All Above Love: Falling in Love at SRJC

Pete McCormick and Jill Lombardi
It was the fall of 1989 when local swimming phenom, Jill Lombardi, stepped onto the Quinn Swim Center Pool deck to lifeguard the men’s Bear Cub water polo team. One girl to 15 guys are not the best odds for a shy guy, but patience persevered. Six months later, well into coach Bob Miyashiro’s swim season, Jill invited me to attend the Sheriff’s debate on campus. Jill claimed it was a homework assignment. Following the debate, a banana split at Swenson’s Ice Cream across the street sealed the deal.

I would try to keep up with Jill in swim practice and Coach Miyashiro would regularly discourage any “spawning” during practice. Near the end of the swim season I used Jill’s expertise to shave all my hair off in preparation for championships. A mohawk hairdo which was sealed with a kiss of bright red lipstick was the key to being the only SRJC male swimmer to qualify for 1990 state championships and I also established a short lived school record in the 100 yard freestyle. Jill would also compete with multiple top four finishes in individual and relay swims at the state meet.

Today, Jill and I have been happily married for nearly 20 years, continuing to compete in swimming and triathlons. Jill taught English and coached swim team at Piner High School for nearly 10 years but since 2000 Jill has been one of the most successful Bear Cub coaches in the history of SRJC. I work at Marin General Hospital as a fundraiser. All of our swimming records at SRJC have been broken during Jill’s tenure. Together we are raising 2 teen boys, oldest of which is now a Piner High student/swimmer and theater arts student here at the SRJC.

Jill and I would like to thank the many fellow spawners/friends/family/alumni that support SRJC and particularly aquatics.
**Rose Barber and Jesse Meuschke**

Jesse and I re-met at the JC, which is nearly as good.

We actually sat next to each other in second grade at Mendocino Grammar School. But very soon after I moved to Sonoma County, I went to middle school in Sebastopol and high school in Santa Rosa, as my future husband went up through the grades in our hometown. Our families did not hang out together so we did not stay in touch.

When I was 18 (we were both at the JC by then,) we re-met through a mutual friend attending the JC as well. We did not recognize each other at all. It took a few months to dig all of it up. The JC is special to us because of the time we spent working at the Oak Leaf, and going to Wednesday night planetarium shows (an awesome inexpensive date.) We really love it there. We are both teachers now and we tell our students to go to college - but even if they can afford a CSU or UC, they should consider going to the JC first because it is a first-rate school. The JC is certainly comparable and sometimes more rigorous than four year schools.

Jesse and I had beautiful engagement shots taken at the JC last April. We are so proud we were able to go to school there.

**Samantha and Andrew Mora**

My husband and I will celebrate our 5 year wedding anniversary this coming February. We met while playing water polo at the Santa Rosa Junior College. I was the “superior” sophomore, while he was a “lowly” freshman. I remember him catching my eye at a game, but he had a girlfriend at the time. According to my now significant other, I was the “hot college girl.” I actually took a liking to one of his friends, which he later informed me fired his vow to win my affection.

I instantly found him charming, funny, smart, and handsome, to name a few among so many other wonderful qualities (which we now both lovingly refer to as false advertisement). We began dating, thinking it would be a short lived summer romance since I was transferring to UC Davis that fall. Fate had another idea in mind. Summer had come and gone and we just couldn’t say goodbye to one another. We drove back and forth between Davis and Santa Rosa nearly every week for 2 years. We eventually found ourselves in San Luis Obispo where we got married. We are currently planning our wedding vow renewal ceremony for August of this year.

Santa Rosa Junior College will always hold many fond memories for us, meeting our one true love among them.
Molly Curley and Flynn O'Brien
We met in our swimsuits. It was the first day of the Bear Cub’s swim practice, a sunny January day in 2005. I had just transferred from San Francisco State back to the JC and barely knew anyone and Flynn was a second year water polo player who was forced to swim in the off season. He couldn’t care less about swimming and at that point, swimming was my everything. It drove me crazy that he didn’t care and he loved that it drove me crazy.

