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## Robert Argue and a Unique Feeling of Belonging

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WMU Alum Robert Argue

Wednesday, Jan. 11 at 3:30 pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Cassie:** Hi, can you hear me?

**Robert:** Yes, I can.

**Cassie:** Okay great, how are you?

**Robert:** Pretty good.

**Cassie:** Good. Well, I'm glad that it's pretty good at least. Thank you for meeting with me today. Is it all right if I record?

**Robert:** Yep, no problem at all.

**Cassie:** Okay, perfect. So, I have a few questions that I'd like to direct our conversation with, but feel free to tell any stories that come to mind or go off in a different direction if you feel like it. Whatever story you want to share is completely fine and fits with the project and what we're trying to do.

I'll start by asking you to introduce yourself and asking you some questions about your connection to WMU.

Do you have any questions or anything before we get started?

**Robert:** None that I can think of. No.

**Cassie:** Okay, perfect. Alright then I'll just start by asking you to introduce yourself. If you could spell your name for the transcription and then tell us about your connection to WMU.

**Robert:** Okay, my name is Robert Argue, that is spelled A-R-G-U-E. I was a Western Michigan University student from January of 1984 until June of 1987. I majored in marketing and my minor was general business, and my business classes were on east campus.

**Cassie:** Are you from the Kalamazoo area then? Were you born here? What brought you to WMU if you were not?



**Robert:** I'm actually from Bridgman, which is an hour drive away. I was in the Air Force, stationed in Vandenberg Air Force base California before I started classes at Western.

And I was looking for a decent business college and Western—the more I looked into the programs and things at Western, the more I liked it. So that's where I ended up.

**Cassie:** Okay. Reflecting back on your time at Western, how would you summarize your experience?

**Robert:** They were some of the best years of my life. I have autism spectrum disorder, so connecting with people, that can be difficult, but I really felt like I belonged there.

**Cassie:** Was that a unique feeling to have?

**Robert:** Very unique. I wouldn't feel that again for about 20 years.

**Cassie:** Wow. Yeah, so going back a little bit to your first moments on campus, what are some of your earliest memories on east campus?

**Robert:** My first memory was climbing the hill to get to the campus. I was staying at the dorms at Davis Hall because I was over 21 years old by the time I started classes. I went by bus and the bus dropped us off at the bottom of the hill. So, we had to climb up. And my very first class on East Campus was business communications. Which I took as a sophomore.

**Cassie:** Do you remember anything about the professors that you had or students that you had classes with?

**Robert:** Well, I remember that quite a bit. In my business communications class, I got connected with Phi Chi Theta, which is a co-ed professional business fraternity. That really set up my entire time as a business college student there. I really got along well with the members there and ended up being an active member for a total of seven semesters, including my pledge semester.

**Cassie:** Wow!

**Robert:** Generally speaking, I had a good relationship with the professors at Western in the business college.

**Cassie:** Do you remember any professors in particular?

**Robert:** Dr. Bradshaw was my business communications professor. In fact, she not only had me in her class, but she also ended up having my sister after I had graduated from Western. There was a management professor, Dr. Versa, whom I remember too. I had her for both the basic management class and the dreaded Business 499: Management Problems. I still got good grades on both.

I can't remember his name, but there was a marketing professor that I had. He is originally from Bridgman too. So, we talked about being from Bridgman. And I had him for Industrial Marketing and I think Sales Management.

**Cassie:** Do you remember anything about the buildings at the time?

**Robert:** They were old. I don't remember them being particularly humid or anything. I remember the business library too, where I spent a lot of time and had to go up and down the stairs to get to certain sections of books.

Then, hanging out—I don't know if they called it the lobby or what—but at the front of the library, there was a section where students would go down and do some reading, homework, and a little bit of socializing.

Most of my marketing classes were at North Hall and some of them were in West Hall. East Hall was mainly for accounting at the time. Although I think I had a business law class at East Hall as well. Then North Hall was for business communications and finance.

**Cassie:** What did a typical day look like for you while you were a student at WMU?

**Robert:** Yeah, I usually had my classes in the morning. So, I would get up and usually hit—I can't remember if I started classes at 8 or 9 AM. But I would be there for most of the morning. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday the marketing club had a donut and coffee table that I'd stop at the beginning of the morning. And on Tuesdays and Thursdays, my fraternity Phi Chi Theta had one. So especially on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I kind of touched base with the members and the pledges and caught up with what was going on—not only with the fraternity but with my friends' lives.

**Cassie:** What were some of your favorite pastimes? What did you do for fun when you weren't working hard in class?

**Robert:** I saw a lot of movies at the time and my social life pretty much revolved around the fraternity. We were infamous for always taking up a collection in the middle of the party for another keg. Those were the two things I remember.

I also remember Bilbo's Pizza. I still go there whenever I'm in town during the day. There was another one called Hotshots Pizza, which was on West Michigan. You turned left from Stadium and it was right there. They used to have some pretty good pizza, but they only lasted about three or four years.

**Cassie:** What person, place or event do you think impacted you the most during your time at WMU?

**Robert:** Well, I would say being a member of the fraternity. I was a member not only for the professional events there but for the friendships I made at the time.

**Cassie:** Did you stay in touch with some of them?

**Robert:** Just one who is now the executive director of the Haven Rock Rest in Battle Creek, which is a homeless shelter in Battle Creek.

**Cassie:** Wow. How do you feel about WMU now versus how you felt about it when you were going to WMU?

**Robert:** I still have some affection for Western. It's changed a whole lot since I was last there 12-13 years ago. I was volunteering with Service to America at the Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency. And I also did a bit with a non-profit that was based at Western at the time, the Kalamazoo Poverty Reduction Initiative. One of the things they used to do was poverty simulations, which would take a group of people through a simulated month while living with low income. I was very involved with those. But that organization lost its funding a number of years ago, so it doesn't exist anymore.

**Cassie:** I just had one last question. Do you have any other memories or stories that you'd like to share? Any topics we didn't touch on?

**Robert:** Not that I can think of, no. It was generally a positive experience; it was kind of sad to see most of the buildings on East Campus being torn down. I actually went up there once. I think it was North Hall that was in the process of being torn down and I just turned around and left right away.

**Cassie:** I think now all that's left is the front facade of the building. So, they kept the front wall and the sign of the North Hall but that's about it.

I think on your consent form you checked that you would be willing to have a photo to accompany your story. It can be a recent photo or from your time at WMU or any photo of you.

**Robert:** It would be a recent photo. I didn't have access to photos back in the day.

**Cassie:** Okay, that would be great. If you just want to email those photos to me that would be great and I can notify you when your story is up so you can read it and share it.

**Robert:** Okay, thank you.

**Cassie:** Thank you, and thank you for meeting with me, if you have any questions feel free to email.

**Robert:** I certainly will.

**Cassie:** Okay great, have a good day.

**Robert:** You too.

**Cassie:** Thanks. Bye.