

REBEL 5IVE



Episode #35 - Gerard Striby

Gary (00:02):

You're listening to Rebel 5ive an interactive interview podcast with alumni, past and current parents and friends of Roncalli high school. I'm your host, Gary Armbruster, director of alumni and corporate relations at Roncalli and each week I will ask our guests five questions regarding how their lives have evolved and how key connections of experience, opportunity and alumni networking have propelled them to where they are today. We'll talk challenges, how to overcome challenges and what they've learned along the way. Stay tuned.

Gary (00:32):

Today's guest on the Rebel 5ive podcast is Gerard Striby. Gerard, welcome to the podcast. Thank you very much. Good to be here. A little unusual this week for the first time we are recording remotely. Normally our guests is sitting across the table. Uh, we've been out of the building now for about a month. How is E-learning going for you?

Gerard (00:51):

Uh, as best could be expected for somebody who's computer illiterate. Thank God for my wife.

Gary (00:59):

That's okay. But how's that adjustment been? I know a lot of people have struggled with it. I shouldn't say a lot of people, but some people have struggled with it. Um, E learning was not designed for semesters worth of work. It was designed for two or three days.

Gerard (01:13):

It's been difficult finding things for me anyway. It's been difficult finding things that I think would be a value to the students, my students, Mmm. Rather than just busy work. Uh, fortunately or unfortunately I had already, without knowing this was going to happen, have it had assigned a project. Mmm. And uh, and a capstone paper, one of the senior capstone papers. So that took a good part of the two or so weeks up to this point. So now we're starting to get some new stuff. Mmm. So it's a learning process for me as well, but we're getting there.

Gary (01:50):

What's the give and take with the kids? Do you have much of that?

Gerard (01:54):

Uh, we set up our first Google meet, uh, last week and it was an optional, and I told the kids via email that it was optional. And in the first one would just be just to see how everyone was doing. Yeah. So how'd that go? Well for those who joined us, I mean it was, I probably had about 35% of the kids, but starting next week, uh, when I started getting into sharing notes with them and things like that, cause there's some point we got to learn new material at least to some degree. Then I'll be using that for, explain the notes to them.

Gary (02:34):

And this is a Christian and Christian adulthood is this Oh, vocations. Okay. Okay. Doing the research on Gerard Striby. So that's a, that's a job in itself. It is. I can't believe you're still here 28 years. 20. Is that right? 28 years at Roncalli. Roncalli Yes. So talk a little bit about um, growing up on the East side Little Flower. You were a Little Flower Trojan, you went to Latin school, so that was a little bit unusual. Latin school closes, uh, you got, you finish out high school, at Scecina, correct. And then off to St. Meinrad. So why St. Meinrad?

Gerard (03:13):

Well, you know, I had thought for many years about the possibility of being a priest. I grew up in a very strong Catholic family. Great background my parents gave me. So I had thought about it for a while. That's why I went to Latin school for those two years, high school seminary, you know, I felt like I was something I had to at least look at. So I did go, uh, to St. Meinrad, Not really knowing what, whether that was my calling from God, but at least one to look into that.

Gary (03:45):

Was it a difficult transition going from Little Flower to, to Latin school?

Gerard (03:50):

Uh, it was difficult in that I was, it may or may not surprise you. I was extraordinarily shy and so go into a brand new place where I knew once one person, I had one classmate who went as well, Father Dan Mahan, who's now at St. Barnabas.. This actually was a classmate of mine in both at Latin school. Yeah. So it was a, it was a little bit of a transition, but it was small enough that I've found pretty quickly, I think my comfort zone.

Gary (04:21):

So your sophomore year, the school closes, what was that like?

Speaker 2 (04:26):

Uh, I was, I was, I was really bummed. I was pretty devastated. I, uh, it was, like I said, I was pretty shy, so, but it was very small class so I was able to connect a lot of people and grow a lot of, have good flow. I have a lot of good friendships and, and I loved it. I loved Latin school and I will say going to Scecina It wasn't anything to do with Scecina as far as their fault but I did not have any, I did not enjoys most of my two years at Scecina and that was on me cause I just didn't branch out. Mmm. So that was a, that was a little tougher.

Gary (05:02):

You graduate from Scecina and off to St. Meinrad. So is the priesthood still in the equation?

Gerard (05:08):

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

Gary (05:10):

So talk about St. Meinrad a little bit. I know, I know a very little about St. Meinrad My dad graduated from St. Meinrad a hundred years ago, uh, he was on the board down there. I know it's a beautiful place and shame on me. I have not been that down there. But one time, I know that I know and I shame on me, but talk a little bit about that.

Gerard (05:33):

I, I will, I will say that as much as I enjoyed Latin school, um, St. Meinrad up to that point in my life was, was when undoubtedly the best four years of my life. Mmm. I mean, I, I just, and I even looked back at that now, Mmm. [inaudible] socially, spiritually, you know, my education, obviously, uh, my spiritual life, everything athletically, even. Mmm. I just, I just grew so much St. Meinrad Mmm. Some of the best friends I've ever had still keep in contact with a few of them. Mmm. Uh, just a lot of growth as I am sure anybody would experience in it, in college during those college years. But for me it was, I really kind of felt like that's the first time I started recognizing some of my gifts and talents and who I was and what God was calling me to be and the kind of person I was. And you know, I, I, I would say after that point, I was the best version of myself after that point. In those four years,

Gary (06:42):

At some point in time, the priesthood doesn't, doesn't appeal to you or what happened with that?

