



...and Beyond!

Find Out What Inspires This Alumna to Take Trips & Chances

BY AMY SCOGGIN MCMANUS

“When joy and duty clash, let duty go to smash!” Not exactly the self-proclaimed motto you would expect of a highly-successful businesswoman, but, for Pamela Barefoot, the SBA’s 1999 Virginia

Small Business Person of the Year and recipient of the 2003 Outstanding Woman Entrepreneur Award in the United States, it’s the motto she chooses to live by.

“Every once in a while, I have to take off and go somewhere,” says Barefoot, a Louisburg alumna and owner of Bay Beyond Inc. (trading as Blue Crab Bay Co.), a Chesapeake Bay-inspired specialty food and gift wholesale/retail business on Virginia’s Eastern Shore. Her wanderlust – sparked by a letter written in 1929 that she found tucked inside a book she had purchased for fifty cents at a downtown thrift shop as a Louisburg College student some 40 years ago – has taken her around the world and inspired her to take chances, both personally and professionally.

“Every spring,” says Barefoot, “I would pull out that letter and re-read it.” The two-page type-set plea, written on the 22nd day of March, 1929, begins simply with “Dearest Lady,” and closes with the signature of a woman by the name of “Amy BVD.” Hoping to persuade the friend to travel abroad with her, Amy writes, “Must you really stay home to care for your brother’s children? I do so want you to come. Why not follow the philosophy of Rebecca of Sunny Brook Farm – ‘when joy and duty clash, let duty go to smash!’”

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

Barefoot spent the first seventeen years of her life living and working on a tobacco

farm near Four Oaks, North Carolina – a place where, she says, “I learned that hard work builds character.” Her childhood was filled with a close-knit group of cousins and anchored by grandparents who had raised nine of their own children in and around Four Oaks. During her childhood, travel consisted mostly of “short family trips in Ford station wagons with my parents and siblings to see relatives.”

Barefoot was especially close to her cousin

Michael and felt rather lost when he left North Carolina to attend Northwestern University, but was also inspired by his determination to go to college. Barefoot began considering her options, eventually deciding to attend Louisburg.

“Being a country girl, I liked that it was in a small town,” she

explains. “I had not traveled much and was hesitant to go to a large city. Louisburg was a good stepping stone.”

During the brief time she spent at Louisburg, Barefoot managed to immerse herself in all that the small liberal arts college had to offer, enrolling in an honors English class,



Barefoot as an “Island Girl” in LC’s 1969 production of “SOUTH PACIFIC”

playing an “Island Girl” in the theatre department’s production of “South Pacific,” and establishing life-long friendships. “I think Louisburg gave me a strong foothold to



Barefoot in her Merritt Dorm room, 1969

burst forward into the world on my own,” she says.

In spite of Mrs. Gladys Bailey, Merritt Dorm’s strict housemother, Barefoot and fellow residents cut loose on occasion. “We would have to sign out every time we left the dorm, recording where we were going and with whom,” she says. She laughingly recounts “panty raids” in which the girls in Merritt Dorm would throw various undergarments out of the windows onto the boys below. At a time when girls were only allowed to wear jeans if they were on their way to theatre practice, Barefoot pushed the dress-code boundaries. “I was always getting in trouble for wearing my skirts shorter than the allowed 2” from the knee.”

