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## How I Came To Dominican

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# HOW I CAME TO DOMINICAN

Lisa Wagenhurst

I remember like it was yesterday. It was late on a hot Friday afternoon in mid-August and the sun was shining with the fierceness that August is notorious for, even in Northern California. Everywhere I looked there were trees and flowers and beautiful lawns. As I stepped out of my car, I stopped to listen. The only sound I could hear were the birds chirping as they flew through the trees and the silence that one only hears with the absence of human beings. I could hear no talking and yelling, no music playing and no traffic going by. Having just come from my current job in the mission district of San Francisco this was a welcome change. Everything was immaculate. The only signs of life that I saw were the birds and a few deer eating grass. Everything that I observed only increased my excitement. I had dreamed of working at Dominican for years and for me this was the opportunity of a lifetime.

The excitement I felt tamped down any of the nerves I would usually feel when going for a job interview. I had no idea which department I was interviewing with; I was only told to go to Meadowlands Hall and see Sara. When I sent my resume to Dominican University of California for the administrative assistant position I saw advertised on their web site, I was not sure I would be called for an interview, but within two days I got a call back. The young woman on the phone

described Meadowlands as an old brown and white Victorian house. I have to admit that the idea

of a Victorian house on a college campus intrigued me.

Finding the house was not difficult, but I wasn't prepared for the sight of the building. It

was love at first sight. My breath was taken away at the grandness and I truly felt that it put most

of the Victorian homes I have seen in San Francisco to shame. It was one of the most beautiful

houses I had ever seen. I could feel the history of the house as I stood there looking at it. It

emanated mystery and romance and I wanted to embrace it. The wide steps leading to the front

door were surrounded with flowers and vines and I could tell even from a distance that it was

kept with great care. I entered the house on the first floor after climbing the stairs. Even though it

was hot outside the interior of the house was cool. Everywhere I looked was a sign of beauty and

love. The walls were dark paneled wood and there were beautifully carved wooden stairs going

up to the other floors in the house.

I stood there trying to decide which way to go when a facilities worker with the name

Willie embroidered on his shirt approached and asked me if I was lost. Willie was a tiny little

man with thick glasses and wiry grey hair. He reminded me of a wood sprite. I told him I was

looking for Sara and he led me down stairs to the ground floor. We stopped in front of the

department of nursing door and he told me that Sara was in there. I thanked him, but when I

turned to look at him he was already gone, like a little ghost. I wasn't even sure that I had seen

him because everything was so surreal and quiet.

Finally, I put my hand on the doorknob and opened the nursing department door. Sara

was there and we introduced ourselves to each other. She walked me down the hall to meet Mary

Ann Haeuser who was the interim chair of the department. We chatted for a minute and then

Sara and I went down the hall for my interview. I was at ease throughout the hour long meeting

with Sara and as we talked, I was envisioning myself working in this lovely building. After Sara

and I talked, she took me back to meet with Mary Ann.

At the end of the interview, I shook hands with both Sara and Mary Ann and asked if

there were other applicants. I can't remember what they said, but I just knew that I would get this

job. When I left Meadowlands I sat on a bench outside for awhile just looking at the house and

thinking about how much I wanted to work there. Finally, I got up and headed for my car. I was

reluctant to leave the place that had cast such a spell on me, but I had to get home because we

were leaving on a trip that evening.

When I got home, my daughter and husband were waiting for me. They urged me to

change my clothes so we could leave on a seven hour drive to Oregon to see the in-laws before

summer was over. I went upstairs to change and saw my computer. I knew I had to take the time

to write and mail thank you letters to Sara and Mary Ann. I turned the computer on and quickly

typed up two letters. As I was pulling the business cards out of my purse to address the envelopes, my husband came into the room and was upset because he thought I was checking email.

I thought of Meadowlands and Dominican all weekend. I was still star struck and couldn't shake the feeling that I was meant to be there. On Monday morning I was on my way

back to the mission district for work. I was distracted all day. I could not wait to hear from Mary

Ann or Sara about the job. I figured that it would be at least a week before I heard a decision.

When I got home I joined my mom on the couch. The living room was the coolest room

in the house and as we sat there talking, I heard the phone ring in the background. For some

reason, I did not connect the phone ringing with Dominican. So I was a little surprised when my

brother came into the room with the phone telling me I had a call. As soon as I picked up the

phone, I got nervous. I had no idea what awaited me on the other end of that phone. I took the

phone and answered with "hello" and the woman was Mary Ann Haeuser. She thanked me for

the letter and asked me how I was doing. I thought it was odd that she wanted to call me to chit-

chat and I was a little thrown off. Suddenly she said, “I would like to offer you the job.” I was

stunned. I think deep in my heart I knew I would get it, but at that moment I could barely speak.

I looked at my mom and I could tell that she knew. I accepted the job and set up training dates.

As soon as I got off the phone the questions began, my mom wanted to know what the

pay was, and the benefits and all those other nitty gritty details I failed to ask. At that moment, I

didn't care what the answers to those questions were. I was too excited. Eventually I found out

that by taking this job, not only was I getting my dream, but the increase in salary was going to

benefit me and my family.

I started working in Meadowlands on August 22, 2000. I was privileged to work in that

lovely house for nine years until the department of nursing moved into Bertrand Hall. I will

always have a soft spot for Meadowlands and for Willie, of course. Willie and I are the best of

friends and have been since the first day I came here and he asked me, “Are you temporary or

permanent.” Obviously, I am more permanent than I ever dreamed I would be. He still reminds

me of a wood sprite and that only increases as the years go by. I know that my life was changed

the day I came to Dominican for a job interview.