

Chris Velardi: It's a 'Cuse Conversation with 1995 Syracuse University grad, Brian Gewirtz, who's written a book about his time as the head writer for World Wrestling Entertainment. Book's called There's Just One Problem...: True Tales from the Former, One-Time, 7th Most Powerful Person in WWE.

Brian Gewirtz: My job was to basically have a conversation with talent and give them the, as they say, the 50,000 [00:00:30] foot perspective in terms of, "Okay, here's on the surface, this is what we're doing, here's where we're going with it. Here's what we hope to achieve with it. Here's hopefully the payoff to it. Sometimes people will be like, "Oh, okay, yeah, I guess I get to understand that. There's a lot of money to be made if we do that." Sometimes it's like, "Yeah, I hear what you're saying. That still doesn't work for me at all, at all."

Chris Velardi: We're going to get some behind the scenes stories from Brian, hear about how he earned the trust of [00:01:00] Dwayne 'the Rock' Johnson, and how that trust led to Brian's initial job as a WWE writer and his current role as Senior Vice President of development for Johnson's Company, Seven Bucks Productions, where, among other things, Brian is the executive producer of the NBC show, Young Rock.

I'm Chris Velardi, Director of Digital Engagement and Communications at the Office of Alumni Engagement. Just like today's guest, I'm a 1995 Syracuse grad. In fact, as you're going to hear, I've known Brian since our first [00:01:30] week as freshman living on the eighth floor of Day Hall. What a floor, by the way, as you can be sure, we'll talk about.

If you're a wrestling fan, there is a lot here for you. If you're not a wrestling fan, there's still a lot here for you.

Brian Gewirtz: When I was at WWE, in the back of my mind I always had a lingering desire to, maybe this could be converted into a television show one day, the proverbial Larry Sanders of wrestling type [00:02:00] show. At one point, we at Seven Bucks, the production company, Dwayne Johnson and Danny Garcia's production company that I work for, sold a pilot to Fox and we teamed with Adam McKay and Will Ferrell. It was really, really exciting, and then for whatever reason, the pilot didn't go.

That's not terribly uncommon, but it's still not pleasing to hear when it happens. It's like, oh wow, is [00:02:30] all these stories now just going to be locked away in terms of, if it's going to be the people that I actually physically talk to and interact with, that's going to be 17 people are going to hear these stories for the rest of my life, I talk to that few people.

That's when I'm like, well, what is there... not only a way to tell these stories beyond podcasts and conversations and stuff, but [00:03:00] also the thing that I found in the pilot process was just how much what comes in your head ultimately changes due to notes, due to network notes, and I wasn't even

writing it. There was another writer writing it that I was working with. By the time it came out, it bore little resemblance to the experiences that I had in my head. It was homogenized, changed a little bit.

That was in the back of my head, hey, if I [00:03:30] actually wrote a book, then it's just the pure thought to paper and there's no interference and there's no misinterpretation or anything. It is purely from me. That sounded good, especially up to the pilot experience. It's like, why not? This is the most purest form of being able to relay these stories.

Chris Velardi: Purely for you, but obviously these stories involve people who, wrestling fans and those who aren't even wrestling [00:04:00] fans, are very familiar with. How did the response go to that and how did you handle that idea that, well, yeah, these stories are mine because I lived them, but these stories also involve these other folks? How did you balance that.

Brian Gewirtz: That's a good question. In some respects, I didn't feel I needed to get permission to tell stories, [00:04:30] because I have a good relationship with almost everybody I'm writing about, almost everybody I'm writing about. I also know tonally, this isn't going to be... I wouldn't say the majority of wrestling books, but a good number of wrestling books are, as they say in the wrestling business, like burials, one person completely burying either a group of people, individual people. There's a little taste [00:05:00] of bitterness that goes with it. I didn't really have that kind of experience, so I just figured there's some people that I did buzz ahead of time to let them know that that book was coming out. Some people I even asked. Well actually, it was Syracuse alumni, Sean Coulthard, who goes by Michael Cole, the most longest tenured broadcaster in WWE.

There was this story that was just hilarious, and I write about it in the book, [00:05:30] but essentially, this was before Vince McMahon bought his big charter plane and we were on a little plane in which... I don't know what insane person came up with this idea. I guess it was for people traveling solo, but there was no bathroom on the plane. But one of the captain seats, one of the four front seats, converts to a toilet if you take the top of the seat off, and there's a toilet, which might be great if you're a millionaire flying by yourself, but if you're on a plane with eight people, [00:06:00] it's not the best way to go.