Gerard (06:48):

Well, I, I graduated from the seminary with, with full intention of eventually returning, to the seminary and finishing and becoming a priest. My, when I graduated at 22, I thought, okay, I'm going to be a priest. But I was burned out of, this is ironic because I was burned out of school. I was burnt out of classroom and studying and exams and everything. So that year I decided to take, it's a little bit of time off, but I wanted to work in the church at some fast fashion. Mmm. Because I thought that'd be healthy. When I went back to seminary, I'd work in the church, uh, you know, having worked in the church then that'd be better prepared.

Gerard (07:30):

So I actually interviewed with the archdiocese to be Dre, director of religious education, but they said, well, I had the theological background, but I didn't have a teaching experience. So I've ever thought about being a teacher. I said, this is my senior year. I said, not really. I said, well, you should think about it. So actually I got into teaching because, uh, I was, I wanted to take a couple of years off and maybe become a Dre and then go back to seminary. So, uh, that was the plan at that time. You taught at Scecina. At Scecina I actually, as much as I disliked Scecina at myself, because again, my fault. Mmm. It was, I'd interviewed at Cathedral and Brebeuf and um, before, during that summer, I didn't get anything. I was actually the week before school started that Thursday morning I got a call to go see Ray Riley, the principal at Scecina.

Gerard (08:30):

And I went in and out school starts the following Tuesday. And so I went in and he starts about 15 minutes into it. He's, he's telling me what I would be teaching and what I'd be doing. And I said, you mean I got the job? And he goes, well yeah, school starts next week you had the job. So my Scecina ties got me my first job. Did that surprise you that you know, I didn't have time be like I'm the last choice kind of thing. I, I had three days to prepare to go into the classroom and while I taught CCD at Meinrad and for a couple of years it didn't prepare me for six classes, you know, in four days being in front of all those kids. So it was a culture shock.

Gary (09:13):

Two years. Is that how long you were there?

Gerard (09:15):

I was there eight years.

Gary (09:16):

Oh, eight years. Okay. Um, wow. I was, I was thinking, uh, just two, uh, so why'd you leave there?

Gerard (09:23):

Well, um, I, uh, I had, by that point I decided, I went through a pretty intensive, couple of years of, of spiritual direction, uh, later in the years at Scecina and, decided that God wasn't calling me to be a priest and I was loving teaching. Um, I actually left, I'd met Joe Hollowell at CYO camp originally. And, uh, I worked there for five years, summers. And then I had taken some kids from Scecina on field studies for about four years. Joe asked me to bring, you know, see if we could get

some kids going from Scecina. So I got to know him really well in those years. So I literally, I don't think it's an exaggeration to say I was, for all intents and purposes, hired in Denver, Colorado at a campfire when I was talking about my passion for service and he was talking about, man, I want somebody here who can run a service program. And, and this was back in the day when I don't think too many schools had that kind of a program. So yeah, somebody that's dedicated to not just, you know, seeing if kids wanted to do something, but really having a program centered around it and Scecina wasn't at that point yet. So, and I had known a lot of teachers that could at Roncalli a lot of students to field studies. So I think I got hired over the campfire.

Gary (10:49):

Do you remember your first, um, introduction to Roncalli? Is that, go back to Scecina, does it go back to the Latin school? Little flower even?

Gerard (10:58):

Let's say it goes back to probably actually it'd be teaching. It's just Roncalli was someplace I actually wanted to go after Latin school closed because a good majority of the students went to Roncalli. Right. And for that reason I said, I want to go to Roncalli. And my dad said, you're not going to Roncalli you're six blocks from Cathe or Scecina you're going to Scecina So on paper I knew of Roncalli, but only as a place I wanted to go. My dad wouldn't let me, which is probably a good thing.

Gary (11:28):

But as far as knowledge of being on Roncalli 's campus, anything like that,

Gerard (11:35):

Not so much on campus. I, you know, I connected to a lot with Roncalli as the adversary of softball. We never beat him as I was the coach at Scecina for all those years, knew of Roncalli to that new of our, obviously through field studies. That was my biggest connection to Roncalli was those four years, right. Took Scecina kids on field studies with us. So that was my first real connection to Roncalli.

Gary (12:00):

Okay, I'm going to go into this and, and I hope I don't offend you. Um, clearly you have a physical disability. Yes. Um, w w what is that challenge? And I'll tell you and I'll get to why I'm asking what, what, what is the challenge there?

Gerard (12:16):

I think it was a struggle for me growing up just because I'm, I knew I was different. I knew I, um, you know, it might surprise you. I was picked on a little bit through grade school. Uh, so it bothered me. It probably bothered me more in grade school. Um, I, but by high school and especially college, you know, I, I guess the best comments people could have given me, and I've heard this a few times at, people would say to me, they never looked at me as being handicapped, um, which, and I, and I really, I think that was really what I discovered at St. Meinrad in college. I mean, I got really involved athletically intramurals. Mmm. I was really involved with that. Did an okay job. I met some people would be shocked to see I was a decent athlete back then, given my, um, disability. But I really felt w it was, uh, it was, uh, for that point forward. I really never felt, it wasn't day to day thing where I felt like I had disability.

