



# happily ever a

HOW THREE COUPLES FOUND THE LOVE OF THEIR DREAMS

By **DIANE HERBST** and **RACHEL DESANTIS**



## 'WE PRAYED FOR THE PERFECT FAMILY'

Ben and Tina Gibson used embryo donation to have children and learned true love is timeless

When Tina and Ben Gibson wed in 2010 in Knoxville, Tenn., they knew having children would be difficult because of Ben's cystic fibrosis, a genetic disorder affecting the lungs that can cause infertility. "We fostered children and explored adoption," says Tina, 29. "But nothing fell into place until we learned about embryo adoption. That was God saying, 'This is what you need to do.'"

Tina, a schoolteacher, and Ben, an IT specialist, began working with the National Embryo Donation Center, a faith-based nonprofit that offers adoption and implantation of unused embryos from in vitro fertilization (IVF) patients, and reviewed hundreds of profiles describing donors' hobbies, physical traits and medical information. It wasn't until minutes before the implantation procedure that they realized the five embryos they'd adopted were frozen in October 1992—a full 24 years earlier.

Although medical opinions vary, the Gibsons' doctor



HALEIGH CABRILE PHOTOGRAPHY; INSET: COURTESY TINA GIBSON

# after

assured them the embryos' age wouldn't affect viability. In November 2017 Emma Wren Gibson was born, setting a record for oldest embryo to result in a live birth. The Gibsons beat that record themselves, when Emma's full biological sister Molly Everette was born on Oct. 26, 2020, more than 27 years after the embryo was frozen.

The whole experience only deepened their love, Tina says: "We were leaning on each other and sharing when we were struggling. And there's nothing greater than seeing the person you love love something as much as you do." Adds Ben, 36: "You can't get any happier than this."



**Small Miracles**  
"We took a leap of faith," says Tina Gibson of using older embryos to have Emma, 3, and Molly, 4 months.



INSET: COURTESY, PEGGY WILSON

## Making It Official

"I thought, 'Why wait?'" says Peggy of their small wedding attended by 10 friends and family members.



## 'I SAW HIS

After 62 years began vic

Last June, four weeks of her husband of 43 Smutz, 80, received a Don Wilson, a class high school with in D whom she hadn't spc "I heard the news fro thought I ought to sa Don, 80, who lost his 2019. "I called on Peg

Despite six decade contact—Peggy had s Ariz., and Don in Mo the pair hit it off, laugh times. By their third c smitten. "I trusted he her from the start," se electronics operatio Peggy's surprise, Don rejected him, suggest Zoom to improve his