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Hello, College Bound listeners.

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My name is Meaghan and I'm a current sophomore here at the University of Notre Dame. We are so excited to bring you another episode of our podcast, The Post Notre Dame Experience. A conversation with ND graduates about what their life has been like after graduation. Whether that was attending graduate school, going into the workforce, or moving abroad. We are ready to share with you the endless possibilities that are at your hands when you graduate from Notre Dame.

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In this episode, we feature Woody Northup, here with us today, who will be talking to us about his journey and career since he graduated in 1970. He is also my grandfather and one of my biggest inspirations for attending Notre Dame!

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Hi, Woody. Thanks for joining us today. I would love to hear what your Notre Dame intro is, so that's your major, your grad year, your your hometown, your dorm and what you're doing now?

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I graduated in 1970, a long time ago now. My original dorm was Farley Hall. I lived there freshman and junior year. In my sophomore year, I was in Innsbruck, Austria on the Notre Dame Exchange program, and then in my senior year I was off campus. My major, liberal arts, English literature.

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And what are you doing now?

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Well, I'm retired, but I still own the business that I started back in 1985 called Radio Sound. It's an electronic design and build business, and we cater mostly to powersports equipment. Harley-Davidson, Polaris, motorcycles, ATVs, or RVs. We provide radio, speakers, amplifiers, headsets, all kinds of entertainment equipment for the outdoor market.

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Wow, that's so awesome. And I definitely want to get more into it, but before we jump into that, I'd love to hear what do you think is the biggest change in Notre Dame you've seen since you graduated?

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I would say, Meaghan, that there is a whole lot more prosperity at Notre Dame just in terms of the physical landscaping, the buildings. Everything is just done to a tee. They had not really perfected the art of fundraising, that they have now perfected to help the campus look the way it does right now. The biggest change, of course, is that there are now women going to Notre Dame and there were no women

going to Notre Dame when I was there. We had a few Saint Mary's Exchange students and I took a couple of classes over at Saint Mary's in exchange, but there were no women on campus.

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Wow, that is such a big change. So now jumping a little bit into your professional life, how do you think Notre Dame prepared you for the professional world, especially operating your own business?

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Notre Dame encouraged me to take some risks. The prime example of that would be the Innsbruck program. Back then, the Innsbruck program, which was an exchange program for Notre Dame students to go over and attend the University of Innsbruck, was very revolutionary. Father Ted Hesburgh started this in 1964. I went in 67. I was the fourth class to go. It was revolutionary at the time, especially during sophomore year, which is pretty young to be to be gone.

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So in order to do that, I had to make the decision basically to leave my beloved campus, a campus where we had just won the national championship in football, where I had met a girl that I would end up marrying, all my friends, the Great Spirit, I loved every minute of my freshman year. I had to leave all that and take a chance and go to a different country well beyond the reach of my parents. We communicated with letters. Twice during the year I had a phone call home, but they were so expensive, nobody really called home. So I, along with 35 other guys, were on our own. We were untethered. We were not part of the infrastructure that we had been a part of our whole lives. It was scary. It was also thrilling and it was one of the seminal experiences of my life. I would say that almost more than any other experience I had at Notre Dame prepared me to be an adult. We had to grow up fast over there. We were traveling on our own. It was a growing up experience, and I'm still very, very, very close to the remaining members of that Innsbruck class.

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The second most important part of my Notre Dame life was that I did meet my wife and didn't know she was going to be my wife then, but one of the first nights of my freshman year, and ended up marrying at the end of our junior year. So why do I tell you this? Well, Innsbruck and my wife, having different varying degrees, encouraged me to take chances. Innsbruck taking the chance to go over there, being untethered, risk taking. It wasn't totally dangerous or anything like that, but it was totally different. I was totally out of my comfort zone when I went to Innsbruck, as for my 35 friends. And it taught me the rewards of taking a chance of untether yourself to the reality of what you've been a part, that was a huge, huge thing for me.

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Second, my wife Anne, is much more of a risk taker. I would say much more daring, I would say, than I am. And by being in a relationship with her, she encouraged me to take risks that I probably would not have taken in my business, had I not been married to her.

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As your granddaughter, That story is quite important. So now moving on to today. Many students today have the question of how they might go about opening a business. What was your discernment process in figuring that out and actually running the business?

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I sort of would like to go back just a little bit and talk about my education, the importance of the subjects that I was taught, literature, history, philosophy was very important as to how I would conduct myself as a business person, especially starting my own business. When you study literature and history, you learn. It's really a history of leadership. You're learning about how to lead, how other leaders have led throughout the years, throughout the centuries. It gave me an opportunity to sort of mold in my own mind to the kind of leader that I wanted to be. But in addition to that, Notre Dame being a Catholic school, you know, I took theology and religion, too. One of the great things that religion teaches you is the path of dissent. And by that, I mean you often have to go down before you can rise back up again. I mean, just think of the crucifixion three days later, the resurrection.

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So without the crucifixion, there would be no resurrection. So life is like that too. And there are lots of opportunities that occur when you're in the midst of a downtrend. Out of chaos often comes great opportunities. And that's what happened to me when I started my business. I was with a business. It was an electronics business that had a total crisis. And what I did was I picked up the pieces of that business and approached one of the customers of that business and asked them if I could continue to supply them with the product that they needed as a new company, as a new entity.