Gary (13:23):

Well, and that's where I was going with that because you've mentioned twice now athletics at Latin school and SA and St. Meinrad. And then you went on Summer field studies for four years. Well I've been on summer fill studies and I'm an able bodied person and I know what that means as far as the rigor of being in the mountains and what have you. Yeah, you just mentioned it. I mean, I don't look at Gerard and as this disabled person, you're just Gerard. And I think that reflects on you more so than your disability, if that makes sense. Does that make sense?

Gary (14:00):

Well, I appreciate that. And I, and for the record, I took a lot of the shorter hikes. I've been there. I've been on those too. None of them are. Yeah. But I, but I will say this, my, and I, and I attribute a lot of that to my parents growing up because my dad and mom would not allow me to feel much, feel myself as a disabled boy. They just never let me do that. They

pushed me to do everything, anything I could do and uh, well I can remember having struggles with it. They just wouldn't let me, they pushed me to, to not think of myself that way. So I attribute a lot of that to them.

Gary (14:37):

You were a one of nine, as you mentioned before, where, where are you in the nine? Eight. Your eighth. So I assume you took some grief from your older siblings

Gerard (14:46):

a little bit. A little bit. Of course. Especially the older brothers. Yeah.

Gary (14:51):

What was your first job?

Gerard (14:54):

Uh, I would call a job was delivering papers. Mmm. I did that for about six years back when they had the Indianapolis news afternoon paper

Gary (15:03):

and that involved collecting and, and you know, after school,

Gerard (15:07):

that was after school. So I would, uh, I would literally, when I was at Latin school, I would walk about a mile to the bus stop, take the bus home or take the bus, and then walked another three or four blocks from the bus stop to home, grab my paper bag and go to the, get my route. So it was a D it was a decent amount of walking. Yeah.

Gary (15:28):

What, uh, some lessons learned from that paper route?

Gerard (15:30):

The biggest lesson I had was was actually was learning how to take, learning how to take care of money. Yeah. Learning about responsibility had, you know, if I didn't collect from everybody in a given week, that's when you had to go door to door and, and tear off the little stickers, stickers to give to the people and when they paid. And I hadn't clicked enough to pay my bill on his Saturday morning. Mmm. But also I remember this is another lesson I didn't like at the time, but I really appreciate it. And my dad would say, well a 50% is going right into the bank and 25% you're going to give to your mother. Wow. Cause your mother takes care of you. Yeah. And 25% you can keep. So, you know, I don't know remember what it was, but I, if I made \$5 a week, yeah. I was lucky. So, no, it didn't way but, but it's like, come on dad, I need such and such and he wouldn't no this is the deal. So

Gary (16:30):

No, that, that's, that's awesome. You had Sundays off, you had the news right. Sundays off. Yeah. That was awesome. Yeah. Cause if you had a star route, it was 365 days a year. Rain, snow, sleet.

Gerard (16:45):

Well my three older brothers all had star routes and that's why I took a news route because there's no way, because again, my dad, its your route, you're doing it.

Gary (16:55):

No, that's, that's, that's great. I know, um, you mentioned CYO camp earlier and I know that was probably a big, uh, part of your growing up experience. Do you have a favorite memory from CYO camp other than meeting Joe Hollowell?

Gerard (17:11):

Uh, I just love being, I mean, I, I, I didn't go to CYO camp as a camper, but I went each of the four summers during college and then two summers after I, uh, was teaching. So six full total. I just loved being around, um, nature and being around

kids. I actually attribute part of my ultimately becoming a teacher to my very quick a recognition that as much as I loved the little kid, like the eight year old, nine year old year, I really gravitated toward, you know, the 12, 13, 14, 15 year olds.

Gerard (17:50):

I can't, that just seemed to be where I enjoyed more. Not that you enjoy the others, but enjoy the older kids. So it was also help me recognize it when I went into teaching elementary was not mine. Yeah.

Gary (18:06):

Well not to harp on this again, but you're at CYO camp and there's hiking and horseback riding and walking and all this other stuff. I just get the sense you never let anything stop you from doing what you wanted to do.

Gerard (18:21):

Uh, I'd say I think that'd be fair to say. I, uh, yeah, I did as much as I could do is, and uh, and didn't look back really. [inaudible] you know, I look back now and that's why I was raised in, never really felt that way about myself.

Gary (18:39):

So, well, I think the East side, uh, around Scecina um, you're talking big, big Catholic families, tough kids.

Gary (18:49):

Yeah. Um, I, I always felt like when I was in high school, you're a year, you're a year older than me, I think. Is that right? Did you graduate from high school? Okay, so I'm 81 so you're a year older. Um, I always felt like back then Scecina and Roncalli were very, very similar schools, same kids, same hard-nosed kids. But man, uh, big Catholic families that uh, had a nice work ethic, lived in a three bedroom house with a basement and you know, one bathroom and on and on and on, that kind of thing.

Gerard (19:24):

So that's pretty much describes my house. I know, I know. That's uh, we had four bedrooms actually we had, yeah, we had four bedrooms plus another bedroom for my brother Timmy, which we might talk about later. Yeah. And two bathrooms. So yeah, it was.

Gary (19:44):

Well heck you had two bathrooms. So you were, you were living in high cotton. We were living the dream buddy.

