

Interview of Kate Ward-Gaus
By Wendy Stanley
In person in the Counselling Offices at La Salle University
July 15, 2021

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Stanley: Today is Thursday, July 15th, 2021. My name is Wendy Long Stanley. I am a graduate student at La Salle University. I'm here with Kate Ward-Gaus. We are going to do an oral history. Kate, do I have your permission to tape you today?

Ward-Gaus: Yes, you do.

Stanley: Please state your name and the date.

Ward-Gaus: It is July 15th, 2021 and I am Kate Ward-Gaus.

Stanley: Wonderful. [Pause] Kate, tell me where and when you were born.

Ward-Gaus: I was born here in Philadelphia. Specifically, I was born—when my parents were first married they had an apartment in south Philadelphia on a street called Tree Street, and I was born October 30th, 1954.

Stanley: Tell me about your childhood. Did you grow up in Philadelphia?

Ward-Gaus: Yes, I did. Shortly after—I'm one of six, I'm the second oldest of six. So I'm what is often referred to as an Irish twin. My sister right above me is only thirteen months older than I, [and] the brother who is next in line is only eighteen months younger than I am. We lived in the apartment on Tree Street until I think somewhere between when I was one and two [years old], and then we moved into my grandparents' house, my maternal grandparents' house, on Pine Street in what is now called University City, west Philadelphia. It was at 42-46 Pine Street, a big six-bedroom, two-bath house. My grandparents were there, my mother's younger brother, and her youngest sister that she had. Then my parents, my sister and I, and my younger brother. We lived there until 1960, right before I was going to start first grade, the summer actually, July or August of 1960. The fourth of us, my sister Terry, was born in June of 1960 and it was shortly after that, that my parents then had purchased their own home in Southwest Philadelphia, right around 65th and Chester. So we moved out of this house with my grandparents and an aunt and uncle, and actually there was a boarder who lived there as well [chuckles], into our own row home, at 65th and Chester.

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Stanley: And tell me about your childhood.

Ward-Gaus: Obviously my memories of my grandparents' house are not as steeped as the ones [I had] once we moved onto 65th street, but I have great memories of living amongst so many people, so many adults, at my grandparents' house. There was always somebody there to keep an eye on us, and of course, take care of us, and interact with us. But there weren't many other children in that neighborhood; it's adjacent to the University of Pennsylvania, and so it was a college environment. There were many professors and college students who lived there, but not too many children, which was why my parents wanted us to move to a neighborhood that was more family-friendly and kid-focused. My mother is actually the second of five, and her older sister had already moved to the same community that we were moving to, two blocks away around the corner. And so they already had some familiarity with that area and the number of children. I remember how overwhelmed I felt. We moved there in the summer and, you know, we were no sooner in the house and all these kids were coming and knocking on the door and asking for us to come out and play and that had not occurred over at my grandparents' house. I remember feeling shy, a little bit shy, like, is it okay? I mean, we were actually allowed to go out by ourselves, again, not at my grandparents. Not because of safety issues at my grandparents', well, we were younger and there just wasn't that much to do.

Stanley: What sort of activities did you do as a child under ten?

Ward-Gaus: So we played a lot of, you know, I laugh now at the terminology, but, we played a lot of chase games. Manhunt was a big one. So, I mean—

Stanley: Would that be on the street? Or...

Ward-Gaus: Oh yeah. So you would go out and a group of kids would appear and somebody would say, "Let's play manhunt," and you got into teams and the whole manhunt game. I don't know if you're familiar with it. There's probably another name for it now, but there would be a home base and there would be a team that would be the team that got to hide and run away and not get caught. And then there was the team that had to do the catching. And so if someone on the team that was doing the catching got you, they had to bring you to the home base until they had captured the whole team.

Stanley: Fun.

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Ward-Gaus: And then, you know, that piece was done and then the teams would switch. So we, you know, we did that. There were actually a number of small streets that ... the house we were on was on a trolley route and, and too busy, cars. In fact, we weren't there long, a couple of years into being there, [when] my brother was hit by a car on the block—

Stanley: Oh dear.

Ward-Gaus: —because he'd gone out between two cars. I guess he was five, so I was probably seven. He got hit by a car and had a severe concussion and brain injury. He recovered from it, but it was pretty bad. So the playing we would do would often be on the narrow side streets that had less car traffic.

Stanley: Tell me about your parents.

Ward-Gaus: They married when they were in the 21 [year old] range. My parents are about, I think they're six months apart. My dad's birthday was June and my mom's was... well less than that, September. But I think they were in different years in school. My dad might have been a year ahead of my mother. I'm not exactly sure how they met. I know dancing was a big draw. My mother loved to dance. My father was a good dancer. The dancing was at that time, [for] that generation, in the forties and fifties, was jitterbug and that sort of thing. So they seemed happy initially ...

Stanley: Did they work?

Ward-Gaus: Oh, so my dad did, my dad, he worked for pretty much his entire career for DuPont Company, at what was known as their Marshall Laboratories on Grays Ferry Avenue. I guess that would have been considered Southwest Philadelphia, between 34th and then the Grays Ferry Avenue bridge. His title was Chemist Assistant. He was, in our mind, what he was noted for in terms of a very almost famous way is that they, Marshall Laboratories, made paints for appliances and my father was on the team that developed harvest gold, and avocado green, which became two very popular appliance colors in the seventies.

Stanley: So interesting.

Ward-Gaus: My mother, she had worked up until she had children and then my mom was a stay-at-home mom until the youngest of my siblings, who my brother, Tim, is twelve years younger than I am, until he got into school. And then she wound up working after that as a waitress for PSFS, which was a bank and they had an

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executive dining room and my aunt, one of her sisters, (not the sister above her, but one of her other sisters) worked there and my mother was a waitress in executive dining.

Stanley: Tell me about tell me about your personality and your aspirations as a young Kate in elementary and middle school.

Ward-Gaus: [Sighs. Imperceptible, thinking out loud.] Is it wrong to say I'm not sure I had aspirations? I would say it's almost the story of two Kates. I was actually pretty shy and insecure as a child. My sister, who was thirteen months older than I was, was a very good student and got lots of positive affirmation through parents and teachers. So I'm in the grade right below her. I come in behind this A-plus student, and I was...you know, I don't know that I want to say I wasn't as motivated as her. I literally didn't think I *was* as capable as her. And so, I was a good *enough* student, but I wasn't a great student. That was all through grade school. Eighth grade, I remember starting to feel—now think about it, eighth grade, 'cause she was out of the school at that point, she was in high school—I started to feel a little bit more like, “Yeah, I can be a good student if I want to.” And that carried on into high school. We went to the same high school.

Stanley: What school was that?

Ward-Gaus: West Catholic. At that time, it was West Philadelphia Catholic Girls' High School. Again, I went in [to the school], she [her sister] was first track, first honors. She was a... [searches for term] what do you call the, oh, we called them the Green Ribbon girls. So she was on student government and that sort of thing...

Stanley: So you had big shoes to fill.

Ward-Gaus: I kind of in high school, I got a little bit of an attitude about it. I was moving out of the insecurity, and the security became like “Fine. You can have good grades, I'll have friends.” [Laughs.] So she never liked [that], she had friends, but she didn't like that I had that kind of attitude and implication for her. But as a sophomore ... so the Green Ribbon girls had posts in the hallway, they were traffic cops amongst many other duties. And my sister's assigned post was right outside my sophomore religion class. The teacher had never had my sister in class as a student. One day in our class, I don't remember what I was doing that was not to this teacher's liking but she was a religious sister, it was one of the nuns, [and] she said to me, “Miss Ward, you are *nothing* like your sister. And I *don't* mean that in a good way.” [Laughs.] It was like, of course, like the rest of the girls were like, “Ohhhhh,” you know, and, and I had two responses, right. It could have made me burst into tears. But all it did was make me get my back up

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like, "Yeah, you're right, I'm not."

Stanley: So let's talk a little bit more about high school. Let's put you in your senior year in high school. You're finding your feet, it sounds like a little bit. Where are you going to go from high school? What are you thinking? What are your hopes?

Ward-Gaus: So, it was not until junior year of high school that the idea that college was a potential entered into my brain, and it really wasn't until senior year that I realized that it was. Clearly, we were first generation. My mother had not gone to college. My father had not gone to college. I had been an average student up until that point. But my senior year, I had a number of teachers who were like, "You know, you really can do this. You're college material." And then I was like, "Oh! I'm college material."

