

1 man, 4 women, many stories

The women in George Dumstorf's life took his word, until they found out about each other.

By COLLEEN JENKINS, Times Staff Writer

Published November 18, 2007

Martha-Irene Weed no longer wears her wedding rings, she is pursuing bigamy charges against her husband George Dumstorf Jr.



Stephanie Dumstorf, wife of George W. Dumstorf Jr. She is a professor at Brevard Community College.

[Handout Photo]

[Daniel Wallace | Times]

TAMPA - Divorce attorney Martha-Irene Weed had seen her share of spiteful spouses looking to sucker punch an ex.

"Good people at their worst," she says.

So she wasn't fazed when a man came into her South Tampa office and said his wife of 15 years wanted a divorce. The wife accused him of leading a double life, having stayed secretly married to another woman who bore his children.

Mudslinging, Weed thought.

She believed George W. Dumstorf Jr., a handsome white-haired man who spoke of a distinguished career. He smoothly contradicted his wife's claim and told Weed his first marriage ended almost a decade before his second began.

Weed took his case, settled his divorce and got rid of the bigamy complaint.

But in February, Dumstorf will stand trial on another bigamy charge. A different lawyer will be at his side because, this time, Weed is the accuser.

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Dumstorf, 69, says he has performed top-secret work for the Air Force and NASA. He says he got married, divorced, remarried, divorced, then remarried again, in that order. He says he has five children.

His three wives tell a different story. So does a fourth woman who says Dumstorf was her boyfriend for 20 years.

For 16 years, they say, he had two wives and a girlfriend at the same time.



[Daniel Wallace | Times]

Martha-Irene Weed holds the bouquet of flowers she carried on her wedding day, along with the boutonniere worn by George Dumstorf Jr. After her wedding she had the arrangements framed.



[Daniel Wallace | Times]

Martha-Irene Weed is pictured with George Dumstorf Jr. on March 13, 2003, when she received an award from outstanding pro bono service from two Hillsborough County legal associations.

Across five decades, he convinced them all that work kept him away for weeks. He took them to launches and VIP tours at Cape Canaveral but said other parts of his work were too sensitive to reveal.

He took control of their finances and investments but never showed them his paychecks.

The women loved him too much to suspect deception.

And that, they say, is what he counted on.

Wife No. 1

"You've got to remember," Dumstorf used to tell his future brother-in-law in the 1960s, "for every lie you tell, you've got to tell two to cover it up."

That was near the beginning, when Dumstorf, son of an appliance store owner, worked in the development office at Bellarmine College, his alma mater.

He and his wife, Stephanie, whom he married in 1960, lived in his hometown of Louisville, Ky., with their five children.

As the kids grew, so did George's absences. He told his family he had been hired by the space administration, requiring a commute to Cape Canaveral, Stephanie said in a deposition last year. She declined to comment for this story.

Two more births, seven baptisms and five high school graduations later, George and Stephanie moved in 1988 to the Florida city of Melbourne.

Wife No. 2

Judy Howell was the first to doubt George Dumstorf.

A divorced mother of three, she began dating him in the mid-1970s in Louisville. In the early 1980s, they settled in Dania, a town in southeast Florida, and then married.

He spent pieces of holidays with her, arriving in a bomber jacket and helmet, telling her he was running test flights.

"You know you're not supposed to ask me questions," he would say, if she wanted details.

She started asking anyway in 1999, after Dumstorf said he wanted a divorce. Howell learned that George Dumstorf had a homestead exemption in Melbourne with Stephanie, and public documents still listed them as husband and wife.

Howell found newspaper clippings from Brevard County that referred to him as the father of two daughters she didn't know about, born long after she had started dating him.

She confronted Dumstorf at a deposition for their divorce case in October 1999. He seemed to have an answer for everything.

Under oath, he claimed Stephanie had filed for divorce but he didn't know where. He said she had her sixth and seventh children with another man.

Howell, now 65, can't forget the way Weed, then Dumstorf's attorney, scoffed at the suggestion of a double life.

"I think it would be a waste of time and money to go chasing after that dead horse," Weed said during the deposition.

Howell tried anyway, reporting Dumstorf to law enforcement agencies in several counties. But she says no one took her seriously. She had diabetes and had to go on an insulin pump. When her doctor said the stress might kill her, she accepted \$100,000 in alimony and let go.

The girlfriend

Not long after Dumstorf made a home with Howell in Dania, a new relationship blossomed 12 miles north in Plantation.

Julie Jones, then a divorced mother with a successful travel agency, says she met Dumstorf through the local chamber of commerce.

For the next 20 years, Jones says, they took frequent cruises to Europe and the Caribbean and visited her family in Michigan.

