



CSU ALUMNI

M A G A Z I N E

SPRING 2015

ALUMNI CHAPTER UPDATE

MIRACLE IN THE MIDST OF MOUNTAINS

The Brown family's miraculous story of survival

ALL IN THE FAMILY

A father and son support each other in the CSU Family

THE CSU ALUMNI LIBRARY

Books written by Alumni

A publication of Columbia Southern University

CSU MASCOT SIR MAXIMUS



The CSU mascot has officially been “knighted.”

We would like to formally introduce you to Sir Maximus, the CSU Knight!

The Latin term for “greatest” or “largest,” Maximus is the symbolic embodiment of CSU’s vision of changing and improving lives through higher education. Maximus represents the person we all want to be—the best version of ourselves. Sir Maximus travels the world finding others who are striving to be the greatest and invites them to pursue or complete their education with CSU.

Many of you got to meet Max at the 2014 Graduation and we can’t wait for him to meet even more of you!

Be sure to check out the *Alumni Magazine Online* and the community page for local alumni events.

Alumni.ColumbiaSouthern.edu
ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Community

CSU also offers continuing education opportunities! Visit ColumbiaSouthern.edu/CE for a complete list of upcoming training and class sessions.

REASON #18

A DEGREE WAS
ESSENTIAL
FOR MY SUCCESS

Tem Frierson
CSU Student



YOUR REASONS ARE OUR MOTIVATION.
FLEXIBLE. AFFORDABLE. ONLINE.





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The Alumni Magazine is a bi-annual publication. Check it out online at Alumni.ColumbiaSouthern.edu for additional information and upcoming Alumni events.

When you see this icon, the article continues online.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Beloved readers,

It is with great excitement that I am writing this letter to you! It is wonderful to know that you are a valued member of the CSU alumni family and are reading this wherever you are, flipping through the pages, which have been thoughtfully put together for YOU! These pages are filled with inspiring stories of alumni just like you- hardworking individuals who work day in and day out to be the best in their careers, in their families, and in their communities- all brought together by one common thread, their Alma Mater.

I am so proud to be the editor of this magazine because it is people like you that inspire me and make this magazine what it is. Your stories and CSU pride have brought a smile to my face every day and for that I am truly grateful.

Thank you for being such a valuable member of the CSU family. Thank you for sharing your time and thoughts with us to make this organization so continually successful. Thank you for reaching out to other members of the CSU family through social media and local events in your area. If we haven't met you already, we look forward to having the opportunity to do so in the future.

Most of all, thank you for taking the time to read your CSU Alumni Magazine. I urge you to share any ideas you may have for the pages of future editions.

Again, this publication would not be possible without passionate CSU alumni like yourself. Your CSU family is proud of you!

Happy reading,

Libby Reilly
Editor-in-Chief

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU CONTACT US

Questions regarding the Alumni Association?
Please send an email to CSU-Alumni@columbiasouthern.edu.
21982 University Lane | Orange Beach, AL 36561

SEND US YOUR CSU STORY!

Have a story idea for future editions of the *CSU Alumni Magazine*? Submit your story online at Alumni.ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Contact-us or email CSU-AlumniMagazine@ColumbiaSouthern.edu

PHOTO CREDITS: (Above) Photo courtesy of Libby Reilly;
(Right Page) Photo courtesy of Ralph Blessing

NOTE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Alumni

Hello fellow Knights.

I hope that you are all doing well and enjoying the fruits of your CSU degree as I am.

I have been asked to write a note in the first printed edition of the CSU Alumni Magazine, and of course I graciously accepted the challenge.

Without a doubt, we have made enormous strides as a young alumni association. The CSU mascot, the first alumni chapter, and the opportunity for other cities and countries to establish their own chapters are all things we can be both proud of and excited about.

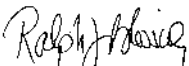
With regard to the first alumni chapter in Atlanta, it has kicked-off its historical move on the 21st of February. The new officers of the association officially inaugurated the process with approximately 100 alumni that have decided to become another part of CSU history. I applaud “the 100” for taking that first step and making a statement to the other alumni associations that CSU is a force with which to be reckoned.

As CSU alumni, we are the faces of a great education, a greater organization and the future of each state we represent, as well as this great country. Each of us accepted, and successfully completed, the endeavors and arduous tasks presented to us on a weekly basis. It is DEFINITELY something of which we should be proud.

