



University of Notre Dame/Alumni Association ND Today/Monahan Family Article

By Beth Lipscomb

One Family; 28 Years of Notre Dame Students

Every year since 1982, the Notre Dame campus has been home to at least one member of the Monahan family from the small town of Arcola, Illinois. The incredible 28-year streak ended this past spring, when **Andrew Monahan '09, '10 M.S.A.** completed his education.

How it All Began

The Monahans' commitment to Notre Dame started when **Tom Monahan '31** was a football player under Knute Rockne. The family patriarch told stories of carrying bricks to the bricklayers during construction of the football stadium, and of the legendary coach leading his team to cut and lay grass for the field.

When Tom's four sons — all athletes themselves — entered college in the 1960s, they were well-versed in all that Notre Dame had to offer. "We'd gone to football games, so we had the athletic connection and were familiar with the campus," said **Tim Monahan '61**. "And we knew the academics were very strong. Our parents pushed that aspect very hard."

The Third Generation Arrives

By 1982, when the next generation of Monahans began their college years, Notre Dame had changed. Daily schedules were less stringent. There were no more bed-checks or lights-out rules as Tim and his brothers had experienced — and the student population was much more diverse.

Yet the young Monahans, like their predecessors, had been steeped in Notre Dame traditions. Football and basketball games had been on the TV as they were growing up, and **Megan (Monahan) Wurtz '98** noted that her father (**Joe Monahan '64**) had named three consecutive family dogs "Rocky," in honor of Knute Rockne.

"It was a privilege to attend Notre Dame, so we all fixed our gaze upon the Golden Dome since our youth," Megan said, although relatives are quick to note that all students made their own choice of college, without undue pressure.

Tim's son **Tom Monahan '87** was the first of this generation to choose Notre Dame — and during his years as a student, Tim built a family tailgating tradition, carrying family members to home games in a motor coach to watch Tom (and later, other Monahans) play football.

The Benefits of Family

Being in close proximity to family made the transition to college life easier for the Monahan cousins. As Megan said, “I had instant community and friends in five other dorms, and I took full advantage of it. Having my siblings and cousins with me at Notre Dame was by far the greatest gift our parents could give us.”

Her younger cousin, Andrew, agreed. He and his on-campus cousins ate together once or twice a week — throughout the decades, meals were among the Monahans’ favorite times to socialize — while giving each other the freedom to enjoy their own unique college experiences.

Beyond the family tailgating, Megan recalls fond memories of asking her brother and cousins to join her and her Farley Hall friends at dances. Plus, she noted, “Going to each other’s evening dorm Masses had a huge impact on developing my vision for community life.”

Common Values

While several of the younger Domers kept their ancestors’ tradition of participating in sports — from football to boxing and fencing — the choices to attend Notre Dame commonly came down to one key family priority: values.

“Some of your biggest decisions are made in college: who your friends will be, your future spouse, and your career choice. Lifetime habits are established. Did I want to make those within a shared vision, or amidst a secular, relativistic setting where God, religion, family, and tradition are of little importance? It was an easy decision for me to make,” Megan said.

Both Tim and his brother **Joe Monahan '64** have expressed concerns that Catholicism is not taught with the same rigor as when they attended. Megan shares in this, but adds, “[Not everyone] who goes to Notre Dame will experience the faith like I did, but if you honestly seek it out you can find it in this environment.”

As he’s watched his family members work their way through college, Tim has found that some of the changes have offered new opportunities for service. For instance, Andrew participated in the University’s tax assistance program, filing tax returns for low-income families, and called it “one of the most rewarding experiences I’ve had.”

Such values, along with the desire to make lifetime connections — as his father, uncles, and grandfather had — were a critical factor in Andrew’s own decision to attend the University.

A New Legacy Begins

After ending the 28-year streak of having a Monahan student on campus, Andrew has ensured a continued family presence — this time as a member of the staff. In August 2010, he began working as an accountant in the University controller’s office.

Now, the 4th generation of Monahans is in high school, and Tim believes some of them may choose to attend Notre Dame as well. As with their elders, however, that will be a personal choice.

Monahan Family Graduates

Of 31 total 3rd-generation Monahans, 17 attended Notre Dame, with five more joining them in South Bend, at Saint Mary's College. The school year 1994-1995 saw the largest number of Monahans on campus at once, with eight.

Thomas F. Monahan... 1931

Tim 1961 — Six of Tim's nine children are Notre Dame graduates.

Tom 1987
Jon 1990
Patrick..... 1991
Chris..... 1995
Mark 1996
Cathy..... 1998

Pat 1962 — Three of Pat's nine children graduated from Notre Dame.

Kate 1991
Dan 1995
Dave 1998

Joe..... 1964 — Seven of Joe's eight children also graduated from Notre Dame.

Joe..... 1995
Megan 1998
Tim 1999
Bridget 2001
Jack..... 2004
Bob..... 2007
Hugh..... 2009

Jim..... 1967 — One of Jim's five children studied at Notre Dame.

Andrew..... 2009, 2010 M.S.A.