

Noah Brooks

Interview with Patrick

Transcription

Noah: My name is Noah Brook. Today is October 26, and I'm interviewing Patrick Dunlea. The resume for the Colby College Korean Oral History Project. Patrick, do you agree to grant the college permission to archive and publish this interview for educational purposes?

Patrick: I do.

Noah: Awesome. First and foremost, thank you for being here. Patrick, how are you doing today?

Patrick: Yes, I'm doing pretty well. I'm currently studying abroad in Barcelona, which is been just a really great experience. But I'm coming off a little... a little issue with an appendix surgery this past weekend. So I'm just glad I could be here.

Noah: Definitely. Happy to have you here. Can you please introduce yourself? Tell us a little bit about yourself?

Patrick: Yes. So my name is Patrick Dunlea as Noah sort of previously stated and I guess that this interview for is for a Korean history class, so I should sort of preface that I was adopted from Seoul, South Korea, when I was just a few months old. I moved directly to the United States, but specifically, the Midwest and just right outside Chicago. I am about an hour west of the city. I grew up in a really small town called Wayne and I lived with both my parents and older brother and an older sister, all four of which were completely Caucasian. And from then on, I did my schooling throughout Illinois until I ended up going to a boarding school, my sophomore year of high school. It was in Connecticut called the Hotchkiss School. And then from there on, I ended up meeting Noah where I am today, at Colby College. So yes.

Noah: Patrick, what was your childhood like in living in Chicago?

Patrick: Yes, that's really interesting question, especially because of my sort of background as an adopted child. And this is exactly what I sort of wrote my common app college application about was growing up as an Asian child within a Caucasian family. And one of the things that I sort of talked about was that I tended to do or like dislike things that may not be typical of a quote, unquote, "stereotypical," Asian childhood. I remember, growing up, my parents made me play piano. And I know that's something that's super common. Especially with a lot of Asian children, and I hated it. And I remember every day, my friends would want to come over and play football in the backyard or do some sort of activity outside and I'd be like, "No, I can't. I have piano lessons." And it's something that I despised my whole life. I made a deal with my parents that if I made the National Lacrosse team for my own my levels in eighth grade, that I'd be able to quit [piano]. And fortunately enough, I worked hard and was able to do so. And yeah, so just sort of going back to the main point at hand, I'd always grown up doing things that were

maybe a-typical of, a stereotypically Asian family household. I played lacrosse, I went to a private Catholic school as one of the only Asian kids there went to boarding school, that was just something that maybe not typical of a... a stereotype that you might think of firsthand, but I didn't do it because I resented that I was Asian. I did it because I grew up with an environment that was primary or completely Caucasian. And I did things that I was surrounded by, and they became my, interests and I don't think it has anything to do with the race, but rather the environment that I sort of grew up in. So I sort of tended to do things that were more typical of the sort of Caucasian family that I lived in. I played sports, like football, lacrosse, etc. And I went to, private school growing up and yes, and I think that just tends more towards environment rather than race.

Noah: Definitely. Can you tell me a little bit about your family?

Patrick: Yes, I can tell you a little bit about my family. So I will start off with my parents. My dad was... is Irish. He also grew up sort of, in the Western Suburbs of Illinois. He... like I said, grew up in Illinois. He goes to Ireland every so often we go see his family, which mainly is there except for his mother who lives now... moved to the western suburbs as well. He ended up going to trade school, and he worked in a lot of different sales jobs growing up and then sort of went his own route and started his own small business. And he does third party asset verification, which you could ask me what that is, and I have no clue. So I can't really help you out there. And then my mom is Greek and she grew up in a very Greek household and we have a lot of... a lot of Greek family and they're very loud. There's always a lot going on. And she went to the University of Illinois for school and then ended up doing her master's degree at Northern NIU Northern Illinois University. And now she's a fourth-grade teacher in the suburbs of Illinois as well. And I think she's getting a little bit tired of it. She's talking about how kids nowadays have just changed so much... from when she began teaching. She's like, "it's become a lot." I don't know if it's technology, or just the way parenting has sort of gone in, but sort of that's her story. And then going to my other brother, his name's James. He is just about to turn 29 this month. So he's getting old, he's getting a little old there. He's almost touching that 30 mark. But he's the genius of the family. He didn't..., We don't have a lot of the same interests, like he didn't love sports growing up. He just loves books and reading in school. And he ended up going to Cornell University for his undergrad. He did that there. He went to Northwestern for two years to complete his master's in law. And then he did three more years at Columbia University in New York City, for his PhD in psychology, and now... he currently works as sort of a, statistician or something or consultant - again, I don't really know - for CVS and he loves his job, and he gets to work from home. So it seems sort of ideal.

