

Interview with an IS Couple: Andy Delfino and Jana Gut -- Class of '98-'99

By Ariana Hosseini

The following interview is with Andy Delfino and Jana Gut, former Integrated Studies students from the class of '98-'99, who started dating while in IS and eventually married. They now live in Atlanta, Georgia and have an IS baby.

What were your majors when you attended UC Davis?

Gut: I came in as a Biology and Agriculture Major and I never changed majors.

Delfino: When I was in IS I started out as an engineer, specifically computer science and engineering, but I hated that and switched to English winter quarter.

English?! That's great, English is my favorite subject! Do you use your major today in your job?

Gut: Yes I do, I'm working as a research fellow at Emory University. I just graduated with my Doctorate in Biomedical Engineering.

Very impressive!

Delfino: Yes, I do, every single day! I'm an English teacher.

What age group do you teach?

Delfino: Junior High. An advantage we have is that the school has an old holdover from its days as an all boys and all girls school that shared a campus. They kept, for some reason, the 7th and 8th grade English segregated by sex. So, I primarily teach all boys classes, and that fits my personality and sense of humor. My wife claims that I'm a junior high boy at heart.

That's so funny! Can you give me an example?

Delfino: Right now we're doing superheroes as a part of our hero unit, so we're watching Spiderman 2 and they have researched different superheroes and presented how they fit the hero archetype.

That's so interesting! You know, I was actually looking to take a class here at Davis regarding myths and legends about heroes. So, what year did you both participate in the IS program?

Delfino & Gut: '98-'99.

What inspired you, or encouraged you to join IS?

Gut: I liked the fact that it was going to take this giant, twenty-five-thousand-person university and make it much, much smaller. Nora McGuinness sold it as this is the small liberal arts school within this giant UC campus.

Delfino: My brother had gone to UC Davis and my father and a bunch of family friends had gone to Berkley, so I had heard about how big and imposing public schools were. So, it appealed to me to be in a small group setting within the larger group.

That's actually one of reasons I joined the program! Also, in our year, IS students have benefits that regular students don't always have access to, such as priority registration, and living in one of the newer buildings. What were some of the benefits of the program when you participated?

Delfino: Let's see—we got to live in the dorm closest to the Dairy, so it smelled like cows all the time. My mom grew up on a cattle ranch in the East Bay and when we got out of the car, as we were moving into the dorms, she said it smelled like her childhood. We also had priority registration, grad student lending privileges at the library, or was that just Regents Scholars? I always get them confused. They all run together, it was so long ago. I believe that only Regent's Scholars got priority registration. My roommate was not a Regents Scholar so I remember him complaining about his late registration time. What other perks did we have? We had the dorms and the small classes.

So you were both Regent's Scholars?

Delfino & Gut: Yes.

It's so interesting, because now Regent's Scholars and other students within IS all get priority registration.

Delfino: In our year, there were only three people in the dorm who weren't Regents scholars. It was a much smaller program back then.

How many students were in your IS year?

Delfino: I think there were 58 or 60 because we were in the smaller Tercero buildings.

You must have gotten to know all the students in the IS program very well because it was such a small group!

Delfino: Oh yes!

What were some of the other IS students like? Were they really nerdy or do you remember someone in particular that was very unique?

Gut: In an honors program you're going to get the whole spectrum and you're lucky if you do get the whole spectrum, from the super nerdy to the somewhat normal. I'd like to think that I'm on the other end, of somewhat normal.

Delfino: There was a handful of us. I thought I was a big nerd in high school, but I was by far one of the most normal people. One of my quad-mates, another IS person and I lived together in an apartment for the rest of college after IS. We consider ourselves three of the four normal guys in the building. The rest were really nerdy. My roommates would be up until four or five in the morning, but it was entirely playing Warcraft on the network. They played lots of games. Dungeons and Dragons had a brief popularity. Origami was popular at one time or another. It was bizarre.

Oh, those video games are still popular. You see people playing them all the time here.

Delfino: There were a lot of people who were nerdy like that. We took this class for Mechling that year on how the turn of the 20th century was paralleling the turn of the 21st century and we had to do debates. Jay Mechling asked us all to share information and books to get both sides of the debate. We were both in that class, and a bunch of people wouldn't do it because they had to get the best grade in the class. I remember we had a cookout in the spring and only a handful of us knew how to barbecue. One girl, I remember was freaking out, because she had to go study, and was upset at how long it took.

