



WINDSOR
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Daniel Crittenden: Share Your Windsor Story

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Patricia Bruhn

All right. Are you ready?

Daniel Crittenden

This is like an eye chart. [laughs]

Patricia Bruhn

I'll help you out. Don't worry, don't worry. Let's start with – state your name and what part of Windsor you're from.

Daniel Crittenden

OK, my name is Daniel Crittenden. I live [in], I guess, what is now called the Matianuck neighborhood because we named it for this event, and I've lived in Windsor since I was two years old. The story is that they moved into the house in Windsor on my second birthday. Exactly.

Patricia Bruhn

Very nice, very nice. So, let's see. So where'd your family live before you moved to Windsor?

Daniel Crittenden

My parents lived in an apartment in New Britain. New Britain, West Hartford, Farmington – whatever. Farmington line intersection.

Patricia Bruhn

Did they say why they moved to Windsor at all?

Daniel Crittenden

I'm sorry, no, that's not right. They lived in Bloomfield. They lived in Bloomfield, had my sister who is 15 months younger than I am, [00:01:00] and needed a bigger space. So they moved from along Park Avenue. In Bloomfield, there's a housing complex. It's still there, the apartment complex, and they moved across Blue Hills Avenue into Windsor.

Patricia Bruhn

Oh, let's see. So what is your experience in Windsor? What do you think? Let's talk about your experiences going through elementary school up through high school.

Daniel Crittenden

So I attended public schools and private schools in Windsor. I started off, my parents being very religious people, put me in the only Christian School. Well no, the more Pentecostal of the Christian schools in Windsor. That was interesting. Then I transitioned into Poquonock for thirty days? [00:02:00] Thirty days because they were like, "Let's try public schools," you know? They were all young and in their 20s. Then I had a medical incident. I developed asthma, an asthma issue, and then they took me out. They moved my sister into Trinity Christian School and their preschool grade, you know, preschool four-five program.

Daniel Crittenden

And then they brought me over in [second] grade, and I was there through third grade and fourth grade and then we transitioned back into public schools by fifth grade. My sister then went to school in West Hartford, and then my mother actually had my brother. So then my brother was kind of in preschool. He was over there in West Hartford as well, and then I went to Poquonock for 5th grade and then transitioned into Metropolitan Learning Center in Bloomfield in 2000/2001 in years, [00:03:00] and graduated there in 2008. So I graduated the fourth class out of that high school.

Patricia Bruhn

Did you play any sports while you were in town? Did you play baseball or basketball or something?

Daniel Crittenden

Well, we learned pretty early that I was not good at doing sports.

Patricia Bruhn

Are you an artist then? Or music?

Daniel Crittenden

Oh no, not really. So we did sports but, you know, I didn't have the hand-eye coordination. We'd be at fall soccer and the kids would be, you know, kicking the ball and I'd just be standing there. So we just realized that it just was not a good fit. And so I'm like – yeah, it just wasn't my thing.

Patricia Bruhn

Do you remember your coach's name or anything?

Daniel Crittenden

Oh no.

Patricia Bruhn

No?

Daniel Crittenden

I mean, you might as well ask me – [laughs]

Patricia Bruhn

I just thought I'd throw that out there.

Daniel Crittenden

No, no.

Michelle Tom

[00:04:00] Did you say that you go to church here?

Daniel Crittenden

No. I've never, no.

Michelle Tom

I thought you said your parents were really religious?

Daniel Crittenden

They were religious people, but they – yeah, so [it] was the 90s and I guess the 80s. And, you know, they were like, “We want our kids to have a Christian education.” You know, that Christian education situation, and they ended up sending me to Praise Power Prayer on is it old Kennedy Road, I think? Or wherever it is, for two years, and one of the things I realized now, as an adult, that I carry from that place is that my first grade teacher every day. She was a maybe 5’6”, three-hundred-pound woman. She was very, you know – largest hoop skirts I had ever seen in my life. You know, to the ground, was very, very, very [inaudible] at least from the perspective of first grader. You know, granted, she could have been normal size. But, to me.

