

John Boccacino:

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

Julie Friend:

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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 to do what they did."

John Boccacino:

Here on the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast, we are honoring the 35th 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, 1991. And Julie, I want to thank you so much for making the time to talk to us today about your experiences.

Julie Friend:

It's a pleasure to be here, John. As you know, I work in higher education and so Syracuse is never very far from my heart.

John Boccacino:

250,000 proud alumni around the globe have fond memories of their time on campus. And not to make a tough pivot, but this was a very challenging time obviously that day, December 21st, 1988, when the flight went down over Lockerbie, Scotland, it forever changed the trajectory of this institution of a small town in Lockerbie, Scotland that I'm sure many students on campus had never even heard of before this terrorist attack. Can you take us back to that fateful day when you were a sophomore back in 1988? What do you remember about the news? How did you hear about it?

Julie Friend:

It's a funny thing about memory. I think my memories are correct. I've talked to some of my friends at the time and say like, "Is this what you remember too?" And it's interesting as more time passes how harder it is to recall that time, but I still do have pretty distinct memories. And maybe part of it is because I've talked about it so often. But yeah, I was on campus. There weren't that many of us left, obviously it was close to the end of the semester and I believe I was going home the next day as my roommate Beth was. And if my memory serves, we were in the pizza parlor, Cosmos. I don't know if it's still there now. And we were having pizza.

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 around, but you had to have cable in order to see it. And my roommate and I, we 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 me, 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 have not seen examples of that, but that is my memory.

And I just remember saying to Beth like, "That sounds really terrible. And aren't there people coming back from study abroad programs?" I mean, I was in the process of applying for a study abroad program, so I knew the cycle of application and the timeframe that the students were abroad and we were like this. And of course then the news made some reference to the institution. And all I remember next is we went to the chapel because sort of where it's probably still where people go when they need companionship and community. And really that's what I remember.

And then we all went home and we had to process whatever happened in our families. And I'm sure for those who knew somebody who had died, I knew of a few people, but I was not close to anyone who died. But I think now about how hard it must have been for those who knew somebody, who were close to somebody, how hard it must've been to get information because again, no internet, it was the nightly news was all newspapers and how difficult it must have been to deal with those first few weeks of grief and trying to explain to your family what you were going through. And because I work with students who are in crisis now, I have thought a lot about what that experience must have been like for them and I'm sure it was really difficult.

John Boccacino:

What was it like on campus and going to the chapel? What were the experiences like?

Julie Friend:

To be honest, I don't remember. What I remember is coming back to campus. I think it was when we came back to campus in January and the full impact of the crash and the tragedy and the numbers of people involved, and the impact to the institution, and to the community of Syracuse. That's what I remember. I remember coming back to campus and it being really prominent, the information being very widespread, the coverage in The Daily Orange, professors bringing it up in classes and just a lot of people asking questions.

And of course, the friends that were gone for the fall semester, because they were studying abroad, that were expected to be back were not there. And so in some spaces on campus, their absences were felt very strongly. I was friends with a lot of people who were in student government and Sandy was a prominent person in student government and there was just a big hole in the hearts of so many people that I know because he had passed in the crash.

John Boccacino:

You talked about the community and that hole that was left. How did you see the campus community kind of come together and rally around this unthinkable, unspeakable tragedy? How did you see that almost as an inflection point to rally the community?

Julie Friend:

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, and 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 too 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 of 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 so close, 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 where 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 an affront 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 to do what they did."

John Boccacino:

One of the things that's so commendable about this program is the fact that each year we get 35 students who are Remembrance Scholars and they really embody the motto of looking back and acting forward, which means honoring the lives of the people that lost their lives by both paying tribute to them and looking ahead how they can be inspired by their life. What was your thought process? Why did you want to apply to be part of that first cohort?

Julie Friend:

So I was abroad when the opportunity to apply came out. I was studying abroad at the Strasbourg Center, and I just remember thinking like, "This is a way to honor... I am doing something that those people got to do but didn't get to tell anybody about." And I really felt like I had a responsibility to tell their story by saying like, "I was so 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 about 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, and 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 too 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 who 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 experiences. And one of the things I said to them is, "Those of us who went to school during this time, I think maybe we have a different relationship with our alma mater. I mean, maybe we don't come back as often. We don't come for football games or basketball games. And of course, I live far away, but also when I come back to campus, this is what I am reminded of. I mean, I am reminded of that timeframe and the experience that we all went through, the collective grief."

