

A Perfect Fit



JOAN REDDEN AND ROBERT BARGE WERE NEVER THE TYPE TO SIT AROUND AND WAIT FOR LOVE TO FIND THEM. LUCKILY, LOVE CAUGHT UP WITH THEM ANYHOW...

by Jennifer Teel-Wolter



"I wasn't expecting much, so I didn't really pay too much attention," says Joan. "But then one day I joked to Ryan that his friend had never emailed me back. Well, he called Robert who said that he did respond to my email and that I was the one who never got back to him afterward...But, I figured I had nothing to lose, so I emailed him again, and that time we connected!"

After a few phone calls, Joan and Robert agreed to meet on his way back into town after a weekend away. But, on Sunday, his plans changed and he called to say that he would be unable to make their date. After her evening dance class, Joan sent Robert a text message on a whim, asking if he'd like to join her for dinner. Even though he was in the middle of a training session, a top priority for his career, Robert followed a gut feeling and stopped - right in the middle of the session - to go meet Joan. As it turns out, it was a life changing decision.

"From that first dinner, we just knew...right away," smiles Joan. "We made plans to see each other again on Thursday, but on Monday morning he text messaged me and said 'Do you really want to wait until Thursday?'" I saved that text message. It was all history from there."

To say it was love at first sight would be an understatement. Robert told his friends at the gym the very next day that he'd found the girl he was going to marry, and Joan was equally smitten. So in spite of their busy schedules and careers, the two followed their hearts and dove into the relationship. Just two months later, Robert asked Joan to become his wife.

"It was a really simple, special moment. We were just hanging out in our jammies over Christmas break and drinking our morning coffee. He took out the ring and he proposed. It was perfect," Joan remembers.

Despite the whirlwind speed of their romance, Joan and Robert never had any doubts. Common goals and interests may have provided the initial bond, but they quickly realized that their individual natures were a perfect compliment to the other's. Robert's optimism and drive offered Joan a new adventure every day, while her nurturing spirit and gentle generosity provided them with the support they needed to achieve their goals, both professionally and as a couple.

"It sounds cheesy, but when you know, you know. It doesn't matter how long it's been...and we just knew. We couldn't wait to be a family together," says Joan.

The excited couple immediately shared their news with family and friends. Both being family-oriented, it was important that their families come together right away - long before the wedding. So, Joan and Robert organized an engagement dinner to introduce their loved ones. The bond that the couple felt for each other easily extended to the families, who welcomed one another with open arms. And, as they moved into planning their wedding, Joan and Robert vowed to keep that sense of family and intimacy at the center of their day.

While they both were settled in the Sacramento region, neither Joan nor Robert was originally from the area, which led to some debate over where to hold the wedding. Joan grew



Ambitious, energetic, and passionate about health and fitness, it's easy to see that Joan Redden and Robert Barge were made for one another. Yet, with all their commonalities and shared goals, it was only through a twist of fate that the two ever met.

It was the fall of 2006, and both Joan and Robert were hard at work with their respective careers - Joan was excelling in the mortgage and financial planning industry and Robert was making a name for himself in the field of personal fitness training. In spite of their outgoing personalities and stacked social calendars, neither had much time, or inclination, for dating.

"Robert and I had both recently gotten out of relationships that didn't end well, so we weren't really into dating..." says Joan. "At that point, we were just so focused on our careers, we didn't have time to date."

Even though Joan maintained that work left her too busy for a love life, a persistent client was determined to get her back in the game. Ryan frequently asked Joan about her weekend plans and good-naturedly chided her for not seeing anyone, saying she was too young to be so serious. Finally, Joan

jokingly asked if he had anyone specific in mind for her to date. Ryan immediately answered: Yes, his good friend Robert.

"Ironically enough, I'd never met Ryan in person at this point. All of our communication was over the phone or through emails," remembers Joan. "How amazing is it that he didn't even have to meet me to know that I was perfect for his friend?"