Daniel Crittenden

And what she would do is, every day, [she] would list everything we had to do [00:05:00] on the board, you know, on a giant pad of paper, and I would never get through that pad of paper. Never. Not a day of first grade did I ever get to item fifteen or item sixteen on that list. But now, as an adult, I find that having to write things on a board and having them up on the wall is a good way for me to keep organized with things. I don't know, of all the things I keep from her is that.

Patricia Bruhn

I love that story. I was going to ask you about your teacher or something.

Michelle Tom

How many kids were in your class or in your school?

Daniel Crittenden

So at Praise, Power, Prayer we had – God, it must be around thirty kids? Forty kids?

Patricia Bruhn

The whole school?

Daniel Crittenden

No, no, no, no. School at that time was about ninety kids and, you know, they had kids packed in there. There should have been an investigation on how many kids they had in that school. [laughs] They had ninety kids and, you know, you go through the door, there's a classroom off the lobby that was like kindergarten. Then there would be classrooms to the side of the lobby. That was like [00:06:00] first and second grade. The lobby itself was third and fourth grade. Then you would go down because it's the church too. So then the sanctuary was set up, you know, half seats. Fifth and sixth grade were all against the wall, and then back on the back wall, there was eighth through 12th. Like it was a K-12 [school], and ninety something kids because they had to keep it large enough to make money but small enough so that no one would look in and be like, "What are y'all doing over here?" So yeah, at that time, I imagine no less than twenty kids. I'm comfortable saying twenty kids in my first and second grade class.

Michelle Tom

So there were classes, like, all in one room?

Daniel Crittenden

One room.

Michelle Tom

But different classes? Like different teachers?

Daniel Crittenden

No, it was [K-12]. So one teacher per grade or, well, per pairing of grades. So first and second was one teacher, third and fourth was one teacher, fifth and sixth was one teacher. [00:07:00] But then middle school and high school were all taught by one teacher. And they didn't pass classes. At the time, they used the VCR. You know, these people are still alive. You're gonna get me in trouble. [laughs]

Patricia Bruhn

[laughs] No, no, no.

Daniel Crittenden

I know these people personally.

Patricia Bruhn

Not at all.

Daniel Crittenden

Don't air this one. Yeah, but then they used a curriculum out of Florida. The 'Becca Book program – Rebecca Book Curriculum, which is pretty creationist, fundamentalist, you know? Very –

Michelle Tom

Did most people go K-12 there? Or did they –

Daniel Crittenden

Well, not from that era. Most of us were there for one or two years. I know some people did three or four. I did have a couple friends who graduated from that school. Their parents just had, I guess, the money and the commitment to kind of navigate because it's a pared down experience [00:08:00] from a regular public school. Like coming out of that school and Trinity, I didn't know the Pledge of Allegiance. You know those kind of things that routine kids do in school? I didn't know we do that. I think they talked about the pledge of allegiance to the Christian flag, which is a whole other conversation.

Daniel Crittenden

And then I went to Trinity, and Trinity did the Pledge of Allegiance and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Christian flag. It's basically what you keep from different educational experiences. Then I went to Metropolitan. My transition to Metropolitan, and this was – oh God, this had to have been three months into my first year or second year. There they started doing this thing where they were looking at the schools over in China. And the Chinese school that they got this from apparently, the teacher entered the classroom, said good morning to the students, everyone would stand [00:09:00] and say good morning back to the teacher. And we did that, you know, every class period for seven years. So when I got into college at UHart, it took me a while to not hear door slam, "Good morning class," and stand up and say good morning teacher because that was what I had done for so long. I was like, "Oh my God." Today it would probably be like, you know, just in my head [to say] good morning, which is a thing that we did for so long. I did swim in high school because at that time, CREC didn't have its own athletic programs. So I swam for Windsor High – oh God.

Patricia Bruhn

My brother swam for Windsor High too.

