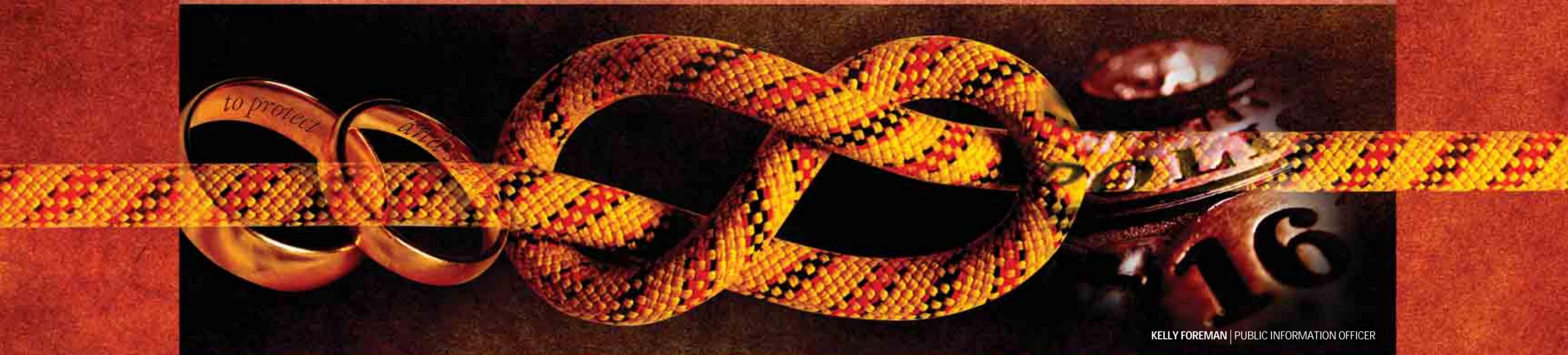


TO PROTECT *and* Serve



KELLY FOREMAN | PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

*M*arriage is complicated. Add an officer's schedule, stress and responsibilities to a couple's daily activities and the combination can be harrowing. But what if both husband and wife serve as officers?

The following are stories of five law enforcement couples, how they balance the stress of their jobs and their families and how they make their relationships work.



Fort Wright Sgt. Marc Schworer & Park Hills Chief Amy Schworer



(Editor's note: Cuddled together on their living room couch, we began the interview with Marc and Amy. Immediately, it was obvious from the bouts of laughter and dripping sarcasm that this couple was unique. Marc and Amy had a good time talking about their relationship, their struggles and their experiences over the years as a married law enforcement couple. Read the following interview with an air of playful banter in mind.)

How did you meet?

Marc – At work.

Amy – We were both working at Fort Wright. I had actually been there about a year before he got hired on, and that first year we didn't really get along at all. He was dating some other girl, and she was very high maintenance.

Marc – Then I went through the woman-hating phase.

Amy – He was “focusing on the job.” When he broke up with her we just started talking, it was mostly work-related stuff.

While you were dating, did you think being with someone in law enforcement would make things more complicated?

Amy – I don't think I even thought about it at first. I didn't.

Marc – I knew when I started dating her I was going to have to either date her forever or marry her. Because it would just be a bad thing to be dating somebody that you work with — it was going to end badly or end gloriously. Luckily, it has been glorious.

Amy – I guess one of my rules for dating originally was not to date somebody in this profession because I didn't want to appear as if I was that badge bunny. I knew if he was somebody I was going to be dating it would have to be something probably long term.

Since you were both working for the same agency when you started dating, did either of you hear any banter from your co-workers?

Amy – Yeah. It was hard for awhile.

Marc – The environment will make

or break the relationship, I think. If everybody likes it, it's a good thing. If everybody hates it, it's bad.

Amy – Our old chief thought we would be the demise of the department. He almost helped to create that environment to make it happen. We don't fight. We hardly ever argue. We disagree and stuff, but it wasn't the knock down, drag out fights that I think the old chief was anticipating.

Marc – Yeah, there's never any gunplay involved...

Amy – Not now that TASERS are out...

Did you ever have any issues working together?

Amy – No. I think we had enough respect for each other and each of us knew that we could handle ourselves doing the job. Because we were established, separately and as individuals, that helped.

Marc – She's a great cop, but I've known that. We have to tell about fighting the guy in the kitchen.

We went in and he's got nothing but underpants on. So I'm sliding him all over the countertop ...

Amy – Trying to get the handcuffs on.

Marc – She crawls up the back of him and chokes him out. I mean it was a knock down drag out.

Amy – It was a domestic. Pots and pans are flying. I was in the other room at the time because the lady had this ginormous dog and I'm telling her to put the dog in the bathroom.

