

Bowdoin Scholarship Appreciation Luncheon

Susan Sgroi

Thank you, Barry. Good afternoon, everyone – students, scholarship donors, faculty, members of the administration, trustees, alumni, and friends of Bowdoin.

It is such an honor and privilege for Dennis and me to be speaking to you. I recall the day when Jane Camp from the Development Office called me to ask if we would present today. The conversation went something like this:

“Sue, we thought this year we would do something new and different and so we would like Dennis and you to present as a couple at the Scholarship Appreciation Luncheon.”

Later, when I told our teenage daughter Sophia that Bowdoin had asked us to speak because we were “new and different,” she paused and then replied: “Really?”

We aren't sure what we have to say is "new and different," because we know that each of you – like us – has a story about what makes Bowdoin College so special.

Then again, perhaps our story is different – because it's actually a love story – I assume at this point, Jane Camp is re-thinking her invitation for us to speak. The love story has two parts. The first is about a young couple who met at Bowdoin – I will cover that chapter. The second part is about that couple's love for Bowdoin and what the college has meant to them over the years, and I'll let Dennis tell you about that.

So here goes...

Back in 1982, Dennis was a senior and I was a freshman. Like many freshmen, I was just trying to adjust to my first semester of college. Dennis, on the other hand, was wrapping up his Bowdoin career and focusing on his transition to medical

school. I met Dennis at a frat party and we hit it off almost immediately, despite the fact that we came from different worlds in Massachusetts. I was from Lexington, where lawns are well-tended and where the heroic Minutemen launched the Revolutionary War with the “...shot heard ’round the world,” and Dennis was from the rough streets of Lynn, which is known by some as “Lynn, Lynn, City of Sin.” I had never met anyone from Lynn, but the reputation of the city was well-known throughout the state and initially, I told my parents that Dennis was from the “North Shore” – because, in fact, Lynn is geographically north of Lexington. Dennis asked me to go to a movie on our first official date. At the time there were two choices – Rambo or Ghandi – I was pleasantly surprised when he informed me that we would be seeing Ghandi. After seeing the film and having a terrific conversation on our walk back to campus, I found I was no longer leery about the guy from Lynn.

Over time, we enjoyed many meals and discussions at Coles Tower on multiple topics from religion to politics. However, one of Dennis' favorite topics was his gratitude for Bowdoin. Dennis viewed his Bowdoin experience as a gift both academically and financially – because literally and figuratively it was just that. Conversely, when I applied to college, I had no idea how fortunate I was. My parents could afford to pay and going to college was expected. It never crossed my mind that I might not be able to attend any college I set my sights on. Over time, I came to view my college experience for the gift that it was – regardless of who was paying for it. Additionally, where Dennis and I came from became far less important than where we were going.

One of our favorite quotes during our time at Bowdoin that still has meaning for us today comes from William DeWitt Hyde's "The Offer of The College." And two lines in particular stand out:

“...to carry the keys of the world's library in your pocket,

and feel its resources behind you in whatever task you undertake...”

We can truly say that we have felt the resources of Bowdoin College behind us in all aspects of our lives. Upon graduation, we committed that we would use our time, talent, and resources to actively pass on to others the gift of one of the finest liberal arts educations this country has to offer.

Over the past two decades, Dennis and I have tried to live up to the values of Bowdoin, in some small way to emulate the longstanding tradition of generosity. We have the privilege of working at two tremendous institutions – Fidelity Investments and Massachusetts General Hospital. Both have excellent relationships with Bowdoin and employ many alums. As you probably know, almost everywhere you go in Boston, you will find a fellow Polar Bear. Over the years we have also taken advantage of the Bowdoin–Boston network to connect students

with alums and we work with the career planning office to place Bowdoin students in internships and jobs.

And of course we have not forgotten where we came from -- so back to the guy from Lynn. As I referenced earlier, Lynn is a working-class community that has seen jobs stagnate, wages erode, and only 16% of the adult population has a college degree. In 2001, Dennis and I established the Sgroi Family Scholarship Fund. The Fund's description reads as follows:

“The Sgroi Family Scholarship Fund provides scholarship support for Bowdoin undergraduates with preference for graduates from... ***[no surprise here]***...Lynn, Massachusetts.”

And this brings us to part two of our story – our love for Bowdoin College and what the college has meant to us over the years.

