

Interview with: PAUL BROWNE

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Lily Jandrisevits

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Transcript: Paul Browne

Interviewee: Paul Browne

Interviewer: Anne Matheus and Gus Nolan

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Summary: Paul Browne talks about his early personal life in the Bronx before attending Marist College. He talks about his time at Marist, as well as the different people who supported him through his undergraduate experience which includes becoming editor-in-chief of the Marist newspaper, The Circle, and studying abroad for a year in Colombia. He then went to Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and talks about his chance encounter with an undercover KGB agent and his subsequent reporting to the FBI. He also gives various stories from his professional career including working as a journalist, Chief of Staff for senator Pat Moynihan, Deputy Commissioner of the New York Police Department, and Vice President of public affairs and communications at Notre Dame University.

00:00:01:05

Paul Browne

Good thing I heard about this neurosurgeon saying that--.

00:00:06:00

Will

It's all ready. It's all ready to go.

00:00:06:28

Anne Matheus

Thank you.

00:00:09:25

PB

Neurosurgeon.

00:00:11:04

AM

Thank you, John. Can I open this for you?

00:00:15:12

PB

Paul Browne

Yeah, please. As you get older, if you try to do things with your non-dominant hand, like brush your teeth, something like that, it creates new neural pathways.

00:00:27:19

AM

I've heard that. And I really should try that.

00:00:30:20

PB

Yeah, well, I'm doing it now because I have no choice. But it's amazing. After I've been, with, for two years now and, it's even an old age, that pretty.

00:00:47:25

Gus Nolan

Yeah. yeah. Well, Paul let me just say something while you are here. Because, I have nothing else to do. I retired something like, twenty years ago, and, there was a meeting, this John Ansley, he wanted to know, like (). And he says, we don't have any archives, and we don't have any recordings of people who spend some time with here. Marist is a fairly young college, but then we get to find out how it was at the beginning. There were enough people around to tell us how it was. And in fact, Paul Ambrose, the founder of the college, was still here and I was able to interview him. So, we were able to go back to the beginning. And so, that's the thing. And to whom do we direct our attention? Well, administrators, the president of our resident, faculty. students, staff, students, and then friends of the college. So, there's a whole realm of people,

Paul Browne

about this time in history, and they hear about the 120th only because it took us that long to find you. Yeah. You're so busy and various jobs, and we're going to ask about those.

But that being said, we would like this as a kind of recording of your recollection, with a number of things [affirmative]. I'd like to tell you first about the early childhood and growing up and say, my goal, choice of Marist, experience at Marist, and then leaving Marist. What happened? I think I sent you a basic outline about career development or trajectory or some words like that, and stuff along the way. So, we'll try and get interesting information that would be helpful for the college to know about itself and the people who are here. So, that being said, tell me about your early years. Where were you born? Grow up in the family, in the Bronx?

00:03:07:02

PB

Grew up in the Bronx. My parents were Irish immigrants, four kids and two adults in a two-bedroom apartment, which meant my parents always slept on a Castro convertible. But I never saw them in any form of undress. Pajamas or otherwise, they were up at 5 or 6. And to bed after us. So as far as we knew, our parents never slept. But we never saw them in bed because that was in the living room. And it was probably, wasn't probably until I came to Marist--.

00:03:44:22

GN

Alright, well you're jumping ahead. Where in the Bronx around Mount Vernon area or?

00:03:49:27

Paul Browne

PB

Around Bedford Park. Not far from the Botanical Gardens.

00:03:53:24

GN

Yeah. Where did you go to grade school?

00:03:56:25

PB

Our Lady of Refuge [affirmative] I was supposed to go to Saint Philip nearby, but that would have meant crossing the Grand Concourse which was a very busy street. So, my mother insisted we go to the elementary school where we didn't have to cross the Grand Course. So that's how I ended up with the Dominican nuns, I think from Wisconsin, at, Our Lady of Refuge.

00:04:23:13

GN

Yeah. Okay. To experiences there, heavy times, or?

00:04:29:14

PB

Except for a few intimidating nuns [laugh] in like fourth grade, you know, every now and then, you get, you know, I had a sweetheart of a music teacher, and then I just had a very a frightening, I think, fourth grade teacher who eventually got into a confrontation with the principal right in

Paul Browne

front of us. Next day, she must have gone off to the gulag of disobedient nuns, or something. Yeah, but she was very strict. And the principal came in with information that the boys in her class, including me, had done something bad at lunchtime in the schoolyard. But we had the criminals best defense, we were already detained in her class [affirmative] for some kind of misconduct. So, it couldn't have been us and she's trying to explain that to the principal. And the principal, well, I have a list. And Sister Deborah took the list out of the principal's hand, ripped it up and threw it on the ground and says, "I don't give a damn about your list." And she referred to us as "my boys." She says, "my boys were in this class." And we all kind of felt wow. There's a little bit of empathy there. But anyway, that was my most memorable. You know, it was typical like thirty plus kids in the class.

00:06:10:06

GN

How many family, brothers and sisters?

00:06:13:29

PB

An old, everyone's older, a brother, five years older, and two sisters, ten and eleven years older.

00:06:20:11

GN

I see, okay. We talked about grade school being tough. How was the Mount, some tough guys there too I suppose.

Paul Browne

00:06:30:13

PB

Timothy Joseph, I remember he was the dean of this one, we called him TJ. I don't know, you may. I think as kids, we wanted to, we elevated this toughness the degrees that are really--. But he was like, I remember one day my senior year, I went outside to shovel snow before I left for the Mount. And so, I put my warm coat over. I had just my shirt and tie. I hadn't put my suit jacket on yet, so I just put on a winter coat and then went out. Then it was time to leave. I forgot that I didn't have my suit jacket. So, I got to the, and I thought, well, that's a pretty reasonable excuse, detention. You know, like, there was no, you know, I needed that suit jacket, so.

But I think, like I said, we romanticize it a little tougher than it ever was. I did have great mentors there. I think one of the things. But, you know, my father, never went beyond the sixth grade. I think he was a little mystified by college. Just to a certain extent, American culture outside of kind of the working poor. I always thought of him as middle class until I got older. So, I kind of looked, I think to some of brothers, not exactly as father figures, but for that kind of mentorship and I got it in spades from Dick Cuoto. That was, yeah, that was in high school. He was a Marist brother. He started a project to help with the poor in Appalachia. And I look back and it's funny, all these kids, we had no money and we were going down to help the poor [laugh].

00:08:38:00

GN

() Yeah.

Paul Browne

00:08:39:08

PB

So, I was in the first group that did that.

00:08:41:27

GN

Yeah.

00:08:43:00

PB

With Dick Cuoto and we remained lifelong friends. But he also, and this kind of leads into how I got to Marist. So, I was the first in the family to graduate from college.

00:09:05:29

GN

You're ahead of the game, we got to get to high school first.

00:09:08:20

PB

Well, I'm out of high school but before I graduate. So how I get to Marist is, I was like totally at sea as a senior, you know, my mother would ask, oh have you applied for the different colleges? And I'd say yeah, yeah, yeah. Meanwhile, all these deadlines were passing. In fact, I got some

Paul Browne

kind of small scholarship that was applicable to... not Williams. It's kind of one of those small men's college in Massachusetts. Not an Ivy, exactly, but an exclusive school. They called me.

00:09:54:12

GN

Oh yeah.

00:09:54:24

PB

And said I should apply, and I started the application. That was late, when they called me, got to just get it in right away. And I had no appreciation. I was the editor of the paper, had decent grades, decent SATs, but I had no familiarity with higher education or... And I thought, well, maybe I'll travel the world, maybe, I'll learn, you know, join the Navy and become a pilot. I was all over the board and Dick Cuoto said, the only place in the world you're traveling if you don't go to college, is Vietnam. Which was true. So, he called-- so I had not applied nowhere, and all the deadlines had passed. And I was probably a pretty good prospect for a lot of colleges, but I just, you know, it was all in my hands, and I had no guidance. So, Dick Cuoto called Ed Cashin.

00:11:02:02

GN

Oh, I see.

00:11:03:06 - 00:11:21:07

Paul Browne

PB

Who is vice president. And he says, you know, I have this really good student, but who's, you know, but also a very, not a smart one in some ways. And, you know, Marist should really take him. So that's how I came to Marist: phone call from the Dick Cuoto to Ed Cashin.

