The Ticket to Major League Success

by Michael W. Mourey ’95

The Philadelphia Phillies and SU alumna Ken Duffy ’99 had a big year in 2008. The Phillies won their second World Series title in their over 125-year history, and Duffy became the team’s manager of ticket operations. The Phillies’ success continued on and they won their fifth consecutive East Division championship last season. Duffy sat down with fellow alumna Melissa Mourey to discuss his role in this stellar finish.

Meet Ken Duffy, a communication arts graduate, who is the manager of ticket operations for the Philadelphia Phillies. “Through an internship, he began his career in baseball in 1999 and was hired full time in 2001 as a ticket office representative. Shortly after the Phillies moved from Veterans Stadium to Citizens Bank Park in 2004, Ken was promoted to box office manager and subsequently became the manager of ticket operations in 2008. Recently, I had an opportunity to interview Ken about what is like to work for a professional sports franchise.

Q: Can you describe a typical day in a major league box office like the Phillies’?

A: During the season, I am at work for all 81 home games. It’s typically a 12-13-hour day if it is a day game. Day games are great because you get to take a little break. I typically start out early. My typical morning consists of: checking the box office sales and tickets inventory for that night’s game and all the rest of the games at the same stand. The hours leading up to game time are spent mostly in customer service duties and on ticket-related tasks.

Q: In 2008, the Philadelphia Phillies won the World Series for the first time since 1980. Can you share what it was like to experience that magical post-season playoff run?

A: The 2008 post-season is something I’ll never forget. The week was intense, the games were incredibly stressed, and the experience and the ultimate payoff made everything worthwhile. The past season can only be a maximum of 11 games versus an 81-game regular season, but you only have about a month to prepare for it: there is an entire off-season for the regular season. We have to take care of our service ticket holders, have a public sale, and check tickets for our employees and business partners as well as the players. During the month of September, we have all of that going on, plus regular season games to worry about. I remember being dead tired during the National League Championship Series (NLCS) and World Series, but at the same time I was totally running on adrenaline. We won the NLCS on the road, and we had a viewing party in the Diamond Club at the ballpark and quite a celebration when we won. Then the reality of being in the World Series and all the prep work that goes into our hosting our home game at the new ballpark in Miami for the World Series on the road against the Rays in Tampa, and the Phillies clinched a game for all of the front office employees. We stayed at Clearwater Beach and took a bus to the ballpark for Game 1 (which happened to fall on my birthday). We won Game 1 and lost Game 2. We flew back to Philadelphia and won the next three home games to win the World Series and took Game 1 of the World Series to the home stands two days later, we got to ride in the parade in front of a million Phillies fans.

Q: World events have affected all of us, so when I asked Ken to share his favorite memory of his job beyond the Phillies experience.

A: “One of my favorite memories was back at Veterans Stadium on September 17, 2001. It was baseball’s first night back since the tragedies of 9/11. Back then, we had a promotion with the Red Cross where we gave them a bunch of vouchers with 10 dates throughout the season that could be redeemed for a free ticket. When people donated blood, they were given a voucher. In the days after 9/11, thousands of people gave blood in the hopes that there would be survivors that would need it. Everyone who donated was given a voucher. Ironically, the September 17, 2001, Phillies versus Braves game just happened to fall on the night the voucher was good for. So as I mentioned previously, it was our first night back. Some 11,000 people walked up that night and redeemed a voucher for a ticket. In addition, 3,000 people walked up and bought a ticket. We had lines all day, but the01 Phillies game was incredible. We were amazing with an incredible video tribute. The nation and ‘God Bless America’ were incredibly emotional. When the game started, the Phillies beat the Braves and you sort of had a feeling good for the first time since 9/11.”

Q: Ken went on to talk about his SU experience.

A: “Salisbury laid the foundation for everything I do now. From an early age, I became interested in computer skills to communication skills, it all came from Salisbury.”

Q: What does it mean to you, the SU community, and those in theSU alumni network to see Ken in such positions as Who’s Ahead of Vogue Hoyt? (right) and Teeth & Night, he also was a gilded artist. Among his credits, Starres had performed, directed and taught at the renowned Williamsburg Theater Festival, MA.

A: Under his leadership, Salisbury’s program proudlly announces a new scholarship honoring his memory. It will be awarded annually to a major who has demonstrated promise as an artist, who is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence and whose habits demonstrate professionalism. The first recipient will be announced at the spring 2012 Honors Convocation.

Q: Can you tell us a bit about the distinguished academic and professional resume. Director of theatre at the University of Pittsburgh, he had bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Harvard University and his Doctor of Fine Arts from Yale. He had directed the Yale Dramatic Association and taught in the famed Yale School of Drama. As Salisbury’s first production by new Director of Theatre Leland “Lee” Starres in fall 1972, the audience was electrified. Salisbury University Theatre had a history of good academic productions, but the polished, sophistication and professionalism in the Starres years was remarkable. The audience, thank you for having us here. Starres year’s 1972-80, recall productions – from the classics to Broadway musicals – that earned the small department a reputation throughout Maryland as one of the best in higher education.

This year, on the 45th anniversary of Salisbury’s Theatre and Dance Department proudly announces a new scholarship honoring his memory. It will be awarded annually to a major who has demonstrated promise as an artist, who is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence and whose habits demonstrate professionalism. The first recipient will be announced at the spring 2012 Honors Convocation.

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Q: Remembering When: A Sea Gull Turns 100

Homecoming 2011 was a time to remember and celebrate: Margaret Lawns Engle ’31, at age 100, may be SU’s oldest living graduate; certainly, the oldest at that weekend’s alumni luncheon. But she was not alone, and was the agent for the Class of ’31 for many years. Although now in a wheelchair, and one time she fell asleep in bed from exhaustion, much to the consternation of Powell, who wanted her assistance, “She was not in good humor” when that happened, Engle said.

Engle maintained her ties to campus and was the agent for the Class of ’31 for many years. Although now in a wheelchair, she still lives in her century-old SU. One secret to her longevity may be her Benedictine motto, “ora et labora.” Engle and her late husband George were patrons of the Salisbury Symphony Orchestra, which performs in Holloway Hall Auditorium.

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