Alumnae Paths: Spotlight on the 1980s
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Why did you choose Penn?
As soon as I stepped foot on campus, I knew it was right for me. Coming from a small town, I wanted to be in a city, yet enjoy the benefits of a campus environment. Also everyone I met during my first visit seemed so happy and to love Penn. Penn was also a driving distance from my home, so that gave me a feeling of comfort.
What did you study?
I started as a math major but soon realized it was not for me. I transferred to Wharton sophomore year and it was the best decision I ever made. I loved my classes!

What activities meant the most to you as a student, and why?
I started an organization called Students Helping Students, a peer advising group. This was important to me as I wanted others to have the same experience I was having. I also worked at The Wharton Magazine which impacted my decision to be a marketing major.

Why did you decide to pursue the career you are in now? Tell us about your current role/position, and your path to it.
I serve as Executive Director of Development for the USC Shoah Foundation, the organization that Steven Spielberg started to document the testimonies of Holocaust survivors. After years of serving as a consultant to various not for profits, mostly in the areas of event planning and fundraising and volunteer management, I wanted to pick one organization to focus on and I could not be happier with my decision. The work that we are doing in using the testimonies for educational purposes to prevent future hatred and persecution will change attitudes and behavior for generations to come.

What other professional activities have you been involved in since graduation?
I spent years planning high end customer outings to major sporting events, which was very exciting and fast paced. I also served as the Executive Director of the 125 Years of Women at Penn - definitely the highlight of my career! Through this event, we gave women an equal place at the table, and as a result there are many more women in leadership roles (trustees, boards of overseers...) at Penn today.

What hobbies, or personal activities of note, have you pursued in your adult life?
I have been actively involved with Penn since graduation - first as a member of the secondary school committee and then as a member of the Trustees' Council of Penn Women (TCPW). I now serve as Chair of TCPW and well as my class president and recently rotated off of the ACLC (Alumni Class Leadership Council). I am also involved with the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia and serve on the Women Philanthropy's executive board.

How has your connection to Penn impacted your life, both personally and professionally?
My Penn connections has impacted my life 100% !! First, I met my husband freshman year, and our daughter is Class of 08. When I think about many of the mentors that I have had through the years, many are Penn alumni. The majority of opportunities I have had professionally also relate back to Penn, as the decision makers have been alum and sharing that special bond always helps.

What advice do you have for other women interested in pursuing a profession similar to yours?
To be successful in the not for profit world, I think it is important to have experiences both as a staff person and volunteer. To see a situation from both sides is invaluable.

Any last words of wisdom to your Penn sistren?
While I loved being a student, I love being an alum even more! Your relationship with Penn is lifelong - take advantage and get the most out of it.

Lolita Jackson, ENG’89

Why did you choose Penn?
I chose Penn because it was in a city of manageable size, excellent academics, had a great social life with activities/sports/performing arts, and all the schools were in one place so the students would all mix.

What did you study?
Started in chemical engineering and switched over to applied science, to have flexibility to take Wharton courses. But was in the engineering school throughout.

What activities meant the most to you as a student, and why?
Counterparts, because Penn is known as one of the best schools for performing arts for non-majors, and we were the best a cappella group while I was there. We spent as much time together as any athletic team, and some of my closest friends from Penn are from the group. It also created a lifelong passion, as I am a professional jazz singer in my free time, largely due to my tenure at Counterparts creating the spark (I did not sing at all until I came to Penn).

Why did you decide to pursue the career you are in now? Tell us about your current role/position, and your path to it.
Wow - this is a long story so I will give the abridged version. When I left Penn I immediately went to Wall Street, as I knew I did not want to be an engineer. The firms I worked for welcomed my engineering training and my desire to work with people, so I had a 14 year career in finance, largely doing technical marketing and project management for Morgan Stanley Investment Management. I was working for them on 9/11 in the South Tower of the World Trade Center and the person I was going down the stairs with died. Two years later I decided to make a career switch, and an outside hobby, helping with political campaigns, became a job - I was Manhattan Coordinator of Bloomberg 2005, and was hired afterward to join the administration. I was Manhattan Director of Community Affairs for over five years, and I am now Director of Special Projects, in charge of The Second Avenue Subway and Barclays Center (Brooklyn Nets arena) projects. I am in charge of all operational NYC agencies. This is the perfect job for me.
because my engineering training directly comes into play, and yet I have to constantly deal with people - elected officials, community members, and sometimes the press. Those skills came from my extracurricular activities, especially performing while at Penn and beyond.

