

# Get to Know Your...



## Marlene Lobsiger

She enters a room with a burst of energy – this blond, stylish, gregarious, ageless woman, who has been seen at every Four Freshmen Society (FFS) convention since Indianapolis (2008). In 2013, she co-hosted (with Dave Blackwell) the highly successful FFS convention in Fort Wayne, and they are ready to do it again. Of course, we are talking about Marlene Lobsiger. And, according to her daughter, she is a “multi-tasker do-er” who has spent her entire life focused on music and business.

Marlene’s grandparents migrated with three small children from Switzerland in the late 1800s. Her dad was a lover of Swiss music and had a custom-built accordion made for her when she was five years old. It wasn’t until she was eight that she began taking piano lessons. She studied piano, organ, and accordion privately for many years. She became a church organist at age 16, which she continued for 36 years.

She always knew she wanted to work. While in high school, she did bookkeeping for her father’s automotive business. She took business management courses at IPFW (Indiana Purdue

Fort Wayne) and started her own career as a buyer and business manager for two Hallmark gift shops.

She was invited to become marketing coordinator for Dunbar Furniture in Berne, Indiana, which built custom, high-end residential and commercial designer furniture. This position involved planning events and sales meetings in Chicago and New York showrooms, overseeing large graphic organizations with photos and write-ups for catalogs/display ads for illustrated magazines, and developing price lists for architects and designers for their ten showrooms around the country.

Marlene and her husband Jerry, who was an architect, lived in Decatur for 27 years and raised their two children there. Her husband owned an architectural firm in Fort Wayne, so when they moved to Fort Wayne, she took on a distributorship for a fine line of clothing. When Jerry passed away, she became a buyer for a high-end retail store. When she heard that Von Maur was opening a new store in Fort Wayne and was looking for a pianist to play their grand piano, she joined the company and has been playing there for 17 years.

The whole Lobsiger family has been involved in music. Marlene’s husband was a gifted vocalist, and when their son Kim was four, he was a boy soprano and started singing publicly with her husband; Marlene was the accompanist. They were in several Broadway productions at the Civic Theater and the Embassy Theater. Lori, Marlene’s daughter, has been involved with Choral Production, a company out of Germany, and Music for All, a choral events group out of Indianapolis.

In 1989 Marlene formed The Music Express, a six-piece ballroom dance band, including her husband as the lead vocalist and her son Kim (then a high school principal) as the trumpet and flugelhorn player; they invited Dave Blackwell to join them. When Marlene’s husband died, her son took over the vocals. The band continued to play together for 30 years. The group played for experienced ballroom dancers who danced to all different rhythms.

It was at a jazz festival in Marshall, Michigan that Dave and Marlene became reacquainted with The Four Freshmen and met Sara Lou and Neil Lantz. They learned that the Lantz’s would be hosting the 2008 convention in Indianapolis, and they learned about the connection between the 113 Club in Fort Wayne and The Four Freshmen. Today, Marlene is a board member of The Four Freshmen Music Foundation and a member of The Four Freshmen Board of Directors.

Marlene’s entire life has been involved in music, business, and event planning. “But,” as she sums up, “One of the most exciting and rewarding things that I have done in my life was co-chairing the FFS 2013 annual convention, where over 420 members came together to support the group and renew friendships with other fans. Today, I am happy to once again co-chair the 2023 FFS convention, which is the 75th anniversary of The Four Freshmen on the very site where they performed for the first time as professional musicians.”

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