



Photo by John Trigiani Photography.

Meet Rosa Nudo-Perras

By Mike Van Haren • Photos submitted by Rosa Nudo-Perras

Life's most difficult moments can soften our hearts and strengthen the relationships that matter the most. Without telling our story, though, how do we know which door to knock on when we need comfort and compassion, a word of resilience and courage, or simply the knowledge that we aren't alone in a seemingly private struggle? Sharing our stories opens the door to help each other through the hard stuff.

Meet your neighbours, Rosa Nudo-Perras, her husband, David and their two daughters, Pamela and Olivia. For 23 years, the couple has called the Windfields and St. Andrew's area home, and their house is a retreat after the frantic pace of the workday, and a welcoming hub for family and friends to gather.

Working in the same field has always tethered Rosa and David together, and it was on a building project where they first crossed paths. "We were both working on a construction project at the time," said Rosa. "David was working with the developer, and I was involved through my father's business. I knew I'd caught his eye, but I didn't want my personal life getting mixed with business. Two years later, a close friend told me about this guy he thought I would really hit it off with." Rosa remembers the details like it was yesterday. "He told me, 'We'll stop at this party, and you can see if there's anything there.' We met at the party,

and strangely thought we had met before, but it wasn't until after we left that I asked my friend what he did for a living, and then I put the pieces together," laughed Rosa. Three years later, the couple married, in February 2002.

Rosa possesses the rare combination of a mind that thrives in both art and math. "After high school, I pursued and obtained a degree in Economics, but my real passion was always the arts. Every elective I chose centred on art, art history, or architecture. Following university, I went on to study design at the acclaimed International Academy of Design—now known as Yorkville Institute," Rosa explained. Ambition blended with her studies and Rosa was ready to define her own professional path, but tragedy has a way of reorienting our lives.

"Our dad passed away unexpectedly at an early age, when my sisters and I were still in our early twenties—one of us even younger," said Rosa. "We were suddenly faced with grief, along with the responsibility of the business he had built. I set aside my own professional pursuits to step in with one of my sisters, and together we carried it forward. As we moved into this new phase of life, working side by side allowed us to support each other, balancing the demands of the business with the realities of family life during a very challenging time."

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The family dealt with loss again when Rosa's mother passed away in late 2018, after a long struggle with progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP). The Alzheimer Society of Canada identifies PSP as a rare progressive neurodegenerative disease that causes vision difficulties and loss of balance while walking, as well as changes in cognitive ability, mood and personality. "Mom needed a lot of care as her health declined over the years," said Rosa. "PSP shows symptoms similar to Parkinson's disease, and other neurodegenerative diseases, but there is no single test to identify it, and no known cure. My sisters and I were hit with the unexpected responsibility of caring for our mom in the middle of our lives, as we were raising our own families. All I can do now is meet people with empathy and compassion when they're faced with a dramatic life change. I can step into a lot of uncomfortable shoes, and painful stories, and I apply a lot of care in those difficult situations because it's so meaningful and personal to me."

Today, the kids are no longer kids. Pamela just graduated from the School of Interior Design at Toronto Metropolitan University, and Olivia is finishing her degree in Commerce at the John Molson School of Business at Concordia University in Montreal. "Pamela comes with me to hot yoga, which I've been practising since Olivia was born, attending the same yoga studio. I love Level Up Yoga Studio! Their instructors are great, and I always look forward to the rigorous endurance session of the Sunday morning HIIT yoga class set against invigorating playlists," said Rosa. Olivia has also recently picked up yoga while away at school. "Olivia was a nationally ranked figure skater before she hung-up her skates during Covid." Eagerly awaiting visits from their girls, Pretzel and Snowflake, 10-year-old Shih Tzus, always keep a lookout at the window.

David stays very active even around the long clock of his workday. "He's a very early riser and gets in a workout with his trainer before he starts his day. He plays hockey twice a week, and enjoys golf as well," said Rosa. After 23 years of marriage, David makes sure Rosa still has some arm candy to take to dinner.

As the kids grew up, Rosa was able to slowly return to her early dreams of interior design. "Our home renovation was my first foray back into the industry," she laughed. "My dad would always say that you had to work for the luck in your life. I know I was fortunate to have friends that were so inspired by the transformations we made here, that they had me over to bring the vision of their homes to life, too." Rosa is now an award-winning interior designer, an accredited member of the Decorators & Designers Association of Canada and the owner of NUVO Design Studio here in Toronto.

The family are avid skiers, and for years, they travelled with the girls out West to both Whistler and especially Panorama Mountain Village. "We wanted to bring the feeling of Whistler home with us, and that had a big influence on how the backyard has evolved," said Rosa. "Most recently, for David's 60th birthday, we built a pavilion in the backyard to host a band for the party, and it was such a joy to fill the space with over 100 friends and family to celebrate.

Our yard holds so many memories for us, from summer birthday parties for the girls, to family camp outs. It can be a challenge to find time to get out of the city, so we've built a space that helps us recharge and bring people together right here."

While they love their time at home, travelling to Italy has been a favourite spot to visit over the years. "For us, the most memorable are the breathtaking views overlooking the Bay of Naples," said Rosa. "It's this cross section of history, culture, and landscape that make it feel timeless and inspiring." Much of their travel takes them south, with family on both sides still living there, and Italy's diversity keeps drawing them back. "Last year, we visited Taormina in Sicily for the first time, and it left the girls wanting more. They absolutely love it, too." Rosa and David do hope to purchase a home there soon, and have a launching point to explore Italy and the rest of Europe.

Whatever the future holds, Rosa and David will continue to build it together.