**What other professional activities have you been involved in since graduation?**
I am a member of several international fellowships, including the British-American Project, US-Japan Leadership Program, and The Royal Society of Arts - which was founded in 1754 and counts Benjamin Franklin as a 15 year active member.

**What hobbies, or personal activities of note, have you pursued in your adult life?**
I am a professional jazz singer and have performed on four continents as well as at Carnegie Hall, and have been studying Mandarin for four years.

**How has your connection to Penn impacted your life, both personally and professionally?**
The impact is profound, and indeed immeasurable. When I came to Penn I had almost never traveled outside of the East Coast and had never met many of the types of people I met at Penn. The exposure to the vast academic offerings, to perform regularly, to socialize with so many different types of people, even to experience Penn Relays really shaped me as a young adult. Everywhere you go in NY, when you meet a person from Penn there is an instant bond, and often the person will definitely be more willing to speak to you or give the benefit of the doubt. In both of my professions, finance and government, there have always been many fellow Penn alums, which is something that has always been helpful - Penn alums are almost always willing to help each other out. Personally, many of my friends are people I knew at Penn and that is likely to always be the case. It has been a wonderful community for me throughout my adult life.

**What advice do you have for other women interested in pursuing a profession similar to yours?**
If you wish to be in government, a good place to start is volunteering for a campaign to get your feet wet. Be willing to stuff envelopes, stand on the corner to hand out leaflets, and the like. You can see things from the ground up and hear why people like or dislike your candidate/officeholder, which helps if you are later involved in a policy role for that person. Also if you are a good volunteer you often move up quickly and can take on more responsibility faster. My current career came about because I ended up a high level political volunteer after 10 years of doing it as a hobby outside of my financial career.

**Any last words of wisdom to your Penn sistren?**
Yes - two things: cherish your friends from Penn because they will become more important to you as you get older, and know that you may change careers completely several times - with those changes coming from things you are already doing in your spare time.

**Dale Bell, MT’81**
Why did you choose Penn?
I applied to the School of Allied Medical Professions and there was a particular academic major that interested me. I also chose Penn because of the extracurricular opportunities, the City of Philadelphia and the proximity to my home (2 hours away).

What did you study?
I studied Medical Technology and I was the last class to graduate with this major.

What activities meant the most to you as a student, and why?
My student activities including SAMP representative to the Undergraduate Assembly, Hillel Student leader, Mortar Board Senior Society and volunteer at the Children's hospital were all very important to my undergraduate experience. They provided me with leadership opportunities, source of friendships and establishing connections to the University.

Why did you decide to pursue the career you are in now? Tell us about your current role/position, and your path to it.
After Penn Graduation I worked in a clinical lab at HUP and Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia. After working for a year I decided to go to grad school to pursue a career in Health Care Administration. I earned a Master of Public Administration in Health Care Administration at NYU and then after a residency at the United Hospital Fund I was offered a full time position. My experience in health care research and planning lead me to my current position in health care consulting. I am a Senior Health Care Consultant with Loeb & Troper in NYC working on strategic planning for long term care facilities.

What other professional activities have you been involved in since graduation?
My hobbies and personal activities have all involved volunteering at Penn. I currently serve as President of Penn’s Class of ’81, Vice President for the Penn Alumni Interview Program of Metro New Jersey, and member of the Penn Hillel Board of Overseers.

What hobbies, or personal activities of note, have you pursued in your adult life?
Additional hobbies include traveling and attending all Penn football and basketball games with my husband, a Penn athletics fanatic!

