

## Our Happily Ever After: The Tale of a Newly Engaged, Middle-Aged, Disney-Loving Couple at Walt Disney World

by Carolyn Brooke, PassPorter Guest Contributor

During our recent month-long adventure in the USA to celebrate joint (big number) birthdays and our 10th anniversary of being together, I found myself to unexpectedly be one-half of a newly-engaged couple!

This is the story of how it happened, and how we were treated during the Disney part of the holiday.

The proposal itself was the biggest shock of my life. As I said, Charlie and I have been together for ten years now, and have both had previous marriages that ended quite badly, so even though we had talked about marriage previously, I was fully convinced that he was too terrified to ever do it again! Neither of us has any religious beliefs particularly, so I had come to terms in my head with the fact that we probably would never get married. And then the following happens, and he astonishes the life out of me. Just goes to show, you can never trust a man to do what you expect him to!

□ We were in the second week of our trip, in New York. There was snow on the ground, and we were visiting Central Park. Charlie had said that he wanted to go to Strawberry Fields, the memorial place for John Lennon, but as we walked towards it, it was barriered-off from the public due to falling branches (the snow had arrived a bit early and had badly damaged a lot of trees in the park). We were able to walk around the perimeter of the area, and as we approached a nearby bench, Charlie went over to it and began to wipe snow off it with a gloved hand. I assumed we were having a sit down for a minute, so waited till the bench was clear of snow and delicately sat on a dry bit. He began ferreting in his bag again, so I just sat there and looked &#39;round at the beautiful views, all snowy and pretty. Suddenly, completely out of the blue, he asked me if I wanted a sweet. I said okay, and held out my hand. He placed a lilac-colored M&M into it, which had my name printed on it! I looked at it for a second, then smiled and said, "Ooh, look, it's got my name on it!" At which point he put a pale pink one into my hand, which had the words 'marry me' printed on it. I stared at it for a moment, not entirely sure what I was seeing. I looked at him, then back at the M&Ms. I looked at him again, and he placed a beautiful, pale pink, crystal ring box in my hand, containing a white gold ring with a

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huge pink sapphire and diamonds. He looked at me with hope, I began to cry, and after asking him, "If I said no, can I still keep the ring," eventually managed to say, "YES!"

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□Fast forward another week, when we arrived at Old Key West for the second half of our vacation. Upon checking in, we were given a package of leaflets, information, maps, plus our Key to the World cards. Then, the cast member checking us in began plying us with badges, "We're Celebrating!", "Happy Birthday!", and "Happy Anniversary!" Then I told him we had just got engaged, so he happily shoved another couple at us, "Just Engaged!" Phew!

We wrote our names on the Just Engaged badges, and Charlie pinned his to his backpack. I wore mine proudly on my chest all the time! The good wishes and "Congratulations!" we received from cast members and other guests were absolutely wonderful, from the other couples we chatted to who were also 'just engaged,' to the apparent surprise of some cast members when they realized we were actually just engaged, and not celebrating a wedding anniversary!

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□We met one or two cast members who spotted a badge, and went to say Happy Anniversary, until they realized we were not wearing anniversary badges. I guess because we are a little bit older and not 'love's young dream,' it was kind of expected that we wouldn't be recently engaged, which was a surprising attitude sometimes. Hey, why shouldn't older people get engaged?

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□It was also quite amusing to be congratulated unexpectedly. As the weeks wore on, we sometimes forgot about our engagement, and were taken by surprise on a couple of occasions by someone coming up from behind us, giving their congratulations when they spotted the button on Charlie's backpack! It didn't seem to matter where we were when we wore the badges, we got best wishes at Universal, Denny's, and even Wal-Mart on one occasion!

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□We didn't expect or receive any special treatment or free desserts because of the badges, which was fine by us. It was just wonderful to have complete strangers share in our love and joy at being together, in the Happiest Place on Earth!

*About The Author: Carolyn lives in the UK, first fell in love with Walt Disney World in 1989, and has visited 10 times since then, as well as six visits to Disneyland Paris. Her dream is to live in a fairytale castle with her handsome prince; failing that, regular visits to any Disney park anywhere in the world will do!*

Article last updated: 02-22-2012

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