

Karen (Kozak) and Greg Kushla
Florham Park, NJ

Current club: Rutgers Promenaders
Former clubs: Y Squares, Liberty Stars



How did you start square dancing?

Greg saw square dancing at a campus demo. Karen lived in the dorm room next door to Greg (who was treasurer of Rutgers Promenaders) in 1982; went to RP's "high-low" dance (Sept. 1982), and signed up for lessons in Jan. 1983. (Karen danced all her life, though; she took dance lessons – ballet and tap – from the age of 3 years to 14 years, and was a folk dance enthusiast. She also attended on a regular basis the Rutgers Ballroom Dance Club dance nights as a freshman in 1981–82.)

What year did you meet? 1982 And marry? 1987

Although we did not have square dancing at the "formal" reception, we did have a separate "square dance wedding reception" a few weeks before the wedding. Betsy Gotta called and Roy Gotta cued at the dance, and many of our square dance friends whom we could not invite to the formal reception attended this dance. (Karen's family is very large, so we had to keep the "friends" guest list to only our closest friends.)

Circumstances of your meeting and dating?

In 1982, Greg was a fifth-year pharmacy student at Rutgers University who got stuck living in a "triple" dorm room (meant as a "double," i.e., for two students) with two other 5th-year pharmacy students; Karen had a great housing lottery number, and chose a corner dorm room (which is normally tripled) with a friend. Greg thought Karen was shy; Karen thought Greg was loud and rude. However, they had too many things in common – both were involved in Scouting (and each received Scouting's highest awards in 1978, Eagle and First Class), were involved in Scouting exchanges with UK Scouts, and members of Greg's parents' church in Rutherford, NJ, grew up with Karen's mom in Jersey City, NJ. Friendship grew into love. Although we didn't realize it at the time, it was pretty apparent to others, especially Grace/Bob Bishe (who happened to be NNJSDA treasurers at the time when Greg was president and Karen was treasurer of the Rutgers Promenaders when the Promenaders asked for, and received, a loan of \$500 from NNJSDA, which was paid back that year).

Favorite square dance memories?

Because of work and graduate school, we could not get an engagement ring until many months after Greg's marriage proposal and Karen's acceptance. The Saturday we got the engagement ring happened to be the day before the NNJSDA Mini-Festival in 1985. The first person we saw that Sunday afternoon was Grace Bishe. When Karen introduced Greg as her fiancé, Grace said "hi Greg," took a few steps back to the treasurer's table, and then shrieked when she realized what Karen said. Fred Hill announced our engagement to those at the Mini-Fest that afternoon during announcements.

Anything else?

(1) We were featured in two of the square dance videos produced by Ralph/Marilyn Neibart (now part of GottaDance); the Neibarts waited until we got back from our honeymoon in the United Kingdom to begin filming in late October 1987. (2) Karen started cueing in 1985. (3) Karen and Greg are a “paradox” – both have doctoral degrees in their professions; Greg received his doctorate in 1991 in pharmaceutical science from Rutgers University, and Karen received her doctorate in 2005 in audiology. (4) We have two children – Helene, age 18 years, and Matthew, age 16 years.