

John Boccacino:

Hello and welcome back to the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. I'm John Boccacino, senior internal communications specialist at Syracuse University.

Julie Friend:

I think those of us who were in this support category, those of us who had interests in the world through our future career goals or our academic goals, we sort of took this as a front like, "Those terrorists want to scare Americans, they want to keep us from doing things, they want to keep us from interacting with the world, and we are not going to let them do that."

I remember being with people and we're working on our essays to apply for our study abroad programs, and some people said to me like, "Aren't you scared to go?" And I'm like, "Well, no. That's what they want. We have to go. More of us need to go. We need to go and interact with people and learn their languages and try to close the divides that create the level of hatred that would prompt somebody what they did."

John Boccacino:

Here on the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast, we are honoring the 45th anniversary of Pan Am Flight 103. We are celebrating the lives of those victims. We are commemorating the terrorist attack, we are honoring the memories of the family members and the Syracuse University students who have been playing a very instrumental role in this as Remembrance Scholars.

And right now I am honored to welcome on Julie Friend of the class of 1991 here at Syracuse University. Julie currently works in higher education as the director of Global Safety and Security at Northwestern University in Chicago. She was in the first cohort of Remembrance Scholars back in 1990,

going

And if my memory serves, there was a news story about it. This is, of course, I always have to remind people, especially young people, this was before cell phones, before the internet. CNN was, but you had to have cable in order to see it. And my roommate and I didn't have cable, we just had the regular TV stations, but we were in the pizza parlor and there was a breaking news and there was an explanation about the crash. And then if my memory serves, they started rolling names of the deceased. I think the news got a flight manifest or something like that. I don't think they can do that anymore. I don't think that is done. I mean, obviously we haven't seen examples of that, but that is my memory.

And I just remember

Well, I definitely feel like, again, the chapel was a space offered for people who needed community and comfort. There wasn't really a religious bent to any of it. It was just always known as a place of gathering. And of course, it's conveniently located in the center of campus. I remember The Daily Orange just doing absolutely fantastic coverage and having really, if you were to go back and look at the archives, I mean I even have this because I still have my little scrapbook from when I was a student. There's some really heartfelt photographs of students on campus processing their grief in very personal moments.

And it's interesting, I was taking a photography class at the time and experienced a very heated debate within our class about the appropriateness of some of the photographs because there were people in the room who were directly impacted by the crash. They had lost friends and the photos were just too much for them and they were trying to say like, "It's too painful. You're hitting people close." And I remember a professor who was really, said, "But this is the reflection of the truth." And at the time I sided with the students who were in grief. And of course now as I've had more life experience, and course now I work in higher education, like I said, I understand where the professor is coming from and I agree with him now. As hard as it is to see a photograph of a young woman in complete grief, it tells the story better than any string of words ever could.

John Boccacino:

For you personally, the trauma of Pan Am 103, how did you come to grips with what had happened with the traumatic incidents?

Julie Friend:

I can't say that I experienced my own sort of personal grief. I think that those of us who sort of were in the secondary layers is it was really, we were trying to provide support and comfort to those around us who were experiencing grief. This was a time when counseling and going to counseling and getting therapy, that was not as commonplace as it is now. Talking about your feelings, your feelings of grief, also not as commonplace. To be honest, I do not know how those individuals who were really directly impacted got support. I hope they got the support they needed. So I imagine there was probably a lot of family support.

I think those of us who were in this support category, those of us who had interests in the world through our future career goals or our academic goals, we sort of took this as a front like, "Those terrorists want to scare Americans, they want to keep us from doing things. They want to keep us from interacting with the world and we aren't going to let them do that." I remember being with people and we're working on our essays to apply for our study abroad programs, some people said to me like, "Aren't you scared to go?" And I'm like, "Well, that's what they want. We have to go. More of us need to go. We need to go and interact with people and learn their languages and try to close the divides that create the level of hatred that would prompt somebody to do what they did to our people or our country."

