

It all started with a pair of shoes: **The Beggs' Love Story**



Photo by Sreedhar Vasomsetti

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In one serendipitous moment, described by Wichita State President Donald Beggs as a “wow” moment and an instant surge of physical attraction for Shirley Beggs, the love of a lifetime was initiated over shoes and continuous conversation.

Shirley, donning a sleeveless, straight-line lime-colored dress, was shopping for a dress in Donald’s hometown of Harrisburg, Illinois when she walked by Carp’s Department Store and noticed an attractive young man coming out of the

store to place a pair of \$1.98 brown children’s shoes in an outside sales bin.

More than 50 years later, the couple can still recall the details of the fateful day—June 19, 1959—as vividly as Shirley’s bright green dress.

“I saw him and thought, ‘he is so cute.’ So, I followed him into the store and tried on all the shoes he had in my size. At that time, shoes were a lot like they are now,” Shirley said. “Women’s heels were 4- or 5-inch spike heels, and the ends of them—which ruined so many women’s feet of my generation—were pencil-thin. So here you were trying to

hobble around on these spike heels and get your big feet in these little tiny-toed shoes that were every color of the rainbow and then some with purses to match.”

Just like Cinderella searching for her lost glass slipper, Shirley tried on the shoes without any intention of buying, but rather to keep conversing with Donald.

“My specialties were selling shoes and bib overalls. Obviously, she wasn’t interested in the bib overalls,” Donald said. “We just kept the conversation going. We tried every shoe I

Please see **BEGGS** *on* **PAGE 10**

had, and I think before long, the conversation was more important than the shoes. And no, she did not buy a shoe, but if I recall correctly, I bought a lot of shoes as an employee getting my discount. That and stuffed animals."

Though the two came from different communities about 10 miles apart, mutual contacts allowed the relationship to bloom.

"I went back to my hometown that day and called a friend of mine with whom Don played American Legion baseball and said, 'I've just met Don Beggs from Harrisburg. Do you think you could fix us up?'" Shirley said. "So he did, and I guess a couple of weeks later they were playing a ball game and he and Don were talking, and this friend of ours mentioned that I was from his hometown, and how about us having a