Life’s a random walk for successful Trent alum

Darren Huston in Tokyo, Japan:
“I often tell people, ‘Do your undergrad at a place where you can grow academically and socially.’”

From his office in the heart of Tokyo on a Thursday morning, the president and CEO of Microsoft Japan is showing its roots. Darren Huston, the Trent grad with a B.Sc. Honours in economics, is about as gracious and self-effacing as an all-round Canadian guy can get. Oddly enough, he uses similar terms to describe the new culture in which he finds himself immersed.

“Japan is a wonderful place and almost Canadian in many respects,” he says over the phone more than 10,000 kilometres and several time zones away. “Individuals in Japan are polite, understated, and self-critical. But they see themselves as being in one boat more than in North American society. Everyone’s lives here are very symbiotic. If anyone fails, it feels like they’re failing family. As a foreigner, you can never really be a part of that.”

This might seem like pretty deep talk at 9 a.m. for the North American businessman guiding the destiny of Japan’s number one brand and its 2,500 employees. But there’s an easy-going quality to conversation with Darren Huston. He’s not delivering corporate lines. He’s reflecting – intellectually, emotionally, philosophically. You feel like you’re connecting with a real person and it becomes apparent, the more you talk with him, that Mr. Huston is a uniquely intelligent individual modestly wrapped in an everyman persona. It’s very, very Trent – and he’d be the first to admit that’s true.

Darren Huston became the president and CEO of Microsoft Japan in July 2005, moving to Japan with his wife Clarissa (who graduated from Trent in 1990) and their children Erinne (six), Owen (three). Before joining Microsoft, Mr. Huston was a senior vice president at Starbucks Coffee Company where, among other things, he led the rollout of the Starbucks Card and WiFi to Starbucks stores around the world. A graduate of the United World College in Trieste, Italy, he earned his B.Sc. Honours in economics at Trent, his Masters in economics at UBC, and an MBA from Harvard University.

In fact, he’s able to track the origins of his successful managerial style and the human quality he brings to the most senior levels of business back to both his studies at Trent University and a job he had here early on. “You know, I was manager of The Commoner (a former Trent pub). I still think that was the best job I’ve ever had,” he recalls. “I was given a lot of responsibility at a young age: running a business, leading a group of people. I got real managerial experience from that. It was eye-opening – very pivotal.”

The job Mr. Huston landed managing the pub also changed his course of study. Rethinking academic and career goals is common – almost encouraged – as a part of the undergraduate experience at Trent.

“I thought I’d go into politics, be a diplomat, but I gained a love for doing business,” he says. “I came out of Trent feeling proficient in Economics. And, ultimately, I did my MBA at Harvard.”

As for his current role, Mr. Huston says that his goals at Microsoft include a project called ‘Plan J’ which covers a range of investments that Microsoft will be making in Japan, innovations which it will bring to the marketplace and partnerships which it will seek out. “As if this weren’t enough,” he adds. “On top of this, we hope to continue growing an already large business by double digits.”

Not a bad to-do list for someone who just turned 40 this year – another fact casually revealed where others might fear to tread. According to Mr. Huston, his age does come as a surprise to many in Japan. Most business people at the CEO level would be older than his own father. “Yeah, they’re very surprised,” he says, but is quick to add, unassumingly, “But because it’s such a large corporation and you’re a foreigner, they assume someone has thought this through.”

It’s so interesting how life is a random walk. If I had it to do all over again, I wouldn’t do it any differently. I honestly wouldn’t.” — Darren Huston
THE CLASSICS IN ACTION

A tale of jealousy, love, suffering, betrayal and death...

This is a description of the great Greek tragedy, Euripides’ Hippolytos, being performed by the Conacher Players of the Classics Drama Group at Trent University this month. However, just as easily, it could also be a tagline for a modern day film or soap opera. It is this remarkable signature of Greek drama – the capturing of the “great themes” that will forever play a role in art and in life – that has resulted in the success of productions put on by the Classics Drama Group since its inception in 1993.

“They are beautiful plays, they really are,” says Lucy Dawson, director of this year’s production. “This is where Shakespeare got all of his stuff...from the great Tragedians.”

Conceived by Martin Boyne, a former professor in the Department of Classical Studies and currently director of the Academic Skills Centre, the Classics Drama Group was formed as both an extracurricular activity for students within the department, and as a teaching tool to allow students in a course on ancient drama the opportunity to watch and evaluate a Greek play in action.

Euripides was selected as the first playwright of study and Hippolytos, the same tragedy to be performed this year, became the first production by the Classics Drama Group in March 1994. “It is a very balanced play. It has really juicy female parts and really juicy male parts” says Ms. Dawson, explaining the choice of returning to Hippolytos after 11 years. “It gives equal opportunity for both male and female students.”

Ms. Dawson, who has been directing the productions for the past three years, is also a Classics major herself. Her husband, Dr. Peter Dawson, is a professor in the Physics department.