Now, in addition to the teachers, a really critical point for me when I was a senior, and again, it started to happen when I was a junior, is, in a good way—so I told you about the, you know, maybe not so great influence of being the second behind a very inspiring person—but my sister had gotten involved in an organization in high school called the Community Service Corps and it was a diocesan-wide program so it was in every Catholic high school. It put students doing service work, but also provided a *lot* of leadership development and, and made us believe that we were not only part of the church, but a really *important* part of the church and living out the message of the gospels. And so, when my sister was a little concerned about some of my decision-making, when I was a junior, she said, "I want you to meet this priest." And it was this, at that time, he was Father Francis Schmidt, and now he's a Monsignor. He's still alive actually. There was a walk around city hall, a youth walk on some important issue. I can't even tell you what it is right now. I don't remember that. She introduced me to this priest and he was developing all these different service opportunities and developing student leaders to run them. And he's like, "All right, I have two new ideas. One is a phone line to provide people with assistance, to answer questions about food stamps. And the other one is a phone line to provide students, provide people with information about venereal disease and getting tested, which do you think you would want to work on?" So I picked the food stamp program. [Laughs.] But as a junior, I got involved in this leadership of doing it and between doing better academically and seeing the potential for me as someone who had these leadership skills, that took me into senior year. And then I started to look at college.

Stanley: When you were growing up, did you and your family attend church?

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Ward-Gaus: Oh yeah. We were—the Catholic church was very, I mean, I was one of these Philly kids who didn't know the neighborhoods. I only knew the neighborhoods by the parishes. If you would've asked me, and it's funny that I didn't answer it this way, where did you live? There was a time where I would've said, well, I was born in St. Richard's parish and then I lived with my grandparents in St. Francis de Sales parish, and then we moved to Good Shepherd parish. I mean, that's how we answered questions.

Stanley: So you're from a family of faith, and faith was a part of your development as a child and coming into your...

Ward-Gaus: Yes.

Stanley: So let's return to that last year of high school. You've been involved in this service project. You're feeling like teachers are saying you're college material. Now you have to make life plans or at least plans for the next four years. What did that look like? And did you cast your net wide or how did you go about choosing your education, and where did you go after high school?

Ward-Gaus: So as a first-generation female college-bound student, I didn't see myself having the world be my oyster in terms of career paths. So I thought nursing, I thought education, and in third [place] was counseling. And the only reason why I started to think about that was because in high school, I had volunteer hours in the counseling center at West Catholic. So I started to say, oh, this is interesting. No one in my—we didn't do—people didn't do therapy or go to see a psychiatrist. I didn't, I didn't know anybody who utilized those kinds of services so I knew very little about it. The nursing got eliminated fairly quickly after I took chemistry class. [Laughs.] I didn't see myself doing well in science, which is interesting because my father was a chemist assistant and that was one of his strong suits and I have some siblings who fall into those categories. I was not one of them. So then it left education or psychology. I didn't want to go to school in Philadelphia. So I was working in the guidance center at West Catholic. I literally got one of those mathematical tools, I think it's called a compass, and I got a map and I put the compass out for what two hours away from Philadelphia would be.

Stanley: Why did you not want to go to college in Philadelphia?

Ward-Gaus: Because by then I really was thinking I wanted to spread my wings and I wanted to, I want to know more about who I was apart from this world that I had grown up in that was, you know, happy and fulfilling enough, but I still wanted more. But only two hours away! [Laughter.] So I did that. And then I looked for

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programs that were in, I didn't still yet know whether I wanted to be a psychology major or an education major. So I looked at schools that would have both. And then something happened, which was, there was a youth conference that was down in Washington, D.C. that I was going to, and this priest who ran the service programs said, "You ought to look at Catholic University of America." And I said, "Okay." So then I looked up some information about it and he said, "I'll get you an interview." So, while we were down there for this conference, I went over to Catholic University and I got an interview and I walked around the campus and I was like, yep, this is where I want to come.

Stanley: Why is that?

Ward-Gaus: It just felt like an adventure. It felt like it's D.C., I liked what I saw. It's the first time I'd ever been to D.C. The campus was in the city, but it was, you know, similar to LaSalle, you know, they had these areas where you then weren't in the city.

Stanley: Does that university still exist?

Ward-Gaus: Oh yeah, yeah, it does. And they wanted me, so that sealed the deal. It became a problem for my parents. I think they didn't—especially my dad. I think they didn't think I would go through with leaving Philly and it meant not being a commuter student. It meant living there. Finances were a challenge for my family, six children with, you know, Dad worked not just one job. He worked at DuPont, but he was also in the Philadelphia ticket union business. So he worked, at that point, predominantly for the Phillies. So when the Phillies were playing, he was the ticket seller for the Phillies.

Stanley: Did you get free tickets?

Ward-Gaus: Not when they opened that stadium. When we were young, grade school age, and the Phillies were playing in Connie Mack stadium, which was up at 20-something in Clearfield at the time, we could get in, if we went with him to work, which meant we would get there hours before a game would start. That's a whole other story about how we used to be up at the fence. My dad had a whole strategy, like "Don't call them by their first name, call them Mr. So-And-So." So it was like, "Mr. Rojas, Mr. Rojas!" Cookie Rojas was my favorite player. I'm blanking on the name...Johnny Callison was my sister's favorite player. We had all their autographs and they would come over and talk to us and all that! Did

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not save any of them. None of the autographs, we didn't save any of them. But anyway.

Stanley: That's really a shame.

Ward-Gaus: But anyway, in terms of college, my parents didn't go to college. My sister went to St. Joe's. So again, a year ahead of me, she went on a full scholarship to St. Joe's. I did not go to college on a full scholarship. I had a small scholarship from Catholic University and I had some state aid, but I also needed to do loans and it was freaking my parents out. And I was being like, "I'll take all the loans. You don't need to take any of the loans." I needed them to co-sign. Subsequently, I *loved* Catholic U. I loved it.

Stanley: Tell me about your time there.

Ward-Gaus: I quickly, very quickly [imperceptible]. They had a summer orientation program. We had to go down overnight for the orientation. And then I went down with my parents. It was always very unusual to be the only child with the parents, because there was always somebody else around. But so I go on this trip with just my parents and we all stayed over. The parents stayed in the dorms, we stayed in the dorms, and they had all these activities. I just recently came across the picture of us on the top of the rooftop of the John F. Kennedy Center down there. And in the picture, is my mother and a woman who I met that week, on orientation week, and then we connected as soon as we got to campus and she is still a friend of mine today.

Stanley: That's wonderful.

Ward-Gaus: Yeah. So I just lucked into a really good set of friends who I am still [friends with today], there are five of them. We get together every other year for a weekend with our spouses...

Stanley: Wow, lifetime friendships.

Ward-Gaus: Um, but I left Catholic U after my sophomore year there.

Stanley: You did?

Ward-Gaus: I did. Because money became a problem. My father couldn't co-sign on the next loan that I was going to need. I convinced myself it's because... so when I had done that, looking at colleges that had psychology and education, Catholic U had

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a fabulous psychology department. They had a small education department that would only certify me in the state of Maryland, not in Pennsylvania.

Stanley: So where did you go?

Ward-Gaus: Temple. I came back. The most miserable two years of my life.

Stanley: Are you serious?

Ward-Gaus: Serious.

Stanley: Why?

Ward-Gaus: I probably shouldn't have switched majors into education. I was good at it, and I certainly used my education degree, but I, I have no remaining friends from my time at Temple. The idea that you could walk—I didn't live at home. I got a studio apartment on Roosevelt Boulevard and lived by myself for my junior and half my senior year. They were not good years. Living alone was not a great experience for me. I would go to campus, and you know, outside of the people that you would see in class, it was so huge. It was just too big. You could walk around and never see the same person twice, which was very different than my Catholic U experience.

Stanley: So you graduated.

Ward-Gaus: I graduated. Late, because, not a lot late, but I wound up taking incompletes my senior year because I just, I lost all motivation and was having a hard time getting my work done. So I delayed, I didn't graduate until August. Still that's only a few months late.

Stanley: And you had a degree in...

Ward-Gaus: Elementary education.

Stanley: And when it was time to find employment? Tell me about that please.