00:11:21:09

GN

Well, I tell you, that's a good story. I mean Ed Cashin, he's how I got here. He came to his office and said, "You know, why don't you go over and teach on the campus rather than in this office," you know. And I said, "oh, I don't know." And he just arranged it so I would be transferred, you know. Start teaching here full time rather than just the courses in his office then drive the bus over for the chem students. So, it's a long story. And not only that, I introduced him to his wife. So, there's a certain Ed Cashin and Gus Nolan connection that goes back over the years. The other thing about-- who was the big football coach in those days? Howie Smith, Howie something.

00:12:18:12

PB

Howie Smith.

00:12:21:16

GN

Howie Smith, yeah.

Paul Browne

00:12:22:21

PB

Yeah. I mean, Saint Michael had a pretty good football team our big rival was Hayes.

00:12:27:22

GN

Cardinal Hayes.

00:12:28:16

PB

Cardinal Hayes.

00:12:29:18

GN

Thanksgiving Day.

00:12:31:07

PB

Yeah. And, since then, I've been able to--. If I run into somebody from Hayes, I'll say, you know, Hayes has gone coed. They'll say, no it hasn't it's still all men. I said, they're accepting men now [laugh]. And I knew that joke because it was played on me at the Mount. But yeah. You know, I enjoyed the Mount.

Paul Browne

00:13:08:11

GN

Did you do any activity?

00:13:10:02

PB

Yes, I ran track, and I was the editor of the paper, "The Tower," in my senior year. Yeah. And that sort of, I think, led me down the path of what I did professionally.

00:13:24:07

GN

Yeah. Let's move on to Marist College then, because I want to go from there to the career. How was Marist.

00:13:33:00

PB

Marist was, for me, it was, terrific because I built these relationships with faculty members and because I was on the student paper, I got to know faculty who I didn't even have in class.

00:13:51:26

GN

Yeah. I see.

Paul Browne

00:13:52:17

PB

Like Zuccarello. I never had him in class.

00:13:54:22

GN

Oh yeah.

00:13:58:12

PB

Tom Casey. I didn't have a class with him until my senior year, but I ended up working for him in a work study program, and he and I became close friends. Bob Lewis I never had him in class, but I think because I was friends with Tom, I would sometimes talk with the two of them in the rathskeller.

00:14:22:11

PB

And so, I have a lot of good informal relationships which developed into friendships as I got older. But it was outside of the classroom.

00:14:41:27

GN

Paul Browne

Yeah, Bob Lewis and Robert Lewis. Is that the connection, it was through Bob that you met Robert?

00:14:48:26

PB

Well, I heard about Rob. I'm trying to remember. I mean, I met him when he was a little kid.

00:14:55:03

GN

Yeah.

00:14:55:29

PB

But I ended up hiring him in every place I went. Well, several. From Pat Moynihan, the Police Department, U.S. Customs.

00:15:06:10

GN

Yeah.

00:15:07:03

PB

I found Rob wherever he was because he's such a great asset. That's how I met him. Yeah.

Paul Browne

00:15:16:04

GN

IBM thinks about that now too, in him [laugh]. I want to--.

00:15:25:00

PB

Oh, third year abroad was a big thing too.

00:15:28:09

GN

Oh, yeah.

00:15:29:01

PB

I can't remember exactly what my interest was. I had not traveled to Europe. I think I had been to Ireland, maybe not even at that point, but I have it in my head that Europe was like, that's the old world that's been-- I hadn't been there, but it was sort of been there, seen that. I wanted to go somewhere a little more adventurous. Marist had programs in France, Spain, and England. So, I went to Belanjay (?), he's another one that I became friends with. I had really mediocre grades. And I think you needed at least a 3.0 to go abroad. And I talked to him my sophomore year, and he said, well, you're going to have to get your grades up, but I wanted to go to Latin America and there was no program there. And Bell said, if you can find a program like an accredited program,

Paul Browne

I could do that. And I found one. I remember I went to, you know, pre-Internet days. I went down to this international education services place across the street from the U.N. And they had a library there, and I was looking up study abroad programs. And one was through Antioch College, it was called the Great Lakes College Association, and they had programs in Latin America. So, I ended up going to Colombia.

00:17:08:20

GN

Yeah.

00:17:09:24

PB

And I was, I think, the first Marist student to go somewhere outside of Europe. And I get tremendous support from Belanjay (?) and from Casey was my advisor. And just, everybody. So, I was the college editor at Marist when I was a sophomore. So, I got to know Foy, and, you know, it was the Vietnam era. So, there were protests and I remember I wanted to invite Timothy Leary on campus, who was like, the big LSD guy living over in Millbrook. And Cashin and, you know, we were very, you know, typical students, very impressed with our own selves. And so, I thought I wasn't going to let the college interfere with what I want to do. And somebody's smart idea had me talk to Cashin. And he could have, you know, he could have talked North Korea into giving up their nuclear arm. I mean, he was just incredible. And I'm walking out of there saying of course I'm not going to invite Timothy Leary because he was saying, it'd be hurtful to the campus and trying to do these things, and there's donors who would be upset. Went through the

Paul Browne

whole thing. And I said, okay, I'm not going to invite him. But that was an example of what I was saying is I got to know faculty and administrators. It was not only because of the size of Marist and the inclination of the faculty to be that way.

00:18:52:15

GN

Yeah, yeah.

00:18:55:14

PB

But also, because I was, editor at a young age. I mean, well, as a sophomore. I began to, in that capacity, meet administrators and other faculty.

00:19:12:13

GN

How do you get to be editor? Did you write articles at first? Or popular with the staff or?

00:19:19:04

PB

Yeah, I'm trying to think now. I think it was just, you know, battlefield promotions like people just not wanting to do it. And, because I had edited a paper and a monthly in high school and in the Circle at this time was a monthly, and I changed it to a weekly, which, like, that's when my

Paul Browne

grades nosedived. But it was a lot of a lot of fun. Met a lot of interesting people just in that capacity.

00:19:53:28

GN

It was very, very interesting. I mean, everybody picked up this article. They were left all over the place.

00:20:02:20

PB

And so that was, and, you know, it eventually played a role in my being hired as a--. In my senior year, I was the stringer for the New York Times. So, what the Times would do is they had these college, what they call college correspondents. A lot of them, they were just interested in what's going on campuses generally. And I heard about the time-- I heard that this job existed, and I went and I got an interview with the metro editor at the Times. It's a big deal at the time. And he said, well, you know, we have heard from Harvard and Yale, why should we hire you from like, little old nothing? I said, well, because most of the people in this country go to colleges like Marist, they don't--. It's a fraction of the college population goes to the Ivys. And that apparently worked as an argument. So, they hired me to do that. And I also applied to Newsweek at a similar thing. I was driving a cab in New York during summers to make money. One of my fares was saying, well, what are you interested in when you graduate? And I said journalism. And they said, oh, well, you should be a stringer for the, or campus correspondent for Newsweek. I said, well yeah that would be great. He says, you know, my daughter does that out in California. So,

Paul Browne

they probably would do-- so I called Newsweek. They said, we already have someone at Vassar. So, then they call me like, I don't know, a couple of weeks later and say, the woman at Vassar didn't work out. Do you want the job? I got it, so I'm the campus correspondent for the New York Times and Newsweek, and my first big story in the Times was a Sunday, running across the top of the second section, and it said, Marist College gives its students credit and cards to recruit others.

00:22:10:10

GN

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:22:12:06

PB

Ed Flynn, was that his name, who was the admissions director?

00:22:16:19

GN

I don't know.

00:22:18:08

AM

Dan Miller?

Paul Browne

00:22:19:10

GN

No.

00:22:19:28

PB

I thought it was Flynn, but.

00:22:21:06

AM

It was Flynn, Dave Flynn.

00:22:21:26

GN

David, David.

00:22:23:26

PB

Dave Flynn called me and said, you know, the next week he was getting offers from colleges all over the country. Because of that one story and the recruitment program. So, I had a lot of fun with that.

00:22:38:17

Paul Browne

GN

It was an eye-opener, that. I mean, people stopped and couldn't believe the Times. Carry on this and I didn't know where the link was. I never heard you were part of it, you know.

00:22:49:20

PB

And I had other I had other stories that mentioned, Marist, but anything in the region, anything to do with the war. Newsweek had me, there was a-- they were told that there was a bunch of kind of, what were they called? Young Republicans for Buckley when he was running against Moynihan.

00:23:17:24

GN

Oh yeah.

00:23:18:17

PB

They assigned me to cover Buckley. He was taking, like, a train like by Amtrak or something through the state. Assigned me to go along. And I'm getting paid like a per diem expenses and hanging out, like with this candidate for U.S. Senate. I couldn't. That's when I said I got to be a journalist-- I couldn't believe--. Like when Newsweek said... I said, well, what do you mean for expenses? Well, you know, when he-- you know, if you travel all day with him, you have a sandwich or you have dinner, or take him out to dinner. I said, yeah, and you'll pay me for that?