Jones, 63, says Dumstorf persuaded her to invest more than \$250,000 in CDs, which he said would be issued by the Kennedy Space Center Federal Credit Union.

She received official-looking green certificates in the mail. Much later, she learned there was nothing official about them.

Wife No. 3

Weed, 57, is a high-mannered woman who wears large hats to public functions and uses the antique dining table of her childhood in her law office conference room. She has never been in trouble with the Florida Bar.

After she settled Dumstorf's divorce from Howell in 2000, Weed says he charmed his way into becoming more than a client.

"He was the most wonderful, caring, thoughtful, smart, protective, fantastic man," she said recently in her mahogany-paneled law office. "Just fantastic. I just loved him in a way that I hadn't loved anybody."

She trusted him, sometimes blindly. If he told her to sign a financial document, she did so without reviewing it. When he fussed that terrorists might notice his name on the sign for her 80-acre Brooksville cattle ranch, she took it off.

When he talked of marriage, the board-certified divorce attorney demanded a church wedding. And the Episcopal church, she said, required proof of Dumstorf's divorce from Stephanie.

Weed looked everywhere for the decree. Dumstorf said he looked, too. They couldn't find it.

She says one e-mail, dated Jan. 4, 2004, changed everything.

It appeared to have come from Karen Dumstorf, one of the two daughters George claimed not to have fathered. It said Stephanie Dumstorf had died the previous August in a car accident in Haiti.

Implausible? Not to lovestruck Weed. She no longer needed the divorce decree.

She became Mrs. George Dumstorf that March in Bay County. She wore a pink suit and matching hat; he wore an Air Force tuxedo with a Vietnam service ribbon pinned to the jacket.

Revelation

A fellow lawyer, Ashley Myers, told Weed they needed to talk.

It was April 2006. Weed's two-year marriage had become the envy of her circle of female family law attorneys and a source of pride to her father, a World War II veteran.

Weed sometimes passed along published stories that Dumstorf e-mailed her about his work.

Myers received one such article from a military publication about "Maj. General George W. Dumstorf" getting commissioned by NATO to work as a civilian contractor after his retirement from 46 years in the Air Force and government service.

Something about the story struck Myers as odd. She found the Web version. It never mentioned Dumstorf.

She called the author. He hadn't heard of Dumstorf.

Alarm bells went off in the colleague's head.

For several days, she conducted a discreet inquiry. Then, an Internet search revealed shocking news: Stephanie Dumstorf was alive and working as a writing teacher at Brevard Community College.

Weed couldn't believe her colleague's findings.

Admittedly, her third marriage wasn't perfect. Dumstorf wouldn't introduce her to his children, and he complained that he needed to take out loans because she didn't make enough money. But she was determined to make things work.

Weed immediately called the Brevard college.

"She's teaching there now?" Weed asked.

"Yes," came the answer.

Weed hung up and gasped for breath.

A letter

Four months later, a curious message arrived in Weed's mail.

Martha, I believe you know who I am. If you think it would be beneficial for us to speak to each other, please feel free to contact me.

The letter had no signature, just an e-mail address and a phone number.

Weed called the number. By then, she had spent months tracking her husband's claims.

She knew nothing of the woman who picked up the line.

It was Julie Jones, the 20-year girlfriend. Her son, too, had checked out Dumstorf's NATO story.

Comparing notes

In isolation, each woman doubted everything.

But together, they sifted truth from lies, sharing their stories and Dumstorf's e-mails. In one to Weed, titled "My try at the truth," Dumstorf acknowledged that Stephanie was alive but in bad shape from the Haiti accident.

The women's case against Dumstorf grew.

The Air Force and NASA have no record of him. One of his attorneys, Brett Geer of Tampa, says those agencies aren't acknowledging Dumstorf to protect his sensitive work status. But an Air Force official said even if Dumstorf performed classified work, he would show up in databases as a member of the service.

The women learned that in January 2006, Dumstorf traveled to Walt Disney World separately with Weed and Jones. After several days with Jones, Dumstorf complained of back trouble and said he needed to see his doctor at Cape Canaveral. He went to Weed's hotel instead.

They learned that the Kennedy Space Center Federal Credit Union does not issue CDs.

The women realized he borrowed their family names for his own purposes. A Kentucky bank trying to validate Dumstorf's credit union CDs got an e-mail signed by "Martha-Irene Weed, federal program compliance and verification officer." And e-mails regarding Jones' investments came from a "chief of staff" whose name was identical to the daughter of wife No. 2.

They learned to question everything he had told them. When Jones pressed Dumstorf about the state of her CD investments, he stalled, claiming in an October 2006 e-mail that his younger son, Mark, had died. But family members in Louisville say Mark is alive.

