

Dan Christian
Excerpts from June 13, 2018 Oral History
Interview by Mac Barrett '67

Realizing that Gilman was his professional home

Barrett: When did you realize that Gilman was your professional home?

Christian: I think it was probably the year after I was the varsity coach and getting to teach Dante and C. S. Lewis and Dickens and things that were just amazing to me--when I stopped being the varsity basketball coach and then went back and was the freshman coach for another six seasons before I became the JV coach for 20, that we had a--I still have a picture of the team the year--the freshman team down in my office--[unclear] Dean, who just graduated this year, his dad is in that picture. Brad Lebow's picture is in there; Brooks is going to be a junior now. His dad's in that picture. And I'm pretty sure Joe Miller is in that picture. I don't know if Jack Cavanaugh is in that picture or not. He might be. Scott Corlander, I think, is in that picture. Clark White is in that picture. And that was the first team I had afterwards. And then the next year, we had Matthew Eastwick on the freshman team. And he goes off and starts at--

Barrett: Princeton.

Christian: At Princeton and started every game in the national tournament his freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior year.

Barrett: For Pete Carril

Christian: For Pete Carril. In fact, he started in the game where they--his freshman year is when they almost beat Georgetown.

Barrett: Lost 50 to 49.

Christian: Correct. And I'm pretty sure that kid got fouled, because they had a shot at the end and he got-- But it was amazing. I mean, it would have been the upset of upsets before this one with UMBC and Virginia. But the next year, which would have been maybe '84-'85? I was coaching the freshman team again, and this was after the team--the Eastwick year, that was a freshman team that was 15 and 2 playing against all those Catholic schools. Back then when all the best freshmen stayed on the freshman teams.

So, in our first game against Mount St Joe, in the old gym, I think it was '84-'85, a friend of mine, Debbie, had come to the game. She wanted to watch. And that year was completely different. We started a team where all the starters, not one of the kids had ever started an interscholastic high school basketball game. So we're playing Mount St Joe, and with about three minutes left in the fourth quarter, we're losing something like 85 to 16 or something, just some amazing number that's almost impossible to imagine. I called time out and we're doing what we always do, telling the kids, "Hang in there; we're going to keep getting better." So, the kid who is now the head of a school in Connecticut, or maybe it's Ohio? I can't remember. Charlie Khan, who was on the freshman team the year before, did not play very much, really. He was really a good kid. I have a picture of him, actually, down in my office still, of that year. And he is sitting next to my friend Debbie, and he didn't know who she was. He's kind of a chatterbox, he's kind of chatty. And he said--this is the nicest thing that I could have ever imagined as a schoolteacher and a coach that anybody would have ever said. He said, "Hello, my name's Charlie." And he said, "Did you hear Mr. Christian during that time out?" She said, "Yes." And she didn't know anything about basketball, so she didn't know. She just came because she wanted to see a game. He said, "I played on the team last year and we were really good and I

barely got to play, but what I remember the most about that season was not how many games we won, but that Mr. Christian's attitude towards us was the same whether we were winning or losing." And so when she told me that after the game, I thought, okay, if I'm lucky enough as a schoolteacher to have one kid come away from having spent some time with me and he takes that away, then I feel like I've been blessed times 1000. So it was then that I think, now that I think back--I never really thought about that--that kind of crystalized my--

Barrett: Maybe I'm in the right place.

Christian: Yeah, maybe it's a good place maybe to try to grow, to grow up. Yeah, maybe I'm in the right place.