

Oral History Interview_Jack Chielli_May 14, 2025

Participating: Paul Adams, Chris Breiseth, Jack Chielli, and Tim Gilmour

Paul Adams (PA): There we go!

Tim Gilmour (TG): There we go. Hey, Jack, did I give you enough information? You know this is really just a session in which we're trying to get people who are critical parts of the history of Wilkes and people who have unique insights as yourself to talk about their experience and to essentially create a record that people will learn from and benefit from. I got to say that this whole exercise which Chris originated, and which I thought was interesting, has turned out to be something that I think I can speak of, for all 3 of us, have found it really animating and exciting, and showing us in ways that maybe all of us didn't fully appreciate, certainly myself, really, how unique and special the Wilkes culture is. And so with that, Chris probably will have some, and Paul will have some things they want to add. But, after that, take it away.

Christopher Breiseith (CB): I would merely say, Jack, to get going. Describe how you got involved with Wilkes, and even kind of do a quick summary of the high points of your relationship with the college/university. We want to ask you more about it.

Jack Chielli (JC): Sure.

(CB): Why don't you just give us your story.

(JC): Okay. Well, it started at Chase Hall. I applied for a job because I wanted to come East to be closer to my family from Pittsburgh. I walked into Chase Hall and there was Mike France. He met me in that beautiful paneled room there and I was like, "So this is what a real college looks like when they're recruiting students, right?" I mean, it was impressive. It was beautiful to this day. I think Mike's office is the nicest office I've ever seen. Mike and I hit it off and I think the thing that impressed me about the University when I got there was, you hear this all the time, are the people right? I mean Mike and Melanie Paul. I think I and Scott Byers, I mean, these were some really great people, great thinkers, and I think that we had what I thought was a uniquely solvable challenge. It was a challenge, but I could see a way that we could solve it because it had a good product. The area of Wilkes-Barre, I think I didn't. And I'm being truthful here right? I didn't see Wilkes-Barre for what it sort of was, which was really a lot more depressing. It had a lot more issues than I had initially realized. But I came to see that the challenges of the town were sort of one of the things that we had to overcome. The downtown was pretty rickety at the time. So, my first thing was just trying to get an assessment of the team that I had at the community college. I had a really large team. I had four public information officers, two graphic designers. I had a writer, someone to manage publications. I had an executive assistant. There was a team there, but it was really small. It was Christine Tondrick, Mark Golaszewski, Pam Fendrock, and myself, and that was it. And so we did have a lot of work that needed to be done. I thought, well, the first thing was sort of learning higher education. I had never been at a

university before. Community college was a simple sell for me. Allegheny County is your market. You didn't have to worry about contiguous counties or other states. You had price and convenience. You just didn't have quality, right? Everyone thought it was a 13th grade. So, the challenge of community college was vastly different than the complexity of marketing a university, and that was a learning curve for which two of the gentlemen on this call here really taught me, and the one missing, too, was Mike France. But I think that between Paul and Tim, understanding the complexity of the various different majors, the cost, student life, all those things played into the marketing of it. And what I remember was it probably took me six months or more to sort of get a footing. Mike had started to work with someone by the name of Elizabeth Scarborough, who was doing a view of the university, like what we call baseline research in which to build stuff from. I met them for lunch, the three of us up at the hotel at the top of the mountain there, East Mountain. We met at the East Mountain, and the three of us, and Melanie, started to share her initial thoughts, which was really in-depth research. She had been talking to trustees, students, faculty, and alum. It was pretty extensive research. It was really good, too. And coming from a community college, I had never heard anything like that. And then, on the way down the hill, Mike and I were driving down together and we were talking about the lunch, and I said, "Mike, what Elizabeth has laid out is more than my shop can handle. I mean, it is really extraordinary stuff. And if we're going to get the lift that we need from Elizabeth's research, we sort of need help. We don't have horses. We had one graphic designer and our website was really just not up to snuff." We didn't really have the kind of marketing push that we needed. Mike said, "Well, what do you think?" I said "Well, let's write an RFP (request for proposal) for a marketing firm for some marketing help and let's start interviewing some companies. We'll see how much they come in at and whether we can afford it." And that's sort of where we started, and I'll just end there and see where you guys want to pick up from. But, two years prior to that, I had been at a rare conference in Harrisburg and I was listening to two gentlemen, Daryl Chilly and Mark Stone from a Philadelphia firm (160over90), talk about taking St. John's or Saint Joseph from an all female to an integrated male/female school. They laid out how they did it and I was completely impressed by their thinking and their creativity and just their interaction. I said, "Well, at a community college, I have no need for any skills like this" but, they stuck with me and two years later, coming down the hill with Mike and thinking of firms, there were a number of different firms that we pitched. But, I said to Mike, "There's this company I'd like to get in the mix here. I have to look them up. I think they're doing some blood pressure thing, but let me try and find them because I thought they were really good." And so I looked them up, and I called Daryl Chilly and I told him where we were and about how much money we had to spend. He said, "Forget it. You guys just can't afford us." And I said, "Oh, you're kidding me like my money isn't green. Give us a break." And he said, "Well, let's take a look at it." Well, we got all the proposals in, and there was Daryl. I forget some of the other companies they were. They were big companies. There was another one that was really big that was politically connected in the higher education market. Both Mike and I said, "Well, if we don't give it to this firm, you know it's not going to look politically good in the higher education world." So, 160over90, their presentation was awesome. We brought them to campus. Everybody loved them and they didn't really pitch any of their ideas. But Jim Walls was their creative director, and when he came into the Cabinet Room and spoke to everybody, I remember everyone going "This guy's pretty special." So, that's where I'll leave off. That was my experience in the first twelve months. It might have even been longer, I mean, I was at Wilkes for 11 years, so it might have been. I might have been in there a whole year before we really got into this marketing kind of thing. My learning curve was pretty steep, not having been at a university, but I had great mentors and great patience from the leadership team to let me get my bearings and figure out how we were going to push ahead.

