Q&A with

Timothy Lewis

author of

*Forever Friday*

**1)  The story is loosely based on the lives of your Great Aunt and Great Uncle who had a weekly postcard ritual like Gabe and Huck (Pearl) in your book.  Tell us more about your relatives:  What were their names? Where did they live? What did they do for a living?**

Their names were Bob and Jewel. My grandmother was Jewel’s sister; my mother, Jewel’s niece.

Bob and Jewel met on a jitney bus in Houston and married on September 4, 1927. (My wife and I share the same anniversary month and day. We married on September 4, 1982. We didn’t discover until years later that we shared the same date!) Jewel was engaged to another man and had one of her brothers return the engagement ring.

Bob worked as an accountant for a Houston oil company, and Jewel taught school. Due to a childhood injury from a car accident, she couldn’t bear children. Since my mom and dad looked after Bob and Jewel during their later years, they willed most of their belongings to my mother.

**2) Did anyone know about the postcards?**

I questioned those in the family who were closest to Bob and Jewel, and no one knew about the postcards. So I deduced they’d been kept secret.

**3) What did people think when you found them?**

Most were delightfully surprised, some even amazed. A few said I should base Bob and Jewel’s story in a novel. But after the initial finding at the estate sale, life went on and the cards were rarely mentioned.

**4) How did you discover their postcards?**

I discovered the postcards at Bob and Jewel’s estate sale in 1999, literally pulling the albums out of the trash heap. (They were thought to have been miscellaneous photos of people no one in the family knew.) At first, I thought they’d collected antique postcards. You can imagine my astonishment when I realized each card had an original love poem on the back. It appeared Bob had sent one to Jewel every Friday for sixty years. I was deeply touched.

**5)  What did you do with them?**

I knew I’d discovered a once in a lifetime “true romance” for an author of love stories. But there was no *conflict*. (I’d been at the fiction game long enough to know an editor wouldn’t dream of publishing a love story without it.) So I placed the postcard albums on a shelf in my study and wrote other things, all the while waiting for the perfect conflict to discover me. About five years later, I received a phone call from a high school friend whose wife of 20 years had left him without warning. He said, “I don’t believe in love anymore.” I remember gazing up at the shelf holding the albums and thinking: *There lies 60 years of love. Married love.* And suddenly…I’d found my story.

**6) The story explores what it takes to make a marriage last. What made you want to dig into that topic?**

From a writing standpoint, I viewed the topic as a challenge. There were many, many novels that explored and even touted infidelity, but few actually celebrated marriage. And where infidelity was the seed of conflict, fidelity birthed contentment. So there stood my challenge: Pen a novel about a happy marriage that contained enough conflict for the reader to keep turning pages.

From a personal standpoint, I saw what was happening to some of my friends. Marriages that seemed invincible for over a decade, suddenly suffered separation and finally divorce. And these were good people, most of them having a strong faith in God. The day my friend called was eye opening. I couldn’t imagine his not believing in love anymore. So I decided to write a novel that might offer “hope” to others going through a similar experience.

**7) In the character Gabe’s marriage, he wants to avoid the phenomenon of “The Long Division.”  What does that mean and how did you come up with that concept?**

During my college years, I began thinking about marriage, and especially about the woman I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. I’d had enough girlfriends to know that romance eventually waned. (I was usually the one who got “dumped.”) Each time I’d feel a breakup looming, I’d hold on all the harder, which always ended in disaster. So I began to wonder what happened in a marriage when the initial romance vanished. And once it did, could it be rekindled?

I purposely started observing the married couples I knew, and more important, listening to the way they communicated in public. It wasn’t hard to discern. Some were obviously on the slope to disaster, others in love but romantically complacent, and only a few still exchanging intimate glances and holding hands after 30 years. It became clear that the glancing-hand-holders still dated. Even the ones with hectic job schedules and small children made a point of having at least one night “out” together each month.

Moreover, I noticed a gradual decline of affection between the vast majority of couples. So I decided that I would purposely do things in my own future marriage that would not only keep my wife and I in sync with one another, but maintain our lifelong membership in the *furtive-glance & hand-holder society*.