I look forward to the day that each of you are given the opportunity to become involved in a local chapter, whether as officers, volunteers, or enthusiastic members. It is another accomplishment of which you will be proud.

Take care and stay involved with CSU. We are here for you, as you are for us.

With utmost honor and pride,


Ralph Blessing



STAY CONNECTED

ALUMNI
CHAPTER UPDATE

The CSU Alumni
Chapter Network is

GROWING

ATLANTA
CHAPTER
100 MEMBERS

COLUMBIA SOUTHERN
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

As you may have heard, 2014 was an exciting year for CSU alumni as the final revisions were completed on the CSU Alumni Association and chapter articles, which are the governing documents for the association. This is both important and exciting because it provides guidelines and procedures for the association, as well as the provision to develop regional chapters.



The Atlanta membership has now swelled to more than 100 active members and we are still growing at a steady pace.

chapter membership discussed a number of topics. Topics discussed included future meeting and network events, elections, and the chartering celebration, which will officially recognize Atlanta as a chartered alumni chapter of CSU. Immediately following the chapter meeting, the chapter held their first networking event, which included CSU alumni, students, and faculty. The personal interaction is a wonderful testament to the value of belonging to an alumni chapter. During the course of the evening, there were a lot of valuable connections made that may lead to new jobs, promotions, and friendships.

We have heard your cries for networking and relationship-building events across the country. This is where CSU Alumni Chapters fit, the first of which being formed in Atlanta, Georgia. Rest assured that more chapters will be popping up across the country in the future.

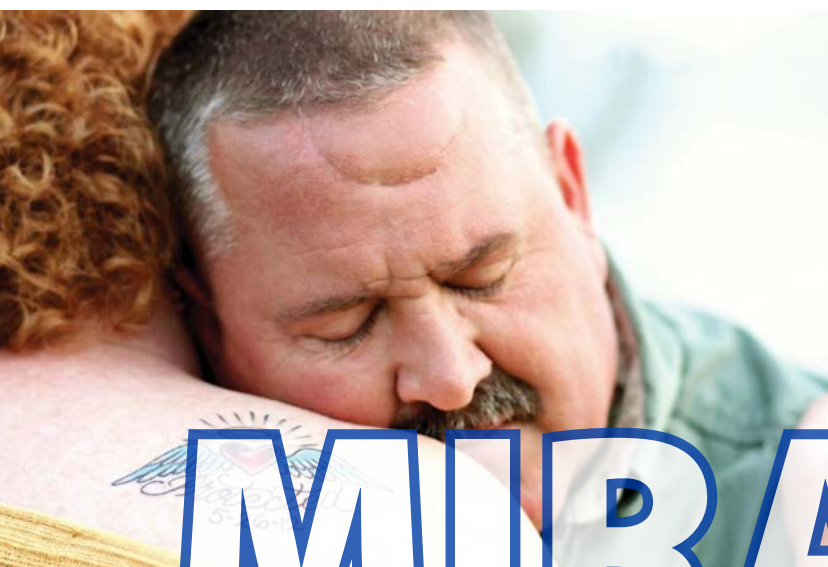
With Atlanta being our first regional chapter, we have been very busy adding new members to our rolls and our recruitment efforts have paid off. The Atlanta membership has now swelled to more than 100 active members and we are still growing at a steady pace.

On February 21, we held our first official chapter meeting at Fado's Irish Pub in Atlanta, Georgia. Though the meeting was brief, there was a lot accomplished as the

An exciting new development is the announcement of the chapters that will be created next. In 2015, we will be moving forward with the creation of eight additional alumni chapters: **Dallas/Ft. Worth, Los Angeles, Columbus, Chicago, New York, Hawaii, and Vietnam.** If you are interested in becoming a member of any of these future chapters, visit columbiasouthern.edu/community/alumni/alumni-chapters.



Written by:
Mark Briscoe
CSU Student and
Alumni Engagement



MIRACLE

in the Midst of Mountains

It was Memorial Day weekend near Sacramento, California in 2012. Brian Brown, a deputy fire chief for the Wilton Fire Protection District, and his wife, Jayann, were preparing Brian's 1966 Cessna 172 for a flight to see their eldest daughter in Idaho. Brian had been flying since he was a teenager, and now with two grown daughters, he was certainly comfortable in the cockpit. His youngest daughter, Heather, hated to fly and Brian hadn't counted on her joining in on this trip. At the last minute, however, she grabbed a blanket and her duffle bag and hopped aboard.

