

**OUR LOVE STORY**  
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I have told the story of how Cyndi and I came together hundreds of times — to family members and to anyone else who would listen. And for decades I have been promising to write it all down. Well, it's time now to do that, so here goes.

**[1] IN THE BEGINNING**

I returned from my mission in Ireland in June 1966. I immediately resumed my education at Cal-State Los Angeles and attended the LDS Institute there.

The institute — actually five institutes of five different colleges — planned an LDS Student Association conference at Cedar Crest. And so, on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1966, a Friday, I was on a chartered bus with my institute friends heading towards the mountains and Cedar Crest.

Among my circle of friends were Brick Friedland and Terri Flores. I brought my guitar, and our group sang songs at the back of the bus. I sat in the middle of the back seat, Terri was on my left, and Brick sat just in front of her. From the middle of the back seat I could see straight up the aisle to the front of the bus, and anyone up there could see me.

As the bus proceeded east across the San Gabriel Valley, it stopped at each of the schools to pick up more kids. The last school was Citrus College in Azusa, and, as at each of the previous schools, those kids dutifully lined up to get on the bus.

My eyes explored the line up and quickly picked out the prettiest girl in the line, the blonde wearing a bubble hairdo with a turned up “horn” (as she called it) on the left side of her head. I immediately thought, now that's the girl I want to meet on this trip. It was love at first sight, and she hadn't even gotten on the bus.

As we sang and I played, I wondered how in the world could I get that pretty girl's attention. I needn't have worried. From her seat in the front row, she leaned into the aisle, looked back at me (or so I thought, but I learned later was not the case), stood, and walked back to our group, sat down, and joined in our singing. Her name was Cynthia Ball, or just Cyndi.

*It's the guitar*, I thought. *Girls love guitar players*. It turned out, as I learned years later, it was not the guitar and it was not me. It was my buddy Brick. Cyndi knew him and was trying to cozy up to him. Turned out, she knew nearly everyone at my school except me. I didn't know that at the time, and that was a good thing because my stoked ego gave me confidence to talk to her should there be an opportunity.

The bus finally arrived at Cedar Crest and we disembarked. The boys went one way and the girls another, and we all got settled into our bed arrangements. Then dinner. Then, what was left of Friday was ours to spend as we wished.

I toted my guitar around the grounds, and soon a group of kids huddled around me for the singing, Cyndi joined the group and we talked, though I don't recall what we talked about. That was our second contact, a good glad-to-meet-you situation.

Finally, bedtime arrived, and that was the end of Friday.

Saturday began with breakfast, and followed through with classes and speakers, though I don't remember any of it. Except, what I do remember, and remember well, was that evening.

Each of the five schools was tasked to put on a play of some sort. While we were fretting about that, Cyndi came over and asked me a favor. Her group had some idea for a play but felt that they needed one more male, and she wondered if I'd fill that role. I said of course and counted myself lucky. But then she got word that they didn't need me after all so that didn't happen. But that was our third contact.

Looking back on it, I think that I was not very assertive. I could have been, and I should have tried harder to really meet her, to get her phone number and arrange something. As it was, I was squandering opportunities and I knew it. I just didn't know what to do about it. But as luck would have it, divine providence overrode my reticence and gave me an opportunity that even I could not squander. I was about to learn that fate is a determined matchmaker.

Sunday morning arrived and great things happened, better than anything I could have arranged or even hoped for.

*Background:* My good friend Doug Brown was going on a mission, and his missionary farewell was that Sunday afternoon in South Pasadena. He had asked me to speak at his farewell, so it was urgent that I get away from Cedar Crest immediately after breakfast. So, waiting for the chartered bus was out of the question.

To get myself off the hill early, I had pre-arranged a ride with another friend, Steve Buck. Steve also had to leave early on Sunday, so he declined the bus and drove up in his own car. I would be leaving with him and another buddy of ours, Steve Earl.

I was standing in the breakfast line when the miracle happened.

Cyndi came to me and explained that she too needed to leave Cedar Crest early. She had heard that I had an arranged ride and wondered if she could hitch a ride with me. Well, of course she could. Where did she need to go? To South Pasadena, to a missionary farewell of a friend. This was beyond coincidence. What friend, I asked. Doug Brown, she said. I struck gold.