Ward-Gaus: I did find employment, again using that Community Service Corps and the diocese network, and my West Catholic network, kind of a combination of them. One of my mentors from high school was a sister, Cora Billings, who was in residence. She was a high school teacher, but she was in residence at a convent,

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St. Barbara's, which is up in the Wynnefield section of Philadelphia. And she knew I was looking, I started telling people, "All right, I'm ready to get a job." So she told the principal of that grade school, and so I taught sixth grade for two years after college. And—

Stanley: How was that for you?

Ward-Gaus: I loved it, but always felt like I wasn't a great teacher. In hindsight now, I know what I was. I was a *new* teacher. But I spent every day being like, I gotta do this better, I gotta do this better.

Stanley: So it was stressful, did you find? Or no?

Ward-Gaus: Yes, but a different type of stress and maybe some other stress that I had had when I was younger, because in this case I had stress and a *lot* of support. Like this principal that I had was so good, and so nurturing, and the team of teachers that I was working with were so supportive and like, "No, we're going to get you there." Even the parents were great.

Stanley: You mentioned you taught for two years. What happened then?

Ward-Gaus: So after two years, and again, I was like "Classroom teacher, is this really... [what I want to do?]" And remember, I was always psychology, education, and [I was thinking], "What am I doing?" There was at the time, a program called Shalom and Shalom was founded by a sister of Notre Dame.

Stanley: Could you spell that for me please?

Ward-Gaus: It's S-H-A-L-O-M. So Shalom is a Hebrew word meaning peace. And this religious sister, Sister Madeline, had been the disciplinary in at St. Maria Goretti High School in the seventies and drug use was becoming a problem for high school students. She was realizing how many of her discipline cases were drug-related. So she started a program to reduce, to prevent drug abuse among high school populations and took it citywide. Got some funding through various sources, including the National Institute of Drug Abuse and started hiring people to do both prevention and early intervention in the high schools. So the Catholic schools could get these services without having to pay for them, because she found the funding for them. The position at West Catholic opened up. So my high school now had this position, and the prevention work was *group work* ... so values clarification, decision-making...

Stanley: Was that interesting to you?

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Ward-Gaus: Oh, it was! It was a lot of the work that in the leadership development, when I was in high school that we were exposed to as a result of the Community Service Corps, I was familiar with many of the strategies and the activities. I was leading groups in high school that were now part of the curriculum for this Shalom program.

Stanley: Were you offered a job or did you apply? Or...?

Ward-Gaus: I applied. I knew the position opened and I applied, and Sister Madeline was familiar with me because the Catholic world in Philadelphia is very small. So she knew about my involvement with the Community Service Corps, and when I interviewed, my sister had worked for the same program. So, yeah, so I got the position.

Stanley: What age are you at this point?

Ward-Gaus: At this point? I was... [pause] So that was ... 1978 that I started working for them. So I would have been 24.

Stanley: And are you still single?

Ward-Gaus: No. At that point, I had been married one year. I married in 1977. My husband, I met through the Community Service Corps. He went to a different high school. We met doing that service work. He was from Philadelphia.

Stanley: How long did you stay at that job in the high school?

Ward-Gaus: So I stayed with the agency for seventeen years. I worked at West Catholic for... initially I worked for six years consecutively, had my first and second child while I worked there, and went back to work part-time, three days a week after I had them.

Stanley: And how many children do you have in total, Kate?

Ward-Gaus: Three.

Stanley: Boys or girls?

Ward-Gaus: One boy, he's the oldest and he's 40 now. And two daughters, one who is, who will be 37, and the other one who turned 30 this year.

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Stanley: Any grandchildren?

Ward-Gaus: Yes. Two. My son has a son who is eight, and my daughter, the almost 37-year-old, has a three-year-old.

Stanley: Lovely. Let's return to the year that you moved on from your seventeen years at the agency. Tell me about what's happening, what your career goals are, and where you intend to go.

Ward-Gaus: So I had been, [I] had worked at West Catholic. Then I worked at another school for two years, St. Hubert's, and then went back to West Catholic. And then I, at that point still only had the undergraduate degree in elementary education and the woman who founded the program said to me, "You need to get a Master's. I can't pay you, I can't pay for your education, but if you can figure out how to pay it, I really want you to be...I really want you to supervise and I want you to train. I want to pull you out of the schools. I want you to do that." So my husband and I took a second mortgage on our house. This was now eleven years after I graduated from college with my undergrad in '76. And I went to school in '89, '88, I guess it was, so yeah, eleven years later.

Stanley: What school did you go to for your Master's?

Ward-Gaus: University of Pennsylvania. And it was a Master's in Psychological Services. So, there were different tracks within the program, and the track that I was on was school psychology, counseling psychology. So I took the year out, did that, actually worked one day a week as I was able to get my internship working for the agency, and then when I finished the program, then I, the last five years of those seventeen years, I was supervising the staff in seven different schools and doing training for the student assistance model. So training teachers on how identify at-risk students and how they could intervene.

By then, what happened was, at that point, my husband works in social service, his whole entire career. We were not, we didn't have money for our [searches for words] ...my oldest at that point was getting ready to go into high school, which meant college was looming behind that. So I started to look at, honestly, what are the jobs that I can get that had the tuition benefit associated with it? And I discovered that there were...I could go in as an admin assistant someplace. I was not a licensed psychologist, so I wasn't going to be able to get a higher ed counseling job at that point. Plus, my experience was predominantly in substance abuse work, and those positions in most colleges at that time, which

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now we're talking about 1999, were coming out of offices called Office of Health Education, or Office of Health Promotion. So higher ed counseling centers would do mental health, and then health services centers, or health education centers or health promotion, were doing substance abuse. I was able to get a job at all places, [the] University of Pennsylvania in their Office of Health Education, which was phenomenal on all kinds of levels. One is I walked to work 'cause we lived actually out at 48th and Baltimore. So we were on the western edge of the campus community. I started just as my son was going into high school. You had to be in at that time, Penn, you had to be there for five years to get vested into the tuition benefit for your children. So the timing worked out perfect. Actually, I started when he was in eighth grade, it *literally* worked out exactly.

Stanley: How long were you at Penn altogether?

Ward-Gaus: So eleven years at Penn.

Stanley: And just give me a few high-level highlights of things you're proud of during your time there.

Ward-Gaus: I'm going to say the first thing that comes to my mind is the Ask Us Why campaign. While I was hired for the Office of Health Education, particularly for my expertise in substance abuse prevention and early intervention, I have a wellness perspective and so my vision about substance abuse is that if it's in the context of overall teaching, or encouraging people to overall take care of their health and wellbeing, that's the better case than this very myopic view of just focusing on the decisions around substance abuse. Penn is a big place, ten thousand undergrads. We were largely responsible for programming to address undergraduate health and wellness issues. We had a survey, we were data-driven, we had an annual survey of their health status, and we took the top health issues that had a negative impact on academics, so sleep, substance use, time spent on electronics, colds and flus. These were the things that were more likely than not, that were going to negatively impact the college students and their ability to do well academically.

So the Ask Us Why campaign was ... I worked with a graduate student, our admin assistant, and we wound up having this whole brainstorming session. Like if we want to get students to take some advice or tips on how to live healthier lives, how are we going to get to them? We knew it had to be like a public health campaign. We had to use the marketing approach. An example for colds and flus: Wash Your Hands. Ask Us Why! We were ahead of our time with COVID by the

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way. [Laughter.]

Stanley: [Laughter.] Yes, indeed.

Ward-Gaus: "Safer sex. Ask Us Why!"

Stanley: How'd that work?

Ward-Gaus: So that was our sexual health kind of education. And then what we did was we had a website and we had all this education within the website, so they could then ... the Ask Us Why then sent them to a link that would then go to the information. And we didn't have all the campaigns out there at the same time. We had them going out in six week increments.

Stanley: Smart.

Ward-Gaus: Yeah. So then people got used to the Ask Us Why campaign, and then we would have larger speaker events and, you know, ... in terms of mental health, people who could talk [speakers], we would have suicide prevention programming and that sort of thing. So I would say at Penn that's high up there on my, [list of] what I was happy about.