And I was a step away from the grief because I wasn't impacted as personally as other people are, and I can't imagine what it was like for some folks who were personally impacted. So I think that's one of the things that I've tried to explain to people, we have a different relationship with our alma mater than maybe another student would who graduated in a different timeframe. So it was, I think just my second time coming back to campus since I graduated. And my roommate Beth came with me, bless her heart. It was really lovely. I just called her up and I said, "I really want to do this thing, but I don't want to do it alone." And she said, "I'm there."

And it was an extremely emotional experience, I think, to be honest with you, more so than the actual ceremony was the display of the chairs on the lawn with the airplane seat numbers on the back. I'm a big fan of public art and the impact that public art can have on an individual, and that was a really emotional moment for me and really, again, a reminder of the impact of public art because that was the moment where I felt the most heartbroken.

I had an opportunity to be interviewed for the archives right there in that setting, which was really wonderful and emotional. And Beth and I were there together, and that was quite meaningful for me. But to meet more of the families, that was really sweet and just to walk around campus, and in fact just see how the institution has, despite these experiences, grown and thrived and to meet the other candidates of today, oh my gosh, they're all so impressive. I mean, if I had jobs for them all, I'd hire them in a hot minute.

But it was tough, but I've been to the memorial in D.C. I do a lot of work in Washington, so I'm often in D.C. and I have been to the memorial. I've just gone to Arlington Cemetery on my own more than once to visit the memorial there. And I travel quite a bit for my job. And the next time I find myself in the UK I'm going to make my way up to Lockerbie because one of the things that's really important for me is I want to go to the onsite memorial.

John Boccacino:

I don't want to reach with this question, but I have to ask it because the journalist in me is curious. With your job title being director of Global Safety and Security, do you think that in some way, shape, or form the work you're doing now is almost an extension of being a Remembrance Scholar because you are trying to make sure that parents have their family members, their daughters, their sons, their children,

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 about it all the time in the sense that whenever I am dealing with a student in crisis abroad, I think about the families behind them who want so much for that student to have success, to thrive and to be healthy. And for whatever reason, something went off the rails while they're abroad. And it's my job to partner with those parents and try to figure out how we can support a student and get them back on track. And I can go back as far as knowing the parents at the time who of course experienced the ultimate tragedy that a parent would experience when their student goes to college. And I think about them in that moment and what they might be going through and how important it's for me to put myself in the shoes of those parents so that I can be the best that I can at my job.

And I won't say I haven't stopped at Northwestern. I've tried to be a leader in the field. The work that I do is sort of a new specialty that's come out, I'd say in the turn of the millennia, and really following a lot of strife overseas and a lot of terror attacks. And really the response of higher education as well as corporations and NGOs who have personnel overseas is, "How can we provide them with support and resources when something happens in their environment that causes them to not be able to accomplish their goals in the way that they wanted or just makes it that much more difficult?"

And so I provide a lot of leadership in the field of higher education to best practices and being prepared for emergencies abroad. Those may include health emergencies, safety emergencies, security emergencies, and I've even written the industry standard and how to respond to the death of a student abroad.

John Boccacino:

It's powerful, it really is, the way that, again, you have managed to embody that looking back, acting-forward motto of the Remembrance Scholars and I know the Northwestern students and community are better off for having you working there in charge of the global safety and security. Julie, I know it can't be easy to reminisce about, again, a hardship that took place on Syracuse's campus, but I really appreciate you opening up, sharing your emotions, and sharing your memories from that day, from that time on campus. And how you've been striving to honor Gretchen's memory from that day forward. Thank you so much for making the time and best of luck with your career at Northwestern.

Julie Friend:

Thank you very much.

Hannah Rafferty:

When terrorists are acting and performing acts of terror, their goal is to still instill fear and to really terrorize a community. And I like to often think back to the fact that the students that we represent, they didn't get their chance at love, they didn't get their chance at having an adulthood, they didn't get their chance at living life past college. And so for us, it's really cool to look back every year and think that the terrorists that performed that terrible act, they were trying to harm people and they were trying to hurt people. And Syracuse in creating the Remembrance program, and then every year as scholars, we are trying to find the good in that situation.

