

Christine DuFur 0:01

Hi everyone. I'm Christine DuFur, a junior at Sarah Lawrence College.

Lee Brown 0:05

And I'm Lee Brown, a senior at Sarah Lawrence College. Our seminar, objects in memory, is focused on people's relationship with evocative objects and how they shape and evoke particular memories.

Christine DuFur 0:16

Our class is a community based combined class with the Wartburg adult care community.

Lee Brown 0:21

Today, we will be interviewing our classmate Rob, who is a resident at Wartburg's independent living housing, and a lifelong learner.

Christine DuFur 0:28

We asked Rob to think of and discuss an object that holds meaning and memories to him.

Lee Brown 0:33

When we arrived at Rob's home, he had brought out one of the few objects that he's kept with him over the years; his high school yearbook from Regis high school.

Christine DuFur 0:41

This yearbook is maroon approximately an inch thick and leather bound. While sitting down with Rob through describing his yearbook, he told a lifelong story of learning and friendship that began during these high school years

Rob 0:54

Catholic high school in the country and the 15th best high school of all high schools. So it's quite a school. It was a wonderful, wonderful four years that I spent there. And this, of course, was in senior year, we all got a year book, which has mainly pictures a little bit, a little bit of print, but mostly pictures, which is all you really want. So I occasionally take it out and take a look and it's full of memories. All male. Yes. Actually where I went to college was all male, St. John's University at the time I went was all male, was about 600 men. And now it's a huge University.

Lee Brown 1:37

So when you look at your yearbook, what does it like, conjure up for you? Do you remember when you got it? Was there a party like-

Rob 1:44

I do remember when we got it. We took it all around and got people to sign in. Yeah, it was a pretty big day the day to get that. Yeah. And I looked at it now and then even in these, what-how many- 70 some odd years later.

Christine DuFur 2:03

Is there a specific signature from someone in there or different people that you still are in contact with? Or have-

Rob 2:11

Most of them are dead.

Christine DuFur 2:13

Okay.

Rob 2:13

-Most of my most of my better friends, although we still get together once a year in a bar in the city called Hailey's. And there's maybe three or four of us at this point left that go, but we do go.

Christine DuFur 2:27

That's amazing.

Rob 2:28

Yes.

Lee Brown 2:28

Do you often look through your yearbook, or is this the first? Do you often look through it? Or is this the first time you've pulled it out in a while?

Rob 2:37

When I say often, you know, every couple of months, I might take a peek at it. Yeah. yeah.

Lee Brown 2:42

Do you have any pictures of you in here that are your favorites? Or least favorite?

Rob 2:46

Oh, there are some funny ones.

Christine DuFur 2:52

Rob then pointed out some of his favorite photos of him and his friends, some of which he stayed in contact with after high school.

if they weren't photographed, or do you think the memories are brought to you? Because you have photos of them-

Rob 3:05

Oh, yeah.

I'd have- I would have high school members without the book.

Christine DuFur 3:10

Right.

Rob 3:10

Yeah.

Christine DuFur 3:10

Okay.

Rob 3:11

Very much so.

Oh, if I go through the book. Yeah, I might have specific memories.

Christine DuFur 3:17

Yeah.

Rob 3:17

Yeah. I'd see a basketball picture and yeah, I was at that game.

Christine DuFur 3:22

Yeah.

Rob 3:23

Yes.

Christine DuFur 3:24

I know that you said that there were a few that you stayed in contact with from high school. Do you think those memories of those people are primarily from your childhood and your adolescence? Or are the memories with them-

Rob 3:39

-Oh, I see what you mean

Christine DuFur 3:40

-In adulthood?

Rob 3:41

no, no, it'd be mostly from our teen years. Yeah, we see one another regularly. But it's definitely a teen years.

Christine DuFur 3:49

Right.

Rob 3:50

I never- I never developed a friendship with many these guys that I saw on a regular basis. No.

Christine DuFur 3:59

And you said that Facebook is a way that you would keep in contact with some of them?

Rob 4:05

Not but these guys-

Christine DuFur 4:06

Oh, okay. Just from college friends. Yeah, I understand.

Rob 4:10

Yeah.

Christine DuFur 4:11

But that's nice that that, you know, people are able to still have, you know, contact with each other.

Rob 4:17

Yes.

Lee Brown 4:19

So, you were saying that things have changed a lot since you were in high school and college. When you look back at the yearbook are there things now like people had written comments that you think- people don't use that language anymore? Like, you know, just like old slang or something? Or does it all feel like kind of contemporary to you?

Rob 4:37

That's interesting question. It was a, you know, very different world, as I say all boys. There was one black kid in the whole school. So I had very little contact with diversity. We were nearly all relatively poor Irish Catholic kids. I wouldn't say poor poor. You know, most of us didn't own homes, you know, rented homes. But it was fun. It was a wonderful four years, nevertheless.

Christine DuFur 5:12

I know that you said that it was, is it, one of the better high schools in the country.

Rob 5:17

Yes.

Christine DuFur 5:18

And were you aware of that back then? Or-

Rob 5:22

Oh God yes, they let you know every day.

