



00:00:00 Doug Ryan

This is like Shangri La or this isn't Kansas anymore. It's not Creighton anymore.

00:00:06 Micah Mertes

This was a football field last time you were here?

00:00:08 Doug Ryan

Yes, sir. Yeah, yeah. Track and football and. Oh, so many memories.

00:00:22 Micah Mertes

Welcome to Weird Creighton History. Just Micah today. No, Rick, we have kind of a special episode trying something a little bit different. I was recently invited to go on a tour of Creighton that was led by Creighton Athletics. And it was for a 86 year old man named Doug Ryan. Doug isn't a Creighton alum himself, but he grew up across the street from Creighton. In fact, he lived in the area where the CL and Rachel Werner Center for Health Sciences Education is being constructed now. So it was. Creighton was more or less his front lawn. He also worked as the water boy for the Creighton men's basketball team in the years following World War II. And the guy just has a lot of great stories about growing up at Creighton. And it was, it was very touching to be able to go on this tour of the university with him. Until this tour, he hadn't set foot on Creighton's campus in about 75 years. So things had changed a little bit. He was awful surprised and pretty delighted by what he got to see that day. Please forgive some of the audio quality for what you're about to hear. I would say it oscillates in quality from pretty good to not so great. But we were mobile and trying something new. And hopefully it doesn't detract from your enjoyment of the episode. So here we go. Here is Doug Ryan returning to Creighton 75 years later. All right, well, Doug, tell me, tell me your full name and who are you?

00:01:39 Doug Ryan

Okay. I'm R. Douglas Ryan. R Y A N. I'm retired from First National Bank of Omaha. Many, many years ago. I was a water boy. We called us in those days for the Creighton University basketball team. And I'm getting a tour of the campus here. And it's incredible. The changes are literally unbelievable. This can't be Kansas anymore. It's incredible.

00:02:10 Micah Mertes

So what, what age were you, you think when you were.

00:02:13 Doug Ryan

I would have been 10, 11, 12 years of age now because I'm 86 now. So that's again right

after World War II. There's so many changes with Creighton.

00:02:24 Micah Mertes

And you grew up next door to Creighton. What was it like growing up next to a university?

00:02:28 Doug Ryan

It was fun. We used a lot of the facilities. We played baseball on the football stadium. Used to be a football stadium here, a double decker and could seat about 20,000 people. Creighton played football prior to World War II. After World War II they did not play football and we would sneak into the gymnasium and play basketball up in the little gym. We called it upstairs. And it, it was a wonderful education.

00:03:00 Micah Mertes

You're not a Creighton graduate, but you definitely are, I don't know, you definitely espouse a lot of the values of philanthropy. Giving back. I was wondering if you could tell me the story again about how you started your Santa Claus business.

00:03:12 Doug Ryan

Many years ago I was a collector at First national bank of Omaha and we had purchased like five or six thousand Nebraska Furniture Mart accounts. And most of them paid on time. But if they didn't see guys like me would call them, say your two payments passed due. So this one lady, and I won't use her name, I called her and I said, well, your two payments past due, she says, I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm pregnant, I have a two year old child and we don't have a lot of money. My husband is whatever. And I said, well, you got to make the payment. I hung up the phone. I felt so guilty about this lady. I said I got to do something. So I went down to J.L. Brandeis and I had gotten the name of her kids and how old they were and bought a bunch of stuff and said send it out. And then I thought, well wait a minute, she may not think this belongs to her and send it back. So I devised the letter. Rich man, poor man, beggar, blah blah blah. Your name has come to my attention. Can't put my name, I'm trying to collect the payments. And I said how can I sign this letter? And I thought, well wait a minute. I was in the service in Eder Oberstein, Germany. Even the Germans don't know where the heck it is. But we had a base there. So I signed it Mr. Eder Oberstein and sent it out. And that was the first party that I played Santa Claus for as far as Eder Obers. And I did that for a number of years until someone said, why don't you put on a suit and be a Santa Claus? I'm not going to put on that. Anyhow, I bought a suit and I used the Santa visits to help pay for the needy families. And that's how I've done it for 40 years or so. See a lot of sad things at Christmas time. But as purse is empty, the Heart is filled. That's all I can say on that.

00:05:12 Micah Mertes

You've got to see quite a bit today, quite a bit of Creighton for the first time in a long time.

00:05:16 Doug Ryan

What.

00:05:18 Micah Mertes

I don't know what was the best part of it? What was the most surprising part?

00:05:21 Doug Ryan

The surprising part, number one, would be, how did they get all this? Where did all this come from? The chairs that have the blue jay logo on them, the gymnasiums, the workout. I mean, Creighton was a small campus in those years. It was the big administration building, the little gym, the big gym. Big gym, little gym. And the church, which wasn't part of Creighton. And that's basically what it was. And now we have a campus and so many buildings. I get mixed up. Cook center, whatever this. That I can't name one thing. All of it. All of it is. If you were back in my era, wildest dream. Couldn't imagine what this has grown to. And it's been wonderful.

00:06:11 Micah Mertes

Before we end the episode, I wanted to offer just a nice moment from our tour of the old gym. We were just about to leave the old gym when somebody suggested that we look at some of the old historical photos on the wall, which I believe originally came from the University Archive. So these were, in some cases, photos that were a lot older than Doug himself. You know, of the. Of the pool during its early days, of the gym when it was first built in 1915. There was one photo on the wall that Doug's friend Rod Jewell, who was along for the tour, that he noticed on the wall. And I just thought this was a really nice moment and wanted to share it. If you want to read more about Doug's tour and his many memories of Creighton in the 1940s, go to alumni.creighton.edu. Thank you. You find yourself in any of these photos

00:07:01 Doug Ryan

on the bench. There's the.

00:07:02 Micah Mertes

Wait a minute. There's two kids sitting there with the team right there.

00:07:11 Doug Ryan

Well, I don't know. Well, one of us might require. One of them is me. I'd be the littler guy. He was the bigger guy. Oh, come on. Remember that. I don't. I was in the sixth or seventh grade at St. John's Grade School, and I don't.