

July 30, 2005

Good afternoon family, friends, members of Dave's lousy softball team. My name is Jim Bernard and I am the Vice President of Wedding Operations for Phoebe and Dave. It is a great honor to be able to address you today about a couple that I've been following since spring training. A couple with such obvious potential that it doesn't surprise me at all that today we honor them with the equivalent of the relationship "Most Valuable Player Award." I'd like to share some observations about those early days...

Phoebe and Dave met as co-workers at the bookstore Barnes & Noble. This apparently isn't all that unusual. In my limited research on the subject, I've found that over two hundred and thirty thousand B&N co-workers met, fell in love and eventually married. What makes Phoebe and Dave different from thousands of their B&N peers is that they aren't getting married **IN** an actual Barnes & Noble store. Store weddings are so commonplace that Barnes & Noble has created a new chain concept where there is a small wedding chapel right off the coffee bar.

This isn't surprising because books are great aphrodisiacs. Reading is sexy because it invites you to explore exotic places, people and experiences. Plus, when someone else is reading you can take a good long look at them—admire their features and imagine what it would be like to spend the rest of your life curled up on an overstuffed couch next to them reading a book of your own. Maybe this is why Barnes & Noble staff pair up like ballroom dancers.

Back in the day, Phoebe admired Dave while he was reading, helping customers, unpacking boxes, and the like. Dave is very sharp dresser and so Phoebe struck up a conversation complimenting his clothes. Dave noted that some of his pants no longer fit like they used to. One thing led to another and before you know it Dave had brought his pants into the store and given them to Phoebe. Phoebe wears these special pants to this day. Well, not on THIS day, but you get the idea.

I'm telling you, this kind of thing just doesn't happen at Home Depot.

Amazingly it was months before Dave realized that Phoebe, the woman who was now wearing his actual pants, was romantically interested in him. I would love to spend an hour or two sharing with you the dozens of stories of how Phoebe tried draw Dave's attention, but I promised to keep my remarks short and for the most part clean. Let's just say when I heard all the details I wondered if Phoebe shouldn't be writing articles for Glamour Magazine about, "how to catch a really dumb guy in six to nine months."

Eventually, she hit paydirt. She asked Dave if he'd like to go see Lord of the Rings (Fellowship of the Ring). Phoebe was a little nervous that he might not agree, but as it turns out Dave would go to Lord of the Rings with the evil Sauron, Lord of Darkness. Dave was looking for any excuse to go see the Lord of the Rings again that wouldn't look like he was looking for any excuse to go see the Lord of the Rings again.

That night in the theater Dave wept openly and often. Remember this is a movie based on a book he had read dozens of times, a movie that he had seen several times already. Phoebe discovered that Dave is the kind of person who needs a whole box of Kleenex to get through a movie about Hobbits. For Phoebe, who had never read any of the Tolkien books, this must have been somewhat unexpected.

I asked Phoebe if she had second thoughts sitting next to Mr. Sensitivity on their first date. What did she think of this pant-swapping, tear-flowing, Toby-McGuire look-alike? Concerned about the free-flowing emotions? “Well,” she said, “It was kind of cute.”

“Kind of cute” is pretty sappy coming from Phoebe. I took each of the happy couple out separately to discuss this big day. Dinner with Dave, not surprisingly, went something like this: “Phoebe is so great. I mean, she’s so smart and funny and beautiful. Phoebe is so special. I sure do love Phoebe. Love. Phoebe. Love love Phoebe Phoebe love Phoebe.” When Phoebe and I sat down, she looked me in the eye and said, “You’re not going to make me say anything mushy are you?” I promised her if she did, I wouldn’t mention it today.

Despite their divergent positions on the “public display of mushy,” anyone who knows Phoebe and Dave knows they are a couple of many passions. They love music, theater, books, zoology, science fiction, weather, Latin, comic books, and of course softball. They love their friends, their family, and their cats.

Watching Phoebe and Dave fall in love with each other has been really fun. You can see how much they care about one another at softball games and book events. After their first Lord of the Rings date they kept up a string of two hundred and forty four consecutive days of seeing each other. Sometimes one of them would drive to a B&N just to have a cup of coffee during the other's break time, but the streak went on. With each passing day, their delight and love for each other seemed to multiply.

It's almost as if they became some sort of mysterious love energy, growing bigger and stronger every day, catching more people in its wake until finally they morphed into a giant wave of love which in its unquenchable quest to expand, threatened to engulf the Enterprise stranded light years away from the nearest starbase. At the last critical moment James T. Kirk appeared and reminded Phoebe and Dave that destroying space ships is not in the spirit of love at all.

And I think we can all agree on that. Just as we can all agree that today is a glorious day to celebrate a unique couple.

Phoebe and Dave, I want to see you winning Most Valuable Relationship honors again next year and for many years to come. Draw on your strengths, your passion for friends and family, the interests you share and those that you don't share. Develop and care for your relationship and keep the love growing **UP UNTIL** the point when it threatens to destroy space ships.