



Larisa Mindra Design

I Do, I Do

Internet, trip to France bring couple together

By M.C. Finotti

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Dana Merritt and Bill Choisser were single for the last 12 years. She was a widow; he was divorced. And after hearing the successful stories of friends and family members who found love on the Internet, Dana and Bill decided to give it a try.

They each signed up for eHarmony in December 2009 and by April 2010 Bill had taken Dana to dinner. They liked each other but both say they didn't really connect. For instance: "I love to fish," said Dana, 54, a speech pathologist. "And so I put a picture on my profile that showed me standing next to a stuffed sailfish that I caught." Bill picked up the story: "But that didn't say to me that she loved fishing," he explained. "If there had been a picture of her holding up a fish she just caught or cleaning a fish, then that would have been a different story."

The two saw each other sporadically over the next year and a half, when they went fishing in Bill's 45-foot boat. On the last of those excursions, in August, Bill asked Dana to travel to France with him.

Dana was reluctant.

"And I was like, 'Really Bill? How is that going to work? We've been fishing four times and you want to go to France?'" But her parents said "Go" and her son said "Go," so Dana went. And there, in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, Dana and Bill enjoyed their first kiss.

"We didn't feel like we really knew each other until we got out of the country and out of our lives," said Bill, 62, an attorney and a doctor with a family practice in Orange Park. During their 10-day trip, the two realized they enjoyed the same food, the same jokes, the same politics and the same religious beliefs. "We fell in love," Dana said.

Three months later, Bill proposed while Dana was taking notes in church on her pastor's sermon. Bill borrowed the notebook and wrote, "Will you marry me?" Dana wrote back. "Yes!!!" Four weeks later, on Dec. 10, the two said "I do" at Resurrection Episcopal Church on Fort Caroline Road. They call their marriage more than luck — a blessing. And they both know they likely never would have met, but for the Internet.

If you or someone you know has an interesting love story that led to the altar recently, email features@jacksonville.com. Include a wedding picture.