Paul Browne

It was like I couldn't get over it. So, I had those jobs as, this was as a senior, when I had come back from Latin America. And while I was in Latin America. And here's another thing about Marist's flexibility and my closeness to...

00:24:28:19

GN

Faculty.

00:24:29:11

PB

The faculty and administration. So, when I was in Latin America, my first semester was at the center of sort of Colombian language and studies, and I met some other Americans. There was a woman from Smith, Latin American Studies major, and Smith would not give her, recognize the credits she was getting in Latin America. And she's a Latin American. Of course, Marist recognized the credits for my first semester there. And then my second semester, we were all supposed to go to whatever university we tried to get into. The center was this kind of collective, but a degree granting or credits granting. And then the second semester I was planning to go to the National University. Well, there was a state of siege declared in Colombia in the second semester, and they shut down all the universities, because that's where like most of the leftists-- in fact, that's where FARC came out of. I was there in the year that FARC kind of came into existence, they were originally like a lot of college, students, faculty who basically want to throw overthrow the government and so the government said, close down the universities. They can't afford to stay there. So, I'm now in Latin America with an entire semester with no plans. So, I

Paul Browne

kind of sat down and I kind of wrote down the road to Tom Casey, and I wrote down a whole semester of independent study because my faculty members were out of work, too. And some of them agreed to meet with me and stuff.

00:26:14:09

GN

Yeah, I mean, here I thought you went there after you graduated, you went there as an intern for the whole year.

00:26:23:02

PB

Not as an intern. As a junior.

00:26:25:27

GN

A junior, alright. And then after you graduate--.

00:26:29:13

PB

I went to Samoa for the Marist Brothers as a volunteer.

00:26:32:19

GN

Paul Browne

Oh, that's right. Okay yeah.

00:26:36:12

PB

But all of that, just my point about Marist's size and the intimacy of the place. I had this whole complicated thing to get done, and I could do it. And this was no phone calls or anything, and no internet or texts, through letters back and forth, with Tom Casey and with Belanjay. And any other faculty members I needed kind of their sign off for my independent study that was proposing for their--.

00:27:09:29

GN

Yeah.

00:27:11:07

PB

Course. Tom got, you know, got the sign off between the two of them they got the sign offs. And so there I am in Latin America with an entire semester in front of me.

00:27:23:12

GN

Do you remember Casey?

Paul Browne

00:27:25:08

PB

Oh. Very well. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:27:27:09

GN

There's another story.

00:27:30:16

PB

Yeah. I remember the year when she had, I think, the world's largest collection of tchotchkes
[laugh].

00:27:38:09

GN

By the office and all, you know, they see a home for Puerto Rico, I guess.

00:27:48:09

PB

But anyway, it was that, I had two feelings about Marist. One mostly positive. The negative was,
it was sort of an insecurity thing about myself. I thought... So I was in-- when I started, at Marist
it was still all men.

Paul Browne

00:28:07:21

GN

Yeah.

00:28:09:00

PB

When I told somebody, who had some familiarity with Marist, they thought I was studying to be a brother.

00:28:16:15

GN

Yeah.

00:28:17:11

PB

But it had none of the name recognition. Of you know, even, like a Fordham. Some of my friends were going to colleges where people said where they went. Yeah, people knew exactly where it was. So, I had this bit of an inferiority complex about having attended a college that wasn't well known at that time. And then, so soon after... Well, after I came back from Samoa, a monk by the name of John Cherry, I think.

00:28:55:15

GN

Paul Browne

Yeah.

00:28:56:10

PB

Who came across campus when they, when I was still a senior and asked if I was interested in this volunteer program that Marist brothers were starting and he listed off a couple of places. One was Brownsville, Texas, and I forget a couple of others. And then he said, American Samoa. And I said I'm your man.

00:29:15:05

GN

Yeah, yeah.

00:29:15:26

PB

And then I recruited the other, Brendan Mooney and Philip Plenning (?) and--.

00:29:22:05

GN

Now how did the family react? I mean, you have all this time studying and you wind up volunteering, you know.

00:29:30:27

Paul Browne

PB

My parents were great. My parents were-- I think part of it was, because I was the youngest, you know, the spoiled one. So, anything I propose, they seemed to think was a great idea. I mean, Brendan Mooney, his parents were not happy. They thought he should be getting a job, but I couldn't get a job because I was 1A. I couldn't get an actual job. There were jobs aplenty because there were vacancies but the war had sucked up everybody. So, when you went to a job and the first thing they wanted to know, you had to show them was your draft-- what was your status? Mine was 1A which meant I could be drafted at any time. But I also had the lottery number. They had instituted that, and I had a lottery number that was like in the middle. Wasn't clear. Like if you had, like 300, you weren't getting drafted, and if you had 100, you were being drafted. And I was like, it's something like 120 something. And so, the year I'm in Samoa, it's American territory. I could have got drafted there. I didn't. Come back from American Samoa and got contacted by the draft. Or did they say my status had changed from 1A to 1... I can't remember what it was, but what it meant was that I been exposed to the draft. Like, seriously exposed to it for a full year. And then a new group of people went into that exposure. You were put into this kind of less likely--. And so '71, '72, the war ended in like '73, I think. So, it was winding down and I never got drafted. And I applied to--.

00:31:25:23

GN

NYU?

00:31:26:24

Paul Browne

PB

No, to Columbia.

00:31:27:21

GN

Oh, Columbia.

00:31:28:09

PB

Because of this insecurity. And I met a guy when I was in Samoa. He was a Peace Corps volunteer in Western Samoa, and he'd gone to Stanford, and I was telling him I was planning on going to graduate school at Columbia, and he said, well, don't waste your time. He said, try to get a newspaper, try to get practice journalism. Forget about graduate school. It's a waste of time. I know I wasted a year or two at Stanford, at graduate school. And I said to him, I want to be in exactly the place you are. I want to have my degree from Columbia University on my resume, and then people, oh, it was a waste of time, I didn't need it. Because it's an important credential.

00:32:18:17

GN

Yeah, yeah.

00:32:19:07

PB

Paul Browne

And that was my whole motivation for Columbia Journalism School because I also kind of thought, yeah, I don't want to go to school for another--. I know how to do reporting, I've been doing it for the Times and for Newsweek, but I wanted that pedigree. And so I apply to Columbia, I get accepted, I get informed that the tuition was \$3,000 a year, and I said, I can't afford it, which makes students now laugh. But so I talked to the dean, the dean of admissions at Columbia said if you go up to Watertown, New York, on the Canadian border, the new managing editor there went to Columbia, to the journalism school, his mother went to Columbia. If you go up there and just say you want to work for a year and save up to go back to Columbia, they'll hire you. And he was absolutely right. They weren't advertising for a job or anything. I went up there and I told him the story, and I got hired as a reporter.

00:33:27:15

GN

Oh, you went there first, before you went to Columbia. You went to Watertown?

00:33:30:03

PB

Yeah. The first year.

00:33:31:11

AM

We were wondering how you got to Watertown. It's an interesting story.

Paul Browne

00:33:35:00

PB

That's how I got to Watertown. Yeah, and I probably stayed too long. I was very comfortable there. I really loved the family that ran the paper. I got a job offer soon thereafter. Well, I go to Columbia. I mean, I go to Watertown. After a year I go back, I go to Columbia Journalism School. I get my degree, go back to Watertown. They asked me what I wanted to do, and I said, well, New York politics. So, they opened the bureau in Albany because that's what I wanted to do. And, they had given me an unpaid leave to get the degree. And I did that probably all told for about, I think, twelve years. Which was, now is a huge amount of time for anyone to stay anywhere. But like a year or two later I got an offer with the Baltimore Sun.

00:34:41:25

GN

Did you say twelve years?

00:34:43:13

PB

Yeah. And the Baltimore Sun was a big paper at that time, and I probably should have taken it, but I got very comfortable at the Watertown paper. You know, I still have no regrets about that.

00:35:05:15

GN

Paul Browne

Let's talk a little bit about the career now. How does Pat Moynihan fit into this and-- Do you want to take it?

00:35:16:29

AM

I think you're doing great the way you're going. I'm really interested in how you got into the political and your relationship in how you progressed through your various careers. Although I sense there's a theme.