Steve's car was an El Camino. It had a one seat cab with an open truck bed in back. Steve and Steve were in the front so Cyndi and I were together in the back. How fortunate. But the mountain road was twisty and she got motion sick and threw up over the tailgate onto the road.

I understood immediately that she would have to ride up front, so I knocked on the window and motioned for them to pull over, which they did. Cyndi and Steve Earl switched places and the trip continued without incidence.

I remember thinking at the time: what a stroke of bad luck that was, losing her to a bout of motion sickness. I quickly corrected that thinking to: what a stroke of good luck that was, allowing me to show a bit of gallantry, helping my damsel in distress.

## [2] OUR FRIEND DOUG

In any case, we made it to South Pasadena, and the Steves dropped us off at a market near the church. We found the restrooms, changed into our Sunday attire, walked the short distance to the church, dropped our camping gear onto the foyer floor, and walked into the chapel into the already in-progress missionary farewell of our friend Doug Brown.

Doug was sitting with his family on the stand. A speaker was at the pulpit. Doug and I made eye contact and he appeared relieved that we had arrived. Cyndi and I stood at the door. I knew I had to walk to the stand and wondered, only for a moment, where I should put Cyndi since the chapel appeared to be full. Then I did a brave thing. Out of pure reflex and without thinking (had I thought about it, I might not have), I took her hand, looped her arm in my arm,

walked to the stand with her in tow, and sat us next to the bishop. Years later, Cyndi told me that what she was thinking was: *what is he doing?*

Well, whatever I was doing, it was the right thing because it set up the second miracle which was about to happen.

Old time Mormons know that in those days it was customary after a farewell to have a reception line. That gave everyone a chance to shake the departing missionary's hand and leave money in that hand.

Cyndi and I went through the reception line like everyone else. But when we reached Doug, what happened caught us both by complete surprise. Doug said this to us:

"Ray and Cyndi. I've always known that someday you two would meet. I expect you to be married before I return." We had known each other just three days, and that barely — eight hours, tops.

I now consider those words to be Doug's first prophetic utterance as a missionary. So it was written and so it happened.

### [3] THE KISS

How we got from South Pasadena to my mother's house in Highland Park, we have both forgotten. I supposed we hitched a ride with someone who was heading that way. That part is hazy to both of us, but somehow we found our way to my mother's house.

I took mom's Chevy and drove Cyndi to Citrus college where she picked up her car, a Hillman. Then I followed her to her parents' home in Monrovia and met her mom and dad, Dottie and Don Ball.

Preparing to leave and standing in their driveway, I did another brave thing, the bravest thing of my life: I put my arm around Cyndi's waist, pulled her close, and kissed her. For the record, she did not resist. Cyndi told me later that when I left and she returned to the house, she said to her father, "He kissed me, so I think that means he has to marry me."

To repeat, we've known each other just three days, or not even.

That kiss impacted me. Backing out of their driveway, I ran over their garden brick wall and tore bricks loose. I may also have broken a sprinkler head or two. Well, what would you expect? I was lucky to make it home alive, or, for that matter, to leave their home alive.

### [4] MY MOM

Cyndi and I didn't see each other during the week, but we spoke on the phone. We saw each other again the next Sunday.

I picked her up at her home in Monrovia and brought her to Garvanza Ward in Highland Park to meet my mother, Phyllis. Cyndi later told me that two things happened.

*First:* Cyndi and mom were sitting on opposite ends of the pew. Cyndi wanted to see what mom looked like so she leaned forward to take a peek. At that moment, mom also wanted to see what Cyndi looked like, so mom also leaned forward to take a peek. Their eyes met, and, both startled, both jolted back from that caught-in-the-act position, both slightly embarrassed.

*Second:* After Sacrament Meeting, mom took Cyndi around and introduced her to all her Relief Society sisters. Mom introduced Cyndi to all of them as "Ray's fiancée." This was day four. I am not making this up. Were Doug and my mom in cahoots? For sure, something was.

## **[5] MY BROTHER DALE**

I think it was November that we double dated with my brother Dale and his wife Marsha. We saw the movie “The Bible” starring George C. Scott as Abraham. There was a butt scene in the movie, actually, a double butt scene. The producers saw nothing wrong with taking the Bible literally: “they were naked and were not ashamed.” And so Adam and Eve showed more of themselves than we expected which caused some blush, and maybe thoughts of, well, marriage.