The other, the other thing that I was pretty proud about is I didn't do long-term counseling anymore. I did early intervention. So students who were written up for a policy violation, in the dorms for substance use, would have to come see me for two sessions to debrief what happened, to have me assess their degree of where they fit on the continuum of: no problem...moderate problem... maybe you need to think about treatment. I would have that conversation with them. It's called "harm reduction, motivational interviewing" to encourage them to either make changes in their behavior [or] if they can't make changes in their choices and behavior, then they need to consider getting involved in treatment. And I was connected to the counseling, they called it Counseling and Psychological Services at Penn. So then I could refer students to that program.

I actually have a student from Penn who, on the anniversary of his sobriety every year, sends me an email thanking me, because he was in my office, we were having one of these sessions. I mean, his joke is that when your fraternity turns you in, that should have been enough to tell him he had a problem. [Chuckles.] But you know, we had the session and I walked him over to the counselor who was in the Counseling and Psychological Services assigned to deal with significant substance abuse issues and that was the day of his, the start of his sobriety.

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Stanley: That's a tremendous achievement.

Ward-Gaus: So that goes back ... I mean, I left Penn in 2006. I probably met this particular gentleman in the early 2000s. Yes, I think he told me this year, he's seventeen years sober.

Stanley: What an achievement for both of you. For you professionally, and for him personally.

Ward-Gaus: Well, yeah. I mean, it's a privilege to sit with someone and be part of, [to] watch the connection that happens with, "I need to...I don't want to live this way anymore, and I want to know what I need to do to live differently." It's just a real privilege, and you know, you don't always hear about it afterwards. Every year I thank him for just keeping me in his loop and letting me know.

Stanley: Powerful. Let's fast forward to La Salle University. What brought you to La Salle, please?

Ward-Gaus: His name is Brother Edward Conway. [Chuckles.] So when I was working at, well, [let's] go back. My husband, in his career, he worked for a Christian brother program called the St. Gabriel System. So it was... it *was*, because unfortunately it no longer exists, but it was a treatment program for court adjudicated youth. My husband worked for forty-some years in three different capacities for them, ultimately as director of their two-day treatment programs. Brother Edward Conway was a Christian brother who at one point worked in one of the programs my husband worked in, so I knew him from that. Actually, that's not the first time I met Brother Edward. Brother Edward was the athletic trainer at West Catholic High School for Boys where my cousins went and I met him in that capacity and then later he worked in the St. Gabriel System for my husband. So we had this relationship that way. Then he started to work for La Salle University, probably around 1999. I was at Penn. He was working in the Alcohol and Other Drug Education Center here at La Salle, doing similar work to what I was doing at Penn. He was working with the students who had been written up. We were going to the same conferences, so we would...national conferences and local conferences...so we'd go to the conference, we'd meet up, we'd have dinner together because we were old friends. By around 2003, I started to, for different reasons, [I] was not as happy at Penn as I wanted to be, but I needed to work in higher education because this was now how we were partially funding college education for our children.

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There were some changes that had occurred in the Office of Health Education that I was not happy with so I started to look for other jobs. The person who was the director here at La Salle, in the Alcohol and Other Drug Education Center was leaving in 2006. Brother Edward was the counselor educator, so it was his boss who was leaving. Brother Edward called me. He knew I wasn't happy. He called me at Penn, said, "The position's open. You need to apply." I'm like, "No, I'm not sure I want to come to La Salle." In fact, I was thinking, "I went and got a certificate in human resource management. Maybe I'll get out of this whole thing with substance abuse, counseling and education. I don't know." Well, Brother Edward called me three times in one day to say, "No, you need to do that." So I literally told him, "Fine, I'll think about it," just to get him to stop calling me. Well, then he called me back and told me, he had told the Assistant Dean who was going to be the boss of this position, who knew me, through the Philadelphia circle of higher education, that I was thinking about it and now Lane was excited. So he called me back again, "Lane's excited." Well, then I didn't want to insult anybody. So I applied, [chuckles] I applied for the position because, "Well, I don't want to insult them. And you know, what harm could it be? You know, I'll go see what it's going to be like." So I came up in July of 2006. Now, my son went to Penn. I was there. He got the Penn [tuition] benefit. My daughter was at La Salle, the middle daughter, [she] went to La Salle.

Stanley: Before you came here [to La Salle] as an employee?

Ward-Gaus: Before I came here. My son, it was a good thing Penn was so big, because there was no way he really wanted to be going to college on the campus where his mother works. My daughter, the middle one, she would have *loved* to have had me on the campus where she was going to school. But I wasn't, I was down at Penn. So here I am [in] July, after she graduates, coming up for this interview and it was a half-day interview and I'm an hour into a three-hour interview and I'm like, "Oh my God, I'm going to say yes, I'm going to come here."

Stanley: Why?

Ward-Gaus: Because one of the things that I... [pauses to gather thoughts] because I felt like it was back to scale. I mean, if you go back to my college experience, I loved Catholic U. Catholic U was about the same size as La Salle. I was *miserable* at Temple. It was just too big. And I often felt at Penn, like the young man that I mentioned who would write to me every year. It was so hard to think that I was making a difference at Penn. I mean, the programs were these media programs, like how do you know that you've prevented someone from having a problem?

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Stanley: Let me interject here, Kate. Is that important to you? Making a difference?

Ward-Gaus: Yes.

Stanley: And so, when you say, how do you prevent someone from perhaps engaging in substance abuse, is that why you did the work you did?

Ward-Gaus: Yes. One of the reasons, yes. I mean, I think it falls into a bigger picture of really wanting people to have the opportunity to be their best and happiest selves.

Stanley: Okay, let's go back to your first day at La Salle. You've arrived. What's your job title?

Ward-Gaus: So my job title was Coordinator of the Alcohol and Other Drug Education Center. There were only two of us, myself and Brother Edward. Brother Edward is going to see all of the first-time policy violators, and he and I are going to split the multiple offenders, if you want to call them that. And then I'm going to develop the prevention programming. So, you know, the outreach to the residence halls and the parents during orientation, the workshops with parents. And so it was more attuned to the way I like to operate, because even though we did media campaigns, we were also doing face-to-face interaction in the work that we were doing. The irony is that my first day on the job, it was the first year that the nursing students who were going to go into Clinicals, had to have drug urines done.

Stanley: Oh.

Ward-Gaus: I didn't know this when I accepted the position. I didn't know that they were doing that. And I didn't know that what it meant was that if a student tested positive on the drug urine, they were going to have to come and have one of these sessions.

Stanley: Oh. [Thoughtfully.]

Ward-Gaus: Where you screened for no problem, moderate problem, significant problem. And my first day on the job, I get a call from the nursing school that they have five nurses that tested positive, and that at least three of them were totally devastated. It meant they couldn't get into, they couldn't start Clinicals until they produced a negative urine, and depending on what I found out in my assessment, some of them might have to wait for a full month because for the THC to leave their system, it takes a month. And so my first day at La Salle, I had

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five sessions with people who were pretty distraught, and I not expecting that on my first day.

Stanley: Yeah. Yeah. Wow.

Ward-Gaus: We, by the way, made some adjustments after that, like my recommendation to the nursing school was that they push back the testing that they were going to require to earlier in the summer, so that there would be a window of opportunity to then, for those that would come back positive, to have these sessions, and have it clear their systems and make the changes they needed to do to clear their systems, to then be able to start Clinicals on time. So that was the big thing. They did that.

Stanley: It's a little more humane, a little more manageable.

Ward-Gaus: Yeah. Yeah.

Stanley: So tell me about your journey after the first year, did you stay in the same roll? Did you change roles?

Ward-Gaus: No, it changed over time. The first change that happened is that ... I think it was only one year that I was a coordinator. They elevated the position to a Director position, which meant that I went to [chuckles] a different set of meetings at the director level with what was the Assistant Dean for the whole department. So at that time it was the Counseling and Health Services. It included Student Health, the Student Counseling Center, and the Alcohol and Other Drug Education Center. As a coordinator, I wasn't at planning meetings with the other two units.

Stanley: Yes. Yeah.

Ward-Gaus: They had told me in the interview that was the intention, but they had to wait a little bit to make that happen. So I was in the Director of the Alcohol and Other Drug Education Center position from, let's say from when I started in 2006 until, oh, well actually, until, for ten years, until 2016, which well, no, until 2017. So 2017 is when I went from the Director of the Alcohol and Other Drug Education Center to then ... the Assistant Dean who had hired me had left in 2016. There was a year where there was no one in that position and we were being supervised by the Vice President for Student Affairs. I was on the search committee for the position of Assistant Dean. Well they retitled it and now it was Assistant Vice President for Student—. They renamed the department from Counseling and Health Services to Wellness Services, and they renamed the

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leadership title from Assistant Dean to Assistant Vice President. I was on the search committee.