What made Joan and Robert such an obvious match? It's not everyday you find two people who love sports and fitness this much! Robert, a personal trainer, had a passion for Tae Kwon Do, bodybuilding, and boxing. He'd started his own business providing training, nutrition planning, dietary supplements, in-home gym design, and children's programs. In addition to regular fitness training, Joan played soccer, participated in gymnastics, and danced in many styles, including ballet, jazz, and tap.

Knowing their similar interests, Ryan passed along Robert's email to Joan and encouraged her to contact him. She decided to take a chance and shot an introductory email off to Robert. Three months passed with no reply.

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up in the Bay Area, while Robert's family hailed from the East Coast. After taking a family trip to visit Robert's relatives in North Carolina, the couple had their hearts set on a beach ceremony near his childhood hometown.

"When we went to North Carolina, I saw a side of him I'd never seen before. He was so relaxed and at peace. I could see how much this place meant to him, that's why I wanted to get married there," Joan explains. While the atmosphere was everything the couple hoped for, calm, beautiful, and traditional, planning a wedding on the opposite coast proved to be a monumental task. The bride had only visited the region once and didn't have the necessary contacts to find a venue, caterer, and other wedding necessities. Furthermore, arranging for their West Coast family, friends, and colleagues to travel to North Carolina was proving to be nearly impossible. Stressed out and overwhelmed, Joan and Robert made the decision to move their wedding back to California.

But, with Joan transitioning into

a challenging job in the health care industry and Robert opening up a new boxing and martial arts academy, they knew they needed help to get their Big Day up and running. They enlisted the help of Michelle Klaff, owner of Elegant Events by Michelle. In addition to being a talented wedding planner, Michelle was also a longtime friend of the groom – making planning easy and comfortable.

Wanting to preserve the elegant, waterfront feel of their original East Coast vision, the bride and groom opted to have an outdoor ceremony at Folsom Lake, followed by a reception at Serrano Country Club. Joan built on the classy theme and selected a simple, traditional white gown with an empire waist and pearls down the back, adding a high-necked bolero jacket for an "Audrey Hepburn" look.

But it wasn't enough to craft an event that was just elegant; it was also very important to the bride and groom that the wedding day honor their families and feel intimate. In keeping with Barge

family tradition, they began the wedding festivities with a pre-ceremony brunch for the family. They also selected only family members for their bridal party - choosing just one bridesmaid, Joan's mother, a best man, and Robert's father to stand beside them on wedding day. The ceremony was small and close-knit; only a handful of close family and friends attended to witness the vows.

At the reception, Michelle worked with the bride to bring her vision of classic, sophisticated elegance to life. Angie Zimmerman, owner of Heavenly Flowers and Events, complimented the natural beauty of Serrano Country Club by designing décor in shades of champagne and cream, building off the slate rock, natural wood, and calm color tones of the room. Joan also chose to add a pop of color to her flowers by incorporating her husband-to-be's signature color: orange.

During the cocktail hour, the event featured several personal details that celebrated the happy couple. Sweet tea was served as a nod to Robert's North Carolina heritage and, to capture their

sporty style, a series of fun engagement photos taken at Robert's boxing academy were showcased on the bar, along with other childhood photos of past sporting events and accomplishments.

In spite of the ups and downs planning the event, the go-getter couple had finally achieved their number one goal – a flawless wedding to unite them as husband and wife.

"In the end, it's easy not to worry about the small stuff for the wedding...We were married a long time ago in our hearts," says Joan. "The wedding is just a chance to display and proclaim that, but he's been my husband since the day I fell in love with him."

So, where does the ultimate power couple go from here?

"We'd love to start a family," says Joan. "We can't wait to dive in and see what's next, experience all the things that couples do...We just want to grow ourselves and fulfill our dreams."

With a track record of life, love, and success, there's no doubt that they'll find 'a perfect fit' for their dreams as well.

PHOTOS BY JEFF WALTERS & ASSISTANT KRISTA DEDRIKSEN OF UNIQUE PHOTOGRAPHY
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FLOWERS BY ANGIE ZIMMERMAN OF HEAVENLY FLOWERS & EVENTS
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