

~ A Love Story ~

Eric Fried and JulieAnne Sherwood

Eric Fried likes to say their romance started the old fashioned way — in a bar, at happy hour.

Eric, a man of many skills, was carrying eight beers between his fingers back to his friends at The Public House in Center City Philadelphia. It was a Friday night, Sept. 29, 2006.



JulieAnne, squeezing her way toward the bar, noticed not his dexterity at first, but his strong jaw and Clark Kent good looks. She almost out loud said “Wow,” and reacted fast.

“Are you thinking of getting a job here,” she quipped as he passed by.

“Maybe I should,” he replied.

Five minutes later, Eric was at her side. They talked for the next three or four hours.

An information architect for Independence Blue Cross, JulieAnne wasn't even going to go out that

night, but had been to the salon that day and couldn't waste a great haircut. “It was all pretty and fabulous and insisted on a night out,” she said.

Eric, a secret service agent, immediately noticed her beauty, but also loved her self-confidence and her sass. He knew that night this was a girl he could marry.

There was one little obstacle first. Eric, 35, a former Marine who runs marathons and competes in triathlons, teased her that they couldn't start dating unless she passed the Secret Service physical training test.

“He texted me the entire thing,” said JulieAnne, 33. She aced the pushups, sit-ups and mile run requirements, the last being easy since she had been a college hurdler.

“I waved the flexibility regimen since she was a Pilates instructor,” Eric said.

They dated three times the following week and really never stopped.

On their first date, Eric told her, “I hope this doesn't scare you, but my 96-year-old grandmother isn't going to die until I get married.”

JulieAnne wasn't scared.

Three months into their relationship, Eric accompanied Bill Clinton to India. He told JulieAnne to make sure her cell phone was set up to accept international calls. “For an entire week I did not hear from him,” JulieAnne said. She took the phone into to the gym with her, kept it by her bed, waking up in the middle of the night just to check. She tried to stay positive.

Eric had forgotten his calling card. As soon as he landed in New York, at 7 a.m. on a Saturday morning, he called and apologized, and asked if he could take her to breakfast. “That's when I knew he loved me,” she said. “I got on my bed and jumped up and down. ‘He loves me!’”

She learned to cook for him. “I didn't even have my oven turned on when I met Eric,” she said. He learned to dance for her. They run races together. Or at least start races together. “I give her a kiss and then I take off,” he says. “And I wait for her at the finish line.”

Even though they talked often about getting married, and knew they'd always be together, Eric didn't propose until July of 2008. He did it in a very Secret Service-like fashion, casing out the Four Seasons Hotel in advance, arranging for the right table, the perfect champagne. He drew in close, pulled the ring from his pocket, and popped the question before brunch.

“She spent the next ninety minutes calling people, and I spent the next ninety minutes making sure I got my money's worth at the buffet table,” he joked.

They are a perfect match in so many ways. If she's the jump-up-and-down-on-the-bed type, he's the former Marine who keeps his emotions in check. Not the type to openly gush, he even uses a code for “I love you” — “olive juice.” Sometimes, they just shorten it to “OJ.” They can say OJ anytime, anywhere, and only they will know what it means.

On this, their wedding day, Dec. 5, 2008, OJ all around.

Michael Vitez, a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author, will write A Love Story for any occasion. Contact him at www.michaelvitez.com