College sweethearts remember early days at Freeman

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Nicole Norris (BSM ’00) and Chad Norris (BSM '01) celebrating their 20th Wedding Anniversary in Douro Valley Wine Country, Portugal.

For most people, there’s nothing romantic about tax season.

But Nicole Norris (BSM ’00), who works as the director of tax for a public accounting firm in Peachtree City, Georgia, says one tax season was especially romantic for her.

“It was when Chad proposed,” she says. “He came to visit me in the middle of tax season when I was working for Deloitte. Work was crazy, but he swept me away for a night. We went to Newport, Rhode Island, and that’s where he asked me to marry him.”

Nicole, who grew up in New Hampshire, met her husband, Chad Norris (BSM ’01), when they were both undergraduates at the Freeman School of Business. Chad, who is originally from upstate New York and now works as a pilot for Delta Air Lines, arrived at Tulane after serving four years as a search-and-rescue swimmer and Hospital Corpsman in the Navy. His service earned him both a Navy and Marine Corps medal for heroism and an NROTC scholarship to attend Tulane.

And in a way, his service also led to his first encounter with the woman who would become his wife. One of Chad’s ROTC friends was the link who brought them together, introducing them and catalyzing their two-decade-long relationship.

“I met Chad my junior year, when he was a sophomore,” Nicole says. “And my first thought was that he looked damn good in his Navy Uniform.”

The feeling was mutual.

“I just remember how hot she was,” Chad says. “But after we started talking to each other, I realized the connection was far more than physical.”

“Chad was just such an easy-going guy,” Nicole says. “He was just so fun to be around.”

The pair began spending time together on Tulane’s campus, prepping for class in the study pods in Goldring/Woldenberg Hall, socializing with their ROTC friends and attending Sigma Chi fraternity events. When they weren’t hanging out on campus, they were out on the town, soaking up all New Orleans had to offer.

“We loved the live music in New Orleans,” Nicole says. “We spent a lot of time at the big venues. Howlin’ Wolf, Tipitina’s and the House of Blues were some of our favorite spots.”

Over the course of their time in New Orleans, the couple bonded over their shared love of music, attending Jazz Fest in 2001 and spending a memorable spring break in Orange Beach, where they were introduced to the legendary Flora-Bama Bar, a honky-tonk bar that remains a favorite.



Nicole and Chad Norris at Jazz Fest in 2001.

Though the pair did not have any classes together, they have fond memories of their Freeman professors.

“I loved my time at Freeman,” Chad says. “The classes I enjoyed the most were the ones that had professors who actually worked in the field they were teaching in. They made the material real for us.”

“That’s what stood out to me as well,” Nicole says. “So many of our Freeman professors were active professionals in their career fields. They brought so many real-world stories into the classroom and were truly inspiring. After hearing from them, I couldn’t wait to be out in the real world doing what they were doing.”

Nicole soon got her wish, landing an internship with KPMG in New Orleans. The internship was fortuitous both because it launched her career and because it allowed her to stay in New Orleans while Chad finished up his final year at Tulane.

Following graduation, Chad completed naval flight school, and the pair eventually moved to Oklahoma City, where Chad was stationed at Tinker Air Force Base. He served 20 years as a pilot in the Navy before retiring in 2017 and joining Delta Air Lines. In 2018, the pair moved to Peachtree City, Georgia, where Chad is currently

an Instructor Pilot for Delta on the Airbus 321 Fleet.

Now with two children, Nicole and Chad say the foundation they built at Freeman continues to guide their lives more than two decades later.

“It’s fun looking back,” Chad says. “We have so many great memories of Tulane.”