(TG): Well, I wonder. Others may have some questions, but I think you really ought to move on with 160over90 and talk about the special relationship that we formed with them and how creative you were in dealing with them and convincing them that they had an incredible developmental opportunity, which, indeed, it turned out to be so. Maybe you want to tell that story.

(CB): Right.

(JC): Yeah, so I told him we didn't have a lot of money, but, again to Tim's point, that the opportunity was there. I think what got them interested in it was our ability to take chances to do something different. I said that I had a leadership team that, if we had a good idea, we could sell it to them and that we needed something to get us on the map about who we were. And so I remember we started a multi-year contract. It was a three-year contract and we started the brand with the view book. You can launch a brand two ways. A website and a view book. We launched it with the view book. They had come to campus, interviewed a whole bunch of people, students, faculty, everyone, and they took it back to their shop, and wrote a script. I remember it was just words on a piece of paper. They called us down to their Philly offices on Broad Street, and Melanie, Mike, and I went up to the 16th floor. We sat down in their conference room and Jim Walls and Daryl Chilly, and a couple of the principals on the account, came in and sat around the table. Of course, we were ready to see a dog and pony show like, "Let's see the graphics. Let's see the pictures. What do you have?" Jim Walls proceeds to pull out sheets of paper, and he says, "I'm going to read you the view book." We're like, "What is this? Story time? Are you kidding me? Where are the pictures? What do we have?" So, Jim Walls starts to read this view book. I mean this seriously. He couldn't have been one page in and all of us realized he had absolutely captured this mentoring brand. He just read the view book literally from beginning to end. No pictures, nothing. Just listening to him read it was like a fireside chat kind of, or a bedtime story. Well, at the end of it, Melanie was like, "Oh, my God, that's unbelievable!" And Mike was like, "Yeah, that's incredible." And I was like, "Yeah, but I'm still not convinced. What's it going to look like?" He said, "Well, first we get the buy-in with the narrative and then we'll design something around it." So, we were off and running. I wish I had a copy of the view book. I might. I don't know.

(TG): Do you have one Paul?

(PA): Of the new view book? No, that view book is from way back.

(TG): Way back when.

(CB): I've never seen it.

(TG): Oh, it was amazing.

(JC): I have it somewhere. So the view book was a really huge success and a hit. It started the mentoring brand and where we continued to evolve it with new ideas.

(TG): I don't mean to interrupt, but.

(JC): Please.

(TG): The view book when we finally got it was so radically different from the view books that we were seeing from other institutions. First of all, you could read it from either end. One side was student life and one side was academics. And I guess it was just so beautifully done. And indeed, maybe I'm getting ahead of the story, but 160over90, it was kind of a fledgling operation. They obviously knew what they were doing, but by the third year we really couldn't afford them because they had moved up to Ivy level.

(JC): They used our work to sell Notre Dame, to sell Southern California, to do Michigan State. I used to joke with them. I said, "Guys, don't you think I ought to get a commission here?" Tim is right. We were only the second or third school they worked with. The other thing I loved about them is that they were a youth-oriented marketing firm. Their main brands were American Eagle and a couple other youth-oriented brands. They knew how to sell to high school kids. They were designing shirts, stores. They were doing stuff like that, but the only reason they got into St. John's, or what was the name of the school? Was it St. John's or Saint Paul, Saint Joe's? It was one of the Saint schools. Well, anyway, the only reason they did that is because they knew the Mother, a Superior there, because one of them went to church. And she said, "We need help integrating the school." So they're like, "Okay, we'll help you." They had a lot of fun with it. So, we were only like the second or third school that they got involved with. The other thing that they did is that they had quotation marks, and our faculty were all blown up about quotation marks. They're like "They're not using them grammatically correctly." And we're like, "Well, this isn't a grammar class. This is a marketing piece, and the quotes are meant to mean they're like hugging people. They're like embracing people and they use it to embrace concepts about students rather than have them be literally quotes." I had to fight that battle for a couple years, but one year their design was read from front to back and back to front, which was cool. And so, we got through that first year. The view book did really well for us. I think we started to see some uptick in enrollment. But certainly, people were getting noticed. The view book won all sorts of awards. And then the other part that we did, which was new was, we issued Apple, if you remember iTunes was new back then and you know the iconic of the black, silhouetted dancer. Well, one of the things they came up with was this idea. To use a card that looked like Apple's dancer and our students would put their playlists out for our incoming students to see. This was a language that students spoke to each other. So, if you could dig the playlist of the students at Wilkes, you would like the students at Wilkes. You would understand who they were. And so the playlists were huge. Well, we had to call Apple at the time and get permission to use it, and they fought us on it a little bit. We're like, "Come on guys. I mean, we're a small school. You don't have to worry about it." We changed the design enough that they could live with it, but it was similar enough that the students got the idea. But, we issued playlists. Our current students put out their playlists. The mentoring brand was understanding people. It was getting to know you. If we're going to mentor you, we got to know who you are first, and so we're going to do as we say in our marketing and on our campus. Get to know you. And that sort of led to this next idea

