



## **A Family Tradition**

*Brandi Neman*

I have lived the majority of my life in Akron, so, growing up, The University of Akron was a common household name. My first experience with The University of Akron's campus was around 1980. I was about seven years old, and my aunt was returning to school to get her degree in education. I went with her to Spicer Hall to get registered for classes. It was probably one of the most boring experiences of my young life. But I remember thinking it was so cool that my aunt was returning to school. She is one of the strongest women I know, and I was to be her guinea pig as she learned how to teach children. I was excited to be able to help her. She received her degree and

successfully taught elementary children until she retired in 2011.

Her oldest child also graduated from The University of Akron with a degree in education. She is five years older than me and let me tag along with her on some of her college adventures. During her time at the University, she was an active member of the yearbook staff. I was probably around fifteen when she took me to my first Akron Zips game at the Rubber Bowl. We ran, full sprint, across the field to get to the game on time so that she could get a few photos and interviews. Around this same time, my mother decided to return to school. I was a high school student at Central Hower High, and Mom wanted to get her degree in special education—specifically, sign language. Almost every day of my sophomore year in high school, I would walk to Bierce Library after school and stay in the third floor cafeteria, studying, until my mom would meet me and drive us home. We were featured in The University of Akron's 1989 yearbook in an article covering nontraditional students attending the University. Mom is currently working as a teacher's aide for special needs children.

Fast forward a few more years to 1991. I found myself attending The University of Akron's Fine Arts program. My dream was commercial photography. The registration process at Spicer Hall had not changed much since visiting there with my aunt in 1980. I spent hours in line searching through mountains of course offering books, hoping that by the time I got through the registration line, the class I wanted was not

already full. This was before the internet and cell phones. Unfortunately, I was not as dedicated as my aunt, cousin or mom. I changed majors a few times, eventually dropping out in 1993 after two and a half years.

I met my future husband at the old Campus Lounge on Exchange Street. We are celebrating our twenty fifth anniversary in 2019. In 2000, I decided it was time, once again, to return to school. Of course, The University of Akron was my first choice. I sat down with one of those two-inch-thick books that detailed every career available. This time I chose to pursue a career in computers.

The registration process in 2000 was a completely different experience than before. The long lines and mountains of course offering books were things of the past. Registration was now possible from my home computer. I worked for the Upward Bound Math and Science program in the Polymer Building and immersed myself in my studies. In three years, I graduated with an Associate's Degree in Computer Information Systems and a certificate in Networking.

I have been working in this field ever since. Recently, I have entertained the idea of returning to school to get my Bachelor's degree. So my experience is not over yet.

Hopefully my daughter will carry on the family tradition at The University of Akron, but that is many years away, and another story.