Marc – We found him hiding in the closet. He came out of the closet almost naked.

Amy – That was a long time ago. You don't usually even have time to think, though. >>

Marc and Amy dated and were engaged about two years before they were married on Sept. 11, 1999. (“We thought 9-11 was so clever ... until 2001,” Marc said. “Then we thought, man, that was a stupid idea.”) Amy began her law enforcement career in 1991 at Xavier University Police Department, then came to Kentucky in 1996 to join the Fort Wright Police Department. She served there for seven years before taking a job with Independence Police. In 2010, she became the first female chief at Park Hills. Marc began his career with Park Hills in 1990, then served with Villa Hills from 1992 to 1996, when he was hired at Fort Wright. The two have a daughter, 17-year-old Kalli, from Marc's previous marriage. Amy works day shifts at Park Hills, while Marc works six months on day shift and six months on second.

PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS

>> **Marc** – I always believe her, she’s way smarter than I am. She would walk up to a car and say, ‘Hey, let me see your driver’s license. Where’s the drugs at?’ And they would say, ‘Here you go.’ And I’m thinking, ‘What?!?’ They never do that for me.’

Now that you have been married for 11 years, does anything about you both being in law enforcement make it more difficult to have a regular relationship?

Amy – I don’t know if it makes it more difficult. It is work.

Marc – See, I think it’s easier.

Amy – It’s almost like a rollercoaster. Every once in awhile something will come back, not necessarily that we’re in, but something else that is created for us. Sometimes the guys give him a hard time, and that’s difficult for me. Like when he went to the Academy of Police Supervision, he went after I did and everybody called him ‘Amy’s husband.’

Marc – Yeah, that’s one of my stresses — dealing with that. Really though, I don’t know any of the wives of the other guys I work with, but everybody knows her. Everybody knows if she makes a mistake.

Amy – If there is something one is going through the other will try and help, so we get a different perspective.

Marc – Everybody says, ‘You’ll last forever because you never see each other.’ We see each other more than people think we do, because we make time.

Were there any tensions with Amy’s promotional process when she was named chief?

Amy – I know he caught a lot of flack. A lot of guys I work with were more withdrawn than I thought they would be.

Marc – Most every guy I talk to is very proud of [Amy]. Everybody says, ‘Man, she is going to do a great job.’ There are a few people out there that don’t like her being chief, but I don’t listen to that. Most people are psyched about it. I mean, I get the razzing, but it’s all done in fun.

Amy – We knew there would be a few hurdles here and there. But, we just have fun with it.

What is better about your relationship because you’re both in law enforcement?

Marc – I think as officers, we are forced to communicate. Because on calls, we’re



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS

always communicating. I think we probably communicate more versus if I was sitting behind a desk not talking to anybody all day.

Amy – I think if one of us or even both of us wind up having a difficult day, we understand why. Not only because we either know the call they went on, but also because we can relate more to the other because we go through the same things. We encourage each other.

Marc – We have the same beliefs when it comes to leadership, what we want to do on the job — we always want to do the right thing. We want to work hard. Neither one of us are lazy.

Amy – I think that is probably the easy part, it doesn’t really seem like work.

Do you talk about work at home?

Marc – Yes. I think that is a good thing, that we have no boundaries.

Amy – I can get advice from him and he gives me a different perspective. Obviously, sometimes I might see it differently because of my gender or some of the training I have had. I think by combining the two, we get a good perspective.

Marc – We try not to talk about work all the time. We talk more about the gossip than the job. Then again, we have been married so long, I don’t know what another marriage would be like.

Amy – Well, Marc is going to the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy next year, and I would have to say the most difficult times for me is when he is gone for a long period of time. Knowing he’s going to be gone for 10 weeks — I think that part is going to be a little

difficult, too. Even when you are away from somebody for awhile, when you do get the opportunity to talk it’s like, what are the most important things we need to talk about? Home stuff? Family stuff? Work stuff? And you feel like you have to cram it all into a shorter period of time because you know the other person is busy.

What are the stressors on your relationship because of your jobs?

Amy – Sometimes I feel like I’m a bit more overloaded because I’m tasked with not only the work stuff, but the household stuff. We split it fairly evenly I guess, except when it comes to making plans, or going out, birthday cards, Christmas cards, all the family stuff. Every once in awhile I feel a little overwhelmed. But he’s pretty good about stepping in.

Marc – I’m not a real stressful guy.

Amy – We’re pretty laid back.

Marc – I hate to act that way, but I’m not.

Amy – I think it helps that we recognize a lot of those stressors.

Marc – I think it’s good for us that we have gone through our careers at the same pace. Being a supervisor at the same time, we can bounce things off each other. Where as if I was just a patrolman and she was chief, we would have totally different views on what law enforcement was about.

