

It Started at MIT

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CHAPTER: Prologue

Perry Ha '85, SM '87 & Karen Ha '85, SM '87

KAREN HA: Technically we were friends. [LAUGHTER]

PERRY HA: No we weren't. Everybody knew!

KAREN HA: OK, to my parents we were friends. [LAUGHTER] Yeah, but we were very good friends from freshman year.

HOST: Karen and Perry Ha met while they were students at MIT in the early eighties. That much is fact. But some of the more specific details about how they met are still up for debate.

PERRY HA: We were part of this thing called the KSA, Korean Student Association. I think that's when we got introduced.

KAREN HA: I think we actually met playing volleyball. [LAUGHTER]

PERRY HA: Different memories.

HOST: And it's entirely possible that they met during either of these activities. Karen and Perry were both involved in several extracurriculars. The one where they shared a common passion...was volleyball.

KAREN HA: I don't even think we ever really had a, went on a date because all we wanted to do was play volleyball, so I think you can say all of our dates were at Rockwell Cage playing volleyball.

HOST: Karen isn't exaggerating here. They played a lot of volleyball.

KAREN HA: Yeah, I mean I think we felt like we majored in volleyball.
[LAUGHTER] It was just something we loved

KAREN HA: One of the summers, you know both of us are doing research, doing UROP. So, UROP by day and then when work was over, we used to play volleyball basically until the gym closed.

HOST: UROP stands for Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program. It offers MIT undergraduates the chance to work on cutting edge research projects. The program was created in 1969.

KAREN HA: Then we used to go grab dinner.

PERRY HA: In Chinatown.

KAREN HA: In Chinatown.

PERRY HA: It's the only place that's open really late. It used to open until four o'clock in the morning, quite affordable and great on student budget and then we'll come back in the middle of the night wanting to play volleyball a little more.

KAREN HA: Some more.

PERRY HA: So, we used to sneak into the top floor of Walker gymnasium. I don't think it's used for anything other than taking exams now, but we used to sneak in and play more volleyball until four or five o'clock in the morning.

KAREN HA: Yeah, very late.

PERRY HA: A lot of fun.

HOST: Naturally, when asked about their favorite place on campus, Karen and Perry's response?

YOUNG SOO: The gym?

KAREN HA: Yeah, that would be at the top of our list, but I would also like to say probably from a nostalgia perspective, it has to be the chapel. So, after knowing each other through four years of undergrad, two years of grad school, we actually got married at the MIT chapel.

PERRY HA: That’s right. She chased me for six years and then I gave in and that’s my story.

KAREN HA: And he’s been sticking to that for a long time. [LAUGHTER]

HOST: We often hear from alumni that MIT was the one place where they felt surrounded by like-minded individuals. It’s no surprise that many alumni end up meeting their spouses here at MIT. In fact, there are more than 4,400 married MIT couples.

HOST: Today on the Slice of MIT podcast, in the spirit of Valentine’s Day, we have a number of stories from alumni who found love at the Institute. We’ll hear a story about an East Campus romance between two next door neighbors. A story about first dates and the unwritten November Rule. We’ll also hear how Match Day brought two medical students more than just residency placements. And finally, two MIT alums talk about how even the best laid wedding plans can be stymied by the PhD thesis writing process.

**CHAPTER: How we met
John Wilson ’90 and Vandita Wilson ’90**

HOST: This second story comes from John and Vandita Wilson who graduated from MIT in 1990.

NICOLE: If you guys just want to say how you met?

HOST: That’s my colleague, Nicole, who interviewed John and Vandita during the Reunions Access Memories (RAM) project. Over the past two years during Tech Reunions, more than 60 alumni have shared their memories of MIT with us. John and Vandita’s story starts when they became next door neighbors in East Campus during their senior year.

JOHN WILSON: She was quite literally the girl next door. Senior year, she moved to my dormitory and ended up in the room next to me, which would seem to be sort of an interesting coincidence since I actually was the person who did the room assignments. But I just figured having someone who was a senior transferring from another dorm would probably be better than having a freshman in the room next to me so that’s how I picked.

VANDITA WILSON: From my point of view, I had lived in Burton Four, Burton Third and Bexley for a year, and a bunch of my friends from Burton Third were moving to East campus, to 50 specifically. So I said, oh great, some people to hang out with that I already know. I put in my room request over the summer but I was travelling in Europe and I kept calling this person named John Wilson to say, did you get my room request? Did you get my room request? You can reach me now in Denmark for the next like eight hours, please call me back. Nothing happened, nothing happened. Finally I got to East Campus and I did in fact have a room.