00:35:31:15

PB

So, I'm in Watertown for just really a year. And this will come in later, like when after I have a daughter. I didn't know I was doing this myself. I think one of the reasons my career was successful is I told my daughter, when she's fifteen or sixteen, getting some of her first jobs. I said, what's important is you show up and do your job like and don't be a pain in the ass, because I had managed a number of people, but I said, there are a lot of people who I manage. I'm happy when they don't come to work. I hope that like-- if they're sick or if they're on vacation, I think, great. That's one less problem I have to deal-- is problem employees. I don't know when it's, you know, I had Depression era parents. If you had a job that was like golden. And so, I always like worked extra. I didn't think of it as working extra hard.

I'm at the Watertown Times in Watertown. It was what they call the PM paper would publish in the area, would come out like at one o'clock in the afternoon instead of early in the morning. So that meant our deadlines were-- you'd show up at work at like three o'clock and I worked-- I

Paul Browne

mean, at 7 a.m. and the workday would be over by three. John Lindsay is coming to Watertown, some reception. He's running for president. And he had switched by that time. He started out as Republican in New York City and then became a Democrat. He's coming to Watertown to some, like Democratic dinner or something. And the regular political reporter, people senior to me, you know, Lindsay is coming to town, it was a big name at the time. The city editor couldn't get anybody to volunteer for the job because it was after regular hours. And I'm like, hey, I'll take it. I raise my hand all the time. Oh, the Queen's coming to Kingston out there. Yeah, I'll go like, oh, everybody else had their weekend plans or something. So, I got these choice assignments because I was always willing to do it, but it didn't feel like work for me. It was like, wow, this is a cool story.

00:38:02:00

GN

Yeah, yeah.

00:38:03:04

PB

And so, I think that's why the editors feel confident in like-- . And I think I was just always interested in politics. Just sitting around the kitchen table. I mean, I grew up in an area where we all knew, like, who the sanitation commissioner was in New York City. It's like times have changed. It's like, you know, it was just, you're, I mean, anybody, any Irish immigrant who became a judge. You didn't get any more negative. So, I was drawn to it early on. I read when I was in high school, no, eighth grade I think, ninth grade. I read *Making of the President* by

Paul Browne

Theodore White about the Kennedy election when I was still in, I think, elementary school or freshman in high school, because I just loved the-- I mean, that book gives you all. It was the first book that kind of went behind the scenes and talked about all the machinations of the campaign and, I like that. I enjoyed all that stuff. And I would just, I think I would just say, yeah. Like when some people say, well, how did your career go from...? I tended to just say, yes when somebody came up with like a really interesting idea, like go to American Samoa. Yeah. You know. Or, you know, cover John Lindsay, yeah, I'll do that. So, in fact, when I got offered a job at the Baltimore Sun, I had a big, I had great clips from anybody who came through the North Country of any...

And the Washington Post asked me to-- the writer Edmund Wilson had an old stone house in northern New York when he died, the Washington Post knew of me. That's a long story, how they knew of me. But they knew of me, and they asked me if I could write a feature on that house, and they wanted me to do it right away because, there were other magazines and journalists, they think, looking to do the same thing, because Wilson had written a book called *Up Satan*, where that house was featured. So, I go there. I talked to his daughter who lives next door and she asked me if I want to live in the house. I looked at the story. So, when the Washington Post editor calls me worried about-- said, no problem, I'm in the house, I'm not letting anybody in but me. So, I had opportunities that kind of really landed in my lap.

When I was at Columbia...I was a little down about having been a real reporter for a year and getting paid to be important. Now, I'm at Columbia paying them to be like a student. And one of the courses I took was on international studies. And you go to the UN, cover the UN for class work. But it wasn't being published.

Paul Browne

And I remember sitting in the delegates lounge, it was a bar and a place where the diplomats would come when the session got out, the General Assembly got out, and I was in there kind of just feeling sorry for myself having a beer or something. And it was empty. And so, I had a table for myself. And then the General Assembly comes out, all these diplomats come out, and I see these three guys are looking for a table. And I see. I said, take this, I'll go up to the bar, because I'm only alone. You know, they go, "no, no, comrade, you know, stay where you are." It turned out it was the undersecretary, the UN, who was a Russian, a guy from Moscow radio and TV who turned out to be a KGB agent and, who subsequently tries to... [Ringing noise] Oh, I know what this is. I forgot to call and tell them I'm not coming. Hello, oh yes. I have to apologize. I forgot to call you. Something came up this morning, and I couldn't come, so I'm not going to be there. Yeah, I apologize. I'll be there tomorrow. Okay. Bye. I forgot to call them, get this medical treatment that I blew off today. But anyway, so that guy ends up asking me, well, offers me money to write stories, to interview certain diplomats off the record and tell them what they said. Tell me how many of the students and faculty at Columbia were Jewish? Because at the time, the Jewish Defense League was really busting the chops of the Russians in New York because they weren't letting, Soviet Jews out of Russia. And so, they wanted to know everything they could about like Jews in New York.

And so, I tell the dean at Columbia and he says, oh, this guy's clearly an agent, and we have to report it to the FBI because you may already be under surveillance and they're wondering what are you doing with this KGB agent? So, I go to the FBI. They didn't know anything then. They're very eager to get me to work. Sort of undercover. Not undercover. Well, just to continue working with the Russians for the rest of the year. Learning as much as I could about what they were up

Paul Browne

to and what they wanted me to do. So that ended up with another big piece in the Washington Post for me.

00:44:10:17

GN

How do you do that? Do you have a notebook with you? Or just try to remember all they talk about?

00:44:15:11

PB

Yeah. No, obviously I wouldn't take a notebook. But no, right after the meetings or anything, I would take notes or the FBI would meet with me immediately afterwards.

00:44:26:00

AM

I read that whole thing and I was like, wow, you really did that for over a year? Were you afraid?

00:44:33:00

PB

No, not until the very end. I was a little nervous. There were two times I was nervous. One, because the FBI got me nervous one time, this guy I got to know, the main KGB guy said, he invited me to his apartment. He had a wife and kids, invited me over to his house, and the FBI were like really spooked by that. They thought that was very unusual. And they were telling me

Paul Browne

to drink, like, cod liver oil to coat my stomach in case it was drugged. And to call this number, I didn't have to say anything. I just had to call and the phone rang and they'd come and get me. And I'm thinking the guy's just friendly, you know? And so, I go that night, and I'm pretty on edge. I don't think the cod... I'll take the drugs or whatever he's trying to drug me with before I'm going to drink cod liver. So, knock on the door and nothing, he's not there. I leave. One of the FBI, the more senior guy, they're trying to figure this out.

And he says, you know, that was the equivalent of Mother's Day in Russia. He says what all these expatriates do, like in Russia, on holidays, they all get together like these guys are not home. They have a big party. They all get drunk, you'll call home. And that's what he probably did. He probably forgot about it. And then he realized he was supposed to go to this get together and call mom and all that. And that's exactly what happened. But there were a million kind of stories connected with that. But again, it was one of these things that just... You know, when I was put in the position to say yes.

00:46:26:03

GN

Yeah. Yeah.

00:46:27:18

PB

Absolutely did, like with the FBI, asking me to work with them in that capacity.

00:46:36:00

Paul Browne

AM

I do think it was a little brave.

00:46:38:11

PB

Yeah, I-- the other time was at the very end of it. At the very end. First, they were against it, then they were for it. Supposedly Kissinger didn't want anything written that would upset the, what was it called? His approach with the Soviets, it had a name, where they were trying to get along with the Soviet Union. But in any case, suddenly the objections went away. And I put my memoir. I protected the FBI agents names and gave it to the Washington Post. They played it really big because it was in New York. It happened all in New York, under the nose of the New York Times [laugh].

And so that's why they loved the story, but just before it was published, the FBI told me, like, the KGB can be real thugs. And so, they say, you know, they may slash your tires. There may be some vandalism. Just kind of watch your back kind of thing. So, but that didn't happen. I think there was too much exposure, because when the Washington Post came out, the NBC-- I mentioned in the story that this guy Yakovlev lived on Casino Boulevard in Queens, and they found the apartment and knocked on his door, and he answers the door, and I wasn't anticipating this part. You know, the Washington Post, blah blah blah. And he says, "No, Paul Browne, he is a spy. He came to us, the Soviets, and asked for money to spy against this country. And we said no." And I thought, wow, it's the first time like, I was in the media where a big lie was being said, and I was like, oh my God. Like nobody believed it.

Paul Browne

00:48:45:04

GN

Yeah.

00:48:45:28

PB

But still, you know, it was on NBC news. The guys saying, I went and offered to betray my country to the Soviets and woah. But anyway, that made my graduate year at Columbia very exciting.