Daniel Crittenden

Yeah, I swam for Windsor High and I'm trying to figure out if I want people to know this about my life. [laughs] I swam for Windsor High in, oh God, man, I'm giving so many years. [00:10:00] '05 - '06. '04 -'05 [and] '05- '06. And we lost every swimming meet we ever went except for two meets. One against Enrico Fermi and one against some other school, and the only reason we won those meets was because the numbers. We had more people physically on our team than they did, so they came in first, you know, in their relay, but our relay was second, third, fourth, and fifth, you know? And because of the point allotments in swimming, we ended up winning those. And it made like the reminder – I think there was a reminder write-up about how we won the meet because we were, you know, just always losing everything. Yeah, so that was my sport. And those kids were so happy about losing all them games. I was just so pissed off. I was like, "How are we happy?" I'll leave that alone. [00:11:00] Yeah, so are you going to make up another question or do you want me to?

Michelle Tom

Well, did you have anything that you wanted to talk about in particular?

Patricia Bruhn

Do you want to talk about your community experiences or what you're doing in town?

Daniel Crittenden

Well, I mean –

Patricia Bruhn

Why do you stay in Windsor?

Daniel Crittenden

I stay in Windsor [inaudible]. I mean, I don't know. I've just lived here for so long at this point. I mean, I think a lot of my experiences are in Windsor. My mother would get books from the Windsor Public Library and read them to us. [laughs] You know, we probably have some books that are from the 90s that we've just never returned. And if we return them today, they'd be like, "This isn't from our collection," because they've updated the database and just kind of marked it gone or disappeared. But I think some of my – at least my first introductions to reading are from Windsor. I'm trying [to think]. [00:12:00] My mother [worked] in finance for a good portion of my life to date. She started off in Charlotte and Fleet and as you know, they've been acquired by different corporations. They became a different company. So I grew up in a house that I called an insurance household. And the funny thing is, you know, my mother, she was in data processing.

Daniel Crittenden

She's been in data processing. In 2004- 2005, she transitioned into education, which made her a lot more happier because she did not like working for corporations. Not at all. And/or insurance. Like it was the insurance thing, it was the banking thing. It was just not a good fit for her. My father has always been – he always worked in an adult day care. And so he's had one job for [00:13:00] – what year is it? 34 years? You know he just walked off the street [and] there was a help wanted sign. And so when I graduated high school, I graduated college, he's like, "Why don't you just find a newspaper?" I said, "That doesn't exist anymore. What are you talking about?" [He said], "Go find a newspaper. Go find a help wanted sign." I haven't seen a help wanted sign until the pandemic started and people were like, "Let's bring these out of storage." My career in Windsor. So I guess this would be important to somebody doing research on my life if they so choose to. I graduated Metropolitan in 2008.

Daniel Crittenden

I went to University of Hartford from 2008 to 2013. I started off as an architectural engineering major and I was terrible at that. Very bad at that because I was not a good math person. I could do math. [00:14:00] I can do math, but granted I know my PEMDAS. [But] the man was asking me to do 100 problems. It would be one through whatever odd due Wednesday, one through whatever odd due Friday. On Friday, one through whatever odd due Monday, and [it'd] be like 50 something problems. It's like I can't have a social life and do this and keep this major. [It] just wasn't for me, but the thing is [in] my first semester in college, the only class I did good in was architectural history. And, you know, that's a sign from the universe, right? Then I transitioned into education with a concentration in creative writing. So that put me, at that time, in two

colleges with three advisors. I had A. Cheryl Curtis as an educational advisor, I had – oh God, education advisor, [00:15:00] I think had Brian Sinche. Doctor Brian Sinche. It's S-I-N-C-H-E, Sinche, as an advisor. Or no, as an English advisor. And then I had, I think, oh boy, Benjamin –

Patricia Bruhn

So did you live at home when you were at U of H or did you live on campus?

