

Reflections from WT Podcast #34 with Dr. Dave Rausch

- Randy Ray: You are listening to Reflections from WT. This is podcast number 34. My name is Randy Ray, and I'm joined today by my big boss, Dr. Walter Wendler. We have a special guest today, a friend of mine that I enjoy hanging out with a little bit, Dr. Dave Rausch from over in the political science department.
- President Wendler And he is the Teel Bivins Professor of Political Science.
- Randy Ray: I have that written down. I was really going to brag on him for that. What does that even mean? The Teel Bivins Professor of Political Science.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: It's funny because I have to explain that to everybody who Teel Bivins, particularly people from other parts of the country. Senator Teel Bivins was the senator who represented our district before Kel Seliger. George W. Bush appointed him ambassador to Sweden, so they were good friends. The Bivins with the Bushes were pretty close friends. And so when he moved from the Senate to being ambassador, there was a lot of campaign financing still available. So there was a donation made to the university to establish the Teel Bivins Professor of Political Science.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: I always think it's funny because at one time I suggested maybe we should have the Teel Bivins College of Social Science and Education, but the Dean of Education and Social Sciences didn't like the way I twisted the names around from social science and education. I'm always very honored to be the Teel Bivins Professor of Political Science. Very rarely when I call down to folks I work with in Austin and stuff, they don't know who Teel Bivins is, but when I call people in DC or Boston or New York, it's like, what's a teel?
- Randy Ray: But their family had a lot of influence around here.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: Oh yeah, and they still do.
- Randy Ray: Yeah, they still do.
- President Wendler And by the way, I knew Teel, oddly. I mean, here I am, but I knew Teel. Ambassador Anne Armstrong was on the board of regents.
- Randy Ray: Before you came to work here.
- President Wendler Yeah. I knew him back in the '90s. Actually, he asked me to testify before Senate Finance when he was chair of Senate Finance, if I would testify on the concept of charter schools, what a person in higher ed thought about them. And of course I cleared that with the chancellor, then Howard Graves, and I testified. But Mrs. Armstrong, she was the ambassador to Great Britain under Ronald Reagan. She was a very, very ... a person of great substance. She had me come up here to meet Teel because she just thought I should meet him. And I had tremendous admiration for him, and I still do for the Bivins family. They are people that have committed themselves to the panhandle and what

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the panhandle stands for, I think, in a very admirable way. That's an outsider looking in. You know, I'm from New York, David's from Pennsylvania. You're surrounded by Yankees.

Randy Ray: I've got to get out of here.

President Wendler Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Dave Rausch: [crosstalk,]. No, one of the interesting things about Senator Bivins was he's one of the reasons why it's still called WT and not Texas A&M university Canyon or not Texas A&M University of the Panhandle or whatever. In the early '90s there was a big debate in the Texas Senate about what to call the school now that it was joining the Texas A&M system. So if you read some old Prairies, you can track the debate.

Randy Ray: So he fought for us to remain WT.

Dr. Dave Rausch: Largely because a lot of alumni who really weren't entirely thrilled about the A&M part didn't want to lose the WT part. So they fought pretty hard for that.

President Wendler You know, Dave, I'll say too, from kind of an educational perspective, I think that we've done a very good job on this balance beam, on this knife edge of being independent and representing our region, but also representing the state through the Texas A&M university system.

Dr. Dave Rausch: Oh, I agree. Yeah.

President Wendler And I'll tell you the truth. I can't think of a better place to be, actually. The A&M system, I told the board last week, I went to a programmatic budget review and I opened as a way to compliment the board, and it's not ... it's sincere. One of the things I like about working for Chancellor Sharp and the board is they allow for a lot of local autonomy and responsiveness to local conditions. But at the same time, they give some guidance that's very helpful to us and very, very astute about the waves and the ebb and flow of higher education in the state of Texas, because John Sharp and the vice chancellors, I think, do an excellent job of understanding how all those pieces fit together. But we have some individual liberty up here, which I really like. I think it's very [crosstalk,].