00:49:05:18

AM

Yes.

00:49:08:18

PB

Yeah. But nothing happened. But of course, they might not have known where I was living or anything because I didn't reveal a lot to the Russians.

00:49:25:28

GN

Moving on, picking up, I'm just curious about the introduction of the Moynihan story.

Paul Browne

00:49:33:13

PB

Okay, so, Moynihan--.

00:49:36:29

GN

What year was this, do you know?

00:49:40:26

PB

I have to think-- '80, 1982 or '83, '82, I think. So, in the course of being a political reporter in New York, I got to know Tim Russert, who at that time was Moynihan's press secretary. And Russert was leaving Moynihan's staff to go work for Cuomo because he thought Cuomo was kind of-- a lot of people that thought he was going to run for president. And, you know, Moynihan made it clear to those of us who ended up working for him that he had no intention of ever running for president. So, Russert decided he was going to bail. Moynihan could work, Cuomo, he called me. He said he wanted to recommend me to work for Moynihan because he thought we would kind of just hit it off. And he was right about that. So, in fact, his mother and my mother were both private duty nurses, you know.

00:50:47:13

GN

Oh yeah.

Paul Browne

00:50:49:10

PB

And, you know, he came from this-- you know, everybody thought he was a bit of, a lot of people thought he was this almost aristocratic because of the way he presented himself. And, of course, he grew up with nothing. The father abandoned the family, and they moved. He probably moved, you know, like six times during grade school because back in those days, if you signed up for a new lease, you would get the first month free as a kind of an incentive. So, a lot of people with no money would move a lot so they could save that month's rent. And so, Moynihan, no working father in the family, I forget how many kids, but the mother, you know, just did what she could, including moving a lot to keep the family together. And I think-- I remember we, he would come up to, he had this farm in Oneonta where he'd go over there in the summer. And on the way up there, he'd fly into Albany County Airport, and then somebody would, meet him, drive from... So, Russert arranged for Pat to interview me at the Americana Inn at this restaurant in Albany at the airport. And I worked very diligently to be prepared for this interview because as soon as Russert said-- I thought I never want to work for a politician. But because it was Moynihan, is like a hero in our family, it was no question. So, I prepare like I knew what he did as an aid in the Harriman administration, all sorts of stuff. So, when he asked me any question, I had like an informed answer, including like, why do you want to work for me as opposed to somebody else? And, and I had all sorts of, you know, guaranteed income ratings, his writing on this and that and blah, blah, blah. So, meet him at the hotel. We have cocktails before dinner. And three bottles of wine with dinner [laugh].

Paul Browne

So, when he comes around and asks me why I work for him, the question I anticipated, I blurt out, because my mother would be really proud of me [laugh]. He said, great answer. And so, I ended up, being hired, and then rapidly promoted from, started out doing kind of scheduling and kind of looking at politics in New York and then ended up as press secretary and ultimately his chief of staff.

00:53:44:29

GN

Did you drive him or anything like that. Were you a chauffeur?

00:53:48:04

PB

No, that was an entry--. I came in at a higher level, but, because I was all of 32. I also said, it would have been a job to have because here--. So, I was a senior advisor to Pat Moynihan, who had been senior advisor to four presidents.

00:54:08:20

GN

Yeah.

00:54:09:11

PB

Paul Browne

Before I went to work for him. So, it seemed really presumptuous to be a senior advisor to a guy who had been an advisor for four presidents and, ambassador of India, ambassador of United Nations, you know, a Harvard professor. So, it was a little intimidating. And I think if I had the job when I was 42, 52, I would have been more seasoned and have more of-- appreciate his sense of humor and not be as upset of, like... He would do things that I'd lost sleep over, like he was very meticulous about his mail. His secretary would go through it, and then before I gave it to him, I'd go through it.

Like one time I had what I thought was a relatively important piece of correspondence. I can't remember what it was. But it's sort of on like typing paper, but it was a personal letter. And then in the same pile was a letter from the Cardinal at the time, might have been an invitation to the Al Smith dinner or something.

00:55:21:11

GN

Yeah.

00:55:22:09

PB

But the other one on the regular paper was of more importance. So, I had that up higher in the stack. He calls me in, and he has both pieces, letters. The one on the regular paper and then the Cardinal's, which is like 90% rag content with embossed everything. And he's weighing them in each hand and he goes this one, like the light one, just rolls it up and throws it. That's not what--. Then he has the Cardinal's, "Now, here's a letter," like that. Just the care taken in. Not what it

Paul Browne

said, just sort of the book by its cover. But, and then another day he took this stack and he wouldn't look at any of his mail during the week. He'd do it on Saturday mornings because he didn't want to be distracted with little things all the time.

So, he'd have a big stack of mail, and it was from heads of state around the world. Bush was a Vice President under Reagan. He would send notes sometimes even Reagan, you know. So, it was quite a collection. And, one day. He wanted to go to lunch, and he hadn't gotten to the mail. And on Saturdays I would go in, I would be the only one working on Saturdays with him. But that was kind of expected for the AA or the chief of staff. So, he picks up that entire pile of mail, maybe forty pieces of correspondence. One more important, they didn't include all the junk that he didn't. And he picks it up and he throws it in the wastebasket. Said, "Time for lunch. If it's important they will write back" [laugh]. And so, if I was older, I would have loved that.

00:57:18:06

GN

Yeah.

00:57:19:21

PB

But early thirties. Oh my God. What about, you know, the vice president... And when he asked me to be the chief of staff or was really called administrative assistant back then, AA. I felt I didn't have enough experience in the legislative process because I had only been with Moynihan for, like, a year and a half or something, and he's asked me to run the office. So, he said, well, think about it. Meanwhile, I went to come to New York. And he's meeting with them, this is the

Paul Browne

mid-80s, the then Prime Minister of Israel during Iran-Contra. Sort of a moderate. The rule, I mean, particularly... but it's been around forever at the time. I can't remember his name. I'll think of it. But anyway, his suite in the Waldorf Towers. We get to the top floor or whatever. And the hallway is filled with these security guys with, who is he? We go into this prime minister's suite. He's there unannounced in the country to convince the I don't know this--. Moynihan explains it to me later. To convince the White House people that Israel's the kind of... just to kind of tell a story that wasn't exactly true about Israel's involvement, which was not good in that whole thing.

Okay, so, it's Moynihan, the Israeli Prime Minister, his kind of note taker, and me, that's it in the meeting. Afterwards, Moynihan said, well, you know, he was lying. I said, well, no, I didn't know he was lying. He says, oh, yeah, they just want me to go back to the White House and regurgitate everything he said, I'm not going to do that. But, you know, that was his whole purpose because Moynihan was really respected by Israel because of his days in the UN. So, they were hoping that he would sort of bail them out of this mess in Iran-Contra, which he was not going to do.

But I thought, right after this meeting I said, this is unbelievable. So, we're leaving the-- we were going different places after that. And he says to me, well, how about that AA job, chief of staff job, what do you think about it now? You get to do stuff like this a lot. I go, I'm your man, senator [laugh]. So, he was very, you know, clever.

01:00:23:09

GN

Russert's son, Luke, are you in touch with him?

Paul Browne

01:00:29:18

PB

No, I didn't really know. No, I knew, Maureen Orth, Tim's wife. I knew her before they were married. She was a journalist for Vanity Fair, I think. But I got to know her in my other, you know, spokesman for Moynihan. Different things before they met, but I didn't, I went to his funeral in Washington where Luke spoke. And that was another great story. So, like, Ray Kelly said, tell Bloomberg, I was at the police department. He said, you know, Paul was, you know, good friends with Russert. Of course, Bloomberg was flying down to Russert's funeral on a private, his own plane. So, with some VIPs. And so, Bloomberg invited me to go down, with the funeral. You go to a funeral like that, it's good to go like with a big VIP because everything goes smoothly. But I went to that funeral and on the way back, he got the bird into from La Guardia to Westchester County Airport because of weather or something. And when we land, Bloomberg has waiting for him a helicopter with the rotors going.

And I learned to fly when I was 40. So, I'm looking at-- and there's no pilot seat. There's a co-pilot. And I'm thinking, where's the pilot? Bloomberg gets in the pilot seat and flies the helicopter to Wall Street airport. And when we landed, he landed in a crosswind, which is-- so a small craft, like a helicopter or a small airplane, if you have a crosswind, it can push you away from where you want to land. So, you have to come in in a crabbing motion, almost sideways, and then at the last minute, straighten it up to land. So, I noticed what was happening and so, when we get out, I said, you really greased that landing, which is kind of pilot talk. He says, "do you fly?" I say, yeah. So, we became buds after that.

