

Love at first sight can happen anywhere

By Christine Marek

It happened as a chance meeting. Two strangers make eye contact at a South Tempe Assisted Living Center and within five minutes their lives are changed forever.

Eighteen months later these strangers, who are now bride and groom, married last Sunday, August 26th at the very site where they first met. More than 130 people attended the celebration and surprisingly a majority of the witnesses were the people who live at the assisted living center and their families.

Judy Hoeffler, a receptionist at the Carestone Assisted Living Center in South Tempe, was at her desk doing her job when Jon Forner walks in the door to repair one of the office desks.

"The first thing I saw when I looked at Judy is her incredible long black hair," said Forner. "I went to repair the desk and before I walked out the front doors I turned to Judy and I just had to say, 'You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen'. She thanked me for the compliment and then, for some reason, I blurted out 'I'd sure love to come home to you every night'."

When asked what Hoeffler, a twice divorced 52 year old single mother of three plus two grandchildren, thought of the direct compliments from Forner, a 45 year bachelor, she said her reaction was instant, "I told him that I was available and asked him to call me sometime".

Since then Forner and Hoeffler admit that they have become inseparable and the best of friends. "The whole experience is totally mind-blowing to me" said Forner. "I cannot imagine loving or being with anyone else for the rest of my life. Judy is the most loving, caring and affectionate person I have ever met and I know I will never find anyone else like her ever again."

The 75 residents at Carestone are ecstatic about the couples fortunate meeting as well. Eunice Goldberg, Carestone's Recreation Director, explained how the people who live at the center feel extremely close to those who work there. Judy has been at the center for two years and has been a very important part of their lives during this time. Her meeting Jon at "their home" so to speak, makes them feel greatly responsible for this incredible romantic reunion.

With the residents in mind and the approval to use Carestone's reception facilities, the couple decided to have the wedding right at the location where they met. "It makes it so easy, especially for those who are not mobile, to attend the wedding and reception," Hoeffler said. "It wouldn't be complete without them all there to celebrate our special day."

Pauline Kezmoh, a Carestone resident, was especially overcome by emotion and happiness for the newly wed couple. Coincidentally, on the very day Judy and Jon are married it marked her 54th wedding anniversary with her late husband, who had passed away only nine months ago.

"It was a very exciting and joyful event to share with our residents," said Mary Meininger, Carestone's General Manager. "Often you would hear them talking about the coming day and say sweet things to each other like what are you going to wear to Judy's wedding."

Susan Post, Carestone's Director of Communications, said that this will be the first wedding that they have had since the place opened in May 1999. "We do many special things around here for the residents, like lunch outings, trips to casino's, we are even planning a T.V. beauty makeover for some of the residents on Channel 3 with Rolf in September. But nothing compares to the anticipation and joy that this wedding has given."

After the wedding, the party doesn't end there. The day after the wedding, the newly married couple are planning to meet up with the Carestone group at Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino. "It is

something that I have done with them every year”, Judy said. “Jon and I thought it would be fun to share some of our honeymoon time with the people who helped make our dream come true.”

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