Amy – Sure. Because he’s going through something with the guys he is working with, maybe I can prevent him from having problems or vice versa. J

Want more? Each of these couples had much more to say. For a full editor’s cut of these interviews, view them online at www.docjtky.gov/publications.asp.

Kentucky State Police Sgt. Tim Mullins & Detective Cassandra Mullins

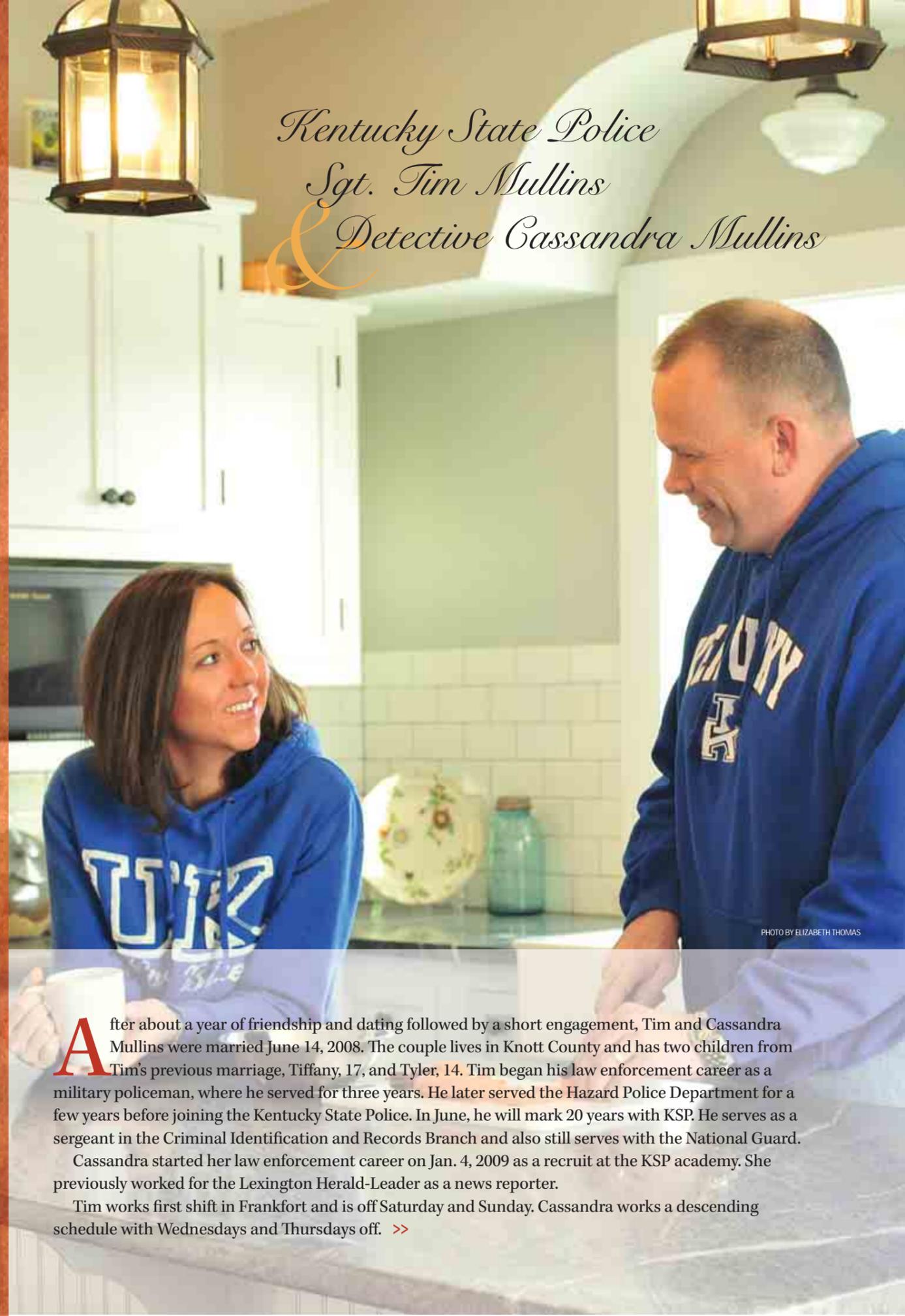


PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS

After about a year of friendship and dating followed by a short engagement, Tim and Cassandra Mullins were married June 14, 2008. The couple lives in Knott County and has two children from Tim’s previous marriage, Tiffany, 17, and Tyler, 14. Tim began his law enforcement career as a military policeman, where he served for three years. He later served the Hazard Police Department for a few years before joining the Kentucky State Police. In June, he will mark 20 years with KSP. He serves as a sergeant in the Criminal Identification and Records Branch and also still serves with the National Guard.

