Role Models [1]

Submitted by Marvi Ann Matos [2] on 9 July 2016 - 5:27pm

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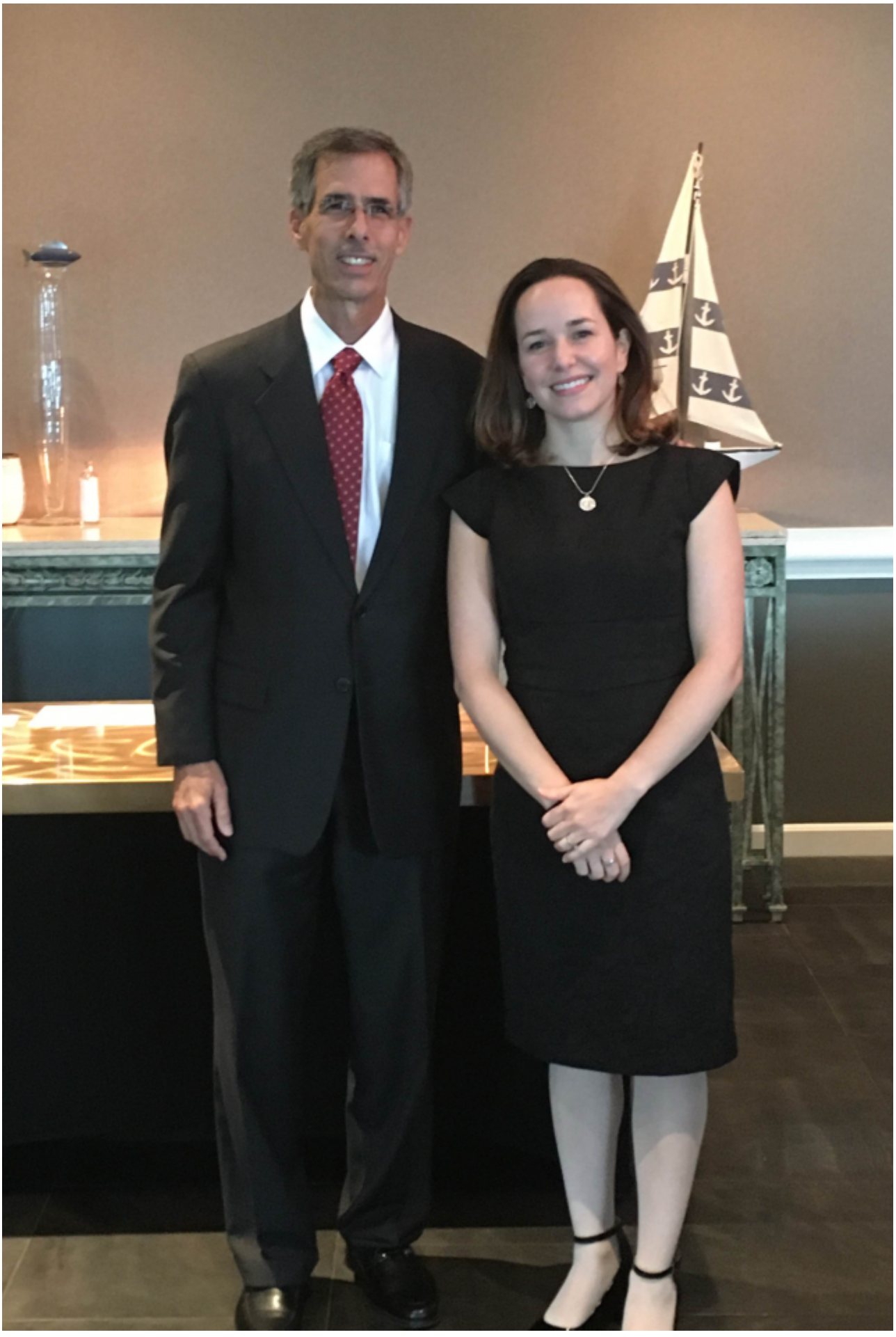

Dr. John Tracy and Dr. Marvi Matos

Years ago when I joined Boeing, I read an article written by Dr. John Tracy, the Chief Technology Officer (CTO) and one of the Executive Council members at the company. The article pointed at the importance of diversity in business and in it, I learned about John, his Hispanic heritage and that prior to pursuing his PhD, he was a math teacher. Many years later after reading the article, I have the privilege to sit down with this great man and ask him about his role models. Before we start, I wanted to share with you briefly, some of John's accomplishments.

