



Season 3 | Episode 7 | The Three P's

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David Copeland, Alumnus, Texas Tech University: When Dean Alan asked me to speak tonight, uh, I did what every new commencement speaker should do... I googled top commencement speeches...

Taylor Peters, Host: DAVID COPELAND'S VOICE IS AMPLIFIED THROUGHOUT THE UNITED SUPERMARKETS ARENA. HE STANDS ON A STAGE, AT A WOODEN PODIUM WITH A THIN BLACK MICROPHONE. BEFORE HIM SIT STUDENTS IN IDENTICAL BLACK GOWNS AND PUFFY HATS WITH LONG YELLOW TASSLES.

Copeland: As I expect with most of you, it was my parents who equipped me for the challenge.

Peters: IT'S GRADUATION DAY IN MAY OF 2018, AND DAVID IS DELIVERING THE KEYNOTE SPEECH FOR THE GRADUATES OF THE TEXAS TECH SCHOOL OF LAW. DAVID'S STORY IS UNIQUELY INSPIRING, MORE THAN 40 YEARS AGO, HE SAT IN HIS OWN COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY FOR THIS VERY SCHOOL. HE MAY HAVE GRADUATED ON THAT DAY IN 1982, BUT HIS PRESENCE WITHIN THE HALLS OF THE LAW SCHOOL HAS NEVER LEFT.

Copeland: Neither of my parents finished high school. My dad didn't finish junior high. But they worked hard to make a life and they worked multiple jobs to make sure that my older brother and I got an education. I think for them that meant graduating high school. But we were the first in our extended family to graduate college.

Peters: AT JUST 24, HE HAD ALREADY OVERCOME EVERY ODD STACKED AGAINST HIM- HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE, COLLEGE GRADUATE, PREPARING FOR THE BAR, NOW READY TO TAKE THE WORLD BY STORM, LAW DEGREE IN HAND.

Copeland: Tonight, I want to share with you three things that I learned on my journey, that I think could inspire you as you start yours.

Peters: DAVID HOLDS FAST TO THE THREE P'S- PEOPLE, PASSION, AND...

Copeland: Purpose. Pursue your purpose and don't lose sight of it.

Peters: THIS ISN'T JUST PART OF HIS GRADUATION SPEECH- IT'S HOW HE'S BUILT HIS LIFE. A LIFE THAT STARTED ON THAT DAY THAT HE WALKED THE STAGE, ACCEPTED HIS DIPLOMA BEFORE VENTURING OUT ON A CAREER PATH THAT WOULD CHANGE HIS FUTURE AND HIS FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS TO COME. ITS DAVID'S PURPOSE TO MAKE THAT SAME FUTURE POSSIBLE FOR STUDENTS WHO SHARE A BIT OF HIS OWN STORY.

IT'S OUR SEVENTH AND FINAL EPISODE- THE THREE P'S.

(Music)

NATS Raider Power

Peters: THIS UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN HOME TO HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS OVER THE LAST 100 YEARS. AND FOR MOST, IT'S NOT JUST THE PLACE THEY GET A DEGREE- THEY

MIGHT FIND THEIR CALLING IN LIFE, THEIR FUTURE SPOUSE OR FRIENDSHIPS THEY'LL CARRY FOREVER, THEY MIGHT GET THAT INTERSHIP THAT LEADS TO A FIRST JOB. AND IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW LONG THEY MIGHT BE GONE, BEING BACK ON CAMPUS WILL ALWAYS MAKE YOU FEEL SOMETHING.

Allison Hirth, Senior Director of Media and Public Affairs: Go ahead and introduce yourself. Tell us your name, your title at Texas Tech and how long you've been here.

Byron Kennedy, Vice President for Advancement: Byron Kennedy. I'm the vice president for advancement here at Texas Tech University.