So I was abroad when the opportunity to apply came out. I was studying at the Strasbourg Center, and I just remember thinking like, "This is a way to honor... doing something that those people got to do but didn't get to tell anybody about." And really felt like I had a responsibility to tell their story by saying like, "I was inspired by you and the dreams that you had that you couldn't see through, that I made doubly sure that I worked really hard to get to my dream," which at the time was to have this year-long study abroad experience. So I felt really motivated to honor their dreams and their goals and to try to think about what they would want those of us who were still here to accomplish in the time that we had.

John Boccacino:

And how did you go about honoring and representing Gretchen Dater, the student who was on the plane, that was your person that you were trying to embody their spirit? How did you go through that process of getting to know Gretchen and trying to really honor her moving forward?

Julie Friend:

Well, Gretchen and I had some things in common, although we had never met. I mean, she was interested in theater and I was not a theater student, but I did take some acting for non-majors classes while I was at Syracuse, and I certainly took the wonderful opportunities that they had for discount tickets at the theater there in Syracuse to appreciate and experience live theater. So I definitely thought about her when I came back to campus in embracing those opportunities. And I remember exchanging letters with her mother a few times, which that's how we talked to each other in those days. There was no email, no text messages, and I think that was very sweet.

I don't believe they came to the remembrance ceremony that I was in, but I did meet her when I attended. I came back to campus for the 30th anniversary of the crash, I did meet Mrs. Dater at the time, so that was a very meaningful moment for us. I believe she's passed now. I know that Mr. Dater passed some time ago. That's really, wow. I think about that a lot because a long time has passed and I think about we are losing the parents of these students and how the legacy of their memory will be carried on through other members of their family. I'm grateful for Syracuse's ability to create such a program around Remembrance Week because it does help to instill a habit of reflection.

John Boccacino:

What are your thoughts about Remembrance Week and what impact the program had on you?

Julie Friend:

I think it's such a wonderful way to pay tribute to the students and their families, and also to instill the impact of the event on Syracuse as an institution. And Syracuse could have gone the other way because obviously it's a very sad circumstance, it's a tragic circumstance. And Syracuse could have decided to brush it under the rug and quietly give out some scholarships and really not acknowledge it. And I'm so proud of the institution for going the other way and saying, "We are not going to do that. We are going to embrace the people impacted, the impact on our campus as tragic and painful as it was for all involved. The students, I mean the faculty and staff who knew that the students that had died were friends with the families of those that were local."

I mean, Syracuse instead decided that they were going to make this a thing and I'm really proud of them for that because that means that this is going to last well beyond, as I said, we're losing the parents now. I mean, I'll be gone someday and that is not going to matter as much because you have instilled the

celebration and the acknowledgement of the impact to the community into the culture of the institution.

John Boccacino:

I want you to share a little bit about the emotions that kind of came flooding back when you came back to campus for the 30th. What was that ceremony like and what was going through your head?

Julie Friend:

It was extremely impactful and emotional. I mean, I will say more so than I thought it would be. I think one of the things, I've talked to a lot of student journalists over the years. They've tracked me down because I work in higher ed, I'm not that hard to find. And they want to talk to me about the

as safe as they can be when they're trusted to go to Northwestern? Do you think there's a tie between your current work and your work as a Remembrance Scholar?

Julie Friend:

Absolutely. I think

university created because of what they did. And so I think it's a really powerful story, and I think that as we go about and as we work together and people ask how we met and we talk about our story, it's a really cool situation and a really cool story to bring up. And it allows us to talk about Pan Am 103 and allows the lives of those who lost their lives to continue through us telling our story of how we met. And so I think it's really cool to see it continue down the line.

Luke Rafferty:

Hannah and I, we now work together and we actually run a video production company where we tell the stories of companies, of organizations, of individuals. And me personally, that was the path that my student was going to go down, that Alexia wanted to be a photojournalist and tell those stories. And we get to now do that together, which I don't think was on Hannah's radar when she was graduating from Falk, but now that's something that would've never transpired, would've never come to be, had the program not existed and had this terrible event not happened. There's a little slice of good that might not have come from it.