That is crazy! I think we have a few really nerdy, socially awkward kids as well, but wow!

Delfino: We had this one guy who was enormously awkward. He was incredibly awkward. He had all these problems, like he claimed to be disabled and so he had a little cart he would drive, even though he could walk. It was very bizarre. He would park it and charge it in the lounge. People would take it for joy rides, which resulted in a cracked entry door. We also had a couple kids who didn't talk. I could not, to this day, tell you what they sounded like. One girl, I didn't realize, even lived in our building until winter quarter. It was a weird mix. For the most part, we all got along. I was accused of being a bastion of hyper-masculinity once because I made jokes.

Very funny!

Delfino: It was ridiculous...it was pretty nerdy. We called ourselves Nora's Nerds, that was our nickname for the yearbook. And our T-shirts say Nora's Nerds.

Nora's Nerds! That's so cute. So I understand you two met in IS! How did you guys meet and when did you start dating?

Delfino: She was right under my feet. She was in the quad on the first floor and I was in the quad on the second floor. We met in that Jay Mechling class. She tells the story better. I'll let her tell it to you.

So your husband said you tell the story of how you two started dating much better, so please tell me how did you meet and start dating?

Gut: So he was living with this guy named Adam in a quad. And I had met one of the other IS people from that year and I was sort of friends with her, and she thought that Adam was really cute. Now, you have to go back to the fact that we had just graduated from high school, so were still in that high school mentality of "go ask him to see if he thinks that I'm cute, but don't tell him I sent you" kind of thing. So, she thought Adam was really cute, and she had a crush on him. She wanted to go talk to him, but of course being a very mature 18-year-old, she couldn't go there and actually talk to him. So I had to go with her, so that it wouldn't look like she thought that this guy was cute. So we went over there, and Andy was in the common area of their quad playing a computer game or

something. And the other girl shows up there with me and we were going to meet Adam. So then Adam and Rhonda go off into his room and talk or whatever and I'm just kind of sitting there and Andy is angry and Andy is programming and he does not have time for me! So he's just says, "Here read this." And I'm like okay... and I didn't really like him, at all and he asked me out and I told him to get lost. Then one night we went to a movie at campus cinema together and I guess the rest is history.

That is so cute! Did you date all through college?

Delfino: Yup!

When did you guys decide to get married?

Delfino: When we graduated and realized we were going to move to Atlanta together. We applied to similar places and she got into several PhD programs. So I decided to come out to Atlanta with her. We got engaged and married a year after we graduated.

How sweet! It all worked out so well! I have also heard you have an IS baby!

Delfino: Yes, she's actually asleep right now! Her name is Hannah and she is eight and half months old.

That's precious!

Delfino: She's smart too!

I bet she is! I mean, she has a lot to live up to and a lot of people to look up to! I believe she is the only IS baby, which makes her very unique! Which reminds me, being one of the few IS couples, with I believe, the only IS baby that we know about, what do you expect for your daughter? Do you want her to go to UC Davis and attend the IS program?

Gut: Do we get a prize for that? I want a prize!

I'm pretty sure you should get a prize for that!

Gut: Well, the first thing you have to realize that when you do have a child you think that they're the brightest and the smartest of everything, so you're going to get a biased answer there. But we're getting settled in Georgia. We're in the process of buying a house, so I would not be upset if she chose to stay here instead of going to UC Davis.

Very understandable. All mothers want their children close to them! You sound like my mom. The only IS baby and her IS parents. Everyone from IS who knows about it thinks it's so cool! Were there any other IS romances from your year?

Gut: Yes! There were always a couple of IS couples. We weren't the first ones by far. And actually I know of one, maybe two, from our year, who also actually ended up getting married.

Delfino: We also had dorm-cest—well, we called it dorm-cest.

We do too!

Delfino: It was ridiculous in our building. I think over the course of the year we had nine couples and of those nine couples, the first couple started dating the 3rd day! I mean orientation week wasn't even over yet and they started dating! They got married probably around the same time we did. There was another one, these friends. They were friends for years and started dating our third year of college. He did the same thing I did, except they moved to Arizona. I wonder what happened to them! I believe there were three couples that survived all four years of college. A bunch of the other relationships were very transitory.

That is so typical of college dorm life! I see it in our year too. Couples will spring out of nowhere. Then they get tired of seeing each other every moment of the day and break up. How did you and your wife manage to maintain such a great balance all four years of college?

