

Looking back

by Dan Cudle & John Lebarge

Danny Cudle and John LaBarge celebrated 30 years together on May 9th—a feat impressive to any couple, gay or straight. They share with us how they met and their secret to a long and happy relationship.

John: A girl I used to hang around with told me to come out with her to a women's bar. Originally I said no, but she insisted, so I figured why not, and if I don't like it, I could go around the corner to a men's club instead. Later, as I was about to leave the club, I saw Danny coming in the door, so I turned back.

Danny: I'd just walked into a lesbian bar called the Cameo, on Trinity Avenue, in a basement of a factory, when John approached me and asked, 'Can I buy you a drink, or what?' I replied with a quick no thank you. A little while later he approached me again and asked, 'Are you gay or what?' His persistence and the approach he was taking made me laugh. I was intrigued with the 'or what?' I was not drinking any alcohol at the time, so I said yes, he could buy me a cola. I would not say it was love at first sight, but I would say we grew fond for one another quickly, and we became inseparable fairly early on. John became a member of the family and has been there for a couple of generations now. We have been there for each other through the loss of parents and continue to support each other.

John: I would say there was a connection there for sure. When I saw this tall attractive guy come

in the club, I knew I had to meet him. We have been together ever since.

Danny: Our secret to staying happily together for so long? We made a pact not to go to bed angry, and over the years have learned to be tolerant of one another. Most arguments happen over trying to make your partner into something they are not, or trying to change them into what you want them to be. But if you think about it, what attracted you to them in the first place is the fact that you were different. Sure, we argue, as all couples do, but we have come to the realization that we are different and respect each others for our differences.

John: The main thing is be true to each other and talk about whatever is on your mind. Don't hold things in. Always communicate and never hold the other person back. You are two, and planning must be done together.

Danny: Remember, the mind of your partner is their own, not yours. You have to let them be able to think freely and express themselves. Eventually you have to come to terms with the realization, the only person you can change is yourself.

Dan and John own and operate their own business. They are very active members of the LGBT community in the Durham Region. Dan is the President at Oshawa's nightclub Club 717 (www.club717.ca), and he was one of the recipients of PFLAG Canada's "Durham Region Champions Against Homophobia and Transphobia Award 2010".