

A Quick Look Back. A Keen Focus on the Future.

It's not easy to convince Joe Crafton to reminisce; he's far too excited about looking forward.



Nevertheless, while visiting the campus in October for the 2010 Shopper Marketing Forum Executive Summit, Crafton paused briefly for photos on the Crafton Family Terrace, named in honor of his family to commemorate his generosity to the College of Business Administration. “From this terrace I can see the other colleges on campus where so many of my family received their degrees—arts and sciences, engineering, education, and, of course, business—and I can see Neyland Stadium where my father lived in East Stadium Hall dormitory,” says Crafton. He teases, “The only thing that could improve this view would be seeing the Torchbearer statue at Circle Park, because my mother earned the UT Torchbearer recognition in 1956.”

“WHEN I WAS 20 YEARS OLD,
I HAD NO CONCEPT OF THE DEGREE TO WHICH
MY INSTRUCTORS WERE GOING TO AFFECT MY LIFE,
BUT IT WAS MENTORS SUCH AS ERNIE CADOTTE,
TONY SPIVA, DICK TOWNSEND,
AND DICK REIZENSTEIN WHO SET ME ON THE PATH
THAT LED ME TO WHERE I AM TODAY.”

Crafton credits his mother for setting an example of how he could make the most of his collegiate experience. Like her, Crafton was heavily involved in Greek life, student government activities, and his studies. “When you are active in campus activities as a student, you’re more likely to be enthusiastic about your alma mater, and I do look back on those experiences fondly,” admits Crafton. “However, what I value most about my UT experience is the passion for my career that my professors instilled in me.”

“When I was 20 years old, I had no concept of the degree to which my instructors were going to affect my life, but it was mentors such as Ernie Cadotte, Tony Spiva, Dick Townsend, and Dick Reizenstein who set me on the path that led me to where I am today.”

Crafton (BS 1984) majored in marketing and has spent 25 years in the consumer goods industry. He went to work for Procter & Gamble immediately after graduation. Four years later, he joined CROSSMARK as a junior partner when the company had only 120 employees. After a series of successful acquisitions in the 1990s, and considerable growth since then, the company—which specializes in providing outsourced sales and marketing consulting and



Joe Crafton enjoys the view of campus from the Crafton Family Terrace (opposite page). Celebrating his graduation from the University of Tennessee in 1984 with future wife Wendy Wood (above) and his parents (right), Pattie Thornton Crafton (UTK 1956) and Joe Crafton Sr. (UTK 1950).

services to the consumer goods industry—now employs more than 25,000 people; Joe is one of its five owners.

“I’m very grateful for the influence that my professors had on my career and my life, and I hope that the work we’re doing with the Shopper Marketing Forum will have that same career-defining influence on the next generation of business leaders.”

The conversation quickly turns from nostalgia to the here-and-now, and Crafton’s enthusiasm swells: “I want the University of Tennessee to leverage its standing as one of the best supply chain/logistics universities in the world and become known as the premier university in the nation at which to pursue a career in consumer goods marketing.”

It is a passion to which Crafton is devoting vast amounts of his time, talent, and treasure.

In 2009, Crafton made a generous gift to the College of Business Administration as a part of UT’s Campaign for Tennessee \$1 billion fundraising effort. His gift supports technology in the college’s new James A. Haslam II Business Building and shopper marketing efforts in the college’s Department of Marketing and Logistics. He also contributes significant amounts of time and talent to the college; he is a regular Executive-in-Residence lecturer and is a founding member of the Shopper Marketing Forum.

“Shopper marketing is an emerging discipline that addresses the way people make purchase decisions today, which is radically different from the way their parents and grandparents shopped,” explains Crafton. “For example, traditional forms of advertising such as TV, print, and radio have lost much of their effectiveness



in today’s world because consumers eliminate commercial messages by using digital recorders or by getting news and programming on the Internet.”

Shopper marketing is about influencing consumers when they are on the path to purchase. It’s a collaborative blending of retailing, branding, and sales efforts, with a heavy emphasis on analysis and shopper insights. Along with social media, shopper marketing is one of the fastest growing segments of consumer goods marketing today.

Crafton says the University of Tennessee is on the cutting edge, bringing together consumer goods giants such as Kimberly Clark, PepsiCo, Bush Brothers, Wal-Mart, Nestlé, and others to collaborate on curriculum for this new discipline.

In 2010, Crafton received a university-wide Alumni Service Award in recognition of his exceptional service and leadership to UT; however, he modestly claims his forward-thinking contributions also have selfish purposes: “I want to help UT create a center of excellence in this area and create fully developed leaders who are years ahead of their peers, and then I want to hire them!” ●