Gary (19:51):

I'll tell you what, we're going to take a break and we're going to be back in just a minute with Gerard Striby on the Rebel 5ive podcast.

Break (19:58):

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Gary (20:29):

We're back on the Rebel 5ive podcast today with Gerard Striby. A little unusual this today or we're uh, recording remotely the first time we've done that. And uh, everybody kind of understands that. Gerard you and Kim, are you the only ones at home? We are at your house. We are.

Gary (20:48):

And so should we give a shout out to Kim for being quarantined with, with you?

Gerard (20:53):

You really should, you know, especially with the technology as computer illiterate as I am she is technologically savvy. Yes. I would tell people that this is a true testament to her. Love for me. I guess if she's patiently helping me out with

technology and it's been good. It's been good. 15 years. Is that right? You guys been married 15 years. Oh man. On the spot. I wish you had asked me that. I, this is, this is number 15. It'll be 15 in September or October. And so a shout out to Kim. God bless you. God bless Kim.

Gary (21:31):

All right. You mentioned in the last segment, uh, you're sitting around a campfire with Joe on Summer field study and you decided service learning was going to be something that you didn't decide. It was something that was very important to you, right. In your wildest dreams 28 years ago, did you think you'd still be at Roncalli?

Gerard (21:51):

Uh, I don't know that I thought 20 years ago about that far in advance, but no, I don't think I was ever, well, I believe at that point I wanted to be a teacher. Um, I was still single at that point, so I totally discounted the priesthood. But I was pretty certain that I was, as long as I enjoyed teaching that that's where God wanted me to be. So, but to think of it 28 years later that, that no, what? Look in that far, man,

Gary (22:22):

When I was researching this and I put the math together, Holy, Holy cow. I mean, it's just a long time and they kept me this long, Gary. How about that? Well, that's not where I was going. What was the first class you taught?

Gerard (22:37):

Holy cow. It was at Roncalli. It was, wow. You know, I can't remember Gary the first. Well, okay, so then the service, uh, service learning a part of that, how did that evolve?

Gerard (22:53):

You know, it started pretty slow, wasn't really service line. I mean, I'd started the first few years just trying to get as many opportunities for service for the students. It kind of, the big coin phrase back then was service learning and trying to connect service to classrooms. So we connected with Marian now Marian university and uh, they gave us a lot of programming, a lot of research on it and, and just a lot of resources. Uh, so I, you know, I was indebted to them in those early years. I've had a connect service to the classroom, but it never, I mean we certainly did that probably six or seven years. That was a focus. But, um, it wasn't the only focus of just doing it during the class, through the classroom. It was also service outside of that. We did that for a while and then I think while I was called a service learning program up until the last few years, Mmm. It really was only to service learning service connected to the classroom for probably six or seven of those years.

Gary (24:00):

So the first six or seven or the last six or seven,

Gerard (24:03):

The first. After a couple of years into those. So those middle six or seven years from 94 to 98 or 99, something like that.

Gary (24:14):

All right. So you have uh, two stepkids, um, Joe and Deseree, right? Correct. And then I have three kids that all are alums and they have both lamented and enjoyed the service hour projects. Are you the father of that, would you say?

Gerard (24:37):

The father of them enjoying him or loving it?

Gerard (24:41):

The father of service hours.

Gerard (24:45):

I am the father of service hours. Yes. I don't think I ever really thought of it that way. And maybe you don't want to think of it. That will be, yeah, I apologize to anybody who might be parents.

Gerard (24:59):

No, it it, I don't know that the service hours were even a requirement back then. And initially we just kinda did it through the theology classes. It became a universal, I'd have to look, man, I'd have to go back and really do some research on it. But when requirement connected to a grade in religion and theology classes, that probably wasn't for a while.

Gary (25:21):

Do you have a favorite project or a favorite assignment that you've given kids that stands above the rest that, um, kids went out and did something that you entirely did not expect them to do on behalf of Roncalli on behalf of service?

Gerard (25:40):

You know, I, I think it's, it's more narrow because I think the best thing that's ever happened to the service program is our mission trips [inaudible] to Charleston, West Virginia. I mean at the height of those, you know, we've been doing those since 2004 I believe in and [inaudible] to know that we always got kids doing it. We always had kids that were interested in it. I'm willing to go, willing to pay to go and at the height of it, I mean we were doing three trips a year, 25 kids a trip at the height of it. It just amazes me and, and staff that continue to come back and staff it. So, you know, it doesn't apply to that many students because you know, the majority don't go to mission trips to Appalachia . But uh, it, it stands out as my favorite part of the program by far.

Gary (26:35):

Well, it's interesting you bring that up because I was going to bring it up too, um, again doing research, and it's probably more than this now, but at one point in time you had done at least 50 trips to Appalachia right?

Gerard (26:50):

We did. We did one trip for a few years and then we went to two years or two per year. And then, and then like I said, at one point, uh, we did three, three or two in the summer. That lasted about six or seven years and then an hour back to two.

Gary (27:06):

Well, I don't know what this says Gerard, but you've been trying to get me to go on that trip for a long time and I always had an excuse and I was going on this year, I was on board. I know, I know I was on board.

Gerard (27:20):

I remember that. I was like, man, that's a, well, you know, you're going to still be on board. Don't worry about it. Gary.

