



JWU : Legacy

SHARING AN EXPERIENCE OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

By Catherine Sengel

A legacy. A gift given, an endowment bestowed, a line of succession through which the past shapes the present and the present builds a future. For academic institutions steeped in history, a birthright often opens doors to halls where ancestors have matriculated for generations. At many schools of higher learning, attending a relative's alma mater is an honored tradition.

At Johnson & Wales University, where students are often the first in their families to attend college or blaze new educational trails, "legacies" are a relatively new cohort. JWU awards Legacy Scholarships to offspring of alumni who are accepted, though sons and daughters of past graduates attend JWU, attracted as often by the quality and variety of degree programs and campus locations as by parental direction.

But whether influenced by a parent's experience or by a student's career focus, families that share the Johnson & Wales experience find that a legacy is more than a generational bond. While years may separate their experiences, all have an education built on focused work and practical training that prepares them for whatever lies beyond their years at JWU.

"The reason why we wanted Emily to go to Johnson & Wales is the fact that it's such a career-driven college," says Marjorie Druker '86, wife of Paul Brophy '86, the parents of Emily Brophy '14. "Many people go to college and they come out and they're still unsure of the direction they're headed ... The thing I love, is that from the day students start, they're on the job and they get firsthand experience and exposure to so many incredible opportunities."

A Family Affair

In many ways the Druker-Brophys are a poster family for JWU. Paul and Marjorie's life together began at Johnson & Wales College. He was a food service management major taking night classes. She took culinary classes in the morning. "We went on co-op to Captiva Island together and fell in love the first day we met, Sept. 3, 1983," Marjorie recalls precisely. "Not only did I get this phenomenal education, but I met my best friend in the entire world. I met my husband and my business partner." Emily was 2 1/2 when Marjorie and Paul opened New England Soup Factory in Newton, Mass. "We literally put her on an upside-down pot and gave her a vegetable peeler and a carrot," Paul says. By 14 she was working in the front of the house with her dad, and by the end of high school, putting in six-day weeks. "She learned probably more than she wanted to, but I think it's going to make her a very strong professional when she actually hits the road."

With parents in the business 24/7, every part of Emily's world is a Druker-Brophy legacy. Her dad's introduction to the restaurant industry began at 15, washing dishes for a chef studying at Johnson & Wales. Working summers and weekends throughout high school, he grew with the opportunity. When Paul decided to pursue a career in culinary arts, his mother was adamant that he study food service management, "the wisest thing I could have ever done," he admits.

Johnson & Wales was a far different place in the early '80s, but it was the rigor, then and now, that Paul values. "For me, the whole school was full of mentors. Chef [Kevin] Duffy taught commercial production kitchens and he seemed to be the one who pushed the hardest," Paul says. "These chefs would scare you and intimidate you and make you think you've got to do things correctly and right. I appreciated it. I didn't mind the discipline." He, like most of his classmates, went home on Thursdays to work through the weekends. There were few "extracurriculars," he chuckles. "Maybe if you were lucky you'd get to go ice carve somewhere."

Though Marjorie was cooking professionally by 17 and loved doing it, the idea of a woman attending college to become a chef defied convention. "It wasn't on my radar. It was really my parents who said to me, 'You are going to go to culinary school. You're really talented at it.'" "When I got to JWU, the chefs were very professional. They were a bit intimidating and there weren't lots of women," Marjorie says.

Among her list of favorites, the influence of "loved" chefs Peter James, Anna Colaiace and Dr. Dominic Vavalao endures. "I still have all of my notes from Chef [John] Aukstolis '76 who taught garde manger — and his own recipe for gravlax. It's like a treasure."

Marjorie found that her education paid dividends. "All you ever had to say to a prospective employer is that you were a graduate from Johnson & Wales and they opened the door; they wanted to talk to you; they wanted to see you."

After a few years of working for others and catering together Paul and Marjorie opened the restaurant they had imagined when they met. Today there are New England Soup Factories in Newton and Brookline with 40 employees. The company has been profiled on the Food Network, gotten coverage and kudos in the Boston market and been featured in Restaurant Business, Nation's Restaurant News and Newsweek. Marjorie wrote the "New England Soup Factory Cookbook" and has been a repeat guest on "Martha Stewart Living" on satellite radio.

The carrot-peeling toddler grew up in the middle of all of it. "She's come with me to work; she's seen me hire people; she's seen me fire people. She's seen me happy, she's seen me sad," Paul says with parental pride.

Not as comfortable in the kitchen, Emily puts in most of her time on dad's side of the business, cashing out, doing inventory, serving customers. He admits to being a tough taskmaster, scheduling his daughter to work 50-hour, six-day weeks to prepare for an industry that requires stamina and long days. "It worked to our advantage. She was my best employee."

"I do everything," says Emily. "I get there at about 7 am every morning. I make sandwiches for the day. I set up the case, I open, wait on the customers, do cash registers at both stores. Since I was 14 I've known how to open and close the stores." When she sees a problem at work, she'll come back with a solution, Paul says. A system Emily introduced to operations when a junior in high school is still in effect. "She would absorb everything like a sponge," Paul chuckles. "Even when I didn't think she was listening."