Peters: OR IN BYRON KENNEDY'S CASE, THAT FEELING IS WHAT BROUGHT HIM BACK TO TECH. HE HAS TWO DEGREES FROM HERE, HE WALKED ALONGSIDE HIS WIFE AS SHE EARNED HER DOCTORATE AND BECAME A PROFESSOR IN THE DAVIS COLLEGE. THEY'RE SHARING THEIR LIFE TOGETHER, RAISING THEIR FAMILY ON THIS CAMPUS. WHEN WE MEET WITH HIM, HE'S A WEEK SHY OF CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT AT TEXAS TECH. IN 2008, BYRON GOT HIS LAW DEGREE WITH ASPIRATIONS OF WORKING IN FINANCIAL AND ESTATE PLANNING.

Kennedy: And if you'll remember, 2008, you know, the whole economy fell apart and there were too many lawyers and there for sure wasn't a whole lot of wealth that needed to be managed. And so, I found myself as a young lawyer, tech grad, and the job that I was able to identify I was happy to take was general counsel to the Texas Tech Foundation.

Peters: HE'D GO ON TO HAVE A COUPLE OF DIFFERENT ROLES WITHIN THE SYSTEM, UNTIL HE WAS NAMED THE VP FOR ADVANCEMENT IN 2018. YOU MIGHT NOT BE FAMILIAR WITH WHAT THE OFFICE OF ADVANCEMENT IS OR WHAT IT DOES. BUT, PUT SIMPLY...

Kennedy: Our job is to go out and seek investment in the institution and its goals. Most often from individuals but also corporations, foundations, even in the form of sponsorships and economic development dollars. Our job is to translate the good work of the university to people who might have an interest in funding it.

(Music)

Hirth: Okay. So, finish this sentence then... Donor dollars at Texas Tech support, what?

Kennedy: At the end of the day, they support people. I mean, I think Texas Tech's a place that we are lucky that we're comprehensive enough to have almost any type of programing that a person could want. But I think at the end of the day, what distinguishes Texas Tech and I think is really our, our deep identity is it's still a very personable place and there's still an expectation that students know faculty, that faculty know staff, that staff know students. And there has very rarely been a time and I actually can't think of anywhere where a donor's investment doesn't ultimately land on a person and make things better than it was before. And I think that may be the most gratifying part of the work.

Peters: THERE ARE COUNTLESS WAYS THAT ADVANCEMENT EMPOWERS THIS UNIVERSITY TO OPERATE AT ITS MAXIMUM POTENTIAL- TO POWER AHEAD AND BECOME MORE OF WHAT IT'S DESIGNED TO BE. 2022 WAS A RECORD YEAR FOR FUNDRAISING. A TOTAL OF 234 MILLION DOLLARS WAS GIVEN TO FUND DOZENS OF DIFFERENT PROJECTS- NEW BUILDINGS, NEW RESEARCH, ENHANCEMENTS TO THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND SCHOLARSHIPS. IN THAT YEAR, MORE THAN 34 MILLION DOLLARS WENT DIRECTLY TO SCHOLARSHIPS TO HELP STUDENTS GRADUATE WITH AS LITTLE DEBT AS POSSIBLE. YOU MIGHT BE LISTENING TO ME SAYING THESE HUGE NUMBERS, AND YOU'RE LIKE 'WHY SHOULD I CARE?' I MEAN, I GET IT. I'M NOT IN A PLACE TO GIVE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO ANYONE. BUT DON'T MISS THE

POINT HERE. WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW IS THAT A LOT OF THESE GIFTS – THEY'RE SMALL – BUT TOGETHER, THEY ADD UP TO SOMETHING BIG... SOMETHING IMPACTFUL.