which was to do this campaign.

(TG): Jack, could I just interrupt you? I shouldn't, but Paul, did they ever ask you for your playlist?

(PA): No, I don't think I would be the demographic they were searching for.

(JC): No, no.

(TG): Sure. Excuse me.

(JC): No, he wasn't, but from there we went to this campaign. It was called The Power One. It sort of then morphed into The Majority of One, and The Majority of One was a concept in which we use micro marketing in a macro market. That's the best way I can explain it. Which is where the creative folks went out and picked students that were from the incoming class that we thought were emblematic of the students. We wanted to recruit at the University. They went out and interviewed everyone. Their mothers, their friends, their teachers, and they got to know these students. What their best songs were, what their favorite foods were, what their restaurants were, what courses they liked. We built a copy around them as if we were talking to them like we were their best friends or that we knew something about them that they didn't know about themselves. I remember sitting in Tim's office, it was him and I, and I was nervous about this, because there were no pictures of kids "in a three" which is the traditional way. You've got the black student, the female student, and the white student, or you've got the Asian student, you've got the white student, and you've got the female student. It's like we've got all the demographics. We're not leaving anybody out. There were no pictures of pretty faces anywhere. It was just words in quotes and a tagline that said, "Call a colonel" and then a phone number. I went into Tim's office and I said, "Tim, this new campaign, let me explain it." And so I go through sort of what I'm saying here now, but probably it made a lot more sense because it was really fresh in my mind. I thought about how I would approach it with him and in the end, I said, "But, you got to understand there are no pictures of any students, and we're talking to the students as if we're marketing to them. Not one student, but marketing to every other student. You'll see a billboard with someone's name on it and a phrase. It was so brilliant though. It was extraordinary. Tim looked at me for a minute, and he thought, and then I remember he slapped his head. He went "I get it, I get it." And I was like, "You're good with this?" He's like, "Let's do this." We wouldn't have done it if Tim hadn't signed off on it. It was too risky, and he's like, "Yes, this sounds really cool." So, we ran it, and I was driving down River Street and I saw the very first billboard. I literally wanted to pull off the side of the road and get sick to my stomach because I said, "I'm going to get run out of higher education marketing. I am so stupid. I put a billboard up without any pictures on it and I'm recruiting students. How could I be so stupid?" And then this thing started to take off. We did the same thing on pizza boxes which is what really captured the idea of people. We put it like you're Anthony's friend. You know, he's got pepperoni, and you've got the sausage side of this pizza, but he's got geometry straight because he was a math student. It was like, "Count your pizza slices" because it was for Anthony who loved pepperoni pizza. And the story broke! See, they were smart. They pitched it to the New York Times right around the middle of April or May because in May everyone's doing stories on interesting enrollment in