Christine DuFur 5:23

Oh really?

And is it a public school or-?

Rob 5:29

No, no it's a Catholic-

Christine DuFur 5:30

-Oh, right, Catholic, right.

Rob 5:31

Jesuit high school

Christine DuFur 5:32

okay.

Rob 5:33

Yeah, it was some, some woman in 1914 went to the pastor of this church on Park Avenue, with a bag full of money and said, build a school, and-

Christine DuFur 5:46

Oh wow

Rob 5:46

-I'll support it. And the family supported it for about 40-50 years, and then the money ran out, and now the alumni support it. So it's all funded by the alumni.

Christine DuFur 5:56

That's amazing

Rob 5:57

You know, I had a class of 117 and graduated with an Admiral, a General, two bishops, three corporate CEOs, all in one little class.

Christine DuFur 6:13

Wow

Rob 6:13

Extraordinary place

Christine DuFur 6:14  
That's amazing.

Rob 6:16  
Well, I went to, I worked on Wall Street for a while. And I just said to hell that, I couldn't stand it. I got a job in education.

Christine DuFur 6:24  
Good for you.

Rob 6:25  
Smartest decision I ever made in my life. I cut my income 75%

Christine DuFur 6:31  
Wow.

Rob 6:32  
But I was making pretty good money for- for a short period of time. But I loved teaching at a Community College.

Christine DuFur 6:39  
yeah

Rob 6:40  
I'm a firm believer of them.

Christine DuFur 6:42  
What were they encouraging post high school because I know for us-

Rob 6:47  
Oh, it was a given that you're going to university, given. I would say most of the kids I went to grammar school with and then went to high school- did not go to college. There is more than not that go to college. -- As a matter of fact to people who went to high school with, not this high school, but my neighborhood children, this is not in my neighborhood- who went to high school and didn't go to college fought the Korean War. I was perfect age for the Korean War. But you got an automatic deferment for college. So I went to Navy OCS, and I was in the Korean War, but never got anywhere near Korea. I sailed the Mediterranean, which is a nice place to be during the Koran War.

I have my senior yearbook from college stached somewhere.

Lee Brown 7:34  
Which one- I think the high school one means more to you. Is that because-

Rob 7:39

Oh yeah. My high school experience was- I met a ton of friends in college, but when I went to St.- in retrospect, I did not have a particularly good opinion of the school- that's probably not fair to them. But I have a lot of good friends from college that would have been more in my life on a daily basis than my high school friends.

Lee Brown 8:02

Do you remember what the high school looks like? Was it like a brick building?

Rob 8:05

Oh it's a beautiful building.

Might be in here. Quite, quite a beautiful building.

Christine DuFur 8:14

Have they renovated it since you went there?

Rob 8:17

Oh yeah. yeah. Yeah. But it's it's quite a beautiful building with a- a courtyard in the middle and the building goes all around the courtyard. It's in the middle of the Manhattan, you know. It's got pillars. I don't know if there is a picture in here. But it is a quite a beautiful building. And they put a green roof on it now- to grow stuff.

Lee Brown 8:44

Do the students do that?

Rob 8:45

Yes. Yes.

Lee Brown 8:48

How do you stay in touch with your high school? Do they have events? Like how do-

Rob 8:52

Yeah, they do. They do have events.

They had a- they had a pretty nice theater in high school.

Christine DuFur 8:58

Okay

Lee Brown 8:59

Did you attend the plays-

Rob 9:00  
Pardon?

Did you attend all of them?

Oh God yes. I was up in the loft moving scenery.

Lee Brown 9:06

I can't imagine you know, high schoolers attending all the Shakespeare plays. I know, when I was in high school, I would have been like, oh, that's too-

Christine DuFur 9:13

Yeah

Rob 9:13

-actually it give me an appreciation of Shakespeare at an early age.

Christine DuFur 9:18

Yeah, that's amazing

Lee Brown 9:22

One question I have is just about the fact that it was a Catholic institution... How did that affect the way you felt about, you know, your maybe relationship with religion?

Rob 9:33

Oh, I was lock, stock, and battle Catholic in those days. Right into my fiftys I guess, sixties- now its'--- don't get me started. And especially having a gay son. I have a gay son. the church's position on gayness is so bizarre. It's a whole different world but uh, yeah, I was lock, stock, and battle a Catholic.

Lee Brown 10:03

Would you say, thinking about those four years, when they mean like a lot to you is that because you made a lot of friends there, because of the academic experience-

Rob 10:14

the academic experience it was it was very academic. tough. to the point where college where I went was a bit of a joke. But there were- good friendships and just very happy years. Some people talk about their high school years not particularly happy, my high school years were very, very happy. Very happy.

Christine DuFur 10:41

Thank you so much for talking with us today.

Rob 10:44

I enjoyed it..

Christine DuFur 10:46  
We enjoyed it as well.

Rob 10:49  
Idaho and Connecticut.

Christine DuFur 10:52  
and New York!

Rob 10:53  
And New York, yeah.