And so it's really cool every year to look back and think that I'm sure that when they were doing that, they weren't thinking that 35 years later there would be two people who met through a program that a

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 on 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 and we get to 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 photojournalism 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 would've come from it.

John Boccacino:

Our next members of the Remembrance Scholars who we will be talking with here, 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 do it. Luke, 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 to act forward, and it's really just something that I've carried with me while past graduation because I met Hannah through the Remembrance Scholar program. We got married a few years after college, and here we are.

John Boccacino:

For the audience here, there's a couple things we love at Syracuse University. We love our Orange Love stories, which is how I actually met Luke and Hannah in the first place. We did a profile a couple of years ago talking about how they met and how they really merged their love for each other with the love of Syracuse. And that's a great segue to welcome in our second member of the Rafferty family who will be talking about the Remembrance Scholar program. She's Hannah Rafferty from the class of 2016. It's so great to have you on as well. Fill in the gap for us. How did you become interested in the Remembrance Scholars program and who were you honoring? Whose life were you honoring as a scholar?

Hannah Rafferty:

So I was friends with a Remembrance Scholar the year prior to us, and her mom actually went to Syracuse University and knew a couple people who are actually on Pan Am 103, so I kind of had that one step removed relationship with Remembrance and with Pan Am 103. And so through her, I got to know the program and I got to understand the significance that it has at the university. And when I applied for the program was actually studying abroad in London, so that brought a whole other connection to it,

kind of being able to feel what it felt like to study abroad and kind of imagine and put myself in the footsteps of the students who lost their lives on Pan Am 103.

And as my husband said, brought us a lot more than we ever thought it would. I did not go into the program thinking I would get a husband, but here we are. And so I represented Suzanne and I picked her because of what she was trying to pursue. She was pursuing a career kind of in counseling. And so my dad passed away when I was younger and he was a counselor, so I kind of had that connection through that. I'm still Facebook friends with her mom, and every once in a while we kind of exchange pleasantries and just every year we're reminded of how special and unique the program is to us.

John Boccacino:

Out of such a horrible tragedy, we are now going on 35 years of Remembrance Scholars, who again, look back through their service, but also act forward with their purpose and their mission. And you both did such a great job of summarizing the students that you represented. I want to spin this a little bit though, and make it about you and your service to Syracuse. Luke, what does it mean to you to get to have that badge of honor being a Remembrance Scholar?

Luke Rafferty:

Yeah. I mean, it's definitely something we think about a lot. And I think when people ask, not to always merit back to Hannah and I, but when people ask how we meet, we tell the story back. There were 35 Syracuse University students on the flight. To people of a certain generation, they say, "Oh, I remember that. I know exactly what you're talking about." People of a newer generation don't really know. And we get to provide that context and we get to tell them that story and make sure that those 35 students are always remembered and are never forgotten.

So I think just right off the bat, every time we think about it, every time we talk about it, we are remembering and we're honoring those 35 students and those lives. And I think moving forward, we were able to, by representing individual students as well as just the program as a whole, are able to act forward.

So maybe jumping ahead a little bit here, but Hannah and I, we now work together and we actually run a video production company and we get to 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 photojournalism 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 way back when, but now that's something that would've never transpired and would've never come to be had the program not existed and, like you said, had this terrible event not happened,. There's a little slice of good that might not would've come from it.

John Boccacino:

I don't want to get too spiritual with this question, but do you think, Luke, that given the fact this wasn't really something that was on both of your, I mean, I know it was yours with being a photojournalist, but the career path you've taken now, do you feel like your student would be proud knowing that what you dedicated your life to was a very similar vein to what they were going through as a student here at Syracuse?

Luke Rafferty:



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 do 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 all 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. And in my case, Suzanne was also a Upstate New Yorker and I grew up in Upstate New York. So there was just kind of a variety of different reasons that I selected her besides her character, besides 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 fun 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 were both on community service together. And Luke had a gathering one night at his apartment. We kind of started talking then. Luke asked me out a few weeks later. I ultimately said no because I valued our friendship too much and didn't really want to spark that relationship knowing that as a Falk College student in sport management, I was doing a semester-long internship in the spring semester of my senior year, so I wasn't quite ready to pursue that relationship.