higher education. It's always been the same. And the guy from the New York Times, John Stewart, a higher education reporter, ran a story about the pizza box. He said, "This is a really unusual campaign," and then everyone started to pay attention to it. I was coming back from a conference somewhere and I'm getting phone calls from the Associated Press, CBS News, NPR, and I'm doing interviews everywhere. I was on Fox News, the newspaper. Remember, Irene? No, you wouldn't know Irene Campana. That was my dean from community college. She was in Florida, and she called me up and said, "Jack, what are you doing on the front page of the Miami Herald?" It ran in the Chicago Tribune. It ran in the San Francisco Chronicle. It literally ran all over the country and the website just blew up with hits to it. It was totally extraordinary. I was with one of the students who we had featured in the ads on Fox News. She was like, "Yeah, my friends saw the ad and they're like holy cow, this is really cool!" I had a mother call me up and get me on the phone. She was weeping, and I said, "What's wrong?" She said, "I saw my daughter's billboard and I had no idea she loved my meatballs that much." Literally, because the billboard said something about "Our kitchen. We can't match your mother's meatballs, but we'll try." I'm not making this up. I swear to God she was so happy to learn that. Her daughter had never told her that her meatballs had meant so much to her. When I did this presentation I told the story, I said, "If your copy can make people weep out of joy, you know you've got the right message." So, we put ads in fortune cookies, and it would read "Call a colonel. Consider these lucky numbers" and then it would have the number of the Admissions office. I had a bet with the creative director at 160over90, because we put specific numbers on every ad that we would track. I said, "Kids aren't going to call these numbers." He said, "Oh yes they will." So, if we got 50 phone calls I owed him a dinner down in Philly, and, sure enough, we got hundreds of phone calls. Kids called the numbers. So that campaign ran for two years. The issue with that campaign was that it was a lot of work. It's not like a cookie cutter. It had to be researched every year with new students, and I think we featured about eight students in every campaign. I mean some of them would go to Ivy League schools. We just couldn't compete six out of the eight the first year, and I think I want to say seven out of nine the next year. We had a pretty good yield rate and people would always ask me, "Well, did the kids you marketed to enroll?" and I would always say, "Well, that's not really the point if they did or didn't. The fact is that everyone's looking at Wilkes." But we did, in fact, enroll several of the students that we featured. But we experimented with something called the Wilkes Paper Cut because we figured this was an environmentally conscious group of students and that they would welcome the chance to cut down on paper. And so, we issued them the Wilkes Paper Cut that gave them an option to cut back on mail publications and get digital ones instead, thinking that it would really take off. We could get out of the print business and into the digital business. It was a big flop. The kids wanted the print materials. So, it was obvious we tested that, but the print stuff really mattered to them. They like the tactile stuff of it. The other thing we did as part of that campaign is we rented a few airplanes to fly over graduations trailing things like students that had committed to Wilkes as a tie up to the campaign. It was like "Congratulations Paige! We welcome you to Wilkes University" during graduation. One principal said he banned us from the airspace around the stadium because he was afraid that students would get upset. But we actually did fly it over. I have photos of a couple where we flew it over and it was just a huge hit. People were amazed by it. We recruited you through this copy and now we're welcoming you to Wilkes at your graduation. We made stars out of these kids. We also did something that I thought was really cool. We rebranded the Colonel. He was originally a guy that dressed up in a colonel uniform rather than a mascot, but we designed this mascot. Some people hated it. Some people loved it. But what I loved about it was that we had the Colonel Guidebook and we put the Colonel in places. We went down to the Martin Guitar Factory and he's sitting in what's called the Pickers Room playing these Martin Guitars. We put him out on the ski slopes at the ski lodge just south of Scranton. We put him out on some of the beautiful rivers we had. We had him all over to show that Wilkes was not in the middle of nowhere, that there were fun things to do, and so the

Colonel was out having fun. It was a great way to address this “Geez! There's nothing to do in Wilkes-Barre.” Well, there really is, and we put the Colonel out into all that stuff. Let me think. What else was there?

(PA): Didn't you do mall signs for kids when they were walking in the mall?

(JC): Yeah, we did more kiosks. Our website had an electronic kiosk in which you could spin it and you could then click on the posters that were on it and it would take you to things like student life. So it was like, “Learn about Wilkes,” and it was a kiosk that was like one you might see in a mall. It was one of those that if you click the arrow to the right, it would spin to the right and you could stop it and then click on a poster that would then take you to a web page. And we did mall kiosks. We even experimented with ads on gas station pumps. That didn't really go over, but we took chances. A lot of them were really good. Pat Leahy, when he came after you, Tim, wanted us to get rid of this thing immediately. We did a poster to hang up in high schools called the League of Awesome, and it was like a superhero poster. The superheroes were like the faculty, the athletic director, the science dean, and it was all these figures at Wilkes that were then characterized as superheroes. And our director of admissions, Alex Barraza. Well, Alex Barraza, and the recruiters absolutely loved this, would put these posters in high schools, and they'd fly off the walls. They were really well done. The copy on them was really great, but the League of Awesome posters were placed in high schools and students absolutely love them. Pat never understood that one. He was like, “This is not my style. It's not University of...”

(TG): Jesuit. Yeah. Well, actually, there's some Jesuits who are fun guys. One of the things that just struck me, Jack, when we worked with 160over90, was how much better they understood the youth culture than at least I did. I mean, I learned a lot from them, but they really react to youth in a positive way.

(JC): Yeah, they did.

(TG): And kudos to you for bringing them in and being willing to go with them. And I do believe that, in fact, you also channeled them somewhere they needed it.

(JC): Some ideas they wanted to buy. You know, one of those little Mini cars. They wanted to buy a Mini car, outfit it as a colonel with the colonel hat, and drive it into school. So when we made a visit to the schools, it would get everyone's attention. And I'm like, “I am not going to buy a car to do that with.” I said, “Scott, Byers would have shot me with that, and so would Chip Prescott.” The other thing that we did, if you remember, we punked people back in the day.

(TG): Byers might not have shot you, you know. Yeah.

