

Excerpts from

# Seven Days of SHIVA

*Forty-six years of puppy love*

*By Marc Gellman*

I think I was always attracted to girls. Maybe even as far back as when I was in diapers. As a young kid, I'm not sure if it was actual attraction or curiosity. Girls were confusing to me back then. I couldn't figure them out. I'm finding that such confusion is not age restricted. Nowadays, I seem to be having the same problem.

Anyway, I remember, as a kid, wondering how a girl could find playing with dolls and baby carriages fun. With all the fun things that kids could pretend to be, why pretend to be a parent? All parents do is take care of kids, with meals and bathing, and on and on. Who would want to pretend to do all that? The answer seemed to be, it was girls who wanted to do all that.

Boys had cars and trucks and wore pants and could sit on the sidewalk and play with bottle caps. Girls wore dresses. That was another thing I couldn't figure out. Dresses never seemed practical. Also, for boys, our playtime was never interrupted by the need to pee. We would just go over to a bush and pee on it. This is also something I've always wondered about. Why do guys feel the need to pee on something? Girls had to go back inside to pee in private. As a kid, I used to think, "It can't be fun being a girl." And yet, girls seemed to be content playing with dolls, pretending to be mommies, wearing dresses, and having to go back inside to pee.

As a young kid, I was surely happy to be a boy. Thinking back, I don't know why I was so preoccupied with the being-a-girl versus being-a-boy thing. But I was. Because for some reason, I was attracted to girls. I could be playing a game on the sidewalk with my friends, pitching bottle caps or playing stoopball, and be totally engrossed in the game. But when a cute girl with dark brown hair, dark brown eyes, and an olive complexion walked by, I would instantly forget about the game and stare at her. Especially if I was sitting on the sidewalk and the girl was wearing a dress. For some reason, the sight of her legs would get my attention. I didn't know why. But girls were

cute, soft, and clean all the time. I couldn't ignore it, there was something I liked about them. I just didn't know what it was.

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My fiftieth birthday was on a Sunday. Barbara arranged a party at a restaurant. It was our kids, friends, and relatives for an afternoon dinner party. Barbara and I were in our bedroom and finished getting dressed for the party, when in mock seriousness she asked, "So on this day of your fiftieth birthday, what confessions do you have?" After twenty-eight years of marriage, it was, at that very moment, that I admitted to Barbara that I am incorrigible. Barbara started to laugh, came over to me, put her hands on my shoulders, looked me straight in the eyes, and said, "So, you are admitting to being incorrigible. Let me tell you something. I've always known that, but I'm happy to hear you admit to it. Good. I can use that admission. It'll make future disagreements with you easier on me."

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It was the first time I had ever heard Barbara talk about having everything. The fact is, married to Barbara, I always had everything. To Barbara, the grass was never greener someplace else. She held no jealousy nor envy about anyone or anything. To Barbara, whatever we had at any point during our marriage was all we needed. It was everything.

Barbara's courage and optimism brought her through all her bouts with cancer and kept our marriage and family together. She always accepted difficult and troubled times and did whatever was needed for us to make it through.

As Barbara sat beside me on the couch that evening, I could see that we truly did have everything. It was at that very moment, after all the years of our marriage, that I came to realize, with Barbara, I always had it all. At that very moment, "all" meant having Barbara holding on to me and her knowing I would never leave or give up on her struggle to live. To me, "all" was seeing Barbara's smile, filled with hope ... and her dimples. From that moment on, I knew I would need nothing else, until the day I would lose her.

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My eyes were inches from Barbara's, as they had been at Times Square on our first New Year's, forty-four years before. Looking into her eyes, I could sense that she was wishing for another year. For sure, I was too. In the middle of all the celebrating around us, Barbara asked, "This is going to be a good year, right?"

"Yes," I answered.

It was always difficult for me to get the words out when she asked such questions. Barbara always breathed a sigh of relief when I gave her a positive answer and she found peace in that. But over the years, the questions pained me more and more each time she asked. Barbara's prognosis wasn't improving. As time passed, my answers felt like increasingly bigger lies. I wondered if Barbara believed me less and less. Did she wonder if my answers were only telling her what she wanted to hear? It was a question I hoped Barbara would never ask me. Because I would have lied.

## **Reader Reviews**

### **Amazing story of a love affair spanning over four decades**

*"I loved this book so much I don't know which part to talk about first. Marc Gellman is an incredible story teller. His honesty and ability to become vulnerable for his readers is outstanding. This allows you to feel the feelings he felt over four decades of his relationship and family with his beloved Barbara. They begin her journey with breast cancer in her 30's. It comes back several times and each time they meet the demon head-on with love, affection, and support that is admirable and breathtaking at times. I loved this book. It made me laugh, smile, and cry at times. I got to know not only him and his wife, but their three children. I would highly suggest you buy this book. it is incredible!!"*

### **And they called it puppy love....**

*"Seven Days of Shiva is the love story of Barbara and Marc Gellman. Both Marc and Barbara were devoted spouses, role models for their children and enjoyed a wide variety of friends.*

*Barbara passed away at the age of 59 from breast cancer. She was a three-time survivor of this insidious disease, All women that have gone through this cancer journey and/or are in it now, will certainly relate to Barbara's fighting the fight and becoming a strong voice in the breast cancer community.*

*This book reveals the power of love between two teenagers that blossomed into a lifetime of respect, love, and like. They saved one another and were lucky to find each other when they needed each other the most.*

*Don't be fooled by the title. Shiva is viewed as a celebration of one's life.”*

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