

A risk worth taking

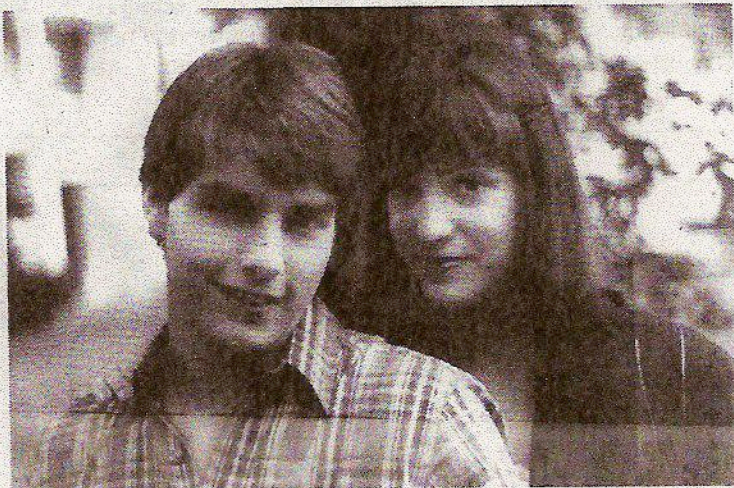
Weston native in the business of entertaining

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A night out at The Improv in Los Angeles sounds like a great opportunity to relax with friends, laugh at a comedy act, or perhaps even act the fool singing karaoke.

Yet, what if a friend suddenly dared you to enter this pending karaoke contest? After flipping through the pages of potential songs, you pick a familiar Gershwin piece titled, "Summertime." You walk onto the stage, lights blaring in your face, and step up to the microphone as the first notes echo through the club.

For some of us, the seemingly tone-deaf and anxious bunch, this scene could prove to be a bona fide nightmare. However, for Sarah Partridge, a nearly identical incident just happened to spark her fairytale journey into the music industry.



Partridge's introduction and rise as a jazz singer is pretty unusual. She and her family moved to Weston when she was 8 years old. She still remembers the house her architect father built for them on Glen Road, where she would live through her middle school graduation. Partridge had what she enthusiastically recounts as a "really good childhood."

What's more is that Partridge's interest in jazz was not born that night at The Improv, but rather lay deeply rooted in her Weston days. Her passion throughout elementary and junior high school was theater. Through her participation in various drama productions, her love for music and singing also grew.

She remembers acting in "Anne of Green Gables" and falling in love with its wonderful music. However, Partridge never really saw herself as having the best voice; instead she had goals of becoming an actress.

Partridge also grew up listening to classic artists such as Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and her personal favorite, Sarah Vaughan. Although each

of these artists has had a deep impact on her own style, Partridge says her own father was her greatest influence: it was with him that Partridge spent hours listening to jazz. Despite her ongoing aspirations to act, Partridge's passion for music, especially jazz, stuck with her for years.

After middle school, Partridge's family moved to Birmingham, Ala., where she experienced what she explains as immense "culture shock." From here, Partridge went on to receive a degree in theater from Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. Still pursuing a career in acting, she landed her first role in a major motion picture titled "Risky Business."

"Hi, I'm Joel," were Tom Cruise's first words to Partridge.

"He had such charisma - even then," she explains. Partridge was cast opposite Cruise as Kessler, a school chum of Joel's who he had fantasies about. Partridge will even admit to having a little bit of a crush on Cruise at the time.