

Jeff Olin



**Your Life Is Now
1999-2005**

**“In this undiscovered moment
Lift your head up above the crowd
We could shake this world
If you would only show us how
Your life is now”**

- John Mellencamp, Your Life Is Now

Everyone has one. A song that, the instant you hear the first notes, the first words, you are transported to another place and time in your life. Maybe it was your first kiss, the time you won that race, or just maybe when you took one of the biggest risks of your life. It was a risk that you had to take completely on your own. Your last chance, your only chance. For Jeff Olin, that song was John Mellencamp’s “Your Life is Now” and that chance was to come to Kansas State University and finish his bachelor’s degree.

On August 8th, 1999, Jeff Olin packed up all of his belongings and set out on the journey of a lifetime. This was it for Jeff, his chance was now, and his life was now. He printed out driving directions from his father’s house in Baytown, Texas to Manhattan, Kansas. With 30 t-shirts, 10 pairs of shorts, socks and underwear to last a while, a few pairs of sandals and a TV, Jeff decided that this was his time, and he took that chance. After a 12 hour drive, Jeff arrived in Kansas, his new home, a state that he had never even visited before. He then checked in to West Hall as a guest. Jeff knew there was no turning back, this was it, and he was going to give his all.

**“This is your time here to do what you will do
Your life is now,
Your life is now,
Your life is now”**

Before Jeff left on his journey, he knew he wanted to do more than finish his degree. Jeff wanted to become involved on campus, meet new people and be able to help students along the way. He knew he wanted to be a Resident Assistant before he arrived at K-State.

When Jeff checked into West Hall, he met a few Resident Assistants who were preparing for the upcoming school year. Up until that point, the only person he knew at K-State was Ell Roberson,

who played football in high school for Jeff's father. Bored and looking for things to do, he sat in the lobby of West Hall and helped the RA's with their door decs. Jeff made friends and in the process learned more about being an RA. When the halls open, Jeff was assigned to Haymaker Hall, a place to call home for five of the next six years.

Jeff checked in with his Resident Assistant and moved his belongings into his room in Haymaker. He asked a few questions and did what he could to help others get moved in. Jeff also noticed that the front desk was hiring people for the school year. Jeff saw this as an opportunity to get involved and be a role model for others. He turned in his application and was offered an interview. Jeff was the last interview of the week before the selection was to take place. The next day, Jeff received a letter in his mailbox stating that he was offered a position as a Community Assistant.

The Community Assistant position was the first step in learning about Kansas State Housing and Dining Services. He learned how the hall ran, how things got accomplished and how he could help out. During this first semester in college, a long way from his beloved Texas, Jeff made Haymaker Hall his home. He asked many questions of his supervisors and wanted to know of ways he could do more. He did mail, covered shifts for his co-workers, and helped out whenever he could. His dedication to the halls and his job were going to pay off sooner than Jeff anticipated.

When Jeff went home for his first holiday break, the first time home since he left for college, he was a changed man. Jeff was excited to be back in Texas, near the beach and back with his family, but he was also excited to get back to K-State. Jeff knew he loved K-State and would do whatever he could to make it a better place. He bled purple! It was only one semester, but K-State has a way of doing that to you.

At the end of winter break, Jeff was informed that two Resident Assistants and the Multicultural Assistant of Haymaker Hall left for various reasons during the break. Todd Clark, the Residence Life Coordinator at the time, asked Jeff to interview for one of those positions. Jeff gladly accepted this unexpected offer and knew he had to shine.

“In this undiscovered moment, put your head up above the clouds....”

Jeff was offered a position as a Resident Assistant and he started in January of 2000. This was the beginning of great things to come. Jeff dove right in, without the benefit of formal training and tried his best to meet all the residents of the floor and learn all he could about being a Resident Assistant. Although he didn't always know the answer, he always did what he thought was right. In his mind, effort, dedication and willingness to learn would go a long way. If he had effort and was dedicated, the rest would take care of itself.

