuable insights and wisdom that will help them navigate the complexities of relationships and build long-lasting connections with their partners.

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### **Author Bio**

Hi! My name is Maya and Im a junior at Freestyle Academy and Los Altos High School. I was born with an innate sense of curiosity that has always driven me to explore the world around me.

Despite being quite shy and reserved, my insatiable desire to create has led me to develop a rich inner world of creativity and imagination. Throughout my life, I have pursued a wide range of interests, from reading and writing to music and art. My inquisitive nature has made me a problem-solver, and I enjoy nothing more than delving deep into a subject to uncover its secrets. Despite my quiet demeanor, I am always eager to share my insights with others and learn new things.