I remember, this is really super early in my tenure there. Cole just kept asking me, "Brian, ask the pilot when we're going to land. I have to pee. There's no worse feeling in the world than having to pee," which is not something you say with people who have taken wrestling bumps. Ultimately he couldn't hold it and as we were landing, he made a beeline to the chair and the McMahons dove out of the way and he sat down and did his bit.

I'm like, all right, that story is hilarious, especially [00:06:30] when told in full, but I'd feel bad because Cole's a friend and I like him. I got to ask his permission ahead of time. I'm like, all right, how do I put this? I hem and hawed, and then I

just texted him. He's like, "Yeah, dude, it happened. I don't care. Go ahead and tell it. LOL." That's what kind of guy he is. It's like, yeah, he doesn't care. Nothing could embarrass Cole after everything he has gone through at WWE.

[00:07:00] Yeah, I did, some people, I sent chapters ahead of time, not so much to make sure I wasn't offending, but just to, "Hey, this is how it happened, right? This is how I remember it" They gave notes back and everything, but I haven't heard anyone, especially, the book's been out now for three and a half weeks or whatever it is and I haven't gotten any like, "Oh boy, this person's really upset that you wrote about this," which is either a combination of them having not [00:07:30] read it, or more likely, I'd like to think the most likely, is them being like, "Oh yeah, that's a fun story. Go for it. I think it's good."

Chris Velardi: These are big people. You don't necessarily want to make them angry at you, I would imagine.

Brian Gewirtz: That's true.

Chris Velardi: Not a great idea. In terms of your experience at WWE and really telling these stories and building these characters, [00:08:00] did you ever run into situations where you've got this story that this narrative, this character, where the character him or herself says, "You know what? I really don't want to go there and be that guy or that person?" How do you deal with that kind of thing? Because it's not like you've also done this, it's not writing a sitcom. It's a [00:08:30] different type of show.

Brian Gewirtz: That happened pretty much every week, and you're right, it is different. Roddy Piper, who was my favorite growing up, and I wrote about and dedicated the book to him and my dad, there was this show called Legends House that WWE did awhile back that basically had all these legends in a reality show type thing. It was one of their early WWE network [00:09:00] concepts. It was a crazy, wacky reality show where they brought Gary Busey in of all people, to talk to them and teach them meditation and everything. Busey was basically trying to say, "You're just playing a character. You don't have to worry about, you don't have to blend the two." Roddy, very sagely said, "Well, here's the difference between you and me, Gary [00:09:30] Busey. When you go on the street, people go, 'That's Gary Busey.' They don't say that's..." I think the character's name was Joshua or something like that, from Lethal Weapon or something. 'When I go on the street, they don't say, there goes Roderick Toombs. There's Rowdy Roddy Piper.'

The people are, even when they're outside the ring, they're still basically that person. It gets even blurred even further when [00:10:00] you have a guy like John Cena or Brett Hart or the McMahons, who that is their real name, and that is their character they play and it's kind of the same thing. It cuts really, really deeper in the world of wrestling, because it's not like... yes, there's some clear dichotomy, like Glenn Jacobs could run for Mayor of Knoxville and win. It's

clearly not Kane, the devil's favorite demon, who he played, but a great deal of [00:10:30] characters are themselves in some way, or with the volume termed up to 11, as they like to say.

There is some extra sensitivity to that, and especially when, I remember there was... there's so many lines that blurred. There was these wrestlers, very, very successful ones, which I'm sure you've heard of and the audience heard of, Edge, Lita, Matt Hardy. There was a whole real life love triangle going on with three of them. This is years, decades ago. [00:11:00] Vince and all of us were like, "Wow, well, if they could do business with each other, that would make a real hot television angle if we incorporated the real life elements into the storyline." I don't think that was an easy sell.

There were plenty of times where it's like, yeah, I'm not really comfortable doing that. Ultimately, my job was to basically have a conversation [00:11:30] with talent and give them the, as they say, the 50,000 foot perspective in terms of, "Okay, here's on the surface, this is what we're doing, here's where we're going with it. Here's what we hope to achieve with it. Here's hopefully the payoff to it." Sometimes people will be like, "Oh, okay. Yeah, I guess I get to understand that. There's a lot of money to be made if we do that." Then sometimes it's like, "Yeah, I hear what you're saying. That still doesn't work for me [00:12:00] at all, at all."