Peters: THINK ABOUT THIS: THERE ARE MORE THAN 240-THOUSAND TEXAS TECH GRADUATES – IF AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES, HALF OF THEM GAVE \$100-DOLLARS TO STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS... THAT'S \$12-MILLION DOLLARS FOR STUDENTS. IMAGINE THE DIFFERENCE THAT WOULD MAKE – THE BURDEN THAT WOULD LIFTED FROM THE SHOULDERS OF AN 18, 19, 20-YEAR-OLD STUDENT. REDUCING EVEN ONE STUDENT'S DEBT MAY MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM TO BUY THEIR FIRST HOME, START A FAMILY, TO PURCHASE THEIR FIRST CAR. ACCORDING TO THE EDUCATION DATA INITIATIVE, STUDENT LOAN DEBT IN THE U.S. TOTALS CLOSE TO \$1.8 TRILLION DOLLARS WITH THE AVERAGE DEBT BALANCE AS HIGH AS \$40,000 DOLLARS. THAT'S NO SMALL AMOUNT. BUT THESE DONORS, THEY'RE HELPING TO LOWER THAT STATISTIC. AND THAT IS A PRETTY BIG DEAL.

(Music)

Glenys Young, Director of Storytelling: Hi! My name is Glenys Young, I'm the editor of Texas Tech's Evermore magazine. In our office we're driven by stories. They might be written or through photos or video, through podcasts like the one you're listening to right now. And as storytellers we believe it's a privilege to bring people together through shared experiences. It's what Fearless does and it's what Evermore does. Be part of the journey with us as we uncover all the ways Texas Tech is proving that, From Here, It's Possible. And if you're interested in learning more about Evermore, visit today.ttu.edu/evermore.

(Music)

Peters: IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY- THIS PLACE GETS IN YOUR BLOOD AND STAYS THERE. WHEN INSPIRED PEOPLE INSPIRE OTHERS, IT SPARKS A PASSION AND REINFORCES A VISION. IT'S WHAT PEOPLE LIKE CHRIS HUCKABEE AND HIS FAMILY HAVE ALWAYS FELT.

Lawrence Schovanec, President, Texas Tech University: Their ties to this university are strong, but even stronger is their passion for the success of our students and this university.

Upe Flueckiger, Dean, Huckabee College of Architecture: This very generous gift from the Huckabee family marks a new optimistic day for the architecture program. This is a life changing moment not only for our students but also for our faculty, staff, and the College of Architecture and Texas Tech family at large.”

Peters: IT'S NOVEMBER 2022. A PODIUM IS MOUNTED ON A STAGE IN THE CENTER OF A ROOM INSIDE THE COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE. NEXT TO THE PODIUM, AT MID-STAGE, AN ENORMOUS BLACK CLOTH HAS BEEN HOISTED TO COVER A SIGN SURROUNDED WITH METALLIC RED, SILVER AND BLACK BALLOONS.

Chris Huckabee, CEO, Huckabee Architecture: Good morning, I'm blown away that all of you are here. I need to start this morning by making a few very special introductions of some folks...

Peters: CHRIS GOT HIS DEGREE IN ARCHITECTURE FROM TECH, HE SERVED AS A REGENT UNTIL 2021. STANDING AT THE PODIUM, HE LOOKS OUT ON THE CROWD, TAKING IN THE HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE PACKED SHOULDER TO SHOULDER TO BE PART OF THIS DAY.

Huckabee: Tommie actually grew up in a construction family and decided as a young man that he wanted to be the first person in his family to go to college.

Peters: HE BEGINS WITH A STORY ABOUT A MAN WHO HAS SHAPED HIS LIFE SINCE THE VERY BEGINNING.

Huckabee: Unfortunately, Tommie was only able to go to college for about one year when he just simply ran out of money. And in those days, access to college loans or scholarships, it was just limited, he just didn't have a lot of options. So, he went to work for an architecture firm in Lubbock, and in those days, you could apprentice and then sit for your exams. So, he completed his apprenticeship, and he took his architectural registration exams and after passing, he founded Huckabee in 1967 with a focus on educational design. Tommie felt, if he could not have an education, that he could do his best to contribute to others so they could accomplish their goals...