Cassandra started her law enforcement career on Jan. 4, 2009 as a recruit at the KSP academy. She previously worked for the Lexington Herald-Leader as a news reporter.

Tim works first shift in Frankfort and is off Saturday and Sunday. Cassandra works a descending schedule with Wednesdays and Thursdays off. >>



Kentucky State Police Sgt. Tim Mullins & Detective Cassandra Mullins

(Editor's note: At the time of the Mullins' interview, Cassandra was serving as a trooper at KSP Post 10. She was promoted Jan. 16 to detective with the agency's Electronic Crimes Branch.)

>> How did you meet?

(Both begin laughing.)

Cassandra – I worked for the Herald-Leader at the time. I covered eastern Kentucky and lived in an apartment that was in a set of four A frames. Tim was in uniform, looking for somebody with the National Guard. He didn't know where they lived, so he just knocked on every door and I was the only one home.

Tim – All I had was the building address. I just beat on all four doors and she was the only one who opened the door.

How did you begin a relationship from such a coincidental encounter?

Tim – The guy I was looking for was not related to police work.

Cassandra – He set us up after that. He knew we were both single and he was a mutual friend. Then I did a ride-along with him and our relationship continued.

Before Cassandra applied for the state police, did either of you think you both being in law enforcement would make your relationship complicated?

Tim – I didn't really think it would be that big of a deal.

Cassandra – He had a better sense of what I was going into, and I think he was trying to make me grasp that, but you can't until you're in it. He knew our schedules would be kind of crazy, but he knew what I was going to be going through. If anything, it helped us, because it can be stressful.

Have either of you been married before and was it to someone in policing?

Tim – Yes, I was, and no, she was not.

Do you think because Cassandra is a trooper that it has made your relationship easier?

Tim – It's great. Because you know exactly what each other is going through and you can talk about it. They tell you, 'Don't take

your work home with you.' Well, she can come home and tell me anything that goes on or ask me a question, and I can do the same thing.

Cassandra – I think that was, as far as your first marriage, though, part of the problem, wasn't it?

Tim – Oh yeah, it was.

Cassandra – The anxiety of worrying about whether he was going to be OK, what he's dealing with and then, too, just the culture. When you have a guy in uniform, they get hit on a lot, and that's always there, too.

Tim – Law enforcement has a huge divorce rate, and I'm sure that's a lot of what it is. I think that being married to someone in law enforcement, you understand, you know what each other goes through, and she will come home and tell me about some drunk she arrested that said whatever to her and we just laugh about it.

Cassandra – You do develop a sense of humor that is different than what a person outside of law enforcement would have. Really, that's just a way of dealing with the stress. That sense of humor, you can't bring that to just any dinner table.

What do you think is difficult about your relationship because you are both in law enforcement?

Tim – One thing that is difficult — of course, this doesn't really happen a lot — but she called me one time and said, 'I'm going to this kind of complaint and this is the guy that I'm going on.' The county where she works is where I started, in Floyd County, and I started thinking, 'Oh my god, I know that guy, I know he's really dangerous and I know he is a bad person.' So, when I didn't hear from her after awhile ... I never call over to her post and ask her to call me, but I did that time. Knowing what she was doing and knowing the kind of people makes you worry. This guy had actually killed somebody and they were responding to it. I knew he had the

potential to try to kill them, and you worry knowing what they're doing.

Cassandra – I can think of a lot of advantages.

OK, let's talk about that. What do you think the advantages are in your marriage because of your mutual career?

Cassandra – Our relationship is probably unique, but especially for me, because I'm just getting started, his experience has helped me tremendously. I care a lot about people, and I have this mentality where I feel like I want to try to save everybody, and you can't. It doesn't matter how much you care or how much you try, some people just don't want your help. That is frustrating and stressful for me. He does a really good job of talking me through those things, understanding where I'm at, what I'm going through and making me feel better about moving on or accepting things that can't be changed.

Tim – Even though I have a lot of time [in law enforcement], I still would say that any married couple who does this will tell you they pull from each other. Where she just went to the academy, there are things I've mentioned to her and she says, no ... she knew more about it than I did. I do the same with her. We kind of pluck each other's brains, I guess you might say.

What do you think are stressors that are added to your relationship because of your jobs?

Cassandra – I constantly feel like there is this weight on my shoulders because I have all these people who are depending on me. Whether it is a burglary complaint I'm working or an assault victim of domestic violence. I feel like I have the knowledge and power to help them if they will just let me. I find myself getting weighed down by that. Sometimes I take that out on him. I guess that's normal — a lot of times you hurt the people you love the most. I'm comfortable with him, so I yell at



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS

him sometimes. (She laughs.) That's awful, but when I get stressed out, I'm awful to talk to sometimes, I know.