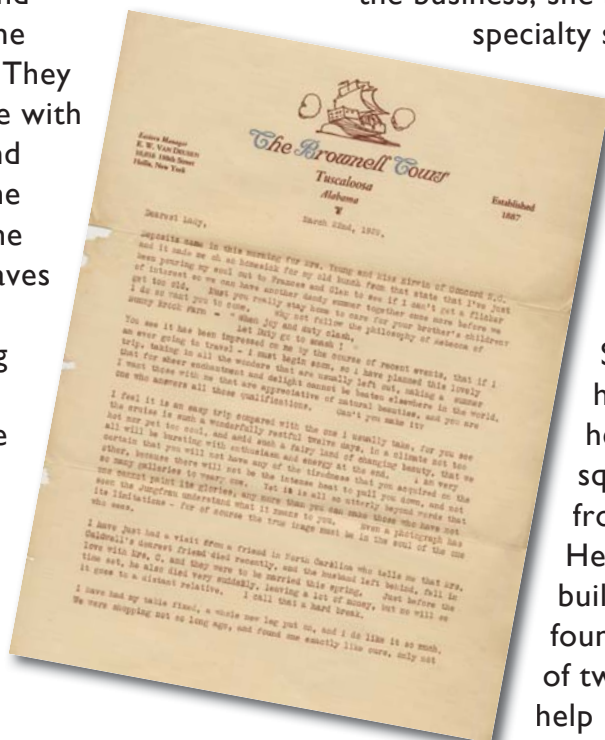
“I think Louisburg gave me a strong foothold to burst forward into the world on my own.”

This past year, with the utilization of social media, Barefoot and a handful of former classmates have been in contact with their drama teacher, Mr. Versteeg. “We are all in agreement that he was a big force in our lives and helped us to be better people.”

Near the end of the ‘69 spring semester, Barefoot was invited by a classmate to visit Virginia Commonwealth University – a sprawling campus located in the heart of Richmond’s “Fan District.” Barefoot took one look and was hooked, and by the next school year, she flew from the nurturing nest of Louisburg College to the fast-paced avenues of Virginia’s capital. VCU offered the chance to earn a bachelor’s degree and, for Barefoot, the opportunity to explore the unknown – an undertaking partially inspired by the letter she’d found just one year before.

Upon completing her degree in psychology, Barefoot began working with at-risk youth – something she was good at, but, after four years, knew was not going to be her long-term career choice. Using money she raised through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and donations from tobacco companies, Barefoot traveled back home to photograph and document tobacco farms and the people who owned and worked them. Upon completion of her self-published book, Mules and Memories, A Photo Documentary of the Tobacco Farmer, Barefoot sold many of the 10,000 printed copies at tobacco festivals in Virginia and North Carolina.

While living in Richmond, Barefoot met and married Jim Green. By the early 80's, the couple was living on Berkeley Plantation in Virginia when a friend invited them to visit the state's Eastern Shore. They immediately fell in love with crabbing, clamming, and the tidal rhythms of the Chesapeake Bay on one side and the rolling waves of the Atlantic Ocean on the other. Knowing they had found a new place to call home, the couple packed their belongings and soon found themselves living amongst the quiet serenity of the shores of Onancock.



recalls Barefoot. “There were no jobs here. If you wanted to work, you had to create it yourself.” Soon after she opened the business, she sent out brochures to specialty shops throughout Virginia.

Much to her delight and surprise, “the business took off very fast,” she says. “There was a niche there that was empty and ready to be filled.”

Since that time, Barefoot has moved Bay Beyond's headquarters to a 24,000 square-foot-building not far from her waterfront home. Her husband, a former boat builder and bronze wildlife foundryman, along with a staff of twenty dedicated employees, help run the thriving wholesale and retail business.

Browsing a bookstore one day, Barefoot happened upon the book Beautiful Swimmers – Watermen, Crabs and the Chesapeake Bay. Inspired by the watermen's stories, she began experimenting with crab and clam dips in her farmhouse kitchen, hatching the idea for the Blue Crab Bay Co. brand, and eventually expanded the line to include everything from coastal-themed snacks and Bloody Mary mixers with clam juice to seaweed soaps.

Barefoot hails from a family of successful entrepreneurs. Her much-beloved cousin, Michael, owns *A Southern Season*, a large-scale gourmet and gift shop in Chapel Hill, and her mother, now in her eighties, owns and operates *Barefoot's TLC Nursery* near Four Oaks.

