

Mt. Morris siblings reign as academic twin towers

Brother, sister are 1-2 in class

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

MT. MORRIS — They came into this world side-by-side — and 18 years later, little has changed for Tom and Kelly Shaffer.

- The twin siblings are actively involved at St. Patrick's Church — Kelly as a religious-education instructor, Tom as a lector. They also traveled together to World Youth Day in Denver in 1993.

- Both have been involved in a variety of athletic and musical activities at Mt. Morris High School. In addition, Tom has volunteered in the Big Brother/Big Sister program Kelly initiated at the school.

- Both will attend the University of Pennsylvania this fall, and each plans to major in political science at the Philadelphia-based Ivy League college.

- And on Sunday, June 25, Tom and Kelly were noted for a highly uncommon achievement: Tom was valedictorian of his 42-member graduating class, and Kelly served as salutatorian. With a 97.55 grade-point average, Tom edged out Kelly (97.48) for the No. 1 class ranking.

Yet Tom stated that competition never became an issue between them. Rather, he and his sister were more concerned about qualifying for their college of choice than about who became valedictorian.

"It really didn't matter. Both of us had applied to Penn, and it's a hard school to get into, so we both just wanted to do well enough to get in," remarked Tom.

"We wanted to make it so they couldn't take one without the other," Kelly added.

Tom noted that he and Kelly have supported each other over the years by sharing their academic strengths.

"I was a little better at math, and she



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Top photo: Tom and Kelly Shaffer stand side-by-side on the stage of Mount Morris High School during their June 25 graduation. Both will be attending the the University of Pennsylvania in the fall.

was a little better in English. It's kind of a good balance," Tom said.

Kelly acknowledged that without each other, "We would have done well (academically) but not as well as we did."

And both also agree that their top class rankings were more the product of high motivation than high IQ.

"It always bothers me when people say, 'Oh, you're a genius.' Well, I'm not a genius," Tom commented. "It took a lot of work and a lot of studying."



Kelly (center), who delivered the salutatory address, sings with the senior ensemble.

"If it was just school, fine. But to do all we've done (outside of studies) and balance that with school, that's hard," said Kelly. "You have to make sacrifices — not going out on a Saturday night so I can study, or so I can get up early Sunday morning to teach religious education."

Kelly, who hopes to eventually attend law school, also foresees a long-term commitment to helping those in need. One possibility, she said, is to open her own homeless shelter.

"I want to do something that's going to make a difference," Kelly remarked.

Tom is considering law school as well. Yet despite the many common paths traveled by these twin children of Thomas and Leah Shaffer, Tom said he and Kelly don't mirror each other completely.

"As we've gotten older, we've developed more of our own personalities," said Tom.

Still, Kelly acknowledged that attending college without her brother "was never an option. He's my friend, he's my buddy. I can't imagine it any differently."

Kelly joked that she'd also like to bring their younger brother David — who, incidentally, just finished his freshman year at Mt. Morris ranked No. 1 in his class — to Penn with them.

"But then my parents would be lonely," she said.

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Give them a deep faith/a bright and firm hope/and a burning love/which will ever increase/in the course of their priestly life.

In their loneliness/comfort them/
In their sorrows/ strengthen them/
In their frustrations/point out to them that it is through suffering/that the soul is purified/and show them that they are needed by the Church/they are needed by souls/they are needed for the work of redemption.

O Loving Mother Mary/Mother of Priests/take to your heart your sons who are close to you/because of their priestly ordination/and because of the power which they have received/to carry on the work of Christ/in a world which needs them so much.

Be their comfort/be their joy/be their strength/and especially help them/to live and to defend the ideals of consecrated celibacy. Amen.

John Joseph Cardinal Carberry, Archbishop of St. Louis

Or whatever the Lord inspires you to offer Him on behalf of His Priest.

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