

## Eric Mayse

His childhood dream of flying high tech military jets ended suddenly playing the sport he loved. Yet, good dreams die hard, and sometimes a backup plan works out just fine. In this case, it landed him at the most prestigious college in America.

Meet Eric Mayse, one of our most accomplished family members and son of Carroll and Thomas Mayse and grandson of Vivian Smith (Ruby Prosser's daughter). Eric presently lives in Memphis, Tennessee with his wife Darla and is 37 years old. Both are native Texans, Darla from northeast Texas, and Eric was raised in Temple, Texas, about an hour's drive from Austin.

Eric is the only child of Carroll and Thomas. Growing up, however, Eric never really felt lonely without brothers and sisters with the many relatives who lived nearby. Both his mother and father are members of large families, 7 siblings on each side. Coincidentally, there were exactly 6 boys and 2 girls on both his mother and father side of the family. In total, there were 11 uncles and 3 aunts and many cousins to hang out with.

Especially memorable to Eric were the occasions spent with his cousins and other relatives at the home of his grandparents while growing up. As he recall, practically every weekend his family visited grandparents or other family members on either his mother or father's side of the family. One weekend the family would take the 20 minute drive from Temple to spend time with his father's folks, and the next weekend, the family drove about an hour to his mother's family in Austin. Some weekends, the family would take both trips, depending what was going on in the family.

Though very busy with family activities, Eric also was very busy on his own. In high school, Eric played the saxophone in the high school band and also lettered in both football and baseball. His mother Carroll, however, was quick to point out that she only allowed Eric to play sports if he kept high scores. Though rather challenging, Eric did not disappoint her and graduated seventh in a class of around 500 students.

With very high academic scores, Eric set his goals high as well. His dream was to attend West Point or the Naval Academy with hopes of flying jets for either the Army or the Navy. He applied to both institutions and was accepted by both. However, his acceptance to the Academy was nullified after tearing ligaments in his neck while playing football.

Though disappointed with failed hopes of becoming a pilot, Eric took a chance on something else. During that school year, he had received literature in the mail from Harvard University and thought he would apply just to "see whether he could get in." As he recalled, he wasn't really serious about attending Harvard at first. His application he submitted was incomplete and omitted the essay portion of the application. Then, to his surprise, Harvard called and requested that he complete the essay portion. After doing so, Eric was accepted to Harvard.

Though admitted to this fine university, Eric mentioned that it was the campus life and students at Harvard that won him over. He shared that many have a preconceived notion that Harvard is basically an upper classed, white university. However, Harvard is quite diverse with approximately 10% African American and 10% Latino and 25% Asian.

Eric did indicate that the curriculum at Harvard is quite competitive. Practically everyone who attends is very smart. Recalling an experience during his freshmen year, Eric mentioned that math was his best subject and that he felt most confident regarding his math skills until he met Mr. Math of New York, Mr. Math of Connecticut, and Mr. Math of Massachusetts. Something else, Eric also shared that it is tough to make “A’s” at Harvard. Many professors grade on a curve. So, it is conceivable to score 93% on an exam and yet earn a “B.”

Still, in spite of the tough curriculum, attending Harvard was a very good experience for Eric. Especially memorable were the people he met and learned from and the many world leaders who came and spoke at the University. In fact, in one week, Bishop Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and Colin Powell came to the University to speak.

After graduating from Harvard, Eric returned home to Temple, Texas. Back home Eric took a job in Finance with a manufacturing company, and, also spent a lot of time doing community service, serving as a mentor and tutor at his former high school in Temple.

A couple of years later, Eric met his future wife Darla. They met at his home church in Temple. At that time, Darla was not a member of that particular church, and was, in fact, just visiting from out of town. She was visiting the church pastor who just so happened to had been her pastor years before back home in northeast Texas. They had stayed in touch over the years, and their friendship led to something greater, Darla meeting her future husband Eric. Three years after meeting, the same pastor performed their wedding ceremony.

After a few years, Eric returned to college to further his education, to pursue a Master’s Degree in Business Administration. Instead of returning to the northeastern section of the Country, he selected a college closer to home, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. SMU was significantly different from Harvard. It was much smaller and less diverse. However, Eric very much appreciated the experience. He especially enjoyed being closer to home and studying on a full scholarship and the camaraderie of working with small study groups.

After receiving his MBA degree, Eric went to work for American Airlines in Finance and Marketing. Besides his work, Eric really liked the flight benefits of working for a major airline. He and his wife could fly anywhere they wish without charge to visit family and friends. However, five years later, Eric was victimized by massive job cuts in the airline industry following 9/11.

After leaving American Airlines, Eric went to work for Phillip Morris in Richmond, Virginia, and now currently works for Federal Express in Memphis, Tennessee. His goals yet remain high, with hopes of becoming senior vice president, or, perhaps, starting a business of his own. On a personal level, Eric and his wife Darla plan to begin a family, with hopes of one, or possibly, two children.

January, 2008