

Debbie Harmon Moriarty, Brown College, Rice University 1976

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in the country outside Houston now known as Cypress-Fairbanks. We had horses, raised a calf every year for beef, had a garden and pickled and preserved our fruits and vegetables every summer. I played every sport - out in our horse pasture - with no uniforms or referees. We made our own rules and hashed out our disagreements. We never locked our doors or cars.

Cy Fair was so undeveloped back then we had an 8 family party line for our telephone service and a ringing partner - ours was one long and theirs was two short!

Why did you decide to go to Rice?

In 7th grade, I belonged to the Junior Historian Club at school and we took a field trip to Rice. I fell in love with the whole campus. But mostly I loved the library! I was completely taken aback by the vast array of books! All at my disposal! Right then and there, I decided I would attend Rice! My grandfather was friends with George Brown so we all decided that was the place for me! I never even thought about applying anywhere else.

What extracurricular activities did you do at Rice?

Cheerleading was one of my favorites! I started as a freshman cheerleader - and that happened to be the last year Rice had a freshman football team. I enjoyed cheerleading and we took some great trips! My sophomore year, we traveled with the team to LSU and cheered our hearts out in Death Valley. Would you believe the fans threw sticks and stones at our bus as we pulled away after Rice's 3-0 victory over LSU!!!! Go Rice!!

During my tenure, we also played at Notre Dame and that was quite an experience! I mean, we actually took pictures with "Touchdown Jesus"!!! One of my best memories at Rice was when Bucky Allshouse and I partnered up to play in the Intramural Coed Racquetball Tournament. We won the whole thing and were quite famous for a short while.

I had a great time playing volleyball as well. Back then volleyball was not an NCAA sport, but we played conference matches and tournaments. We all had a passion for the game and Dr. Jimmy Disch was our coach!!!

What was Jimmy Disch like as a coach?

It was so fun having Jimmy Disch as our coach! He knew the game of volleyball and he was a really good player himself. Jimmy had been involved in the USA Program and he had coached several celebrity volleyball Olympians who he invited out to Rice to play. Jimmy was not much older than us as he had just finished his doctorate. He was fun to hang out with and all the girls thought he was pretty cute! However.....we knew when Coach meant

business there was no fooling around. To this day we remain great friends and Jimmy has coached my daughters in volleyball clinics.

Describe the origin of the Owls hand sign.

During the football season in the fall of '73, I suggested to our cheerleading squad that we needed a Rice Owls hand sign... We tried to think of something with just one hand - that would make it easier to keep our balance during stunts high up in the air and while running in with the football team, etc... In the end we gave up and I showed the squad the hooked thumb Owls hand sign (kinda of how we made hand shadow puppets growing up) and we went with it. The main use in the beginning was for the fight song and alma mater. It was still easy to balance while standing on our partners' shoulders while using the two handed owl. So much like the cheer all the students knew back then, "E to the x Dy Dx"..... the Owls hand sign seemed to fit right in. What still makes me smile today is remembering when I first came back to Rice for a sporting event after having moved away and started a family, and I saw the students using the Owls hand sign!!! I couldn't believe that it had really caught on and had withstood the test of a new crop of students.

How did you meet your husband at Rice?

My husband, Tim, Will Rice '75, was a stud basketball player at Rice. After Rice won the Southwest Conference Basketball Championship in 1970, Tim was recruited out of the basketball hotbed of Wisconsin, with a state championship under his belt. Coach Knodel went up to Wisconsin and plucked him out of a snowstorm, bribing him with "sunny and 75" in Houston. SOLD!

Tim and I were friends at first, sharing classes and attending mixers his buddies, The Rally Club, put on. We met up at some of the free movies on campus and spent more than a few Friday nights studying at the library.

I think what sealed the deal for us was Tim pulling me through Intro Accounting which I foolishly took Pass/Fail. Since I had missed a couple of classes, I decided I would cram the night before the Final. Tim taught me five major concepts from the semester (he had never skipped any classes!) and lo and behold, there were only those five questions on the Final!! Yes! I pulled off a 2 in the course. Boy was I ever indebted for that passing grade!

Since Tim was captain of the basketball team and I was head cheerleader, it was a nice touch when J. Fred Duckett, the announcer, called us both to the middle of the court during halftime of a basketball game and announced our engagement!

We got married in the Rice Chapel and our reception was at Cohen House. Yes, Rice Owls through and through!

How many daughters do Tim and you have?

Our daughters are Jennifer, Rice '99, Kiki, Pepperdine '00, Courtney, Texas A&M '04 and Michelle, The University of Texas '08.

And one went to Rice?

Jennifer, Will Rice '99, our oldest daughter, went to Rice as an All American swimmer, already having her Olympic Trial Qualifying times. After recruiting trips and offers from Stanford, Northwestern and a few other strong swimming schools, Jennifer reminded us that she had always wanted to attend Rice. Jennifer has never regretted her decision and it was at Rice that she met her husband, Justin Hyland, Will Rice '95.

And another is married to a former Rice baseball player?

Our youngest daughter, Michelle, is married to former Rice pitcher, Scott Lonergan, Sid Rich '07. Scott is a California boy, hailing from the San Diego area.

Are you related to Butch? or Mark?

Sigh....I wish!! But considering my maiden name, you think I might be able to wrangle some discounted golf lessons? Or some woodworking lessons?