Gary (27:26):

Talk a little bit about that because, uh, as far as the, uh, service cause. Okay. Service. What does that mean? What are the kids, what are, what are some of the projects that the kids have done and it's kids based. It's not adult based as or as far as involved, but I mean there's overseeing but it's mainly the kids. So talk a little bit about that, cause I don't think everybody has a full appreciation for what those 50 trips that you've taken.

Gerard (27:54):

The kids that have gone, I don't know that too many of them that ever had any of them really have not just loved it. Um, those who have gone and the, the fact that they see the kind of poverty and there is poverty in Indianapolis obviously, but they come upon a kind of poverty that we experienced. Mmm. And in the Hills of West Virginia, in Charleston area, Mmm. People living in rundown trailers and, and you know, conditions that none of us have ever experienced.

Gerard (28:27):

I'm sure, and the way they reached out that reached out to the people, uh, to the, the people we work with. Um, can I share a story with you on that? Absolutely. Um, you know, I remember probably the first couple of years we did very, we didn't do a heavy maintenance because we didn't have the, uh, expertise. Once Kevin Hurley joined us. That helped a lot. But I think the second year we did it, or maybe the third year we went, we went to a house Mmm. With two women. You were Mmm. In there probably 50s. One of them was not real healthy. Mmm. She was a heavy smoker and had lung

issues and things. Um, and, and [inaudible] there was, we were asked to get rid of trash. I go get rid of trash. They had mounds of trash in their backyard because the garbage trucks couldn't get there, couldn't get to them.

Gerard (29:30):

Um, the narrow roads and things like that. And so they were on their own and she didn't have the money to get rid of it. So we procured a couple of trucks donated to a, to take it. But we literally spent the entire week from trash, from the backyard to the front yard. I mean, there was a mound of this heavy duty trash bags. Uh, that was my first connection. Her name was the one, I can't think of her sister's name, but Mary. And then we went back when we had a little bit more ability [inaudible] to do some heavy duty heavy duty work. And the first real construction work we did there was in her kitchen. Her floor was caving in and the kitchen. And so I remember the same lady, the same lady. And uh, so we spent a week repair repairing the floor. I remember them saying, but they had friends coming and bringing them food and stuff because they put a sheet over the doorway.

Gerard (30:24):

They didn't have a door sheet over the doorway from the living room in the kitchen cause they didn't want to see and do her. We're done. And uh, and so we replaced the floor, you know, at the end we were done. We were made it safe and they, and you know, pull the sheet out on the last day. And they were, they were very thankful to crying tears. And that was, that part really wasn't necessarily uncommon. How much thankful, how much, how much thankfulness is the people had. But, uh, I, I mentioned that because the kids were not only so good, but just treated with such respect and dignity and all of the people we work with. But a few years later, the person in charge of the program with whom we work, our connection down in West Virginia said, you know, Gerard, uh, it was a on a spring break trip and they said, I think you should go see Mary.

Gerard (31:18):

And we, yeah, I hadn't seen her for a few years before cause I don't think she's going to be alive back, you know, in the summer. So I went and, uh, went and talked to her and she was bedridden at that point. She was on oxygen and I said, you know, and I felt that initially I felt such guilt that we couldn't do more for them, that we just, you know, and we stopped coming and we couldn't do more for him. Um, and she said, and she said, Gerard stop. And she was kind of raspy and she kind of pulled me to her bed and she goes, Gerard, I want you to know something. You and your kids. And she specified the kids. She goes, you and your kids. She goes, before I met you and those kids, I didn't believe in God. And as much as you did for my house, she said, I want you to go back and tell your kids how important they are. Because I now believe in God. And she goes, I know I'm going to die. I know that. Mmm, I'm not going to see you again, but I just need you to know that, that you and your kids restored my faith in God and I'm, I'm ready to meet God now. [inaudible] and of course, as I am listening to this. I'm bawling like a baby. And uh, I mean that kind of thing that, uh, it is Appalachian wise, it's so wonderful to me is that it's more than just rebuilding houses or repairing floors or

Gerard (32:41):

fixing a leaky roof. It's a, you know, we always tell kids when we go, it's being Christ to others and, and uh, an experiencing Christ's through others as well. And as much as I, as much as I know, I believe we've helped people. I know that our kids and I have been just as much and that's why, that's why I think about service it, the struggle is, you know, trying to get it to be more than something. You check off a box. I got, I did my hours so I could get my grade [inaudible] the kids really buy into it. I think will recognize that they get as much out of it as they put into it and that's what I hope our kids get.

Gary (33:25):

That's the lesson that everybody hopes. Yeah, absolutely. What I'm always amazed at with Appalachian, and I haven't been so, I can't say firsthand, but the number of kids that go more than once.

Gerard (33:39):

Oh yeah. Yeah. We've had, in fact, the reason we actually got that third trip was because I had a bunch of, uh, graduates. You said, I want, we can, we do a graduate trip? And these are kids that probably went two or three times high school students cause we get a graduate trim. I said, well if you want to do it, I'll set it up. And we, we had it ready to go and, and, and we just, we had about 10 or 11 and then things happened with, a lot of them were down to three or four. So we

can't do a trip with three or four, but we committed to them in West Virginia. So we put together very quickly at third trip, second one in the summer. And that's how it got that third trip. Mmm. But then like I said, we'd had kids, you're right. Multiple kids, many, many kids go two, three times even.