And then my sister, she had a kind of a difficult childhood growing up, because she grew up, she's hard of hearing. So she has hearing aids and obviously, growing up with disabilities in... for anyone is pretty tough. And I've always been proud of her despite everything she's sort of overcome. And she went to school at a local college in Illinois called Elmhurst College. This is another sort of small college in the Western Suburbs of Illinois. And she currently just started her new job this past year as a preschool teacher at a hard of hearing school. So she's doing what she enjoys. And she's helping those in the same community, which is awesome.

Noah: Awesome. That's great. How would you say your family has shaped your identity?

Patrick: Yes, sort of going back to one of the earlier questions that you asked me. I think if someone met me, they wouldn't think like... If they... Disregarding appearance, like if you were just to go off of sort of all the different experiences that I've had throughout my life, they would not, if you ask them, draw an image of the person who thought of the zero possibility that they would ever draw, I think an Asian person. I think they would probably draw, I don't know, your average looking Caucasian, lacrosse player or frat guy, or someone that enjoys to have a good time or something from the East Coast. But I think I don't... I don't really... Sorry, I'm kind of getting sidetracked here. But, I think this just goes towards growing up in that sort of, white environment, like I said. I really don't put any of this towards race, especially because of how I really stressed the importance of environment and sort of the environment you grew up in has such an influence on you just like, lacrosse, piano, not loving that - just like all the interests I've had growing up. Yes, I just tended to have interests that weren't of norm, I guess to say. I don't really know if that's the right word to use or not, of what maybe people would think that I would be interested in and that's totally fine by me, I'm just going to keep going with what I'm doing. I don't care if I'm a minority group and whatever. Like lacrosse, I know, there's not a lot of Asian kids there. At least at the schools I went to, as long as you're sociable, and you try to be a good person, I think you'll get along with everyone. And I think that my family has sort of swayed my identity and I've started to grow interests that they would have, rather than what maybe someone would think I should have.

Noah: When did you learn you were adopted? Or did you always know?

Patrick: You know, I couldn't pick out a certain exact time. Obviously, throughout my life, you kind of understand that you are adopted. And I think one of the sort of signifying moments to me was... I don't know what grade it was. I think it was either first or second grade. But seeing the Christmas card from that year and sort of noticing that maybe you look a little bit different than the rest of your family. It was definitely a moment to me like, "wow, this is something unique and I don't... It doesn't feel right, just when you're looking at the picture. But, it's your family, you love them, and they're always gonna love you back. I think that was just a really big hit to me, was [recognizing] I don't look like the people that surround me, but this is my family.

Noah: Do you know anything about your birth family? Or have you ever been interested in learning more?

Patrick: So interesting enough, my biological sister was adopted to a family in another suburb of Illinois. It's probably an hour away from me. I used to spend a lot of time with her. We would probably meet up every few months or so throughout the year growing up when I was younger. But other than that, I have not seen her in several years, probably since 2012 or 2015. And then, I do not know anything about my biological parents now.

Noah: Did your adoptive parents raise you with any exposure to Korean culture or language? And how did this presence or absence shape your relationship to that heritage?

Patrick: Yes, of course. No, they did not. They just raised me like I was one of my older brother and my older sister. They raised me the complete same. I think the only difference they have given me is maybe being the youngest child, I had a little bit more leeway with things... That's totally true. But no, I was not exposed to any sort of Korean culture. I know, whenever I go to restaurants or something, people will try to speak to me in a native language. And I'll just be like, "I'm sorry. I am the furthest thing away from being able to speak this language," and I couldn't tell you a single thing about Korean culture besides Korean barbecue, which could be... Maybe an American spin-off on a Korean food, and I would have zero clue. But yes.