Peters: CHRIS GOES ON TO TALK MORE ABOUT HIS DAD. HOW HIS BUSINESS WOULD EVOLVE INTO A HIGHLY RESPECTED FIRM THAT WAS A REFLECTION OF TOMMIE'S OWN CHARACTER AND WORK ETHIC. HOW, OVER TIME, TOMMIE AND HIS WIFE SYLVIA, CHRIS'S MOM, WOULD FUND COLLEGE EDUCATIONS FOR COUNTLESS STUDENTS.

Huckabee: They're just private people that believe in helping others because it's the right thing to do.

Peters: TOMMIE MIGHT HAVE SEEN HIS 19-YEAR-OLD SELF DISPLAYED IN THOSE STUDENTS. IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN HIS VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE, TO HAVE MORE CAPABLE YOUNG PEOPLE FILLING THE INDUSTRY. OR PERHAPS HIS OWN PASSION WAS TAKING SHAPE... TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO DESERVING STUDENTS.

Huckabee: First, it is our hope that it will help more first-generation students attend and complete architecture school... We hope that the Huckabee...

(Cheers)

Huckabee: I will clap to that, thank you! We hope that the Huckabee College of Architecture will become the number one architecture college in the nation for first-generation student graduates.

Schovanec: This family has so positively influenced this college and this university for so many years. It's a family with a long and storied history at Texas Tech beginning with Tommie.

Peters: THAT'S LAWRENCE SCHOVANEC. HE GETS TO BE THE ONE TO MAKE THE ANNOUNCEMENT WE ARE ALL HERE FOR.

Schovanec: The College of Architecture will now be named the Huckabee College of Architecture.

(Cheers)

Peters: IT'S IN HONOR OF THAT FAMILY WHO HAS FOUND THAT PEOPLE ARE THE TRUE FUEL TO THEIR PASSION. THE HUCKABEE FAMILY WILL SEE THEIR INVESTMENT GO TO PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS TO FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS WHO ARE PURSUING ARCHITECTURE DEGREES FROM TEXAS TECH. AND THEY'RE USING ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN STUDENTS AND ALUMNI TO HELP RENOVATE THE BUILDING.

Peters: AFTER THE PRESS CONFERENCE, THE FAMILY IS LED INTO ANOTHER ROOM JUST DOWN THE HALL. BLACK PIPE AND DRAPE ARE SLUNG OVER THE WALLS AND WINDOW, A DOZEN CHAIRS SIT IN FRONT OF A SEPARATE, MUCH SMALLER STAGE. TOMMIE AND SYLVIA FIND SEATS RESERVED FOR THEM ON THE FRONT ROW AND CHAT QUIETLY AS OTHERS BEGIN TO FILE IN. SOFTLY POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE BEGINS TO PLAY, THE FAMOUS COMMENCEMENT TUNE. TOMMIE SMILES AND TURNS AROUND AS 5 MEN, DRESSED IN GRADUATION REGALEA, ENTER THE ROOM IN A SINGLE FILE LINE AND IT DAWNS ON HIM- THIS IS A PERSONAL GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR HIM.

Peters: YOU KNOW THE STORY- TOMMY ATTENDED BUT NEVER GRADUATED FROM COLLEGE. HE FINALLY GETS HIS DEGREE, AND IT'S THE FIRST DIPLOMA PRINTED WITH THE COLLEGES' NEW NAME- HUCKABEE COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE. THE FAMILY IS ADAMANT, THEIR LEGACY, THEIR GIFT, THE INFLUENCE OF THEIR PATRIARCH, IS IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS THAT MIGHT HAVE MORE OPPORTUNITY THROUGH ACCESS TO SCHOLARSHIPS AND RESOURCES. IT'S IN THE NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS PROVIDED TO GIVE THE FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITY THAT TOMMIE DIDN'T HAVE AS A YOUNG PERSON. IT'S HIS WAY OF GIVING BACK.