The trio began to realize they were hitting some unfavorable weather and landed on a gravel runway in Oregon, near the Owyhee Mountains, about two hours into their trip. After analyzing the conditions and making some decisions, Brian saw an opening in the weather and decided to continue on with their trip. As they traveled over mountains with little altitude, the bad weather began to quickly surround the small four-seater plane. The plane hit reversed airflow, which caused it to stall. Brian stared at the mountain straight ahead of them and realized the situation was deadly. He took a staggered breath to say to his wife and daughter, "I am sorry. I don't think we will make it.

I love you both." The plane was rapidly falling and Brian pitched the nose down in an attempt to gain lift. He pulled on the control column with every fiber of his being.

In the next moment, the plane crashed through the canopy and branches but managed to belly up to the side on the side of the mountain. Brian woke up moments later in a fuzzy haze, feeling something pour down his cheek. He then heard his daughter, Heather, scream from the passenger side of the mangled plane. Heather was holding her mother by the back of her shirt as she was barely being cradled by her seatbelt; Jayann's body looked like that of a rag doll hanging out of the plane where the passenger door once was.

"I've killed my wife," Brian thought to himself as he shifted his body. "Dad, help! She's falling!" Heather said, her arms shaking. Brian helped his daughter pull Jayann inside the plane. She was fighting to gasp for air and her eyes were rolled back in her head; Brian knew his wife had a head injury and he began to reposition her head and clear her airway. A few seconds turned into a minute and Brian prayed his wife would come back to him.

Finally, Jayann took a deep gasp. "I'm still with you," she said. She was in shock but she was alive. With one miracle down, Brian did not yet realize the miracles that would still follow.

Night was upon them and the troublesome conditions grew. The temperature in the canyon dropped and the idea of sleep was impossible as Brian and Jayann both had head injuries.

Brian knew he needed to call for help, but with cellphone signal being spotty at best even on the roads and other areas of Oregon, he was not surprised when he could not send out a mayday signal with his portable radio and other devices.

Heather continued to watch over her mom and began to gather some snacks they had on the plane. Brian knew he needed to start a fire to ward off possible hypothermia; he managed to fill a plastic cup with engine fuel and poured it over some branches. The fire quickly burned out and the three just looked at each other, fear apparent in their eyes. It began to snow soon after.

There was one blanket amongst them, the one Heather grabbed before their departure that felt like so long ago. Brian located the

MIRACLE IN THE MIDST OF MOUNTAINS

passenger door and did his best to put it back in place so they could huddle in the plane for the night; Heather gave the blanket to her parents. Jayann prayed and they all did their best to keep each other awake and warm. They shivered, they prayed, they worried, they did what they could to not fall asleep, dreaming of how they could escape this horrible situation alive.

The next miracle of the night came in the form of a beloved Abba song. “You are the dancing queen.... Young and sweet...” It was Jayann’s phone, ringing with the song she gave her eldest daughter to ensure her call was always recognized.

Heather fumbled to find the phone in the wreckage but did not get to it before the call was sent to voicemail. Brian, in his fuzzy state of mind, exclaimed, “Call her back and tell her to call 911!”

Heather, thinking better of that request, scabbled quickly to call 911 herself. She was able to get off-and-on clarity to her calls with the dispatcher but Heather and her parents did not know how to explain where they had crashed. The dispatcher was eventually able to ping the cellphone and the search and rescue was underway. It was 12:31 in the morning.

A little while later, Brian heard the whirring of a helicopter overhead. “This was such a warming moment,” Brian said. “I just kept thinking, oh my gosh, they’re getting closer.”

The search team was within a five-mile radius but were operating in whiteout conditions. Finally, at 5:50 a.m., Brian went outside and launched one of the travel applications he had downloaded to his cellphone before this trip; this app was able to flash like a strobe light to get the attention of the search team. The helicopter radioed overhead and landed a mile away from Brian’s crash site, hiking to them in the snow and low visibility. When the pilot finally got to them, he took a long look at the mangled plane and the three survivors as if he were staring at a group of ghosts.



One by one, the family was hoisted into a National Guard helicopter that flew them to safety where they were met with the proper medical attention.

“I’ve been doing search and rescue for a long time, but I’ve never brought a live pilot out of the mountains,” the pilot said with misty eyes.