Noah: I can definitely relate to the leeway of being the youngest child. Do you feel as though you're part of an adoptee community? How or how not?

Patrick: No, I don't think so. I'm trying to think of other people that I know are adopted. I can only really put together one person who is from my high school. He's actually Caucasian. He was from... He was born in Russia. I honestly didn't even know he was adopted until my parents told me... I think because they talked to his parents. But I really don't see a community of adopted kids out there. I've always just sort of surrounded myself by the people that I'd always like to spend my most time with, and they tended to be white. I think the majority, like ninety nine percent of my friends are white. I think that just comes down to like, what my interests were and how I grew up.

Noah: Transitioning a little bit. When did you start playing lacrosse?

Patrick: Yes, so I started playing lacrosse really early in my life. Probably [in] first or second grade. It was brand new in Illinois. So it's still like, very, very, basic level. Not anyone in the state was super advanced, unless you were from the North Shore, which [lacrosse] sort of went to Illinois a little bit earlier. But yeah, I would say first or second grade, just because my brother in highschool began playing, and I sort of started from there as well.

Noah: What was it like moving from a city like Chicago to studying at a preparatory school?

Patrick: Yeah, I think that was the biggest culture shock of my life was moving. I think the Midwest in general to the East Coast is a huge jump. And I think the one thing I would put that towards, especially going to a boarding school like Hotchkiss, was just the cutthroat nature and sort of the competitiveness that people had there. I'd always just been... I feel your typical Midwest kid, pretty laid back. I wasn't super serious about my schoolwork. Sorry to say that to you if you're listening. But I was never in the library for 12 hours a day. I was never reading books for enjoyment as a kid. I liked playing sports. But that was the biggest thing to me was I remember going there. And people were just coming at each other for school. And I'm just... I was so confused. This has never been a big competition to me... Trying to get into college. I remember college sweatshirt day on my senior year was the most elitist thing that I'd ever seen in my entire life. But deservedly so, everyone... They worked as hard as I'd ever seen anyone work before. But just seeing that around you was just a really big shock. And that was one of the

big highlights of my time at boarding school. Trying to think of what else... Yes, I think it really tended towards the expectations of the people in the East Coast and where they wanted to be, as well as me being from the Midwest and then going to the east coast. So that was the biggest shock for me for going to a boarding school [to] a prep school.

Noah: What do you remember about playing for Hotchkiss?

Patrick: So obviously, my junior season didn't happen because of COVID but from my sophomore to senior year. It was very, very different. When I got there my sophomore year, I wouldn't even consider us a lacrosse team. I would consider it a bunch of football players that played lacrosse. And that really did constitute to our losing record that year. The culture just wasn't great. People were just there to... You had to play two sports. So people just played two sports, they played football and lacrosse, or hockey and lacrosse. But I don't think anyone's really main sport was lacrosse. They were coming from elsewhere and just playing lacrosse as well. But I just remember it not being a very strong or bought in culture. It was like everyone liked each other, but they were just not bought in for the sport. They were bought into being with the team. And that did show on the field. And then going into sort of my senior year, we had a new coach, or going into my sophomore year. And he really changed things around and brought in a bunch of new recruits. I ended up being a captain for my senior year, and we had a really great season. We had a really great group of guys and things were just a complete one-eighty of where it was before. It was just [a] completely different culture. Everyone was sort of bought in, and they were doing stuff in their own time. And they were glad to be doing it. Which is something that you'd like to see... People enjoying actually playing lacrosse. And yeah, we had a really great year, senior year, even though it was abbreviated due to COVID still ongoing. But yes, I think lacrosse was the highlight of my time at boarding school just because of how strict it was. We'd have to be in our rooms at 10pm during the week for check in and on the weekends at 11. We didn't have free time. You can have people in your room, you'd have to hang out in public spaces. So sort of being able to play sports was kind of a release for me. And that's something I was really glad I had at Hotchkiss.

Noah: And I'm sure that played into your decision, in part, to come to Colby. Can you tell me about your path to Colby?