John received a PhD in Engineering (1987) from the University of California- Irvine, and a master's degree and a bachelor's degree in Physics respectively from California State University- Los Angeles (1981) and California State University- Dominguez Hills (1976). His 35-year career at Boeing includes serving in the dual roles of CTO and the senior vice president of Engineering, Operations & Technology (EO&T), from 2006 to 2016, providing strategic direction to several functions and business organizations comprising of more than 100,000 employees. Prior to this work, John was vice president of Engineering & Mission Assurance for Boeing Integrated Defense Systems with responsibilities in engineering processes, engineering tools, and the 32,000-person engineering team. He is an elected Member of the National Academy of Engineering and is a Fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) and the Royal Aeronautical Society. He is also a Fellow of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) and the past chair of the ASME 6,000-member Aerospace Division. John has been awarded numerous Hispanic engineering honors, including being named to the HENAAC Hall of Fame in 2009 and being presented the Renaissance Engineer Award from the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers in 2014. Truly a renaissance man, he also authored more than 35 publications in the areas of composite structural mechanics, launch vehicle structures, smart structures, and aging aircraft.

With this in context, I asked:

John, growing up who were your role models?

"My 8th grade Math Teacher was my first role model, his name was Robert McHugh. This man believed that every student could do anything. He also believed that no matter how smart, every individual needs direction to reach their highest potential. He helped me to understand that it's ok to be me, even though I was different. He used practical examples in his classes so that we could follow the material. He reached out to students and made it ok to be who we were. I aspired to be him.

In 9th grade, my Math teacher Delbert Showalter, also became my role model, staying with me every day as long as he could to help me. Algebra was hard for me, but my teacher spent as much time as it was necessary for me to get it. These two teachers became my role models and the reason I aspired to be a math teacher."

What attributes do these role models have in common?

"They were willing to help people without asking for anything in return. There was nothing in for them, it was completely altruistic, one direction, it was not a part of their job schedules or responsibilities and they were not getting anything back. I find that truly admirable."

If you were to give advice to teachers, what would that be?

"Believe that every single student could win a Nobel prize when provided with the right opportunities. People can reach unimaginable things if provided with the right direction."

What advice would you give to the students?

"Find something that you would like to do and shoot for it! You need a vision to build your future. Find people that can help you achieve your goals. Find people that you can help to achieve their vision! There is no better way to grow than to teach."

What advice would you give to people at different stages in their careers?

"It is simple, treat everyone with respect, treat everyone the same way. Do the right things, regardless of the pressure imposed upon you. And finally, always place yourself in the right financial and professional position to have a fall back and to be ready to quit if things are not right."

It is difficult for me to express how liberating is to ask these questions to John Tracy and to listen to responses that one by one resonate with the values my grandfather and my mother have taught me. As we sit in his office at the top of the Boeing Company Headquarters in Chicago, an overwhelming sense of purpose fuels my drive.

No job is to little or too big, when the fuel to serve does not emerge from an ambition to be at the highest rankings, but instead it rises from the simple definition of service itself. Being a servant is all I aspire.

I have had the great honor and luck to have John be a mentor since last year. I came prepared to every session with a topic, with notes and with my always-too-many questions, trying to learn as much as I could every precious minute. There are so many of us that know firsthand of John's humility, so many that have been at meetings where his brilliance has led enterprise wide technology development, so many that have been deeply inspired and so many that have benefited from his wisdom and guidance. Thousands of engineers, technicians and leaders have seen this simple man grow and serve every day. In this interview with John, I wanted to focus on his role models and what were their common attributes. I discovered that one generation after another, a profound driving force for true inspiration is simply *altruistic service*, helping others without expecting anything in return, and this is exactly why this humble and brilliant Hispanic man is today My Role Model.

Tags:

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