

# 'Everything becomes clear'



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## Utica couple, both visually impaired, make it on their own

By LaTOYA NELSON  
Observer-Dispatch

UTICA — A typical day in the life of Tom and Mary Dietz includes walking the dog, working eight hours, coming home to watch "The Young and the Restless," and making dinner together.

This probably sounds like many couples — except that most couples don't have visual impairments. Tom is blind and Mary has very limited vision, but that hasn't stopped them from being independent and accomplishing their dreams.

The Dietzes moved to Utica last year. Interviews and time spent with the couple show how their situation can serve as a model for others in the Mohawk Valley about how to make it on your own when you are disabled.

"Tom and Mary are a good example of living independently," said Donald LoGuidice, president of the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. "They have proven they can be like any other person, sighted or visually impaired."

The Utica-based Central Association for the Blind and Visually

Impaired has played a big role in the Dietzes' success in Utica. It offers programs such as employment services that have helped people like Tom and Mary get a job.

Mary and Tom take the bus to work every morning for their eight-hour shifts at Central Industries, the light association's industrial division. Mary is an industrial sewing machine operator and Tom is an assembly line worker.

"I'm delighted to have them as employees," LoGuidice said. "I'm proud of what they're bringing to the center and glad that they have settled in the area."

Mary, 45, and Tom, 50, met 31 years ago, and married in 1975. A pair of born romantics, they still celebrate their wedding anniversary monthly. On their 23rd anniversary, they danced the night away with a stay at the Radisson Hotel-Utica Centre.

They are best friends, so in tune with each other that they finish each other's sentences.

Tom is a modern man who took cooking classes so that he could help his wife make dinner. He enjoys sports and once took Mary to a football game. One of his brothers asked him how he could

enjoy a football game when he can't see it.

"I told him you just sit in the stands, close your eyes, and everything becomes clear," he said.

Tom's road to independence began with orientation and mobility classes when he was 12. His sight loss is the result of a premature birth. The oldest of five children, Tom was the only vision-impaired child in his family.

Tom has a guide dog, Yorick, but once he has learned his surroundings, he often needs no help at all. When Tom and Mary lived in Albany, he would sometimes walk around with no cane or guide. One of the security guards in his building once asked, "Are you sure you're blind? You don't look blind."

Mary was also the only vision-impaired child in her family.

"I was in St. Agnes home for children for about a year because my mother couldn't take care of me. My sister Eileen took me out of the home and cared for me. She was very good at it," Mary said.

She can see colors and has little sight in her right eye. She was born with cataracts but had them removed in 1961 and can now see

better.

Her move with Tom to Utica from Albany was a big step.

"This move was a whole new thing for us and my sisters," Mary said. "They wanted to shelter me and tell me how to run my life but they had to learn that I'm an adult. I'm going to make mistakes and have some falls..."

"...and pick yourself right back up," Tom chimed in.

They decided to move here after reuniting with an old school buddy of Tom's, Jack Vincent. He is also blind and works at the association. He told them about the association and they liked what they heard. In Albany, both Tom and Mary had been laid off their jobs a number of times, so they were ready for a move.

When they first got here they lived in an apartment, but last month, they bought and moved into their first home.

"They're good friends," Jack said. "I'm proud of all their accomplishments and happy that they have bought their first home."

The people at the association are also proud of how independent Mary and Tom are.

"They are exemplary as exactly what the mission of the agency is," spokeswoman Susan Burlingame said. "They're so proud of their accomplishments; we, as an agency, share that pride. We're also glad they are sharing their story to educate the public about being visually impaired and that you can be independent."



Swing dancers are featured in one of the Gap's khakis commercials.

## Casual khakis still popular

By REON CARTER  
Gannett News Service

Khaki is no longer bland and buttoned down. It's so hot it's cool, as the look proliferates on the streets and in some of the hippest ad campaigns.

The nation amid of a khaki revival:

► The market for khaki has doubled from \$450 million in retail sales in 1993 to \$920 million last year, according to Fairchild Strategic Information Services (SIS).

► Americans bought 114 million pairs of khaki pants priced from \$19.99 to more than \$100 in 1997.

Gap commercials featuring rock, hip-hop, young skateboarders and dancing gen-Xers trumpet the new khaki messages: "Khakis Groove," "Khakis Rock," "Khakis Swing."

That's a far cry from its roots. Khaki, a Hindu word which means dust-colored or having a yellow-brown hue, has been around since at least 1848.

"British troops stationed in India adopted the color after noticing their all-white uniforms became too dusty," says Peggy Statzer, the owner of Khakis, a Hyde Park, Ohio, shop that carries a variety of khaki clothing for men and women. "They started wearing uniforms that were dust-colored for practical reasons, so the dust wouldn't be quite so noticeable. True khaki is a color."

According to Amy Rosenthal, senior marketing specialist for Dockers Khaki, today's khaki transcends color.

"The term khaki has grown to mean 100 percent cotton twill pants to a lot of people," she says.

Today's khakis are pleated, baggy, boot cut, low slung and hip-hugging, and can be matched with just about any kind of top. Khakis also are shorts, skirts, vests, jumpers and suits.

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PHONE:  
792-5002  
or 800-265-8491  
FAX:  
792-5003

E-MAIL:  
od@bort.com  
MAIL:  
Observer-Dispatch,  
221 Oriskany  
Plaza, Utica, N.Y.  
13501

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## Distrust of authority a common movie theme

By ERIC HARRISON  
Los Angeles Times

"Snake Eyes," like most of the movies in the series, is a

that followed.

That was "the first time that we didn't believe our leaders," De Palma told an interviewer in

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mind

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By ROY RIVENBURG  
Los Angeles Times

(which ranker Santa's list of wh and nice (No. 9)