Daniel Crittenden

[pause] Yeah no, I heard the question. I'm trying to think of the third person's name. Benjamin Greenberg I think was the person. He was my creative writing advisor. I lived on campus and that's how I ended up starting the undergraduate student magazine. I started the undergraduate student magazine at University of Hartford in 2000 – well, we started the process to be ratified in 2010. It was the fall semester of 2010. It took us two years consistently to try to raise the money [00:16:00] to get the magazine published because the university, they didn't want to provide the funding outright. They considered the newspaper, The Informer at that time, to be sufficient as a newspaper, as a print publication, and as a result, didn't want to fund a magazine. So I had to meet with deans and the president. I met with Walter Harrison a couple times and some deans of colleges, the athletic director Patricia Meiser, and we got together \$3000 [and] about ten to fifteen signatures [so] they could ratify us. The student government could ratify us and create the club. And to date, I've met about five or six of my successors on that front.

Patricia Bruhn

Do you want to talk about anything else you do in the community and in Windsor? [00:17:00]

Daniel Crittenden

Sure, I mean I can talk about how I came associated with the Historical Society?

Patricia Bruhn

Yeah, and you're also a member of the Board of Directors at the Historical Society. Could you talk about that a little bit too?

Daniel Crittenden

Right. So at UHart, [I] had a knack for asking questions that most people don't have the answers to. Just in my experience, I'll be like, "I have a question that no one has an answer to." Usually. I said I have a knack for asking questions that people don't have the answer to. Usually like people around me. You know, just like a laser. I'm always asking those types of questions, and I had a question about something regarding the University of Hartford and they pointed me to the University archives. And so I walked in one day and Ms. Mair was sitting there. M-A-I-R.

Margaret Mair was sitting there, and we had this back and forth. [00:18:00] I think I found the answer to my question or didn't find answer to my question, and she came back to me, oh God, later in that fall semester. This had to be 2009/2010 in the fall, and she asked me to be her student worker. And so I was the first student worker for the University of Hartford in the Archive Department. Through that, I had a couple good experiences. I learned about finding aids, I learned discipline to sit down and know information and not, you know, become ecstatic about it. "Did you know this?" That type of thing. I ended up finding the University of Hartford's fight song because – oh, this is an interesting story here. The University of Hartford believes, and I think to say they reverted back to this belief, that in 2001, they wrote their first fight song. That's not true. What happened is the University of Hartford [00:19:00] just –

Patricia Bruhn

Buried it?

Daniel Crittenden

They didn't bury it. It's that the University of Hartford has such an amalgamated history where they were created in 1957 through the merger of three different schools. And so, the University of Hartford outs everything outside of, and this is even department wise, outside of music and instrumental music really. And the arts programs come from Hilliard College, the original school, including residential life, including vocal music, including any of those that really the embody the university. And for some reason – oh, I guess they never sang the school song or it never was part of campus life in a vibrant way. So what happened is, Margaret Mair had a custom of having [00:22:00] an RSS feed for University of Hartford stories. And so one day I'm going through one of those databases online and I come across an article from 1990. It might have been the historical Hartford Courant or historical New York Times that started off with the phrase, "When the University of Hartford Pep Band starts off with, Hartford onto Victory." You know, quotes. "The school da da da da da."

Daniel Crittenden

Because at the time, the University of Hartford was trying to engage community. We're going to have our games not on campus but down in the Civic Center, and it was talking about that. And so I'm like Hartford onto Victory? This is New York Times. They wouldn't just make up a song for this detail, you know? So I ended up having to – I talked to Steven Glick, who wrote the new song in 2001. I talked to anybody and everybody. They said, "Go talk to Hart school. They're music, they know that." You know? [00:21:00] [I] went to the president's office, they were like, "[Aren't] you the Archivist? You should have something in there." [I] went over to the athletics department and a man, I think he's since passed away, he went into a triangular shaped closet behind the trophy case, right? This is like, you know, back in a file cabinet. Back behind this and this pile of stuff, he pulls out an old program and on the back of the program were the words for Hartford onto Victory. And so it had been lost and because I was like, "No this is the New York

Times. You gotta understand. They would not.” I forgot that it was covered by the Alumni Music Magazine and the Library Magazine at the time.

Michelle Tom

Well, thank you so much.

Daniel Crittenden

Okay.

Michelle Tom

I'm sorry to cut you off.

Daniel Crittenden

Oh no, no. You got other people, so I get it.