Stanley: Yeah.

Ward-Gaus: We had two candidates in the end that we were not a hundred percent on either, so we presented both to the Vice President and said, "Here, you decide." Then she called me on a Friday. She said, "I want you to see me first thing, Monday morning." I went in Monday morning and she said, "I'm failing the search. I'm not going to reopen it. I want you to take the position."

Stanley: Wow. What a compliment.

Ward-Gaus: Yes.

Stanley: How did you feel?

Ward-Gaus: It was an interesting way to start the week.

Stanley: Did you see it coming? How did you feel?

Ward-Gaus: I did not. Here's why I did not, because when the position opened, I had a conversation with her. She was a new VP. So I didn't have a long-standing relationship with her and said again, "I only have a Master's degree. I never went for the doctorate." She had the position listed as doctorate preferred, like base-level Master's, doctorate preferred. So before I went on to the search committee, I asked her whether I would be a viable candidate, and she said, "I'm really hesitant because you don't have the doctorate. And I don't know how faculty will perceive you without the doctorate." And I said, "Okay, that's a legit reason. So, okay. Put me on the search committee." She had said she wanted me to be on the search committee. I couldn't be on the search committee and apply for the job [too]. So I was like, okay, I'll be on the search committee. So anyway, then that Monday morning when I came in and she offered it I said, "I still don't have a doctorate." And she said, "I know, but I've watched and heard enough to understand that that's not going to be an impediment for this faculty or for this university."

Stanley: And this is 2017?

Ward-Gaus: Yes.

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Stanley: And you were in that role for how many years?

Ward-Gaus: For three? Almost four. So from March of 2017, till January of 2021.

Stanley: Okay, so almost four years. Tell me about that time professionally for you.

Ward-Gaus: So I'm really glad that I accepted it, even though it was the *ride of my life*. I mean, it's interesting that that's the way I ended my professional career. I might, there might be some employment for me again in the future, but it won't be what I had devoted my, you know, forty-some years of my life to, it'll be something different, I know that for sure.

I was overseeing student health. I was overseeing the Student Counseling Center, and I was overseeing what had been the Alcohol and Other Drug Education Center, where I came up through, but we renamed it to Substance Abuse and Violence Education and included the services that are offered for students who have been sexually assaulted or, you know, the victims of sexual assault, or any kind of sexual impropriety. So we brought that into that department and called it the Substance Abuse and Violence Education Center. I worked with wonderful people. I was short-staffed the entire tenure of mine within the Student Health Center and that was a big challenge and weighed on my mind. As I was coming on board, the director who had been the director of the Student Health Center retired, and it was difficult to fill that position. It took me, I came on board in March ... that director retired in May... I hired someone [in] August, right before the school year started but she only lasted two years. [Searches for words.] I'm proud of what we were able to do in terms of transitioning into more wellness activities. We created something called Wellness Wednesday, which the students all know about, which is every Wednesday we had a different topic. Again, data-driven, based on National College Health Association data. We would have either staff from our department present on the topics, or we would bring in outside presenters. We would do these sessions publicly, like on the quad or in the Union lobby with the notion that people didn't have to sit in this formal setting to be able to gather information.

Stanley: I love that idea.

Ward-Gaus: Yep.

Stanley: Love that idea.

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Ward-Gaus: We partnered with the Department of Public Health so it became a capstone course for public health students to then develop a Wellness Wednesday program. We had, oh my God, this fantastic group who did all this education on vaping. We recruited a group of five faculty, myself and faculty members, and we had daily meditation opportunities for students. So, in addition to this acute care response, either through student health or counseling or substance abuse and violence education, we're really encouraging students to just embrace their own wellness and wellbeing. That was a highlight of the three years.

Stanley: I'd like to step back a little and look from more of a 30,000-foot level just for a little while so we can talk through some concepts. In your time at La Salle, did you feel the nature of student wellness changing? I don't mean in terms of your department; do you feel that stress increased over that fifteen years that you were at La Salle? Do you feel that students' stress increased? Do you feel that the nature of substance abuse increased? Can you comment on that in a generic way?

Ward-Gaus: Yes, I can because I've thought a lot about it. So it was fourteen years that I was here. I will say when I came here in '06, the alcohol use in particular, La Salle was on the higher end, in terms of the amount of alcohol that students consumed and how frequently they consumed it. It was targeted in demographic groups. Our highest drinkers, the students who drank the most were white male students who lived, whose permanent residence was further than two hundred miles from La Salle.

Stanley: That makes sense.

Ward-Gaus: Right. Right? Away from mom and dad and all those constraints. They also tended to be, from a financial perspective, to have more money in their pocket than our students who were commuters, who had to work to get themselves through college, and all that. Their drinking rate was actually *twice* the norm, that particular demographic group, was twice the norm. So that was something that we were going to address, and do it from multiple ways. One was to try and make the connection because they actually had lower GPAs as well, to talk to them. Not like, "You have a problem with alcohol," but "How is alcohol affecting your ability to be a successful student?" And they were, some of them weren't. So from this macro level, that wasn't unusual. I mean, that, wasn't just at La Salle. That was nationally, that was kind of the demographics. In the time that I was here, the alcohol and drug use of students, and again, we collect data, we were doing surveying every two years, we could see it steadily going down. Whether there's a connection between the two, the same National College

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Health Assessment data that was showing us that our drug and alcohol use was going down, we watched as anxiety and depression went *up*. Not within the same demographic group. It wasn't like (because we were curious about this), okay, it's going down, and this is going up. Is the group that we targeted to decrease their alcohol use, was that ... were they self-medicating? Is that why this is going up? Uh uh. [Shakes head.] It wasn't that. The group that the anxiety and depression were increasing [in] was a largely, certainly more so among female, more so among athletes. I'm trying to think of the other demographic group that we ...[thinks] ... students of color. So we then started from the student wellness services having to shift some of our programming and resources to get more information and assistance out to the students who were reporting these high levels of stress and anxiety.

Stanley: So you indeed could trace patterns over a long period of time. I don't think a lot of people listening are aware of that, that universities are very carefully monitoring and caring about those patterns.

Ward-Gaus: I think you're right. I think unfortunately the '80s, John Belushi, you know, [the] Animal House image of college and college students prevailed for way too long. And, you know, the notion that they didn't care about their schoolwork or it was just party time all the time, frankly, that diminished. I'm not saying it wasn't there, but it diminished [by] the 2000s and the mid-2000s.

Stanley: I'm also curious about the type of substance. And I'm not talking specifically about La Salle university, but more as your awareness as a professional in the wellness setting. Did the type of substance abuse in terms of drug use change from one particular [drug], like from marijuana to a different type of street drug, or do you want to comment on that at all?

Ward-Gaus: Well, you know, alcohol was, and I think will always be, the drug of choice by the majority. Marijuana use had gone down. But then as decriminalization occurred, medical marijuana laws were changed in various states. Marijuana use has gone up. Colleges and universities were experiencing the same issues with opioids that...

Stanley: Mmm. That the nation is struggling with...

Ward-Gaus: Right. Because of COVID—I'm trying to remember the last year—we were doing our National College Health Assessment every two years. We were not able to do it, we were scheduled to do it in 2020, but put a pause on it because

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of COVID. So I think the last data is [from] 2018, it almost doesn't matter. It was still like 1% of the population would report any opioid usage whatsoever, which is really small. It's a handful of students, however, opioids are *awful*. And so, there isn't such a thing as recreational use of opioids. I mean, opioids are so quickly addictive. We had this three-year period of time, and this was predating when I started as the... it predates 2017. It was still when I was the director of the Alcohol and Other Drug Education Center. We had a pot, a small group of students that we became aware of who were using opioids. In almost every case, and again, this is national as well, the usage started with legitimate use of pain medication. It's not uncommon for people to get their wisdom teeth extracted when they're in college. And unfortunately, it was also not uncommon for them to go home with a prescription for 10-day usage for something that they didn't need 10-day usage for. Athletes with any kind of ... not just student athletes, but people who work out, back injuries, those sorts of things. So starting with legitimate usage and then, because of the way it was prescribed, it was converting all too quickly into addiction.

