

Helping Home

A gift from J. Morgan '84 and Tara Rutman honors two kinds of history

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From his earliest days, history and UNH were an integral part of life for J. Morgan Rutman '84. His father, long-time faculty member and early American history scholar Darrett B. Rutman, played a central role in establishing UNH's doctoral program in

history, and his mother, Anita H. Rutman, was a historical researcher who co-authored several works with her husband.

But Rutman recognized early on that “one historian in the family was definitely going to be enough.” After reading *The Money Game* by Adam Smith at the age of 17, he instead turned his attention to the lure of the financial world. “From that moment on I knew that I definitely wanted to go to Wall Street,” he says.

When he landed there after graduating with a double major in finance and economics, all was not the same as the book’s portrayal of Wall Street in the 1960s and 1970s. Still, Rutman was hooked. Work with one of the biggest financial institutions in the country was soon followed by a focus on investing and a successful career as a hedge fund manager.

Yet, after more than a decade working in New York and California, Rutman was drawn back to New Hampshire. “I think that when I was younger I always felt like Durham, and even New Hampshire, was such a small place that it wasn’t part of the real world,” he says. “All I wanted to do was get away.” But then he realized “what a great place New Hampshire was and how significant UNH had been” in his life.

Rutman and his wife Tara recently honored that connection with a \$1 million donation that will support three critical initiatives. \$375,000 of the Rutmans’ gift is earmarked for the Shoals Marine Laboratory, a cooperative program of UNH and Cornell University, and will provide funding for 10-week summer research internships, awards and scholarships, and curriculum development. Another \$500,000 will go to support the construction of a new athletic complex, a project Rutman calls “important to the state and to the university.” And \$175,000 of the gift provides additional funding for The Rutman Distinguished Lecture Series on the American Presidency, established in honor of Rutman’s parents. “New Hampshire is a unique place with its first-in-the-nation primary,” Rutman says. “With the university’s strong history program and the state’s significant place in America’s politics, this series will bring some of the world’s most noted history scholars to campus, benefitting the community as a whole and raising the profile of UNH.”

As Rutman sees it, giving back benefits not just current Wildcats, but alumni and future students, as well. “It’s really a virtuous cycle,” he says. “The more we support the institution, the more recognition it gets for the excellence that is already here, and the better and more prestigious it becomes. We’re definitely on the right track—I know how much pride I feel when I say I went to UNH, and I know I’m not the only one who feels that pride—but I’d like to see us continue to expand on what we’ve done to improve the culture of giving back to the university.”

Certainly Rutman is doing his part. Though based in New York, he spends as much time as possible in New Hampshire and at UNH, and recently bought a family home in Rye. “I love New Hampshire,” he says. “It is definitely home to me.”

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