

# Not Always Smooth Sailing

June 01, 2007

We met at an anti-Vietnam War protest in 1971. Jerry was an associate professor and Judy was a graduate student at the University of Illinois. We encountered one another across the table at an anti-war strategy meeting, and our eventual relationship can be traced to a fortuitous game of footsie that went on under the table. Jerry has a vivid memory of the interaction while Judy has none at all, suggesting that she assumed the flirtatious foot was attached to her then boyfriend (sitting beside her).

Happily, the case of mistaken identity eventually led to a life together. Although our personal relationship was deeply satisfying from the start, it created professional problems of a sort that were especially common for couples in academia at the time.

In 1973, Judy received her PhD and left Champaign-Urbana for her first job as an assistant professor at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. Jerry drove her from corn fields to palm trees in her 1963 Volkswagen Bug with rusted-out holes in the floor and two Siamese cats howling the whole way. That spring, dissatisfied with the long-distance relationship, Judy resigned her position, packed the cats back into the VW, and headed north for love, but an uncertain professional future.

Since 1966, Jerry had been comfortably ensconced in one of the best psychology departments in the world. At that time, hiring was through the “old boy network.” Someone at Illinois decided that they needed one of Jerry’s advisor’s students, made a phone call to Texas, and invited Jerry to visit and then to join the faculty. He was promoted to associate professor in 1970 and to full professor in 1975. Clicking his heels in joy (literally) after hearing the news of his promotion to full professor, he was chagrined to discover his celebration had been observed by a senior colleague.

In contrast to this smooth trajectory, Judy had a series of part-time — “research” this and “visiting” that — positions in various locations around Illinois. Eventually, she was offered a post doc with Ann Brown at the University of Illinois, with encouragement to write her own grant. In the life-changing summer of 1978, we lived with dear friends — our “chosen kin” — in Washington, DC, and worked every day in the Rotunda of the Library of Congress. Inspired by the beautiful setting, Judy wrote her first grant proposal. The award paid her salary for the next few years, enabling her to establish a research program, thereby making an academic career possible.

The other life-changing accomplishment of that magical summer was the conception of our son, Benjamin. He was born back in Urbana in a March blizzard and went home with a bow attached to his blanket with the message: “Happy Birthday Daddy.” He has made us happy ever since.

In 1979, Judy finally got a regular academic appointment — assistant professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Ecology in the College of Agriculture at the University of Illinois. Although it was a small, weak program, there were two excellent colleagues and the opportunity to do research. After a slow start and great anxiety about her career prospects, she was tenured in 1986 and

promoted to full professor in 1990.

Because we were worried about Judy's tenure, we postponed trying to have a second child — a course of inaction we have always regretted. Our standard advice to young academic couples about starting a family: There is nothing in life more satisfying than having a child, but there is no perfect or even convenient time to have a baby. Just don't wait until it's too late.

The next major transition came in 1991, when Judy was invited to move across campus to join the University of Illinois Psychology Department. We often served on the departmental advisory committee together, taking care never to sit near one another. Although we agreed on most matters, we took opposing positions on several important issues — something we rather enjoyed.

We have always felt enormously fortunate that things worked out so well after such an inauspicious beginning. We both love the academic life and cannot imagine any other profession nearly so rewarding. One of the true benefits of academia is the flexibility it affords with respect to many of the most important things in life, such as child care. We enjoyed sharing the care of Baby Benjamin for his first few years.

Another great benefit of academia is the existence of sabbaticals. Sabbatical leaves do exactly what they are supposed to do — provide an opportunity to think more deeply about your research, learn about new topics, and forge new collaborations and friendships. We have thoroughly enjoyed and have benefited in many ways from every sabbatical we've taken. Some more advice: If at all possible, go away for your sabbatical and seek both professional and personal experiences. For example, we took sailing lessons on San Francisco Bay while on our first sabbatical at Stanford, and it has been a shared passionate interest ever since.

The last major change for us was the very difficult decision in 2000 to leave our wonderful friends and colleagues at Illinois; however, our new ones at the University of Virginia are a source of pleasure and inspiration. One reason for making this move was the opportunity to have a sailboat on the Chesapeake Bay.

In contrast to many of the psychologist couples we know, we've never collaborated on research. In fact, we don't even talk about psychology all that much, partly because we have very different intellectual styles. Jerry has a highly logical, deductive mind and loves to talk about research, spinning theories and hypotheses. In contrast, Judy's thought processes are primarily intuitive. Ideas germinate underground, and she is relatively unable to discuss, let alone explain, her thoughts until fairly late in their formation.

This paper is our first together. The preliminary draft was written while sailing our catamaran Whisper on the Chesapeake toward her berth in the mouth of the Rappahannock River on 13 knots of breeze. Life is good.

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## **Dynamic Duos**

Step aside, *Survivor*. Time's up, *24*. Get lost, *Lost*. This season's hottest reality series is right here in the *Observer*!

Okay, now that we have your attention: the truth is, we invited a number of distinguished couples to co-author a memoir about their lives together – anything from how they met, to other major personal and career milestones, to how they juggle careers and home. Their articles will appear as a series in the *Observer* over the next several months. In generously sharing their lives with us, they provide a fascinating glimpse into the human side of science and a record of the events that shaped some of the most productive and influential careers in our field.