



WEDDING PAST from the

Darlene Borg interviewed **Christine Galea** who tied the knot with her husband John on 30 May 1982. It was a Sunday morning wedding and this year they are celebrating their 25th (silver) anniversary

Christine tells me that they started their relationship during their second year at St. Aloysius College Sixth Form in 1978. Nine months later, they got engaged. This is due to the fact that John was supposed to leave for pilot training abroad and they wanted to formalise their relationship. However, for various reasons, the training was delayed, only to materialise before the birth of their first daughter in 1984!! After four years of courting, they decided to tie the knot. Christine nostalgically recalls how her father was really excited and was directly involved in their wedding preparations, especially since she was the first of his daughters to get married.

With tears in her eyes Christine says that, unfortunately, six months before the wedding, her father died suddenly. On hearing this sad news I had a lump in my throat! Christine and John's first reaction was to cancel the wedding. However, despite the unfortunate situation, her mother plucked up courage and took all the wedding preparations in hand. This surprised everyone as her mother used to depend a lot on her husband, but she wanted to fulfill his dream and continue what he had left unfinished. As one can imagine, it wasn't easy for Christine to accept the death of her father and certain wedding preparations were even delayed.

The couple chose St Aloysius's chapel to exchange their vows since they had met there. >>

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As was the tradition, her parents paid for all the wedding expenses. (Christine remarks how much more expensive everything is today, in comparison).

The couple placed a wedding list at two different outlets and cash gifts weren't even considered. Her mother was very fussy about etiquette so they kept a register and ticked what gifts the guests gave them and sent everyone a personalized thank you note. This caused some pressure as they wanted the thank-you notes to be sent out to everyone before the wedding! No souvenirs were distributed as this trend wasn't in at the time. The invitations were a reminder of her father's involvement in the preparations since he had already ordered them before he died.

On the day, Christine's brother took over the role of their father and walked her down the aisle. 350 people were invited to the wedding. As soon as the couple entered the venue, they greeted all their guests since Christine's mother didn't like the idea of having guests queuing up in order to welcome the bride and the groom. The catering was in the expert hands of the venue but the cake was homemade and beautifully decorated by her Mum and her aunt. It was a wonderful wedding, however out of respect towards the loss of her father, no music was played during the reception. Christine's uncle Joe Fenech, a talented baritone, sang hymns during Mass.

Although the wedding date hadn't been moved, Christine admits that the preparations are still something of a blur due to her father's death. Having said this, Christine adds that she still went into the marriage preparations wholeheartedly because she knew that her father was watching over them from above.

Some months before, the couple had been to an Egyptian wedding, where it was the custom for the guests to shower the spouses with gold coins, for prosperity. Christine liked the idea and they purchased some which were mixed with the rice (which her mother had patiently dyed peach to match the bridesmaids' dresses). Christine recalls how she and John both thoroughly enjoyed the day and were very relaxed. In fact, they had warned the photographer beforehand to keep photos to a minimum because they did not wish to spend the whole wedding posing for pictures. >>



On their 15th anniversary

<< The reception venue (which had already been chosen by her father) was at Villa Anna Theresa in St Julian's. Christine explained that her mother was the type of person who always left everything to the very last minute so to put her own mind at rest, she bought her wedding gown during a trip to Rome, two months before, together with her mother, her bridesmaids and her best friend, Angela.

This was a wonderful week, as apart from several trips to the shops to choose the wedding gown, they made a holiday out of it and tried to ease the pain of her father's loss. The bridesmaids' shoes and some other items for the wedding were also purchased in Rome.

Together with the help of her aunt, Christine's

On hearing Christine talking non-stop about all the preparations I immediately asked her about her husband's involvement in their 'Big' day. She burst out laughing. Like many other grooms, John left everything in her hands and simply went to try on the suit that

he was going to wear. Her mother-in-law, however, gave her a lot of moral support.

Christine's aunt made all the flower arrangements. Christine wanted a white bouquet of roses and her aunt did everything she could to find roses that were large enough, but it proved to be a problem in the month of May. So instead she embellished them with white chiffon so that they would look bigger. This bouquet was placed at her father's grave the day after the wedding. Unlike nowadays, less importance was given to hair and make up, and friends pitched in to achieve the final look.

"IT'S NOT ONLY the wedding BUT the marriage THAT ONE SHOULD PREPARE FOR"

mother made all the bridesmaids' dresses a few weeks before the wedding. As was characteristic of her mother, the going away outfit was sewn just two days before the wedding, but despite these delays Christine knew that her mother would never let her down.

The colour peach was really in fashion at that time so it wasn't difficult to decide on the chifon material for the bridesmaids' dresses. Culottes had just entered the fashion scene in the early '80s so that was what Christine chose for her going away outfit - laughingly, she says that nowadays she wouldn't be seen wearing those type of trousers even if she were paid to do so!



John and Christine with their daughters Elizabeth, Sarah and Rachel

<< Their friends Angela and Paul got married two days after them. The grooms were best men at each other's wedding and the two couples even went on their honeymoon together. They had just started working, and had saved little money so they opted for a cheap honeymoon to Vienna and Hungary, which only cost each couple about Lm300! They made their bookings through NSTS and had a nice guesthouse in Vienna but unfortunately in Hungary

they were placed in a youth hostel with separate beds! They enjoyed it thoroughly and promised each other that they would repeat the same experience - this time in style - 25 years later. Today, their friends are parents to three sons and John and Christine have three daughters. In June they are going on holiday to Vienna just as they promised 25 years ago!

"But we're definitely not staying in a youth hostel this time," adds Christine with a laugh.

Christine wishes to pass on this message to everyone who is either already married or is preparing for their Big Day:

"We have had many, many joys and blessings during our life together, however, every family goes through difficult times, over such a long span of years and we have been no exception. My advice is never to give up, even if at a particular time one cannot see a solution to the problems life has in store. I really believe in the power of prayer and in the value of commitment. Marriage is a sacrament, which bestows upon the couple the grace of God. In a Catholic marriage, there are three persons in the marriage - the bride, the groom and God himself. Unfortunately, many couples make many preparations for the wedding but fail to focus on the relationship itself. Dialogue is an important feature between two people and one must speak openly about everything, not only during their courtship, but also in the years following their marriage."

I would like to add how much I admire Christine, especially because of her unyielding faith. On hearing her message I wish to share with you some advice given to me by a priest, which is still engraved in my memory. He told me these precise words: there are three rings - the 'engagement ring', the 'marriage ring' and the 'suffer ring.'

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