Patrick: Yes, my path to Colby started fairly early in my lacrosse career. I remember maybe freshman year going to a camp at Dartmouth and the first person I met there and my coach or my team at Dartmouth was Casey Dowd, who was an assistant coach at the Colby lacrosse team. And he had just been someone that I sort of looked up to for a while just because I went to that camp every year. I'm going to be completely honest, I wanted to go to Dartmouth my whole time. Growing up, I wanted to go there. So I would go to the camp every year. But Casey Dowd was always there. He would always reach out to me because he recognized me every time and he's always super friendly and was obviously a great coach as well. So I remember talking to him throughout my whole high school career. That connection was always there. I'd always been hesitant of going to a NESCAC school just because I really thought people at Hotchkiss looked down upon it. I remember the day I told everyone that I committed to Colby.

First off, they were surprised to get into college just because of how much they were just in the library doing their own thing, but it also seemed like I remember hearing from a bunch of different people that told me was their backup school. If they didn't have any other options. I was like, "okay, I really don't care what you..." I did care at the time. But in the back my head I was like "so be it." This is a great school and this is a great opportunity for me but... I don't know why, but I didn't want to go to Maine. So I always had [in] the back of my mind that even though I sort of narrowed it down to be going to the NESCAC schools I was, I wanted to go to Middlebury, or Williams. But in the end, I honestly didn't have the grades for them and the other one didn't end up working out. [I] ended up coming to Colby and I was a little hesitant at first, but it ended up being the best decision of my life for not going to the other two schools. I'm glad it worked out that way too.

Noah: Absolutely. Did identity play any role in that decision?

Patrick: I'm trying to sort of think of how I could differentiate the schools I wanted to go to versus I think... I think being sort of following my brother, who was so successful in school, made me sort of want to go to an Ivy League school. I don't think I actually had any desire to actually do it, versus just the name. I've known a lot of things that I do, it's like, if you don't totally have one-hundred percent love for it, it's just, do the... Or try to be a part of the best thing that you can. And I think that sort of just following in his footsteps made me sort of want to just say I was a part of an Ivy League school, but in reality, I wouldn't... I don't think I would have enjoyed my time there. Like I said, I'm more... I'm not saying that Colby is more laid back than Dartmouth. But I think that the people are, I don't think there isn't... intens[ity] about everything and every single day of their life. I've been able to sort of have a lot of friends that maybe aren't in the library twenty-four seven. And I really am thankful for that as well. I'm probably putting myself down right now, but I promise I try in school. I try to do my best, but I just can't have that all day studying grind. But yes, I think the only thing towards identities is looking at my family and seeing how my family has been... Or my brother has been so successful and just wanting to be in his footsteps. But I did what I could to the best of my ability and I'm still one hundred percent grateful for where I am today at Colby.

Noah: Absolutely. In terms of heritage, would you say you've experienced any obstacles at Colby?

Patrick: As in just like being an Asian student?

Noah: As a Korean American.

Patrick: Not really, I don't. I feel most people would say yes. But I think I have just, am a person who surrounds myself with people I know, wouldn't ever do that. Or say anything that I've never had these issues. I am very adamant about who I hang out with... Strong willed about the people that I surround myself with. And I know it's bad to say, but I feel like if I don't like someone, they probably will know it from me that I don't like them or I just will just not have myself around them. And I think for that reason, just my own. I'm trying to think of the word. Sort

of, I don't know, just that aspect of me and that characteristic of myself has allowed me to sort of surround myself with people that wouldn't ever say or cause any obstacles for me while I've sort of had my time at Colby.

Noah: Absolutely. Patrick Lacrosse has a deep history of exclusion dating back to its origin within indigenous communities. Have you experienced any instances of racism during your time playing the sport?

Patrick: Nothing that... I have sort of... that was intentionally racist I don't think. I think people might have doubted certain abilities in the sport, maybe skill. If you're looking at me at first glance, I'm usually one of the shorter guys on the team, as an Asian kid that maybe doesn't look like he'd be very good at the sport. So I think right off the bat, maybe someone would doubt my abilities on the field and try to keep the ball away from me or something, or just did not include me in the play at that time or that ongoing time, but I've never really experienced anything to where it was directly racial slurs or harmful towards myself rather than... I'm trying to... perceived notions of an individual. If someone were to be on the field, they'd be like, "okay, he's probably not very good. So I'm just not going to give him the ball." But yes, you just got to keep proving yourself and you'll get to, you'll get to where you need to be. And you just got to show everyone. I just feel I've had to prove myself twice versus what everyone else would have to do on the field.