Delfino: I think that was a problem for my wife and me after we got out of the dorms. We took a class together every quarter freshman year, in addition to living together in the dorms.

That's crazy!

Delfino: We took our second IS class together and we took Jay Mechling's folklore class, in the spring, which is a great class! You should take it if you have the chance. I believe its an American Studies class.

Most definitely. So did you have a favorite IS professor?

Delfino: Oh I loved Jay and I liked Eric Schroeder. I joke that my minor in American Studies was just a minor in Eric and Jay because I took a lot of their classes. I'm still in touch with both of them, though Jay a lot more. Jay wants us to raise Hannah to call him Doc and his wife Toots.

Gut: I think Jay was also probably my favorite IS professor. Again, I go back to the whole "it was nice to have sort of small liberal arts school within this giant community," because, for example, Dr. Mechling invited us over to dinner and we went to dinner at his house throughout our three years in college. We had dinner at his house and then he would come over and have dinner at our apartment. There is no way that we would have had that without IS.

That's so cool that you both kept in such close contact with Professor Mechling! Was there an IS professor you didn't like?

Delfino: Not really. There were some weird professors, but I never had any real run ins with them.

How did you like IS courses, seminars and professors in contrast with regular classes and professors Davis?

Delfino: I liked the classes in IS a lot, and the English classes at Davis were very similar to the IS classes. But I didn't like the seminars very much. In the second quarter we had to take seminars that had themes and I was in the acting one, which was fun, but pointless at the same time. So the seminars were not that much fun for me, but I liked the classes a lot.

What was your favorite thing or most memorable experience about IS?

Gut: I think it was very nice how everybody took care of each other. It was like having a family.

I totally agree with that! I see it all the time in our IS year and it's really nice to have so many people who care about you! And you?

Delfino: Aside from meeting my wife, it was probably meeting the professors and understanding that it was cool to be dedicated to learning like that. Also, meeting friends that were very similar to you. Me and my two other friends from IS still talk regularly, even though we're in three different parts of the country. We lived together all three years after the dorms so that was pretty cool.

That is really cool! It's so nice that you still keep in touch with them. So, what was your least favorite thing about IS?

Delfino: My least favorite thing about IS? That's a tough question. Aside from the cow smell, which is not really IS, I think my least favorite thing was being in a program with some people who were almost so hopelessly nerdy, for a lack of a better word. I remember a lot of my run-ins with people, and the only problems I had in the dorms were those people who didn't have enough of a sense of humor to recognize what I was saying.

Seems like you were a mischievous college student!

Delfino: Yea, I wouldn't say all that much, just a typical college student, which made me unusual for that building I think.

Was the sense of community from IS maintained beyond freshman year?

Gut: I think there were pockets of people. We were 60 people, I've heard IS is much bigger now, but you can't have a close, tight knit group of 60 people. So they definitely developed pockets of close knit groups within the bigger group.

Delfino: There were a couple of us that stayed in touch, but no, not really. The only way we maintained that sense of community was to apply for Davis Honors Challenge.

Are you still in contact with any of your IS friends or building mates?

Gut: Yes, sure! Andy's roommate is the Godfather to our little girl. One of my good friends from IS, who's living in Philadelphia right now, was in Atlanta last week, and we had dinner, so yeah we definitely keep in touch with lots of people.

So how did IS affect your life after the program ended?

Delfino: Aside from, again, meeting my wife, which then caused me to move across the country and have children! Jeez! I'll have to say it made me more confident as a person and it got me into writing. I write humor on the side and I got into that because one of the guys in the dorm, that I didn't like very much, who I thought was cocky, got a column in the newspaper sophomore year and he thought he was funny, but he was terrible. It inspired me to start writing. It also helped me see that there were some very cool things to learn in college and that you didn't just have to do the same thing you did in high school, just the generic subjects, you could specialize in certain areas. I guess that's why I like Jay so much, because he taught me about cultural studies, which is something that just fascinates me.

Very interesting! If you could repeat your IS year, what would you change about it?

Delfino: I would think, if I could do anything, a good thing would be to help some of the members of the building have more of a normal college experience, but I'm just very happy with it.

That's great! It's really nice to hear that! I'm very happy with my IS experience so far, so its nice to hear other people liked it too!

Delfino: Yea, the program was great. I really liked it.

Gut: I'm pretty happy with my IS year too! I absolutely love Davis, I think I got a fantastic education, and when we were there it was even more affordable than it is now. I just loved the program, and I really loved my major.