

Ewart Home

I cannot exactly remember the first time I set foot in Ewart Hall. Unlike new students who walk in for their English exam or orientation sessions, I walked into Ewart Hall as a small child in 1968 or 1969. Ten years after marrying at a very young age, my mother decided to go to school and get her degree. I remember being overwhelmed by Ewart Hall...the high ceiling, the curtains, the stage, and the smell. I was at Ewart Hall when my mother's name was called at the Honors Assembly. I was at Ewart Hall when my mother received her BA. I clapped hard when they called her up to receive the AUC Presidential Cup. I was there when she received her MA. All those caps and gowns, the music, the clapping and the standing ovations. I was there wide eyed and in awe.

Several years later, I walked into Ewart Hall as one of the youngest AUC applicants to take my English (then called Michigan) exam. That date I remember. It was early September of 1979. I sat there, a big girl now, in one of those seats that took me in as a child. And I still looked at the high ceiling. Next to me was a young man who I got to know as Ibrahim Hegazy. I took a deep breath, held my pencil and wrote the exam.

Two weeks later, I got into AUC. Over the course of the four years of my undergraduate years, I frequented Ewart Hall constantly. There were no auditoriums then. There was Oriental Hall of course, but Ewart was where it all happened. All those lectures, debates, concerts, talent shows, the Thursday night movies, and yes, the Honors Assembly, me this time.

June 1983 I walked down the BA graduation procession in Ewart Hall. My mother, now teaching at AUC, was in the procession. My professors walked by, and I remember Dr. Galal Amin shaking my hand as he walked down the isle. I was one of those capped and gowned people I gaped at in my childhood. As my name was called, I walked up the stage to receive my degree, then down again, thinking that would be my last experience with Ewart Hall.

Little did I know. Four years later, June 1987, I was up there receiving my MA. Ten years later, I was up there, again in cap and gown, sitting among AUC faculty at graduate commencement. I have continued to do that until this very day. In 2005 and 2006, four commencements, I hooded our graduates. I was Chair of my department then, and sitting next to me was none other than Ibrahim Hegazy, my Michigan exam friend, now Chair of the Management department. Ibrahim and I were up there in 2005 and 2006 at the Honors Assembly, honoring our top students.

I lectured at Ewart Hall. In 2000 I sat up there and talked to freshmen students about the digital economy, the Internet and all that. As I spoke, I could not help drifting to the time I sat on those very chairs and listened. I kept wondering how many students had been held by those seats, how many faces had been greeted by those lights and how many lives had been embraced by those walls.

Mine is but one. I drift back and remember my first dance class as an undergraduate student on the stage of Ewart Hall, with Indji Solh as my instructor. At that time it was an extracurricular activity; I heard it became a credit course years later. For a whole year, every Monday afternoon, I would head to Ewart's backstage dressing rooms, and I would stay late practicing on Ewart stage under the watchful eye of Ewart's high ceiling.

In the spring of 1994, the curtains of Ewart Hall gently opened up to reveal Indji Solh's four-year-old ballet dancers. When the performance began the stage must have recognized a familiar footstep as my daughter gently danced on that same stage that felt her mother's steps several years ago. Later in 1999 when my daughter did a solo dance, again within Indji's program, Ewart stage recognized her immediately.

As a birthday present to my mother, I put her name on a plate on an Ewart Hall seat. I chose a seat close to where I had sat at my graduation ceremonies. It was the perfect spot: one that I could see from where I had been sitting there in my cap and gown in both ceremonies. I was fulfilled.

I think of Ewart Hall and wonder. How many years have passed, when did it all happen, and where did the years go. How many people have I met in this very place, how many activities have I experienced, and how many lives have been touched.

I have lived a journey at Ewart Hall, from a child fascinated by grown ups in caps and gowns, to a department Chair hooding Masters students. I have lived several experiences and several roles, indeed several lives at Ewart Hall. I am the small child, the student, the amateur dancer, the faculty member, the speaker on stage, the department Chair and the proud mother in the audience. Ewart Hall has witnessed all this, embraced all this, and understood.

I leave Ewart Hall with a lump in my throat. It has been home to many meaningful moments in my life, and the lives of loved ones around me. My mother's name is still there, and so are my cherished memories.

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