Noah: In those moments, can you describe how that feels?

Patrick: Obviously, it sucks. It's not ideal. You don't sort of want people to think of you like that. But you know, it honestly just lets you prove yourself and prove what you're worth. And that's fine by me. If you're going to look down on me at first, so be it. But you are just going to have to reap the consequences. So just gotta keep going.

Noah: Definitely, how would you say you respond or navigate those particular situations.

Patrick: I think I get flustered pretty easily, which is one of my flaws. I think if a coach comes down on me yelling, or if something doesn't go my way I do tend to become a little flustered. So my biggest thing is... I think there's two things. One is obviously saying holding your composure and sort of not retaliating or doing something of that nature. And I think the second thing is sort of being overly prepared going into certain situations just to have the confidence to where you're able to respond accordingly. And when I find myself to be prepared for situations, I find that I succeed a lot more than if I'm just to go into there and sort of just have to perform. So beforehand, I always try to just get... Sort of talk to myself and say that things happen. This is how you have to deal with it. And just having been confident on the field is one hundred and ten percent what keeps me together. And what makes me the player I am and what allows me to sort of keep my composure in those situations. So I would definitely sort of cater that towards being prepared, confident, and as well as being able to stay composed.

Noah: Do you think others share those experiences of adversity based on identity or heritage and in the sport of lacrosse?

Patrick: Yes I think that I think there's two main minority groups that you're starting to see in lacrosse right now. And I, I think there are a good amount of Asian kids that are starting to play lacrosse and sort of make a name for themselves in the sport. There's two twin brothers on records who are fairly, [or] very good actually, that are Asian and that's really great to see for the community as well as then the... I feel there's a large African American population as well playing the sport of lacrosse now, which is awesome to see. But I think the, stereotypes where those two... Asian versus African American on two very, different ends of the spectrum to where maybe Asian people might be looked down upon, versus an African American player who people have some sort of prejudice against, or might assume that they have some sort of... I don't know, I feel there's just so many stereotypes about African American sports players just having that sort of athletic edge on people. Which is obviously uncalled for, and not... I don't really know where I'm going with this. But if you're not white, and you play lacrosse, you're going to have some sort of prejudice against you in some sort of realm of the sport and you just have to put your head down and keep going.

Noah: Do you think the emergence of more minority players succeeding at high levels has shed light on the fact that anybody can play the sport and maybe given confidence to younger players?

Patrick: No one hundred percent. I think it's great for the game and I think it's great for the growth of the sport as well, and I think it translates. You see these minority players in college lacrosse nowadays and even in the professional league, which is beginning to grow as well. And then you see the growth of the sport in total and it totally correlates. [For example,] lacrosse just announced that it's going to be in the Olympics in 2028. I believe for a sixes version of lacrosse, which is amazing. So you're gonna see multiple countries out there, and it's only going to shed more light on the sport and then I'm really glad for that as well.

Noah: I think you have touched on it a little bit, but have you observed efforts within the lacrosse community to address issues of racism and promote inclusivity?

Patrick: I honestly feel lacrosse is such a new game that race is just not... it's not something that they try to... Actually I take that back. The US team goes to Japan every year to sort of try to bridge the game out there because of how popular it has become. So I lied. I totally lied. I do see ways that the lacrosse community is sort of going out of their way to sort of help these minority group. And i even... There's a program in the city of Chicago called owls lacrosse which I ended up doing a donation bin for them with my lacrosse club and they help inner city youth which are primarily African American kids to be able to play the game of lacrosse by donating equipment, pads, etc. And just having these different programs is vital for growing the game and I think they have actually done a great job from my perspective of sort of reaching out to different communities to play the sport of lacrosse. I don't know why I started off saying they didn't because it's not, it's not true.

Noah: It's okay. It can definitely feel like it is not at the forefront of priorities with an emerging game. Are there other players at Colby, or throughout your time playing the sport that share your heritage?

