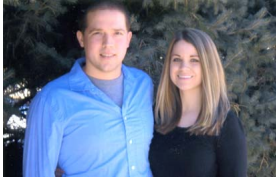


Resilient relationship

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

Friday, 05 February 2010 14:44 - Last Updated Friday, 05 February 2010 14:46



Senior prom first date for couple who plan to marry in June

Kristen Yilk and Joey Rubenthaler were members of the last class to stroll the halls of the old Gothenburg High School.

Shortly after they graduated with the Class of 2003, the building was demolished because a new one had been built.

Kristen and Joey shared many classes. They both played sports for the Swedes.

Joey, who attended country school until seventh grade, was also involved in FFA, band and student council while Kristen—who lived in town—played in the band and was also a member of student council.

At the time, they were just classmates.

Nothing more.

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More than midway through their senior year, they were winter coronation candidates and walked together across the gym floor during the ceremony.

If there was a spark then, neither Kristen or Joey said they felt it.

Less than a month before they graduated, things changed.

“We had never really talked until then,” Kristen said.

The two seniors were at a friend’s house.

“We were just sitting outside and talking and we had our first kiss,” Joey said.

At the time, Kristen was working at the Wellness Center as a receptionist and Joey would visit and keep her company.

“Shortly before prom on April 25, we made it official,” she said. “It was probably our first real date. We were both excited.”

Joey remembers being a bit nervous when he drove to Kristen’s house.

“I think I was even shaking a little when I put on her corsage,” he said.

After high school graduation, they both headed to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where Kristen received a degree in dental hygiene and Joey an athletic training degree.

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A little more than seven years later, the two classmates will start sharing a life together as husband and wife.

On June 12, Kristen will stroll down the aisle of Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church to marry Joey.

Seven years may seem like a long time to date but while in college, both said they thought their paths would probably continue in the same direction.

“We weren’t always positive it would end up this way,” Joey said. “Like any young couple, we had some rough patches but we’re happy everything turned out the way it did.”

Kristen said they had talked about marriage but agreed that it needed to be after they graduated from college.

Joey said it’s fortunate they have grown together and had time to learn about each other.

“I think that we are completely different people from when we started dating at age 18,” Kristen said.

The marriage proposal came about on a cold day in January of 2009.

Kristen said she arrived in Lincoln for a weekend while Joey was at class.

He later called and said his car wouldn’t start and asked if she could pick him up.

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When she arrived, he called and said his car had started and he was driving home.

“When I got to Joey’s house, all the lights were off and I thought that was pretty strange,” Kristen said. “When I got to the front door, there was a single rose and inside he had several tea light candles lit all the way to his room.”

Joey had more roses in his room which was where he knelt on one knee and proposed.

To make marriage work, Kristen said both people must be committed to making the relationship work.

Joey said it also helps to enjoy some of the same things.

“You must also know what it takes to make the other person happy,” he explained. “Marriage is about just wanting to do whatever it is that will make the person’s day better.”

In addition, Kristen said a good marriage means maintaining a good balance of work, friends and family.

“You both also need a strong relationship with God,” she said. “And you need to be able to laugh with each other and have a sense of humor.”

These days, Kristen, 25, works as a dental hygienist in Shenandoah, IA, and Joey, 24, lives in Lincoln where he’ll graduate with a masters degree in education administration in May.

He works for Nebraska Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine and is also the head athletic trainer at

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Norris High School.

Because they have had more than a year to work on wedding arrangements, Kristen said plans have been going well and have not felt rushed.

“I’m the only girl in my family so my mom is having a blast,” Kristen said. “I don’t think she’s missed an episode of ‘Say Yes to the Dress’ on TLC since we’ve been engaged.”

After the wedding, the couple will have a reception at Walker’s Steakhouse & Lounge before traveling to Miami where they will embark on a five-day cruise of the Caribbean.

They are still figuring out where they will live although Kristen said it will more than likely be Glenwood, IA.

The couple plans on enjoying life and each other for a couple of years before starting a family.

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