When it came time for college, Emily listened completely. Her interest in the hospitality side of business cemented their resolve. "If you're going into hospitality, there's only one choice for you," Paul was sure. "I was very forceful in saying, 'You're going to go to Johnson & Wales and you're going to get everything you could possibly get out of it, and then some that we weren't able to do.'"

One visit to Providence clinched it. "I saw Providence and thought, 'I already love it here.' My parents had always raved about it," Emily says. "Johnson & Wales was the first school I heard back from and I didn't even care if I heard from the rest." When everyone advised her to study restaurant management, Paul's take was different. He urged her to move out of her comfort zone. She decided to major in sports/entertainment/



event management. With her innate energy and enthusiasm she joined the Special Events Society as a freshman, "probably the most amazing thing I've ever been a part of." As a member, she's worked fundraisers that included the CVS 5K race and the Mohegan Sun Wine Festival. From among SES's 200 members, she was chosen to be one of 40 who traveled to California to work at a 5K race run by actress Eva Longoria and then meet professional event planners from all over the state.

She hopes to shape her major to her own inclinations. "I love restaurants so much, I'd like to find a focus with events and restaurants," she says. "[SES] really put me on a path toward a goal of finding out what I want to do."

Emily knows she can always return to the New England Soup Factory, her "natural habitat." Her father would rather she "go out and sow her seeds" and experience other managers and owners. Someday she could be running the business, Paul imagines. They know they have a tested "franchiseable concept." Great soups and chilis would score big with sports stadium crowds.

In the meantime all three are enjoying the return to JWU. "Last year every weekend Emily was telling me about an event that she was working," Marjorie says. "It was so exciting listening to her, and to see her living that same life that we lived at school." And noticing the differences.

When Marjorie visited to sign cookbooks and speak to students, the couple toured the campus. Paul admits that he's "so jealous" of the new facilities at Harborside and the sports teams. "We only had that little basketball court that was in the old culinary building. I was in the dorm next door so that's where we used to hang out." "Cooking classes were more classical and foundational — like being a ballerina and studying classical ballet," says Marjorie, marveling at the evolution.

"When you compare what they have today to what we had back then, it's just unbelievable. I hope students appreciate what they are able to take advantage of," Paul says. "There's so much opportunity there. Not that there wasn't when we were younger, but it just has been made so much easier by the way it looks like the school is run now."

Paul often pays it forward. "Whenever I'm hiring, I always will chose a JWU alum faster than I look at anyone else, because if they've graduated the program, I know that they are probably successful at what they've done on the way out."

"We've had a terrific ride and some bumpy roads. Whether they were good or not so good, it's all good learning experiences," Marjorie reflects. "I feel very, very lucky. I'm really grateful for my education at JWU." "We've been in business for 16 years now which is really an accomplishment ... with the economy being the way it is," says Paul. "We're very fortunate. We owe a lot of it to Johnson & Wales and the stamina and the discipline that it gave me."

"It's definitely very fun to be able to say that ... my parents both went to Johnson & Wales. I love how it's such a career-based school. You can feel how much they want to help you," Emily says.

"I think my parents pushed me in a very good direction. They just had a feeling and they were very right."



Same University, Different Campus

North Miami freshman Brittany Clark '15 is brand new to Johnson & Wales. She was brand new to the world when her dad, Robert Clark '95 M.S., came to Johnson & Wales nights after work at Stop & Shop to earn his master's in managerial technology with a concentration in management.

"I loved it," he recalls. "There were a lot of adults who were like me. They had children and wanted to go back to school and learn some different things. It was really, really good."

When it came time for his daughter to attend college, his experience weighed into her decision to attend Johnson & Wales.

"It had a little impact because he told me how great the school was, but it was mostly me who did all the research," Brittany says. From Bellingham, Mass., she'd had enough of New England winters and JWU's campus in North Miami was a big draw. "I definitely wanted to end up somewhere down south and Johnson & Wales just has a great reputation for being able to give me an awesome education."

She'd found an interest in cooking as a freshman in high school. "That's when I discovered that this was my passion and this is what I wanted to do." Johnson & Wales representatives had come to her high school. "They talked to us about the school and the campus and how awesome the education was," she remembers. "And so far I'm not disappointed in any way whatsoever."

Though she'd attended Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School, in Upton, Mass., one of the top schools in the state, Brittany knows that she only learned the basics of cooking. Now learning different styles of cooking and cuisines from around the world, "it's way more in depth than what I learned before."

Her dad knows his own career was enhanced by his time at JWU's Alan Shawn Feinstein Graduate School. "I think people acknowledge the fact that you have a master's degree; people take you a little more seriously."

Working on his thesis, Robert strengthened his writing skills. Lessons he learned about accounting, budgeting, fiscal management and financing properties are serving him well in his new post as senior director of the housing corporation for South Middlesex Opportunity Council. The largest nonprofit in Massachusetts manages 130 properties with 1,500 units across 80 communities from Waltham to Springfield for low-income subsidized housing including veteran's programs, group homes, shelters and services.

