

Love in bloom

From their initial meeting onward, Mark and Ann knew they had a lot in common personally and professionally. Given the family atmosphere at BAYADA, they didn't just talk about company matters. They also chatted about their kids, who were close in age. It wasn't long before both of them felt a romantic spark.

Mark had a strict "no dating employees" policy. Under his self-imposed rule, he felt that if he and Ann became a couple, she'd have to leave the company. It was very unlike Mark to go against his own rule, but he and Ann decided that a low-key date couldn't hurt.

BELOW: Mark and Ann's courtship included plenty of family outings with all five kids. This was one of the first. Left to right in 1991: Kelli, Janice, Jackie, David, and Christin.



At the same time, they both believed that strong relationships with their kids and between the kids would be essential if they were to have a future together. After a short time dating, they decided to take the five youngsters to a family-friendly restaurant. And it was a success.

"I've always loved Mark," says Kelli, Ann's middle daughter. From that very first gathering, she liked being around him. Looking back, Ann's daughters say that Mark had a comforting effect on all of them. He is a happy dad, with a limitless well of paternal love. "There was space for Mark to fill and we needed it," says Jackie, the oldest daughter. "I wouldn't have identified it as relief at the time, but we were happy about them being together."

The first family date led to several more. "We wouldn't just go out on a Saturday night. We'd plan a whole Saturday with the kids," Ann says.

From preschooler Christin to 12-year-olds Jackie and David, everyone got along. Kelli and Janice bonded almost immediately. "Us" and "them" feelings rarely arose—a remarkable situation that has never changed. Granted, David was the only boy, but the girls teased him that they were preparing him for an all-female future. (They were right, as David grew up to have two daughters.)

The gestation of the new family, and the emotional support it brought, came at a particularly good time. Before Mark and Ann started dating, Mark had lost his father to colon cancer. After Larry's passing, Mark's mom, who had experienced a stroke several years prior, moved in with Mark, David, and Janice. Larry had always insisted on caring for his wife, Anne, by himself. Now Mark hired a BAYADA