Tim – In the academy they say when you're in this line of work, not to let a bad day at work be a bad day at home or vice versa. When you go to work and have a lot of stress, a lot of that builds up and when you come home, it's hard.

Cassandra – You get used to handling people a certain way, too. If somebody is hateful to me on the road, I handle that in a certain way. I need to remember not to do that when I come home. It's hard to flip that switch sometimes.

Do you think that because you understand the job and know what training each other has been through, that you worry less about each other on the job, or more?

Tim – I worry less about situations she might encounter because I know the level

of training she has had, definitely.

Cassandra – Back to the disadvantages, especially when he was on the road, you worry. Because you know how bad and mean people are. A lot of people, especially in eastern Kentucky with the prescription pill problem, there are people walking around not even realizing what they are doing half the time. That's dangerous.

Tim – The longer you work in an area you get to know people. You learn to know some of them who are truly dangerous. Some of them, before they would let you arrest them, wouldn't hesitate to kill you. You worry about those people.

Cassandra – It is a different level of worry. Some things you can't prepare for. You worry about those things.

Tim – I think another good thing about being married to someone in law enforcement, though, is that you actually talk about that kind of thing.

What do you think is unique about your relationship and how it intertwines with your careers?

Cassandra – He has such a good reputation. He has done such a good job, he got the DUI award every year for about eight years or something crazy like that at his post. Living up to that reputation, not wanting to disappoint him, that is something that is always there.

Tim – (laughing) She says that, but she will so outshine me it will be unbelievable. Her background in journalism and just the way she works, everything she does at work is just ... and I'm not just saying this, it's the truth. You get a class of troopers that come out and they are all good people. But you'll have those few that are just exceptional – and she truly is. I think that she will do great, great things. J



PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

After about six years of dating, Kevin and Samantha Mighell were married in 2002. They have two sons, 13-year-old Jonathan, from Samantha's previous marriage, and Nicholas, 7. Samantha began her career with the Murray Police Department, but also has served the Henderson and Calloway county sheriffs' offices. She has been a Marshall County deputy for about a year and a half. Kevin began his career at Calloway County Sheriff's Office in 1998 and served there until he joined Marshall County in 2002. Kevin works narcotics and is the commander of the agency's Special Response Team. Samantha works second shift and Kevin works his schedule around hers.

Marshall County Sheriff's Detective Kevin Mighell & K-9 Handler Samantha Mighell



How did you meet?

Samantha – We both worked at Calloway Sheriff's Office together. He was a narcotics detective and I was a deputy.

Did either of you catch any flack from people in your agency about dating?

Samantha – Not too bad. We didn't really tell too many people at first.

Do you think that being married in law enforcement makes your relationship more complicated?

Samantha – Yeah, I think because our jobs are so demanding, something is always going on. Like when the ice storm hit, we had to be at work. It doesn't matter that all the businesses and schools are shut down. So, balancing the kids is hard. It's not like you can just say, 'Oh, well, it snowed today, so I don't have to work.' We still have to be there.

Kevin – I agree, it's hard to get our schedules together.

Do you think there is anything that, because you're both in the same field of work, makes your relationship easier?

Samantha – I think because we can get each other's opinions on things and we know different things that are going on at work, that makes it easier. I think we're more understanding of bad days and good days. He has been in narcotics for a really long time, and I've done criminal investigations for child abuse. We've both worked patrol. So, if we run across something we're not sure about, or if we have questions, we can say, 'What do you think about this?' It's good to have another person's opinion.

What do you think are things that you do that really make your relationship work?

Samantha – We don't get so caught up in things. We realize our jobs are important, but they are jobs. We try to keep family first and make sure we have time with family. We laugh about things a lot. There

are things that frustrate us, but in the big scheme of things, we realize it's not really as bad as it could be.

What are things you do together?

Samantha – Spending time with the kids, we go to church together, we like being outside. It's definitely an effort.

Kevin – We have a hard time getting time off work together. But when we can, we like to go shooting firearms. A lot of times when she was a detective at Calloway, she would get called out on an investigation, so I had to tailor my schedule to hers. Sometimes we wonder what it would be like just to be a 9 to 5 family.

Samantha – I'm sure we would get bored with that pretty quick, though. It's also good, we have two boys, so me working in the evenings, he gets to spend time with them. When they were younger, I was home with them at night. Now that they are a little bit older, he's at home with them a lot at night. So it actually works out well, because they really need that daddy time, too.

What do you think are the best things about you both being in law enforcement?