From the beginning, it seemed like we were the deer in each other’s headlight: we were nervous around each other, scared, sometimes lost for words, but couldn’t not be around each other either. We spent the season in the lanes next to each other, giving each other glances, smiles, and death stares. In one day, Flynn ignored me walking around the Emeritus building, then asked me to marry him in practice that afternoon. He had lost a race during practice and as punishment, the assistant coach made him pop the question to any teammate. While I couldn’t hide how excited I was to be the lucky chosen gal, it was also very clear that something much larger was between us that neither one of us was really willing to face or admit.

We didn’t stay connected when Flynn transferred to CSU Long Beach and I transferred to Cal, but in my last semester of school, we ran into each other on Telegraph Avenue. Flynn had moved to San Francisco and was beginning to plan a European trip and I was gearing up to graduate and move to Spain for a job. When Flynn left to catch his train after visiting me for a week in Southern Spain, it was the first time we both allowed ourselves to miss each other. We also realized that we may have missed each other all along. We spent the next 8 months emailing, writing letters and talking on the phone while I was completing my contract. A year after Flynn picked me up at SFO from Madrid, he asked me to marry him - this time, for real.

Laura and Chris West
In 2006, I met (or rather, rediscovered) the love of my life on campus in Petaluma.

I met Chris when I was 14 years old at a friend’s birthday party and fell for him instantly. He was about a year and a half older than me, a freshman in high school, while I was finishing up my 8th grade year. He was the only boy at that party willing to give back the guff that I had been giving out, and I loved it. He, setting a precedent for being more reasonable than I that still stands, decided that it would be inappropriate to date a junior high girl. We became friends, and I wrote off ever being able to be his girl after he rebuffed me.

We had many fun adventures together, but in the summer of 2001 we were in an awful car accident together with another passenger. The car caught on fire as we were being dragged out by an off-duty sheriff who had seen the wreck and pulled over to help.

Chris went off to Riverside to go to college the next month, and we lost touch. We all slowly healed. I graduated high school and went out into the working world in another state. Eventually I returned to California to get an education, and after several semesters trying to find my way and date people, I took a painting class at SRJC to help me get over a recent breakup. I was
struggling with a painting and went down to the bookstore to get a drink and have a break from the piece I was working. Lo and behold, Chris was working there! Seeing him after so many years was really a shock and I could tell I was still smitten. We started hanging out and dating and he confided that he had a crush on me during high school but we both hadn't pursued it for various reasons. I never even knew he had liked me!

We are now engaged and celebrated six years together this last year. I am always so grateful to have met him again on campus. I realized recently that I've loved him for at least half of my life, and I wouldn't get to spend the rest of it with him if I hadn't bumped into him at the campus bookstore those years ago. Thank you SRJC, and not just for the fine education.

**Jacob Samson and Megan Brenner**

I did in fact meet my loved one, Megan, at SRJC. In the summer of 2010, we were both finishing our pre-requisite classes at SRJC for the local nursing programs.

Megan and I were studying Microbiology 60 with Nate Kofahl and while slaving over bacteria ridden petri dishes, we began to feel attracted to each other. We have been going steady ever since and have moved in with each other. Megan was accepted into SSU Nursing and I was accepted into SRJC Nursing. We have now been each other’s support system for our nursing programs as well. We both have a deep respect for how great SRJC is and how it brought us together.

**Loren Chesbro & Jared Soukup**

I met my lovely wife, Loren Chesbro, in 1998 during a night time English class at the SRJC. We started talking because our professor had each of us work in teams to discuss the reading. I discovered that Loren was much brighter than me, so I figured I would get a better grade if I stuck close to her and listened. Come to find out, both of us were transferring that next summer to Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo where we ended up graduating together. The funny thing is, even at Cal Poly I took some of the same classes as Loren just to get through the tough curriculum.

Loren was originally from Analy High School in Sebastopol and I was from Sonoma Valley High, so we started out rivals. As it turns out now, we are happily married and live back in Santa Rosa. We have been together almost 15 years and have a three year old daughter named Brooklyn. We’ve been fortunate enough to have two successful careers which the SRJC and Cal Poly prepared us for. Loren is now an attorney for School and College Legal Services and I am State Farm Agent in Cotati. Thank you SRJC for introducing me to the love of my life!