



Reflections of Hope From the Past

Description

Anticipating what may come

This story appeared in my former **blogspot** of my name (donnliston.com) which was stolen by Bill Borden, dba High Caliber Reality. Based in Atlanta, Georgia, Borden defrauded me as a senior Alaskan with real estate assets. Thanks to the many friends and readers who **support independent journalism** and have stood by me through the personal crisis requiring building this WordPress site and dependent upon the Alaska Court System for justice.

DONN

A Valentines Day Reflection

February 14, 2018

EDITOR's Note: Cathy Liston died February 24, 2019. This was a remembrance one year before her passing.

For 28 years Valentine's Day has beat out Christmas, Thanksgiving, Halloween, and April Fool's Day as my favorite holiday. Valentine's Day is the day I married Cathy, in 1990.

In the early years we both wondered aloud how long the honeymoon might last. I'm happy to say it has never ended.

Cathy wasn't so convinced we should marry at the time because we had been seeing each other for only a few months. When we both took off one day during lunch to get our marriage license—and after we filled out the paperwork I didn't have the money to pay for the marriage license—she must have had second thoughts.

I was on a cash only economy, and it was simply an oversight.

Despite my embarrassment Cat obviously knew what she was getting into; every time I had brought my paycheck to her teller station I asked that she write the amount in the bank account on the receipt, so I would know how much I had until my next paycheck.

Once we were married Cat made sure all the bills were paid on time and I always had \$100 on my money clip. Instructional note: Two people can live cheaper than one.

We resided in efficiency apartments across the hall from each other on the 5th floor of the Mendenhall Apartments.



Sunlight shines on the Mendenhall Apartments located two blocks from the Alaska Capital where Cathy and I lived until we could save enough to become Juneau homeowners.

Mendenhall Apartments, two blocks up 4th Street from the capitol, in Juneau. Her apartment had a spectacular view of Gastineau Channel while my apartment was slightly larger with a walk-in closet I had turned into a black & white photo lab. Once married, we both moved into my apartment until we could save enough money for a down-payment on a home.

I worked for the teacher's union, NEA-Alaska in an office down the hill. Her job involved protecting a lot of legislator's personal funds. My job included responding to members' requests, and trying to get many of Cathy's legislator customers to give ever more public money to education.

I was also on the bargaining team of employees of NEA-Alaska as we attempted to negotiate a successor contract with our teacher's union employer. Working as support staff for NEA-Alaska negotiations against 54 school districts, I understood what employees of the union should also expect in our employment contract. However, I was astounded on several occasions at what the union expected for teachers but did not expect to give its own employees!

My role—on the union of employees of the teacher's union bargaining team—required regular trips to Anchorage for negotiation sessions. It was on one of those trips, returning to Juneau, that I implemented a bright Idea: How about having my favorite senator marry Cat and me?

Some might recall when Alaska Airlines on occasion featured gourmet meals. This particular plane was full of legislators and other dignitaries. The midtown Anchorage senator from the district where I grew up was Arliss Sturgulewski—a widow—flying in first class. After eating the sumptuous dinner I scratched out a note to Sen. Sturgulewski, asking if she would be willing to marry us, and the steward delivered it to her. I waited with bated breath for her response.

Suddenly, Sen. Sturgulewski arose from her seat and came to the bulkhead, with my piece of paper held up to eye level, and announced: "Donn Liston, I would be very happy to marry you!"

There was a gasp from those within earshot, and after a pregnant pause she continued: "...to Cathy Gault." Everyone laughed and my face must have been valentine red.

On that Valentine's Day Cathy and I walked over the Capitol and into Sen. Sturgulewski's office. There were beautiful flowers, supportive staff, and the ceremony was wonderful. The Juneau Empire sent Mark Kelly to take our picture and it appeared in the paper as a news item. (See his current FaceBook page!)

We went to Haines for our honeymoon and stayed at the *Captain's Choice* motel. In our haste we had forgotten to grab our suitcase and only had the matching sweat suits we had bought for the occasion. Who needs clothes on a honeymoon anyway?

The years have passed so quickly, EVERY Valentine's Day being a highlight of the entire year. In our lives together, Cat and I have seized opportunities and faced challenges, confident in our sacred bond.

Our biggest challenge has always been her health. We face it head-on and we deal with it in whatever manner necessary. In 2003 a major health event resulted in her being held in the Intensive Care Unit at Providence Hospital for 11 days. Our doctor told me I could expect to have her in my life 2-3 years. It was devastating; I was a newly certified teacher, we were living in a new home, and I had grandkids without ever having kids. How could I lose her now?

I thank God for every day since then; each day a bonus—15 years!

In April of 2017 we got another downgrade of Cathy's health status; she tripped in the dark over our youngest granddaughter's toys while visiting in Ohio, and cracked three ribs. Upon her return to Eagle River, the same doctor who had treated her before found on the x-ray lesions the size of her thumbs in both lungs. Treatments began immediately and her lifespan was now projected to be in months.

By October, due to new Chemo options, those lesions were the size of peas! The oncologist was ecstatic! We were winning the battle against cancer on this level.

I took a new job in December and we drove our truck and 5th wheel trailer to Haines, then took the Alaska Marine Highway to Juneau, for the upcoming legislative session. We stayed again at the Captain's Choice. January temperatures in single digits froze up our camper home in Juneau. We moved into an efficiency apartment while I received updated training as a legislative staffer.

Soon Cat became very sick.

A scan of Cat's brain at Bartlett Memorial Hospital found a 2 cm lesion. We returned to Anchorage where she received "gamma knife" treatments from which she is now recuperating at our youngest daughter's home near the Cleveland Clinic—one of the best cancer hospitals in the world. I am back on the job in Juneau and we are looking forward to a glorious road trip home after Session in the spring.

Forgive me if I am sentimental, but this Valentine's Day will be a celebration of all the others we have shared together.

Category

1. Juneau Living

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