Stanley: Unfortunately, I've heard that too many times. I wish it were different. And maybe it will be going forward.

Ward-Gaus: Yes.

Stanley: Let's talk about some specifics about your tenure at La Salle. Did you ever receive, I know you said you were understaffed for your last role, did you get funding? Was there a general climate of the wellness work being valuable to the university?

Ward-Gaus: I always, throughout the different roles that I've had and my time here, felt that the services were valued by the university. Does that mean we were funded adequately? No, but that's because the university has in general, you know, been, been facing financial—

Stanley: Challenges.

Ward-Gaus: Challenges. Like pretty much everybody, but the ivy's [ivy school league schools] and the ivy-likes. You know, we're not a well-endowed school. And so, you know, that in and of itself makes money a challenge. We were very successful in our department with bringing in money from other sources. As the director of the Alcohol and Other Drug Education Center, over my tenure, we were the recipients of four different grants from the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board to address underage and dangerous drinking. Two of them were to work with

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students. Most of our high-risk drinking occurs in the off-campus environment. And so we had students working, we trained students to do education with other students and to raise student awareness of how their behaviors affect our neighbors. We had four different grants that way. I worked with Brother Bob Kinzler in the university Ministry Services support. We were the recipients of a suicide prevention grant from SAMHSA [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration], which is the substance abuse, mental health association, it's a federal department. Three years. We were able to get a case manager for our students of concern team. We were able to get various educational tools to use with students, some online programming that could extend the education that we were doing on suicide prevention and wellness. I felt supported by the university, even though it still meant that there wasn't enough funding of various sorts, but you know, we were able to then [pause], the one source, and I can't take credit for this, as I was leaving, [in] the last year of my tenure, we received funding from an alumni donor. So an alum, his name was Frank Stanton, he gave a million dollars that can be spent over the course of five years to create the Paul Stanton Wellness Programs in the name of his son who died by suicide. This is all public knowledge. You can actually put Stanton family into the La Salle website and you'll get the story about this. The Stanton family sought us out.

Stanley: What a tremendous thing to do in honor of their son and for every student to come, to go to LaSalle.

Ward-Gaus: I mean, they approached us and said, is there a need? Yes. And then, if you had this fund, what would you do with it? And so, you know, we went back and forth, I made proposals and they funded two positions and some more educational programming that are tools that we can use again, to do the outreach.

Stanley: Why did you leave La Salle University?

Ward-Gaus: So we haven't talked about COVID. [Organizes thoughts.] So the last, oh, well, what ... COVID was March 2020. I would tell you for me, it started on February 25th of 2020.

Stanley: Tell me.

Ward-Gaus: February 25th was when the Philadelphia Health Commissioner, at the time it was Thomas Farley, he said, "COVID is in the area. Institutions need to start their pandemic response planning." Our department, and with my leadership, is

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responsible in, in pandemic planning. It would be our department that would initiate it. I said to Dawn Soufleris, who was the VP for student affairs, who hired me and was the VP at the time, "We need to start our pandemic planning." So that was February 25th. We had our first planning meeting on February 28th. We were all ready. We pulled together the task force. You identify, you know, basically every area of the university to have a representative. We started planning then for what are we going to do to keep mitigated here on campus? And then what are we going to do if it is, it goes where people are saying it's going to go and we have to close down? So that was the beginning of essentially what was seven day a week working and on most of those days, fourteen hours a day of working. And it was necessary. I mean, there were just no boundaries we oversaw ultimately like if you, so initially it was the planning, but then, you know, ultimately it also meant overseeing the contact tracing protocol for it. There's no control over when an exposure happens, when it gets reported, and all that. In October of 2020, I turned 66. I will say, I mentioned early on about my sister, who's only thirteen months younger than me. She died in January of 2020.

Stanley: I'm so sorry.

Ward-Gaus: Not COVID, but she had a health condition.

Stanley: It's very young.

Ward-Gaus: Yeah. She had a health condition that she was, you know, fighting for ten years. The last two years were really bad. She dies in January, but my brother-in-law was postponing the funeral until March because of other circumstances that warranted it. And [then] her funeral had to get postponed in March because of COVID. So a couple of things happened simultaneously. One was, I was grieving a complicated loss in my life. So, personally, at a time when I was stretched to the limits on the COVID response, and not sleeping. The irony of being the Assistant Vice President for Student Wellness Services, when six months in, I was like, "I am not well, I am tired." And I just...I just...by a year ago this time, I realized that I was having difficulty with a five-year plan. And you know, my age was coming up, I was going to be eligible for summertime [retirement]. I had thought I would retire in 2022, in May of 2022. But I just, I couldn't see the forest for the trees anymore.

Stanley: Did you have students come down with COVID at La Salle?

Ward-Gaus: Oh yes. Yes. That's on our dashboard. That's public knowledge.

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Stanley: And so you were also, your department was also fielding all the fear and all the questions, because it was brand new back then, and then you're trying to come up with a response plan. And then you've got your own personal grief.

Ward-Gaus: Yeah. Yeah, it was tough.

Stanley: So you made a choice. Did you take a leave of absence or did you make a choice to retire?

Ward-Gaus: I made the choice to retire. I went to the VP in September of 2020 and said, "Look, I'm going to do this earlier than we had initially thought. But we can discuss when it happens. It could be November of 2020. It could be January of 2021, or it could be May of 2021." And we went with the January of 2021. So initially it was going to be after right after the new year, like after January 1st, but then it quickly became apparent we needed to postpone it because the transition for who would oversee the contact tracing program was not ready right after January 1st, so I waited until January 29th, where we had hired two people in the meantime, who then oversaw the contract tracing.

Stanley: So you are six months into retirement. I assume your husband is retired. Am I correct?

Ward-Gaus: Yeah. He actually retired in July of 2019. He was already a year and some into it.

Stanley: And tell me how retirement is and what you're enjoying.

Ward-Gaus: So, again, I was exhausted. I took the month of March and we went to the Outer Banks, but not of North Carolina. We rented a house on the dock on the mainland side. For a month, I did almost nothing. Now I had a book. I was given a fabulous book by dear friends of mine called *Blessing the Space Between Us*. And so I would start every morning with a reflection and ponder that for a little bit. And I walked a whole lot, hiked a lot of trails, and slept, and got myself back to some state of health.

Stanley: And wholeness.

Ward-Gaus: And wholeness. So the three-year-old grandson actually lives with his parents in an apartment on the third floor of our house. We have one of these big west Philadelphia houses that has an apartment in a separate entrance, and my daughter and her husband had been living there prior to their son being born. She has a business of her own, a craft business of her own. I give her one day a

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week. So one day a week, I am with my three-year-old grandson Connor, and that's a delight. I'm still doing some things within the Lasallian world.

Stanley: What are you doing for La Salle, or in that world?

Ward-Gaus: So there is a consortium of sorts called the Philadelphia-area Lasallian Ministries. It's interesting that I didn't talk about this sooner. One of my other draws to La Salle, different than the Penn experiences, [was] working for an institution that was very clear about what its mission was and that its mission was based on this spirituality of St. John Baptist de La Salle, the founder of the university, in terms of every individual counts and you meet people where they are and that's very important to the work that I do. I've been connected to the larger Lasallian world my entire tenure of working here. And so there's this group called the Philadelphia-area Lasallian Ministries, where we bring together people, West Catholic High School is a Lasallian ministry, the St. Gabriel System, which has since closed down, was part of it. There's a school in Northern Liberties called La Salle Academy. There is La Salle College High School, which is up in Wyndmoor. So we bring faculty and staff from those institutions together to have conversations about the work that we do, and how we do it from a common perspective. On June 22nd, I helped organize [a meeting], the topic of it was addressing social injustice and violence from a Lasallian perspective. And so we had a Zoom session with a couple speakers for it. We have La Salle University social work students working at West Catholic High School, particularly students who are affected by social injustice and violence in the communities that they come from. So they spoke about their work. And then we had a conversation about what the other ministries are doing.

Stanley: Would you like to continue that type of work?

Ward-Gaus: I'll do that for a little bit longer. The one thing COVID [did], was we didn't do anything during COVID, partially because we were all in our individual institutions, developing our COVID protocols and managing COVID in our communities. We need to grow some additional, or tag some additional leaders, to take the organization of this organization home from those of us who have since retired. So I'll stay with it until we have some more leadership.