Patrick: I am trying to think. One of my best friends at Colby, Isaac Kante, is an African American lacrosse player at our school. He is someone that sort of comes to mind. I am trying to think of... I have met an Asian lacrosse player. What's his name? Lily Burnett's boyfriend? He graduated the year before I got there... The year above Rick. I had never personally had anyone that was African American or Asian on my team until Colby. They had been completely Caucasian, which is pretty unbelievable actually. But not surprising. But yes, I think the only person I can think of right now is Isaac, and then Cade Nagahama who was a senior last year.

Noah: Can you describe that experience?

Patrick: Like, playing with people of similar sort of backgrounds?

Noah: Yes, or the absence of it.

Patrick: Oh got you. I think I honestly don't think it's different. And I think that is because once you get to a certain level in the sport, you either have it or you don't. You are going to play no matter what you look like. The coach isn't going to choose you maybe racially. Obviously, size does matter. And Asian people tend to be shorter or smaller individuals. And I have seen that before, but definitely nothing with race. Everyone I have sort of played with has been completely fair and not had racial prejudice against someone playing a game of lacrosse.

Noah: Did it feel different playing with people who did share a similar identity to you, or would you say it is more or less the same?

Patrick: I think... no it definitely feels different. I think it is a little more comforting sort of looking around and seeing someone who has sort of gone through the things that you have. And I think that is also good for the team because it shows that these minorities are allowed to play the sport and we have obviously made it where we are today so we have been successful. I think that promotes a great team culture and you won't have those instances where maybe you have a racial issue on the team. Which I know happened at some other NESCAC schools within the past few years as well, which is great for us.

Noah: Definitely. What advice would you give to players sharing that sentiment?

Patrick: As in, advice towards players in my situation?

Noah: Yes, players who have not experienced diversity on their teams or feel as though they are isolated because of their ethnicity or race.

Patrick: Got it. I think in any sport, you just kind of, you just have to prove yourself no matter what. If you have to prove yourself twice over, like I previously said, just because of how you look or someone's initial perspective of you. Put your head down. Do the work and just continue moving forward and you will make it there. And I think having that sort of work ethic is even better because you just continue to excel past other people and they feel content. And you don't sort of have that content attitude because people sort of look down upon you so you just have to keep working.

Noah: And would you say that your family impacted your relationship with lacrosse, or the way you approached the game?

Patrick: Yes one hundred percent. I don't think... Obviously if I was not adopted, I would not be playing this sport. I think that if my brother did not take the risk of playing his senior year, he played one year of lacrosse just for fun, that I really would have played this sport as well. I am trying to think of maybe approaching the game. My parents have always made me feel like I belonged in the family and I think that sort of translated to lacrosse communities as well. I have always felt a part of every team. I have never felt different. Or I never sort of felt like a stray cat in the group. That's why I have always sort of said that I never had those issues with racial problems on the team just because of how I have always bonded with my teammates. I have always sort of been accustomed of being around maybe a more Caucasian crowd, so I think that sort of stems back to the influence of my parents and just always making me feel comfortable at home.

Noah: Definitely. I think that concludes the questions I have for you Patrick. If you have any other advice you would like to share or any questions that you would like to ask me, I will open up the floor there.

Patrick: Let me think of something. How do you think, or do you think, I guess this is a question towards both of us. How [would] this interview would have changed if I still played lacrosse and I still had the same background as I did, but I grew up in a maybe... not [in] an adoptive household but still was of the same descent? I am trying to think if that would sort of change the answers that I sort of stated in the previous interview.

Noah: That's a great question. I would love to hear your insight on it.

Patrick: I am trying to think of... I don't... It's hard to put yourself in somebody else's shoes. I don't know. I feel you would maybe just feel a little bit more out of place than I did just because of just the environment that you grew up in. Obviously I stressed the importance of that throughout the entirety of the interview. I think it would be harder. I personally do think it would be harder.

Noah: Awesome. Well Patrick, I really appreciate your time taking the opportunity to do this and sharing your story. It was definitely great hearing more about your background, your life and the

impact of being an Asian American lacrosse player, and growing up in the school system. All of those experiences and how they have impacted your life, so I definitely appreciate it.

Patrick: No thank you. That was actually really fun because I don't really... I feel like some people would not even know that I was adopted if I did not tell anyone, so it is good to sort of get it out. So, thank you.

Noah: Thanks Patrick.

Patrick: No worries.