But that’s beside the point. The point is that during the intermission (it was a long movie), Dale and I stepped out for snacks. Out in the foyer, Dale asked me a bold question. “Well?” he asked. “When are you going to ask her to marry you?” I answered, “I suppose it should be soon.”

## **[6] THE PROPOSAL**

Over the next few weeks I had a few false starts. I don’t rightly know just what I said, but when Cyndi invited me to be a bit bolder and say what was on my mind, I said at least twice, “much later,” which was a pretty lame way to put a girl off.

But finally, on December 17, 1966, I found the courage and just blurted it out. I don’t recall my words, but I do recall her response. She said, “Really?” Ah, yes, really. Again she said, “Really?” I don’t recall how many times that bounced back and forth before she finally said yes, but yes it was, finally. All this happened on her front porch.

When I asked her father, Don, for permission to marry his daughter, he got all formal. He insisted that I ask him on my knees. I agreed, if I had a pillow.

## **[7] BUT WHEN?**

I think it was January when Cyndi and I brought my mother to Monrovia to meet Cyndi’s parents. On that occasion, Cyndi and I announced to everyone that we planned to get married in two years when I graduated from college. That sounded practical to me, but mom blurted out: “Sounds like a June wedding to me!” She was right, as usual. Five months later, Cyndi and I were married in the Los Angeles Temple on June 17, 1967, the same date I returned from my mission one year before, and the same date I departed for my mission two years before that.

## **[8] MOM’S CHINA**

Sometime during our engagement, mom said to Cyndi, “I want to show you why I knew you would be my daughter-in-law.”

Mom led Cyndi into the kitchen to her china hutch. From the hutch, mom pulled out a single plate and handed it to Cyndi. Each style of china had a name, and the name was printed on the back of each plate.

Mom said, “You need to know the name of my china. Go on, turn it over.” Cyndi did.

And the name of mom’s china? It was “Cynthia”. Mom knew I would marry a Cynthia.

Did I know that? No. I didn’t even know china had a name, not until Cyndi told me this story years later.

That china is still in the family. Mom gave it to us, and we gave it to our daughter Lauri. It's in her dining room right now.

So, Doug knew, mom knew, Dale knew, and now some unknown glazer at some china factory knew too. Go figure.

## [9] THE DEBATE

In one of my institute classes, the teacher, Bother Johansen, announced that we ought to have a debate. We were all mature college students, firm in our faith, and it was time to put that faith to the test.

But the *subject* was not open to debate. He picked the subject. It was: Are marriages made in heaven?

Well, that's an incendiary subject if ever there was one. One thing Mormons *don't* believe in is predestination, or anything *like* predestination. And how can you have marriages made in heaven if you don't allow for predestination or its like?

The teacher said, "Okay, we need to divide up into two teams, pros and cons. Who wants to be on the pros side?" No hands went up. Which made sense. I mean, what good Mormon would argue *for* predestination? "Okay then, who wants to be on the cons side?" Every hand went up including my own.

"Well," our teacher said, "It's going to be a pretty boring debate. Can I get *somebody* to take the pros side?" No hands went up.

"Okay then, I'll assign someone. Ray," he said. "Would you take the affirmative?"

I gulped and said something like, "Sure. Why not?"

Why he picked me, I have no idea. Maybe it was because on my mission to Ireland, I had kissed the Blarney Stone, which, in Irish folklore, gave me the gift of gab. And maybe I excelled at that. But, whatever the reason, I decided if I was going to do this, I would do the best job I could. So I took it on with every intention of winning.

I invited Cyndi to come to the debate, and she came. Not only would it be a fun thing to do together, but she would be my cheering squad, and goodness knows, I needed a cheering squad as I was about to try to convince a class of a heresy. But more than just moral support, she became my *Exhibit A*.

I presented my case with three arguments: a mathematical argument, a scriptural argument, and an example. Cyndi was my example, my *Exhibit A*.

*First, my mathematical argument:* In a math class called Linear Programming, I had learned a process called the Simplex Technique, Now I had a chance to put it to good use.

My argument went like this: Of all the possible partners that would be available to me, if I considered any two, say A and B (Annie and Betty?), it must necessarily follow that either A would be a better choice for me than B, or B would be a better choice for me than A.