Stanley: If you look forward ten years into the future at La Salle University and the student wellness program and that umbrella, what would you like to see?

Ward-Gaus: So the Stanton family money provided an opportunity for this department to be able to hire a wellness coordinator. We were doing those wellness initiatives, but

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without a wellness coordinator, I was organizing with the public health department the Wellness Wednesday initiatives while I was the lead administrator for—

Stanley: VP.

Ward-Gaus: Yeah, yeah. Right! I was one of the five people doing weekly meditation sessions, but there is now a person who will be able to take that and grow. So ten years from now, what I'd love to see happen is then the ability to look back at and track through the National College Health Assessment, is there an improvement in students, you know, is there a decrease now in students' stress and anxiety and depression? Is there a continued decrease in substance use? Have this database measure healthy behaviors: are more students meditating, are more students sleeping better? Are they, you know, eating healthy? And therefore, can you make a connection between that and things like GPA?

Stanley: I love the data-driven approach that you take. That's very revealing to me of how you're strategic as well as clearly caring. So in preparing for this oral history, I did interview some people who worked with you and they said that you are courageous and that you are not afraid to talk about the elephant in the room. Would you identify with those qualities for yourself? Do you believe that of yourself?

Ward-Gaus: I do, because I know I wasn't always courageous. In fact, when I tell people my own perception of myself is that I was shy and insecure, probably up until the age of sixteen and that, you know, they talk about, I mean, I really do feel like at sixteen, there was a switch that went. And now, I'd also like to think that I'm strategic and not overbearing. In other words, I know I get passionate. I know I am passionate. I'm passionate about wanting people to live healthy, happy lives. And so, when systems are preventing people from living healthy, happy lives, I can get, my passion can get a little shrill, angry, like "The institutions should stop doing this!" But I also know that you have to modulate your message—

Stanley: That's right.

Ward-Gaus: —to the listener sometimes in order to have your message be heard.

Stanley: Yes, and it's a long game, not a short game, which is the challenge when you're a person who's so caring, it's hard to maybe invest in that sense of longevity. If your grandchildren, and your great-grandchildren, wanted to go to university in the future, having done this work for forty-plus years, are there words of advice

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for those children [some] twenty, thirty, forty years from now who are about to enter, maybe it's La Salle University. How would you guide them in terms of wellness?

Ward-Gaus: [Pause. Stumbles on her words.] It's funny, I don't tend to lead with negative, but here I am leading with the negative. Don't believe the false narratives. Don't believe the false narrative that you're not capable of making healthy choices and living a healthy life. You know, that "Because your frontal lobe isn't fully developed you're incapable of making good decisions." Let's not get lulled into that false narrative. That doesn't have to be the case! What I've learned over time is when you...when you...Back when I worked with adolescents in high school and college, it's the same. If you talk and treat adolescents and college students as adults, they will respond. They will respond and take it on. And they can be adults. That doesn't mean they won't make mistakes, but they don't have a chance if we continue to treat them as children for longer than they're really children. Your frontal lobe gets developed because somebody says, "You know what, there's a grownup inside of there and we're going to call that grownup out. Come to the front, be that adult." And being an adult isn't a miserable existence. You can have fun and be happy and joyful and all that without being self-destructive.

Stanley: So let's look back for a few minutes. If you were eighteen again, sitting here, what would you choose? Would you do anything differently?

Ward-Gaus: Eighteen. [Thoughtful.] Okay. So at eighteen... see, it's not eighteen, it's at twenty. See, if I had to do anything different, I would have figured out... I would've... I was a first-generation college student. I didn't know. I should have gone to the financial aid office at Catholic U and said, "Look, I want to stay. Help me." Like, this is what I've, I feel like I've converted that, you know, that particular experience of mine into ... there are a lot of students that I've helped because I didn't know how to help myself. And my parents didn't know how to help me. They were happy to have me come back to Philly and go to Temple and spend less money. So I'm not going to answer it as the eighteen-year-old, I'm going to say the twenty-year-old.

Stanley: Yes. You choose.

Ward-Gaus: I wish I had, I would have maybe ... I was *embarrassed*. So I didn't tell anybody at Catholic U! I presented this whole false narrative that I was leaving because they didn't have the education department and I needed to change my major. That

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was not what that was! I was too embarrassed to tell anybody. First generation working class college student that I was. I didn't tell anybody.

Stanley: I can understand that. I think that's very relatable. And to your point, I think that's what empowered you to help so many other students in the years that came, although maybe, you know, we all wish that maybe we didn't have to go through the unpleasantness ourselves, but it's almost like a spiritual legacy, like you endure so you can go on and help others. So let's talk a little bit about your fourteen years at La Salle. What inspired you the most, other than helping the students to be their happiest selves?

Ward-Gaus: What inspired me the most? Working with a community of people who also were drawn to the charisma of St. John Baptist de La Salle and his method of both education and also the centuries of continued development of his approach to education and spirituality. That inspired me every day. And it inspired me because it was from all these different avenues. You know, Rhonda Hazell is a biology faculty member and her way of teaching, her way of working from a Lasallian, teaching and working from a Lasallian perspective, looked very different than mine, but they were kind of the same. I think about from our community standards side, and, one of my colleagues was Anna Allen, the Assistant Vice President for Campus Life, and her perspective on how to manage (her and Alan Wendell, who's also another AVP over there) on how to address violations of our judicial policy in a Lasallian way. It just ... inspired every day.

Stanley: If a student came to you, if you were still in your role here, or one of your roles here and said, I think I have a problem with alcohol, what's your best guidance for that student?

Ward-Gaus: I'd ask them why, what's happened to them, what were some of the things that occurred that drew them to that conclusion? And some of the questions have to do with how early they began their relationship with alcohol and how frequently they used, and how much they drank, and then also, what are the effects of it and what is it they're hoping to avoid? Once I had some information like that, I would make some suggestions to them. I would ask them what they've tried before. Have you ever tried to cut back? Those types of questions. There isn't one answer for any one student, because it kind of depends on the choices that they've made up to then.

Stanley: Of course. [Beat.] You are retired now, as we've talked about, and a little while ago, you mentioned that you might take some other employment, but it would be different than what you've spent the past forty-plus years on. I was a little

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surprised to hear that! You don't just want to sit around at home [laughter]. Tell me a little bit about what you're thinking.

Ward-Gaus: Nope, nope, nope. No, there's still too much. So there's a couple things. I want to try some writing. I think I might have a kindred spirit here in that regard [referring to interviewer]. I have some fiction ideas out there. I have some non-fiction ideas. Some of it is converting what I—my work experience. [Murmurs, thinking out loud.] One of my significant contributions, I believe, and something that I'm very, very proud of is the work that I've done working with people who are affected by somebody else's drug use. During my tenure here at La Salle, until I became VP, I ran a group. We called it the Substance Abuse Support Group, but it wasn't for substance abusers. It was for students who had a mom, a dad, a sibling, another type of loved one who had a substance abuse problem. And it impacted their lives in not great ways. And so we would meet. I did that kind of work when I was working in the high schools as well. Didn't do it when I was at Penn, my position at Penn didn't allow for it, but those seventeen years at Shalom, and then here, I was able to do that. There's very little, there's not enough (I shouldn't say there's very little), there's not *enough* written about that experience and how to live and love someone who has substance abuse.

Stanley: So would that look like a book for you?

Ward-Gaus: I'm not sure yet. I've actually talked to some of the students who were part of the iterations of the group that we had here at La Salle about bringing them together and them starting to do some writing and reflecting on their experience. For some of them, it's been ten years since they were in the group, but what did they learn then that has transcended and kept them healthier now as a result of the work that they did then? I don't know. I don't know if it's essays, an article, or a book, I don't know.

Stanley: It's very compelling that you worked for so hard for so long and got through COVID and yet you still have so much more to share and give, and so much more energy about you in terms of wellness and healing, which is a real testament to, walking the walk, living your work.

Ward-Gaus: Yeah. Yep.

Stanley: I would like to ask a final few questions so that we can provide some light on Kate as a person. We have a good sense of professionally your achievements. Is

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it safe to say that you've lived in Philadelphia for your whole life minus the two years in Catholic University?

Ward-Gaus: Yes.

Stanley: How has Philadelphia changed for Kate since childhood playing manhunt in the street to seeing those neighborhoods in 2021?

Ward-Gaus: So this is I think a short story, whether it's fiction or non-fiction, I live at 48th and Cedar, in between Cedar and Baltimore avenues.

Stanley: How long have you lived there?

Ward-Gaus: Since 1978. My husband and I purchased it as, a like fixer upper is being kind to it. My husband has all kinds of good construction skills that he learned from his father. We lived in the house while for twenty-five years, we tore the whole thing apart from the inside, and then built it while we lived in it. It was a triplex when we bought it. Now it's a duplex. Remember, I lived at my grandparents at 42-46 Pine Street. One of my regular walking routes [now] is to go past where I lived with my grandparents. And I'm the one who didn't want to go to college in Philadelphia because I wanted to see the world! My husband's Master's degree is in experiential education, and he worked for short period of time with Outward Bound. I don't know if you've ever heard of it.

Stanley: I have!

Ward-Gaus: Okay. It's an international program. I imagined, all right, we're getting married. (He went to graduate school in Colorado.) We'll be living in Colorado and Minnesota and we'll be traveling the world with Outward Bound. And then he came back to Philadelphia and got a grant-funded job to do experiential education in the St. Gabriel System. And then, zoom, he settles here, we settle here. I wanted to be a mom, I always knew I wanted to be a mom. I just always knew I wanted to be a mom. So, yeah. The irony is I was going to see the world and I stayed in Philadelphia for all but two years of it. What has changed? On the heels of, so the Good Shepherd, or the neighborhood I lived in, in southwest Philadelphia, was at the time that I was growing up predominantly 90% or more white. The Community Service Corps opened my eyes to, and West Catholic, which was more diverse than that, you know, the whole [of] Philadelphia as very segregated ... not just by culture, but unfortunately by race communities. And remember, I was in high school from '68 to '72. They were pretty tumultuous years. And unfortunately, it's [been] fifty years and I'm really a little disturbed

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that we're not further along in Philadelphia in terms of addressing what I believe is the original sin of this country, which is our racial injustices.

I love Philadelphia. You know, I'll fight to the death for Philly. I love the fact that we're not New York and that we're not D.C. and that we're not Boston. I love that we're Philly and everything that that means. I'm a Philly girl. We were talking about my passion and all that. I'm what you see is what you get. And I'm part of this culture here. But we as a city need to get ourselves together because the racial polarity is ... We're better, but we're not as far as we need to be. [Pensive.] We're just not as far as we need to be.

Stanley: And it's interesting that you're comparing from, you know, forty years ago and you really feel like the development hasn't been there for racial justice. What about things like cultural nuance in terms of the arts, or the changing nature of your neighborhood over forty years? Has it been the same, or give me a sense—

Ward-Gaus: We're on the western edge of the universities. In fact, if you look at it, there's a thing called University City, and we fit into that boundary. I will tell people I live in west Philadelphia, because for me, the University City moniker is a real estate—

Stanley: Yes.

Ward-Gaus: —induced thing. So, that being said, I love my neighborhood because it really is very diverse. There's so much arts in Philadelphia in general, and you can see or do whatever you want. One of our favorite places, and it's part of my walking route, is Woodlands Cemetery. It's at 40th and Woodland. You enter it at 40th and Woodland. It's old, it goes back to civil war days. It was unkempt for a period of time. It has now become this beautiful garden site. People do gardens in it. I don't know if you've ever seen this. I can't remember what the name of it, but some of the grave sites look like beds and in the middle, you can plant flowers. So you walk through the cemetery and there's all these beautiful beds.

Stanley: Oh, beautiful.

Ward-Gaus: One of the things my husband and I went to, events that my husband and I went to in the last six weeks, I guess it was, there was a group called The Crossing and they're a choral group. They set up in the middle part of the cemetery. Twenty-five people scattered around. They each had their own individual speaker system. And they had a composition that they were singing and it was in memorial to Breonna Taylor, who was one of the—

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Stanley: I know her. I know her well.

Ward-Gaus: Right. And, and they honored some of the other females who were shot and killed, women of color shot and killed by police in a, you know, an act of racial injustice. It was just this beautiful, very significant impactful [event]. And we could walk to it, that sort of thing exists in our neighborhood. We also, however, in our neighborhood lived through the crack epidemic, and that was no fun from a crime perspective. We were broken into multiple times. I faced down a guy who broke into our house and took one of my kitchen knives and backed me into a corner.

Stanley: Kate, that's very traumatic.

Ward-Gaus: What year was that? That was in the late eighties, I guess it was. Yeah. You know, we've had some bad times and we've flipped out of them.

Stanley: What an interesting historical snippet of Philadelphia you just offered. There's so much there to delve into and explore for anyone listening here to this interview.

I'd like to end with two last questions, and I'll ask this one and leave it for a minute, so you can think about it, and then I'll ask the more simple one. So the first one is, is there anything you feel like we haven't touched on that you would like to? I'll leave that with you for a minute, you could interject at the end. And my next question is, what type of hobbies will you be enjoying in your well-earned retirement? Or you can choose to not answer, but give us a sense, besides beautiful walks through cool places, what that will look like for you?

Ward-Gaus: The second part of the hobby question in addition to walking is, my husband and I bought kayaks. Remember, I thought I was going to travel the world with this experiential adventure guy. We actually had kayaks early on that we got, probably in the late seventies. And then we had children and then we had no time, and then we had children and jobs, and we had no time to do that kind of fun stuff. So as I made the decision to retire, he then started doing all the research to like, okay, what are we going to get for kayaks that are going to suit us now? And so we've actually, we got them in the end of March. We've probably been out five or six times on different treks, some of it in the Philadelphia area. We were on the Schuylkill river.

Stanley: Don't you love that river? The history and the geography of that river.

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Ward-Gaus: Yeah, yes. And getting that close, seeing the city from that perspective.

Stanley: Have you ever been outside of the United States?

Ward-Gaus: Oh, yes. Oh, well I say oh yes. Twice! But Italy both times.

Stanley: Would you go again?

Ward-Gaus: Oh my gosh. Yes. But before I go back to Italy, we were supposed to go to Ireland for our 40th wedding anniversary, [in] 2017 actually. He had things going on in his job that were going to not, just, well I knew. We had it semi-planned and I'm like, "No, we're backing out. You were not going to be able to be present in that moment, so we're going to put it off," but we haven't done it yet. So now we're hoping 2022, we'll get to Ireland. His hobby is ancestry stuff, which I could not do. I get fifteen, twenty minutes into it and I'm like, no. But thank God he's doing it. And he's done all this on my family side too. So I know that both my mother and my father's side of the family started up in the northwest section of Ireland: Derry, Galway. Not together. They didn't, the families as far as we know, didn't know one another back then. So kayaking and then some more travel, they will be the hobby things.

Stanley: And is there anything you would like to state that perhaps I didn't ask you?

Ward-Gaus: So I don't know that it's that you didn't ask, but as I was thinking about this, even before the opportunity that you presented in talking about it ...

One of the things that I've come to realize, in the last ... that month of March, when I felt like I had literally lost myself and I was trying to re-find it, and the experience of then grieving the loss of this sister who was only thirteen months older than me, and our complicated relationship, I realized the impact of... [gathers thoughts.]

So if there's anything I would say, it's that I want to emphasize the impact of culture and early childhood experiences on what happens next. But not in a, you know, *fait accompli* [way], but more in a ... [thinking.] It's really profoundly important, and I'm going to get to explain what it is, but it also doesn't determine everything after that. We have choices.

So being raised in an Irish Catholic household, the daughter of an alcoholic with mental health problems, a first-generation college student, of middle income, there were ... it's not the same as being born into privilege. I realize more and

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more and it makes me proud of who I am in a lot of ways. Everything that I've done and my siblings have done to ... [searches for words.]

It's not just about having a better life economically, but having a healthier life. It was difficult. And it wasn't luck! We all *worked at it*. And so, if there's a legacy, and I didn't start out in my career thinking ... I hadn't addressed or really confronted the alcoholism in our family until after I was already in the field, which is kind of a little weird, but still, that's the way it was. I was not seeing things that I subsequently saw after that.

But people, people can do wonderful and incredible things coming from circumstances that are less than ideal!

[PAUSE]

Stanley: Kate, I thank you so much for your time today. I very much appreciate this. Thank you very much.

Ward-Gaus: Thank you.

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