

Love's Reward, Bill and Iva Oates

*Love is patient, love is kind,
Love does not brag and is not arrogant ...
Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...
But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.
(Words from 1 Corinthians 13: 4-13)*

No words run truer than the love between two very special people in my life who I know and love, my parents, Bill and Iva Oates.

Growing up, they attended the same one room schoolhouse on the Queen's Line and lived a mere mile apart. I suppose they and everyone chummed together in this close knit rural community. They went to the same little brown church down the line and warmed their toes 'round the same woodstove at the skating rink'. At this time of the year valentines were exchanged between classmates, perhaps that is when this lifelong friendship began. Mom kept one little handmade valentine all these years, on the back neatly printed in pencil it says "To Iva from Billy". Another valentine joined the treasure box in the cabinet that kept such souvenirs as a fairy basket carved from a walnut shell, heart shaped stones, hair ribbons and curls, pressed flowers and such. This one, had a photograph of a teenager, the girl with the dark curls and shy smile is my mother and it is addressed "To Billy from Iva".

As time went on, a friendship grew and soon the courting commenced. Dating in the forties might mean a day at the Beachburg Fair, an excursion to the Renfrew Cinema or just an evening out to have a hamburger and a milkshake at Ambey's.

Iva Hawthorn married Billy Oates in June of 1951. They motored to Niagara Falls to honeymoon, returning to their Queen's Line home to farm together and raise a family. With hardly time to catch their breath the years flew by. Their children grew and were soon off on their own and so were they once again.

I hardly thought of my parents as being romantic but thinking now of all the little things they did for each other, I guess their bond is very special. If Dad found a heart shaped stone or potato in the field he'd bring it home to Mom. Sometimes he'd climb over a barbed wire fence to snatch a plum blossom branch or stop along a fence row to pick some berries, bringing home something to brighten her day. Little, thoughtful gestures brought them together and kept them there. One icy winter Sunday they didn't want to miss church so decided to walk the short way. With the streets treacherous, Dad got out his boot grippers but with only one pair they had to each slip one on and walk arm in arm all the way.

A few years back Mom wrote a valentine poem in fancy calligraphy script about true love, to read a Women's Institute meeting. All the words still ring true and so it earned a place framed on the wall of her room at the Bonnechere Manor. Everyday, Dad visits Mom; sometimes he brings her fresh blueberries picked from the shrubs they planted behind their Foresters Falls home. Often he'll take her a bouquet of pink flowers from the garden, this spring I know he'll bring a spray of plum blossoms or perchance a little heart shaped stone.

I am not as good at poetry as my Mother so I borrowed these words from poet Thomas Merton (1915-1968), to say what I think love is all about.

*Love seeks one thing only.
The good of the one loved.
It leaves all the other secondary effects to take care of themselves.
Love, therefore, is its own reward.*



Submitted by Lianne Oates