Gary (34:28):

I want to thank you for sharing that story because I just know that that trip is a hidden jewel. I've used jewel several times during these episodes and I think every one applies, but even more so in, in this case where, um, there's, so I have a kid actually they have to pay, you know, they have to go on their spring break, right. When their friends are down in Fort Myers and they're in Appalachia, uh, painting and, and doing all this other stuff. Yeah, that's a, that's a testament to a lot of these kids that, uh, it's a great program. It's a great Roncalli program, but you're absolutely right. It's a testament to the kids. It really is.

Gary (35:20):

I'm going to back up a little bit. Sure. Hobbies. Uh, when I gave you the bio sheet, you mentioned all things Colts, all things Colts. Uh, 1984, the Colts role in the Mayflower vans and, and uh, they go out to, I don't even know where they went. Um, but they were all in. They role in. Have you been a Colts fan ever since?

Gerard (35:43):

Ever since I went from a Bengals fan to Colts fan, so yeah. Yeah. I was always a big football fan in general, but when they came here it was, yeah, it's much too important. Much more important to me than it should be. And I get much too upset when they lose. My wife knows that 24 hours I get 24 hours after a loss and then it's back to normal.

Speaker 4 (36:10):

Other than the Superbowl victory. And maybe I'm hosting the super bowl, do you have a favorite cultural memory?

Speaker 2 (36:17):

Well, I would say the, the, uh, probably the favorite call to memory was the year that we hosted Kansas city in the playoffs. And, uh, I don't know, we were down 21 to, uh, we're down like three touchdowns and, and Andrew luck threw an interception to begin the third quarter. And I said, honey, if we don't score here, I'm, we're leaving. And uh, and by God we scored an end. Just that comeback victory as far as individual memory, I was, that was an amazing, amazing game.

Gary (36:49):

Staying on the sports theme, you mentioned softball, um, at Scecina, you coach, at Scecina, but of course you coached, uh, our team as well, our girl's softball program for 17 years. Do you have a favorite memory of a softball program?

Gerard (37:04):

Uh, well, I, the, the two years I think we won state, um, have to rank up there really high. I mean it, the 1999 team, we actually had a losing record going into sectionals, um, and ended up clicking in the right time and, and going all the way. And then, Mmm, in 2001 we were, we had a much rally, a much better team in 2001, not as much of a dominant picture but better team. And uh, to see that group meet Mount Vernon was the, was the big, uh, competitive in and to beat them, nobody expected. I mean we were under, I mean we were not expected to win either time. So

Gary (37:47):

Today, well not today cause we're not playing this spring, unfortunately. You are the voice, the uh, PA voice of the softball program. Um, you've also done the PA for girls volleyball,

Gerard (37:59):

girls volleyball and girl's basketball. Yeah,

Gary (38:00):

basketball. Um, we just moved into a new gym, uh, several months ago at Christmas time and I've asked several of our guests if they had a favorite wood shed moment or game.

Gerard (38:14):

Wow. Woodshed moment. That's a tough one. That's a tough one. Gary. Uh, I think, I think the favorite woodshed moment wasn't a game. It was early on. I don't remember the year when, uh, at least first experience as a football team winning state and everybody gathering back, gathering in the gym, the woodshed and, uh, just and I mean, it was packed. You couldn't even move one way or the other. Mmm. Packed like sardines, but, you know, and of course the football players came on the stage. And as far as the woodshed moment, I was just, yeah, that was cool.

Gary (38:58):

That's big. That's a big one. Uh, w we talked about Appalachia and your 50 plus trips to the mountains and, and what that's meant, what that's meant, not only to our school, but to our kids that have been on that trip. But there's one thing that you've been involved in I assume, all 28 years and that senior retreat.

Gerard (39:18):

Oh yeah. Yeah. I get choked up just thinking about it. You know, I, I, and I, and I, I joke with the students that when we introduce ourselves, I think I've done as many retreats as I am, been years on this earth. And I think that's about right. Um, but I just to see the transformation, Mmm. From Tuesday night to Friday night to see the kids open up and trust the process to see how it affects their faith and, and, and, and, uh, I'm, uh, in many ways a selfish person and that I need it myself. I need my faith to be strengthened when I, and this of all the things probably as far as my personal faith is concerned, that helped me grow and, and revitalize it as a senior retreat program. That just, it's amazing. It's amazing.

Gary (40:14):

We, um, have been celebrating our 50th year anniversary this year. The retreat program started in 1978. Yes. They're the founding fathers of retreat that came from Scecina. And so did you have any tie in with that at all at Scecina?

