

December 12, 2010: 15 Years of Marriage

by Sara and Jarda Tusek



This year we are celebrating our 15th wedding anniversary. In honor of our anniversary, we'd like to reflect on the ingredients for a happy marriage.

Our Story

We were married on December 12, 1995 at Washington Oaks State Gardens in Marineland, Florida, by the Reverend Ken Saurman. It was a lovely day, sunny and mild. The ceremony took place on a wooden platform overlooking the Matanzas River; we were surrounded by palmettos, oaks and shrubs of many kinds. Behind us was a beautiful rose garden surrounded by trees laden with ripe oranges.

You might think that our small, simple outdoor wedding, with only a handful of guests, was the result of a spur-of-the moment decision made by two people madly in love. Well, you'd be wrong!

This modest celebration was actually ten years in the making! That's how long it took for us to be sure that God wanted us to be man and wife. And it's turned out that ten years was about the right length of time for the commitments made in marriage to be written on our hearts, so that even with the multiple challenges we've faced since 1995, we're still happily married—in fact, every day we become more in love with each other.

We can honestly say that our marriage is strong and growing because of three key ingredients:

1. ***We were friends for ten years before we were married.*** As friends, we traveled together worldwide, seeing how well we got along in different places and activities, observing each other's style of dealing with new situations and what the word "relaxing" meant to each other.
2. ***We worked together for 7 years of the ten years we knew each other,*** giving us the chance to find ways to combine our very different and equally energetic personalities so that we waste as little time as possible in squabbles, but spend most of our time productively.
3. ***We waited till God gave us very clear signals before we "tied the knot."*** At various times over the years, one or the other of us thought we heard wedding bells, but we didn't act until we were certain that our marriage was blessed by God and would be fruitful.

First, friends

We met at St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY, in 1985. Jarda was directing the Office of Career Services, newly hired; Sara was the Career Counselor, already in place.

It must be said that we often clashed rather vigorously in that first year of working together! Our communication styles, ideas about how to do things, and work experience were so different that we often found it excruciatingly difficult to understand each other. But we liked each other enough to find activities we could both enjoy, outside the office. *To p. 2*



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15 Years of Marriage

First, friends (continued)

We canoed on the Raquette River, walked in the woods at Hannawa Falls, visited Ontario and the Adirondacks, and went to foreign films. As we got to know each other, we appreciated each other's humor and common sense more and more.

Workers together

The ease we found as friends started to carry over into our work together at St. Lawrence, and we began to function as a team. We read the Bible together every day at work, and this further strengthened our friendship.

Since we had common career interests and abilities, it was natural that we found we enjoyed working together. We learned how to work as teammates, complementing each other's strengths and making up for each other's momentary lapses. We learned to trust each other, first as friends and then as colleagues.

Those two years at St. Lawrence University (1985-87) gave us precious time to see how our different approaches to career development could be harnessed, producing successful programs and services. By the time we parted ways in 1987, Jarda to Princeton, NJ, and Sara to The University of the South in Sewanee, TN, we were true friends.

Then in 1990, Communism began to evaporate in Czechoslovakia. Jarda could "go home" for the first time since he left in 1967. We visited his family in Prague during Christmas, 1990, and had a wonderful time. That year, Jarda asked Sara to be his business partner in the International Leadership Institute while we were celebrating Christmas in Marianske Lazne

(Marienbad), in Western Bohemia. This partnership produced some rather startling results, and still endures.

Through Jarda's family contacts, we were able to persuade the Czechoslovak government Ministry of Industry and Trade to sign a contract with us to deliver the program we designed for the top Czechoslovak business leadership, the *Executive Education Programs for Czechoslovak Business Leaders*. In partnership with Covenant College and the World Trade Center-Chattanooga, we brought the first group of 12 Czech executives to Lookout Mountain, GA in 1992.

Our business prospered. We felt that God was blessing our work together, as we put ourselves at His disposal.

God-ordained

As we became closer friends and business partners, we continued to pray, read the Bible, and go to church together. It sound so easy to say we did all this, but in reality every step

closer to each other was accompanied by the need to continually work through the vast differences in our cultures, life experiences, upbringing, and worldview. Often it seemed that all we had in common was our faith on God's guidance—but that was enough.

On December 12, 1995, we finally got married! The close friends and family members who witnessed our marriage were probably saying, "it's about time!" These past 15 years have had their share of challenges, disappointments and losses, as well as moment of great joy and gratitude. What keeps us going, loving each other, is the sure knowledge that God brought us together, and will keep us together.

He is the glue that's produced a marriage that will endure.

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- DEDICATED TO HELPING PEOPLE DEVELOP AND USE LEADERSHIP SKILLS
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