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## A Match Made in Hollywood

*Actress Candace Cameron and the NHL's Valeri Bure get an early start on their own full house*

by **Jim Killam**

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**C**andace Cameron Bure is an American sweetheart, the kind of older sister every kid wishes for. And over the course of eight seasons on the ABC sitcom "Full House," kids and adults alike got to watch as she grew up—from cute 10-year-old to attractive young woman.

Valeri Bure is a lightning-fast Russian skater who some thought was too small to play in the National Hockey League (NHL). Born in Moscow, he played on his country's Olympic silver-medal team in 1998. Now, in his fifth full NHL season, the Calgary Flames's right winger looks forward to a long, successful career.

A former child star from California and a professional hockey player from Russia. Not a likely match, right?

**W**ell, look beneath the surface of Valeri and Candace Cameron Bure and you'll find two soulmates who, three-and-a-half years into marriage, remain starry-eyed honeymooners.

"It's been wonderful," says Candace, sitting in the living room of their home in the Santa Monica Mountains. "We talk a lot, and we have so much love between us that it's been a great journey so far."

During the summer, when neither Val nor Candace is working, they live the laid-back L.A. life: taking walks, going to the beach and hanging out with friends, including Candace's "Full House" family. But during the long hockey season, their life together gets more challenging. Val travels half the season and Candace bounces month to month between their apartment in Calgary and their home near Los Angeles. Living in two cities, and two countries, became even tougher after their 1½-year-old daughter, Natasha, joined the family.

"It's hard to go on the road and miss my wife, and now it's even harder to miss the baby," Val says. "If I could change it, I would change the schedule so I could play all 82 games at home so I could be with my family."

With the Bures' second child due in February, the heart of the NHL season, their life will get even crazier. To help ease the strain and maintain a little more family sanity, Candace has set aside her acting career for now, choosing to focus on home. For both Candace and Val, fame, fortune and career success take a back seat to love, laughter and all-out commitment to each other.

"Money is part of our life, but to me it's not that big of a deal," Val says. "I'd rather be home with our family and just enjoy ourselves rather than make some more money and not be able to do that."

And Candace, for all of her early show-business success, couldn't be happier. As a child, she says, a solid family life outside television prepared her for life and helped her avoid taking unrealistic expectations into marriage.

"I've never compared what real life would be like to anything on TV or in scripts," she says. "What I've known of marriage and married life is just from my mom and dad and other friends and grandparents."

### **Childhood Labor**

The youngest of four kids, Candace is no stranger to hard work or to show business. Her older brother, Kirk, starred in TV's "Growing Pains." And Candace began appearing in commercials at age 5. By age 7, she'd made her network debut with a guest appearance on "St. Elsewhere." At 10, she landed the role of D.J. Tanner on "Full House," a show that still is seen five days a week in syndication.

While Candace was growing up in front of prime-time TV viewers, Valeri and his older brother, Pavel, were growing up in the public eye half a world away. Their father, Vladimir, competed as a swimmer in the 1968, 1972 and 1976 Olympic Games. His status as one of the Soviet Union's top athletes meant his sons grew up in relative privilege. Both boys were playing organized hockey by age 5 or 6.

In 1991, Pavel signed with the NHL's Vancouver Canucks. Vladimir and Val accompanied him to North America, and Val, just 17, joined the minor-league Spokane Chiefs.

When Val met Candace in 1994, he had just been drafted by the Montreal Canadiens. Playing in a Los Angeles charity game with several celebrities, he met Dave Coulier, who played Joey Gladstone on "Full House." Coulier decided he knew a young actress who just might hit it off with Val.

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Candace and Val talked, then exchanged phone numbers. They went out for pizza the next day and decided they'd like to see each other again, even though that wouldn't be for two months because of Val's travel schedule. In the meantime, they talked every day on the phone.

"It was surprising how much we had in common, growing up in such different places," Candace says. "We kind of have the same work ethic, because we've both been working since we were 5 years old ... which makes you grow up a little faster."

They dated for two years, starting in the final season of "Full House."

"We'd work [on the show] three weeks and have one week off," Candace recalls. "So every week off I was flying to Montreal to see Val. And those three weeks in between were just horrible." In retrospect, she says, the TV series "kind of ended at just the right time."

### **Private Life**

As a 23-year-old, Candace is enjoying the privacy and free time she never had as a teenager. But the transition from highly visible TV star to everyday wife and mom didn't come easily. When Candace's "Full House" friends urged her to take a break from acting and return a few years later as an adult, she didn't know how to respond.

"It was hard hearing that," she says. "I still wanted to work because I had been so used to it. It's what I've grown up doing. So that was a sacrifice in the beginning. It's not now."

The joy she finds in family life is evident when Candace's eyes light up as Val brings Natasha, just up from her nap, into the living room. Natasha beams back. As Candace and Val take turns spoon-feeding their daughter, who's perched next to the couch in her high chair, they talk about the future.

Val's hockey career figures to last a while—he's only 25—but when the time comes to hang up his skates, Candace hopes for her acting career to be in bloom again. Val says he'd be perfectly happy to be a stay-at-home dad at that point.

But what if Candace's Hollywood comeback never happens?

"It really doesn't worry me," she explains. "God already has it all planned out. If I go back to work and it works out well and I do good things, then great. If it doesn't, then it's fine. I have a good peace of mind about it."

In fact, their marriage rests on the foundation that God is in control.

"Val and I both know that," Candace says, "so we don't waste our time and waste our lives worrying about things—what if this doesn't happen or this or that. We just take it as it goes."

Helping with that big-picture perspective is that both Val and Candace come from Christian backgrounds: Val from a formal, Orthodox tradition and Candace from a more informal, relational approach to the faith.

"We have our personal relationships with God and that's all that's important," Candace says. "He is part of our daily life."

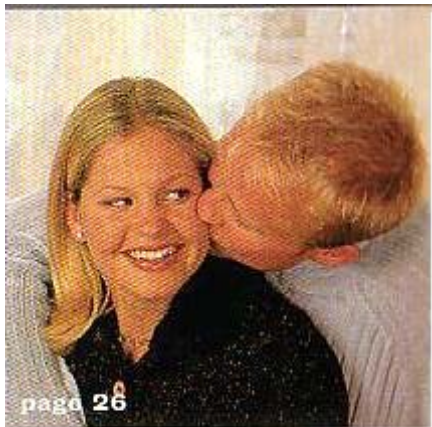
"I wake up every morning," Val says, "and either have [Candace] or my daughter there, and I thank [God] for that. That's the way my day begins."

So much for Hollywood's miserable- marriage stereotype. Val and Candace have found love and contentment together—a goal that eludes many "ordinary" couples. As Candace says, God certainly has a plan.

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**Candace Cameron and Valeri Bure live in a house full of love.**

