

Feb 26, 08

Dear Jennifer,

Thank you for interviewing Samara O'Shea. I had come across her book a while ago and flipped through it, but then misplaced the title.

Letter writing, you could say, is responsible for my marriage. When I was sixteen, I met a boy at summer camp in rural Minnesota. Mark was 15 and we met washing dishes after Sunday lunch at camp. We spent the afternoon and much of the rest of that week talking about our families, friends, our philosophies of life and our dreams.

When we left camp, we promised to write. I was not very confident, though, that Mark would write to me. I decided that I would not write to him until he first wrote to me. I did not want to seem too eager. However, within two days I received a thick envelope with

Mark's distinctive, angular printing on the front. I rapidly replied. This began an ongoing correspondence. Other teens dated. We exchanged lengthy tomes filled with earnest thoughts on life, daily happenings and measured revelations of our feelings for one another.

The following summer, Mark's family moved to Alabama— even further out of reach. Our letter writing continued. I would arrive home in the afternoon, walk in the front door and look toward the table to see if there was a letter in that welcome handwriting. If there was, my stomach would do a little flip and I would take the letter to my room and read it through a few times to extract every layer of meaning from it. Then it would travel with me through the day until it was replaced by the following installment.

Letters flew back and forth in flocks filled with poetry and

handmade cards, sprinkled with the occasional visit and regular telephone calls, for four years before he proposed to me and I said, "Yes."

My friends asserted that I really couldn't know someone I had spent so little time with very well. I contended that we had probably revealed much more of our deeper selves in those letters than if we'd been attending football games and watching movies together.

We still occasionally write letters of appreciation to one another. We've been married for seventeen years, and writing to each other for twenty-two. I would have to admit that his handwriting,

addressed to me, still makes my stomach do a little flip. Thanks for triggering the memories,

Lisa Scandrette

P.S. My kids, ages 14, 12 and 11, get a kick each Valentine's Day out of reading the letters that we have stored in a few large shoeboxes.