

Speaker1: As part of the University of Michigan's bicentennial celebration, the U of M library brought Story Corps to campus to capture personal stories of those who make up the university's rich history.

Speaker1: Patrick Duff was a freshman at U of M in 1971. His son Eamon Duff began his college career at U of M in the fall of 2017. For our latest installment of Story Corps, the father and son sat down to discuss what's changed after 46 years and also what's still the same about being a freshman at U of M.

Eamon: So, I guess what was it, like living at U of M back then?

Patrick: Moving to Ann Arbor from the Muskegon area was a big jolt. Ann Arbor's quite a liberal community, it was back then too. In fact, I remember when I first went to orientation and what not, Frisbees being thrown and blue jeans being very common. And just seemed like it was a different environment. I remember the guys would wear long hair. Bell bottoms were very, very popular. Ten speed bikes.

Patrick: There were some demonstrations and protests going on. This was the time of Vietnam, back in 1971. I was draft eligible. I was 17 years old, soon to be 18. Ultimately my draft number would come up and it was pretty high, so I was never drafted. But that was certainly an issue. Also, the right to vote was that year. So that was, and again, probably in response to Vietnam. It was a new and entertaining, exciting, scary, fun, different people from all over the world, all over the state. Something that I was certainly not used to, going to classes with professors who spoke with accents. The very, very beautiful buildings in Ann Arbor and the kind of different places. Middle Earth was just had been around for a few years on State Street and going over there and reading Zap Comic Books and what not. It was like living in part like a different reality from what I was used to. And I guess when I would go back home it was going back into a different world back in Muskegon. How about you Eamon? How is life at U of M?

Eamon: Well, it's still liberal as you mentioned, very much so. And coming from a small, rural community that's a little bit more conservative it's a jolt as well. But different kind of jolt than I'm sure you had. But I mean, there's still a lot of the same things coming up here that were important back in the 70s when you were there. There are still demonstrations. Lots of issues that people are perpetually trying to solve socially. All the different social justice movements and stuff.

Eamon: But overall I think a lot of things ...times have changed, but really a lot of things have kind of stayed the same here from what it sounds like at least. And so I guess speaking of that, I guess what has changed in the world in this long time that ... between our stints at college.

Patrick: Well, I guess technology is one big difference. Using a slide ruler in the classes that I took, that was the preferred method in doing your math problems. Those that had calculators were considered to be somewhat elite. Calculators are very, very expensive. And now, to think that even calculators are found on phones. So, that's 46 years ago. Communication's another thing. I think I would talk to my folks, maybe that first

semester, three, four times the entire semester. And would send letters via the...write long letters to them and they'd write letters back. Compare that with how do that, Eamon.

Eamon: I mean, there's still mail. It's still around. But it's...we have so many better ways to talk to each other. I mean, we haven't really FaceTimed or Skyped all that much, but say good night to mom every night. She, you know, over text or whatever, call each other and it's so much easier to do this than I'm sure what you had to deal with.

Patrick: Politics, that's another big difference. Maybe we can talk about that a little bit. When I was starting college in 1971, our president was Richard Nixon. He'd been elected in 1968. Before I would end college in December of 74, of course President Nixon would be impeached and removed...well, he was impeached, but he ultimately quit and he was replaced by a University of Michigan graduate, Gerry Ford, who as kind of fate would have it, was my commencement speaker in December of 1974. I don't think that the political parties were as polarized then as what they are now. I think there was more cooperation. I think the more polarization was a kind of a generational thing. The younger folks and the older folks don't trust anyone over 30, was kind of a thing. But I think politics was something that we could maybe compare and contrast...

Eamon: Right, yeah yeah yeah.

Patrick: What's the political situation today?

Eamon: Well, yeah, you're plenty familiar with it, too. Two of the most maybe divisive ... I don't know what the best way to say it, presidencies, between Nixon and our current president, Donald J Trump.

Eamon: I mean, it is very polarized now and like you said, that is...that's a difference, I guess, compared to back then. But, things have changed but a lot of the same issues just keep coming up. There's...I will see stuff, you know, millennials ruin this. Millennials ruin that. And baby boomers ruined whatever economy, housing market, whatever. I don't know. Things have changed a lot, but I'm not sure that they really have, in the way that people, I guess, are. Times have changed but people haven't, I guess.

Patrick: Yeah, yeah. It's something too, because here I am, what 64 and you're 18 years of age and I don't think there's any real generational issue between you and me. And yet we have that big difference in age.

Eamon: Yeah, somehow you know, I guess maybe that same thing with times have changed but people haven't. Somehow we're kinda similar despite being so far apart in, you know, in time. I never tried to be the same thing that you were, but in a lot of ways we kinda ended up in the same boat.

Patrick: Right now, here we're both back in Ann Arbor. Both-

Eamon: Wearing our Michigan sweatshirts.

Patrick: Michigan sweatshirts, and I'm very, very proud of you and it is kinda come around the full cycle here, so. Well.

Eamon: Couldn't have asked for a better dad.

Speaker1: That was Patrick Duff speaking with his son Eamon Duff. These interviews were recorded by Story Corps, www.storycorps.org. For more from the series, visit arts.umich.edu/storycorps.