John Boccacino:

Our next members of the Remembrance Scholars who will be talking with us, what a story they have to share with our audience today. They are Luke and Hannah Rafferty from the class of 2016 here at Syracuse University. I could give you the summary of how they met and the connections to the Remembrance Scholars, but let's have them tell us a little bit about yourself, why you were so passionate about becoming a Remembrance Scholar?

Luke Rafferty:

Sure. So I was a Remembrance Scholar in the 2015-2016 year, and I represented Alexia Tsairis, who was a photojournalist. And I was studying photojournalism at the time, so I graduated my photojournalism degree with the passion to pursue visual storytelling, which was her passion. So that was really powerful for me to get to represent her. The Remembrance Scholar program gave me something a little bit more. The purpose is to look back and tell those stories.

kind of being able to feel what it felt like to study abroad and kind of imagine and

I'd certainly like to think that, and I think so. I know Alexia Tsairis now has a foundation that Newhouse is very heavily involved in, and every year I see the people who are honored by that scholarship and they too serve to kind of continue her work and continue her mission. But looking at what I have chosen to do, and it's not photojournalism per se, it's a bit more corporate video storytelling, but we do give back to companies and we work with nonprofits. And I think that, yeah, I do believe that we are continuing or I'm continuing to pursue her path and deliver those stories and use photojournalism and use, now it's digital, digital storytelling to promote good and to promote those stories.

John Boccacino:

And Hannah, when it comes to the research, I think one of the best parts that I enjoy about telling these stories of Remembrance Scholars is the getting to know the student, what they embodied, what they were all about. Can you share a little bit about your research process? How did you go about knowing about your student and trying to really embody that spirit that they brought to school here at Syracuse?

Hannah Rafferty:

Yeah. So we definitely spent a good amount of time in the archives going through everything that was available to us in the archives and trying to figure out if there was a particular student that we connected with or what they embodied, what their goals were, what their background was. In my case, Suzanne was also a Upstate New Yorker and I grew up Upstate New York. So there was just kind of a variety of different reasons that I selected her besides her character and her career goals, just really kind of looking at her experience and looking at where she wanted to go. That's how I selected her.

John Boccacino:

And I am going to make the transition from hearing about how you all selected your students to how you selected each other as romantic partners, because you like what I did right there bringing that all full circle here on the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. What was the introduction like? How did you guys spark this romance out of this Remembrance Scholarship program?

Hannah Rafferty:

We all split up into committees as part of Remembrance, and Luke and I both on community service together. And Luke had a gathering one night at his apartment.

community and dedicated to giving back. And so that inherently drew me in. And then the more I met him and the more I heard his crazy stories and travels, and experiences, then I decided I wanted to be a part of that.

John Boccacino:

Luke, I have to commend the resiliency of someone who has gone through rejection once, but what was it about Hannah and her personality that drew you to her? And again, keep coming back to this message of out of tragedy coming beauty and joy, and the fact that you two are happily married now as we're sitting here. What was it about Hannah that made you worth fighting for?

Luke Rafferty:

Well, first of all, I have to thank you for appreciating my tenacity.

John Boccacino:

We've all been there and sometimes it's easy to fold up shop and move on and figure it's for the best. But no, you saw what you wanted and you went after it.

Luke Rafferty:

Exactly! I'm certainly glad I did. I would say one of the main things about Hannah I guess stood out to me then and still today is just that she challenges me and helps me be a stronger person. I think even back during the Remembrance time when we were scholars back in 2016 was just as we were setting up these events she would encourage me to go the extra mile or to encourage me to do Remembrance -0ag

after it.





There used to be a photo that I had on my desk that was actually taken by Alexia Tsairis, ~~and~~ was actually of Syracuse University Ambulance of the students in action. ~~And~~ that was something that I volunteered a lot of

Thanks for checking out the latest installment of the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. My guest is John Boccacino, signing off for the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast.