

## Love and Hardware

The February issue of *Hardware Retailing* seems just the right time for telling a hardware love story. February is not only the month of Valentine's Day, but it's also the month retailers Michael and Jackie Sacks got married in 2006.

The couple's story starts like this: Jackie interviewed for a job at Round Top Mercantile in Round Top, Texas, when she was 16 years old. On that January day in 2000, her life plans included graduating from high school and becoming a teacher.

She never dreamed she would fall in love with the boss's son at the home improvement and grocery store or go on to work there for the next 17 years. She just wanted to earn money to buy gas for her pickup truck.

But when Jackie walked into Round Top Mercantile for her job interview, her future husband was leaning against the store counter. Michael Sacks was seven years older, a new college graduate and the owners' son.

Seventeen years later, Jackie and Michael Sacks are celebrating their 11-year wedding anniversary and own and operate Round Top Mercantile together.

"It was really magic," Jackie says. "It just happened."

### In the Beginning

When Jackie got the job at the store, Michael became one of her supervisors. They didn't talk much and weren't friends for nearly two years, Jackie says.

"I had no intentions," Jackie says. "I didn't ever really imagine dating the boss's son. That was kind of off-limits."

At the time, their work relationship was too distant for them to realize they had many interests in common.

However, in December 2001, Jackie learned they both wanted to attend a high school football playoff game in Houston. As a friendly move, she suggested they go together and bought tickets for the two of them.



**"We do our best to portray professionalism. That's kind of been our rule from the get-go."**

—Jackie Sacks, Round Top Mercantile

Michael paid for dinner before the game, and as they talked, they discovered they shared interests beyond football and the store. For example, they both enjoy old-fashioned music, such as German polka, and going dancing. Both of them also wanted to live close to where they grew up.

Michael made the next move, taking Jackie to a Christmas party. Then he went as her date to her high school prom.

"I guess we never said, 'Hey. Let's go out.' It just kind of happened," Jackie says. "I was still in high school. I was just the kid who swept the floors and stocked the shelves."

Her plans changed as Michael became increasingly important in her life. When she graduated from high school, she went with Michael to visit Texas State University and met his former professors. She ended up attending his alma mater and pursuing a business degree instead of teaching.

The couple got married in 2006 and bought Round Top Mercantile from Michael's parents in 2014.

### Not Quite Business as Usual

Jackie and Michael set some rules early on that have helped them navigate their overlapping work and personal lives.

Initially, they kept their relationship a secret from customers. However, Michael's parents weren't concerned because the pair was committed to keeping their interactions professional at the store.

Jackie and Michael implemented a rule that they wouldn't publicly display affection for each other at work, and Michael treated Jackie like other employees if she made mistakes.

A professional scolding from Michael could make a date at the end of the day a little less fun, Jackie says.

However, they still prioritize leaving work at the store and keeping their personal lives outside of the business.

That means they don't talk about personal issues once they walk through the door to work, Jackie says.

"We do our best to portray professionalism. That's kind of been our rule from the get-go," she says. **—**

Top: **Michael Sacks** took **Jackie** to her high school prom in February 2002.

Middle: Six years after meeting for the first time at **Round Top Mercantile**, Michael and Jackie married on Feb. 11, 2006.

Bottom: Michael and Jackie Sacks' two daughters, **Rebekah**, 6, and **Gretchen**, 8, help at the store when they aren't in school.



**Michael and Jackie Sacks**, who together own and operate **Round Top Mercantile** in Round Top, Texas, met at the store in 2000 when Jackie was 16 years old.