(JC): Byers might not. We punked people. So, in other words, we went into schools with gigantic checks. We would go into a pharmacy with a film crew and ask for the pharmacy

student that had been admitted to Wilkes. We would film them getting this great big check, being the scholarship money that they were getting, and we would film their reactions. Then we would put it out on social media after they gave us their permission. We went all over and we would film them. We did a lot on social media, but the punking was it back then. It was where you just surprised people with a video surprise. It was a big thing back then and we did it, surprising people with our very large checks of money, and they absolutely loved it. Like the pharmacy student, we brought them a white coat. We would bring something to the school as well as just the check. But the schools loved it because they got publicity. The hometown newspapers loved it, but, again, it was our PR person that was really good. Michelle Prescott her name was. She was very good and really worked hard at getting us extra press with some of these other things, but the video stuff was cool.

(CB): Let me ask a question as someone who is not part of this at all. In your interaction with them, what do you think they saw in Wilkes? That was an unusual culture for them to play with.

(JC): Yeah, I think that they saw a school that was first of all willing to take a chance. We weren't so stuffy that we weren't willing to laugh at ourselves a little bit and have fun with it. We were a serious university with engineering, pharmacy, and nursing. But we also understood that college had to be fun. I think Paul's student life was an atmosphere that allowed students to be who they were and to have fun at stuff. I think that they saw that. I think, too, they were a bright enough group of people to see that the higher education marketplace was so stilted with sameness that anything that they did, they needed a partner to take chances with, and anything that they could do would get noticed. And it did. They literally took our campaign and sold it to Michigan State and Notre Dame. And these folks at these schools love the creativity. They didn't do that kind of cutting edge stuff, but their creativity really saved them. I'm still in touch with many of them. Jim Walls, as a matter of fact, was really instrumental in mentoring me through this last layoff. He started his own company called Truth and Consequences. You can look them up. But, he wanted to get back to the original idea of 160over90. When it got so big we got their B team, then we got their C team, and then we got something in between a C and a D team. The work started to be less important to them than the legacy of the partnership and the quality of the work started to drop. So, we just moved on at that point and got some other help. But I think that the point was that they love the work and it was not that they got bought out by some of the biggest, I mean Daryl Chilly and Mark Stone and some of the principals got bought out for millions of dollars, because the firm just blew up, and a German company bought them, and then an even a bigger company bought them, but Jim Walls wanted to get back to small and loving the work. He's hired a number of the people from 160over90 that share his vision of what small agency work can be like and if I ever had the resources again I'd hire them. There's no doubt, because he would definitely do an excellent job. I think Jim Walls was probably the most talented creative director I'd ever met. He was extraordinary.

(TG): The thing that you're kind of causing me to recall, Jack, was one of the key points was that they were presenting Wilkes in a way that was unusual, and that basically separated us from the rest of the pack, particularly institutions who weren't willing to take chances. And the stuff was very plain, vanilla, and uninspiring. I think one of the things about that first view book was just how different we looked to individuals as they looked at it. And then, of course, you continued with these other efforts and nobody was doing those either. It's a way to get yourself noticed and that's the thing that we needed and noticed in markets that we weren't noticed. I think that was

the good thing about the other efforts we made where they were targeted to markets where we felt, but really did need to build, Jack, you did a lot more than this, though, in terms of the overall image and public facing aspects of the institution. So, maybe you want to talk a bit about building your office? Frequent meetings that you and I had where you needed more people and I said no really did make huge progress there as well.

(JC): Yeah, we did. We added a couple really, really great people. That made a great difference. I think that part of it was building up our graduate program marketing. Working through the MBA, Gabrielle D'Amico who came to me, and she was a senior business major, she said, "I just want to work for Wilkes," and she made a huge difference with marketing the Master's program. I think that Josh Bonner and Craig Thomas, when we hired the two of them, took our website to the next level. Mark and Pam Friendrock just did not have the same kind of talent that the two of them brought to the digital marketing that we did on a day to day basis. And the tracking of email, open rates, and things like that were something we weren't even doing when I first came but which we were really heavily into when I left. I think that Kim Bauer Spence took our magazine and the overall writing to another level. Our magazine won many state awards and national awards, and so she was a great addition. And, of course, Lisa Reynolds, when we hired her from the seminary, she was ready to blossom. But, boy, when she got to Wilkes and we let her loose, she just was fantastic. And so all of those pieces, including Vicki May, who could pitch stories, like, Vicki May was an Allentown reporter. So, it was building out the earned media. Vicki May upgrading and doing earned media, which was really great getting us into newspapers, Gabrielle focusing on graduate marketing and working with our deans in that space, Kim doing all the writing and the marketing and the magazine, the design of our website and the upkeep of our website, all of those pieces, and then Lisa Reynolds coming in with top notch design and bringing our students in when we opened up the integrative media major and working with all those students to give them the experience they needed. All of those pieces took what was really a three-person shop and transformed it into a real marketing operation. I think it really paid off just in the overall reputation of the University and how we stood out from King's in particular, but also the Penn State in our area, and Misericordia, whose staff was not ever that good. I mean, I know that the campaign tends to have dominated my time there because it was really extraordinary, but we did build out all the different verticals, like I said. The earned media vertical, the website vertical, the graduate marketing vertical, and then the internal marketing prowess which is designers and marketing writers. Those verticals were then bolstered by good people over the course of eleven years. I think that shop was fully realized probably six years in. It took that long because we didn't have the resources, so we didn't add it all at once. But, as we continue to get stronger, we continue to add in important spots, and I give Tim, Paul, and my Cabinet colleagues a lot of credit for supporting the build out. That wasn't something that small schools really did.