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That customer was a small one, very small at the time. Harley-Davidson, they weren't making many motorcycles, they weren't using many radios. But I convinced them that we could supply them. And so that's what started my business. And within 3 to 4 years, their business had quintupled and we were sailing along with them on their rapid rise to the top of the motorcycle world.

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So that's how fast things can change. You have to be willing to take a chance. I had no job back up. I was not going to be employed if this didn't work, I would have had to go find another job. But as it turned out, my partners and I were able to turn that opportunity into a company that's now lasted 38 years.

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It's so interesting that that you could have that vision to talk to Harley-Davidson and ask for this and that. It went so well.

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We were lucky. Every new entrepreneur has to be fortunate. Things just don't always turn out. And I had tried starting a business three years before that that ultimately things fell through. So I had had some experience with setting up the financing and going through the banks and providing all the information that they needed. And so when the second opportunity came along, I already knew what to do. Then it was just a question of would the customer go along with it? Would the banks go along with it? And, you

know, basically the bank said, well, if the customer goes along with it, we'll go along with it. And the customer said, Well, if the bank backs you, we'll go along with it. And I said, Look, let's everybody get together and do this.

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So let me ask you a question about your major. So your major was in the Arts and Letters program, or that's roughly what we'd call it today. But what is your opinion on going into business school versus majoring in arts and letters?

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You have to choose a major no matter what. You're going to miss something once you start narrowing down your course of studies. So what I missed, when I narrowed mine down to to what we call liberal arts, I miss the business preparation side. But if you're a business major, you're going to miss the great literature side. And the literature side is what taught me how to relate to people, how to communicate with them in a meaningful way, how to pay attention to them. The leaders that I studied throughout literature, great books and history, philosophy, all those influenced my style of leadership, which is congenial, which is more of a coach than, certainly not autocratic. That helped me a lot.

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Now can you get that once you've been to business school? Yeah, sure you can and just like me. Could I get the numbers part of it and everything else that I needed to run the business? Yes, I did, because when I started into my career as a business person right out of college, I learned about how the business is run. I learned about the numbers. I learned about the accounting. I learned about the importance of running things by the numbers. And don't doubt it. I run my business. By the numbers. I mean, we pay attention to numbers every day, every month, every year.

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So those are things that you miss when you narrow your major down. But it's not that you can't get them back. It's not that you can't still find the wherewithal to fill in that missing part of your agenda.

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Thank you so much. I have never heard that sort of advice between an arts and letters major in a business major. And funny enough for me, I actually have both. I definitely appreciate that perspective and I think our listeners will appreciate that as well. In deciding their own majors. So just two final questions to wrap up the podcast. So first off, kind of a quick one. What was your favorite class in college

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In terms of English literature? The one I learned the most from was my class on Herman Melville. That particular semester was devoted to the guy that wrote Moby Dick and other great novels. Most of Melville's works have religious symbology in them, and I thought it was a fascinating look at someone who was famous. The book isn't that enjoyable to read. It's sort of dark and dour and not a lot of fun, but there are a lot of great lessons in it.

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Another one that I thought was really fun was 18th century Literature and Poetry. We read a lot of the great poets of English. The meanings inside a lot of those poems are so intricate and so well done. It's like doing a puzzle, like doing a crossword puzzle and finding out little hints and clues to what they're really talking about. That was really fun, I'd say.

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Also, it's funny, you know, even today, even if you're not in arts and letters, you still have to take two classes on philosophy, you have to take a university seminar class, which feels very similar when you talk about poetry and then two theology classes. So it's really cool to see how Notre Dame has really taken that value from the major and tried to use it today in all students. But wrapping up the podcast all in with one final question, talk to me about how you're still involved with Notre Dame or how the alumni network throughout the years has served you.

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Here's what I will tell you from a general point of view. If you graduate from Notre Dame, you're always going to be very proud that you are a Notre Dame alum. The principles and morals they advocate for are timeless, and they make you proud that you are an alum of that school. Football! Of course, we've always been involved since I left with football. It's a unifying force in the school itself. It's so much fun. It's so interesting to see whether we as a top rated academic institution, can still compete on the football field with the powerhouses.

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More particularly, I am and my wife and I are members of the Council for Church Life at Notre Dame, which is one of the five major councils. That Council Council is devoted to making sure that Notre Dame maintains its Catholic identity as an institution, and that particular council oversees several programs, outreach programs to both the South Bend community and the Notre Dame community, but also throughout the country. Religious instruction, training for church leaders in many dioceses. It's a very interesting council. It's very important to me and to Anne, my wife, that Notre Dame not backslide on its Catholic traditions and its dedication to Catholic principles.

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That's absolutely amazing. It's so cool to see that even after all this time, you're still able to be so involved with the university.

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Well, that's all the time that we have for today. Thank you so much, Woody, for your time. And thank you, listeners, for joining us today for another episode of College Bound. We hope you enjoyed getting to hear one perspective about what your time at Notre Dame can look like. Come back next week for another insightful experience about a Notre Dame alum and make sure you listen to our past seasons of college bound on Spotify, Apple or wherever you listen to your podcasts.

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That's all for today. Bye. See you next time, and Go Irish.