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Feature Series — Part III

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“Our” Spouses Part III — Ann Lynn Alster

by M. H. Perry

Councilman Stanley Alster was elected to the city council in 1986, and is now serving as Council Vice President. Both he and Ann Lynn are from small New Jersey towns which have remained small. Many families there were involved in the town. When the Alsters came to Gaithersburg, Stanley served on many of the committees and on the Planning Commission before joining the Council. He holds a BS in Electrical Engineering and a MS in Engineering Management and is in the Executive Leadership Program in the Kennedy School of Government at Howard University. He is a Professional Quality Engineer. Ann Lynn holds an associate degree from the Carnegie Institute – NYC. Stanley and Ann Lynn have two children and seven grandchildren.



Ann Lynn worked in office administration for a mental health practice which she credits for making her a good listener. Click to hear:



- Interviewer's words are in red.
- Ann Lynn Alster's words are in blue.

What made your husband decide to enter politics?

Stan grew up in a town of less than 10,000—many families were involved in the town. He served on many Gaithersburg committees and on the Planning Commission before joining the Council in 1986. He liked Gaithersburg and wanted to be involved.

What was that like for you? Were you looking forward to it? Concerned about it? In terms of the family?

Before coming to Gaithersburg, we were both very active on committees and supporting various activities in our religious community and I continued when we moved to Gaithersburg. This has always been part of our family life. I was working and looking after the kids, and I was involved with that.

What ages were your children then?

Melissa was 18 and Michael 16. They enjoyed their father's getting involved. They liked hearing everything. They really enjoyed getting involved. Gaithersburg back then wasn't as big as it is now, so you could see what was going on. They would do the flyers and pass out the flyers.

Our daughter had a '65 Mustang convertible and they enjoyed going around with the top down handing out flyers.

Our son had a '65 Mustang fastback. Stanley restored the cars for them—he is very mechanical. He can take a car apart and put it back together.

Melissa and her family live in Boyds, Michael and his family live in Hampstead. He has a farm with sheep, goats, bees—he's a bee keeper—chickens, and rabbits...they're very involved with 4H.

Has either one of them gone into local politics?

Absolutely not. They're too busy. Too busy with their families. Michael has the farm and animals. He has five children. Melissa has two children.

How does your husband stay in touch with the City in case of an emergency?

Stan stays in constant touch with the city through telephone and e-mail. It doesn't bother the family. They get a kick out of it. He's always in touch. You can tell who is on the phone, and if Stanley feels he has to take a call, he'll go out. He feels that there is a time and a place for the cell phone and uses it considerably.

The cell phone is always on, but that's life. For very big occasions like a wedding, he will turn the phone off or put it on vibrate. The phone will occasionally go off during the night.

The nice thing about cell phones is that no matter where we are, ...he's always in touch.

What is your role when there are serious and controversial issues such as the Day Laborers situation?

I listen. I will give my opinion to him. We'll talk about it at home—while we can talk about it.

If a young married couple came to you because the husband was considering a political career and it looked like he would be successful, what advice would you give the young wife?

To a young wife, I would say just roll with the punches—it's no different than any other priorities.

Because of the length of time that your husband has been in public office, there must have been times when people said, or printed, things about him that are either untrue, unfair, or both. How do you handle your feelings at those times?

You learn to deal—it may not be pleasant, but everyone is entitled to their opinion. You read it. You get frustrated, and you just roll with the punches. We've been involved for too long to get crazy over it. No matter what it is, you're always going to find someone that has something to say. If you get yourself crazy over all these things, you can't do it. But it always works out in the end. We've been doing this a long time.

Do you think that it's important for Stan to be involved in city work?

Yes. He enjoys it, and he sees things very clearly and very positively, and people seem to like him and like his opinion. We love Gaithersburg. It was interesting when we moved here, and we've watched it grow and we enjoy it. This is home for the kids although we've lived many other places.

What is the best thing about having a family member involved in running the city?

Just to be involved and to meet people and to help the city and to help people who need help and to see basically what's going on. We've made many friends. We've met a lot of interesting people, and it's been fun.

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