

Chicago Tribune

David McGrath: When it's true love, you embrace the person, flaws and all



Here is proof that on at least one occasion Marianne McGrath cuddled a puppy, but in general she is not a dog person, her husband says. It's one of her "flaws," David McGrath says. ([David McGrath/Naperville Sun](#))



By [David McGrath](#)

PUBLISHED: February 10, 2026 at 11:50 AM CST | UPDATED: February 10, 2026 at 11:54 AM CST

Just as William Shakespeare was not afraid to admit to the world that his mistress's eyes were "nothing like the sun," I shall likewise publicly admit this Valentine's Day that my true love snores like a lumberjack.

And lest anyone think this would anger my comely wife, Marianne, I am confident my darling will understand once I explain (right, hon?).

The Bard wrote 154 sonnets, the majority of them featuring the kind of romantic sentiment we celebrate on Valentine's Day. But Sonnet 130 may very well be the most popular for its testament to genuine love as opposed to superficial infatuation.

Following the opening verse with the characterization of his lady's eyes, Shakespeare proceeded to give a rundown of her other features in less than flattering terms, including her lips (pale), hair (wiry), voice (grating) and breath (reeking).

Imagine how irate his mistress must have been reading the first 12 lines of his 14-line poem! But he presumably defused her anger at the end when he swore that his love was more precious than all the women idealized by other poets with exaggeration and falsehood.

Truth be told, Marianne has her own set of peccadillos. Her snoring, I must concede, is not exactly her fault. All five of her sisters, equally lovely, have had the same loud and genetic tendency. I also have it on good authority that stars such as Rihanna, Ashley Tisdale and

Kaley Cucco (www.nairaland.com/2331288/20-celebrities-drive-partners-crazy) have been known to saw wood as well. So, she finds herself in good company.

Next, though my true love is fundamentally a good cook, her meals often have a glaring deficiency. I don't mean the occasional hair found in the eggs Benedict or chicken cacciatore; that can happen with any chef. Instead, I refer to her fear of anything hot or spicy.

For weeks, I swore I must have had COVID-19, convinced that my taste buds were out of commission. But when I tested negative, a search of the pantry turned up the real reason: a complete set of Mrs. Dash salt-free variety seasoning! It wasn't COVID but those seven different shaker jars that left everything tasting like tofu.

What may be more troubling, I am reluctant to say, is that my love is not a dog person. How she is able to resist petting every tail wagger she encounters on her morning walk is befuddling to me and her daughters. Regarding our own pooches over the years, Biff, Casey and Frank, she would never kiss or cuddle them (OK, maybe one time with Frank when he was a puppy — see photo) or allow them to lick her knees.

Finally, it pains me to admit that my love's taste in music leaves much to be desired. On long drives, she likes the Supremes, Billy Joel, Anne Murray, Dan Fogelberg and the kind of tunes that trigger in me the same impulse John Belushi had in "Animal House," when he busted up that troubadour's guitar. And, yes, she'll let me play my Pearl Jam, Smashing Pumpkins and Nas in our car, but she asks that I choke the volume so far down that my Bose speakers beg for mercy.

Her film preference leans at a similar angle: she steers clear of “The Godfather,” “The Deer Hunter” or “Unforgiven” in favor of “Mamma Mia!,” “It’s a Wonderful Life” and “The Homecoming” — anything with a happy ending. Our DVR’s memory is so full of Hallmark movies that there’s little room left for my hunting and fishing shows.

Far be it for me, however, to dare emulate Shakespeare’s dramatic turn at the end with rhyming verses of iambic pentameter.

Instead, I’ll conclude with a quick story about driving Marianne to the hospital last month when she was afflicted with kidney stones.

The nurse came to get me in the waiting room and said the treatment was a success and that Marianne was coming out of anesthesia in the recovery room.

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Anyone who has had kidney stones will tell you there is no greater pain and agony. So, what was the first thing she said to me? “Did you ever get breakfast? You must be starving.”

The single moment captures her character better than any list of adjectives or rhyming words could ever do. And that's why there is no love more exceptional than my Valentine.

David McGrath is an emeritus English professor at the College of DuPage and author of "Far Enough Away," a collection of Chicagoland stories.