

March 9, 2022

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Alumnus Revisits College of the Desert Love Story 50 Years Later

Beyond courses and degrees, College of the Desert also opens doors to life-changing moments, as it did for Peter Terhune.

He was a freshman in September 1972 when he first caught sight of Jennie, a fellow student who would become his wife of 43 years.

"It was the first day of classes. I was sitting on a bench just outside the library when I saw the most beautiful woman I had ever seen," Terhune said. "I had no way of knowing that one day, she would be my wife."

Sadly, Jennie Terhune passed away last year from complications of COVID-19. Struggling after the loss of his soul mate and confidante, Peter Terhune decided to seek out some of their earliest and happiest memories from College of the Desert.

He is planning a visit to the Palm Desert campus this month, where he will return to the magical spot where he first saw the love of his life.

Both Terhune and his wife found success after their time at College of the Desert. Jennie received her degree in psychology from San Diego State University and completed all coursework for a Master's in Public Administration. She worked for many years as an Accredited Records Technician in various hospitals. Meanwhile, Peter Terhune attended and complete law school and is now an attorney in the San Francisco Bay area.

On the seminal day in 1972 when Terhune spotted Jennie, it turned out they had a class together. They soon became great friends, making College of the Desert more than just a place to learn.

Many of the other students at College of the Desert were already familiar with one another, having attended one of the local high schools. Students like Terhune and Jennie, who were new to the desert, often found themselves in smaller groups with other transplant students. The result was friendships that lasted a lifetime.

"What College of the Desert did for me, for us, was provide a place where all of us could build lasting relationships," Terhune said. "Jennie and I were two transplants to the area, so we made friends with others in the same situation."

He is thankful to the College for providing a place where he was able to make some of those lasting memories, some of which changed his life forever. The Terhunes were married in July 1977.