(TG): Well, you made a great case for it. The other thing that really always stuck, well, maybe there are two things, Jack. One of them was you talked about your team, and my sense was that your office was a true team and they really functioned very well together and played off one another a lot. But, the other thing I think you did, because I can remember you coming in to me basically one-on-one saying, based on your marketing knowledge, that we were in trouble here, we were in trouble there, and then working with Mike and Melanie to essentially focus and push on specific enrollment targets that we needed to meet. I thought it was pretty remarkable that you were that attuned to the market and had that kind of information, and I think Mike and Melanie truly appreciated the effort you made. It was a wonderful kind of reach out that you did to help them keep on task, and they were very good people, don't misunderstand, it just was a team

effort, and it was unusual to see somebody in your position pushing as hard as you did.

(JC): Yeah, I appreciate that, Tim. I know Mike and Melanie to this day and they are very good friends of mine and we stay in touch. I remember when Mike left, Melanie and I formed a very, very close relationship. And it was tough to see the struggles there, but I did everything cheap. We both did everything we could to support each other. You know, Mike, Mike was a brilliant kind of tactician, you know. He understood the CMS (content management system). He also understood discount rates and financial aid leveraging. These were things I didn't even know anything about early on, and also how to manage people. I mean, territory management was one of the things that Melanie and Mike really brought, at least when I was there, that I saw them developing territories and, prior to that, they had brought on ECMS (enterprise content management system) and hired Noel Levitz, because Noel Levitz was doing some stuff at the beginning. That was very cutting edge, too. ECMS was new to the whole CMC for enrollment when Mike was coming to Wilkes.

(TG): What's that acronym? CMS?

(JC): CMS. Content management system. So, content management, and the content management was called ECMS, it was enrollment management. It was a Noel Levitz product, and he sort of worked with that. He brought a lot of stuff in from Buena Vista that he was ready to grow, and Mike and I hit it off. I mean, I remember sitting in his office that very first day, and I remember I said, "Wow, if I get offered the job I'm coming," and then I came to see you, Tim, and after I left you, Mike gave me a call the next day or so and asked me if I would join the team, and I jumped at it. It was the best move I ever made.

(TG): I wasn't going to make a move unless Mike approved it.

(JC): Yeah, we hit it off. We really did.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] So,

hearing you working with him at a point when he was really at Wilkes is very exciting, because this whole presentation by you has been immensely inspirational to me as someone who had 17 years at Wilkes, where we fought through some pretty tough battles. But, you guys were really on top of the market at a point that I, as someone who's lived in eight states and have been part of several institutions, still think Wilkes is close to unique. It's particularly in relationships with the community and having picked up the religious issue, all this being aware of Leo the 14th and what difference he can make to that huge institution works, was sold to me by the consultants that approached me. I'd been in another search that they'd managed, but they thought that Wilkes would be a place I would really take to like a duck to water. They sold it as the only non-Catholic institution in Northeastern Pennsylvania and that it had freedom to do things. Our Catholic sisters and brothers knew me well enough to know that that was really intriguing. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And then, of course, I found out that 80% of the population was Catholic. I don't know that, Paul, we ever put these statistics together, but a great part of our faculty was Catholic and many of them were Wilkes grads. As we went into some strategic planning early in my first year, one of the things that they identified was that they picked Wilkes because it was a chance for them to think freely and to approach ideas. They were excited about being without the straitjacket of the church, and many of them went through parochial schools. So, it was very unusual for someone to come from outside. It was a very unusual mix of the old anthracite coal culture, Eastern Europe, Southern Italy, Ireland, in the faculty, and of course our students. And I think Dr. Farley established very early on this, the notion of independence, being against fraternities and sororities, and kind of not buying into what a "good college" should be. I think why I asked you the question of what your colleagues at 160over90 saw in Wilkes that was interesting to work with. I'm giving you how I would answer that question. So, I've enjoyed your presentation just enormously.

(JC): Thank you.

(PA): Check if I do my calculations correctly, I think that the Chiellis left Wilkes with maybe five degrees?

(JC): Yes, we did.

(PA): Kind of shaped your perceptions of books.

(JC): Oh, yeah! Oh, my God! My family loves it! I mean the time that Pat stopped the commencement, and he called my wife up, and he said, "This is a true family of Colonels!" We've got a nursing degree, a graduate writing degree, and here are the three kids, all graduating, all different ages, but all graduating at the same time. So, the five of us were on stage. That was just a moment I'll never forget. But you're absolutely right. Five degrees. And the funny thing is, when I was touring campus for the first time, before I got to Chase Hall, I was in one of the other classrooms and Bonnie Culver had a table set up. I said, "Jeez, what are you doing here?" She said, "We're enrolling the very first class of a creative writing graduate degrees," and I was like "I had waited 25 years to get a graduate degree in creative writing. If this isn't a sign that I belong at Wilkes, nothing is right." And, sure enough, two years later, I think I was in the second or the third class to get a degree in creative writing. So that was awesome. Yeah.

(CB): Wonderful, wonderful! Five degrees and one family at the same commencement. That must be a record.

(JC): Yeah, it was fun. Yeah, it was great.

(TG): That must have been quite a day. I hope you went out and celebrated afterwards.

(JC): Yes, we did. I don't know how you guys are following up, let me know. I probably can dig up some of the copies, some photographs of stuff, some of the billboards, and stuff like that.

(TG): So how we work this, Jack, is that you will get a copy of the transcript which you will see, especially a creative writing graduate of Wilkes will see, can use some editing, and, in fact, I think it will probably spur other thoughts in your mind.

(CB): Yeah, absolutely.

(TG): But, I think it would be really cool if you could give some examples of what you were talking about. The recording will exist, but the transcript will be the thing I think people look at. So if we could put in that file some of those examples, that would be fabulous.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(CB): I got Mike because we were working with a guy from Noel Levitz who went back into being a director of admissions at West Virginia and Wesleyan. I think that's where he went.

(PA): Charlie Hutchins.

(CB): Yeah, and Charlie. Bernie called to say that he was leaving, and it was into recruiting season, so I called my chairman of the board, Gene Roth, and I said, "Any advice?" He said, "Just go out and find some of the best people you can in the country and hire them." So, I called Charlie and I explained the situation. I said, "Is there anyone in the country that would fit us?" because he knew us very well. He said, "Well, this guy out in Iowa, he's been with the school for a long time and does a great job. They're hiring a director and he's a candidate. They haven't picked him yet and he's really ticked that the kind of job he's done there is not being rewarded by making him number one." So, I hung up with Charlie, and I called Mike. We arranged on that phone call for him to come to campus, all costs covered by us, and we hired him. That would go through any of the proper channels of how you advertise, and so forth, and it was probably one of the two best hires I made in my 17 years at Wilkes.

(TG): He's great.

(JC): Yeah.

(TG): I do need to say for the record, however, that Mike's replacement, Melanie, almost didn't miss a beat and kept things going really well, and, in fact, there was some strength she had that Mike didn't have. But that's the way things work.

(CB): Melanie had endured his predecessor for a while, so she knew a lot about what worked. No, she was wonderfully talented.

(TG): Absolutely and both of them went on to consult with Noel Levitz, and then another firm. They were, I think, considered to be some of the best around. Hey Jack, forgive me quickly, I looked at the materials on Capitol Technology University. I think it's a very interesting opportunity. So, one of the things I was looking for is, given that they're a tech institution and so on, have they got anything on AI? Well, they've even got an AI PhD. I suspect it's pretty thinly staffed, but they're on the right track, they'll survive. Long haul is essentially building that capability and training people in that area.

(JC): Yeah, I was amazed. They had an undergraduate degree in AI and the only other schools in Maryland that do are the University of Maryland, the Naval Academy, and John Hopkins.

(TG): Yeah. And obviously they could use your help. The website's good, but not.

(JC): Yeah, it looks more like a graduate website and that they want undergraduate students. The graduate programs and PhD programs are growing nicely. It's undergraduate that's really, really sucking wind right now. So, I'm really anxious to get down there and start to get my hands on and see what's going on because I think I can make a difference. You never know. But I'm gonna try.

(TG): So many markets are collapsing now as a result of AI and the economy and I just think they're well positioned, nevertheless. And the tenor of the website, of course, is "We can place you in a government job." But that's got to change.

(JC): Yeah, exactly. There's a lot of messaging work that needs to be done.

(TG): They've got the message. Anyway, we can place you in the new jobs.

(JC): Yeah.

(CB): Well, and the change itself that we're going through, which is really awful, is you need to capture that change in how students need to be helped and how to apply that change throughout their lives. That's been the theme for a long time. But, with AI, that's literally survival talk.

(TG): Yeah, I was talking to a guy yesterday who's really into all this stuff. He was in a meeting and he said, most of the people that he talked to said they were not hiring any coders at all, that AI had pretty much solved their problem. They're just very, very senior people. AI is now being introduced in particularly the for-profit medical practices, and it's doing better diagnostics in most areas than doctors can. So, it's just going to be a revolution. That's all there is to it. So get them into that, Jack. You don't need huge research firepower. What you need is people who can keep up with the field and a little bit ahead. And prepare people for exactly what Chris was talking about, which is a life of constant evolution and change, and liking to do that.

(PA): What are you going to be doing? This is news to me.

(JC): Yeah. Well, I got hired by Capitol Technology University as a Vice President of Enrollment Marketing. So very, very small. It's a stem school that just focuses on stem degrees and it's right between Baltimore and DC. It's a county or town called Laurel, Maryland. I'm going to go down there and see how I can help. They have a very low undergraduate enrollment and a very small on campus culture. They want to try and grow more students to live on campus. And they offer everything from certificates all the way up to PhD programs. So it's interesting. It's for such a small school. Some of their faculty are unbelievable. I mean, they're guys from NASA. It's just really pretty interesting.