Dumstorf's relatives reeled, too. No one in the tight-knit Kentucky clan had met Jones or knew Howell or Weed as his wives. His mother's estate accused him in a lawsuit of altering a power of attorney document to secure more than \$1-million in loans.

His family can't explain Dumstorf's actions.

"It lasted for so long," said Joseph Dumstorf, George's younger brother.

"That's the amazing thing."

Dumstorf's defense

Dumstorf wouldn't grant an interview. His defense team characterizes Weed as a masterful manipulator who is out to destroy his credibility and go after his assets.

They say his version of events goes like this: Weed lured him into a sexual relationship while she was still married and still his attorney. She persuaded him to borrow money and co-sign loans to skirt her bad credit. She knew Stephanie was still alive when they married in 2004.

Weed denies she was still his attorney when their affair began.

In August, Dumstorf sued Weed for professional malpractice. He wants to evict her from her South Tampa office; he says he owns it, but she says he led her to believe they both did.

He is fighting the bigamy charge, filed in Bay County where he and Weed married. Jonathan Dingus, his criminal defense attorney, says Weed led Dumstorf to believe that he was legally able to remarry.

"He put his trust in her, and she failed him," Dingus said.

Dumstorf thinks his first wife and Jones changed stories to help Weed incriminate him, said Geer, his Tampa civil attorney. Stephanie Dumstorf knew her marriage to George had ended, knew he had not fathered two of her children and knew about his marriage to Howell, Geer said.

The Dumstorf children didn't want to comment. Their uncle, Joseph Dumstorf, says that, physically, the youngest two daughters are "spitting images" of George.

Geer disputes Jones' claims of romance, saying their relationship was "simply a long-running instance of two friends helping each other out financially."

More trouble

On Nov. 8 - a year to the date of Dumstorf's arrest on the bigamy charge brought by Weed - three FBI agents and two sheriff's deputies handcuffed him near a rundown trailer in the woods of Spring Hill, his home since Weed kicked him off the Brooksville ranch.

A Kentucky grand jury indicted him on federal bank fraud charges. He is accused of using fake CDs as collateral for an \$850,000 loan.

Moving on

The February bigamy trial in Bay County could unite the women for the first time.

After 46 years of marriage, Stephanie Dumstorf, 69, bucked her Catholic distaste for divorce last year. She said she didn't divorce George after learning about Howell, wife No. 2, because

he said theirs wasn't a real marriage. "He's a very good teller of stories," Stephanie said during her deposition.

Howell lives with her daughter and doesn't want Dumstorf to know where. She believes Weed was genuinely blind-sided. "What goes around comes around I guess," she said. "I feel sorry for her."

Jones, the girlfriend, hasn't seen Dumstorf or her \$250,000 investment since she confronted him about Weed. She had to leave retirement to pay her bills.

Weed filed for an annulment. She is repaying more than \$800,000 in loans, which bought a new roof for Wife No. 1 and covered alimony for Wife No. 2. She calls this chapter of her life "the blackest, most awful time."

"It's going to be a long time before I can even consider an emotional commitment," she said. "I just really question whether or not I'll ever be able to really, really, really trust."

The divorce attorney keeps her wedding scrapbook in her office, evidence of a promise broken.

Times researcher John Martin contributed to this report. Colleen Jenkins can be reached at cjenkins@sptimes.com or 813 226-3337.

Fast Facts:

Key players

George W. Dumstorf Jr: Told women he worked for the Air Force and NASA. Says, through attorneys, that his three marriages did not overlap.

Stephanie Dumstorf: Wife No. 1. Met Dumstorf through a Catholic student group. Married him in 1960. Says they had seven children and were married 46 years.

Judy Howell: Wife No. 2. Met Dumstorf through work in Kentucky, then married him in 1984 after they moved to Florida. Had no children with him. They divorced in 2000.

Julie Jones: Calls herself Dumstorf's girlfriend of 20 years, until 2006. Says they talked about getting married when he retired from the military.

Martha-Irene Weed: Wife No. 3, a South Tampa lawyer. Represented Dumstorf in his divorce from Howell, then married him in 2004. Now seeking annulment.

Timeline

1960: George W. Dumstorf Jr. marries Stephanie Schmida in Akron, Ohio.

1963: Dumstorf says he begins working at Cape Canaveral.

1984: He marries Judy Howell in Lehigh Acres.

1986: He meets Julie Jones.

1988: Stephanie says she and Dumstorf move to Florida.

2000: Dumstorf and Howell divorce in Hillsborough.

2004: He marries Martha-Irene Weed in Panama City Beach.

May 2006: Weed files for an annulment.

July 2006: Stephanie Dumstorf files for divorce.

November 2006: George Dumstorf is arrested on a Bay County bigamy charge.

August 2007: He sues Weed for professional negligence.

November 2007: He is arrested on federal bank fraud charges.