

shortly after graduating from college.

But then he met Dale Martin, on a blind date, no less.

Her sister was his mother's teaching assistant, they got to talking, and one thing led to another.

It wasn't quite love at first sight, says Dascombe, but the date went pretty well, given that he had just completed a grueling insurance certification exam and she was fresh from root canal surgery.

"Now my sister-in-law Diane sometimes reminds me that I owe her a finder's fee. Other times, I tell her I need a trade-in," Dascombe joked.

Dascombe grew up in Pennsylvania, in a small town about 35 miles from Pittsburgh. But when he was 13, the family moved to North Raleigh after his father was transferred.

Dascombe attended Millbrook High School, graduating in 1980.

Then it was on to St. Andrews College in Laurinburg. Thinking he would eventually head for law school, Dascombe became a politics major with minors in business and economics. But the more he found out about the tedium of the legal profession, the weaker his interest became in that field.

"I basically enjoy dealing with people, and one thing I found out was that lawyers sometimes spend an awful lot of time by themselves, doing research," he said.

Ironically, he ended up working with lawyers quite a bit after joining the insurance company as a claims adjuster.

He stayed with Nationwide about three years, rising to become a district claims manager in the company's Raleigh office before getting the offer from his father-in-law.

"It was really a tough decision, and one I didn't want to make at such an early age," Dascombe said. "It meant leaving corporate America and the ladder they paint for you."

It also was a decision about where the family would live: staying with Nationwide probably meant an eventual move to Ohio. The Martin family is close, and has strong ties to this area: That influenced the decision, too, he said.

Dascombe said he has many reasons to be glad he took the job, one of the foremost being the variety it offers.

"I wear so many hats," he said. "One day I might be dreaming up a

TV commercial for a shopping center, or maybe negotiating a lease, crunching numbers, getting down to the nitty-gritty. Or it might be a time when no one else is here [on the mall staff], and someone comes and says a toilet is stopped up, and I have to go deal with that."

Dascombe believes strongly that an education doesn't stop after someone finishes college. Also, the responsibility of managing an entire family's assets weighed heavily on him. So not long after

### Bob Dascombe

Born: Newcastle, Pa.

Family: wife, Dale; sons Addison, 6, Landon, 5; daughter Skyler, 1

Title: senior vice-president, Martin Properties

Hobbies: yard work; pickup basketball (at the Cary and Raleigh YMCAs); golf; church activities; emceeing for public events such as roasts, awards ceremonies or fashion shows

Other activities: member, Cary Board of Adjustment; has done children's coaching with Morrisville Department of Parks and Recreation

Favorite books: "Seinlanguage," by Jerry Seinfeld; also reads lots on politics

Favorite movies: any of Harrison Ford's action films

Favorite television shows: "Seinfeld," "Friends"

Magazine subscriptions: "Business Leader," "Journal of Property Management"

joining the family business, he started the lengthy process of earning his certification in property management. It took five years, but he completed the program.

Religion plays a large part in Dascombe's life, as it does in that of Martin.

"We are Christian businessmen, and it is important for us to make decisions consistent with what the Bible says is true and proper," Dascombe said. "If we had a particularly hard decision to make, I don't think either of us would hesitate to go to the Bible."

This doesn't mean they push religion on business acquaintances, but it does mean they try to conduct themselves in a way that is in line with their beliefs, which can sometimes lead others to broach the subject of religion.

Dascombe says his relationship with his father-in-law is one of the most important in his life.

"He is the patriarch. I'm learning from him all the time," he said. "It's a humbling experience."

"We've got all these relationships — father-in-law, boss, friends. We're both men married to similar women."

"I think we complement each other and that's why the business relationship works. What we are is a team — he's truly an entrepreneur, and I'm truly a detail person. He also has given me the space to be a leader here."

Dascombe's job includes managing the mall and surrounding plaza, and other property owned by the family, including a strip shopping center in North Raleigh and a new office building in Apex.

Tenant Bob Harris, who owns Sew-N-Vac stores at South Hills and at a shopping center in Raleigh, said he wished the landlord for his other store was as professional as Dascombe.

"Bob is a very caring person — he really cares about the tenants and they know it," he said. "You can go to him if you've got a problem, and they get on it immediately. Really super people. If Bob tells you a chicken dips snuff, look under its wing and the box will be there."

Indeed Dascombe is a detail person, said his friend Marc Sodano, training director for a Cary computer firm. But Dascombe also revels in the art of the deal, getting involved in the nuts and bolts of a transaction, no matter how large or small, he said.

"And he'll go to great heights to meet a challenge," Sodano said. "He and I and a couple of friends were out playing golf one day, and he hit his ball right of the fairway onto a fairly steep ridge, I'd say about 50 degrees."

"He almost had to be a mountain goat to get up there, and when he did, he kept taking swings at it and knocking it onto the ridge again. Plus he had a tear in his pants. But he kept on taking swipes at it and moving it down the fairway. He is determined."