Over wine one New Year’s with other professors at the University, Arlene Allen, an alumna of the Classics Drama Group and seasonal lecturer who was directing the production that year, asked Ms. Dawson to step in as an extra in the Chorus. One thing led to another, and Ms. Dawson went from an extra in the cast to the director, with no previous acting or directing experience to rely on.

“Once you’re in, you’re in,” she laughs. “It is just so much fun. It is a lot of hard work, but it is also a lot of fun.”

Over the years, the Classics Drama Group has become quite well known, especially as Trent is one of the only Canadian universities to have such a group. The Conacher Players, named after Desmond Conacher as a way to honour the respected teacher and scholar and a Canadian leading expert on Greek Drama after his death in October 2000, have performed for many audiences outside the campus, including Trinity College in Toronto and the Classics departments at Waterloo and Lauter Universities.

Ms. Dawson says that many other university Classics department are in “awe” of Trent’s drama group but she credits the students here as the reasons for its success.

“This is such an amazing group of young people,” she remarks, sharing that most of the young actors are also carrying full course loads, working part-time or full-time jobs, and participating in other extracurricular activities.

“They are all so well rounded.” Behind-the-scenes of each production there are many other people who contribute to its success. Professor Ian Storey, an instructor in Ancient History and Classics, is one such person. Described by Ms. Dawson as “the mover and shaker behind the production”, and fondly referred to as “Uncle Ian” by students and cast members alike, Professor Storey has been the driving force behind the Classics Drama Group since its inception in 1994.

Overall, this year’s production of Hippolytos will no doubt be yet another success under the belt of the Classics Drama Group.

Preview Night for this year’s production of Euripides’ Hippolytos will be on Tuesday, February 14, followed by Opening Night on Wednesday, February 15, Gala Night on Thursday, February 16 and an encore presentation on Friday, February 17. All performances begin at 8:00 p.m. and will be held in the First People’s Performance Space at Gzowski College. Tickets are only $5. To reserve or purchase tickets contact the Ancient History and Classics Department at 748.1011 x1814.

TALKS SHOWCASE INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO HEALTH

Maternal attachment and the link to breastfeeding among a variety of topics addressed at fourth annual Health Studies Day

There is an association between attachment and health, says Professor Elaine Scharfe of the Psychology department at Trent University. This was one of many findings presented at the fourth annual Health Studies Day held on Wednesday, January 25 at Trent College. Professor Scharfe presented details on her study of the link between maternal attachment and the decision to breastfeeding. During her presentation she shared findings from a recent study which showed that mothers who breastfed tended to be more stable, supportive interpersonal relationships and mothers who did not breastfeed or breastfed for less than three months were more likely to report that they preferred to avoid intimacy in close relationships.

As one of eight speakers, Professor Scharfe lent her support to the fourth annual event put on by the Centre for Health Studies. A potpourri of talks open to anyone with an interest, Health Studies Day is the epitome of the one with an interest, Health Studies – all from Trent University will be on the fourth annual Health Studies Day, along with other highlights from the year, will be published in the Centre for Health Studies’ fall publication, Showcase 2006.
Nick Bibby's life has always run on two tracks – journalism and politics. Over the years the two tracks have merged as well as separated and have taken him in many different directions and to many different places. In 2005, after a chance encounter with a Trent professor in an Edinburgh pub, his life took yet another turn and brought him “across the pond” to Trent University.

Professor Stephen Brown, a faculty member in the Department of English, was the professor who “discovered” Mr. Bibby that day. During a talk Mr. Bibby was delivering, Professor Brown learned of Mr. Bibby’s history as a freelance journalist for the Scotman and the Herald and his involvement with the Scottish Green Party as the party’s spokesperson on economics, education, planning and culture as well as the party’s strategist, a role in which he designed and helped deliver a campaign that increased the party’s representation at Holyrood from one to seven. That first encounter was just the beginning and resulted in a series of follow-up meetings which ultimately led to Mr. Bibby receiving an invitation to come to Trent.

As Trent’s journalist-in-residence, Mr. Bibby has been living on campus since November 2005, working on his first book, tentatively titled The Global Order: A User’s Survival Guide and experiencing all that Trent has to offer. “I really like it here,” said Mr. Bibby. “Trent has provided me with a place to work, to read, to think, and to debate ideas.”

It is the debating of ideas that has been the most crucial to the development of the book so far. Mr. Bibby has been overwhelmed by the number of students at Trent who are keen and enthusiastic to share their ideas and want to discuss the topics Mr. Bibby’s book will address.

Mr. Bibby describes his work with Trent students as “invigorating,” explaining that young people here, at Trent and in Canada, are much more open in terms of not having a set view of beliefs, especially in comparison with the students on campuses back in England and Scotland. Described as “a beginner’s guide to the left”, the book will be targeted at people, mainly young people, who have been “politicized” by things like the war in Iraq and the Bush presidency, but lack a broader ideological understanding of what is behind it all.

“I am just trying to give people some pointers,” explains Mr. Bibby. “I want to provide a critique of what is going on, a reference to what others are saying and suggestions on what to do with it all.”

