

# MADISON

## NEIGHBORS

FEBRUARY 2023

Meet the  
Flanders



Anne & Rich Flanders  
at the piano

## Meet the Flanders

By Lisa Lelas • Photos by Shantel Berg

Anne and Rich truly have a classic Valentine love story. A story of first loves and second chances. Both rising actors and singers, the couple met in the tumult of 1968 at the American Music & Dramatic Academy (AMDA) in NYC. "On the very first day of school, I saw him walk by and my heart sang," smiles Anne. Their courtship was inevitable. But, after the sudden loss of Anne's father and the deep grief that followed, Anne and Rich went their separate ways. 45 years later, when Anne heard that Rich's wife had passed, she sent him a condolence card and he reached out to say thank you. "We began chatting and despite still grieving for my wife, I realized that the more I was in touch with Anne, the better I felt," remembers Rich. Their first date, after over four decades apart, was just after Valentine's Day. "It was like 45 years never even happened," Rich explained, "when our eyes met, it was soul to soul. I was still in a state of grief but realized I was also falling in love simultaneously!" Three dates later, they decided to get married! This year, the couple will celebrate their ten-year wedding anniversary.

Anne Tarpey-Flanders was born in Greenwich Village, NYC and raised in Eastchester, NY with one younger brother. She had considered following her dad's footsteps as a doctor but instead majored in psychology at the College of Mount Saint Vincent where she also discovered the joy of performing in plays and musicals. After graduation, Anne enrolled at

AMDA, a full-time two-year arts academy in NYC. "Of course, this is where I met Rich. He had me at the first song! We were poor struggling actors at the time but a big romance was brewing and he saved enough money to take me out to lunch. We began dating soon after." As Anne reflects on this first chapter of their love story, both of their hearts were broken when they went their separate ways.

Anne stayed single and busy playing leading roles in plays, musicals and one-woman cabaret shows – all while working in restaurant management. (Actors need to eat!)

She returned to NYU for a Master's degree in social work leading to a career in organizational learning and leadership development in NYC major medical centers. "Remembering the kindness my father expressed to his patients, I became an early developer in the field of Service Excellence – improving patient experience, developing leaders and workforce engagement. After relocating for three years to Washington, DC as a senior healthcare consultant with the Gallup Organization, I missed my family. I accepted a position as Service Excellence Officer at Westchester Medical Center, a five-hospital regional trauma center, serving the Hudson Valley, NY. Totally happy with my career, family, friends and staying single, I said to some friends, 'God would have to drop a perfect man in my life to change



Rich reading an excerpt from his book, "Under the Great Elm"

that! Two weeks later, I re-connected with Rich. Like a lightning bolt, we rekindled our love and were married within the year. Second chances are rare gifts. You have to trust the force of destiny and take a leap of faith. I told my startled boss, 'I'm sorry but I finally fell in love and I gotta go now!' ..and here we are living, loving, singing and thriving in Madison, our kingdom by the sea. For us, life certainly came full circle!

Rich was born in Aurora, Illinois and raised in Western Springs, IL, with one younger sister. "It was an idyllic Norman Rockwell type of small town," he



Anne & Rich will celebrate their 10th Anniversary at the end of this year!

says, "but at age ten, my family moved to San Mateo, California. My father had been a musician in the big band era, so I grew up around music." During summers at San Francisco State University, Rich roamed and worked across the West. Upon graduating, he enlisted in the US Army and served in Paris, France at the US European Command Center. "After the service, I stayed in Europe for a while and volunteered on a kibbutz on the Gaza Strip in Israel. When I returned to the States in 1968 after four years away, I got accepted at AMDA and moved to New York. I saw this beautiful Irish looking girl

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named Anne and my heart leaped. I was devastated after our break-up.” Rich went on to become an accomplished actor and singer, appearing in ‘Shenandoah’ on Broadway and the first national Broadway tour of ‘Annie.’ He also started working for the Shaklee Corporation, distributing health & nutrition products and met and married his first wife, Amy. He kept performing, singing with various groups, and recording. His first album, ‘Yondering,’ won The Will Rogers Cowboy Award. “When my wife died suddenly, Anne was not on my radar. I was in a state of grief. But when we met again after all those years, I knew it was meant to be.”

After Rich and Anne got married, the couple began looking for a new home. “We looked around the Hudson Valley area for an entire year, but nothing clicked for us,” said Anne, “then we called a friend who is a psychic. She said, ‘don’t you both need to be by the sea?’ and we thought, ‘yes, yes we do!’ We looked at a map and saw these intriguing Connecticut shoreline towns. When we first saw our house in Madison, we knew it was meant to be. It was February 16, exactly one year from our first ‘reunion’ dinner date. We love it here!”

Adjusting to life on the CT shore was easy for them. “We sing together,” explains Rich, “in NY and CT including some local fundraisers at the First Congregational Church, Madison, to help restore the mighty 1930 Moller pipe organ and also for refugee relocation. Over the 45 years of separation, Anne and I actually lived very parallel lives, never losing our passion for performing, worthy causes, and our mutual love for the sea.”

*Rich and Anne Flanders, a match made of second chances!*



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