

Sooner Nation

The dynamic Katie den Daas

By Tami Althoff

There was never any question about what career path University of Oklahoma journalism alumna Katie den Daas would take. In fact, she remembers the precise moment she was bitten by the news bug.

It was Oct. 17, 1989. She was barely out of preschool.

As she recalls, she sat glued to the television, watching coverage of the 6.9 earthquake that hit the San Francisco Bay Area during the third game of the World Series.

"I was only 4 years old, and I could not stop watching coverage of the earthquake," says den Daas. "I probably sat in front of the TV for hours. I think my mom finally had to turn it off."

Once that seed was planted, there was no turning back for the 36-year-old Emmy Award-winning producer.

Since graduating from OU in 2007, den Daas has moved furiously up the ranks of the television news industry, making history in September when she became the first woman in 40 years to assume the title of London bureau chief for ABC News.

While London wasn't part of her career plan, she says she's up for the challenge.

"I was working as an executive producer for ABC News Live, and the London bureau job came open," says den Daas. "Foreign news is not my area of expertise, but ABC News has the most amazing team of foreign journalists."

That team of reporters has been instrumental in helping her settle in to both a new country and a new job, which immediately included international coverage of the fall of Afghanistan.

"I've had a crash course in foreign news over the past three weeks, and I couldn't have asked for a better team of reporters. It's been really challenging, very stressful, even heartbreaking," she says. "I have an immense amount of pride in what the team

has done bringing this story back to the United States. I feel very grateful. It's going to be a really exciting adventure to lead this team."

When den Daas entered OU's journalism program, producing wasn't on her radar. Like many young journalism students, she wanted to be a writer. In fact, she put off taking a required television journalism class as long as she could. The professor was tough. She didn't want to take the class.

Former OU professor Dana Rosengard remembers his former student from that particular class well. In fact, the two still stay in touch, and den Daas now considers him a dear friend and mentor.

"Katie came to me as an OU junior, I think, and was clearly bright and responsible and brave. Those are all good characteristics for a journalist," says Rosengard. "And she did excellent work."

"Katie thought she wanted to be a reporter. That's where I came in. I push. Some journalists have a skill set better suited for bigger successes in other roles, like producing. I saw Katie going much further down that path."

After seeing her work in his reporting course, Rosengard recruited den Daas for *OU Nightly*, Gaylord College's student-produced and student-

run newscast.

"He told me to show up in August and he would teach me. That August, I started working for *OU Nightly* as a producer, and that led to my first job at Channel 9 in Oklahoma City in 2007, just before I graduated," says den Daas. "To this day, he is still my go-to. He is leaps and bounds ahead of everyone as my most favorite professor at OU."

Her job at News 9 set den Daas on a mission to achieve bigger and better things. She knew from there she could jump to the Dallas market, then to New York City.



Former OU Professor Dana Rosengard changed the trajectory of Katie den Daas' career as a mentor and friend. Here, the two reunite at a Harvard/Yale football game in New Haven, Conn.



OU 2007 journalism graduate Katie den Daas made history in September by becoming the first woman in four decades assigned as London bureau chief for ABC News.

That was her plan, and it pretty much unfolded that way. She quickly left the Oklahoma City market for a job in Dallas/Fort Worth, but finding a job in New York City took longer than she had hoped.

“I was in Dallas/Fort Worth twice as long as I intended to be,” she says. “I had been applying for jobs, and I finally got an interview. I wanted this job, so I did a full-court press and tracked down Mike Boettcher.”

The determined journalist took a day off work and drove to an alumni event where she knew Boettcher, a fellow OU alumnus and former foreign war correspondent for NBC and CNN, would be present.

“I said, ‘Mike, I really need some help,’” she recalls. “He interceded for me and pushed my resume to the top of the pile, vouched for me and got me to the next interview phase. It changed my career and my life.”

Den Daas landed at ABC News, working on shows like *World News Tonight*, *The View* and *Good Morning America*. She’s covered presidential elections and the pandemic, and earlier in her career, the 15-year anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing and the NBA’s arrival to Oklahoma City.

Rosengard says what den Daas has accomplished is nothing short of amazing.

“Her success speaks to those skills I saw in her back in Gaylord Hall: bright, responsible, brave,” he says. “News is not for the faint of heart. It can take commitment and sacrifice many are unwilling or unable to make. Not Katie.”

Den Daas says everything worked together almost serendipitously to bring her to where she is today, including choosing OU for her education.

“My mom grew up in Norman, so I spent my summers a couple of blocks from campus at my grandparent’s. I was determined to leave. I thought I was going to all of these schools far, far away,” she says. “As it turns out, when all was said and done, the best place for me to go was the University of Oklahoma.”

“Everything about my experience at OU was what it needed to be. OU helped me build a foundation of leadership that has continued to serve me, one I’ve been able to build on throughout my career. And that, to me, is invaluable.”

Tami Althoff is a Norman resident who works for the OU College of Professional and Continuing Studies.