Jeff put forth effort by having a presence in Haymaker. He could always be seen in the halls talking to people. He also tried to do extra rounds to get to know people that lived in other parts of the building. It was Jeff's mission to meet, and really know, as many people as he could. Jeff knew the more people he knew the more people he could be a role model for, someone to turn to with questions or problems, someone who really cared and could really help. His residents and staff saw the effort Jeff was putting forth and nominated him for Resident Assistant for the month of February. The nomination was an honor, an honor made even greater because he was nominated by his peers.

In March, he applied and was inducted into the National Residence Hall Honorary. Jeff wanted to be one of the top one percent of students living in residence halls and strove to be worthy of the distinction on NRHH. He saw NRHH as a way to continue his presence in the halls as a role model and also a way to push himself to further excellence.

In April, Jeff also obtained another position he wanted when he came to Kansas State. He wanted to work with the football team as an Equipment Manager. Jeff had literally grown up on the sidelines. His dad is a high school football coach in Texas, where football is everything. Jeff wanted to be on the sidelines again and be a part of a winning team. Jeff became a leader for the student managers and other Wildcats. He worked with the defensive line for four years and created relationships with players and managers between conducting drills and helping the coaches. Jeff

became the go-to guy, the lead manager on the road, helping set up locker rooms before the team arrived and troubleshooting problems along the way. Jeff went the extra mile. In fact, he went the extra 1573 miles driving in a semi truck from Manhattan to San Diego, California, 1320 miles to Phoenix, Arizona and the 518 miles to Dallas, Texas for bowl games.

Jeff's position with the football team became very important to his life at K-State not only because of his passion for football, but because of his ability to role model how to balance school, being an RA and football. His new and taxing schedule could have been used as an excuse to slack off, but instead Jeff worked harder and harder. Many times after home football games Jeff would rush back to Haymaker to take the pager from a staff member and resume weekend duty.

In his last full year of football at K-State, Jeff's dedication to the Wildcats was rewarded when he became the head student manager. It was a daunting and extremely rewarding task. Jeff worked directly with Coach Bill Snyder. His time with Coach Snyder cannot be measured. Not only did Jeff gain more air time on television, which he despised, he was given the privilege that every fan dreams of, the chance to listen to the great minds of the coaches at work during games. There is no way to put a price tag on all the things that he learned from Coach Snyder, a man he greatly admires.

The chance to work with football gave him the opportunity to attend more than 50 regular season games, four bowl games and two Big XII championships, including a win over Oklahoma. Jeff used his position with the football team for other opportunities as well. Working with football gave him a chance to help the staff of Haymaker Hall, the hall football players are placed, know the players better. Jeff was able to not only reach out to football players more, but also to forge a connection with other residents. Jeff was never boastful about his relationship with the football team, but was always willing to talk football; even it was the twentieth time that day someone asked him if Ell was hurt, or who was starting the game tomorrow. Residents felt comfortable approaching Jeff after seeing him on the field or on TV, and quick exchanges about the game often evolved into a friendship.

The people he met and the places he went through his position with the football team made an amazing impression and created memories that will last forever. With both of his positions, RA and equipment manager, Jeff showed true dedication. He was always willing to go the extra mile without neglecting either duty. His efforts were rewarded by the relationships built both on and off the field. During his time as an RA, Jeff was nominated for RA of the month five times, with one awarded the campus winner, and one winning at the regional level. Jeff was also nominated for RA of the year in 2002.

Jeff thought he was done as a Resident Assistant in May of 2002 because he would begin student teaching in spring of 2003. Jeff enjoyed the atmosphere of campus life and decided to live in the Jardine apartment complex for the remainder of his time at K-State. He lived there for about a month and a half before starting a summer internship with the Washington Redskins. While at the Redskins, Jeff received a call to come back to housing for one more semester. An increase in the number of students wanting to live in housing allowed Jeff a position with overflow housing in the Lower Terrace of Goodnow Hall for the fall of 2002. Jeff was excited for the opportunity to stay involved in housing, and also to experience a new environment. Jeff would be moving into a co-educational building on the opposite side of campus. Jeff was ready for the challenge and wanted to know how he could prepare for the upcoming year while he was still hundreds of miles away. Mishelle Banas, Residence Life Coordinator of Goodnow Hall at the time, told him that things would be taken care of as Jeff's new staff helped prepare his floor. Jeff arrived back in Manhattan on the Saturday of the halls opening and was ready to go.

