

Love and loss: IND president finds love again

By Elizabeth Lowe

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One year and three weeks after her husband died, Mary Funke was working in her Columbia home office while her 15-year-old son hosted a Halloween party for friends.

Funke finished her work that evening and became acutely aware that she was alone. "It hit me so hard," said Funke, president of the Institute of Notre Dame in Baltimore. "Is this what the rest of my life is going to be like?"

Funke's husband of more than 16 years, Larry Funke, 55, died from a pulmonary aneurism in October 2004.

"Immediately, I started to surround myself with love," said Funke, 60. "You have to let people in. Everyone has different experiences, everyone grieves differently."

Their son, Larry, now 21, was a freshman at DeMatha Catholic High School in Prince George's County when his father died.

"I think being in a Catholic school and that sort of spiritual environment made a huge difference," Funke said of her son's grieving process and support system.

The Funke's met at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland in Baltimore; Mary was dean of students and Larry was head of the chemistry department. The family worshiped at St. Louis, Clarksville.

"It's like losing a limb. You learn to live without the limb," Funke said. "Time does heal. You have to decide that no matter how painful, you don't stay in the grief, that depression."

That October night in 2005, Funke began visiting online dating sites even though she wasn't ready to start dating. She was seeking companionship.

"It helps with the loneliness," Funke said.

In 2008, Funke met Jim Hausman, 62, a widower after 25 years of marriage.

They met on the website SeniorPeopleMeet.com, which Funke said, "neither of us can tell you how we found that site."

Their relationship began with them chatting online and then on the phone. Soon after, they met in person.

Hausman proposed last October, and Funke accepted without hesitation.

"We had a great time and still have a great time," Funke said.

The couple didn't want to live together before marriage, Funke said, so they

exchanged vows and were married Feb. 25 at St. Matthew, Northwood. On June 23, they had a celebration of their marriage with a Mass at the IND chapel, which family and friends were invited to attend.

At both ceremonies, Funke said, "I was so overwhelmed with love for him. It felt so right and was so blessed and so joyful."

Father Joseph L. Muth Jr., pastor of St. Matthew, officiated at both ceremonies.

"They were surprised that they hit it off," said Father Muth, who called it a "unique situation" that both spouses are widowed.

"We can easily talk about it (being widowed), there's no taboo," Funke said. "It's OK to be happy. It doesn't mean you don't love your (deceased) husband."

Funke and Hausman, who honeymooned in Bermuda, live in Baltimore and attend Mass at Our Lady of Good Counsel, a church in the parish cluster of the Catholic Community of South Baltimore.

"It's a journey," Funke said. "I believe in the power of prayer."

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