At that point, essentially I would then have to have a conversation with Vince McMahon, and Vince would ultimately bring the talent in and have the conversation with them. Either they come out of that room and Vince says, "Hey, we're changing this," or they come out of that room with Vince doing and his old Jedi mind trick thing, or they go, "Yeah, no, that really does work now." It happened more often than not.

Chris Velardi: [00:12:30] That's what it's all about, is getting that buy in. You talked about the relationships and you said you've got good relationships with most of them, and that's an important thing, and there's so much trust that must go into that process.

Brian Gewirtz: That's the biggest thing a WWE writer can achieve is, it's easy to get what we like to call cheap heat or cheap pops. Someone goes to the on center and says, "It's great to be [00:13:00] here in Syracuse." Yay. Okay, great. Or they go, "God, your football team hasn't been in a bowl game since I was seven years old." Boo. Okay, that's easy. There's creative ways to do it, which could sometimes be brilliant, but that's easy. What really is the challenge for all writers is to gain the trust of wrestlers, especially because as you pointed out before, a lot [00:13:30] of wrestlers have the mindset of, well, this person doesn't look like they could beat up a fourth grader. How is this person going to tell me how I'm supposed to kick somebody's ass? What?

My instinct, my reflex to that was always somewhere in the area of, well, I don't think Michael Criton was chasing down dinosaurs, but he somehow wrote Jurassic Park [00:14:00] and selling sequels to it. It's like, if you're good, you're good, and if you're not, you're not. Give us a chance and let's try to work together.

Chris Velardi: Fair. Obviously trust that you built, the relationship you built with Dwayne Johnson, The Rock, has led to where you are now. Talk about that process and getting from writer, WWE, to [00:14:30] being a right hand man to some degree in this production company.

Brian Gewirtz: I write about it obviously in the book and everything, but my entry into WWE was, basically, Dwayne was essential in that. Again, it's a whole... it's actually also a Syracuse related entry, I guess.

Chris Velardi: Which we love. That's [00:15:00] what we're here to talk about, really.

Brian Gewirtz: The short version of it is, at Syracuse, and we graduated as you know, as I'm sure everyone knows, the same year. We were in the same freshman dorm, Day Eight. I had Professor Thompson, Professor Robert Thompson.

Chris Velardi: Who's still here?

Brian Gewirtz: Yeah, and I actually [00:15:30] had him freshman year. Most other freshmen didn't have him freshman year, because I had already taken Comm 107 in the Syracuse pre-college program in between junior and senior year of high school. I don't know if you remember this. There was a class with a professor who didn't get tenure, is what I had heard. Then after he didn't get tenure, he started videotaping his lectures [00:16:00] in as opposed to being there in person, and nobody was paying attention. It was a complete disaster. Then he was, I guess let go. Then Professor Thompson came in and took over the class. That was his introduction to that.

He's talking about, giving us all the Thompson greatest hits, the Hills Street Blues and all these type of things. Everyone just loved his class. He would teach over the summers at Cornell, [00:16:30] and that's where my sister took a class with him, and she really had a great time. That's the reason why she went into television and has three day time Emmys, all out of taking Professor Thompson's class. The roundabout way of all this is, her taking Thompson's class led her to want to get to television, which led her getting a PA job at MTV, which led to her calling me when MTV needed a writer for a series of WWF specials in '99, [00:17:00] and me getting hired, and me meeting Dwayne. Right then and there in New Jersey, we were shooting this show for at the Meadowlands. They had a live event there, house show, as they call it back then.

Dwayne's attitude, getting way back to the actual question you asked, is always then as it is now, which is, I don't really know you from a hole in the wall, but

hey, maybe you're great, maybe [00:17:30] you suck. I don't know, but I'll give you that chance, because what do I have to lose? I'll still be The Rock after all this. If you help me, great, and if you can't, everything will be fine. That was the launching point, where he liked what I had. He recommended me to WWE. I interviewed with WWE. Through a long series of events, I ultimately got hired by WWE and we just always had a great rapport and always worked together on stuff.

[00:18:00] We couldn't be, obviously, I don't need to say this, more opposite. In fact, I, and I'm sure you as well, Chris, I didn't realize this at the time, but I've told Dwayne on many occasions, it's like, "Freshman year I booed the hell out of you at the Carrier Dome."

Chris Velardi: We didn't like Miami. I mean there's no hiding that.

Brian Gewirtz: We got stopped short of the three yard line.

Chris Velardi: We did. That was a painful, painful, painful [00:18:30] game.

