



**Question of the Month: What is your proudest achievement. How did your Penn experience influence your life?**

**Marilyn Kanas**

- 1) what is your proudest achievement: being the first person in my immediate family to go to college; breaking the glass ceiling twice, first as the first woman manager in INA's (now CIGNA) data center, and second becoming an officer of a public company.
- 2) Did you Penn experience influence your life? Absolutely! Met my husband and we are married 52 years. Education and its importance were instilled in me as long as I can remember and to this day I appreciate the value of the education I received at Penn.

**\*\*Every day is a gift\*\***

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**Carol Greco**

Greatest influence was not so much the academics but gaining confidence as a woman, allowing me to succeed professionally and personally.

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## **Randy Elkins**

The "proudest achievement" question is an interesting one, particularly after three-quarters of a century to put life in perspective. "Pride" is one of the seven deadly sins, so I am reluctant to admit to ever having it. Having said that, as I'm sure is the case with many of us, I devoted much of my adult life to raising my kids in the best way I knew how, and share with my awesome ex-wife great gratification in how they turned out. I also look back at my three years on active duty in the Navy as a high point. I take great satisfaction in having played a part, tiny though it was, in opposing international Communism in the Vietnam War, an endeavor I still consider a noble one, sadly too timidly pursued and ultimately botched by those in charge.

But the one non-family related "achievement" I confess to taking pride in was during my second (and last) active duty tour was in organizing and producing a four-color "cruisebook" for our four small Antarctic U.S. Navy bases in the "Winter-Over Party" of Operation Deep Freeze 1970-71, for which I served as Executive Officer at the McMurdo Station. I don't think a cruisebook had ever been done before for the winter-over group, and could not have done it without my experience with the 1968 Record at Penn, of course. I loved our years at Penn and it no doubt influenced my life in various ways, but none as directly as in doing that cruisebook.

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## **Mark Grant**

What are your proudest achievements??

Passing two Bar exams; becoming a partner in a law firm; being recognized for many years as being one of the "Best Lawyers" (in Florida and the US) by my peers; being invited and admitted as a Fellow in the American College of Real Estate Lawyers; becoming a father (twice) and then a grandfather (5 times).

Did your Penn experience/education impact/influence your life and/or career?

I believe being a graduate of the Wharton School has helped me throughout my life. Because of Penn's incredible reputation as a premier university, being admitted to Penn gave me a greater sense of self-worth and confidence than I had up until that time, which has continued through my life.

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### **Linda Kates**

My time at Penn as an English major instilled in me a love of literature, and deepened a life-long passion for reading, where you can escape into far away times and places, or see the current trends of the day in a new way, or inhabit the lives of people who are just like you, or very different from you. And the Shakespeare course I took at Penn introduced me to his plays, and opened my eyes to the universality of Shakespeare's themes. I have enjoyed seeing many of his plays performed live and always marvel about how enjoyable they are, 400 years after they were written.

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### **Lee Gordon**

#### **HOW MY PENN EDUCATION HELPED ME ACHIEVE AN IMPORTANT PROFESSIONAL GOAL**

One overriding educational tool I learned from my Penn professors was to think critically. My inner Paul Simon emerged during those formative 1960's years: "When I think about all the crap I learned in high school, it's a wonder I can think at all!" I now realized that I could not accept all the conventional so-called wisdom I had been fed before my Penn experience.

But thinking critically was not enough. I fervently believed that I needed to express my critical thinking not only with coherence but with passion as well. It was passion that I absorbed from my interactions with Professor Alexander Riasanovsky. I regarded passion as ambition, materialized into action, putting as much heart, mind, body and soul into something as humanly possible.

My desire in the practice of law was to defend the weak against the unreasonable excess of power of the state. As a young attorney, I represented clients charged with murder. In my appellate practice career, I fervently tried to apply my Penn taught critical thinking with my sincere passion for justice. That blossomed, seven years after Penn, in my first murder case, of which I am singularly proud.

Charles Harrison, accused of first degree murder in Baltimore City, was an unfortunate victim of the testimony of the single so-called eyewitness, who had suddenly joined the military. Dressed in his new Air Force uniform, this witness knew so much about the murder that one could only speculate "how come?" Charles professed his innocence to me at the prison, but, of course, I had to first overcome my skepticism. Fortunately, I believed Charles Harrison.

My first attempt to reverse his conviction in the intermediate appellate court failed. I was so incensed by the Court of Special Appeals' summary dismissal of my argument that I immediately walked to the bar library and wrote out my certiorari petition --without a break and totally in longhand (no computers anywhere then) – all the while with my Penn critical thinking and Riasanovsky passion flowing from my Eberhard Faber #2 Pencil. Fortunately, my properly placed passionate argument did get a proper review by the highest court after my petition was accepted.

In Harrison vs. State of Maryland, 276 Md. 122 (1975), I was finally able to secure a reversal of the murder conviction in a landmark attorney-client privilege case. However, my job was not done for Charles Harrison. After considerable time and 3 lie detector tests, I was finally able to convince the State's Attorney that my client was most likely innocent. My client was now a free man.

Soon after the Harrison opinion, one of the Court of Appeals judges crafted "Certiorari Procedures in the Maryland Court of Appeals" for the first Maryland Appellate Practice Handbook. Judge Irving Levine selected my certiorari petition as an exemplar for it's "excellent guidance." I am most proud that this encomium came totally out of the blue and unsolicited. Sweet victory all around!

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## **Ted Pollard**

My proudest achievement was to co-author the joint custody law in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I had gotten divorced in 1976 and lost custody of my 4 year-old son. I was granted visitation, but had no other rights. I considered myself a second-class citizen. Two years later I co-founded a group called Fathers' and Children's Equality (FACE) and grew it into a 2,000 member organization over the next few years. At the time mothers were granted custody over 95% of the time and it was felt that fathers weren't capable of being caregivers. Along came Dustin Hoffman and his movie Kramer vs. Kramer in late 1980. Twentieth Century Fox offered FACE a private viewing; I cried through 90% of it and vowed that I would change the law so fathers had equal rights. In early 1981 a fellow FACE member and I began to draft legislation which sought to make parenting equal and fair. Through some good contacts we were able to marshal the law through the legislature quite rapidly and the governor signed it. I have the pen he signed it with. We were the second state in the country, after California, to have this legislation.

As a back-story to this is the fact that my parents got divorced when I was two and I only saw my father once before he died. He tracked me down at Penn when I was 21 and we spent a nice day together. That painful loss spurred me into action, and I know that many parents and kids now have a better life without the pain and struggles I went through.

In an odd twist of fate, my ex-wife died of a rare heart disease two weeks after the governor signed the bill. We had remained cordial and I am just sorry we couldn't have shared our son's upbringing together.