Ties would be inconceivable by the Excluded Middle principle (it's either raining or it's not, it's never both or neither). So, suppose A is the better choice, how would A compare to C? How about D? And so forth. As we work our way through the entire list of available partners, it becomes obvious and mathematically inescapable that there is one *best* partner for me.

This is much like a Bubble Sort process in computer science. Just by rippling through a list repeatedly and flipping entries as needed, you eventually end up with a properly sorted list

with the first item first. And in the list of prospective marriage partners, the first is *the* best and therefore necessarily *the* woman that God (or fate or destiny or whatever) intends for me to have.

Now, whether I actually find her or not is a different matter — there are bad marriages. But God’s *intention* is undeniable: he wants us to have *the best*, and there is *a best*. And if we do find that perfect someone, that match was pre-determined; in other words, it was made in heaven — or the universe or whatever. It must be so.

*Second, my scriptural argument:* Mormons dismiss notions of pre-destination out-of-hand because it intuitively conflicts with free-will, free-agency, and self-determination.

I didn’t want to run afoul of all that, but if we were going to consider the possibility that marriages are made in heaven, then we’d have to have an honest discussion of the Bible’s notion of destiny.

The Bible’s concept of destiny is easy enough to see from a few examples: **Jeremiah 1:5** *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.* **1 Samuel 16:13** *Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him [David] in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.*

We accept that hindsight is 20-20, but it appears that God’s foresight is also 20-20.

How does that happen? How did God know before Jeremiah was born that Jeremiah would be his prophet? How did God know that David would kill Goliath and become king? I don’t know how, but he knew. That, we call destiny.

The Bible often burdens us with evidence for both sides of a debate. Its authors seem at times to be unaware of the philosophical conflicts (and religious wars) that their polarized theologies create for us. And for the present discussion, the question, “does God know the future or are we free agents?” seems to best be answered with “yes.” It is perplexing that this question seems not to have even occurred to the Bible authors. They seem to not know or care that God’s foreknowledge and man’s free agency run afoul of each other.

Consider, for example, how conflicted Paul is here:

**Philippians 2:12** *... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. :13* *For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

So, which is it? Do you work because your free will motivates you? Or does God trump your free will and make you behave according to his “good pleasure”? Paul says both. And I suspect that if I ever ask him which it is, he’d probably answer, “which is what?”

I guess my point is that it is no heresy to argue either side (or even both sides at once) because the Bible does.

And so in our debate, I dared make a case for predestination which goes to the heart of our question: are marriages made in heaven?

I did not keep a list of the scriptures I used, but here are some that I might have used —

<b>Luke 22:21</b> <i>Judas betrayed as was determined</i>	<b>Eph 1:5</b> <i>predestined “marked out”</i>
<b>John 1:12-13</b> <i>Not the will of man but of God</i>	<b>Eph 1:11</b> <i>Why? For his glory</i>
<b>John 6:37,44</b> <i>All the father gives me shall come</i>	<b>Phil 1:6</b> <i>Began a work in you, will finish it</i>
<b>John 10:26-28</b> <i>ye believe not because not my sheep</i>	<b>2 Thess 2:19</b> <i>Having this seal, he knows</i>
<b>Acts 2:23</b> <i>Determinate council foreknowledge</i>	<b>Heb 12:2</b> <i>author &amp; finisher of our faith</i>
<b>Eph 1:4</b> <i>chosen before foundation</i>	<b>D&amp;C 59:21</b> <i>his hand in all things</i>

We can haggle all we want about freewill, and what predestination might mean, and in what sense Paul used the Greek word pra-a-rid-zo (marked out boundary) which we translate to either “predestination” or “foreordination” depending on which translation we prefer at the moment. But it is undeniable that in *some* sense anyway God knows and controls the future, at least if we are to take the Bible literally — which of course we are not required to do, but there it is anyway.

And if that be the case, if God knows beforehand who is saved and not saved, and if, as *D&C 59:21* says, God’s hand is in *all* things, then he would certainly *also* know who we will fall in love with, or at least who we *ought* to fall in love with. And if we do find that once-in-forever partner, would not that match indeed be made in heaven?

*Third, my example:* True, a single example is not a compelling argument for a general principle. But *my* example seemed pretty compelling — to me anyway. And she was sitting right there watching the debate, my fiancée, my *Exhibit A*.

