

# Love almost at first sight

BY PAM MELLSKOG  
LONGMONT TIMES-CALL

LAFAYETTE — Dan Nicholson unwittingly turned Susan Sanger's head by cycling with his two big white dogs — an American Eskimo mix and a white shepherd boxer mix — past her apartment window every day on the way to a neighborhood park.

Her roommate recognized the cyclist as a graduate school classmate at the University of Oregon at Eugene, promptly introduced them and almost immediately watched sparks fly around her matchmaking.

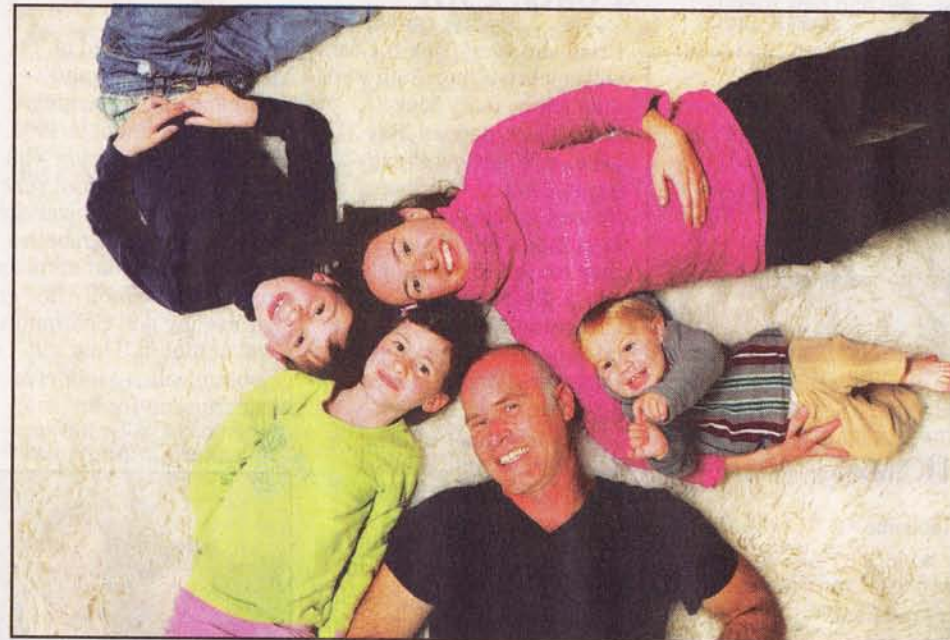
But Susan told Dan between kisses on their second meeting that the chance aspect of their romance would not change her traditional dating expectations.

"I said, 'I'm not looking for a fling. And I would like to name my first-born son Henry after my father, my grandfather and my great-grandfather,'" she said.

Though 10 years her senior and himself ready to get serious, Dan, 44, balked at first.

He wondered if Susan, who was 23 then in 1999, would act her age.

"I had had my heart broken recently by a string of 23-year-olds. So, I was reluctant to date another youngster," he said. "But she's



Joshua Buck / Times-Call

**Susan and Dan Nicholson are kept busy with their 7-year-old twins, Annika and Henry, and 15-month-old son Mitchell. Dan proposed to Susan at Machu Picchu, Peru.**

mature for her age, and I'm immature for my age. So it worked out."

For instance, it meant something to Susan, 34, that Dan treated his dogs and his mother with lots of tender loving care.

He noticed her determination to build a career in health care.

So, though the elevation caused Susan to wretch while hiking in the summer of 2000 at Machu Picchu, Peru, Dan proposed at the Temple of the Condor just before a noisy group of Ital-

ian tourists forced them to move on.

She said "Of course!" to his will-you-marry-me question without missing a beat and only years later revealed why.

Just before they left on the trip, Susan used some paper that Dan had recycled and noticed on the backside a printout of a friend's email that read: "Good luck on popping the question in Peru!"

She kept the discovery to herself to keep from ruining his fun.

They married on July 28, 2001 — she in her mother's 1969 Priscilla of Boston wedding gown and he in her father's tuxedo — beside the Caribou Ranch ghost town ruins near Nederland.

Besides the 150 guests, about 30 dogs witnessed their vows and hinted at Dan's second love then — establishing Bowhaus Day Care and Boarding for dogs from their Lafayette home before relocating it four years later to a custom-built facility in Erie.

Susan now works part-time as a nurse practitioner

at Full Circle Health Associates in Longmont as they raise their three children: twins Henry and Annika, 7; and Mitchell, 15 months.

As they approach their 10th wedding anniversary, they said that both the ups and the downs of life keep them happy together.

They said watching their children grow and supporting nearly two dozen local charitable organizations brings them great pleasure.

On the downside, they recalled struggling with fertility issues early on and later, in 2008, coping with Dan's borderline diabetes diagnosis.

The discouraging health news could have depressed him.

Instead, he lost 40 pounds by working out at the Erie Community Center and this year trained there with Susan so they both could compete for the first time in a triathlon earlier this month.

The couple — he of Wisconsin and she of Massachusetts — more than once said that their marriage works better when they get a good night's rest for some fresh perspective on conflicts and challenges.

"Hey, we'd been thinking about being a fit Boulder couple ever since we moved here," Dan said, smiling.

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THS

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l, Viktoria E. Macias, born 8, 2011, at Longmont ed Hospital to Roberto las-Sanchez and Virginia s of Longmont. dparents are Miguel Reyes Marina Ramirez of ymont; Jose Luis Macias and ia Sanchez of Longmont; Joanne Becker of ymont.