Paul Browne

But Moynihan was like, he was like a thoroughbred racehorse, temperamental. Not easy all the time. But we're exposed to these incredible--. And he was just. He was just great. He was, literate, you know, an intellectual. I remember what Jimmy Carter said, this was before I worked for Pat, but Jimmy Carter was complaining about, you know, needing tax reform, and he said the income tax, American income tax system is a disgrace to the human race. And Moynihan got up on the Senate floor after he said, "Paul Puff is a disgrace to the human race. The tax system, eh it's okay" [laugh].

01:03:49:19

AM

Good story.

01:03:54:04

GN

Did you ever--?

01:03:54:27

PB

Oh, and I had him come to one of the Dennis's dinner when he, when I was. Yeah, when I was working for him. Well, one of the CIA dinners, the annual dinner, like I didn't. Yeah. Moynihan came to that, when I was working for him.

01:04:14:12

Paul Browne

AM

How did you transition from, in your own mind, from a journalist to a senior advisor to some of the most powerful men in the world?

01:04:31:18

PB

I guess it's chutzpah, I don't know. I did have a lot of, on one hand, I had a lot of self-confidence, and I'm not sure exactly where it came from. Because when I ended up in [cough].

01:04:50:29

AM

Can I refill that for you?

01:04:55:07

PB

I remember when I was the deputy commissioner of the police department. My brother was kind of amazed how comfortable I was in front of the media during all these controversies. And he said, you know, if the mayor-- and he my brother was a career New York City cop, and lieutenant detective when he retired. And he said to me, if the mayor called today and said, "I want you to be a police commissioner," you'd say, "no problem." And I said, yeah, absolutely [laugh]. And he couldn't get over that because he would have these bit of these panic attacks when he'd get more authority.

Paul Browne

01:05:37:12

AM

I could understand that.

01:05:40:02

PB

But I'm not sure where it came from. I got along with everybody I worked with; I got very close with all of them. Liz Moynihan cried when I left the staff.

01:05:59:12

AM

What's that book you're reading by David Brooks?

01:06:04:26

GN

How to Know a Person.

01:06:06:07

AM

How to Know a Person. You are the epitome of that. Yes. I started reading it. It's very hard to know people, but you show yourself and people...

01:06:19:21

Paul Browne

PB

I guess, so.

01:06:20:11

AM

Get comfortable with you immediately.

01:06:24:28

PB

And I think that. Yeah, I think that happened. Moynihan would tell me very, you know, personal things. And I think it came from, you know, my mother, you know, tell him about my mother and she's working hard, you know, my father was, you know, alcohol and... Moynihan's father was an alcoholic who abandoned the family. My father worked everyday of his life, but, you know, when you kind of talk about stuff like that, you know, there's a bond. He showed me a piece of, like, I don't know, it was jade or something in his apartment. And he says, this is probably the only valuable I have, and it was put on me by my mother, who was the nurse for some well off family. So, he was just. But we had the, you know, I had a good relationship with everybody.

01:07:26:21

GN

You seem to listen to people before you talk. I mean, you want to hear what they have to say and they respond accordingly? Or do you press the question and say, what do you think about?

Paul Browne

01:07:41:03

PB

Well, the listening part was just part of being a reporter.

01:07:45:18

GN

Yeah.

01:07:46:26

PB

And I was very shy as a kid. And journalism for me, it gave you like a pass, like a badge. Like I'd be really interested in what happened. Like, why those police cars there? I'd want to know what was going on. But I'd be too shy to go up and ask anybody. But when you're reporter, it's your job. So, you have an excuse like, I'm not coming and saying, oh, I just want to know I'm here with my newspaper, what's going on? And I found there were a lot of-- David Brooks is one of them. He's a pretty shy person.

01:08:21:13

AM

Yes. He says that.

01:08:22:23

PB

Paul Browne

Oh, he does. Because I know him through a family member outside of journalism. But he, I found there's a lot of people who are attracted to journalism because it gave them license to get involved where their shyness would--. It forced them to overcome their shyness. And I think that was the case with me. And I, you may not know it from this, but I'm comfortable with more periods of silence, like with Moynihan or Ray Kelly. I don't have to have. We could be on a trip somewhere and I can just not say anything. And wait for them to talk. That doesn't-- I think some people are uncomfortable with that silence. And I've never been uncomfortable with that.

01:09:21:11

GN

What's the bridge from Moynihan to Kelly?

01:09:25:08

PB

So, what happens with all of Moynihan's chiefs of staff is that at some point, you just get fed up with it. It's just, he's too mercurial, and so what I would do [pause] when he'd have one of these mercurial episodes to make my--. I don't know if you remember, this is years ago in the 80s. The New York Times Week in Review section would have these big display ads in the back for education and different positions, and they were all kind of interesting. It might be with the UN or.... So, one day it's from therapy-- but these are very big jobs. And so there was no point in responding to an ad. They were there just to show that they advertise. But for therapy, sort of. I would send in a resume, and then afterwards feel better, like it was this is equivalent to saying, I'm fed up, I resign, I, you know, but I wouldn't resign.

Paul Browne

And then, so it was one for a senior position with the police department in New York, which I, you know, I always looked up to because my brother, being a cop. So, I answered the ad, I forget all about it. Like weeks later, I got a call from the police commissioner's office and my first thought was something my brother got shot or something.

So, I said, "what's you know what's wrong?" And he said, "what do you mean what's wrong? You wrote to us." Like, oh yeah, right. So, believe it or not, that's how I-- Kelly was not the police commissioner. He was the first dep at that point. Police commissioner was this guy Lee Brown from Texas.

I knew a lot about the police culture. I grew up in the Bronx and so on. And because it was one of these interviews where I didn't care, like if I got a job and I had a great job with Moynihan. So, I was totally relaxed and did things I probably wouldn't have done if I was trying to get the job.

Like I was saying, you know, you're here as an outsider, you're from Texas, a lot of the troops are going to be suspicious of you. I mean, it's a long history of racism in the police department. You're black. You're from Texas. It's like, you have to understand your own power and importance. I said you can pick up that phone right now and ask for the president of the United States, you might not get him, but you'll get his chief of staff, or you might get the president. But you can't forget you can get wrapped up in all the minutia of this job and forget how significant it is. Yeah. And, I think that little speech is what helped me get the job, would be offered a job with him.

01:12:37:10

AM

Paul Browne

Oh, yeah, I think that was right on.

01:12:39:19

PB

Yeah, and I would not have been that bold if I was like, out of work or—I'd have been much more cautious if I didn't... And I've been lucky that way. Most jobs I had; I wasn't dying to necessarily leave. So, I was a lot more relaxed. I mean, with Moynihan, it helped after three bottles of wine, you know, to be a little relaxed. But--.

01:13:13:02

GN

Did you know what the job would be?

01:13:15:23

PB

I didn't know how great it would be. I didn't know-- initially it was okay, but then, when Kelly came in--. So, Lee Brown's wife got very ill, and he returned to Texas. Dinkins was mayor, and he appointed Kelly, and he went through this stupid search, you know, thing where he was looking for, you know, every kind of minority you could think of, like lesbians, gay, you know, and it's driving Kelly-- who, you know, graduated from Manhattan, law degree from Saint John's, a master's in law from NYU. And another master's from Harvard. And like forty years experience in the police department like, so he got really frustrated. And I got to know Kelly at that point that he was going to withdraw from the process.

Paul Browne

And I said, look, you know, don't withdraw. I said, Dinkins he's just like a lot of us who wakes up in the middle of the night and, oh my God, like, worrying about all the stuff that's on his plate. And I said, he does not want to name you police commissioner. You're this kind of like you're the typical Irish cop when he was growing up when you'd pull over in a squad car and you just point to a black kid like him and go like this, you wouldn't even get out of the car, just get over here. And so, he wanted--. That's why David Black (). The Crown Heights had happened. And Dinkins knows you can run the department and he's not going to like it, but he's going to ask you to police--. So just like, keep your power. And that's exactly what happened. And then Kelly was fantastic. It was the best job. I mean, Moynihan was a fantastic, the best job I ever had was being a deputy commissioner under Kelly. It was the hardest work I had worked. And, yeah, it was just, the sense of mission, the sense of-- you know the Senate staffs, you know, part of your job is to watch your back because everybody's looking for it.

01:15:36:13

GN

Could you give us one or two things that is with the hardest job. Haiti?

01:15:46:11

PB

Yeah. Well.

01:15:47:14

AM

Paul Browne

You got some bad press occasionally.