Kevin – I think that I know when she gets called out, it's part of her job. The only time it bothers me is when something bad is going on and I can't be there, too. I don't think anything about what happens, or how dangerous her job is. I just don't think about that. You get used to it. A lot of our friends who have spouses in law enforcement, they worry whenever they go to work and about what they're being called out on. They constantly are saying, 'Your job is too dangerous.' They're always stressing about them going to work.

Samantha – When he goes to work, no matter what he's going out on, I'm confident in his abilities and he's confident in mine. You go in, you do what you have to do, and we understand things can happen anytime. It can happen going to Wal-Mart. We don't stress out about the job. Also, a

lot of times other officers will come in and say, 'My wife called me 12 times because I got called in, she's mad wanting to know when I'm coming home.' We try not to call each other when the other one is at work unless it's just something we need to know, because we understand if you're in the middle of interviewing somebody and you've got this train of thought going, the last thing you need is your phone going off 12 times with, 'When are you going to be here?' or, 'What are you doing now?'

What is unique about your relationship?

Samantha – I think it's that we really trust each other. Even though we both have an insight into what we do, I could see how it would still be hard doing what we do if we were constantly worrying about what the other one was doing. We both have the mindset that, we love each other, and me constantly calling him and asking, 'Where are you?' 'Where are you going?' or, 'Who are you with?' is not going to prevent anything bad from happening. If he was going to cheat, me calling him 20 times a day is not going to change that. We both have a strong faith. We understand that when we go to work, that if today is our day to go, it doesn't really matter what we're doing, it's going to happen. . .]



PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

Owensboro Police Detective Jeff Payne & Daviess County Sheriff's & Deputy Kelly Payne



PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

Jeff and Kelly Payne have been married for 10 years and are the parents of three — Erica, 18, Kaylee, 14, and Alex, 8. Jeff began his career with Daviess County Sheriff's Office in 1994, and served there until he joined the Owensboro Police Department in Dec. 2002. Kelly graduated from the academy in 1997 and has served her career entirely at DCSO. Jeff was awarded detective of the year for 2009 from his agency and Kelly was awarded officer of the year for the same year from the Noon Optimist organization in Daviess County. Both officers typically serve on day shift.

How did you meet?

Jeff – We met while I was working at the Daviess County Sheriff's Office. She had just hired on. It was kind of funny. The first time we met was when she gave out an intersection that was incorrect. I was just going out there to harass the new hire.

Kelly – He's lying, he was going out there to check out the new meat.

Jeff – I was going out there just to meet the new deputy and give her a hard time about calling out the wrong intersection, and it happened to be Kelly.

Did you have any concerns about dating someone in your own agency?

Jeff – I don't know if I had any real concerns. I didn't know how our boss was going to react about it, but I think he took it as well as he could.

Kelly – When we first met and got together, dating was a concern. People would say things like, 'Oh yeah, you all do stuff on duty.' No, we don't. We have always been very professional. When we got married, we incorporated our unit numbers at the sheriff's department into our wedding date. His unit number was 113 and mine was, and still is, 107. So we got married July 13, 2000.

Jeff – We had several people in law enforcement say married couples in law enforcement do not work. We were told that several times by several different people. But that makes us that much more determined to prove them wrong.

Most of the couples we have interviewed have felt the opposite – that being married to someone in law enforcement actually works better for them.

Jeff – I think it's nice. I've been in two specialized units now — evidence and now I'm in criminal investigations. Of

course, I stay on call. When I'm gone, I never know when I'm going to be back. It helps that Kelly is in law enforcement. She understands if I am out on a call out and it takes a large amount of time. Sometimes you just never know where the case is going to lead you. But she understands the dedication.

Kelly – We talk in a world of codes and signals and normal people don't understand the language. We come home and talk about different areas of court and case levels that you're on, most people don't understand. When you talk to someone in the same field, we understand. We don't worry because we know that each of us is capable. We're confident in what we are doing.

Jeff – I think any person would be lying if they say they don't worry, but I'm not sitting over the phone and freaking out if she hasn't called me in an hour's time. I know she's very capable of taking care of herself.

Did you ever have any situations where you got someplace and disagreed about something when you worked together?

(Laughter erupts) **Jeff** – Yes. We had a standoff in the west end of the county that we definitely disagreed on. Buffalo Bill here, I had to rein her back in.

Kelly – One of the first calls on my own was a gentleman that was out in the county. He had just been served an emergency protection order by his soon-to-be ex-wife. He's crazy. He really has mental problems. We got a call from the sheriff's department, the father called in and said, 'My son is looking for a gun to go kill his wife.' I got dispatched to this call to go out to his house. Dispatch never sent anybody to go with me. So Jeff overheard the call, piped up I'll be enroute to go with her.

Jeff – I was the one who served him the >>

>> EPO the day before and he told her that it wasn't over. So, I knew he had the propensity to take this to the next level.