Thus was the birth of The Long Division concept. What is it? Here’s a paraphrase of what I wrote in the novel: In arithmetic, long division divides and then multiplies further divisions into the lowest possible dividend. Likewise, marriage is filled with numerous obligations that divide time spent together. If these divisions are allowed to multiply, then the once shared passions slowly separate into single-minded interests. The Long Division.

I didn’t name it until I’d penned Gabe’s character. But since he was an accountant it made sense that he would express in mathematical terms what I’d concluded.

**8)  What is the secret formula to a lasting marriage?**

WARNING - PLOT SPOILER: When Adam discovered the postcards, he began a quest to find the secret to a lasting marriage, “a holy grail of marital bliss.” Instead, he learned the secret was no formula per se, but a culmination of total trust, an unbreakable bond, and completeness; all undergirded by the invisible force of hope.

**9)  Hope is a big theme in the book. What does hope mean to you?**

Hope has multiple layers. For me, it’s intertwined with my faith in God. On a forward page of my novel, Max Lucado was gracious enough to allow me to quote him from his book, *God Came Near,* where he described hope as “a zany, unpredictable dependence on a God who loves to surprise us out of our socks.”Recently, I read another great definition. In Ann Spangler’s book, *Praying the Names of God,* she stated: “*...*hope isn’t false. It doesn’t pretend away our sorrow but rises up inside it. It’s a brightness that can’t be quenched, a gift for this life that’s meant to carry us into the next.”

**10) Two of the poems in the book, you originally wrote for your wife. Do you often write poetry as well?**

I’ve been known to compose a few poems through the years, and some have been for my wife. Most of the poems I wrote for *Forever Friday* I composed in my head while on my daily three mile walk. So I’d literally run home covered in sweat, and enter the poem into my computer before it fled my brain.

Since I’m a Texan, and a bit of a cowboy, I also love to compose cowboy poetry. Catch me on a good day, and I might recite *y’all* a poem or two!

**11) How do you keep romance alive in your own marriage?**

My wife and I have been married 31 years. We’ve kept romance alive by purposely doing something special “just for us” every six months. It may include traveling somewhere for the weekend, or an event we’ve planned at home. But we’ve always considered the time and expense as an important investment in our relationship.

Besides, I’ve always been a bit of a creative romantic. Huck and Gabe’s first date was patterned after my wife’s and my first date in Galveston. And later—for an early wedding anniversary—I created that same beach scene in our home, complete with sand spread over our hardwood dining room floor, a child’s swimming pool with floating candles, and twinkle lights on the ceiling for stars. Of course the next year I had to “up” myself. We couldn’t afford a real cruise, so I transformed our home into a ship, complete with a fancy dining room (I used our wedding china), a casino (where we played card games and she won fun prizes) and a disco (70s music and a mirror ball I bought at a local novelty store.)

And one more thing: Just like Bob and Jewel; Gabe and Huck, we have our own little parlor, where we keep and read our favorite books, and hold hands on the love seat while rain patters against the panes.

**12) Gabe and Huck have an active faith.  What role does faith play in their lives and marriage and in your own?**

In the Bible, my favorite “faith metaphor” is of a tree planted beside a flowing stream. Even in times of terrible drought, the tree survived—and even flourished—because its roots were deep and thus were still nourished from the nearby water source. The drought wasn’t the tree’s fault, but sooner or later, was bound to happen.

Like the tree, marriages will go through periods where intimacy is strained. So it’s imperative we thrust our spiritual roots deep into the soil of faith and drink the *living water* of which Christ spoke. Fortunately, Gabe and Huck’s roots were deep enough to overcome what happened in Kilgore, and then later, Texas City. Even though they survived these events, Huck had to force her roots even deeper to accept the eventual death of her soul mate.

My wife and I haven’t had to live through a Kilgore or survive a Texas City, but we’ve had our share of disappointments, career hardships, and the untimely deaths of friends and family members. So we’ve learned to replenish our souls daily by digging deeply into God’s word, therefore remaining connected to Christ, our spring fed stream for this life…and the one to come.

**To request a review copy of *Forever Friday* or schedule an interview with Timothy Lewis, contact Beverly Rykerd at** **brykerd@randomhouse.com** **or (719) 268-1935**