

## For him, a millennium anniversary was just a matter of time

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Times Square at midnight. Confetti. Champagne. Come Jan. 1, 2000, there will already be a million snapshots of the new millennium.

Mine will look like this: It's a black-and-white photograph, curled at the corners and slightly torn. It is nearly 50 years old. In it, a 27-year-old man, an Ivy League WASP, and a 24-year-old woman, second-generation Irish-Italian, smile back at the camera. He's in a cutaway, his thick brown hair brushed back from his forehead, his cheeks creased by dimples. She stands beside him, dressed in an ivory silk gown and holding with both her hands a wedding bouquet of white stephanotis and freesias.

If you look closely, past the flowers and around the lace, you can see one more thing - the groom's left hand, placed gently but securely around the bride's right arm. It is a subtlety almost missed by the camera.

But not by me.

The bride and groom are my parents. The photograph, taken Nov. 18, 1950, is a picture of their wedding day - and for me, of the new millennium as well. How can this be? One reason is that my parents will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in 2000. But more important, because my father planned it that way. In fact, my father may well have been the very first person to make plans for the new millennium. A half-century ago, my mother, after four years of turning down his proposals, finally agreed to marry my father. In turn, my father insisted on marrying my mother as soon as possible - mainly so she wouldn't have time for second thoughts but also because he wanted their wedding to take place in 1950. The reason, you see - and the one he has often told his five children and 12 grandchildren - is that he wanted to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his wedding to my mother at the dawn of the third millennium, that is, in the year 2000.

And so it seems, with luck and continued good health, they will.

Regardless, the 50-year-old black-and-white photograph of my parents represents everything that most millennial photographs will not. The snapshots taken at midnight Jan. 1 will be snapshots of fleeting celebrations, of a once-in-a-lifetime euphoria made meaningful merely by a tick of the clock.

My millennial photograph - the one taken of my parents 50 years ago, is framed by a half-century of love and worry and laughter and fidelity. My father's belief that he and my

mother would celebrate their 50th anniversary seems, at the very least, hubristic; at worst, a kind of deranged optimism. But to my father, the millennium was just another landmark, another date in what for him was a known quantity: the future. It signified neither an end nor a beginning, just a way station. My father had a vision of the future and, as it turned out, it looked a lot like the past.

Three years after my father fell in love with my mother, literally across a crowded room but still three months before she would finally say "yes," they went to see the Broadway musical "Kiss Me, Kate." When my father took my mother home that night in June 1949, she broke up with him for what she thought was the last time. A few months later, my mother fell in love with my father, literally across a crowded room. It suddenly dawned on her, when she saw my father again at a party, what a fool she'd been. She walked up to my father and told him she'd marry him.

Last month, my parents, along with four of their children and their spouses, went to see the Broadway revival of "Kiss Me, Kate." It had been 51 years since my parents had seen it. My mother's eyesight was not as good as when she first saw the show. Neither was my father's hearing. But they remembered the play and the music and of course my mother gently letting my father down one more time. From the distance of a half-century, memories, marriage proposals and new millenniums are just reminders of continuity, of nothing more than the steady - and oh-so-predictable - parade of time.

When my parents left the theater last month, my mother remarked how it all seemed like yesterday. And indeed it was.

Only this time they went home together.