“I started the business out of desperation,”

A LETTER'S LONG JOURNEY HOME

While recovering from foot surgery in 2009, and feeling somewhat restless in her immobility, Barefoot did a bit of research on the genealogy site Ancestry.com. “My husband asked if he could look up the name of someone he used to know, and a light bulb went off in my head...could I possibly find Amy's family? I kept thinking it was such a special letter that it should be in the hands of the family; it was too great a treasure to just toss away.”

Going by the name on the letterhead, Barefoot ran a search for Van Deusen, and came across a man in California who had hundreds of them in his family tree. “I sent him a message through Ancestry's site and

heard back from him shortly thereafter. He said he did not have Amy's name on his tree, but he would be glad to help me research it. A couple of hours later, he sent me a link to a photograph on Flickr. It was Amy, her husband Edwin, and daughter Marjorie on the very cruise she referred to in the eighty-year-old letter! I got chills seeing her face for the first time. I posted a message to the Flickr site owner and did not hear back. But Peter (my new friend in California) was persistent and kept looking, coming across census logs and ship manifests with her name. Six days later, after lots of web research, I managed to track down Amy's great-



From L-R: Barefoot, Dave Edwards, Jan Alexander, Barb Banet, and Steve Edwards

grandson in Texas...and from there her four grandchildren.”

During Memorial Day Weekend of 2009, Barefoot traveled to Media, Pennsylvania, where she met Barb Banet, Jan Alexander, Steve Edwards, and Dave Edwards, all four of the Van Deusen grandchildren.

“Never in my wildest dreams would I have imagined that a photo we uploaded to Flickr would play an important role in an amazing detective story - and lead to surprising information about our grandmother and also to such a wonderful connection to Pam Barefoot,” says Banet. “It is nothing short of incredible that Pam was able to find us after all these years,” adds Alexander. “Without her determination

“You can't be afraid to take chances,” she says. “If you have an idea, don't just sit on it, act on it.”

and persistence - and the internet - it would never have happened. Everyone in our family has mementos from our grandmother's many trips to Europe, handed down to us by our mother. Thanks to Pam, and the letter she found that our grandmother wrote, we now have a greater appreciation of those 'treasures' from abroad. We now realize that traveling 'meant the world' to Amy. How nice that Amy's letter ended up bringing so much pleasure to Pam through the years!”

For Barefoot, the experience of placing the letter in the hands of the family was “amazing. They were the perfect recipients, very interested in history.” The group spent the long weekend together, getting acquainted and sorting through Amy's historic travel photos from the early 1900s in which she led tours of Europe, along with old letters and postcards from that



Crossing the Atlantic: Amy Van Deusen (left) with her husband, Edwin, and daughter, Marjorie, 1929

era. Since that first meeting, she has kept in contact with the grandchildren, who were so touched by Barefoot's determination to find them, that they sent two antique sterling silver spoons engraved with a "V" on each handle to Barefoot and her husband. The package included a note that read, "Welcome to the family."

THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

Having a trusted group of employees to steer the ship in her absence has allowed Barefoot more time to do some traveling. Just recently, Barefoot spent two weeks in Scotland – a trip that included a stop on the Isle of Skye, the home of her great-great-great grandparents. "Taking a trip refreshes me and makes me want to get back to work," she says. "I always come back with new ideas."

With a successful business to run and many more journeys in her sights, don't expect Barefoot to be slowing down any time soon. "Thankfully, I have time to work on my special side projects. I hope to do a small book about four sisters from North Carolina I met when I was working on my book about tobacco farmers in the 1970's." She also hopes to do another tobacco farming photo book.

"You can't be afraid to take chances," she says. "If you have an idea, don't just sit on it, act on it. Lots of people have ideas, but you have to act on them."

Visit www.bluecrabbay.com to view Barefoot's full line of products. Louisburg College faculty, staff, and alumni will receive a 10% discount on all purchases (use code 11LC10 at checkout).