Brian Gewirtz: We're so close, and then they started taunting the fans, and he was amongst them. Our freshman year was his sophomore year, but really his freshman year because he was hurt his freshman year. I'm sure we booed number 54, along with everyone else in white, green, and orange that day. But we laugh about that now.

But that trust and that relationship, [00:19:00] it went beyond just WWE. When he was in Hollywood, there was a couple times that he hosted an award show and he brought me in to be a writer on that. I got permission from WWE to take a week off to do that. He was going on the Tonight Show. This is really early. Now he doesn't need this at all, but super 2000, 2001 or whatever it was. "Hey, what's a funny story I could tell?" Obviously it was all him, but just as a sounding [00:19:30] board to just bounce ideas off of.

Chris Velardi: The trust though, that highlights the trust, that he trusted your judgment, your instinct, your ability to be a storyteller, your ability to find humor, those kinds of things. That's big. That's important.

Brian Gewirtz: Oh, totally. Totally. Then ultimately, when him and Dany Garcia, his business partner, ex wife, co-founder of Seven Bucks, started their own production company, he gave me the call and said, "Whenever you're ready to leave WWE, [00:20:00] we'd love to have you here." In 2015, I basically left WWE, full-time, because I had been for three years working part-time at Seven Bucks, part-time at WWE, starting at the end of 2012. Then in 2015, it was, when you're ready, I'm ready. I'm like, "Oh, I'm ready." Then at Seven Bucks-

Chris Velardi: You got a book to write.

Brian Gewirtz: Yeah, exactly.

Chris Velardi: One of the things that's interesting, [00:20:30] I think, about you getting into WWE, is that you came in as a fan, right?

Brian Gewirtz: Yeah.

Chris Velardi: You were a fan before you were an employee.

Brian Gewirtz: What's funny is when we went, and I'll out us here as far as our age. Our freshman year was fall of '91. Insane. That sounds like, it doesn't seem like it's that long ago, but it is possible. Incredibly long ago. I can't even [00:21:00] compartmentalize in my head how long ago that is.

Anyways, WWE was at a creative low point pretty much in '91. In the 80s, was the high with The Rock and Wrestling connection and Wrestle Mania, and [inaudible 00:21:14], Hulk Hogan, Cyndi Lauper, Roddy Piper, all of that. Wrestle Mania III, two years later, in '87 I think it was, Hogan v. Andre the Giant and Savage v. Steamboat. By the time freshman year hit, it was really at low. [00:21:30] In fact, I had even, I wouldn't say completely stopped watching it, but I was turned off by it. This was during, they had Sergeant Slaughter turn on America to get cheap heat and side with Iraq during the Gulf War. I thought that was in poor taste. I was tired of Hogan. Roddy had retired, and it was our friend Mike Connor, who lived on Day Eight with all of us. Who knows if I was on Day Seven, maybe...

Chris Velardi: Day Eight was [00:22:00] a hot dead of talent, I must say.

Brian Gewirtz: Oh yeah. It was magical. But he was always a huge WWF fan and he got me back into it. We started going to the live events, we started putting on Raw in '93, two years later when that started, watching the pay per views in somebody's room, going the War Memorials, now on center, I think. That really got me back into it. [00:22:30] He took the reigns on that and that was... then the attitude era hit, which was the second big peak of wrestling in the late 90s. At that point, I had already been a fan since the 80s anyway, but just when I was about to get out, freshman year, Syracuse got me back in.

Chris Velardi: Got you back in.

Brian Gewirtz: Yeah, that really never left ever since then.

Chris Velardi: [00:23:00] As an aside, on Day Eight was Batting Stance Guy on our floor, too?

Brian Gewirtz: Yeah, Gar Ryness. He used to do his shtick. I remember.

Chris Velardi: I remember during the Pirates and Braves NLCS that year and him doing... Sid Breem, was he? I think so.

Brian Gewirtz: Oh no. Yeah, we'd be in lounge or whatever. "Brian who's this?" [00:23:30] I'm like, "Well, kind of looks like Lenny Dykstra." "You're right." The next thing you know, he's on Letterman.

Chris Velardi: Another podcast waiting to happen, I think. Maybe a Day Eight reunion podcast.

Brian Gewirtz: Day Eight reunion podcast, yeah. Gar, it was like, I don't know. Whenever I watched The Boys on Amazon, kind of reminds me of Gar a little bit because it's like, I don't know what the most useless superpower would be if you were a superhero, but I would say the ability to [00:24:00] emulate every batting stance of every baseball player that ever existed is one of those cool but somewhat-

Chris Velardi: It's definitely a niche kind of thing, but man, he's made a life out of that. But we digress. We digress. I do want to ask though, coming into that job, knowing the history, having been a fan, did that color your approach? Did it help [00:24:30] you? Did it hinder you? Did you feel some things that you were like, I got to get past this to be a writer, to change the narrative, or to drive something?

