

## **A Clown Camp Romance Story**

**By Ron & Sue Kardynski**

*It's 1988, during a hot humid La Crosse Wisconsin summer, and Sue and her daughter Bethany head off to Clown Camp excited to immerse themselves further in the field they both love, clowning. They arrive, check in to the UW- La Crosse residence hall, and prepare for a great week of camp ahead.*

*Meanwhile, in another dorm, Ron, encouraged to go to Clown Camp to expand his clowning knowledge, also arrives with friends.*

*After her first class, Makeup, teenager Bethany reports to her mom, "There is this really weird guy who sat in front of me." This guy, you see was using stencils to apply his makeup!*

*Later that morning, Sue & friends were talking to the stencil guy, Bethany subtly tries to tell her mom that she is talking to the "weird makeup guy." Sue dismisses the teenaged drama and smiles politely.*

*Alley time! All clowns bustle around and find out to which alley they've been assigned. Ron and Sue discover that they are in the same alley. Through the week of alley bonding members have fun and playful times with their new friends.*

*The clowns return home and a year passes. Then in 1989 Ron and Sue both decide to go to Clown Camp again and coincidentally choose the same week to attend without any prior communication. Amazed, Ron and Sue wind up again in the same alley, too!*

*The week of camp was fast and fun filled again, zipping by quickly. Ron and Sue became good friends during the week, though neither recalls any noticeable sparks of 'passion' at this point of their acquaintance.*

*Another year passes and it's time for Clown Camp® 1990, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Clown Camp®. Lightening it seems, can strike not once, not twice, but three times in the same spot, when that spot is La Crosse, WI Clown Camp! Ron and Sue were more than surprised when, once again, without communicating during the prior year, they had selected the same week and alley, and had even both signed up for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary production class.*

*Again the two friends found themselves playing and having fun at camp. Then, during the start of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary show, Ron (Snudek) was to make a grand entrance by sliding down a rope – one end secured to the rafters and the other tied to a backstage safety rail. At the end, Sue was waiting to hand Ron his juggling clubs so that he could join the other performers on stage after a successful slide. As Ron sat in the dark, waiting for his musical cue to begin the slide, he looked down across the stage, and saw a concerned expression on Sue (Soomi)'s face. That look was either concern over the fact that the slide had not been practiced from that height, or, possibly, a "connection" or spark between the two of them igniting. Ron decided then that when he safely landed, he would pursue that spark or feeling of concern to see if there was anything more behind it. The spark grew at the finale when Ron & Sue came out on their stilts with both their new found relationship AND their characters soaring to new heights. Ron and Sue feel the show was very likely the ignition to their relationship.*

*The following days at camp drew the couple closer together, but it wasn't until the final evening when Ron knew that his hunch was correct. That evening never came to an end, as the two clowns sat on the LaCrosse campus swings and discussed every topic under the stars. When morning came, they decided to get together during the year to continue building their relationship to see if both they and their clown characters could get along together outside the fun environment of camp.*

*In February of 1991, Ron visits Sue in California. After Ron's plane landed and he made his way down the escalator toward the concourse, people were grinning and smiling from ear to ear. Why? Because*

*Ron was wearing, what later became known as, "the Good Humor" suit: White pants and shirt with every spot covered in paint, spelling out "will you marry me Sue". Having arranged with a jeweler ahead of time, Ron proposed, on bended knee, presenting Sue with a "3 carrot" ring, yes that was three REAL baby carrots. Of course, a "real" ring was quickly forthcoming.*

*Later that year a clown wedding was held in California, with over 175 family and friends in attendance, and more than eighty of the attendees in full clown. Sue's custom-made clown wedding dress had a removable train that sported a toy train, going in circles, on a wooden disc. Good friend, Barry DeChant, was the best man. The wedding was held in a friend's California backyard with an in ground pool, decorated with balloon arches and floating balloon merry-go-rounds. Minutes before the wedding, Barry accidentally stepped back and plunged into the pool. With his big clown shoes acting as flippers, it was difficult to get out. Thank goodness for clothes dryers. Ron likes to say, "I got married, but Barry took the plunge."*

*Ron & Sue returned joyfully again to Clown Camp in 1995, as dealers, lecturers and an alley leader. Clown Antics continues to grow and the couple still teach clown classes and support conventions throughout the Midwest.*

*Ron and Sue both agree that Clown Camp will always have a special place in their hearts and the sight of the La Crosse campus swing still brings a smile to the happy couple's faces even now, seventeen years later after their first fateful meeting. (Ron & Sue Kardynski -Westland, Michigan)*