

Jason and Somsamay Bonneteau
Brought Together from Worlds Apart
by
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When Jason Bonneteau first asked Somsamay for a date back in 2006, she declined.

They had met through their jobs - Jason as a manager for Sun Life Financial and Somsamay worked at her dad's auto body shop, handling the bookwork. One of Jason's advisors told him that he had an auto body business that might be interested in getting a health and dental plan, so Jason went with him to do the presentation.

The presentation led to a sale. "Once we signed up the plan, Somsamay started calling me quite frequently," Jason said. "So I thought there may be some interest. So I called her and asked her out on a date. She said no."

Soon after, Somsamay sent Jason an e-mail, saying that she was very shy, but would love to go on a date with him. Somsamay said, "There was this voice in my head saying, 'this may be the guy.' I usually don't listen to that voice. This time I did."

That date led to more dates and eventually a relationship. They got married in 2013.

The reason it took a few years for them to get married was, as Jason says, "At Sun Life they were always promoting you out of the province, and Somsamay's family business was here. Mike (Michael Silver, Jason's co-worker at Sun Life and current business partner) and I kept putting off the transfers. Finally, we both left Sun Life and opened our own business. Shortly after we got the business I proposed to Somsamay."

Fate must have brought Jason and Somsamay together, since they started life quite differently. While Jason was born and raised in Manitoba, Somsamay was born in a refugee camp in Thailand. Her father developed a friendship with the guards at the camp and one of them helped them to immigrate to Canada. However, it was a

slow process between the time the guard got her father on the immigration list and the time the people from the Pilot Mound Mennonite Church came to get them.

By then, Somsamay's father had lost a lot of weight. "All they had to identify my dad was an old picture, she said. "But when they saw my dad, he had lost so much weight that they said, 'I think that's him.' We stayed in Pilot Mound for a bit, then we moved to Crystal City and then my dad got a job at an auto body shop in Morden. In 2001 he set up his own business here in Winnipeg."

"The interesting thing is that we were born less than a month apart," Jason said. "But we were born worlds apart."

Jason was born in Winnipeg and lived in Selkirk until he was five, when they moved to Winnipeg. He says, "I started out working at Silver Heights Restaurant when I was a kid. When I was 17, I worked at Olive Garden. I started my career at Clarica Life Insurance in April of 2003, which was bought out by Sun Life. In 2011, Mike and I bought the Wealth Planning Group. Somsamay started working here in 2012."

Somsamay feels that working together is good, although she says, "I think I stress Jason out a bit."

Jason doesn't feel that she stresses him out. He adds, "We work alternate times because we have a dog at home who is getting older and needs more attention."

While her family was living in Morden, Somsamay came to Winnipeg to take a course in administration at Herzing College; when she graduated, she then returned to Morden. She says, "I found a job at Integra Castings in Winkler and worked there for four years. Then my dad started his business here and I worked with him."

When her dad retired and sold his business, Somsamay took a position with Jason and Michael's business. Regarding her current work, what Somsamay actually does differs depending on who you talk to. Somsamay says, "I do the filing and the marketing."

But according to Jason, "She does the marketing on the life insurance side, doing different marketing pieces that we use with clients. She is the head of file development. Somsamay is last person that checks out all the files to make sure that everything is filled out properly and all the signatures are there and everything

is processed in a timely manner. She is the compliance officer that makes sure that everything is done properly.”

The business, the Wealth Planning Group, was an existing business that Jason and Michael Silver bought in 2011. Jason said, “Since then we have grown it from two staff to 11 and we’ve purchased three other businesses and merged them into the Wealth Planning Group.”

When entering the office, a person may get a bit confused, as the front desk holds three different business cards. “We really have two businesses. We have the Benefits Planning Group that does health and dental plans for companies, and we have the Wealth Planning Group, that does individual insurance and investments. However, due to compliance and regulatory measures, if we are speaking to investment clients, we have to have a card that shows Investment Planning Council, because they are our middle man for investments,” Jason explains. “So we have three cards but one business with two divisions.”

Jason also sits on the Regional Advocis Board. “Advocis is the association for financial planners,” he stated. “I have had multiple roles in that organization, including being the Past President. Now I sit on a government relations committee.”

Jason’s business philosophy is, “Give more than you take, and if you look out for other people’s best interest, then you’ll be rewarded down the way. The more you do for people, the more you are rewarded in the end.”

Both Jason and Somsamay love to travel. Jason says, “We want to go back to Asia, back to where Somsamay was from and see different parts of the continent. We want to get back to Europe, see Italy and France and other European Countries.”

Jason likes to travel to the States to see NFL games, whereas Somsamay likes to go shopping in Las Vegas. Jason says, “Somsamay has family in Las Vegas so we go there quite frequently. It’s the greatest place ever. Anything you want to see and do. And we don’t gamble.”

Somsamay adds, “But then I go shopping.”

They are new to Tuxedo, having just moved in last December. Jason says, “We wanted to be more central. Somsamay loves the neighbourhood, the character of the homes, all the mature trees, and it is so quiet and relaxed. We just love the feel of the neighbourhood. It is well suited to us”

They also enjoy getting to know their neighbours. “It is a real neighbourhood feeling. The unfortunate part of newer neighbourhoods is the high turnover of people. Tuxedo is much more stable. People live here for 20 years or more,” Jason says.

Moving forward, Jason and Somsamay are looking forward to settling into their Tuxedo home, strengthening their relationships with their neighbours and visiting family, when they aren’t either working or travelling. Jason is also looking forward to continuing to grow their business and helping people build their financial futures. A very positive looking future for two people who were born 29 days and a world apart who managed to find each other and fall in love.