



VILLAGER BACKSTORY

You may know Tom “Anthony” Roehl from the walking trails in The Villages or as your neighbor in the Village of St. Catherine, but what you may not know is that he was a professional entertainer who played for thousands at events.



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

GETTING TO KNOW TOM “ANTHONY” ROEHL

Age: 63
Village: St. Catherine
Spouse: Teri
Moved Here In: 2018
Moved Here From: Greenfield, Wisconsin
Favorite Villages Activities: Enjoying the walking trails with his dog, getting together with neighbors, exercising and playing corn toss and putt ‘n play



Kristen Fiore

THE VILLAGES DAILY SUN

Do you know someone with an interesting backstory to tell? Email kristen.fiore@thevillagesmedia.com or call 352-753-1119, ext. 5270

When Tom “Anthony” Roehl was in school, music class wasn’t the “cool” thing to do, but Roehl found himself on the choral risers after a friend assured him the class would be an easy “A.”

His decision to take the class would be more fateful than he could’ve guessed. Roehl was walking to said music class when he spotted a beautiful girl in the hallway.

“I can remember to this day the dress she was wearing,” Roehl said. “She had long hair. She didn’t know me and I didn’t know her, but I looked at my buddy and said, ‘That’s the girl I’m going to marry.’”

He wasn’t wrong. Teri did turn him down seven times before she agreed to date him, but the couple is now enjoying their 43rd year of marriage.

After Teri’s father heard

Tom sing in a show, he invited Tom to be in his band, which played at parties and weddings.

The group was so popular that people had to book them two years in advance, Tom said. He stayed in the band for 20 years, refining his talents and earning his chops before forming his own group, The Tom Anthony Group.

Tom had developed a wide range of musical repertoire from singing in the wedding band, and he liked to take the audience on a musical journey into all types of music. Refusing to be pigeonholed by agents into one specific genre of music, he and his group did what Tom called a Las Vegas style show.

They usually started with older music like hits by Frank Sinatra and Andy Williams and then transitioned into popular ‘50s and ‘60s music by

artists like Buddy Holly, Elvis Presley and Roy Orbison. They ended the show with whatever was popular at the time.

Tom said his performances weren’t impersonations, but impressions.

“We had our own texture and flavor, but we still represented what the original artist was intending,” he said.

Tom’s group was an annual staple at the Wisconsin State Fair, where the band would play 33 shows in 11 days for thousands of people. The group also was a regular at Summerfest, one of the biggest music festivals in the world.

The group opened for bands like Herb Reed’s Platters, The Mavericks and more and recorded five CDs in 35 years. Tom’s original Christmas song, “In The Magic of Christmas,” made it to the radio.

Tom also fronted a 60-piece symphony orchestra multiple times.

At the same time, Tom had a full-time job in the printing industry, starting out as a pressman and then working his way up into management.

In 1992, he was faced with the decision to entertain in Las Vegas or take a job with the Milwaukee County Transit System. He took the one with the pension.

Tom spent 27 years there as the manager of printing and graphic services, sometimes working with the Secret Service to ensure that all passes were secure by using special inks, designs and foil stamping to avoid forgery.

“We did 8 million tickets a year and about 50,000 weekly bus passes,” Tom said.

Tom and Teri visited The Villages on a lifestyle tour in 2014, and as they stood on

the bridge overlooking Lake Sumter Landing at sunset, they agreed that The Villages was where they would settle down. Tom snapped a picture of the scene.

“I put that picture on my screensaver at work, and I looked at it for four years until I could retire,” he said.

Now in The Villages, Tom enjoys visiting assisted living facilities as part of the Hearts of Gold Therapy Team with his English Cream Golden Retriever, Angel.

“It’s like doing music all over again, seeing the smiles on people’s faces,” Tom said.

As for music itself, Tom is hoping to hook up with some other musicians in The Villages in the future.

“I’m trying to convince the rest of the band to move down here,” he joked. “A couple of them aren’t old enough yet.”

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