(Music)

Peters: THERE ARE MORE CHANCES THAN EVER FOR STUDENTS TO GET FINANCIAL SUPPORT WITH SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS. STUDENTS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE, HOMETOWNS, FUTURE ENDEAVORS AND ASPIRATIONS. THEY CAN FIND THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO FUND AND FUEL THEIR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE. FORMER PROFESSOR AND TAIWANESE NATIVE KWONG SHU CHAO IS MEETING UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT LAWRENCE SCHOVANEC FOR THE FIRST TIME. CHAO WAS A PROFESSOR ON CAMPUS BACK IN THE EARLY 80S... BACK WHEN LAWRENCE WAS ALSO PROFESSOR, IN THE MATH DEPARTMENT.

Schovanec: So, they were your students?

Kwong Shu Chao, Former Texas Tech Engineering Professor: Yeah.

Min Chang: Dr. Chao supplied us with a scholarship. I'm from Taiwan, so that's how I landed here at Texas Tech.

Peters: THAT'S MING CHANG. MING AND ANOTHER FORMER STUDENT CS LEE ARE ON CAMPUS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS. EACH OF THEM HAS THEIR OWN STORY OF ARRIVING AT TEXAS TECH FROM TAIWAN... THEY SHARE SIMILAR DEGREES IN ENGINEERING AND A MUTUAL LOVE AND RESPECT FOR THEIR FORMER PROFESSOR. AFTER THEY MEET WITH THE PRESIDENT, WE SIT DOWN WITH THEM TO TALK ABOUT THEIR TIME AT TEXAS TECH. BY THE WAY, KEH-SHU LU IS CALLING IN FOR THIS INTERVIEW. HE'S ANOTHER FORMER STUDENT OF PROFESSOR CHAO WHO LIVES IN PLANO WITH HIS FAMILY.

Keh-Shu Lu: I love Texas Tech, I really want to go to Texas Tech, can you give me the scholarship? So, he wrote me a letter. He said, yes, I will offer you the scholarship, but you need to pass the TIE.

Peters: WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT IS AN EXAM FOR NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS- AND HE PASSED. WHEN HE CAME TO TEXAS TECH, HE HAD \$50 AND TWO BRIEFCASES. THEY HELD EVERYTHING HE OWNED. HE KNEW THAT THE ONLY WAY HE COULD COME TO TECH WAS WITH FINANCIAL AID. AND PROFESSOR CHAO HELPED MAKE THAT A REALITY FOR LU, LEE, AND CHANG... AND FOR OTHER STUDENTS OVER THE YEARS.

CS Lee: And the more you give, the more you are able to give.

Ming Chang: Amen.

(Music)

Peters: THAT'S CS LEE YOU HEAR SAYING 'THE MORE YOU GIVE, THE MORE YOU ARE ABLE TO GIVE'. HE TELLS THIS STORY OF HOW, YEARS AGO, HIS DAUGHTER WAS DIAGNOSED WITH PANCREATIC CANCER. SHE WAS YOUNG... AND THEY WERE DEVASTATED. SHE WAS ONLY GIVEN A FEW MONTHS TO LIVE.

Lee: Then somehow, miraculously, the tumor disappeared. They operate on her and the doctor come out said, I don't know what the x-ray and cat scan show. It wasn't there. So, I'm happy. I am grateful. Then I

start to use the opportunity to practice philanthropy. I believe philanthropy it's the same as practice tithes in the church.

Peters: IT WAS A MIRACLE- THEY WERE OVERWHELMED WITH GRATITUDE AND RELIEF... THAT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THEIR JOURNEY AS A FAMILY TO GIVE. HE STARTED AN ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE NURSES AT THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL THAT CARED FOR HER. THAT WITNESSED THIS INCREDIBLE THING WITH THEIR FAMILY. AFTER THAT EXPERIENCE, LEE STARTED THINKING ABOUT OTHER MOMENTS IN HIS LIFE THAT SHAPED HIM. PEOPLE WHO MADE THEIR MARK, WHO CREATED A SHIFT IN HIS CURRENT PATH OR WHO TOOK A CHANCE ON HIM. AND HE STARTED THINKING A LOT ABOUT HIS TIME AT TECH, THAT PROFESSOR WHO DIDN'T HAVE TO INVEST SO MUCH TIME AND EFFORT IN HIM BUT DID ANYWAY. IT ULTIMATELY LED TO THE CREATION OF THE ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FOR PROFESSOR CHAO. IT WAS A SHARED EFFORT BY LU, LEE, AND CHANG... THREE PEOPLE, THREE FORMER STUDENTS WHO SAY THEY NEVER COULD HAVE BECOME RED RAIDERS WITHOUT CHAO.