Kelly – When we get out to the house, we're both parked in front and he has a detached garage sitting out behind. I wanted to go around to the detached garage to make sure he didn't sneak out the back door. But Jeff wouldn't let me go back around there. And, of course, I had to listen to him because he was the senior officer.

Jeff – Yeah...

Kelly – We disagreed on that. We still disagree on that. I still think I should have.

Jeff – Within a matter of seconds of us arriving he came to the front door with a loaded weapon and told us he was going to start shooting if we didn't back off. At that point, we needed to regroup and get some more people out there — in my opinion. We did have the difference of opinion.

Kelly – It all falls into line of protocol. Who's the senior officer? You follow protocol just like if it was someone else out there. Whatever the senior officer says, that's what you have to go by, just like if it was any supervisor.

Jeff – I had dealt with this guy before, so I knew a little bit more about him. The last thing I wanted her to do was let us get cut off where we didn't have contact, because our radios did not work out there. So, us not having contact with each other, and him running around knowing he had a gun ... it was just one of those things.

Do you think there is anything about you both being in law enforcement that makes your relationship more complicated?

Jeff – I think the stress of it, even though she deals with that same job that you're doing, that stress has been doubled within a relationship. Like I said, we've been told by people we respect that it's not going to work. It's like you have one strike against you. Then, when I worked in evidence, I was gone a bunch on cases and it put a lot of stress on me, put a lot of stress on us.

Kelly – One thing that I find difficult, you have to separate work and home. Leave work at work. One of my big pet peeves is, he'll work late and as soon as he walks through the door, his phone is ringing. And it's someone he works with. It's like, 'Dangit, He just got home. Leave him alone. Let him enjoy his off time.' His

phone will ring 24 hours a day with people he works with constantly calling him about stuff. You've got to separate home life and work life.

Jeff – I will tell on myself, that is one of my downfalls. I have a hard time with that separation sometimes, and that creates undue and unneeded stress. Of course, the third shift guys, it's regular business hours for them, and sometimes they will do it without thinking, calling at 2 in the morning to ask a question when I'm on call, not thinking that when the phone rings they're waking up everybody in the house.

Have either of you ever been in a traumatic situation since you've been on the job?

Jeff – I had a couple. When I was in evidence, going on homicide scenes, the cases I had the hardest time dealing with were the baby cases. There were a few of them that were homicide cases, the shaken baby cases, that kind of thing. A young child was put into a bathtub full of scalding water. Listening to the child cry, heavily sedated still, because it was in so much pain. On those, it was a common occurrence to call Kelly and vent a little bit. To be able to say, 'Hey, this is what I'm on.' Some of it was peace of mind, to check on our kids and make sure they're OK. Sometimes the mental health part of it, you just

have to make sure your own kids are OK when you're dealing with a case like that. Ultimately the kid cases is the reason why I asked to come out of evidence. I got to a breaking point after I had a baby autopsy. It was either come out of evidence or leave law enforcement. We're supposed to be machines and not have feelings or thoughts on anything, but enough is enough.

How do you deal together with stress, especially when you have situations like those that get you to your breaking point?

Jeff – For me, it was a breath of fresh air, it was a recuperation just to call and talk to her and make sure the kids were OK. That gives you your second wind to keep moving and get done what you have to get done. Still to this day, I still have some nightmares over some of that stuff. Kelly is willing to listen and sit down and talk about it.

Kelly – I think, especially with the cases where you have the blood and the gore and the guys, most spouses, especially female spouses, they don't want to hear that. They can't take that. A lot of times the guys don't have someone to talk to, to vent with. With me, it doesn't really bother me, because I've seen it too. I think that's helpful. J



PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

Kentucky State Police & Trooper Wes Sandlin & Sgt. Jennifer Sandlin



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH THOMAS

Wes and Jennifer Sandlin have been married for eight years and are the parents of two — 5-year-old Luke and 2-year-old Brooklynn. Wes graduated from the Kentucky State Police Academy in August 2002 and Jennifer followed in October 2003. The couple resides in their native Perry County, but Wes is assigned to Post 13 in Hazard and Jennifer works Pikeville's Post 9. Jennifer was promoted to squad sergeant in August 2010 and works mostly night shifts. Wes typically serves in Knott County where he works patrol, traffic, collisions, cases and all other trooper duties. >>



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How did you meet?

Jennifer – We were high-school sweethearts, and we've been together ever since.

Did you both know early on that you wanted to get into law enforcement?

Wes – That's what I have always wanted to do. She wanted a law enforcement career, but it wasn't the state police right at first.

