Giving Back: Donald M. Ephraim (BUS ’52) Supports and Inspires Student Achievement

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Donald M. Ephraim (BUS ’52) Supports and Inspires Student Achievement

Donald M. Ephraim’s path to becoming a successful agent for on-air talent began with a humble job as a stock boy at a grocery store near his home on the South Side of Chicago. He used the money he earned to enroll in DePaul, becoming the first in his family to graduate college.

“My sister had married a DePaul graduate who had studied accounting,” he recalls. “Back then, I wanted to be a lawyer practicing tax law. I thought having an undergraduate degree in accounting would be helpful, and then I would get a law degree. My brother-in-law spoke highly of DePaul, and that’s where I applied.”

Ephraim excelled at DePaul and passed the CPA exam by special permission at age 20, even though Illinois law required test takers to be 21. He added a JD to his CPA after completing law school at the University of Chicago. “I lived at home during my entire college career, both undergraduate and law school,” says Ephraim. “My parents could not afford to send me to college, so I paid for all my college and law school on my own.”

After graduation from law school, Ephraim served in the army and then worked at an accounting firm and law firms before striking out on his own as an accountant-attorney providing tax and estate planning. His career path changed when former Chicago Bears wide receiver Johnny Morris came to him as a client. “Johnny called me after I did his estate plan and said he had received an offer from WBBM-TV to come on air during football season to do Sunday night postgame commentary,” Ephraim says. “He wondered if I could negotiate his contract. I told him I’d never done that before, but I would like to try. Johnny was so pleased with the result, he talked about it to everyone. All of a sudden, clients just started coming in, and pretty soon I was a major rep in terms of television, radio and newspaper people.”

Ephraim’s client list included film critics Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel, news anchor Bill Kurtis, sports announcer Jack Brickhouse, Chicago Mayor Jane Byrne and many others.

After decades of success, Ephraim turned his law firm over to two of his sons. “I’m in my give-back phase now,” he says. He actively supports education, arts and culture organizations near his Florida home, including the Palm Beach Jewish Film Festival and the Cultural Council of Palm Beach County. He also gives generously to DePaul through the Donald M. Ephraim Family Endowed Excellence Award, which provides a monetary prize for the highest-achieving DePaul business students at the end of their junior year.

“Having to fund my own education, I’ve always been interested in helping students fund theirs. I hope to inspire the students in the business school to achieve their best grades through this award.”

Donald M. Ephraim (BUS ’52)
You can be part of DePaul University’s response to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic. Our students and other members of the DePaul community need your support for everything from technology support for online learning to emergency assistance with everyday and extraordinary expenses. Your gift means so much during this uncertain time.

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