Peters: THEY SAY IT WAS THE BEST WAY THEY COULD THINK TO HONOR AND CELEBRATE THIS MAN'S PERSERVERANCE, TO HELP PROVIDE MORE EDUCATION FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS.

Lee: The money comes from our retirement fund. So how comfortable you feel about give up some of your in-retirement fund while your still pretty young. And that's a faith. That's a very good experience for me. And furthermore, we all do this out of our heart. There's no pressure. And we did it willingly and gladly. To honor our lifelong mentor, teacher.

Lu: I really want to say thank you to Mrs. Chao too. She really took care of us.

Chao: This, to me, is the greatest honor. To be honored by three of these gentlemen. In our profession, the main product is student. And if the students turn around and try to do something for their professors, I think this is the ultimate honor in our profession. So, I really appreciate all three of them. And I am really glad to see their loyalty to the Texas Tech and to the ECE department.

Peters: WE HEAR PEOPLE TALK A LOT ABOUT THE AMERICAN DREAM. AND I LOVE HOW THE DEFINITION OF THAT CAN LOOK DIFFERENT DEPENDING ON WHO YOU ARE. AS A KID GROWING UP IN TAIWAN, KEH-SHU, CS LEE AND MING CHANG THEY THOUGHT MATURE THOUGHTS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE AND LIFE. THOSE THOUGHTS LED TO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT MAKING THEM HAPPEN. IT'S WHAT CONNECTED THEM WITH PROFESSOR CHAO WHO WOULD BE LIKE THEIR PERSONAL SHINING BEACON OF HOPE. SO, YEARS AFTER THESE STUDENT EARNED ENGINEERING DEGREES, THEY'D BECOME SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMEN. THEY'D HELP BUILD COMPANIES AND SERVE ON BOARDS IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY. NOW, AS THEY STAND ON CAMPUS THERE'S THIS MOMENT OF REFLECTION... CONSIDERING THE MOMENTS THAT DEFINED THEM AS PEOPLE. THE PLACE IT ALL HAPPENED AND MAYBE MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE PERSON WHO IGNITED THIS PASSION TO BEGIN WITH. IN LOOKING BACK OVER TIME, THEY SEE HOW THEY'VE BEEN SHAPED INTO LEADERS, INNOVATORS, THE ONES WHO CHANGED AND TRANSFORMED MILLION DOLLAR COMPANIES. IT'S THAT GRADITUDE THAT KEEPS THEM COMING BACK AND TO BE LIVING TRUTH THAT TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN, MUCH IS REQUIRED.

(School sounds and bell)

Peters: IT'S SPRING, 1974 AND A YOUNG DAVID COPELAND SITS IN CLASS AT IOWA PARK JUNIOR HIGH, NEAR WICHITA FALLS... HE'S QUIET AT HIS DESK, LISTENING TO HIS MATH TEACHER REVIEW THE LESSON... HE'S YOUNG, BUT HE KNOWS THAT MATH IS NOT QUITE HIS STRONGEST SUBJECT. HE PAYS ATTENTION, ASKS QUESTIONS WHEN NECESSARY AND HE

GETS THROUGH IT. HE GIVES MATH HIS ATTENTION NOW BUT HE HAS ALWAYS KNOW THAT HIS FUTURE CAREER PATH IS IN ANOTHER AREA ENTIRELY.

Copeland: And I do remember and I've spoken about this before, there was a lawyer in my little hometown of Iowa Park, Mr. Newman, and he wore the white short sleeve, you know, business shirt with a black tie. And his horn-rimmed glasses. And I looked up to him and just as some- I didn't know him- but someone that, you know, looked like he, you know, did something I was interested in.