But then Luke, he was there and just remained one of my best friends. So we gave it a try again. In December, asked me out again, and we decided that it was time to give it a try, gave it a try for a couple months, and then we broke up for six months the night before graduation, both just kind of trying to figure out what we wanted to do with our future. And so a few months later started talking again and kind of realized that life was better with each other, then went out and here we are.

So I think that kind of through Remembrance, when Syracuse University is selecting the Remembrance Scholars, these are students that are students of high character or students who have given back, students who have served the university and the local community. And so I knew that by being selected in Remembrance Scholar, Luke was inherently just a really strong human being dedicated to the

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 to go through rejection once, but what was it about Hannah and her personality that drew you to her? And again, I keep coming back to this message of out of tragedy coming beauty and glory, and the fact that you two are happily married now as we're sitting here. What was it about Hannah that made her 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 be there, encourage me to sign up for something else. That was awesome, maybe so I could also see her, but it was awesome so I could get back. And I have a very vivid memory of the senior year, so I was spending together a cover letter. She came over and she helped me put it together.

And I remember thinking to myself like, "This is so helpful. I wish I could always have this help." Or just like, "Oh, she's so good at this." And now, fast-forward to running a company together and I always have her help to read my emails and my cover letters before I send them, which is awesome. But really, I think she truly just helped me be a better person. And I like to think likewise, and that's back and forth, but really just I felt that when we were kind of collaborating on something together, it was kind of stronger.

And so again, going back through Remembrance events, the events that we got to work on together, not only were they enjoyable, they had an extra element to them and they had an extra strength to them because we were working together. And I just fell in love with that ability to work together and that process and wanted to continue doing that.

John Boccacino:

I love your story. I love love and I love hearing how you both came together again under the darkest of times. And for those who don't know, I actually had the privilege of interviewing both Luke and Hannah for a story that ran when I was working in the alumni office where we were talking about this thing called Orange Love. We mentioned that earlier, Syracuse alums who fall in love and stay happily married. And these two were married in 2019 in Cooperstown, New York, a beautiful scenic place for a wedding. And the fact that we are now, congratulations on four and a half years of marital bliss.

Luke Rafferty:

Thank you very much.

Hannah Rafferty:

Thank you.

John Boccacino:

But one of the really striking comments, and I have to bring it back again to that dark day in December of 1988 was, and Hannah gave me this quote, I don't want to put words into your mouth, but I really want to bring it up for the audience. When you spoke to me for this Orange Love story you mentioned, quote, "The terrorists never intended for something good to come out of this act. They intended to instill fear and negativity." And you two are living embodiment of taking what you're given and trying to both make the best of it, learn lessons from it, and carry a positive attitude. I couldn't think of two better people to come on the podcast.

When it comes to that attitude, Hannah, how do you feel about that now, having some time to reflect and hearing the quote rehashed here on the podcast?

Hannah Rafferty:

I totally still agree. I think that when terrorists are acting and performing acts of terror, their goal is to still instill fear and to really terrorize a community. And I think that I like to often think back to the fact that the students that we represent, they didn't get their chance at love. They didn't get their chance at having an adulthood, they didn't get their chance at living life past college. And so for us, it's really cool to look back every year and think that the terrorists have performed that terrible act where they were trying to harm people and then were trying to hurt people.

And Syracuse in creating their Remembrance program, and then every year as scholars, we are trying to find the good in that situation. And so it's really cool every year to look back and think that I'm sure that when they were doing that, they weren't thinking that 35 years later there would be two people who met through a program that a 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 on 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:

There's a lot of students at Syracuse University. We didn't meet until senior year, and I'm not quite sure we would've otherwise. And so the fact that we were brought together, and that we're able to act forward together, is really powerful. And there's a tangible example that keeps popping on the screen down the bottom left is our dog. So our dog's name is Waverly because our Remembrance Gallery meetings were held in the Bird Library on Waverly Avenue. And that was the first time we were in the same room together. And so we obviously had to name him Waverly as an ode to that, but it's something that we don't maybe think of every time we say the name, it's something we take for granted. But the truth is that even he is an example of us coming together through this.

John Boccacino:

What kind of dog is Waverly?

Hannah Rafferty:

Waverly is a Goldendoodle. He's kind of orange-ish color, so quite appropriate for a Syracuse alum puppy.