Randy Ray: I've wondered in the past what WT would look like today had we not become part of the A&M system. I think we'd be hurting. When I can work at WT, I had some folks say, oh, so you're going to work for the Aggies. And I said, yeah, don't say that because if it wasn't for them, I probably wouldn't have a job here.

President Wendler Well, and look at what's happened in these past four or five years. I mean, and these are things that have been in the pot cooking for a long time, but

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just drive down Russell Long Boulevard.

Randy Ray: Yeah, exactly.

President Wendler: You know, our board approved now ... yeah, well, anyway, and there's more coming.

Randy Ray: I came back to WT in 2002 and the campus looked exactly like it did when I graduated in 1984.

President Wendler: That's not [crosstalk,].

Randy Ray: But man, look at it now. I mean, it is so different than it was. Speaking of the campus, it has a good feel. The students are back. Most of them, a lot of them, are not wearing masks, which is good to see some faces now and again, but it feels a little bit more normal. Don't you guys think?

Dr. Dave Rausch: I do, and it's interesting because for the last several years I've done these surveys of students. Once emails became directory information, which is probably more technical stuff than you all needed to know, I feel comfortable sending out emails to all the students at WT. So I do a series of surveys on their political participation level, their ideology level, and some other questions. And last year, of course, I threw out a question about mask wearing. Who wears a mask? So this year I decided, hey, this might actually be better to do it this year because this year there's actually some conflict. Last year we were kind of required to wear a mask. This year it's a little bit more ambivalent. So I put that on my survey. I'm working on getting that turned into the IRB and probably do that one in the beginning of October again.

President Wendler: That'll be interesting.

Dr. Dave Rausch: So I just thought that was a talking ... compare last year with this year.

President Wendler: You know, I, and David, I'm not saying this because you're sitting here. I do appreciate your commitment to the people of the panhandle through your discipline and through the work you do and interest in what they have to say. You know, some people nowadays go straight to Austin or straight to Washington, DC. I'll tell you the truth. I'm more interested in what somebody has to say out here on Fourth Street in many ways because that's who we see.

Randy Ray: I agree with you. That's why I always enjoy ... Dave shows up a lot on local TV stations, and I always like hearing what he has to say about what's going on with the local elections.

President Wendler: Hear hear. Hear hear.

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- Randy Ray: Yeah. Dave, one of the reasons we're here is we want to talk about Constitution Day.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: Right.
- Randy Ray: And we are always given our talking points to things to talk about. And one of the talking points today is what is Constitution Day?
- Dr. Dave Rausch: Well, it's interesting. You were talking with Dr. Wendler before we started. Constitution Day actually emerged in American history in the 1950s, on at least my brief reading, which was about 10 minutes after I received the talking point, my brief reading of Constitution. It actually started as Constitution Week when there was sort of an encouraged effort among schools and various other organizations, museums, archives, to have various programs during that week that emphasized the constitution. I always thought was interesting that we needed to have a Constitution Week. As you said, I grew up in Pennsylvania, and as someone pointed out to me a couple of years ago, Pennsylvania history is the same as U.S. history because, you know, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. I mean, I grew up about 70, 80 miles from Philadelphia.
- Randy Ray: Where they wrote the constitution.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: Where they wrote the constitution. There's a lot of constitutional history, revolutionary war history and things like that. So the Constitution Day that we celebrate now was a result of Senator Robert Byrd, a Democrat of West Virginia, when he was chair of the Appropriations Committee in 2004, added an amendment to a bill requiring any organization, institution that receives federal funds to have a day of constitution learning. Now, what that entails in the grand scheme of things, that's sometimes referred to as an unfunded mandate, where we're told now you have to do something on the constitution. And at different places, it's kind of fascinating to look at all the different places.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: One of my personal favorites was a law school, and I can't remember which one in the northeast, actually had a week long symposium series on why Constitution Day legislation was unconstitutional, which I always thought was kind of funny. I want to say it was either Bentley ... Does Bentley have a law school? It was a school in Massachusetts, and it was just one of those little ones that they're always up in arms about something. It's like, it's Constitution Day, unconstitutional. And it's quite funny because they came down with maybe, because they didn't want to lose their federal funds.
- President Wendler: You know, I know your general proclivities about the value of understanding United States political science and Texas political science. I recently wrote a piece on the value of teaching the core history courses and why I thought substitutes for those might be a mistake. I don't know how you can know