Peters: THAT MR. NEWMAN CERTAINLY MADE A MARK. DAVID ADMITS THAT HE HADN'T EVER EVEN TALKED TO MR. NEWMAN, BUT THAT JUNIOR HIGH INTEREST IN THE CLASSIC 70'S BUSINESS ATTIRE AND GENERAL APPEAL, IT WAS REAL. DAVID SAYS HE REMEMBERS THAT HIS PARENTS WORKED REALLY HARD AND THEY RAISED DAVID TO DO THE SAME. HE WAS 8 YEARS OLD WHEN HE GOT HIS FIRST JOB.

Copeland: Neither of my parents graduated high school, so they were keenly interested in their sons getting an education, which for them, I think meant graduate high school. So, I was first generation college. My older brother went to college, graduated. I think we're maybe the only two of about 20 something cousins in our, in our generation there that went and finished college.

Peters: THAT WORK ETHIC CARRIED HIM TO THE OILFIELD, WHERE HE WORKED ALONGSIDE HIS DAD DURING BREAKS AND SUMMERS WHILE HE ATTENDED TECH.

Copeland: I remember the day I was working with my dad in a driving rainstorm on an oilfield job, thinking, 'I am glad I am going to law school.'

Peters: DAVID LEARNED A LOT ABOUT THE INDUSTRY DURING THAT TIME IN THE OILFIELD, FROM THE PEOPLE HE WORKED ALONGSIDE, AND CONTINUED TO LET HIS DAD IMPART HIS WISDOM ABOUT LIFE AND WORK AND FAMILY. SO HE RETURNED TO CAMPUS TO COMPLETE LAW SCHOOL... HE MET HIS WIFE, STUDIED FOR AND PASSED THE BAR. HE WAS WADING IN UNCHARTED WATER, FOR HIMSELF AND HIS ENTIRE FAMILY.

Copeland: It was uh scary, sure, something new. There were no lawyers in my family. I'm not sure I'd ever spoken to a lawyer at that time in my life. Even Mr. Newman.

Peters: AFTER TAKING UP HIS FIRST JOB IN MIDLAND, DAVID SETTLED IN AND STARTED DOING WHAT HE HAD BEEN TRAINED TO DO. HE FOUND HIS NICHE WORKING IN OIL AND GAS AND HE WAS THRIVING. HE AND HIS LATE WIFE STARTED A FAMILY AND OVER TIME HIS BUSINESS WOULD BLOSSOM... HE HAS MADE HIS COMPANY KNOWN ON A GLOBAL LEVEL, MAKING ENERGY AND ENERGY RELATED TRANSACTIONS WORTH BILLIONS TO TURKEY, CANADA, AUSTRALIA, INDONESIA AND MORE.

(Music)

Peters: HE TELLS THIS STORY OF ONE DAY YEARS AGO, THE DEAN OF THE LAW SCHOOL AT THE TIME SHOWED UP FOR AN APPOINTMENT AT HIS COMPANY IN MIDLAND.

Copeland: And if you know Walt, he was the first graduate to come back as dean of the school. And you may know this, he was a general in the JAG. And when he says something, it sounds like an order. And he said, your law school needs you.

Peters: DAVID SAYS THAT HE FELT LIKE WALT AWAKENED SOMETHING IN HIM. DAVID HAD ALWAYS LOVED, ADVOCATED FOR, SUPPORTED TEXAS TECH AND THE SCHOOL OF LAW, IT'S WHAT MADE HIM. BUT THIS MEETING WITH WALT INSPIRED SOMETHING DEEPER, IT WAS A CALL TO ACTION AND ONE THAT HE DIDN'T TAKE LIGHTLY.