The book will cover a broad range of subjects, including: energy policy, neo-imperialism, global trade and, climate change. Each chapter will cover a different topic and will include a general overview, case studies, facts and figures, citations from major works on the subject, and, critically, a guide to what practical steps individuals can take to improve the situation.

“I am determined to help people understand politics and political parties and how they work,” says Mr. Bibby.

To date, a few chapters have been drafted, but Mr. Bibby is still looking for input on his ideas. For this reason, Mr. Bibby has been leading a series of seminars, titled after chapters in his book, to gain further insight for his book. The three seminars, entitled, “Old, Cold Warriors and the War on Terror”, “Energy, Oil and the End of the World” and “Globalization: Exporting Poverty, Importing Fear”, have been taking place throughout the month of February.

Here until the end of March, Mr. Bibby will spend his remaining months at Trent continuing to debate ideas with faculty and students in hopes of developing the majority of his book before he leaves. Based on the positive experiences he has had on campus so far, he is confident this goal is attainable.

It is this new area of work that was the focus of Dr. Boddy’s lecture, entitled “Legacy of Empire: Colonialism and Religious Conflict in Sudan”. Interspersed with personal tales from her experiences in Sudan, Dr. Boddy outlined a history of Sudan that led to the British fear of Islam and the resulting paradigmatic struggle between Islamic culture and Christianity. Her new book, Civilizing Women: British Crusades in Colonial Sudan, which explores this topic further and links colonial agents to the “reform” of Sudanese women’s customs, such as female circumcision and child rearing practices, will be published later this year.

Aside from the book and the presentations, however, it is the personal element and the bringing to light of “the whole story”, which has meant the most to Dr. Boddy. When asked how she is most proud of in her work to date, she gives the question some thought before saying, “I have given a human face to the people who are usually simply seen as victims or perpetrators of bodily harm. I think what my work does is show how any of us, of any culture, is deeply influenced by our culture and what other people see as wrong or horrible isn’t necessarily so.”
Choices and Challenges in the Non Profit Sector", by quoting anthropologist Margaret Mead who said: “Never doubt that a small, thoughtful group of committed citizens can change the world – indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

This theme of positive change is something Ms. Crawford has taken to heart throughout her many years working in the non-profit sector. Starting out as a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity in Edmonton, she went on to serve as the chair of the board in Calgary and as a representative on the National Board of Directors for Habitat for Humanity Canada (HBHC). In 2000 Ms. Crawford became HBHC’s Western Affiliate Director before accepting the position of Vice President, Affiliate Services in 2002.

Sixth Annual Literacy Conference a Great Success

Trent Students for Literacy (TSFL) were pleased with the turnout for the sixth annual Literacy Conference. Many Trent students, future teachers, people from the community, and members of other university Students for Literacy Groups were in attendance to hear from a wide range of speakers on topics covering everything from literacy skills in preschoolers and ADHD to tips on how to teach high school students to research and write essays, and mentoring at-risk youth. After the presentations, volunteers involved in TSFL programs were invited to meet Ken Martin from Frontier College, the umbrella under which TSFL falls, and to see a performance by the Sage Age players.

TSFL is a student-based organization where volunteers help children, youth and senior citizens in Peterborough develop their literacy skills.

Arts and Film Week Ends on a High Note

The Trent International Students Association (TISA) held their inaugural Film and Arts Appreciation Week from January 23-17. The week-long event featured screenings of a variety of internationally-acclaimed foreign films and concluded with a spectacular night of music, poetry, and art.

The final evening, “TIS’s Arts Expose”, featured an impressive collection of art work, music and spoken words. Comfortably set in the Sadlier House Performance space, the audience in attendance was captivated by the soothing melodies of Giovanni Matamoros, a Trent student and one of North America’s most promising composers and guitarists. The evening climaxed with a 30 minute poetry performance by Oni the Haitian Sensation. Oni, an Ottawa resident, who was born in Montreal, combines her Haitian heritage to elucidate on issues of politics, religion, HIV/AIDS and relationships.

Trent University Gets Involved with Peterborough Family Literacy Day

On Saturday, January 28, Trent President Bonnie Patterson served as the Honourary Chair for the Peterborough Family Literacy Day. President Patterson is an avid supporter of literacy. Mayor Sylvia Sutherland and MPP Jeff Leal also lent their support to the event, reading children’s books to the 350 people in attendance. Each of the readers stressed the importance of reading and how worthwhile it is that parents, grandparents and caregivers set aside time to read with, and to, their children.

Trent Students for Literacy also lent their support to the event as button makers, face painters and refreshment distributors.

Statutory Holidays for 2006

The Department of Human Resources would like to announce the following schedule for Statutory Holidays in 2006:

- Good Friday Friday, April 14
- Victoria Day Monday, May 22
- Canada Day Monday, July 3
- Civic Holiday Monday, August 7
- Labour Day Monday, September 4
- Thanksgiving Day Monday, October 9
- Christmas Break The last day the University will be open to the public is Thursday, December 31. It will reopen on Wednesday, January 3, 2007 with classes resuming on Monday, January 8, 2007.

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