

113 ~ The Wedding of the Century

Tales of Blawenburg is usually about historical tales related to the village. Sometimes, I enjoy writing a lighthearted tale that is more contemporary. I hope you enjoy this true chronicle of the marriage of East Blawenburg residents John George and Anne Allen in 2023. The whole scenario took place in several locations in Blawenburg.

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We are all different when it comes to decision making. Some of us are the “hurry-up” type, wanting to decide quickly and get on with our decision. Others, however, are slower decision makers, wanting to weigh all the options to get the decision right. In this true Tale of Blawenburg, John George was slow in deciding until the right time came. Then he shifted to hurry-up mode.



*Dr. John George*

Wednesday, May 31, 2023, was a beautiful day, not a cloud in the sky. It was one of those low-humidity days that makes us wish all days were like it. My wife Evelyn and I were sitting on our deck next to John and Anne’s house in East Blawenburg. Around 3:15pm, John and Anne strolled across our lawn looking like the cats that ate the canary. We knew something was up, but we weren’t sure what they would say.

John and Anne's relationship had been long and happy, having met on a blind date over 14 years before. They lived in an apartment at the Blawenburg Café and Market (now the Blawenburg Bistro) until 2015, when they bought their house in East Blawenburg.

They barely sat down when John dispensed with the small talk and got right to the issue at hand. "I just proposed to Anne, and we're getting married," he said. A look of surprise came to our faces. Of course, we congratulated them and told them how happy we were for them.

We wondered about the suddenness of the proposal. We figured they would get married someday, but we were caught off guard.

### **The Proposal**

They then told us about the proposal that had happened just minutes before. John had been thinking about "popping the question" for over a week. He thought of several scenarios and settled on this beautiful June day to enact his plan.

Step 1: John had suggested they go for a walk on such a balmy June day. Although Anne thought this was odd behavior for John, she went along with it.

Step 2: Anne's old home, The Tavern, was about to be sold. John suggested it might be nice to walk there. Anne became suspicious when John wanted to hold her hand. She responded to his overture with, "Are you serious?"

Step 3: After they looked at the old house and reminisced about happy times there, John suggested they walk across the street to look at the plantings in the side yard they had made while they lived in the apartment. Unbeknownst to Anne, John had arranged with their friend Robin, who lived there, to make sure they had the side yard to themselves. John was filled with romance, while Anne was wondering what was going on.

Step 4: As they looked at the beautiful plants, John dropped something on the lawn. "What's that?" Anne said. With the gallantry of a gentleman seeking the hand of his true love, John dropped to one knee, placing it on the washcloth he had dropped to protect his pants from grass stains. He minced no words, getting right to the point. "Anne, will you marry me?" Despite her surprise on this afternoon sojourn, she quickly said, "Yes."

### **Hurry Up**

John is a careful decision maker, thinking long and hard before he acts. It took him over 14 years to propose; but when he did and Anne accepted, things took off at warp speed. When they told us the good news, we asked them when they planned to have the wedding. "Friday," John said without hesitation.

"Wow," we said, almost at a loss for words. "Which Friday?" We were thinking much too traditionally—getting a dress, ordering flowers, arranging for a venue, etc.

"We've already been in touch with Jeff," he said. Rev. Jeff Knol was the Blawenburg Church pastor at the time. "He's ready to marry us at 4pm this Friday."

"This Friday?" Our doubt was obvious. We wondered how they could possibly pull this off in such short order.

"Jeff had a good point when we talked with him," Anne said. "He asked us if we had a license. He reminded us that in some states there is a waiting period between the license approval and the wedding."

*A very good point*, we thought.

Next, they asked us if we would be willing to act as witnesses when they got the license. Of course, we said yes. "When do you plan to get the license?" we asked. I looked at my watch and it was 3:30pm.

"Now," they said as they got up from their chairs and headed for the steps. "Come on. They close at 4pm."

We piled into John's car dressed in our grubby yardwork clothes and headed for the Municipal Building, hoping that the office was still open. John drove, and we made the two-mile trek in record time.

When we arrived, the happy couple joked with the clerk who led them through the licensing process. We signed as witnesses and then we had a group photo with the soon-to-be newlyweds, the neighborly witnesses (us), and the clerk who completed the official transaction.



The licensing team.

## Preparation

There was a lot that *didn't* need to happen in preparation for this wedding—no gown, no venue, no invitations. Anne loved that the arrangements were simple. She prepared her bouquet using local flowers. One thing Anne needed was a clip to hold up her long hair. She went to Shoprite and found the aisle where hair clips were located. A worker was nearby, so she asked her what she thought of the clip she was holding up to her hair. Apparently not into fashion, she shrugged her shoulders and gave her a non-comital “whatever” response. Beyond that, they just needed to show up for the ceremony in their backyard on Friday.

## The Wedding

Friday was another beautiful, but warmer, day. Rev. Knol arrived a few minutes before 4pm, and we were already there. It was uncomfortable in the sun, so we huddled in the corner of the backyard beneath the osage orange trees.

We each had a role in the event. Evelyn was the videographer using Anne's iPhone to capture every precious moment. I was the ring bearer. Shep, their dog, was the unofficial usher, running around the backyard sensing that something big was going on. Rev. Knol was prepared to lead the ceremony.



It was short and sweet, and before long, Rev. Knol cast a blessing onto the newlyweds. Afterward, we had a beer on John and Anne's deck and called it a day.

The bride and groom drove off to Lambertville for a sumptuous repast at Bell's Tavern. When they were at the bar, John wanted to tell someone he was just married, so he mentioned it to Larry, the man sitting next to him at the bar. They went back to the dining room and before long, a split of champagne arrived at the table compliments of Larry! A very nice gesture.

What started as an innocent walk on a late spring day turned into a long-expected proposal followed by marriage. You've heard the expression, hurry up and wait. John and Anne's nuptials were just the opposite, wait, wait, wait and hurry up! But this was just fine with the newlyweds. "If I had it to do all over again, I'd want it to be the same way," Anne reflected. For Evelyn and me, it was certainly a wedding to remember.

After the Wedding of the Century, the couple continues to live happily ever after with Shep in East Blawenburg.

## **FACTS**

1. There may be a good reason why this wedding took so long. John's grandfather was Rube Goldberg, the famous cartoonist whose syndicated cartoons showed Rube doing simple actions in complicated ways. While the actual wedding was simple, getting to it had some complicated steps.
2. While John and Anne could have been married by a judge, they chose their friend, Rev. Jeff Knol, to perform the ceremony.
3. Several months after the wedding, John and Anne were getting an estimate for tree work. Anne looked at one of the men. "You look familiar," she said to him. "I'm Larry," he said. Sure enough, it was Larry from Bell's Tavern, who had helped them celebrate with champagne! A great reminder of their big day.
4. Transparency: While this was the Wedding of the Century in East Blawenburg, to the best of my knowledge, it was also the only wedding in East Blawenburg in this century and likely for at least the last 50 years!

## **SOURCES**

### **Information**

First-hand observation

Interviews with John George and Anne Allen

## PICTURES

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