Copeland: It was probably the gala about three years ago. Probably at the beginning of the law school gala, there was a focus on first generation students, and I read some of their testimonials, like a column in the Tech Law School magazine that came out. And that's when I first started thinking about doing something to offer some support and encouragement to people like that. So that idea kind of bubbled around in the back of my head for a while and started talking to the dean about it. And this was my idea, but I said, 'if you need me to support something else, tell me.' And Dean Nowlin is first generation college and therefore law school as well. So, he was keen on that idea.

Peters: DAVID AND ABOUT 15 OTHER ALUMNI COME TOGETHER EVERY YEAR TO FUND A SCHOLARSHIP GEARED TOWARD FIRST GENERATION LAW SCHOOL STUDENTS. OVER THE YEARS, DOZENS OF STUDENTS HAVE BENEFITTED.

Copeland: I know what it was like to pay bills. And I was never hungry, but I didn't have extra money. And this I'm hopeful that this, these scholarship dollars enable people to do something they think they can't do and that's get here, survive here, get out of here and go serve.

Peters: IT MAKES PERFECT SENSE THAT DAVID'S LIFE AND SUCCESS ARE ROOTED IN AND ESTABLISHED IN THE GRITTY, TOUGH, LABORIOUS WORK THAT DEFINES THE OIL FIELD. I THINK ABOUT THE HANDS THAT CALLOUSED OVER THE YEARS, WORKING IN THE FIELD ALONGSIDE HIS DAD AND THE 8-YEAR-OLD BOY WHO LEARNED HARD WORK THE HARD WAY, THE REAL WAY. I THINK HE'D BE PROUD OF WHO DAVID IS TODAY, AND HOW MANY PEOPLE HE HAS HELPED.

(Music)

Peters: THOSE WHO WORK IN THE OFFICE OF ADVANCEMENT ON CAMPUS SAY THEY SEE THEIR WORK AS SOMETHING THAT CONNECTS PEOPLE WITH PASSION AND PURPOSE. THEY OFTEN TALK ABOUT HOW, YEAH, IT'S INVESTMENT OF FINANCES, BUT ALSO IN TIME OR SUPPORT OR RESOURCES. SOMETIMES THAT SHOWS UP A NEW LAB SPACE FOR TRAINING ENGINEERS OR PHYSICIANS, SOMETIMES IT'S IN AN ATHLETIC FACILITY FOR TEAMS THAT GENERATE NATIONAL ATTENTION TO OUR CAMPUS. AND SOMETIMES IT'S IN FINDING THAT ONE STUDENT, THAT ONE PROFESSOR, WHO WILL GO ON TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS.

Kennedy: I think it's really the invitation to partner. I think it's people using their resources to say this thing is worthy of an investment of my treasure, of my time, of my, my hopes and ambitions. Texas Tech and the education that we provide I think continues to, to be that for people.

Peters: TEXAS TECH IS A PLACE FOR ANYONE WHO SEES GOOD WORK THAT HAPPENS HERE AND WANTS TO BE PART OF IT. BYRON SAYS THAT THE UNIVERSITY BENEFITS FROM THOUSANDS OF GIFTS EACH YEAR, AND YOU MIGHT ONLY HEAR ABOUT THE BIG ONES. BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT GENEROUS PEOPLE ARE GENEROUS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR WEALTH. IMPACT ISN'T MEASURED BY THE DOLLAR AMOUNT, BUT RATHER THE POWER OF THE COLLECTIVE. IT'S THE POWER OF ALL OF US TOGETHER, THE POWER OF PEOPLE AND PASSION AND PURPOSE.

(Music Close)

Peters: FEARLESS IS PRODUCED BY THE TEXAS TECH OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING. IT'S HOSTED AND WRITTEN BY ME, TAYLOR PETERS, AND CO-PRODUCED BY ALLISON HIRTH. THOMAS BOYD IS OUR AUDIO ENGINEER- HE DOES SOUND DESIGN AND EDITS THIS PODCAST. AND IF YOU'D LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CHARACTERS WE TALKED ABOUT IN THIS EPISODE, GO TO TODAY.TTU.EDU SLASH FEARLESS AND DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

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