One by one, the family was hoisted into a National Guard helicopter that flew them to safety where they were met with the proper medical attention.

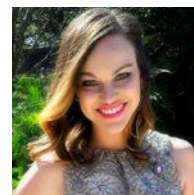
The family had indeed suffered. Hypothermia was among them; Brian had a deep gash in his left arm, a broken right arm, nose, and he lost part of his scalp; Jayann suffered a head injury and broken ribs; Heather was deeply bruised. None of them needed surgery. Everyone survived. Brian knew their survival would not have been possible without divine intervention. Whenever he talks about the ordeal, he

cannot help but give thanks to God. “I have always believed in God and prayed, but my life was changed after that day. I looked back on everything that happened and knew there was no way we should have survived if it weren’t for a lot of miracles.” As Brian reflects on the event now almost three years later, his body is sore and scars still visible, but the worst scar is the emotional struggle with which he and his family are still dealing. Part of the healing process came in the form of writing a book about the ordeal, which has also led to many speaking engagements including the Today Show and the 700 Club.

Brian and Jayann have recently celebrated their 31st wedding anniversary. Brian is now completing a flight training that has added complex and high performance aircraft to his experience; which means the landing gear goes up and down and the pitch of the propeller can be controlled by the pilot to make the plane (engines with more than 200 horsepower) perform more efficiently.

Brian attributes a lot of that day to his brave daughter, Heather, because of her emotional support and strong will. “My wife and I wouldn’t be alive if it weren’t for her.” They needed each other to survive. Three people boarded the 1966 Cessna 172 that fateful day, but Brian will be the first to tell you that when he reflects on the events of the crash, there was Someone else there watching over his family.

PHOTO: Brian Brown, a 2010 graduate of CSU, earned his Bachelor’s degree in Fire Science and has now retired as deputy fire chief of the Wilton Fire Protection District in Wilton, California. You can find his book, Rescued: One Family’s Miraculous Story of Survival, on Amazon.com.



*Written by:
Libby Reilly
Originally published
by CSU October 2014*

ALL IN THE FAMILY



When a new student comes to Columbia Southern University, they join a family for life. The CSU family is one that supports, encourages, and genuinely cares about what is going on in your life, even long after you receive your diploma.

For Walter and William DeCastro, however, the CSU family hits a little bit closer to home.

William DeCastro, an EMT in the Birmingham, Alabama area, decided to finish his bachelor's degree after meeting a CSU representative in 2010. He was looking for a stable career that would use his EMT certificate knowledge, and soon began his studies in Occupational Safety and Health. William completed his Bachelor of Science degree in 2014.

For Walter and William DeCastro, however, the CSU family hits a little bit closer to home.

Meanwhile, his father, Walter, also in Birmingham, was running a small business after a 15-year career with BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc. and researching schools to further his education in a way that fit his schedule and lifestyle. Witnessing the success his son was experiencing at CSU, he decided it was the best decision for him, too.

“Since both of my previous master’s degree were awarded in the traditional setting, I really did not know what to expect. Now that I am completing my comprehensive exams, I can truthfully say that the school courses have been both challenging and rewarding,” said Walter.

Currently, William is a CSU alumnus and his father, Walter, is completing his Doctor of Business Administration* with Columbia Southern University. Walter and William are proud to share their Alma Mater in common, even with graduation dates so close to one another.

“It is a team effort to support each other when challenged to complete assignments that require extensive research, writing, and discipline. We all understand what it takes to balance academics and family commitments; it is a marriage of sorts,” said Walter.

In the summer of 2014, Walter and William DeCastro drove three hours to an event held by the CSU Student and Alumni Engagement department. The father/son duo attended an alumni reception and baseball game, making friends with the CSU representatives and making an impression.

“The DeCastros are so full of energy and enthusiasm,” said Coordinator of Alumni Relations, Andie Bills. “It feels good just to be around them; you know they love life and love CSU and would do anything they could to support us.”

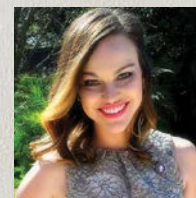


Since the CSU Student and Alumni Engagement department was founded at the end of 2013 and began conducting Student and Alumni networking socials in various cities, the DeCastros have attended seven events in more than three cities.

“I thoroughly enjoy participating in events,” said William, “I enjoy making great friends with staff members, faculty, and students. They are wonderful people and I always look forward to seeing them again.”