How has your connection to Penn impacted your life, both personally and professionally?
Not only has my connection to Penn provided me with a community and enabled me to have
significant volunteer opportunities to give back to Penn and surrounding communities, but it has also provided me with a husband and two amazing children!

**What advice do you have for other women interested in pursuing a profession similar to yours?**

My words of advice: Stay connected and engaged with Penn Alumni! These connections may provide job opportunities, lifelong friendships and volunteerism to help better society.

Keyuri R. Joshi, GNU’89

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**Why did you choose Penn?**

Dad always said “if you choose the best quality, you’ll be happy for a long time.” He was right! Penn commanded respect by having the most comprehensive research based nursing program. I chose the best and have never regretted it.

**What did you study?**

I received a Master of Science in Cardio-Pulmonary Nursing.

**What activities meant the most to you as a student, and why?**

To this day, I most appreciate the research skills that I learned at Penn. Statistically significant studies and data make a powerful impact in every aspect of our lives. In the classroom, I enjoyed group discussions on how to solve problems. No one person can ever have all the right answers. By collaborating, we can share phenomenal ideas and do a greater justice to those with whom we interact. My clinical programs at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital gave me a chance to implement classroom concept with success in the real world. Hey… this stuff really works! Outside the classroom I loved Penn’s musical culture and shopping. What girl doesn’t love shopping!

**Why did you decide to pursue the career you are in now? Tell us about your current role/position, and your path to it.**

Every patient and every day of my nursing career brought me immense pleasure. I always intended to return to nursing after being a stay at home mom, but years of child rearing and observing other parents illuminated a new and necessary path. Warm, loving, well intentioned parents were using the same academic and athletic mold to raise their kids. They were all going
to be a starting quarterback and valedictorian so they could have a chance at a school like Penn. The problem was that many of these kids carried a huge void in emotional intelligence skills or life skills. I started On The Ball Life & Parent Coaching which is a firm committed to helping parents coach their own kids to be emotionally intelligent. After all, Ivy League schools like Penn want kids who know how to be resilient, empathetic, and optimistic. These are the metrics by which we now measure success.

**What hobbies, or personal activities of note, have you pursued in your adult life?**
My husband of 20 years says my hobby is to drive him crazy! I taught Sunday School for 9 years and remain amazed at a preschooler’s ability to understand and implement noble values. I now volunteer at a shelter for women who have been physically, sexually and or emotionally abused. Oil painting and meditation allow me to count my blessings and relax completely.

**How has your connection to Penn impacted your life, both personally and professionally?**
What’s in a name? A name like Penn opens doors fast. That makes life a little easier. Okay… a lot easier!

**What advice do you have for other women interested in pursuing a profession similar to yours?**
Don’t choose a career because of its prestige or paycheck. Choose one that gives you a spark of excitement and positive energy when you wake up every morning to start your day. If you make choices that honor the happiness you desire, you’ll be one of the wealthiest people in the world. All three of my careers (nursing, raising my child, and life & parent coaching) were timed perfectly for my life’s fulfillment.

**Any last words of wisdom to your Penn sistren?**
Though it sounds gloomy, I encourage people to fast forward to their death bed and imagine what three things did they did throughout their life that what would allow them to die with the satisfaction of a life well lived. If they are not actively working toward those desires, they have just identified shiny new goals to pursue. Like Nike says… “Just Do It.”

M. Claire Lomax, Esq., C’84

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**Why did you choose Penn?**
I am from the Philadelphia area (Bucks County). I went to a college preparatory school and had a
peer group that shared a vision for academic success which meant attending an ivy league school, if possible. At the time, I had a two year old brother and I wanted to stay near my family so I could witness and experience his growing up. Penn fit both requirements and because it was the best school in the Philadelphia area, I wanted to explore it as the place I would pursue my higher education. Once I visited the campus and saw how it was a beautiful combination of old and new buildings in an urban setting, I was sold. The fact that it offered an excellent education didn't hurt either.

**What did you study?**
I majored in International Relations which, in the 1980's, was an interdisciplinary major made up of Economics, Political Science and History. My geographical focus was Africa and the third world. My favorite courses were in the area of French literature. I learned to read French literature and poetry and write critical analyses in French. Those classes are one of the most memorable parts of my academic experience at Penn and those writing courses significantly improved my writing in English.