John Boccacino:

The cohort of Remembrance Scholars, unlike every other group on campus, again, there's such a bond over what happened over Lockerbie, Scotland. It's really hard to believe that we're going to have the 35th anniversary coming up. How often do you two get back to campus, and do you have any recollections of being at past commemorations of the Remembrance Scholars when it comes to Syracuse University's ceremonies?

Hannah Rafferty:

We had what we think was a very unique Remembrance Scholar experience in just that we had one of the closest groups in that, like Luke said, all of us came from different majors, different walks of life, and all came together. And Luke and I even had, we had like 80 mutual friends and our paths never crossed. And so one of those mutual friends actually was a Remembrance Scholar with us as well. And our group was just really, really good friends and supported each other through everything and continues to do so. Even now, I would say that we're pretty close contact with a couple of our classmates and a couple of our fellow Remembrance Scholars, and we credit it all to that.

We would've never met these incredible human beings had it not been for the Remembrance Scholar program. And we do try to make it back at least once or twice a year. Syracuse withholds such a special place in our heart. And whether that is the dome, whether that is Bird Library, whether that's Waverly Ave., or the Remembrance Wall, just there's so many sweet memories and so many powerful developing memories that are at Syracuse.

John Boccacino:

I know, Luke, a lot of times when people first come to our campus, you can't help but notice the Remembrance Wall. Could you give our audience a little background on what exactly that wall means to you?

Luke Rafferty:

Yeah. So when you first arrive to Syracuse University, right off the university avenue, it's pretty hard to miss all languages. But right underneath it, there's a beautiful wall. Most people take the photo in front of it, and ingrained on Syracuse University on the back of that wall is a circle. Any given day, there's usually a flower or two hanging around on that wall, and there's 35 names ingrained down it. And those are the names of the 35 students who passed in Pan Am 103. I think that wall is one of the most central things on campus. I think that's really powerful to just see that when you first get there.

And so you know what the campus has gone through, what the campus has lost, but also what the campus is going to represent and act forward, act upon moving forward. And so that wall, I think is a very special place. And I don't think everybody walking by it truly knows that, but I think as people learn about it and as people recognize what that wall means, it stays with them as well, and it allows them to act more on their behalf. I think that's something else is that there's 35 students who are selected every year, but that doesn't mean that not every Syracuse University student has that onus and has that responsibility and has that pride to be able to represent any number of the 35 students who passed.

There used to be a photo that I had on my desk that was actually taken by Alexia Tsairis, and it was actually of Syracuse University Ambulance of the students in action. And that was something that I volunteered a lot of my time with during my time at Syracuse and actually how I found out about the Remembrance Scholar Program. So the thing is the end of senior year has been the archives that I found that photo, and it just kind of hit me as something that brought it all back together, and that was really powerful. So that kind of used to sit on my desk as a reminder. I don't get to see the wall every day when I walk to class anymore, but now I get to see that photo and I get to see how it all fit together. And that one of the last photos that she had ever taken on campus was something that meant so much to me.

John Boccacino:

That's a really powerful anecdote. And again, I think it speaks volumes too. Just the bond, the eternal bond that you all share, and the fact that that was one of the last photos that she was a part of, and that's such a cherished memory for you. Keep that close to your heart, keep that as long as you can, because really that's going to stay with you and sustain you on the days and years you can't come back to campus.

Hannah Rafferty:

And just to build on that, as I mentioned earlier, my dad passed away when I was younger, and he worked as a counselor, which is what brought me to Suzanne. But one of the last times that I saw him was in an ambulance, and so I had a really intense fear of ambulances. Going to college, fast-forward to meeting Luke through Remembrance, he works on the ambulance and was a supervisor for SUA, and through him and through the Remembrance program kind of worked through my fear together with him taking me, showing me ambulances, talking through everything. And so that's just kind of another tangible way that Remembrance brought us together, worked through some fears for me. And like our love and like many things in our life, Remembrance had an impact that the terrorist never really hoped that it would.

John Boccacino:

I want to thank our two guests for joining us on this portion of our Remembrance Scholars Podcast. He is Luke Rafferty, she's Hannah Rafferty. They are an outstanding couple, doing great work together, sharing a great Orange Love story. Luke, thank you so much for making the time to join us.

Luke Rafferty:

Of course.

John Boccacino:

And Hannah, it's always a pleasure to have you on here as well. Thank you for sharing your candid stories, and we appreciate your time today.

Hannah Rafferty:

Thank you so much.

John Boccacino:

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