

Coming down the aisle

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Christine Chumbler didn't anticipate her wedding day taking place in the venue that it unfolded.

However, the recent bride was thrilled that it did.

"We didn't have any intention of decorating or messing up the facility," Christine Chumbler said. "Once they heard about it, they just jumped right on it. They did the whole thing. We just had to arrive in our wedding outfits.

"At this age, we didn't feel like the hoopla was necessary. They took the wheel and did everything for us."

While Lebanon Center for Rehabilitation and Healing was doing "everything" for the couple, Christine and her husband — Steve Chumbler — were determined to have the wedding there for others.

“We had discussed getting married prior to getting engaged,” Christine Chumbler said. “We had always said that prior to doing that we would do it at his parents’ assisted living facility.”

Steve Chumbler’s parents — Jim and Jan Chumbler — began living in an apartment at the Pavilion Long-Term Care facility four years ago, but 88-year-old Jim Chumbler was recently moved to Lebanon Center for Rehabilitation and Healing.

“Lebanon Center is proud to provide an interdisciplinary approach when caring for this incredible population, servicing the mind, body, and soul collectively,” Lebanon Center for Rehabilitation and Healing Administrator Drew Jackson said. “As reflected in our mission statement, our community’s goal is to always provide unprecedented levels of genuine care and customer service for our patients and residents. It isn’t every day that a skilled nursing center has the opportunity to double as a wedding venue, and we were so excited and willing to make this the best wedding yet.”

The wedding date was actually rescheduled multiple times, with the original date set for Nov. 17.

“Jan’s facility — where Jan and Jim had been — they were under a COVID lockdown at some point,” Christine Chumbler said. “Jim’s rehab (facility) was under a COVID lockdown too. They lifted it, and Jan handled all in communicating with them.”

Jan Chumbler was able to drive over to visit her husband.

“They were determined that they were going to get married wherever dad (Jim) was,” the 85-year-old Jan Chumbler said.

Though they had known each other for many years, the couple began dating approximately two years ago.

"I was praying they would (get married)," Jan Chumbler said. "When we first met (Christine), we just fell in love with her, and I think she did with us. They dated quite a while. We were really thrilled. My Jim thinks she's something else."

The feeling is mutual according to Christine as Jim assumed multiple roles on their wedding day of Dec. 1.

"I didn't have anybody to give me away, so Jim gave me away," Christine Chumbler said.

In addition to giving Christine away, Jim Chumbler served as the best man and also as the ring bearer.

"The main thing is that she wanted Jim to be a part of it and wanted him to give her away," Jan Chumbler said. "She pushed him down the aisle.

"He said he didn't want to give her away ... he wanted to keep her."

Steve Chumbler thought that Christine was a keeper as well.

"We were friends before, but we were just friends," the 62-year-old Steve Chumbler said. "We were great friends. When we got together, we just clicked. Our lives were just intertwined together. It was pretty much immediate ... we had a really close bond and connection. She was a Godsend. We are so happy to be together."

The 51-year-old Christine Chumbler added, "I always thought the world of Steve. For about five years, I never saw or heard of him. One day, he contacted me through Facebook just to see how I was doing. I was just so excited. We got together, and everything just fell into place. It was effortless."

Steve and Christine Chumbler crossed paths at unfortunate events, with Christine attending the funeral of Steve's brother and Steve attending the

funeral of Christine's father.

"We felt like they just met up in heaven and were moving us around like Monopoly pieces," Christine Chumbler said. "There was little to no doubt that we'd be together forever."

Steve Chumbler had been a Lebanon and Gladeville resident for a long time, while Christine Chumbler had been in Tennessee since she was 15, living in Smyrna for the previous 11 years.

However, the COVID pandemic swelled shortly after the couple began dating in February of 2020.

"We got to go on a couple of dates, and immediately, the COVID lockdown happened," Christine Chumbler said. "We were all under COVID restrictions at the beginning of our relationship. That went on for months.

"Jan kept saying that she wanted to hug us so bad. We wound up really bonding. Jan has become like my best friend. Jim has become like my dad."

While Christine quickly bonded with the Chumbler family, both Steve and Jan Chumbler are quick to acknowledge that the family has always been close-knit.

"I have always been super close to my parents," Steve Chumbler said. "When I got out of high school, I was a machinist. My dad was a machinist. My brother (Mike Chumbler) was a machinist. We all followed in his footsteps.

"They're just very special to me. They're very special people. They've been through a lot. It was very important to me to have them a part of (the wedding). (Jim Chumbler) was feeling so good that day. We wanted to make them a part of it. They've been a big part of my life."

Jan Chumbler added, "(Steve) is special to us. He's been a blessing to us over all the years. We're very close. Our other son (Mike Chumbler) passed away with a heart attack. He was two years younger than Steve. There was something special about our two boys. When you saw one, you saw the other."

Jan was excited to do whatever she could to assist with the wedding.

"It was overwhelming excitement," Christine Chumbler said. "Jan was talking to all the different units every day about when this could happen. She also got permission from the Pavilion to do it there too. She was super excited.

"They (Lebanon Center for Rehabilitation and Healing) were fantastic about it. They went and bought some decorations and made some treats and ordered a cake."

Steve Chumbler added, "They were fantastic. We'll remember every moment. That's something we can always treasure."

Lebanon Center for Rehabilitation and Healing was pleased to serve as the couple's venue.

"It was so special, and Lebanon Center was grateful for the opportunity to make this incredible day even more memorable for the family," Jackson said. "When the family of Mr. Chumbler reached out, we knew it was our duty and privilege to put together this special event. We always put ourselves in the shoes of those we care for and always think of the care and service we would also want to receive. We were blessed to take part in this special day."

Steve and Jan Chumbler have been living in Florida for the past year, having purchased a home in Port Richey in July of 2020.

"When we started dating, I already had the plan to move to Florida," Christine Chumbler said. "Steve has a camper and planned to spend the winter in

Florida.

“This little tiny house came up. It was a bargain, but it was in desperate need of attention. We spent over a year remodeling this place. Jan and Jim have been so excited. They can’t believe we got a junker and turned it into a dollhouse.”

However, the newlyweds often make the 700-mile, 12-hour trek back to Tennessee for visits.

“Every moment is precious now,” Steve Chumbler said of spending time with his parents.

The couple is retired, and when they aren’t remodeling their fixer-upper of a home, they spend time fishing, kayaking, sightseeing and animal watching.

“The transition has been super easy besides just missing family,” Christine Chumbler said. “That’s why we go back so often. It’s been a nice transition. It’s been very easy to adapt to Florida.”

Steve and Christine Chumbler are hoping that they’ll enjoy a long marriage, like Jim and Jan Chumbler. The elder Chumbler couple celebrated 68 years of marriage on Dec. 5.

“It was just the most precious story,” Jan Chumbler said of the wedding. “It meant everything. We just were really thrilled.

“Jim was thrilled. He was grinning from ear to ear (on the wedding day). They made him feel so special having the part he did in it.”