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where you're going if you don't know where you've been. I think we have to understand. And our constitution was written by imperfect men, no women, imperfect men then, and now is guided and further enhanced through legislation and the judicial branch and the executive branch. It's affected by these imperfect men and women, and it's imperfect. And it always will be imperfect. And that's a fundamental worldview of mine.

President Wendler: We do the best we can with it and recognize its imperfection. And I think that's the process of continual attention to what things say. And I think these core courses that Dave teaches and I think promotes in political science, both state and national government, are very important. And I feel the same way about what I call the kind of fundamental history courses, you know, history up until the civil war, and then from the civil war to contemporary times, however it's caught up. I think those things are hugely important, and we run away from them with all these specialized courses.

Randy Ray: So, Dave, as a political science scholar, alluding to what Dr. Wendler just said, how perfect is the constitution? Does it have faults?

Dr. Dave Rausch: Oh, it definitely has faults. I mean, if you take a look at it, of course, not allowing Indians not taxed. I mean, you can just focus on that wearing off. You're not paying taxes, you don't have the right to vote. So for the longest time, I'm trying to remember, it went up to the 1960s, I believe, native Americans did not have the right to vote.

Randy Ray: That late. I didn't realize that late.

Dr. Dave Rausch: I want to say it's '50s or '60s. I'll have to go back and look. I should have probably read my constitution before coming here. I mean, that's one of the fascinating things to look at, is there's a couple of organizations that publish annotated constitutions. Now, I tried to get an annotated Texas constitution and it would not fit in the car. But the annotated United States constitution isn't very long, and it has, of course, a lot of the major court cases, Marbury versus Madison, Brown vs Board of Education, and then it ties them to which constitutional amendments, which sections of the actual document of the constitution they tie to. So it's definitely not perfect. I mean, of course there's a lot of historical documentation that, you know, the reason being that it was created by men. I mean, had God just dropped it like ...

Randy Ray: Yeah, it's not like the 10 commandments.

Dr. Dave Rausch: Or 15, if you drop one, the 10 commandments. But yeah, it's one of those where it's just a group of men, and of course we had to, you know, Georgia wasn't entirely sure about that section. Well, without that section, New York wouldn't go along. Well, we didn't have New York. I mean, are we going to have New England and the rest of it? I always talk about Pennsylvania being the keystone state, but really New York's the break point in the eastern

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colonies, at least the eastern United States. I mean, that's the interesting thing. That's the nice thing about the U.S. constitution is it's imperfect, so it needs to be changed every now and then, and fixed and adjusted and it meets the requirements of the current era.

President Wendler And that was built into it, right?

Dr. Dave Rausch: Right.

President Wendler And the courts have a lot to do with that. You just mentioned a couple of Supreme Court cases, and I'm reading a book now on Supreme Court decisions. I'm not even going to tell you the title or who wrote it. I've got it, I know it, but I'm not even going to bother. But here's the issue to me. What do you think is the most important decision that ever flowed from the Supreme Court in your perspective?

Dr. Dave Rausch: Well, I definitely think ... I'm a Congress person, so I've always liked Congress. My dad ran for office a number of times when I was little, and we used to hang around with our Congressmen, Gus Yatron, who's an interesting fellow to research on his own. But I always think Marbury versus Madison is by far the most important because it does allow the court to come in and look at what Congress does, look at what the President does and determine, now, wait a minute, that's not really what the constitution says they should be doing, or how they should be doing it, and that type of thing. So I think had we not had Marbury versus Madison, we probably would have a U.S. constitution that's the size of the Texas constitution.