So I told the class our story, Cyndi’s and mine — about Doug’s prophetic imperative, about mom’s foreknowledge and china set. I told them of the unlikelihood of how we met, when we met, where we met; the people who knew we were meant for each other. And then I said, sure sounds fated (dare I say destined?) to me. If not, then what does fated (or destined) mean?

Today, as I reflect on our children and grand children who followed, it seems to me now that they *necessarily* followed and that we have always known each of them, children who waited in a very long line to get here and be ours. Mormons are quite comfortable with the notion of pre-existence, that we existed as sentient, willful, choice-making beings before we were born. It is a short leap from that to notions of fate and destiny.

Is all that evidence of a marriage made in heaven? If not, then I don’t know what is.

*Epilog:* So, what about the debate? Ah, I won. I convinced the teacher, the class, and also the debaters on the other side that marriages, some marriages anyway, are indeed made in heaven. Or so they all said. It was a clean sweep. I also convinced myself.

That was very reassuring, especially since that beautiful young lady whom I was about to marry was sitting in the room looking at me. I knew that she was a gift from God *to me*. And she knew that I knew because I had just said so — and I had just convinced an entire class which I could not have done had I not actually believed it.

We’re coming up to our 47<sup>th</sup> anniversary as I write this. We’ve had our share of problems along the way, the same as any other couple. But knowing that *we* came from God and that *we* are going to God (that’s what temple marriages are about), is a very nice place to be.

## [10] DOUG AND CHERI

Doug Brown and we have remained close friends over the decades. He had done a very good thing for us, and, as fate would have it, we had an opportunity to return the favor.

When he returned from his mission, I think in 1969, He visited us in our Alhambra home, and he had a question for us.

He said he met a girl on his mission that he liked and wondered if it would be all right to return to that area to court her. He was asking us if that was appropriate since he had met her on his mission.

I can’t quote myself, but I might have said something like, “Doug, your mission is over, there is nothing inappropriate. Go talk to her and see what happens.” And he did. Doug and

Cheri got married in the temple and have been happily married ever since. Another marriage made in heaven. Cyndi and I are glad that we were able to be a part of that.

### [11] BRICK

*Roll forward a couple of decades:* In 1989 our son Trevor went to Guatemala for his two year mission. A year before that, he served a short, pre-cursor mission, about three months in Whittier, California, a kind of gearing up for the real thing.

When he returned from Whittier, he had stories to tell. One was this: “Mom and Dad,” he said. “In Whittier, I met a couple who knows you. Their names are Brick and Terri Friedland.”

Imagine that. I guess marriages, some marriages anyway, really are made in heaven.

### [12] KAELYNN

We have 15 grandchildren. Nothing unusual about that. But our 13<sup>th</sup> grandchild is a bit unusual. Read the story and you decide.

Kaelynn was soon to be born, and Grandma and I were in Oklahoma waiting for that blessed event. Kaelynn’s due date was April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007 — a Friday.

Now, I’m not a superstitious man, but a 13<sup>th</sup> grandchild due to be born on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, that gave me pause. Sort of like the 7<sup>th</sup> son of the 7<sup>th</sup> son superstitions.

Well, Kaelynn wasn’t born on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, nor the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, or 17<sup>th</sup>. She waited exactly five days to be born on April 18<sup>th</sup>, *my birthday!*

I said I’m not a superstitious man, and I’m not. But *that* seems planned, by *her*. And she recently fessed up to it. My now seven-year old granddaughter recently said, “Yes grandpa. I waited to be born on your birthday.” I believe her.

Well, if a baby girl, negative 5 days old, can preplan my happiness, then why not God?

By the way: Kaelynn is my only grandchild whose birthday I can actually remember. Gee, I wonder why. Also, I have always called her my luck child because she delayed her birth from Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> to my birthday. Thus she turned bad luck into good luck. That makes her my good luck charm, and she is charming in every way.

### [13] OUR POEM

I’ll wrap this up with a poem that I wrote for Cyndi. I wrote It, I think, in 1977, give or take a year. I call it “For Cyndi, the Queen of My Heaven”.

Here, then, is the length and breadth of it —  
Though I doubt I’ll ever fit  
Together words to match the feelings of my heart.  
For the words I need are not a part  
Of mortal tongue or writ.  
But, still, I need to choose  
*Some* words, so these I’ll use:  
I love you.  
And these simple words will have to do.