



## Jarvis Doctorow

Jarvis Doctorow was born in 1925 to an immigrant Jewish family which had settled initially in Brooklyn, New York, but moved to Lexington N.Y. where the air was healthier when he was a child. He was not bookish or academic and failed to receive a high school diploma. He was drafted to the army in World War 2 and saw active service as an infantryman in Southern Italy where he was wounded. His easygoing personality and his ability to motivate people was recognized by the army and he was assigned to the American Forces Radio Network (AFN) in France. He made his way up through France 15 miles behind the front line after the Mediterranean landings, boosting troop morale with music and programming that reminded them of home. After an initial spell as a unit disc jockey for AFN he rose to station manager and the manager of all six AFN stations in Europe and based in Paris. When we met he was amused to hear that when we first came to England my mother insisted that the family listen to AFN rather than the BBC because the music was better and the announcers were less stuffy. He had a wonderful time in Paris located in an expensive hotel near the Arc de Triomphe and with plenty of US dollars in his pocket to enjoy his furloughs. He met and married his first wife, Catherine Loumeau (who sadly died 20 years later from cancer), and they had three children. When he was discharged from the Army he remained in Paris as a radio reporter for the French National Radio, freelanced for the BBC and he was in demand because he had a good voice for dubbing the voices of actors in films. Catherine had been a member of the French resistance and was a lively multifaceted artist and committed educator. In 1948 when she was offered a job at the Maison Francaise in Oxford she accepted on condition that an interview was arranged for Jarvis at one of the colleges. In those days when the colleges were much smaller, the Principal participated more in admissions and had the freedom to make the final decision. As Jarvis came to tell it, Emden asked him how he came to France from America and he told him that he had paid his way by shoveling coal on the ship. Emden replied that he had done the same thing on a destroyer in 1917 and he was willing to bend the rules for a brave allied soldier. Clearly Vice-Principal Kelly was not present and so Jarvis was spared the acid test of catching an elliptical ball. Since he had no formal academic qualifications Emden prepared a special curriculum for him and they agreed that Modern Languages would perhaps play to his strengths and he arranged sympathetic tutors. It is a tribute to his persistence, his native intelligence and determination that he progressed well, although it involved taking and passing 12 exams each year. On completion he initially accepted a place at a film school in Paris as he hoped to forge a career in filmmaking, but on graduation he engineered another unconventional admission into Harvard Business School and was awarded his MBA in 1953.

Initially he used his army experience and contacts to build a business involving jeeps and with a partner built up a successful company producing greeting cards. When the company outgrew their premises they started looking for an alternative location. With his typical business flair and foresight he entered into an agreement with the owners to rent a 7 storey building on Broadway with the option of buying it at a fixed price at a later date. His partner did point out that the building was five times larger than their present site, but Jarvis was not to be deterred. He thereby became the owner and manager of a significant chunk of Manhattan real estate. The building proved to have an interesting history: during the war it had been used to house the first meetings for those setting up the Manhattan Project and subsequently used extensively by the New York Police Department. He made a tidy fortune when it was sold in 2003. He set aside \$5 million for philanthropic purposes. It was split equally between those institutions which he felt had progressed his career: Crown Heights Yeshiva Elementary School in Brooklyn, St Edmund Hall and Harvard Business School.



He and his second wife Constance (Connie) Karros established the Jarvis and Constance Doctorow Family Foundation. It is dedicated to funding non-profit organizations devoted to mental health service and the performing, visual and literary arts. Connie was Deputy Executive Director of South Bronx Mental health Council. She was a great advocate for community-based services and the empowerment of the mentally ill and their families. Jarvis, Connie and his children (Suzanne, Francois and Danielle) have successfully developed it into a substantial charitable foundation. He and Connie were also great supporters of the Catskill Mountain Foundation for the Performing Arts (Hunter, N.Y.) which is near his childhood home in Lexington.

In Jarvis' own words: "The warm satisfying feeling of sharing what Dad and Mom has kindled in me when I helped a needy cause was deeply embedded. As the youngest of four I was custodian of the blue pushke. My job was to get my siblings to join me in dropping pennies into the Jewish National Fund of Trees for Israel box when we got our allowances or were paid for extra chores. Later in life, as fortune smiled my circumstances became more comfortable, those feelings were reinforced, it became important that our kids could properly equate the pleasures of lollipops, ice creams and hot dogs with charitable giving."

His life and success were based on taking the opportunities offered, making many right decisions and the perseverance to stick to your core beliefs. The evolution from soldier, student, successful businessman to philanthropist is inspirational and a fine example of the realisation of the American dream. Although his story has echoes of Jay Gatsby's journey through Oxford in an earlier war, Jarvis followed his entrepreneurial dream in a more constructive and less flamboyant fashion. His dream was not based on what might have been, but an optimism for the future and an inbred commitment to use what he accumulated to help others who had been less fortunate. The Hall is particularly grateful that he not only funded the lecture theatre which bears his name, but also his additional endowment of the EB Emden Fellowship and the endowment of a University Chair in Conflict Resolution Studies, which has focused on building a brighter future in the Middle East.

When he first told me that the short list for buying his building in New York included Columbia University I cheekily suggested that the deal may be sealed if they included a provision to send one of their students to St Edmund Hall. It appealed to him because he very much liked innovative deals and it would give an opportunity for a young American student to follow in his footsteps. I think it gave us both great pleasure when Columbia University agreed to establish a fully funded scholarship for a Columbia student to attend St Edmund Hall each year for the next 40 years. Jarvis I shall miss your warmth, humanity, generosity and friendship, but will take a rain-check on your puns.

**Mike Mingos**

**Principal 1999-2009.**