

## Her life's a parade: Former lawyer Marni Halasa now dancing to different tune

BY EDGAR SANDOVAL  
 DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Sunday, July 12th 2009, 4:00 AM

She marches to the beat of her own drummer - and everybody else's, too.

Self-described "parade addict" **Marni Halasa** struts her stuff at almost all the city's best street spectacles: the Puerto Rican Day Parade, the Halloween Parade, the Dance Parade and more.

"I just can't get enough," said Halasa. "It's like a drug for me."

Halasa, 43, gave up a buttoned-down life in the law to indulge her love of dance, fun and glitter.

"My parents look at me now and think, 'How is this crazy woman our daughter?'" the Manhattan woman said with a laugh. "It was not what I was meant to be."

Halasa grew up in Akron, Ohio, where she remembers her parents - both respected academics - telling her at age 4 that she had three choices: doctor, lawyer or scientist.

She dutifully trotted down the right path, earning a law degree from the University of Pittsburgh and passing the Pennsylvania bar exam in 1992.

Her studies led her to a job at the New York Law Journal.

In her free time, she explored her more spirited side with belly dancing and figure-skating classes.

Halasa said it didn't dawn on her that she was destined for a life as a street performer until she watched Coney Island's effervescent Mermaid Parade a decade ago.

"That looks like fun," she thought.

She quit her job and began teaching private figure-skating lessons for a living. Six years ago, she felt confident enough to join New York's famous parades.

Not every parade will let her march, of course. But Halasa - a modern-day disco queen with a wardrobe of 40 flamboyant costumes - tries to jump in whenever she can.

"She is pure energy and light," said Greg Miller, founder of the Dance Parade. "I thought, 'Wow, who is this beautiful woman?' And so I Googled her and found out she was a lawyer. I would have never guessed."

Last month, she decided to join the Puerto Rican Day Parade at the last minute. She put on her long golden wings and roller-bladed her way to Fifth Ave.

A group of girls saw her fly by and Halasa stopped to give them a quick show. She twirled and pretended to fly, moves that earned her oohs and aaahs.

"I'm not going to lie. I love the attention," Halasa said. "I love it!"

She even convinced her husband, 53-year-old businessman Peter Cecere, to join what he calls "the freak show." He has dressed up as a pirate and Santa Claus during some of her street performances.

"I'm also her bodyguard and mule," he said. "I carry all of her stuff." He says he lets her take "center street-stage."

"She just wants to be discovered in the worst way," Cecere said with a chuckle.

"Parades are my life," Halasa said.



Siegel for News

Marni Halasa shows off her law degree.



Siegel for News

... but she's a self-described 'parade addict.'