**MUSINGS: A letter to my wife on our 10th anniversary**

Dear Niki:

The other day an older lady told me about she and her husband celebrating more than 50 years of marriage.

"We were too stubborn," she said of the key to making it work.

Not that long ago, when we were living in West Branch, I sat for a couple of hours with the oldest couple in town before Valentine's Day. The magic to their marriage of many milestones? Friendship.

This Friday marks 10 years of our marriage. Ten years ago, just into our twenties, we said our vows at the church you grew up in - St. James in Omaha. We've talked about the 13th of June, 2008, for the past year or so. We're proud of our accomplishment as a team - simply making it 10 years together. We're proud of our commitment. Where our lives have been. Our two beautiful kids. Our hopes right now - in our 10th year of marriage - to bring home a child with special needs from Korea.

It's been a marvelous 10 years.

Never will I forget the day I saw you in the dorm entrance on that cold winter day on the campus of Buena Vista in Storm Lake. From our first date, it seems we were inseparable. Within three years, we were engaged - married within four.

We can't help but think, on the eve of this marriage milestone for us, what makes it work.

I think of the lyrics from Alison Kraus, whose "When You Say Nothing At All" was the first song we danced to as wife and husband:

"It's amazing how you can speak right to my heart; Without saying a word you can light up the dark; Try as I may I could never explain; What I hear when you don't say a thing."

To this day - 3,650 days later - I still feel that way.

If there's one lesson from the past 10 years, I guess it's that sometimes you can't explain love. Like Kraus crooned: "Old Mr. Webster could never define, what's being said between your heart and mine."

I can't help but think of our wedding day.

The church was packed. College pals of yours and mine - and some we shared. Nearly the entire staff from my first newspaper job in Minnesota, eight hours away. Our family - sisters and brothers, grandmas and grandpas, aunts and uncles. Up front sat our parents. There's strength in numbers, they say. Our marriage, no doubt, has partially been held up by the love from those close to us.

For those in the pews, it might have been the longest wedding they'd ever attended. Lots of music. As many readings as we could think of. A full Catholic Mass. We figured this happens just once in a lifetime - make it special, make it memorable.

There's no doubt that our marriage being grounded in faith has made it work for a decade - and will help make it work for years to come. I thank God every day for you - for us.

I don't know about you, but I'm thinking of the humor, too. We were married on the 13th - our 10th anniversary is on a "dark" day, Friday the 13th. The college-owned house you lived in, where we were engaged, is long gone - demolished to make room for fancy condo-style living. The worship space once used by St. James is now classroom space for the adjoining school, as a new church stands nearby. We joke about all of the "doom and gloom" to those places important in our lives. I guess we realize it's our faith in one another, not the things, that binds us.

After all, we've faced less-superficial challenges. Fertility issues for more than seven years. Moves to places where we had no established relationships. The stuff of life. I'm thankful to have gone through it all with you.

I'm thankful each and every day that I share a family with you. Our Eli and Ella are so precious - true blessings. We didn't decide to get married because we thought we'd be great parents someday. But as fate would have it, I married the best mother in the world.

I'd be remiss to not also tell you how much I love your dedication and sacrifice to me. Seems like the best marriages out there are those where the two are one - unselfishly giving of each other. You've been a supporter of my dreams that I hope doesn't go unnoticed - from a move away from family after college to newspaper ownership at 26 years old.

I so look forward to many more years together. More todays of loving one another, caring for one another and, yes, squabbling now and then with one another. We'll be a little stubborn about sticking together. We'll be friends to the end.

With all my love,

Jake