

Meeting the People in Your Neighborhood: Karl and MaryLou Martz

By Barb Roy
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Karl and MaryLou Martz share many things: a home, their kids, and the same workplace at Penn State Capital College, in different offices just down the hall from one another.

That they are loyal Lions fans makes this a natural place for them to be together.

Karl came to work at Penn State first, in 1988. He knew and worked with the person who held the job at Penn State prior to him through his former job as Director of Career Services with Central Penn Business School. He took over when that person retired.

MaryLou was home with their two children, Jennifer and Matthew, but worked part-time as an RN in geriatrics. In the late 1980s, she was instrumental in getting a maternity fitness program, MotherWell, started for Penn State's Pinnacle Women's Resource Center.

Karl graduated from Texas Lutheran with a degree in political science and psychology while MaryLou got her RN from York Hospital School of Nursing and then a BSN from Messiah.

He received an MS degree in Training and Development from Penn State in the Spring of 1993, ending the same semester that MaryLou was just beginning the quest for her MS.

"There are no excuses not to go on when you're working in an educational environment," Karl said.

In his job with career services in the Student Assistance Office, Karl offers services in career counseling, advising and job placement assistance and offers interview and resume advice.

He plays a key role in the Internship Fairs. "While we don't get involved in the actual internship process, we can make referrals and help with connections in obtaining an internship," Karl said.

Meanwhile, MaryLou dispenses medical advice, counseling or treatment in the Student Health Services Office.

They are both from the Harrisburg area; MaryLou attended Bishop McDevitt High School while Karl went to John Harris High School.

Married for 23 years, they met when MaryLou's brother was playing football with Karl after school one day. MaryLou says her sister spotted Karl first, and that she was only interested in watching the game.

"I was not paying any attention to Karl," MaryLou said, "but it was me and not my sister who received a call from

It is this outgoing quality that he brings to his hobby as a magician. "I've always been fascinated with magic," Karl said.

"When I was working at the Central Penn Business School, I helped organize a benefit, and invited a talented friend who was a mime and he also performed magic tricks. My friend was in movies and worked on

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-- MaryLou Martz

him asking me out."

Perhaps it was her interest in football that impressed Karl--their first date was to a Big 33 Pennsylvania-Ohio football game. They carried on a long-distance romance while at college over the next five years.

"My father's rule before we could marry was that we had to be finished with school and both have a job," says MaryLou. "Luckily we both got jobs right away when we graduated."

Both Karl and MaryLou's faces become familiar to students and staffers because of their various activities throughout campus, but not many people connect them together.

"Karl has his job and I'm doing mine... so someone might get to know one of us and then they'll get to know the other separately," says MaryLou.

"Students often react with surprise to see pictures of each other on our desks."

It is a cliché that married couples shouldn't work in the same place, but Karl and MaryLou love it.

"We commute together and it gives us a chance to talk. We go on coffee breaks and to lunch and attend the same staff meetings," MaryLou said.

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the set of *Chaplin*, helping to teach Chaplin routines to the star."

One day his friend brought Karl to a store that sold props for magicians. Karl bought some things, learned from his friend and took off from there. Starting out with kids' birthday parties, Karl went on to perform magic shows for various business conventions.

He has also performed in the Gallery Lounge, and for the annual Penn State Harrisburg Fall Arts and Crafts Festival.

One of Karl's greatest fans is his daughter. When his daughter Jennifer was four, she called MaryLou into her bedroom one day.

"Look, mommy," she said, "I can do a magic trick like Daddy," as she poured real milk into a hat while standing on the bed. This messy audition earned her a place as Daddy's assistant for years.

Outside of school, Karl loves to be active. He teaches kayaking and is the President of the Canoe Club. He is a member of the Harrisburg Bicycle Club, has coached youth baseball, basketball, and soccer. He also plays racquetball and runs several miles everyday to keep in shape.

He ran in the Harrisburg Marathon on Nov. 7 as part of a relay team with his son Matthew, Frank DeVanzo of Police Services, and Jack

Cavanaugh of Penn State's Housing and Food Services. They finished in the top quarter.

MaryLou is also very active and loves the fact that she works on a ten-month contract, allowing her to be outdoors in the summer, playing tennis, gardening, and joining her son for in-line skating. No matter what time of year, she walks two miles every day.

Karl said she is a great cook. "I love when she brings baked goods for everyone to the Canoe Club meetings."

Although she loves to bake, nutrition was her thesis for her master's degree, and she lives what she preaches. She is an avid advocate for healthy eating, saying that it is a joke amongst those who know her to say, "Quick, eat this before MaryLou comes," if there are any goodies around.

A major highlight for their family was to attend the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. The expenses were paid by Penn State. Karl recruited 400 students from Penn State (150 were from PSH) to work as security.

Karl and MaryLou served as house parents and MaryLou also did drug testing. "It was thrilling to be involved with the Olympics. Both of our kids worked too."

The biggest thrill for Karl involved the torch. "I got up at

5 a.m. to watch it arrive, but there was so much revelry in the streets that the runners, a bunch of young Belgians, could not get through," he remembered. "I started to talk with them while they were just standing there. The street was blocked and I asked them [the Belgians] if I could hold it for a minute, and then I actually got to hold the torch."

The biggest challenge came during the bombing that occurred during the Olympics. "It was hard to get a head count of everyone we were responsible for because in the evening, a lot of the students went downtown because there was a lot of fun things to do," Karl said.

"We weren't sure who was where and we had to go through the rooms over and over again until we could account for everyone."

While no one from Penn State was injured by the bombing, several students packed up to leave the next morning. MaryLou and their kids decided to stick it out with Dad.

Sticking with it together is their lifestyle. Karl jokingly said, "If MaryLou and I combine our years here as students and employees of Penn State, we need to retire."

For all of their activity and love of this school, retirement doesn't look likely for a long time to come.



MaryLou and Karl Martz

Photo by Barb Roy