Gerard (40:35):

I did, you know, I didn't, when I was a senior at Scecina, it was there and, uh, I did not go is about 50% of the kids went. I did not go myself, but I think my second year a teacher, uh, I observed, and at the end of the week as like, I remember asking one of the other adults who had been a long time, I said, well, surely this is unique, their experience, unless they got out of it. I said, surely this doesn't happen every time. And as far as the development of the kids and how strong it is to their faith, and, and they, and they, and he goes, Oh, Gerard this is, you'd be shocked. It happens just about every time. And so I worked the following six years there and then I've worked ever since I came to Roncalli. Yeah. [inaudible] and he was right. I mean, every retreat experience is different. Even though I know what the talks are going to be and I know the activities, each of the seniors have their own experience retreat. Mmm. And their own relationship with God that's real, hopefully restored on that. So, uh, it's just an amazing, it's a blessing. It really is. Gary. It's a blessing for me too. Worked all these,

Gary (41:43):

Here's my side of things. Um, and I'm not alone. I, I'm, I'm sure once people hear this, they'll, they'll agree. But, uh, we're in the second generations now. I went my senior year, all three of my kids have gone and the whole experience without giving a whole lot of information out, I mean it's pretty much the same and it's not, you know, Scecina does it as it, we do it. Cathedral does. I'm sure all all the Catholic schools do it to some extent. And I'm not saying ours is better than anybody's, cause I don't, I don't, I don't know. But what a, what a gift to be able to offer these experiences to our kids. And even though you know, they're going to go on and they're going to do other things, they're always going to have that memory. And I still, I mean, it's been 40 years for me, almost 39 years and I still remember that like it was yesterday

Gerard (42:47):

And I regret not having done it now. It wasn't that, it wasn't as much of a thing. I mean it was, but it wasn't not expected. But I mean, we have 85 to 90% of our kids go every year.

Gary (42:59):

Which is crazy. That's, yeah, that's an amazing, uh, amazing number. We're going to take our last break and we're going to be back in just a minute with Gerard Striby on the Rebel Five podcast.

Break (43:12):

Rebel Five is sponsored by Steve's flowers and gifts for the best and freshest flowers in Indianapolis and surrounding areas. Steve's flowers and gifts have exactly what you're looking for for your next special occasion called Steve's flowers at (800) 742-9359.

Gary (43:43):

We're back on the Rebel Five podcast with Gerard Striby. Gerard, thanks for being here today. Uh, very unusual circumstances, but as we've heard over and over again, the new normal and who knows how long this will be and hopefully we'll be back in the fall. And can you imagine not having football next fall? I don't want to think about it. I know. I don't need that. That would just be, that would be awful. So, uh, we just talked about retreat in the last segment and it's been about 10 years since I was on retreat with you. And, uh, without giving out a whole lot of information, you talk about your brother Timmy on your retreat talk. And I know your dad is a huge w w uh, he's been passed now about seven years. Uh, you know, he took care of Timmy for a long, long, long time. So I wanted to give you an opportunity to just talk about those two guys and, and what they meant to you and how it related. to retreat.

Gerard (44:49):

Sure. Yeah. Thanks for asking. You know, without giving it away, I, when I brought Timmy into retreat, uh, when he's still here live, live here in Indianapolis. Um, I T I told the students that seniors that he was the biggest example of love in my life. Mmm. Because of his ability for unconditional love. Mmm. You know, my, my brother Timmy, he, he's, he is, he's still alive. He's in Colorado.

Gerard (45:18):

He's 63. Uh, but he's from birth, been blind, severely mentally handicap, um, cannot speak, cannot walk, can't feed himself. So it's 24, seven care. He has probably the mentality of about a one-year-old as far as understanding of things. But you know, when I was as grown up, my parents always, my parents were given an opportunity to put Timmy in a home back in the 50s. Uh, and they were probably not as the best places in the world at that time in my parents would not have anything on it. Said, Nope, we're going to, we're going to take them home. And my mom primarily took care of Timmy, uh, and these are changing and diapers and feedings and carrying him around for years and years and years. When my dad retired, my dad told my mom, okay, my gift to you is retirement. I'm going to take care of Timmy now.

Gerard (46:14):

And so he did it for another, my gosh, 32 years after he retired, before he passed away. You know why my dad always said Timmy was a blessing in disguise. And um, and it absolutely is true. And I, and I didn't understand it as much growing up, but I sure I understood it when I became an more as a, you know, high school and up start appreciate how much Timmy meant means to, uh, when I, when I would bring him to retreat and I would give the kids an opportunity to, uh, embrace him if they wanted to at the end of the talk. And I can't tell you how many kids tears of joy and how many kids unsolicited came out to me and said, I've never felt God's presence so much in my life. Then when I hugged Timmy, when my dad passed away, uh, I selfishly wanted to keep Timmy here for my own, for my own selfish reasons, but also

Gerard (47:21):

for the kids on retreat. And, um, but you know, my, my wife and I would have had to hire somebody to come in there and I mean, it wouldn't have worked out logistically when my brother and co Colorado, they can do it 24, seven. Yeah. So they're both retired. They can do it 24, seven. So it was a no brainer to have them get her on Colorado. Just the unconditional love that I learned from Timmy, but also how much my mom and dad's sacrificed and what they showed us about love and about family, about family. Um, that just blows me away. That's where I learned those lessons, how important family is. And uh, the love that my brother Timmy is still shows to anybody. Really. It's unconditional. He doesn't know any different.

Gary (48:14):

Well, as I mentioned, it's been a number of years since I witnessed that and I still vividly remember it and I appreciate you sharing that with us. Just another gift that you have given to our kids over the years. So, uh, one of the thank you for that. Um, service learning has been a huge part. As we've talked a couple, uh, talked about a lot. Uh, you are the

recipient of Roncalli's highest award, the Saint John the 23rd award for the service to youth and, and living a life that represents that. What did that mean to you when you were presented that award?