(CB): That's a wonderful situation for you, just learning about you from this hour. That's a wonderful assignment for you.

(JC): Yeah. Oh, thank you. Thank you.

(TG): Probably going to want to hire a firm that's not super attuned to the average young person, but to the nerd.

(JC): Yeah, I think we need a nerd firm.

(CB): Well that's great, Jack. Thank you so much.

(JC): Well, thank you, Chris.

(CB): To repeat what Tim said, when you edit the transcript, you'll see some places to add some things that kind of punctuate what you really want. This is going to be part of the record of Wilkes forever.

(JC): Yeah, I'll definitely do that. Look forward to it.

(TG): Well, I'm really glad that we did get it in this piece about the kind of risk taking that you got us to do. I think it really did separate us in the marketplace. That's good.

(PA): Let me just ask you one other question, though, if you have a moment.

(JC): Of course.

(PA): You know, the other aspect of all this was crisis management, and I'm wondering in terms of crisis management what stands out?

(JC): Yeah, jeez. Well, there were a couple of things. The flood was bad, but I thought that we handled it really well. I think that the death of Johnny Ratchko was really, tough. And, again, that didn't hit too much media wise, but our culture was shocked. I think you did a fantastic job of being in tune to the needs of those students that were really grieving. I know this because my son was one of them. I know how sensitive that situation was and how well it was handled, because it could have been very unfortunate if the kids had felt unheard or disrespected in any way.

(PA): That must be like 11 years ago. 2014, or something like that.

(JC): Something like that.

(PA): Alright, cool. I mean, I can't think of Ross Hall without thinking of him. Wilkes has just done this big conversion of Ross Hall, taking it from a residence hall to be an auxiliary student life space, and so they've had a lot of publicity. I can't see any of that without thinking about Jonathan Ratchko. I mean, I think about his parents.

(PA): John was a young man. I think he was a sophomore at the time, from Hazelton, and he died of an overdose in Ross Hall on a Monday night. His roommate found him. It's just an awful tragedy. We were sitting on pins and needles for a lot of the night because they weren't finding

the mom and the dad. It was just one of those terrible situations that nobody has any experience with, and you're kind of finding your way through it as you work through it. It's probably been many years since we had a student die on campus. Remember the young man who died from autoerotic asphyxia back in the early nineties?

(CB): On Labor Day weekend you just moved in and found them.

(JC): That was tough. The students sequestered themselves in the house across the street for days.

(PA): Yeah, that was tough.

(JC): The flood was a disaster, but we survived that. So did everyone else downtown.

(PA): Yeah, we had great help from Scranton back then.

(JC): Oh, yeah, we have some students up there.

(CB): My flood experience was Misericordia. It took all of our students overnight, and there were a couple.

(PA): We evacuated multiple times over the years.

(CB): Right, a couple that slipped in, and therefore we were out in midday when they were supposed to be gone, and they got under CNN. We had to deal with that nationally. They were critical that they had not been aroused by the college to save them.

(PA): It played over and over again.

(CB): If you ask me the question you asked, Jack. That's one that would pop into mine, along with curly murder. That was the big one.

(PA): Sure, for sure.

(TG): Yeah, yeah.

(JC): No, it was a great 11 years. It was.

(TG): Oh, you're onto something new. I think that will be rewarding, and certainly you had a good time at Mount St. Mary's.

(JC): I did. I did.

(PA): How many years was that?

(JC): Let's see, I think it was eight years? Yeah, eight years. Seven as Vice President of Enrollment. I think the fun of that one was bringing those four teams together, the enrollment, the financial aid, and the marketing communication teams, into one and having them all work together. That was a lot of fun. Our campaign "Lives Significantly" was a good campaign. It was perfect for the school, "Creating Lives of Significance." It's a tough market here. Catholic school, rural, no endowment. That tuition revenue creeping lower and the discount rate creeping up higher. It's just one of those things, but it was a good run. I've been blessed with great bosses. Tim has been great, Tim Trainer, and Roy Flores from the Community College of Allegheny County. They were all really, great teachers and then the good leadership teams. I mean, they're important. The cabinet at Wilkes was great. Scott Byers was a real thinker, real creative guy. He really was buying the call center. What a move that was.

(TG): We bought it for the parking garage. No, I'm just kidding.

(PA): Garage was worth all the money we paid.

(TG): Well, that was just an incredible win and Scott just pulled that stuff off. He did so many great things.

(JC): Yeah, he was quite a guy.

(TG): Yep, still is.

(TG): I don't know if you know. We interviewed him and Mike together. That was worth the price of admission.

(JC): I can imagine. Holy cow!

(PA): Good fun.

(CB): Okay, Jack, thank you so much.

(JC): Thank you, gentlemen. It's been a real pleasure. Good to see all of you.

(CB): And good luck in the new situation.

(JC): Yeah, thank you very much. I'm looking forward to it.

(PA): Best to your family.

(JC): Yes, good to see your family, too. Paul. Alright! Take care, guys.

(CB): Enjoy the pizza.

(JC): We will. Bye.