President Wendler Or the Russian constitution.

Dr. Dave Rausch: Yeah.

President Wendler It's 900 pages.

Dr. Dave Rausch: Voluminous would be the term.

President Wendler Right. What about Brown versus Board of Education?

Dr. Dave Rausch: I mean, Brown's very important for the 1900s. I can't see Brown actually occurring any time before the 1950s. That was a good 1950s, sort of a linchpin in the 1950s. The challenge with Brown, of course, it goes back to Marbury versus Madison. The court said it, now let them enforce it. How is the court going to get all these African-American students into schools? What's the court going to do? Are they going to have justices come out and walk them to the front door and that type of thing? So that's where sometimes the problem with Supreme Court decisions, they're monumental, but it's hard to put them into practice without some sort of armed force like the Arkansas national guard or something, the President.

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- President Wendler You know, something else I never realized. I just always thought that all Supreme Court justices had to come out of the federal court system, but there was a time when elected officials would be, and not attorneys, would be on the Supreme Court. And you really don't ... as I read some of these cases, I know that the legal jargon gets very complicated, but if somebody can help you distill that or cook it down and try to understand the basics, a lot of these ... the judicial branch now is formed by the judiciary, and in some ways for the judiciary. And I think that the politics being taken out of that, actually I can't believe I'm going to say this, is not a good thing. I think people that serve as elected officials, that serve as the will of the people, rather than a lifelong appointment. I don't know enough to even suggest that anything change. It's just interesting that maybe someday what I would consider to be an enlightened president may actually pick some people that did not come up through the federal courts, like the court in DC, which is like a proving ground.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: It's like the minor leagues for the major.
- President Wendler Yeah.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: And it's interesting because you take a look at people who were senators, for example, Hugo Black, one of the most famous Supreme Court justices. There's a guy named Earl Warren. He was actually governor of California. Imagine that, being governor of California and leading some sort of national office? That will never happen. You never have it. Oh, wait, Ronald Reagan. So it's that type of thing, going from governor to being a Supreme Court justice is ... Today, right now we've actually got a lot of clerks. So if you look, you talk about Kavanaugh. Well, Kavanaugh was a clerk for one of the ... was he Scalia?
- President Wendler Yeah, Scalia.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: It might have been Scalia.
- President Wendler I think, I think, I think.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: And I mean, it's interesting how, in order to be a satisfactory candidate for the Supreme Court, you have to have been a clerk for the Supreme Court. It does seem a little ... I mean, even Sandra Day O'Connor was interesting because while she was in the court system, she was more Arizona courts than she was federal courts.
- President Wendler And wasn't she ... I think she might have been a city council person or something.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: She was. I know she was on the school board.

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- Randy Ray: You've got to watch those people.
- President Wendler: You might be on the Supreme Court. We should nominate you. But anyway, the narrow view that we get, I find that I don't read enough, and I read a lot, but I don't read enough because when you read, you get these multiple perspectives, and as an architect, when we would try to explain to somebody what a building was going to look like, we would draw it from every side and many different views and so on. And it's the same way with trying to understand something like the judiciary or the Congress, or the office of President. You've got to see it from a lot of different views, I think. But you get to do that every day.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: I do, and I mean, I actually worked for a member of Congress, so I actually was a congressional staffer. And I always thought when I was in high school and stuff, you know, being Congressional staffer would be kind of cool. And I mean, of course, I did my internship stuff and those things, but I also learned that being a Congressional staffer, you always take your ID off once you immediately leave the building, because you don't want anyone to know on the Metro that you ... Everybody knows you're a Congressional staffer because you're wearing a tie and you're getting off the Metro, and where you're getting off the Metro.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: But it's very interesting, I've been listening to some podcasts about being a Congressional staffer, and the Congressional staffers play a significant role because they can actually go into McDonald's and not be recognized. They can just sit there, and while they're noshing on their Big Mac, they can also be listening to what the other people are saying, and then take that back to the boss. You know, people, I've been hanging out amongst the folks again and learning what people have been thinking and that type of stuff.
- President Wendler: You know, it's interesting. A similar kind of thing, it was in the movie, and I think it was fictionalized, but Churchill was on a train talking to a young young girl. I can't remember the exact context and what the discussion was, but it had a pretty significant influence on him. And he was able to, you know, ride a subway, ride on the underground. You know, I couldn't do that now, my goodness.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: Not with the 24 hour news and TV.
- President Wendler: Oh my gosh.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: I don't think Churchill would have survived TV. In fact, he didn't. I mean, he lost in the 1950s in part because of increased media attention and he was starting to get a little slow and that type of thing. Really old people shouldn't be leaders of governments. Wait a minute. [crosstalk,].
- Randy Ray: Well, Dave, I always try to do a little research into our guest before they come

