

# laddledge

Living Arrangements for the Developmentally Disabled

## LASTING LOVE

Finding Independence,  
Together



*David Meltzer*

INSIDE:

In Memorium:

**Minor LeBlond**  
1930-2014



**ReelAbilities Takes  
Cincinnati by Storm!**

**LADD Breaks Ground**



**T**he date was October 14, 1995. The location, Calvery Presbyterian Church on the East Side of Cincinnati. Linda was dressed in a formal white wedding gown. Her smile was wide and contagious. At 50, she had never expected to get married. Never thought she would meet someone like David. David was young, 31 when they were married, handsome, quiet and well groomed. His eyes, inviting and soft, give you the impression he is incapable of judgment, although not immune to receiving it.

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**Their love story, like any couple who has been together happily for decades is worthy of its own unique narrative. It is one full of beauty, challenge, forgiveness, and a residing love. Their story would be like any others. But it is not.**

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David was born in Cincinnati's West End in the 1960s and was the youngest of six brothers and three sisters. He describes his childhood as "not quite fitting in." Remarking, "I didn't behave." When pushed for details, he describes "always talking to myself and rocking back and forth to music." That's not misbehaving, I counter. "Well," he says, "there was the time I accidently caught our home on fire."

The incident in question took place at Christmas. He was 10. Pausing, he reflects, "Yeah, they gave me a hard time for that."

In 3rd grade my mother was told I was autistic. I don't agree with it, but I have to live with it." David does concede that he had difficulty communicating when he was younger, in particular with "females." As someone who clearly withholds judgment of others, the pang of being dismissed still resides. "I would try to sit with people at lunch time and they couldn't be bothered. I was heartbroken."

Linda is less forthright in her story. She does not volunteer information about her past. I ask and she mostly answers, "I don't remember." Linda was six when her father died. She was in her 30s when her mother passed. Before her mother died though, she took Linda out of Orient. I prod gently about living at Orient—Ohio's largest run state institution. "I was in Orient for 10 years," she whispers. "They put me in a straight-jacket. I don't know how old I was... but I kinda grew up there."

In 1988, Linda was in her 40s, living at LADD's Find A Way apartments and working at Goodwill Industries. David was in his 20s and doing the same. And, one fateful day, David asked Linda if he could sit with her at lunch and she said yes. "We could communicate," says David. "She gets me."

They started dating. David says frankly, "My mom thought Linda was too old for me, but I was an adult, there wasn't much she could do!" The corner of Linda's mouth turns up. The memory makes her smile. "You know," says David, "I



Linda and David, at their wedding October 14, 1995

think we got more comments about the age difference and the race difference than anything about disability.” In 1990, David moved in with Linda and they lived together happily for several years. Until, David recounts lovingly, Linda was ready to be married. The proposal is one for the books. Linda paved the way for many women who today know what they want and go after it without apology. It was Linda who proposed to David. Over the phone. “I wanted to be married to him, so I asked.” She states definitively. For David’s part, he says there was no hesitation. “It took a while for my family to warm up to the idea, but they did.” And so, in 1995, seven years after they met, David and Linda married. They took their honeymoon in Cozumel, Mexico.

The two cuddled on the couch throughout the interview. David spoke. Linda nodded, smiling often. “Vacations,” he said were the best memories. “Managing our money, those were the toughest memories.”

David and Linda both have developmental disabilities, have nearly 20 years age difference and identify with two different races at a time when that still raised eyebrows. I point this out to David and say, “From the outside looking in, I am guessing a lot of people didn’t bet on the fact that you would be together for over 25 years and counting.” David paused. “Race, age, disability don’t make a difference. That we love each other makes the difference.” Linda smiled and nodded in agreement.

*Special thanks to our 2014-2015*

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