JOHN WILSON: Yes, and of course I didn’t have a calling card. I mean I would have had to have paid to call Denmark. So, needless to say she did not get a call. If she had happened to call while I was in my room, I happily would have answered and told her that. I just wasn’t going to make a long distance call.

[musical interlude]

VANDITA WILSON: So, eventually we were dating and said, hey, knock, knock, knock, knock on the wall and found a weak point where there was sheetrock and it covered a door. So we chipped away at the sheetrock and there was a door, which we then took it off the hinges and made a two-room suite.

HOST: One day, after they had merged the two rooms, the House Manager was making his rounds to check the radiators. He checked John’s room, then Vandita’s room and he was a little confused to find the same two people in both places.

JOHN WILSON: He never quite put it together, I don’t think [LAUGHTER].

VANDITA WILSON: At least not that we know of.

JOHN WILSON: Yeah.

CHAPTER: First Date Bill Andrews ’04 and Liz Andrews ’06

HOST: In this next story, Bill and Liz Andrews met during the musical theater guild’s fall show of Liz’s freshman year. Liz was in the pit orchestra and Bill, a junior, was the director.

BILL ANDREWS: I got all kinds of joking from my friends about, “Oh, robbing the cradle, huh? This young freshman girl...did you wait til the second week on campus or did you go for the first week on campus? Hahaha.”

LIZ ANDREWS: We waited until the end of November.

BILL ANDREWS: We waited until it was official, right, The November Rule and waiting until the first of November, I thought.

HOST: Now for those of you who might not be familiar, I just want to interrupt this story for a moment to explain. According to Bill and Liz, The November Rule is one of those MIT social mores where all upperclassmen should not date freshman before the first of November. The rule gives first-year students a chance to acclimate to campus.

HOST: Ok now back to Bill and Liz...

[musical interlude]

LIZ ANDREWS: But yeah so it was middle of November by the time the show ended...

BILL ANDREWS: Yeah and I wanted to wait until I was not in a position of power as the orchestra director just to, you know, be cool. Keep things even between us. And then as soon as the show was over I asked her out and she said no. She had a physics exam...was it physics? Math?

LIZ ANDREWS: Yep. It was physics.

BILL ANDREWS: Ok, physics. And I was like, “There’s always physics exams but come on there’s a movie playing.” “No.” And I asked her like seven times and I think eventually I wore you down, right? All that night. The night that we finished the show and we were exhausted...I wore her down that much more.

LIZ ANDREWS: See from my perspective I wasn’t turning you down entirely. I was...

BILL ANDREWS: She kept saying no...

LIZ ANDREWS: You asked me if I wanted to go see a movie and I said, “No on Sunday I have to study because I’m failing 8.01.”

BILL ANDREWS: Well and this was like on Saturday so it’s not like I could ask you, you know, tonight.

LIZ ANDREWS: True.

BILL ANDREWS: But eventually I got her to say yes to go out with me and we went out a few more times and...November 19 is how we know because that’s our official...start. That’s when we started dating and that was in 2002.

LIZ ANDREWS: Yeah

BILL ANDREWS: So and then six years after that we ended up getting married and we're still married, luckily enough.

LIZ ANDREWS: Mmhmm

[musical interlude]

CHAPTER: Proposal
Katie Loh '11 and Leo Luo '10

HOST: So we've covered the first dates and the how-we-mets and now we're going to hear a proposal story. Katie Loh and Leo Luo are MIT class of 2011 and 2010 respectively. They met in 2010 when they were both members of the China Educational Technology Initiative team—or CETI for short. Leo and Katie taught English, engineering, and some of the more entertaining parts of American culture...

LEO LUO: ...sports, entertainment, cultural etiquettes....

KATIE LOH: We talked about dating tips too.

LEO LUO: Right.

KATIE LOH: How dating is different in America.

LEO LUO: Right.

LEO LUO: She was actually my guest lecture for the dating tips [LAUGHTER] because I thought she would be more savvy in the arena. People in China are just fascinated by what's shown in the movie and what's actually real in the society. At that time we weren't even dating yet so, it was a little bit that tension, like are you guys together? We weren't yet so, we're just talking about dating tips as two strangers. [LAUGHTER]

HOST: Both Leo and Katie went to med school after graduating from MIT. Leo attended Harvard and Katie went to Emory in Atlanta. On Match Day, when Leo and Katie would find out their residency placements, Leo decided to surprise Katie in Atlanta.

