

Past Student Story

Denise Rogan (1994)



In 1994 I am proud to say that I graduated from St George State High school. Why proud? Because I completed all of my schooling in St George, a place I still call home and virtually all of my family. Of course, as we all know, it is a small country town and the assumption can easily be that opportunities do not exist in small rural areas. Before attending High School, I was in a privileged position where I was given a choice to be able to go to boarding school or stay home and attend St George State High School. My parents and I decided together that all of the same opportunities existed right at home, there was no need to feel homesick and be away from my family and friends.....and my horses.

During my high school years I did as much as I could, there was never a lack of choice or opportunity to be busy. Horses were a given for me, always, every day, every weekend, I even managed to turn them into a “sport/subject” during my final year and was able to train my horses during school hours once a week. However

along with my horses I could be found playing netball, touch football, softball, swimming, tennis, piano, music band, ballet, travelling with athletics to Brisbane (shot put) and the list goes on. And yes in between all the recreational activities that were interspersed during school hours and after school hours, there was also some academic studying! What did I do academically? Well I just chose the standard subjects that would give me an OP and an opportunity to get in to University – Maths, English and Science. I had some idea about what I wanted to do, but I progressively learnt that I changed my mind constantly. I just knew, and was encouraged, that University would give me even more opportunities. I remember going to the school counsellor during Year 11 where I was given what I think was an aptitude test. The test gave me an idea of my interests. In summary, it told me that I liked “helping people” and it is something I have never forgotten and have followed this pathway in many different ways.

During Grade 12 I stumbled across an advertisement in the Balonne Beacon for applications to Bond University for Scholarships, specifically for students who were based in rural areas. I kept it to myself at the time, but I enquired and ended up going through an application process that required some written assignments and interviews. Low and behold, a couple of months later I was offered a scholarship to Bond University in their Undergraduate Law program. And this was before Grade 12 had even finished. I was beyond excited but also terrified! Law, what was law? I had no idea other than a concept that everyone just took each other to court and debated with each other over a contentious topic and someone won and someone lost, pretty much like the debating team I had been a part of during High School. But I rolled with it and accepted the invitation to the Undergraduate Law program.

Following High School, I moved to the Gold Coast, with my horses in tow, and was inducted as a “Bondie” (Bond University student). Within two weeks of starting the Bachelor of Law program I knew that Law was not going to be for me. I took me a few weeks to work up the courage to speak with my scholarship co-ordinator and let her know that Law was not going to be for me. Once I found the courage to speak up though I learnt that adulating was in fact ok! It was not going to be a problem, “everything was going to be fine”, “you can still be on a scholarship”, “why don’t you just complete the core subjects this semester whilst we figure out what you might like to do”, “Have a look at all the courses available”, “talk to friends about their courses”, “maybe try something you have never thought of before”. The possibilities were endless and the support was constant. By the next semester I was a Bachelor of Social Sciences (Psychology) student and loving every moment. In 1999 I graduated from Bond University with a B.Soc.Sc Psychology (Honours).

Did I end up becoming a Clinical Psychologist? (a typical pathway for this degree). No, but wow the degree and just simply being a University student opened up opportunities that I could never have predicted. During university I worked for a publicly listed company entering data, a simple job that did not require any experience but you had to be a current university student. The company was a finance company, not in my area of interest, but slowly I gained experience and learned to talk to colleagues and network and slowly but surely I transitioned in the Human Resource and Training Departments, areas within the corporate company where my degree was absolutely relevant and within my area of interest – helping people. Over a 15 year period of time, this is who I was, a corporate employee, climbing the corporate ladder, working with a few different companies, eventually moving to Sydney to follow even more opportunities. The whole time my horses remained with me, training and competing.

My horses were an absolute constant in my life. I trained my own horses in my spare time, coached other riders and competed on weekends when I wasn’t working. It was a job, but also not my ‘real job’ at the time. I was fortunate enough to have some level of success in my chosen discipline of Dressage and was long listed for the Beijing Olympics, while I was working as a corporate employee. I was not selected for Beijing due to an injury my horse sustained six months out, but boy it gave me a sniff of the possibilities that a professional sport could give me. I had been a part of a squad which involved training camps, nutrition, physiotherapy, sport psychology, the list goes on. There came a time in my life whilst living in the city of Sydney (literally 3kms out of the CBD) that I had to make a choice, remain a corporate employee or become a professional horse rider. Not only was I training and competing my own horses, but I had begun training and competing horses for others – owners- and they were paying me to do it. My life had transitioned in to the world of professional sport and I was loving every minute of it. So I dived head first in to it and resigned from my corporate career.

And so this is who I am today. A rider, a coach, a competitor, and employer and everything else that comes with running a business with a barn of 30 horses to manager and many owners



and clients. I am based in the outskirts of Sydney and will remain heavily involved in my sport for as long as I can. Even though I have not made it to an Olympics, I remain undeterred and highly motivated. Some of my closest friends have made it and we have celebrated hard! In fact, in Paris this year, our dressage team did the best we ever have! I know that my sport has many areas I can transfer in to if I choose at any moment to change direction from an athlete perusing a dream to maybe working within the sport to some degree. But currently I am living and

working my passion every day and do not regret a second of transitioning from corporate employee to running my own equine business. Every facet of my corporate life enabled me to set and run a successful Equine business. My degree at Bond University enabled me to find work within a corporate sector. My years at St George High School enabled me to apply and receive a scholarship to Bond University. Don't overthink it.... But do grab the opportunities – whatever they may be and then life will find you! NEGU – Never Ever Give Up!