It’s a Calling

Supporting the University of San Diego Has Been a Lifelong Labor of Love for This Alumni Couple, Recognized for Giving Time, Talent and Treasure

Rosemary (Masterson) ’70, ’90 (MA) and Walt ’68 Johnston answered the call. And for that the alumni at the University of San Diego will always be grateful.

Walt Johnston graduated from the San Diego College for Men in 1968. Nearly two years later, on Jan. 10, 1970, he married his college sweetheart, Rosemary Masterson, between the semesters of her senior year at the San Diego College for Women.

That summer the phone rang in their apartment, located not too far from campus. The person on the other end invited the couple to be founding members of what would become a joint Alumni Association.

The couple attended that meeting nearly 50 years ago and has been serving the University of San Diego ever since — most recently by establishing a scholarship that will benefit Toreros for generations to come.

“We’re a blessed family,” Walt says. “If I hadn’t picked up the phone that day, or if I had said no to the person on the other end, our lives may not have taken the same path. God was looking out for us.”

He met Rosemary at a dance following a party with his fraternity, Tau Kappa Epsilon. He didn’t ask her out, but got a second chance the year after he graduated when a friend invited him to a ball at the Hotel del Coronado. Rosemary, a junior, was there as well, with a date of her own. He saw her from a balcony, while she was dancing on the floor below. This time he wouldn’t let the chance slip through his fingers.

He called her on a Wednesday night, crossed his fingers and asked her out. She asked him to hold for a minute, came back on the line, and said yes. He asked her to marry him on their third date.

It was the summer of 1969. Neil Armstrong landed on the moon and, very fittingly, Walt was over the moon for Rosemary. They spent the next few months hanging out in Pasadena, where she was home for the summer and where he was working for General Electric.

“We would go to coffee shops and talk about everything from politics to how many children we wanted to have someday,” Walt recalls. “Rosemary went back to San Diego for her senior year and I moved to San Diego and started working for Traveler’s Insurance Company.”

It was a fortuitous move.

Sunday, July 14, 2 p.m.
Wine Classic
Jean B. Knov, Institute for Peace and Justice
Learn more at sandiego.edu/wineclassic

Sunday, Aug. 4, noon
USD Day at the Races
Del Mar Racetrack
Learn more at alumni.sandiego.edu

Coming Soon
The fall schedule for the Bridges Academy Lecture Series will be announced in August.

Continued on next page
women couldn’t wear pants and that woman in an ethics class being taught with the school newspaper, eventually worked his way up and took the with one full-time employee and It was there where Walt met a man Men and vice versa. She was the only Founders Chapel — especially before Her junior year she became a resident She lived nearby with her aunt and rings would go unanswered. It was her job to conduct bed checks and shine a flashlight into rooms to make sure her residents were all back in their rooms by curfew. She remembers that sometimes her flashlights would go missing, and Curfew was at 10 p.m. on weeknights and midnight on weekends. When they left campus, the women had to fill out cards listing where they were going and who they were with. When they returned, they had to shift their card from the “out” column to the “in” column. “The doors were locked after curfew,” Rosemary says. “If you were late you’d have to line up at the door. The nuns sawed through the doors and and the stories of USD alumni and leaders in an ongoing video series known as “Bridge of Gold.” It signifies gifts of extraordinary generosity from one generation to another. Through such benevolence — which is not marked by levels of giving, but generosity of spirit — planned giving donors ensure USD will continue to excel, meeting higher aspirations with each graduating class.

Recently, Walt celebrated his 50th reunion and was inducted as a Golden Torero. To celebrate the milestone, he and Rosemary made a gift to establish an endowed scholarship fund that will support future Toreros in perpetuity. “I’m really grateful to the people who believed in my potential and invested in my future when I was a student and relied on scholarships,” Rosemary says. “This is a way for us to pay it forward, knowing that there will always be students like me who couldn’t afford to go to college without the help of financial aid.”

As 2018 came to a close and the holiday season began, Bridges Academy hosted a luncheon to celebrate the most recent recipients of the Bridges Endowed Scholarship. University of San Diego students Glória Sandoval ’19 and DeZell Lathon ’19 were awarded the scholarship for the 2018-19 academic year. At the annual luncheon, Sandoval and Lathon shared stories about their journeys into USD, their experiences on campus, and their plans for the future. It was also a time for the recipients to meet and thank those who donated to the Bridges Endowed Scholarship. The Bridges Academy Lecture Series has established a presence on campus as a continuing education program for those 55 and older. Guests are welcomed to USD to enjoy a variety conferences and events hosted by the Alumni Association. Walt, an amateur photographer, can often be seen behind the camera capturing cherished memories of tailgate events. In honor of their service, Rosemary received the Bishop Charles Francis Buddy Award in 1980. Walt received the same honor in 1987. They have also been instrumental in capturing the stories of USD alumni and leaders in an ongoing video series known as the USD Alumni History Project.

The Bridges Scholarship Corner

Bridges Scholarship Corner

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