Gerard (48:51):

I would say, Gary, that it was the most humbling but the most, uh, touching Mmm. Experience of, of my time at Roncalli as far as individual, I mean for myself. Mmm. It just, uh, learning more about John the 23rd when I went on the pilgrimage. Mmm. And what that award represents, um, knowing how important it is to seniors when they, when they, some of them receive that award, the senior version of that award. And knowing that the people that have that received that award most deservedly before I did. And since then, I mean, I'm just humbled and so blessed to have, have received that. And, and, and I, I feel like it is largely due I except that kind of on the, on, on, on the shoulders of the students because I love Roncalli. I loved the kids. I loved the students. And some of them go kicking and screaming into service hours. I realized that that kind of hearts that our kids have and the kind of goodness they have, I've seen on retreat, I've seen it in service projects. I've seen in mission trips I've seen at St. Vincent DePaul, I've seen it everywhere. I go with the kids on on service trips that that reception of that award is on the backs of the kids. To me it's just, it wouldn't have happened without the kids.

Gary (50:16):

When I was thinking about interviewing today, I was thinking, okay, how can I compare Gerard to something people will understand? And I've worked with you now for or 14 years. Um, and I, in my mind I was thinking, you know, you're like the, you're like the sixth man coming off the bench, you know? Well, well, no, no. So you know, you're one of the guys, you score eight points a game, you'll pull down five rebounds and you go three for four from the line. And so that's every game and you're not the leading scorer, but you're solid as a rock. And, and as I'm interviewing you today, I'm thinking, wait, I'm way off here because you're so much more than that. The number of kids that you have influenced in such a positive way? It is really even more than I even thought about until talking to you? I mean with, um, senior retreat and all the service things that we do, um, people like you, you make Roncalli a pretty incredible place.

Gerard (51:29):

You're very kind to say that.

Gary (51:31):

So I want to thank you. All right. We're going to go into the Rebel 5iv3 questions. I'm ready to do it. With that in another life, what would you want to be or do? Wow.

Gerard (51:42):

You know, I, I tell ya, I, I don't regret in any way, shape or form. Mmm. Choosing teaching as in my career. I love it. Now obviously I love it. I've been doing it so long, but obviously getting married later in life to my beautiful wife, Kim and what she's brought to my life. As much as I love all that, there's a part of me, I would have loved being a priest too. So in a different life, I'd probably, I'd like to be a priest.

Gary (52:09):

I can see that you mentioned the pilgrimage, um, just a few minutes ago. Um, and I was very fortunate to take my wife and I on that pilgrimage a couple, two years ago. Um, and I'm tying this into my next question. Um, favorite time or place when you run into a Roncalli person? When we were in Rome, we ran into some Roncalli people in St. Peter's square, uh, or Plaza. And so I was just thinking of, uh, you had gone on the pilgrimage as well, but, uh, and that may not apply, but favorite time or place when you have run into a Roncalli person?

Gerard (52:52):

Wow. Uh, well actually we, we, we bumped into Fr., Uh, Tony Hollowell and Rome ourselves. Mmm. On that same pilgrimage. Other than that though, it's very general, but I, I, and it, I just love it when I connect with kids. No kid, I call them kids, come back and work and retreats. Mmm. When I, when they'll come back and, and, and work the mission trips.

Gerard (53:26):

Mmm. Oh my gosh. The number of former students who are now staff members at Roncalli. It's kind of scary, but I mean I just love to see that's very general, but love to see them as adults and where they've gone with their lives.

Gary (53:43):

Well again, that when they come back to teach, that says a lot. [inaudible] yeah, exactly. What do you wish you could tell your younger self?

Gerard (53:52):

I would say uh, be confident in yourself earlier than what I did cause I didn't really happen until college and um, and don't sweat the small stuff. I like that.

Gary (54:05):

One last question. Gerard. Life advice. You got any life advice to throw out at us?

Gerard (54:12):

I will say only because I need it. I need it the most and I needed during these trying times. Two is, it is a, don't forget to pray and don't forget to trust in God. Mmm. Because really all the things we've talked about today during my life, I can't, I can't even begin to tell you that we don't have enough time for now the two hour segment on this, but how much God has led me to where I am today and I truly believe that God has done that.

Gerard (54:44):

All the things that I've done and learned, uh, that the source of that is God and my faith in God and I, and faith and God is always not as strong as it should be. But yeah, keep the faith and pray. Yeah.

Gary (54:59):

Well, I want to thank you for being here with us today. And, um, I just think back to that campfire, probably out in the Rocky mountains sometime somewhere in Colorado when you were talking to Joe and Joe wanted to start a service learning program and he thought enough of you to the welcome you aboard. And so for the 28 years, uh, that you've been a teacher at Roncalli, we thank you, um, far reaching with some of our, uh, the best programs that we have and you have been a star of those. And I know you don't think that and you would never say that about yourself, but it's true. And, uh, so thanks for being here and we'll get through this. We'll get through this E-learning and get, get us back at 3300 Prague road, like where we, uh, where we need to be. And hopefully that's sooner than later. So take care and thanks for everything you have. Appreciate it. Appreciate it.

Gary (56:03):

I'm Gary Armbruster and thanks for joining us today for this episode of the Rebel Five podcasts. To find out more information about the podcast, please visit 50.roncalli.org/podcast.php. Again, thanks so much for joining us today and until next time, we'll fight ahead.