

Sun shines on spring wedding at the Res



Photo Pippa Fisher

Lafayette couple have a perfect sunny day for their wedding at the Lafayette Reservoir March 30.

By Pippa Fisher

With the iconic Lafayette reservoir as a backdrop, and under glorious sunshine, a local Lafayette couple tied the knot March 30 on the Rotary stage in front of family and friends. It's not an everyday sight up at the res, and although not a first for the park, it was especially meaningful to the couple.

The couple, Ginny Wehrmeister and John Quell, are known to many locally, having worked for years in theater and music right here in Lafayette.

It is a tale of two people destined to be together in what, it turns out, is a very small world. Despite having many of the same connections, knowing many of the same people and even attending some of the same events prior to meeting, it

took an online dating app for the two to finally meet in the fall of 2016.

"It still befuddles me that we knew so many of the same people but not each other," says Wehrmeister.

"Our very first date was at El Charro – I'll never forget when we were planning our first date and we realized we both worked in Lafayette. Realizing that he knew Rena Wilson and Renee DeWeese (co-founders of Performing Academy), longtime friends and future bosses of mine, and worked at Lamorinda Music – a place I frequented. It was mind-blowing," says Wehrmeister.

"We saw each other a total of six times that week – including a picnic lunch at the Lafayette Reservoir," remembers Wehrmeister.

"We probably crossed

paths a few times before we met since we worked in such close vicinity to each other," she says. In fact, Quell had taken a date to see "Play it Again, Sam" at Town Hall Theatre for which Wehrmeister won a Theatre Bay Area award.

Quell, originally from Norwalk, Connecticut, is the instrument repair technician at Lamorinda Music. A talented musician, he plays locally for a number of bands and is first chair alto sax player for the Walnut Creek Concert Band. He also plays clarinet and flute. Wehrmeister works right above Lamorinda Music at the Performing Academy as their program manager where she oversees all their after-school and summer programming and provides support to families, students, and teaching artists.

"It's funny, the repair tech prior to John ended up marry-

ing a Performing Academy employee as well," says Wehrmeister.

As it happened, the previous Lamorinda Music instrument repair tech was someone Quell knew from school in Washington where he worked for a time after graduation. "When he (the previous tech) moved to another job he reached out to me to apply. I came down and loved the store, (and) John and Colleen (McCormick), and moved down shortly after the interview and have been here since the fall of 2015," explains Quell.

Prior to working at the Performing Academy Wehrmeister, who grew up in Concord, worked at Town Hall Theatre. She explains "After graduation I moved home and found a job working as a teaching artist at Town Hall Theatre. I started out there doing whatever they would allow me - I costumed student productions, I was in a handful of their main stage productions and I taught the love of theater to ages 5-18 years old. I began working full time at Town Hall as a resident teaching artist and then later their director of education."

And it was on the same Rotary stage at the reservoir that Wehrmeister brought many of her THT students to perform at the annual Concerts at the Res over the years. "I've personally overseen about six Concerts at the Res," she says. "Town Hall was invited back every year, our students have performed everything from Gilbert and

Sullivan to Sondheim to Carol King. It's always a highlight to the start of summer."

The wedding was a truly local affair with Stanley Middle School music teacher Bob Athayde, playing piano. Wehrmeister explains that Quell met Athayde while working on the school's many instruments.

In yet another example of the small world in which they both knew the same people but not each other, Wehrmeister relates how local realtor and THT Board Vice President Tom Stack knew both of them separately. "Tom Stack met John at Lamorinda Music and learned John was interested in buying a house. Tom took John around when he first moved here and showed him real estate. Flash forward to two years later when I brought John along as my date to the Shelly Awards. Tom was very surprised – two worlds colliding," she says.

Stack says that Wehrmeister's contributions at THT were groundbreaking, noting, "The inroads she made into the community were spectacular. She was a big part of the family we have there. Operative word – family."

And yes, it was Stack who found them their home. "They are two fantastic people and putting them in there first home together was as good a feeling as you can get in my business. I couldn't be more happy for them," he says.

Peace, Love plus Pancakes – an event for the whole family

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Lorie and his team of many helpers, including Karlene Steelman, Moose Wesler and Sonya Twyman, are pleased that all of the

evening's proceeds go directly to the JBFC schools (www.mainsprings.org), who's motto is "Ending poverty – one child, one community at a time."

