

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile Series

by Margaret McGlohon '81C

Ashley Rogers '88HS

Luxury Real Estate Director

Keller Williams Real Estate, Beverly Hills, CA

Southern Roots and a California Girl

Ashley Rogers grew up in the small town of Beaufort, NC (now a bit more thriving), as her parents wanted for their family a small, close-knit community. Her father opened Clawson's Restaurant on Front Street where she and her two older brothers grew up, and it's still operating today.

By the time Ashley entered 10th grade, she knew she was ready for a change. Her oldest brother was at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) and her other brother was attending Virginia Episcopal School. She remembers vividly her first day at Saint Mary's as an 11th grader.

"That was the day I met Ruthie Sommers ('88HS)," she recalls. "I was enthralled with the other girls on second middle Smedes, especially our housemother, 'Ma Bell'."

Ashley remembers the immediate feeling she had of being independent and how she enjoyed the college-like atmosphere. "Even at that age, I noticed our faculty were very interesting and involved in campus life. They were also proud of the courses they taught," she says. "Our history professor, Dr. Joseph Caddell – from whom I later took a course at UNC – and Mrs. Myra Halpin, my science teacher, really made an impact on me."

Ms. Halpin's quest was to become the teacher selected for the Space Shuttle Challenger flight in 1986. "I remember all the stories of the training Ms. Halpin went through, but she was selected as the number two teacher," Ashley says. "It was a blessing in disguise because of the disaster that happened, and Mrs. Halpin lived to stay in teaching." Today, Mrs. Halpin teaches at the NC School of Science and Mathematics and has sponsored student experiments to fly aboard NASA's Reduced Gravity Plane.

As a student, Ashley was an involved boarder. "I was class treasurer – which is why I'm now the 'crazy finance person' of the group," she says and laughs. "I was also a member of the Ensemble and an acolyte."

As a two-year boarder, she graduated from the high school program in 1988 and chose to return to Saint Mary's for her first year of college before transferring to UNC-Chapel Hill. "It was the right decision for me. Many in my family had attended there, and I was interested in and accepted into the School of Radio, TV and Motion Pictures program."

Ashley's UNC-CH roommates (and many of her best friends at UNC) were Saint Mary's girls. "They were my friends while I was at Saint Mary's, and we grew those friendships at UNC."

A New Life Path

While at UNC-CH, Ashley worked on student films. There, she received her Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication and Media Studies. After graduating, she relocated to Wilmington, NC, which at the time was a regional leader in the film and television industry. "After a year, I headed to Los Angeles to begin my film career," she explains.

Ashley appeared in several independent films and television shows over the next four years. During filming in 1998, she met Hollywood actress Renee Zellweger who hired Ashley to be her personal assistant.

"It was great, but exhausting and after four years, I knew it was time for a change," she says. "So, I left the entertainment business."

With Ashley's connections, hers was an easy transition from film into the world of real estate, and it's where she's had amazing success ever since. Today, she's the Luxury Estate Director in high end real estate for Keller Williams, Beverly Hills. Her clientele even includes those in the entertainment industry.

In 2005, she married a local Californian, Adrian Van Anz, a photographer who's worked for industry publications like *People Magazine*, *Vogue*, *Town & Country*, *Forbes*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and MTV.



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"We were married in Charleston, SC, and today we have two beautiful daughters: Sadie Grace who's 11 and Peyton who's now eight." Both of Ashley's girls enjoy singing and dancing, have their own talent agents, and are working in the industry.

Ashley's southern roots are important to her, and she makes sure to get back to North Carolina twice a year. "Being back 'home' is important to me, and I love that my girls know this area, particularly Chapel Hill, Charlotte, and Charleston. They also know my closest friends from Saint Mary's and Chapel Hill."

In fact, later this summer Ashley, her girls, and a handful of her Saint Mary's classmates and their daughters are going to meet in New York City for a few days. "It's wonderful when we get back together and reminisce, but also share new experiences with our girls."

She also calls one Saint Mary's girl "family." Ann Yancy Rogers ('87HS '89C), Ashley's sister-in-law, lives in Charleston with Ashley's brother Will, and attended Saint Mary's during the years Ashley was there. Today, Ann runs Ro Sham Beaux, a luxury designer boutique in Charleston.

Ashley, a self-admitted "foodie," and her family also enjoy getting out on the road and finding amazing places just two hours to the north or south of Los Angeles. Outside of work and family commitments, she and Adrian support Thirst Project, Habitat for Humanity, and assisting with programs that support low income schools in their area.

As an alumna, Ashley has remained connected and engaged with Saint Mary's by attending regional alumnae events in the Los Angeles area and keeping in touch with Saint Mary's girls in the area, in addition to her lifelong friends. "I know Saint Mary's provided me with great preparation and the skills I needed for college and my career," she says.

She also has some advice to share with current Saint Mary's girls: "Don't rush your time at Saint Mary's. Enjoy every minute and absorb all you can. Be open to trying new experiences and opportunities that come your way. You never know what passion you might discover within yourself. As modern women, we are limitless in all that we can achieve. Life really is about the journey and not the destination."

Ashley hopes Saint Mary's continues to thrive, and she looks forward to being back on campus in 2023 for the high school class of 1988's next reunion. "It will be our 30th!" she exclaims. "Coming back and planning that reunion is the catalyst for our group to reconnect. In fact, we've promised each other we'd gather at least once a year together and not let any more time slip away."

Ashley Rogers truly embodies the spirit of Saint Mary's women who are intelligent, resourceful, passionate, and nurturing, and who are educated to make a difference in their communities and the world. And, we are grateful to share her story.

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