Jeff completed his time as an RA in December 2002, when he started his student teaching. At that time, Jeff also began to seriously consider life after graduation. He enjoyed his involvement at K-State through Housing and Dining so much that he decided to attend graduate school to pursue a degree in College Student Personnel. Jeff was excited to realize that he would be able to continue his

dedication to enriching the lives of college students as a graduate student, and possibly the rest of his life.

At graduation in May of 2003, Jeff was awarded the Dean of Student life Outstanding Graduating Senior Award. Needless to say, the Housing and Dining staff at Kansas State was very excited when Jeff decided to apply at K-State for a graduate assistantship. After being hired as the Assistant Coordinator in Haymaker Hall, Jeff, with typical dedication, jumped right in and started to work in the summer of 2003.

“We could shake this world, if you would only show us how”

As the ARLC for Haymaker, Jeff understood that you have to make the most of your life, and every chance you are given. He was instrumental in developing a solid relationship with the athletic department by using the strong relationships that he had made through his experiences with the football team. Jeff worked with the student athlete population and helped assist them in making the transition to college. Not only was he a familiar face to them, he worked with the placement of the football players living in the halls, held a floor meeting for them during football practice and checked on them to see how they were doing.

**“Do you believe you’re a victim of a great compromise
'cause I believe you could change your mind and change our lives”**

These students were not the only ones Jeff connected with. As part of a program to encourage academics, Jeff worked with the staff in the building and did rounds twice a week to pass out “Study Bucks”. These coupons were given to students who were caught studying during the evening hours. Students could stop by the staff office to redeem their bucks for Bakery gift certificates. This helped Jeff learn the names and faces of the residents as well as to talk to them about their academics. Jeff’s door was always open, and he had a good relationship with the residents on his floor. Sometimes that meant that Jeff was the official photographer before a night out, a person to explain the intricacies of enrolling, or simply a nice guy who let you catch up on your daily soap operas.

Jeff was also very dedicated to the Community Assistant staff that he supervised. Jeff encouraged them to use their job as he had; a stepping stone to more involvement in the halls and the K-State community. His CA's knew they could count on him for advice, gentle reminders if they forgot a procedure and to be an understanding boss who would cover shifts they couldn't work, no questions asked. One of his former students had this to say about Jeff:

"Jeff never doubted me or my abilities, even when I did. He always kept an open mind when I approached him with ideas for HGB and our CA staff. This summer I was co-supervised by Jeff as a member of "The Blue Team," the summer school Resident Assistant staff. As a new RA, Jeff showed great patience with me and excitement. I remember him assisting me with my first door decorations, taking me and another RA out for a slushie, and providing me with a listening ear whenever things were "tough." His support has continued into this year when I moved to Goodnow Hall to be an RA. Even though he does not supervise me this year, Jeff has always been willing to talk with me. There have been numerous times that he listened to me when I was stressed or discouraged and his reaction was always the same; warm, patient, positive, and encouraging. I'll never forget Jeff for what he's given to me."

- Rachel Trowbridge, former CA

The other grad students at K-State saw Jeff's professionalism, his personal relationships with his students and his awe-inspiring dedication. Jeff leads by example and, incredibly, people follow. In order to recognize his accomplishments in the professional realm, he was nominated by his peers for the ACPA graduate student of the year.

In his time here, Jeff played a huge role in Haymaker Hall. Writing over 22 OTM's, he strove to recognize those around him. He also created programs that will be around long after he is gone. His "What Would You Do For \$100", "Football 101" and "Health Awareness Week" programs have been adapted by other RA's for programs on their floors and buildings. Most of all, he was a presence in Haymaker. Jeff's bald head and warm smile added to the lives of countless residents of Haymaker.