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on the podcast.

- Dr. Dave Rausch: Oh, oh. I hope it wasn't a deep dive. My background check.
- Randy Ray: I didn't dig up any dirt. The thing that I found interesting about you, they said that one of your main interest in research is religion and politics.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: Yes.
- Randy Ray: My first thought was, what's the first thing they tell people not to talk about? And he picked both of them.
- President Wendler That's right, and he doesn't [crosstalk,].
- Randy Ray: You may not be the most popular guy at family gatherings, is that right?
- Dr. Dave Rausch: I'm never the most popular guy at family gathering. I just remember when I first met ... my wife's youngest sister is the last one ... it wasn't the last one married. I actually married the last one, but Mary's youngest sister, when she got married, she's an attorney, and her husband was an attorney. And for the longest time, he kept referring to me as Dave the pipe fitter because he couldn't ... you know, he'd gone to school a lot because he's an attorney, and he just couldn't get the notion that why would anyone want to be a professor? It's like, well, it's kind of fun. I get to do stuff that most normal people don't get to do.
- Randy Ray: Yeah, we have good gigs. Yeah. We have good gigs. So I always throw our guest a curve ball. I asked someone this the other day at church, so I'm going to ask you guys the same thing. What was your favorite age? And the silence is-
- Dr. Dave Rausch: My favorite age?
- Randy Ray: Yeah.
- Dr. Dave Rausch: I kind of liked when I was 20.
- Randy Ray: How come?
- Dr. Dave Rausch: I got to spend, the summer I spent as a student at a university in Vienna, Austria. And I thank my grandmother for that. She was actually originally supposed to use tickets to go to Europe and she had some leg problems, mobility problems. She couldn't go, so she gave the money to me and I got the chance to go to spend the summer studying, interestingly enough, U.S. foreign policy in Vienna, Austria. But I also got to practice German and that type of stuff. So it was probably my favorite age, but also my most uncomfortable age, because you're also starting to get close to graduating

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from college, and what am I going to do now, and that type of thing. So I just kept going to school, sort of kick the can down the road a little bit.

President Wendler Vienna's a great city too, isn't it?

Dr. Dave Rausch: I loved it.

President Wendler Yeah. I visited there.

Randy Ray: Dr. Wendler, what's your favorite age?

President Wendler You know, you're going to say, oh, he's just saying this because he's the president of the university right now. I mean, today. I can't think of anything more fulfilling than what I do kind of on a day to day basis. Not every day, but most days I think to myself, you know, I've got to pinch myself and think, is this real, because I enjoy it so much. It's fascinating to me, and it's some combination of experiences and maybe, on good days, gaining a little bit more insight and maturity and wisdom and so on. Not every day, but some days. And I just enjoy it.

Randy Ray: Yeah. I get it. That's going to about wrap up our time. Thank you again for joining us for Reflections from WT, the heart and soul of the panhandle. This has been episode number 34. Be sure and join us again next time. Thank you.