

JULY 2021

CORRALES

Neighbors



Meet
THE RIZZIS



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Frank Frost Photography

Meet THE RIZZIS



WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALBUQUERQUE PLUMBING HEATING & COOLING FOR BRINGING THIS MONTH'S COVER STORY.



BY JENNIFER SMITH | PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANK FROST PHOTOGRAPHY

Every so often, we hear about a meet-cute that simply melts our hearts. Brett and Linda Rizzi's paths crossed in the mid-90s when Linda moved to Chicago from the Detroit area. She had just purchased a home and called Brett's company for an estimate on brick pavers. "Brett will tell you that we fell in love immediately," Linda says, "and I agree with him." It is no surprise that Linda hired Brett and his company, Frankfort Garden Center and Landscaping, and it is safe to say that she was delighted with the outcome in more ways than one.

Two years later, the pair went to Notre Dame Cathedral in South Bend, Indiana, under the guise of having a look at the Grotto. Brett had told Linda that he needed to size up a job for a customer, yet he really took her there so that he could propose. Linda accepted the proposal on that beautiful fall day. "No one was there but a priest passing by. We told him the news and he gave us a blessing," Linda recounted. They married just over a year later in their home.

Before Linda's need for brick pavers set them on the path to finding one another, they had both found success in their respective career fields. Brett started working for his Uncle when he was 10 years old in a meat purveying company in Chicago. At 19, he formed his first business, developed it, and sold it. That is the entrepreneurial path he has followed throughout his career. The two like to joke about how he "flunked 3rd grade", yet it is clear that he possessed a strong work ethic in all other aspects of his life. Brett has also worked as a heavy equipment operator and later would found his largest business in Illinois: American Backhoe, an underground excavating company, which is still in business.

Linda grew up in the city of Dearborn, Michigan. After high school, she attended Junior College and earned her Associates Degree. After that, an opportunity presented itself and she completed her Bachelor's Degree at Arizona State University. Returning home, she eventually got a job with the City of Dearborn in the Community Improvement Department. A career defining opening came in the Building Department for the

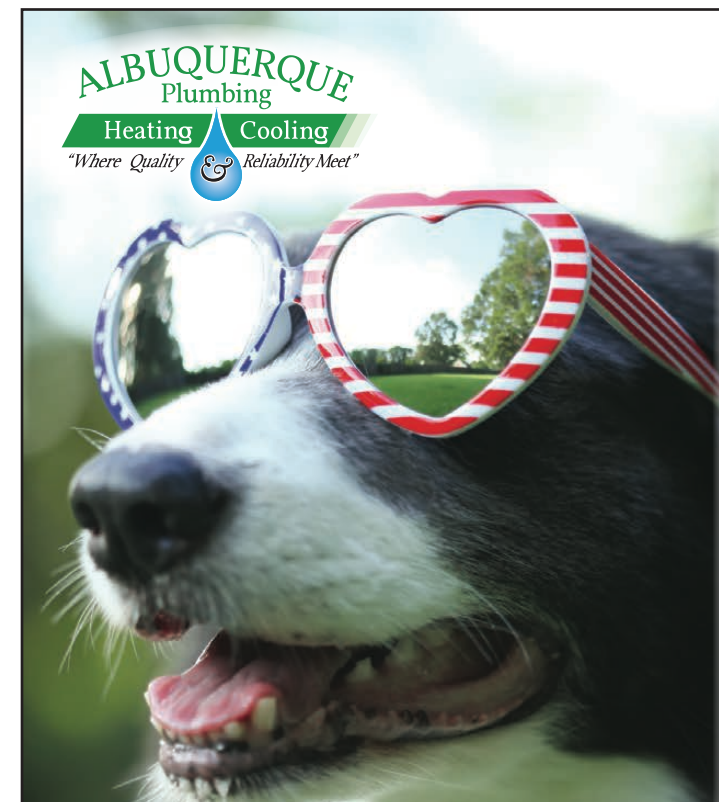


position of Ordinance Inspector, making Linda the first woman inspector for the city. Most of the men that she worked with were WWII veterans, and it was clear that they were going to approach retirement eventually. Later, Linda would enroll in every construction/technology course offered by her alma mater community college, eventually becoming the instructor for each of the classes that she took. Concurrent with that Linda earned her

Masters Degree in Public Administration. She would go on to act as Director of the Dearborn Heights Building and Engineering Department - for which she was appointed by the Mayor in 1988 - followed by an appointment to the State of Michigan Construction Code Commission in 1993.



The Rizzis became official coworkers when Linda joined Brett at his expansion of Frankfort Garden Center, which grew to incorporate an emporium. They later moved to New Mexico to retire in 2009. "[Brett's] business activities here in New Mexico have included Rizzi Properties, Gallery Painting (under Brett's ownership they were



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admitted to the National Terrazzo Association) and now NO BULL PRIME MEATS,” Linda said. After Brett sold the Frankfort Garden Center, Linda turned her experience in training and education to teaching at Joliet Jr. College and others. Here in New Mexico, she has instructed at Lewis University for a number of semesters.

Brett has always maintained a love of gardening and raising animals, such as cows, pigs, chickens, lamb, and goat “for the table”. While still owning the Garden Center, he purchased a farm in Manteno, Illinois, and raised the animals there. When the Budweiser Clydesdales came to Chicago for parades, they stayed at the farm, which they remember as being a sheer thrill to see. “The interest in livestock is what made our Ranch in Estancia attractive to us,” Linda said. The Rizzis also dedicate their time to volunteer work. Brett volunteered at San Ysidro Church here in Corrales during the expansion in 2012 and was awarded the 2012 Archbishop’s St. Francis of Assisi Award for his contributions of time and talent. Linda, meanwhile, has been a Hospice Volunteer since they arrived in New Mexico. For five years, she performed in Nursing Facilities as a clown under the name “Geri Atric”. After becoming Guardian and Conservator of her mother, Linda started her own business, titled Gabriel Guardian Service, and worked as a Court Visitor in Guardianship Cases in court.

Their path led them to Mission Valley in June of 2017, where they have been making memories and enjoying the views as well as their neighbors ever since. They still own the ranch, and divide their time between both houses. “Everyone that we have met has been very nice, and we appreciate that they maintain such care of their property” they said.

Together, the Rizzis have a horse named Zandy and a four-month-old “pandemic puppy”. They also remember fondly having a horse named Clemenza, who passed away four years ago on Easter Sunday Morning. Clemenza is buried at the Ranch. Linda recalls how Clemenza “got into our pool at our house on Applewood when a gate was left open. It has a happy ending. Brett’s birthday was the next week, and so I wrote a poem from Clemenza to Brett as a gift with a framed 8X10 picture. We had a lot of fun with that!” The poem follows this article.



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