It would be easy to make a list of the programs Jeff did, the groups and staffs he mentored and lead, the activities he was involved in and the awards he won and compare that to others. Maybe his list wouldn't be as long, maybe it would be longer. But that is not Jeff Olin's legacy at Haymaker Hall

and Kansas State University. Jeff Olin's legacy is the inspiration he gives to others. His positive attitude and dedication to the department that keeps the rest of the staff motivated to work harder, give more and live life to its fullest each day is his legacy. Jeff has taught everyone around him that it doesn't matter how old you are, what experience you have, how far you traveled or even what you have done. What matters is what you do, and that you give every single ounce that you have to doing it the best way you know how. Jeff Olin has given everything he has to Kansas State University, and in the best way he knew how.

When Jeff made another risky decision this year, took the second greatest chance of his life and set off on his journey to Miami, Florida to work for the Miami Dolphins, Jeff proved to others that it is possible to chase after your dreams, all of them. After all, **"Your Life is Now."**

Each day we meet the people who shape our lives, but rarely do we realize it. In the spring of 2002, while interviewing for an RLC position here at K-State, I met one of these people and since then I have been reaping the benefits.

What I remember of Jeff Olin during my interviews is a young man who was professional, friendly and invested in the decision making process of hiring the new coordinators. What I know of Jeff Olin today is a non-traditional student who thinks the extra mile is the bare minimum and that you can always give more, work harder, and be better than you think you are. He is caring, committed and loyal to the department and all of the trust that is entailed into his position. Jeff has worked hard to build that trust and to make sure that he is worthy of it.

Two years ago, when I had the opportunity to select Jeff as the Assistant Residence Life Coordinator for Haymaker, I jumped at the chance. I had no doubts about his ability to do the job. I looked forward to spending the next two years with a graduate student that knew the building and the dynamics of the residents, because he had been in the trenches as a RA in that same building.

I have yet to question that decision. Jeff has lived up to my expectations and has raised the bar on what I demand of myself. Jeff balances a huge amount of responsibility on his shoulders. Not only does he do a great job in the halls, he also serves as Bill Snyder's right hand man during K-State football games. This position allows Jeff to combine two of his passions; working with students and football.

Our ability to connect to some students has increased dramatically by his extracurricular involvement. Because he is already connected to the student athletes, we have been better able to build relationships with these students, thereby serving them better.

The real area that Jeff shines is in his ability to motivate. He is constantly looking for ways to improve and to go further. As his supervisor, I have to remind him to take a vacation. He keeps me on my toes and looking for ways to emulate him. I have never had the opportunity to work with someone who gives so much of himself. Jeff would bend over backwards to help a staff member out.

I was able to experience his dedication first hand during my maternity leave last year. When I went into labor three weeks early, Jeff automatically stepped in. Without complaint he assumed the responsibility of my position and kept our staff and students up to speed. Even though we hadn't had a chance to plan my leave out, he did a great job. During the time I was out, he hired our new community assistant staff, assisted our Hall Governing Board with elections, helped our staff with a campus wide program, and even picked up some of my responsibilities with departmental committees as a way of helping out. Through it all he kept me informed and worked to make sure the residents were respectful of my time away.

In the supervisor / supervisee relationship, I feel that I have been the one to benefit the most. He has kept me focused and increased my desire to work with students. When our building was slotted for construction, he worked late nights with me to ensure that our students felt comfortable with their mid semester moves.

Jeff is tireless in his dedication and his willingness to be a servant for others. It is not uncommon to see him working a late night shift at the desk to help out the community assistants, or walking the floors talking to residents about Monday Night Football or how they are doing with school. While this is the vision that we expect of all graduate students, Jeff lives up to the ideal.

See the moon roll across the stars
See the seasons turn like a heart
Your father's days are lost to you
This is your time here to do what you will do
Your life is now your life is now your life is now
In this undiscovered moment
Lift your head up above the crowd
We could shake this world
If you would only show us how
Your life is now
Would you teach your children to tell the truth
Would you take the high road if you could choose
Do you believe you're a victim of a great compromise
'Cause I believe you could change your mind and change our lives
(repeat chorus)
Would you teach your children to tell the truth
This is your time here to do what you will do
(repeat chorus twice)