"We raise, on average,

around \$4,000 each year. We've raised over \$20,000 in the five years we've run the

event," Lorie proudly stated. "We encourage the school to use the money in the ways

that they seem best fits. In the past, this has gone to meals, scholarships and supplies."

Info: To buy advance tickets to the event, donate or for more information visit: <https://www.1000lunches.org/dinner>.




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Orinda Watch sponsors town hall to protest CASA Compact and SB 50

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Zeller said that the state is using a "sledge hammer approach where maybe a tweezer would do. Local control," he noted, "is really at risk."

Bronstein described the MTC as "rich, powerful, and feared." She gave a rapid-fire presentation filled with facts about the CASA Compact and Assembly Bill 1487, which focuses on housing development financing, but spoke so fast that a member of the audience pleaded with her to slow down. She responded that she couldn't because she had so much information to impart, although she did say that she would try.

Bronstein calls the resulting CASA Compact a coup because it was an ad hoc with no legal authority with access to large amounts of public funding to formulate major policies for the state legislature. She says that the CASA Compact assumes that selfish homeowners don't want new housing, that cities refuse to build housing, that onerous laws including local zoning and CEQA have strangled new housing production, and that the Bay Area must ceaselessly grow, "whatever the cost." Her proffered solution to the housing crisis is to stop approving new tech offices in the Bay Area.

Bronstein also spoke about AB 1487, which proposes to create a new, independent regional governmental agency, The Housing Alliance for the Bay Area, with authority to levy taxes, issue debt, and buy and sell land for housing development, and ACA-1, a California Constitutional amendment that would, among other things, lower the voter threshold from 66 percent to 55 percent to approve local general obligation bonds and special taxes for affordable

housing and public infrastructure projects.

Kirsch talked about meetings with legislators with the goals of education, information and advocacy, while Richards gave a PowerPoint presentation that focused on the specific effects of the proposed legislation.

Richards described the CASA Compact and SB 50 as a "classic top-down, autocratic, Soviet-style plan ... developed in backrooms." He warned that Orinda is particularly vulnerable because it is classified as a "jobs rich" community since the median income in the city is twice the state's median income. Under the proposed legislation, he claims that the building density of Orinda could potentially triple and that all of Orinda would be affected, not just the areas near the BART station. Attendees of the town hall were provided with form letters to send to their state senators asking them to "please kill the CASA Compact's SB 50 and related bills." During the meeting, Orinda City Council Member Amy Worth garnered some harsh criticism. Worth, an MTC commissioner, came to the podium to explain her positions.

The CASA Compact and related legislation were also discussed at the March 19 Orinda City Council meeting. City Manager Steve Salomon told the council that the mayors of Orinda, Lafayette and Moraga will meet to help coordinate the response of the local communities to the CASA Compact and SB 50 and related bills.

Worth said that the MTC and ABAG did not endorse the CASA Compact, and that ABAG is setting up an additional group to provide feedback. She said that there is a huge amount of momentum in Sacramento, where the governor in his inaugural address said that housing is

one of his priorities and stressed the importance of working with the authors of bills.

Council Member Dennis Fay pointed out that the CASA Compact means nothing if it is not implemented by legislation. He suggested that rather than straightforward opposition, "you'll do better if you can provide legislators with rational reasons why their bills don't get them where they want to go." He pointed out that San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara have a housing crisis because they have added 9,000 new jobs. But, he said, "if we build housing far away, we'll kill the transportation system." Contra Costa County has a 5:1 job to housing ratio, he continued, and Walnut Creek and Concord have been approving a lot of new housing.

Fay added that you can't get amendments unless you oppose a bill.

Darlene Gee stated that she is "deeply disappointed with the CASA Compact," which, she said, relies on sticks rather than carrots. She is deeply disappointed that it does not address transport issues, which, she said, are enormous. She said that she is also deeply disappointed that there hasn't been any effort to change the effects of Proposition 13 on commercial properties.

Mayor Inga Miller suggested that barriers should be removed to encourage the building of accessory dwelling units. She also noted that Contra Costa County needs jobs.

"We have empty office space," she said. "Bring us jobs and we'll build housing."

Worth agreed that moving jobs to the East Bay is particularly important, noting that the League of Cities is working hard to identify positions and that she is confident that Orinda