LEO LUO: I flew down and saw her and she thought I was there for Match Day, but I was there actually to propose. I had made this book titled, Our Food Story. And it was basically our journey through different restaurants and how I had been trained to be a connoisseur in fine dining.

LEO LUO: When she met me, I remember her telling me later after we started dating, she was worried that I wasn't into food and how this was going to work

out. But, I think whenever I talked to her about a restaurant that she really loves, or a food ingredient that she finds to be interesting, I see her excitement and I think that’s something that definitely influenced me to pay more attention to my taste buds when I go to restaurants. And now both of us are really into fine dining.

KATIE LOH: I would say Leo is more into it now. [LAUGHTER]

LEO LUO: [LAUGHTER] Yeah.

HOST: So Leo created this food story containing all of these photos of the two of them at different restaurants all over the country.

KATIE LOH: It was nice because it was like just all pictures of situations where it was just the two of us hanging out because we were just eating together and then, it seems trivial because it’s just like food, but like I think he put a lot of thought and like picking the different places that we went.

LEO LUO: In the end I said, “I’m so glad I have met you. My world otherwise would’ve been much more bland.” And that’s when I got down on one knee and said, “Would you marry me?”

HOST: And of course, Katie said yes.

[musical interlude]

LEO LUO: So after the proposal we went to this great restaurant in Atlanta called Bachanalia.

HOST: Before choosing Bachanalia, Leo had actually emailed an Atlanta food critic for her expert opinion on a good restaurant. He also coordinated with Bachanalia to put something extra special on the menu for that day.

LEO LUO: I called ahead of time to let them know that this is after the engagement and asked if they could put our names down on the menus with the date on it. And they happily obliged so we have a menu and a picture on the side to commemorate the date of the engagement.

HOST: Katie and Leo will be married in the Spring of 2016.

**CHAPTER: Marriage
John PhD ’77 and Lucie Wilkens PhD ’77**

HOST: This last story is from John and Lucie Wilkens who got their PhDs from MIT in 1977. While John and Lucie were writing their theses, they were also planning their wedding.

LUCIE WILKENS: We were very optimistic. We thought we would have our theses done and have graduated by April. We were still here and just finished in September. So [LAUGHTER] so anyway we came back and we lived in Tang Hall in our separate apartments after we were married. [LAUGHTER]

HOST: John and Lucie aren't the only ones in their family to have attended MIT. And at one point or another they all lived in Tang Hall.

[musical interlude]

JOHN WILKENS: Lucie lived on the 7th floor. I lived on the 19th. And our son also came to MIT and for his master of engineering he lived on 13th floor of Tang Hall. Seven plus nineteen divided by two is thirteen. So everything is falling right into place. And he is also very bright in that he also married a young lady from MIT.

LUCIE WILKENS: We are so proud of our son and daughter-in-law and now we have a granddaughter.

JOHN WILKENS: Who has a stuffed Tim the Beaver. Oh yes. [LAUGHTER] Autographed by the Tim the Beaver on Tim the Beaver's 100th Birthday here.

[musical interlude]

HOST: That's it for this episode of the Slice of MIT podcast. But before we wrap up, we're doing something a little differently for this podcast. Since there are so many great stories about MIT couples, there are two bonus stories on the Slice of MIT blog. The first is Megan Pasquina sharing her story of how she met her husband, Lincoln.

MEGAN PASQUINA: A mutual friend introduced me and Lincoln and we started talking and it was great conversation, great to meet him but all of a sudden I started coughing hysterically.

HOST: The second bonus story is Tim Chambers telling us how he met his wife, Robin.

TIM CHAMBERS: So I joke with my wife about her sending her sorority sister to check me out before she would go out with me. She denies it of course.

HOST: To find out what made Megan start coughing and how Tim's wife stood him up on the first date, check out slice.mit.edu.

HOST: And of course there are other great MIT love stories out there. We want to hear how you meet your loved one at MIT. [Tweet us your stories on twitter @mit_alumni](#). That's mit underscore alumni. Special thanks to Karen and Perry Ha, John and Vandita

Wilson, Bill and Liz Andrews, John and Lucie Wilkens, Leo Luo, Katie Loh, Megan Pasquina, and Tim Chambers for sharing their stories with us for this episode.

HOST: If you want to hear more surprising, insightful, and quirky stories from the MIT community, [subscribe to the Slice of MIT podcast on iTunes](#). Let us know what you think; please rate the podcast and leave us a review. We'll be back next month with another episode of the Slice of MIT podcast. In the meantime, check out our website at slice.mit.edu where you'll also find the bonus content mentioned in this episode. Thanks for listening.

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