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Westhampton

AROUND OUR VILLAGE

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The Gabis Brothers have been the house band at Billy Thorne's Artful Dodger for going on two decades. An awful lot of locals have fallen in love, got in fights and had a hell of a good time to a Gabis Bros. soundtrack.

Christopher Sheridan was one of those who spent plenty of time on the beer-slicked dance floor at the Dodger, in the late '80s and the '90s, with the brothers on the stage. Chris is a Westhampton Beach High School graduate, Class of 1984, and like a lot of other local alums the Dodger has headquarters.

Well, times change. Chris is now a captain in the U.S. Army Special Forces Airborne, stationed in southern New Jersey after returning from Afghanistan earlier this year. And a week ago Sunday, Chris got married down there to Kimberley Anne Kukis, director of development for the American Red Cross in New Jersey.

But then again, some things never change. The band at the reception was the Gabis Bros., thanks to a bunch of Westhampton buddies who took the Dodger luminaries down for the party.

Ken Carter—who said he can now admit to going to the Dodger since 1986 “since the statute of limitations has run out”—was the ringleader of the effort. Friends of Christopher who pitched in to hire the Gabis Bros. to play his wedding were Peter Hatch, Tony Hatch, Lawrence Pels, Bennett Feitell, Bill Berrien, Olivier Knox, Rich Rosivach, Jimmy Rodgers and Michael Weinman. “We all went to the Dodger for a million years,” Ken said.

Ken introduced the surprise guests at the reception as “the mystery strike team code-named—the Gabis Bros.!” After Chris recovered from the shock, he was out cutting the rug just like he used to do at the Dodger. Ken said the band spent more time gabbing with guests who had enjoyed their music over the years than

they did actually playing.

And afterwards, Ken's reaction was simple—“Mission accomplished.”

Chris's life story is not one that followed the usual path. He graduated from Columbia University in 1990 and went to work on Wall Street. At age 30, he woke up in lousy shape and decided a career change was in order—“kind of like John Candy in ‘Stripes,’” he said.

Basic training and then Special Forces training followed. And then, earlier this year when he began to think about concluding his Army career and heading off to law school, he was called to command a group of troops into combat in Afghanistan.

He's back now and proud of what he's done. He said that seeing women able to vote and drive and not have to live in fear was more than enough to make it all worthwhile. “I was there, and I've seen lives improve,” he said.

And then the Gabis Bros. at his wedding, thanks to his Westhampton buddies. “It's been an interesting year,” he understated.