

A Tribute to Love

This is a love story. It starts well before January 1989, the month and year of my father's stroke. This steadfast love started in 1966 and continues today with an even deeper bond. In January 1989, an aneurysm burst in my father's brain. He was barely 53 years old. He'd been a writer, and the hemorrhage bled into the part of his brain that controls speech, reading and writing. He was instantly paralyzed on his right side.

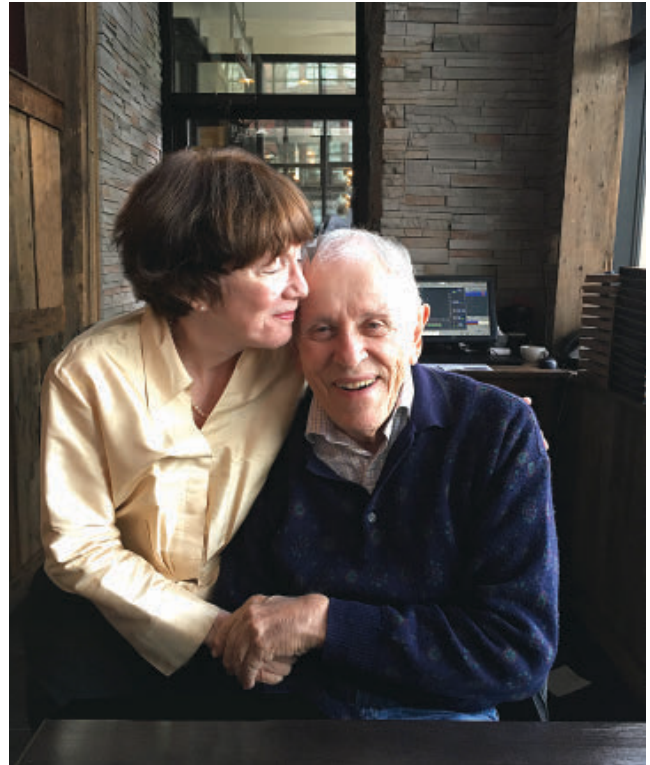
My mother, who was a periodontist, knew what was happening and called 911 immediately. I flew home from Europe, where I was working as a ballet dancer, to join my mother and uncle at my father's side. What followed was a 17-hour operation, then 11 weeks in the hospital for recovery and the first physical therapy. The neuroradiologist called my father's survival a miracle. The hospital staff told me they had rarely seen a more loving family. And so began the long journey for my parents. It was often arduous and filled with heartache, but they countered with their courage, resilience, hope and a love that conquered the darkness.

I write this tribute to my parents at this time, because it is 30 years since my father's stroke. We were told we would be lucky to expect five extra years, and here we are at 30! Each extra year of his life is a miracle, and my mother, his sole caregiver, has so much to do with this fact. He made great strides, re-earned his driver's license, learned how to communicate quite well and became independent. He continues to walk today, mostly unaided, and his thinking is still sharp.

Although I have lived far from home all these years, every time I visit, I recognize in them a loyalty and love that is awe-inspiring.

At the time of my father's stroke, my mother had just started her new periodontal practice. She juggled her new business, all her patients who loved her and my father's delicate health. When my mother retired, they traveled and enjoyed a fulfilling life. They edited my father's novel and short stories, eventually getting a short story called "The Man in Gray" published.

I know they live for each other. My mother's vigilant care has increased over the years. And my father's love and admiration for her has grown. They wake up each morning ready for the day and their first cup of coffee.



30 years of love: Carla & Jack Pickett

The desire to live each day optimistically is strong in both of them.

Their love story reminds us that triumphs are possible with determination, willpower, dreams and the bond of love. I cannot know what my parents have been through during these decades, except that my father would not be here today but for my mother's care and love. He knows this. She knows this. Their determination to not only survive but also thrive serves as an example of triumphs over mighty hardships. They inspire me daily. I am honored to know them and to have this touchstone of true love and true grit. I hope their lives serve as motivation for people facing similar difficulties.

Happy 30th anniversary, Mom and Dad. **SC**

HELEN PICKETT | Family Member
Philadelphia

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