01:15:49:29

PB

Oh, well, yeah. Well, I mean, yeah, we got a lot of, there was pressure all the time. Two things in, not initially, but later on we did. So, after 9/11, there was a kind of love affair with the police department. But that honeymoon lasted, you know, in New York, maybe six months.

So, then it was starting to question our counterterrorism. We had undercovers going into radicalized mosques, stuff like that. We had stop and frisk where we were taking guns off the street in big numbers. Way disproportionately from young black men, who way disproportionately were carrying guns.

In the middle of that, I heard an undercover cop's tape recording at Port Authority bus station. It's a gun trafficker coming up from North Carolina with a bunch of guns, but he doesn't know he's working with this undercover. And for, however, the case was, they wanted him to sell guns in Brooklyn. He gets off the bus and Port Authority and I said, you got to go to prison.

He says, I'm not getting off. I'm not leaving Port Authority. You hear all this stop and frisk. I'm not going anywhere in New York with a gun. You're going to have to take him from me here.

That was music to our ears. There was a phenomenon called the community gun. These young kids were all carrying guns. After we started that program, they would get together and hide one gun, like in an old tenement or something. And then if they wanted to use it, like for red and shooting, they'd go out and get it. But what that eliminated was all the bad luck, all these stupid things that fourteen-year-old, fifteen-year-olds would do. Oh, you looked at me the wrong way.

Paul Browne

You looked at my girlfriend, bang. That stuff stopped because of the concern about being stopped by the police and being found with a gun.

So, it was highly criticized. But it saved lives and mainly saved the lives of black young men.

During that period, after stop and search the Census Bureau reported that life expectancy in New York City had gone up. And they attribute that to the lack of violence among young black men and young men generally.

I mean, that's astounding to move the census number, life expectancy. But the press was looking for, I think there was-- it was just the beginning of a kind of like, race would just overwhelm everybody. And so that was that was part of it. But every year the Times would ask me, we would have in the year statistics on shootings, big, detailed report. What time of day? Where in the city? The Times would put up a big chart. They'd done it for years, during this period like as this sensitivity to race was growing, I came on and the big thing, the number-- the thing that jumped out at you on homicide, both the suspects and the victims, was young blacks. I mean way over the percentage of population, Asians, no crime. Disproportionate was victims.

So, there are interesting stories in this thing comes out. No, no mention of race. Years before they also, I called. Oh, we just don't we just overlooked the--. And I said come on, don't bullshit me.

You guys don't want to write that story. You want to write that cops are racist. That Kelly's program is unfair to blacks.

You don't want to... Now, maybe this isn't the way you want us to get guns off the street, but you can't divorce it from the realities of where shootings are happening. But the Times did, they wanted to and, so that was very--. That was a very frustrating job. I felt like I was in combat all the time. But the upside of that is, you're surrounded by people under similar pressure, and you're like, in the foxhole together, you know, you feel under siege, but you're protecting each other and

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you're trying to do your job. And what I was saying earlier about, like, with the staff at Moynihan's, well, like half of them wanted my job and half of them were looking to work for Kennedy. And so, you didn't have the level of camaraderie that I had in the police department. That was like, you know, priceless. And you never had a day off. It was like it was constant because, you know, you know, go to bed Saturday night, Friday night, thinking I might by get a good night's sleep. But that would never happen because most bad stuff happened, you know.

01:21:39:27

GN

You're on call around the clock?

01:21:43:10

PB

Yeah. And, but I was the spokesman for the biggest police department in America, and some of the biggest stories all the time. One of the biggest was the French, he was a candidate for-- he was the leading candidate to become president of France. And he, sexually assaulted a maid in the hotel.

01:22:10:18

AM

I recall that.

01:22:12:27

Paul Browne

PB

That was an unbelievable story. It was worldwide interest. And people would track you down. You know these French reporters. I had no idea how they got my cell number, but my calls were so intense that the cell phone stopped functioning, it's like too much was coming in. But that was really, really exciting. And, you just felt the-- the cops would say that being a cop being is, it's having, like, front seats to the greatest show on Earth, and that's what it felt like to me because, you know, even if it wasn't directly connected to the police department, we would control, you know, or try to control police media, big media trusts, like, a federal trial wouldn't be a NYPD case, but we would support the federal courts. And like trying to keep the streets open and manage the press with a lot of-- where they would put their trucks. And so, when the big Connecticut, home style queen. Arrested for tax issues or stock fraud. Martha Stewart. So, Martha Stewart was on trial in New York. That was a huge part of my day. Even had nothing to do with it. It was federal charges had nothing to do with the police department except for the actual physical arrangements and dealing with the press.

Everybody wants access and trying to do that in a fair way. And a big ego trip, too, in a way. Like there was a steam pipe explosion in Midtown. This was, you know, within a year or two of 9/11. And all you see is just huge cloud of smoke and everybody's thinking is this a terrorist? I'm at work and Wolf Blitzer is trying to get me on the line, you know, like, to go on the air immediately. And I get to Notre Dame and it's like crickets, you know, it's like. But so, some of it was vanity because you were in demand all the time. But the big part was that sense of mission. And the sense of trying to defend the department against super scurrilous attacks. So, yeah, it was the best job.

Paul Browne

01:25:10:15

GN

How long did you have the job. Was it three sessions?

01:25:16:17

PB

Yeah, with the police department?

01:25:19:19

GN

Yeah.

01:25:20:12

PB

Yeah, you're pretty good at. Yeah. So, Kelly was appointed by Dinkins towards the end of Dinkin's term because he had Lee Brown their first. So, I was working for Lee Brown. And Kelly comes in and I work with Kelly, and then, Giuliani comes in. Giuliani makes believe he wants to keep-- because the New York Times ran a big editorial saying, there's one person in the Dinkins administration that Giuliani should keep it's Ray Kelly.

So, and when I read that, I thought, there's no way it's going to be that Giuliani keeps Kelly, because that's like the appointment. And he's not going to keep the somebody from Dinkins. But anyway, he did for a little bit. And then, Kelly was gone. He ended up being asked by the Clinton administration to go to Haiti to try to...

Paul Browne

After the overthrow of the democratically elected president there, Aristide, he was put in back in power by the American military. And then this international police group was charged with policing Haiti after that. And that's what Ray was head out there for the police, but he asked me to come down as deputy. And so, I don't know, there's maybe two and a half years that first stint at the police department, and then it was all, twelve years of Bloomberg. So, it was a long run. And Bloomberg was terrific. A lot of people I know said, what happened to Giuliani, you know, that he went for Trump seems crazy. You know, he was corrupt and horrible back then.

01:27:23:07

GN

Oh, yeah. I just hear about the present time, but I don't want to go there.

01:27:28:01

PB

No, no, no, but I mean, when I worked, so I worked, briefly for Giuliani, the first thing he tried to do was one of his senior guys was to get me to rebid a contract for tow truck drivers on the FDR drive. So, before it was regulated, what would happen in New York if you got in a fender bender on the FDR drive, three or four different tow companies would come charging to the scene to try to get there first. There'd be fistfights. It was crazy. It's was scary to the people whose car were in the accident. So, legislation was passed. It was put under the police department's control. And we would oversee the bidding process and then pick whatever it was two or three years, the contract. Giuliani comes in, he's trying to get me to undo that contract.

Paul Browne

And, by the way, the tow truck companies are notoriously mobbed up. And so, somebody is offering a bribe somewhere, and the Giuliani people won, and I said, you're going to have to call. I said, I'm not going to touch that with a ten-foot pole. You're going to have to. I said, the mayor is going to have to call Ray Kelly, and I recommend he do not do that because they knew Kelly was a straight shooter.

So that was one thing. Another time we had some bad shootings, a cop shot and killed a kid who was fleeing in the back. Giuliani came out with a statement that said that kid was no altar boy. Well in fact he had been an altar boy, but he put out all of like his prior rights and stuff. The cop doesn't know-- the cop was chasing him for some crime in progress. The cop doesn't know the history of that kid, or whether he was ever armed or anything like that.

But Giuliani puts it out laid the dirty of the kid. And he did the same thing on minor stuff. I was listening to his radio show, you know, he talked to constituents every week. There was-- a person calls in complaining about, it was sort of a speed trap, and I knew exactly where it was. It was in () where I grew up, where if you're just the average driver, it forces you into making the mistake of like running a stop sign, or I forget exactly how it worked where the stoplight never changes green. So, cops looking for an easy ticket writing thing sit there and collect all these unfair summonses. And so, this guy is calling and complaining about that. And I remember calling Kelly and I said, you know, this guy's right. We should look into this. Giuliani goes and has his-- he has like a security detail, has them investigate that guy and find out whatever minor record he had. He had something and leaks that to the press.