Brian Gewirtz: No, it definitely helped, I think, because you have to have that base knowledge of what WWE is, who these characters are. You're a show. RAW started in 1993. Obviously WWE and WWF before that was around with interchangeable characters, [00:25:00] characters coming and going, some staying. But you really, it's so important to have at least some sort of functional knowledge of what WWE is and what wrestling is. That definitely helped me.

The other thing that helped me was, I had written on three sitcoms and those MTV shows before coming to WWE. I wouldn't say I was working with gigantic... nothing like The Rock, working with movie [00:25:30] stars and stuff like that, but you're on a set and you know how certain professionalism that's expected and you're not supposed to fan boy out and geek out and be like, "Oh my God." That's not what they're looking for. They want professionalism. I think that combination of having worked on several shows, and even before that, being a production assistant on shows, again, working in Hollywood with actors, actresses, directors, writers, and just [00:26:00] knowing there's a certain expectation in terms of how you're supposed to behave and not just completely freak out over famous people.

That, plus the working knowledge of wrestling definitely, definitely helped. Because it seems obvious, but have been, I've seen over my course of time at WWE, especially the younger writers' assistants coming up who get sucked into the, "Oh my God, let's hang out after the show. Where are we going to party? Where are we going to get drink," so [00:26:30] obsessed with that, that ultimately that works against them because they're not focused on the job at hand. They're focused on becoming friends with talent, and that's not good. Yeah, having knowledge of the product, a love of the product, passion for it, and also knowing how to conduct yourself on the job is very important.

Chris Velardi: It's the same thing in alumni engagement at Syracuse University. I get to talk to pretty cool people and I can't totally geek out about it.

Brian Gewirtz: Yeah, you're restraining yourself [00:27:00] very well now, Chris. [inaudible 00:27:01].

Chris Velardi: I'm doing a lot of [inaudible 00:27:04] words. Don McPherson was just in my office. We were talking about dropping our daughters off at college. I think that's pretty cool, but I can't fanboy.

Let's kind of go forward now. Sitcoms and obviously WWE and that style of writing, and now executive producing for... back to sitcoms, but [00:27:30] where are you interested in going with Seven Bucks and in your career, and what drives you now? What do you love most about the industry and what you're doing?

Brian Gewirtz: Like you said, it's come full circle because I started out wanting to do sitcoms based on the fact that my uncle was a showrunner and executive producer and writer on sitcoms. I remember gathering everyone up in Day Eight because my uncle [00:28:00] had written a Simpsons episode that had aired, I think whatever it was, second, third season. That really now, I think that ices it because I remember The Simpsons was the hot, new thing when we were freshman year in college.

Chris Velardi: Like Robert Thompson, it's still on.

Brian Gewirtz: Yeah, it's still going and still beloved by millions. By the way, that was peak Simpsons years, '91, '92, '93, '94, [00:28:30] during our tenure there. To be able to go back, now I'm currently, I'm on set for season three of Young Rock as an executive producer. Myself and Dwayne and [inaudible 00:28:45] Garcia, President of Seven Bucks, we wrote an episode last year, which is really cool. But also, to be able in terms of development, to develop and sell and pitch all kinds of shows, both scripted [00:29:00] and unscripted. We have a show on Disney+ called Behind the Attraction. That is a very, very cool show about the secret origins and stories behind all these great Disney attractions around the world. We have a show coming out on Vice, Tales From the Territories, that is another wrestling related show that we teamed up with the creators of Dark Side of the Ring for. That comes out October 4th. Young Rock is November 4th, season three.

[00:29:30] By this time next year, I think there'll be several other shows that we could officially talk about as well. But it's kind of cool to be able to take all genres, all formats. We're even working, developing in the animation space. It's so cool to be able to just flex those creative muscles, so to speak, and pitch and develop and work with some truly, truly talented [00:30:00] and innovative people, and the sky's the limit, basically.

Chris Velardi: That's exciting, and I think that is one of the exciting things about entertainment now, is that to be successful, you've got to be able to be a Swiss Army knife in a lot of ways and be in a lot of places and do a lot of things. But man, for someone who is a creative person and enjoys the process, there can't be anything better.