Throughout their time at CSU and becoming involved in the Student and Alumni events, the DeCastros have created quite a reputation for themselves: a reputation as the father and son who support each other’s education, enthusiastically support their Alma Mater, and are valued members of the CSU family.

“It is a team effort to support each other when challenged to complete assignments that require extensive research, writing, and discipline. We all understand what it takes to balance academics and family commitments; it is a marriage of sorts,” said Walter.



Written by:
Libby Reilly

ALUMNI FEATURE STORY

It has never been a secret that CSU alumni are talented and esteemed professionals in their fields. Throughout the years, we have heard countless stories of students who have graduated from CSU and gone on to accomplish great things. Some of these alumni are now filling the shelves of the CSU Alumni Library, a place where the Alumni Relations department can gather the written works of CSU graduates, most autographed, and watch as the collection continues to grow.



CSU ALUMNI LIBRARY

RESCUED by Brian Brown with Eileen Chambers

Rescued is a book you may have heard about, if only from the featured story in the CSU Alumni Magazine! *Rescued* captures the miraculous story of Brown, his wife, and daughter as they experienced a weekend getaway gone terribly wrong and a miracle that no one would have previously thought possible. Brown's story has been featured on the TODAY show, 700 Club, and more.

DON'T SLIP IN THE MUSTARD

by Thomas Stacey

Don't Slip in the Mustard is a practical and game-tested guide for teaching the game of basketball. Its pages contain sound advice, Stacey's coaching philosophy, drills, photos, and other first-hand knowledge. Stacey shares real-life stories of life as a coach and how those lessons can be translated on and

off the court. The book is geared toward young athletes, coaches, and parents alike.

OBVIOUS by Janie S. Monares

This novel is not the first, but the ninth bestseller for CSU graduate, Janie Monares. *Oblivious* is the story of Patrick Sterling, a powerful businessman, who falls in love with his assistant, Raycie. Raycie has dealt with many rejections throughout her life and suffered the consequences. When she comes to her senses, she runs to Patrick who, little does she know, has some secrets of his own.

CHANGE THOSE SHEETS!

The Art of Self-Encouragement, Valarie Moyer
Featured in *The Empowered Woman*, edited by
Linda Ellis Eastman

This book features the writings of many talented women, one of whom is CSU's own Valarie Moyer. In Moyer's piece, she explains the art of self-encouragement as

you not only "lie in the bed you made" but also operate with the initiative to change anything about that bed that does not serve you well. Her philosophy of finding your own encouragement follows the steps of loving yourself, loving others, showing prudence, and having faith.

REMOTE NETWORK MANAGEMENT FOR OPTICAL NETWORKS, Bell Labs Technical Journal, James W. Haworth, Jr. and John A. Liffbrig

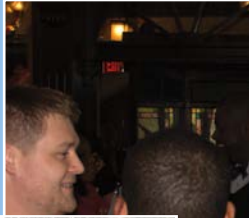
Mr. Haworth is the director of Lucent Technologies Global Network Operations Centers (GNOC) and a CSU alumnus. His work in remote network management of optical networks helps explain the technology advances that have enabled the revolution in network management. By adopting this technology at the Lucent GNOC, they continue to grow and provide unparalleled levels of network service at a significantly lower cost.

ALUMNI EVENTS RECAP

2014 was a great year for Student and Alumni networking events all over the country. The Student and Alumni Engagement department planned various events in order for members of the CSU family to meet, interact, and build both professional and personal relationships.

Events have recently been held in San Diego, California; New Orleans, Louisiana; San Antonio, Texas; and Atlanta, Georgia.

WHERE MIGHT WE GO IN THE FUTURE?



Alumni

CSU EVENTS RECAP

**NOV
14**

SAN DIEGO, CA
NOVEMBER 14, 2014

**DEC
11**

NEW ORLEANS, LA
DECEMBER 11, 2014

**JAN
11**

SAN ANTONIO, TX
JANUARY 11, 2015

**FEB
21**

ATLANTA, GA
FEBRUARY 21, 2015



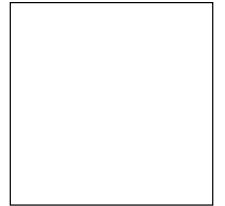
2015 Upcoming Events

ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Community/Alumni

COLUMBIA SOUTHERN

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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