Oh, the guy who called and demanded the speed trap. You know, he was arrested for shoplifting. That's how bad it is. I mean, you could not, like, mess with the prince. And I felt he was corrupt. I felt he was power hungry. I mean, I had no brief for all these Wall Street people he was

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arresting but none of them, not one of them was indicted or convicted. He had all these big what they call a daisy chain. They take out twelve people, all in handcuffs, the cops would call them daisy chains, in front of the press. And these are people who would volunteer, like my brother had a squad in the Bronx, whole different kind of criminal. But detectives first move to get somebody in custody is to call him up. Say, when you come into the precinct, I want to talk to you about this. And Wall Street does that. They have their lawyer do it. That's the only difference, they say, hey, my client will surrender tomorrow. Or what time do you want us to surrender. Giuliani wouldn't do that. He wanted--. And I thought that was really dangerous. He wanted the show, the publicity. And you're talking about people's livelihoods and their freedom. I mean, going to prison.

01:32:10:06

GN

Yeah, yeah.

01:32:11:16

PB

And he wanted it just for power. And I never forgot that. And then we had another guy more recently who is Indian descent. I forget his name. He's like, has his own radio show. His papers (). I think he's a big liberal. He indicted a cop, there's a cop online with a friend of his. And they go into these stupid emails where they say, they're going to, oh cannibal, they're going to be cannibal and cannibalize women like, you know, he talks about an old girlfriend she would make like great steaks or something like that. I mean, absolutely inane. This Peri Perath (?) indicts that

Paul Browne

cops claiming he was really going to try to kidnap and of course, he knew immediately, we all know what the headline was going to be. Cannibal cop. That's what it was. He wanted those tabloid headlines. Like somebody, this is like irresistible. And if you're a decent, you know, honest prosecutor, you can see it's ridiculous. He's taken no action to show that he's really going to try to kidnap and cannibalize somebody.

01:33:34:13

GN

Yeah, yeah.

01:33:35:17

PB

But he did it for the press, and the judge excoriated the prosecutors for that. But that cop lost his job, because of it. So, prosecutors, I've gone way off topic, but Giuliani was never a big guy.

01:34:01:24

GN

All right, we're getting on in time here. I don't know how much. But I want to get to one big story, of course, is the call to Notre Dame.

01:34:11:23

PB

Paul Browne

Well, that's another you know, another thing of my just getting to say yes. So, it's towards the end of the Bloomberg administration, de Blasio is mayor elect. I wouldn't work for de Blasio for a million years. He campaigned against the police department. He was a race baiter. Everything. So, I was there was no way I was going to stay at the police department, even if he wanted me. So, Bloomberg said, you know, don't worry about it. Like I'll take care of you kind of thing. And he was, I don't know if this woman was looking for... You have this one, okay. We'll finish up.

01:35:08:03

GN

We'll be out in a few minutes, okay. We're just finishing our interview. Okay.

01:35:13:15

PB

Thanks.

01:35:15:04

AM

It's finals week. Students are actually studying today.

01:35:22:14

PB

So, anyway, Bloomberg said, you know, he was going to take care of, you know, whoever needed to be taken care of. So, I wasn't worried about a job. But the next thing you know, Bloomberg is

Paul Browne

calling me, and he said, you know if Notre Dame called would you be willing to go out to Indiana like a (). And I said, yeah, why would it? He said you'd leave New York. Like nobody who worked for Bloomberg, Kelly--.

01:35:53:25

AM

Those days.

01:35:54:13

PB

And they had called him. They didn't want the president to reach out and get a no. So, they called Bloomberg to assess, you know, whether I'd be amenable. So, then I got a note from Father Jenkins, and he asked if I would make time to come out and meet with them, make time on my calendar. I wrote him back and I said, that's like asking me if I can pencil in an appointment for an audience with the Pope [laugh]. He may not have known my, you know, of everything I did my parents would be most proud of Notre Dame. Just because, you know, it was this aspirational place for, you know, my mother, particularly Northern Ireland. Lots of discrimination against Catholics and Notre Dame was this this reputation for, you know, this great Catholic it was the Catholic Harvard, that kind of thing.

So, that's how that happened. They had totally vetted me. I met a guy at Notre Dame. Oh, yeah, I talked to Joe Esposito, he was a chief of the department. He talked to all these people. They never called Ray. Ray was annoyed about that. But they did all the background on me and then just offered me the position at a very nice, really generous compensation, which allowed me--. I

Paul Browne

worked for government the whole time. You didn't make a lot of money, but it allowed me to ultimately help my daughter buy an apartment. And ultimately retire because--.

01:37:51:03

GN

Now what was the job being offered?

01:37:54:23

PB

It was vice president for public affairs and communications.

01:37:59:03

GN

Okay.

01:37:59:27

PB

And so, it is basically they were worried, like a lot of universities were of some kind of crisis on campus. But the crises they had were, like, I could, you know, handle in my sleep compared to what I was doing. So, I mean, Father Jenkins said to me, you know, one of your responsibilities is to protect the reputation of the universities. But one of the challenges is that reputation is often in the hands of eighteen-year-olds in shoulder pads.

Paul Browne

01:38:36:17

GN

Yeah.

01:38:37:14

PB

So, I said, I just left the job with a reputation with twenty-one-year-olds with guns [laugh]. And so, and that was sort of true. The pressure, it was just the reverse. The pressure was like I was being compensated for being-- if we hit the iceberg, you know, Father John was a very modest guy, wasn't looking to get his name in the newspapers or anything like that. It was just if some bad stuff happened, they had some what they thought were bad stories. A couple of years they ran through like I think four or five people in that job title, six months, years. And they were just hoping for some stability and that's basically what I gave them. But that was a great job too, travel all over the world. Went to-- my wife laughs. I went to Bangladesh twice, you know, once when the pope--.

01:39:36:04

GN

Did you go to Dublin for the football games?

01:39:38:08

PB

Paul Browne

No, I didn't do that. One had just happened and the next one was just-- I was just recovering I think from my surgery. So, I missed the two Navy games. But anyway, I feel guilty leaving this girl out there so we should...

01:39:57:20

GN

One last thing though. Legacy, do you intend to write a book? Could you write a book? I mean you could write a million books, is it on the agenda? Maybe if we get somebody to listen, they will--.

01:40:17:17

PB

Yeah, it is on the agenda. Just, so my daughter can have it. I don't think. I can't see it selling as a book, but, you know, maybe it's just a publisher. But I thought about just, I was sort of witnesses to these little slices of history at the right time.

01:40:38:11

AM

If you could write down how you figured things out to tell these people like Ray Kelly, what to expect from the mayor. That's an amazing skill.

01:40:50:10

PB

Paul Browne

I don't know where it came from, but--.

01:40:51:25

AM

Insights.

01:40:52:10

PB

You cannot underestimate the tendency for leaders to make bad-- they have bad ideas. What you have to have is the courage to tell them that because the leader gets surrounded by yes men and Kelly and Moynihan, they would have really terrible ideas, particularly, from what the media would do with it. And I would say you can't do that and, eventually, be listened to.

You know, Kelly would call me, you know, he'd be really-- have his mind set up and one time it involved the, I wanted to bring the FBI into an announcement about a terrorism plot. We had a rivalry with the FBI, and Kelly didn't want to do it. And he had a counterterrorism deputy commissioner who was career CIA working there, we had another guy who was for intelligence, Kelly, and myself in this meeting. And what I said, bring in the FBI, the three of them in unison, said, "F the FBI." And I made my case. Kelly called me a couple hours later and said, "yeah, yeah, let the FBI know we want him part of it."

But that's what. So, it wasn't so much I had brilliant ideas. It was keeping your boss from making bad ideas because most of his advisors are going to say, yeah, that's a good idea boss, screw the FBI. You know? So, I think that was my secret.

Paul Browne

01:42:46:13

GN

Well, I can't thank you enough. I can't believe I had this opportunity. And you delivered the way you did. Now, we'll change it of course. Thanks so much.

01:43:00:25

AM

It will take a while for it to make the archives, but it will.

01:43:03:23

PB

Okay. Well, I'm very flattered, and, you know, I've always felt... connected with Marist.

01:43:15:27

GN

Oh boy, this is the third trip now. Graduation speaker, receiving the service award, and now this.

01:43:25:23

AM

I'll get it.

01:43:26:29

GN

Paul Browne

You should leave that there. We have students looking for jobs here.