



# Love connections

In various stages of their relationships, local couples share unique love stories

**F**or many couples, that first meeting can be so magical, so special.

Or it can be something else.

"I didn't like her," said Frank Penze, who met his future wife when he was about 15 years old. Jackie Penze was 11 or 12 at the time.

She asked him a question as the two ice skated and, "I just kind of shoved her," Frank said.

"I went flying and landed on the ice," Jackie remembered.

After that, she didn't really like him either. Somewhere along the way though, things changed. (It had a lot to do with

the "fancy car" Frank drove a couple years later. His looks weren't bad either, Jackie remembered.)

The Crystal Lake couple now has two children, four grandchildren, two step-grandchildren, and a 51-year marriage.

They're one of five area couples who bravely agreed in the spirit of the upcoming Valentine's Day to share their love stories.

We asked them each separately five questions about their relationships. (Thankfully, no shoving took place during the interview process.)

How different are the relationships? Read on.

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## FRANK AND JACKIE PENZE • CARY

A half-century strong

**T**his couple has danced their way through marriage.

For more than 22 years, Frank and Jackie Penze have taught ballroom dance throughout the area.

Every step of the way, they've done it together – occasionally not overly thrilled about it, but always together.

"You can't stay mad at one another if you have to hold one another," Jackie said. "That's what's nice about ballroom dancing – you have to cooperate together in order to make it work."

After that initial meeting on the ice in Island Lake, the Penzes began dating in their teens. Jackie had called Frank to fix him up with a friend of hers.

"It was a trap, a setup," he said. "She wanted to go out with me. That's how she got me." They dated quite awhile before getting married.

"She probably told you she married me to punish me the rest of my life," Frank joked.

They took dance lessons when their daughter got engaged so they could dance at her wedding.

"It's a fluke that we started teaching," Jackie said, but they were good at it and loved it. Still do.

### What is your favorite thing to do as a couple?

**Jackie:** Dance. (Of course.)

**Frank:** Well, since we've been in dancing, I suppose that's about it. Teaching, actually the teaching part of it is my favorite.

### What is your most memorable moment as a couple?

**Jackie:** There are so many. I can't say the most memorable. There are so many highlights in our lives, a lot that were bad and a lot that were good. It wasn't all sugary. We're human like anyone else. As a couple, when we took vacations together, he and I, my parents would be watching the kids when they were little. We did get to go on vacation in Europe one time, which was memorable. Besides vacations, we did family things together that were fun, took the kids to various places, Disney World and Disneyland. Just the experiences that we all shared as a family.

**Frank:** Awww jeez, we've been married 51 years. There are a lot of memorable ones. You know what, there were so many, probably when we met.

### What has been your biggest challenge as a couple?

**Jackie:** Right now, it's hard to talk about it. Our daughter is very ill. She lives with us and

has Crohn's Disease.

**Frank:** When you're married 51 years, you must be doing something right. I think you have to talk about things. Any big decisions have to be decided together. You don't do anything without talking about it.

### What do you think is the key to a successful relationship? Any tips for others?

**Jackie:** Probably respect for one another, loyalty, humor and consideration. Leaving the toilet seat down.

**Frank:** Those three little words: Let's eat out. I think that works out the best. We joke around a lot. We have so much fun. Even to this day, we laugh so hard when one of us says something. You've got to have a lot of fun in your life and it doesn't have to cost a lot of money.

### Was there a moment when you knew he/she was the one for you?

**Jackie:** I don't think it was a moment. I think it was more of building a relationship.

**Frank:** Oh, well we were kind of dating off and on for awhile. When her dance would come up at the school, I would disappear. I had no interest, and then somehow we'd meet again at a party. That's when we, you know, we knew. It's funny how that works. We got along so well.