Jennifer – I have a bachelor's in forensic science. I always wanted to be in law enforcement in some capacity. When I went to college is when forensic science just started picking up in popularity. I got hired on [at the Bowling Green post] as a temporary evidence technician. We kind of played around with the idea and decided we would rather be around family. So, I started going through the process with the state police at that point. There weren't any labs close to Pikeville, and that's the post Wes got. I could have gone to Ashland or London, but neither of them were really within driving distance. So I went through the academy and have been here ever since.

Are there things you have found over time to be special about the way you connect or work together because you are in the same career field?

Jennifer – That's all I know. We always know what each other's doing. Especially when we worked the same post. I have people ask me, 'How do you stand that if Wes is going on a bad call and you're sitting there listening to the radio?' I know he can handle himself. We know what each other's training is — we have had the exact same training. We know what our capabilities are, so that has never really been an issue.

Wes – That has taken awhile. It didn't just happen at first.

Jennifer – At first, when I was sitting at the house and we relocated to Pikeville, all he wanted to do was work, work, work. I had

nothing to do, I didn't have any friends, I didn't have a job and we were newlyweds. I wanted to be the newlyweds and all he wanted to do was work. I remember getting so mad at him because I just didn't understand. Then, when I became a new trooper, I did the exact same thing. I knew why he did it and I felt bad because I gave him a hard time.

Do you think being married to another law enforcement officer makes things easier for you as a couple or more difficult?

Wes – In general, I think it makes it easier.
Jennifer – Yeah. Mainly the hours, understanding you have to be there, that you can't just fix your own schedule. That makes it easier. I think it works a whole lot better for our marriage than if I had done something else. I'm glad now that we are both in the same career. Me and Wes know exactly what the other one does and what we go through.

Is there anything about it that you think makes it more difficult?

Jennifer – I think we are less sympathetic toward each other in stressful situations. Because we both do it, we know what the job entails and we know what we signed up for. Most police officers have the mentality that, 'It happened, it's over with, go on and keep doing your job.' Other people who aren't in law enforcement are very sympathetic toward officers, for the most part. They say, 'You have a terrible job, I couldn't do your jobs and see the things you see.' But in saying that, I can also come to him and talk to him about something I saw or was involved in, and he will completely understand what went on. It has some pros and cons.

Wes – I think we better understand one another. Recently she promoted, and most people would think a promotion would mean better days off, a better schedule, but yet, she went from primarily having weekends off and some day shifts to

weekdays off and working all night shifts. I understand that. You do what you have to do. It's better for the kids. We don't have a day off together now, but Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, the kids have somebody.

Jennifer – We don't have to arrange for babysitters on those days.

In Perry County in early 2009, Jennifer, you and a fellow trooper were involved in a serious altercation that led to you having to fatally shoot the suspect. That had to be a high-stress situation. How did you handle that incident and its aftermath as a couple?

Jennifer – He had worked until midnight that night and me and [then-Trooper] Jackie [Pickrell] were the only two left out in the entire post. I couldn't get any cell phone service where we were after it happened, so I told Post to call Wes. I asked him later, 'What did you think when they called you at home? What were you thinking?' He didn't realize the situation. He thought, like most of our shootings, it had occurred from a distance. He didn't know it was as up close and personal.

Wes – It didn't sink in until I saw them. They were covered in blood with knots on their heads and were pretty upset. I was OK as long as they were OK. They were coming home.

Jennifer – I will never forget it. I guess I expected him to just roll straight out of the bed – he had to bring clothes to me. He met us at the hospital. I expected him to grab stuff and come straight to me. He gets out of the car and he is in full uniform, has his hat on and walks over to me. Then, when I crawl out of the car and he takes a look at me, then he actually got a little bit misty eyed and he knew what we had been through.

What do you think are the biggest stressors that you face on a daily basis?

Wes – In no way, shape or form is family



stressful to me. Family is probably what I look forward to the most.

Jennifer – For me it's different. Most troopers wives have a normal 8 to 4 job. My situation is the total opposite. But I still do the mother role, too. When I'm at the house, I'm responsible for the housework, doing the kids' clothes shopping, making sure the homework gets done and the projects get finished. We do the exact same job, but at home, our jobs are the traditional female and male jobs. He cuts

the grass, takes care of the animals, washes the cars, paints the house — stuff like that. And I play the motherly role.

What do you do as a couple to handle stress and make your relationship work?

Jennifer – We try to let the little things be just that, little things. We try not to get all bent out of shape over minor things. I think that comes with the job, too. You learn to do that and I think we try to appreciate each other more because we

know what the job entails. We don't get paid hazardous duty for nothing. That is probably why, for the most part, police officers are very family oriented.

Wes – I think we have to have time apart, too. So, time together and time apart, it all has to work.

Jennifer – Especially when we worked the same post, we were always in each other's face. We went to work at the same time, we worked together and at home we were together. J