**What activities meant the most to you as a student, and why?**
Although I was not a work study student, I had to work and I landed a great job as an Administrative Assistant in the Central Office of Residential Living. I worked at that job from my sophomore year through graduation, including the summers, and really enjoyed traveling around campus and interacting with the staff and administrators in that department. It was through that job that I became a Resident Advisor for my junior and senior year. That position was excellent because it allowed me to remain as a residential student (vs. become a commuter due to financial constraints my family experienced at the time). Of all of the activities that meant the most to me as a student were the myriad of opportunities for intellectual stimulation around campus. I regularly attended lectures, panel discussions etc. on topics related to apartheid in South Africa and divesting, both significant issues in the news at the time. I also really enjoyed my social life and the parties in Houston Hall!

**Why did you decide to pursue the career you are in now? Tell us about your current role/position, and your path to it.**
I had originally wanted to go into acting and performing arts but my physician father discouraged that as an unlikely career to be able to support myself. I figured if I could not go to Broadway, I would try and become a trial attorney and use my acting skills in that arena. Given my interest in history and politics, I thought it was a natural path for me to pursue law as a career. After graduating from Penn, I was tired of school and wanted to work for a year in the legal profession to make sure I wanted to spend three years in law school. I was lucky to land a job as a paralegal in a center city law firm where I worked for a year during which time I applied to law school. I attended Georgetown University Law School then worked for a year at a small Silver Spring law firm. Our family business was expanding and my father and sister convinced me to return home to join it and help to grow it. I established the legal department and became the company's General Counsel. My father was wonderful in the way he exposed me to different transactions and opportunities to grow as a lawyer through the family business. I will have been there for 23 years as of last June.

**What other professional activities have you been involved in since graduation?**
Since I graduated, I was President of the NBA Women Lawyer's Division- Philadelphia Chapter (a Black women lawyer's group); Chair and CEO of Say Yes to Health, a non-profit health education program for at risk youth in West, South and Southwest Philadelphia, Chair of the James Brister Society (which I joined in 1995 as a way to engage as an alumni) and I was active for a time in the Committee on Correctional Reform for the Maryland State Bar Association. More recently, I am on the Board of Overseers for the School of Social Policy and Practice, a member of the Trustees Council of Penn Women, and a member of the University of Pennsylvania Board of Trustees. I currently serve as Chair of the Board for the African American Museum in Philadelphia, and as Chair of the Salvation Army Kroc Center Advisory Council.

**What hobbies, or personal activities of note, have you pursued in your adult life?**
I am an avid tennis player and am committed to physical fitness in whatever form. I have children and try to be engaged with them and their lives at school, which can be time consuming. I love to cook and have from time to time held cooking classes, catered, and done other things in the area of culinary arts. I mostly work on trying to stay present and enjoy my life.

**How has your connection to Penn impacted your life, both personally and professionally?**
It is through Penn that I met my best friends with whom I continue to have contact on a regular basis. The years I attended Penn (age 17 - 21) were pivotal years for me developmentally and it was great for me, as an African American, to go to school with relatively more people of color than I experienced where I grew up. That shaped me in many different ways and helped to further develop and enhance my ethnic pride. I also feel like going to Penn helped me to get into graduate school and to succeed there. I remain connected to Penn today in large part as a testament to all that it gave me personally and professionally.

**What advice do you have for other women interested in pursuing a profession similar to yours?**
Advice for current students: don't get distracted from what you are primarily in school for, i.e. to achieve academic success. Also if you plan to go to graduate school, make sure you choose something that really holds your interest because it is strenuous and challenging and to succeed, you need to be truly interested in the area you are studying. Finally, learn to balance work and play so you don't get burned out with either and make sure you have good eating/nutrition habits and exercise as a way to stay healthy and manage your stress.

**Any last words of wisdom to your Penn sistren?**
Even though it is difficult, always try to stay present and not get preoccupied with the past or the future.