Brian Gewirtz: Yeah, no. It's funny. Again, I was [00:30:30] tunnel vision on a sitcom writer since third grade, basically. That's what, I studied TRF at Syracuse, television, radio, film, writing. Most of my friends were in TRF production. I was always on the writing side. It was when we all moved out after college to go to LA, we all had that goal in mind, and a lot of us did it. Our friend John Beck, he's [00:31:00] very successful.

Chris Velardi: He wasn't on Day Eight, but he is class of '95.

Brian Gewirtz: No, we'll allow it. He wasn't on Day Eight, but that's true. But yeah, all the people that we used to gather and watch WWF pay per views in college, they're all working in some form of entertainment from those of us who moved out to LA. It's really cool to see. But I never thought I'd be a wrestling writer and I never thought I would, furthermore, be a [00:31:30] creative development person. I didn't even know what that was. It takes some, life takes some interesting twists and turns, but it works out for the best, as you know, too.

Chris Velardi: Yeah. Let's end on that note and talk about being a part of that Syracuse community, because you've dropped it in and I think those of us who have lived it find ways that it's influenced our life. We've run into an alum, there's been some kind of connection somewhere, but what does it mean to you to be [00:32:00] part of this larger, orange family?

Brian Gewirtz: It's great. When you're there you as a student, you're just sucked up into the experience and living it. I don't really like... of course you'll see the alumni weekend and World's Greatest Dad Syracuse shirts and all that kind of stuff, and then post graduation, [00:32:30] you're still truly, truly connected to it, whether it was in LA... Unfortunately for us, we know we graduated, I think one year too soon, because the John Wallace led NCAA team was the year after us, and so was the McNabbera.

But after that, you just meet so many people. For me in the entertainment business, we're working on an animated show right now [00:33:00] with two writers. Both of them went to Syracuse. I didn't even know that at the time. My brother-in-law went to Syracuse four years after. We were never at school at the same time, but it's like he's a Yankee fan, I'm a Mets fan, my sister's a Mets fan, but it's the one thing that my niece, their daughter, we could all agree on. She'll be wearing all the Syracuse stuff, but it's really cool. It's really cool.

I [00:33:30] live in New York. We always gather during college basketball season and go to events. I got to go to the Lubin House more. I haven't been there in awhile, but it's just really cool because there's this... and I know you could say

that about any college, I guess. There's this shared experience, but you just run into so many Syracuse people, both for me in the two places that I've lived, New York and Los Angeles in my lifetime. They're everywhere. It's always such a great [00:34:00] connective tissue and force. I got to go back. I've talked to Professor Thompson about coming back. I've been back literally once since I graduated in '95. That was at a 2003 UU TV or Hill TV or Citrus TV, whatever the student run TV station is currently called.

Chris Velardi: It is Citrus now, yeah.

Brian Gewirtz: Okay, Citrus. I went back in 2003. All of a sudden you look up and that's 20 years ago. [00:34:30] I'll be coming back soon, because it's been far, far too long and it's like stepping in a time machine.

Chris Velardi: One of the things that alumni say when they come back, particularly those who haven't been back for awhile, is something so familiar about coming back that you're instantly home as it were, but also ,it's changed so much. There's so new. There are so many new buildings and just new looks and new scenes. It's pretty special, and I-

Brian Gewirtz: I forgot, did we talk about... is [00:35:00] there still the 5,000 steps to get up to Mount Olympus for a day?

Chris Velardi: I think it's 123, but yes, they are still there and the students still complain about them.

Brian Gewirtz: Yeah, I remember, I'm like one day I'll be back and there'll be a lift or a teleportation device or some kind of makeshift elevator of some kind. But yeah, that's like, oh, why was I in such better shape in college? Probably because I was doing that climb for two straight [00:35:30] years.

Chris Velardi: Well, appreciate your time and the walk down memory lane, but also the insight into what you're doing now. It's fun. These conversations are fun.

Brian Gewirtz: Yeah, totally. It's great. Where I don't want to jinx anything, we're undefeated in football as of this recording. Things are looking up, so hopefully they continue, and I'll see you and the campus soon because I'm definitely, I'd love to [00:36:00] come back.

Chris Velardi: All right. That was fun. Sorry if we got off track a little bit, but that's what happens when Syracuse alumni start talking about Syracuse things. If you are interested in Brian's book, there's a link in the description to this episode. I'm Chris Velardi. Thanks for listening, and if you haven't yet, please make sure you subscribe. I'll talk to you next time with "Cuse Conversations Podcast. Go Orange.