"Kudos to Johnson & Wales," he says. "I was very pleased with the value; I got good bang for the buck. I'm pleased with the cost of sending Brittany down to Florida. I know she's going to get a good education."

As for Brittany, she likes her schedule, her floormates and "being able to look out my window and know that it's about 85 degrees every day. The whole experience and everything around me has just been amazing."



His College, Her University

When Elizabeth Buzzerio '10 came home in 11th grade and announced she was going into baking and pastry arts, her parents were caught off guard. Liz had always been excited by science and forensics. Now their future CSI agent was planning instead to flambé.

"A pastry chef? It will pass," we said when she left the room," says her father, Jeff Buzzerio '84, '92 MBA. When she later insisted on applying only to Johnson & Wales, her father advised she broaden her options.

"To be honest, I urged her to look elsewhere beyond Rhode Island — to consider the Culinary Institute of America," says the North Providence native. "'That's not a college,' she told me. 'They go to school year round. There's no fraternities or sororities; there's no athletic programs; there's nothing to do other than go to school. I want to go and have a real college experience.'" "I'd done my homework," Liz counters.

Intelligent, determined and focused, Liz is her very accomplished father's daughter. "We're so much alike," he says. "We're both really driven."

Jeff discovered accounting in grammar school and by 8th grade he was planning a career as a CPA. An honor student at Providence's Classical High, he intended to go to Florida for college. But when his mother got hurt in his senior year, he was the only one at home, so he stayed. Still determined to make a go of accounting, he enrolled at Johnson & Wales

"J&W served me well. When I graduated in 1984, through the good work at the time of Miss Donna Fantetti (now Yena), I got an interview at the company I went to work for right out of college."

He first worked as a cost accountant, rising in 10 years to accounting manager and then divisional controller for the corporation. Jeff returned to JWU to earn a master's degree in 1992. By then he'd left his original employer to work as a corporate controller, and moved on to jobs as a CFO.

"The last real job I had as a corporate CFO was with a local company that quietly does about \$200 million a year in revenue worldwide. I went in to replace the CFO and the CFO I was replacing happened to be a friend from high school," Jeff says of the path-changing moment. "It solidified my decision. In 2000, I went out on my own with a partner."

Today, as CEO of Strategic Alliances Ltd., in West Warwick, RI, he goes into distressed companies as interim chief restructuring officer (CRO), finding faults, cutting costs and stabilizing revenues. He's run companies in England, Holland and North America and worked for a year-and-a-half in Iowa

"We got cited in Delaware by the judge on confirmation day for being so expeditious and cost saving. That's our big claim," he says proudly. "We got cited in the court record because we did exactly what the judge wanted ... Secured parties got 100 percent and the unsecured about 75 cents on the dollar."

He's now exploring options to raise a Debtor in Possession (DIP) fund to assist smaller companies going into bankruptcy. "I've done a little bit of everything," he says. "It's kind of interesting and pretty exciting." With quiet but obvious parental pride, he notes that his daughter has been equally self-assured about her own intentions. She announced early on she was going to JWU, studying culinary arts for two years, getting a bachelor's degree in baking and pastry arts and going for a summer abroad. "She did all of them."

Liz doesn't remember what turned her interest from forensics to pastry. There were no home economics classes in the Catholic high school where she was an honor student who played sports, was active in clubs and was a standout overachiever.

"Cooking is something I started doing on the side at home. The more I did it, the more I found it a way to destress myself, relax. I found it very calming."

When she decided in her sophomore year at JWU to find a summer job, she headed for Boston's Modern Bakery, one of the best authentic Italian bakeries in the country. Liz walked in with her portfolio, was hired on the spot and worked straight through college.

A recommendation from Professor Lynn Tripp helped get her into a Study Abroad program in Switzerland that included a week studying in Italy.

"I had all great teachers. They feel for their students, like parents," Liz notes. "I don't think I could have learned all they taught me at Johnson & Wales at any other culinary or baking college."

She worked for Pastiche, a high-end pâtisserie on Providence's Federal Hill, after graduation, before being offered a full-time job back at Modern Bakery. With her father's business sense, she'll also return to Johnson & Wales to earn an MBA.

Liz would like to open her own bakery and bistro, specializing in cakes, and already works a little business on the side. She knows she made the right decision to study at her father's alma mater.

"I was a little bit of an anomaly for culinary arts, coming out of college prep at a Catholic school," Liz says. "I came in not knowing a thing, and I've worked at the number-one pâtisserie in Rhode Island and the number one the Italian bakery in New England, and I'm a JWU grad."

In the eight years between earning his own BS degree and returning for his MBA, Jeff found the school "two different institutions."

"The school had grown, gained recognition and respect. I'm in awe every time I come back and see what's been done here," Jeff says. "It's a credit to the institution and it's interesting to see the evolution. It was J&W and now it's JWU. I still can't get used to that." His daughter has no problem. "It's JWoo dad," she laughs.