

Myka Bailey:

This is I Am WT. I am Myra Bailey, and unfortunately Thomas could not join us today, but I have two very special guests with me, Becky and Martin Lopez. Will y'all guys go ahead and introduce yourselves?

Becky Lopez:

Hi, I'm Becky Lopez.

Martin Lopez:

And I'm Martin Lopez.

Myka Bailey:

Awesome. And tell me just a little bit about where y'all are from and how y'all met.

Martin Lopez:

I guess I could start with where we're from, meaning like our hometowns. I'm from Muleshoe, Texas, and when I graduated in May of 1978, I came to WT that August, August of 1978. And my wife, Becky is from Hereford, so she's a little closer, but we both came from ag-based communities and small towns.

That's where we went to public school, in Muleshoe, myself, and then for my wife at Hereford. Now, as far as prior to that, my family's from New Mexico, but I started school in Texas, in Muleshoe, with pre-K.

Becky Lopez:

And so my family's military. So my dad was in the service the first six years of my life. So we traveled and lived in different parts of Texas until we settled in Hereford. And then, of course, I didn't move again until I moved to Canyon to come to WT.

Myka Bailey:

Yay! So we both came to WT.

Becky Lopez:

Yes.

Martin Lopez:

Correct.

Myka Bailey:

Is that how y'all met?

Becky Lopez:

Twice. We actually met twice.

So back story, my freshman year, I was new to the campus and Martin had been here a year already, and he made friends with my roommate. They started dating, and I just hung out, and every now and then we'd interact and things like that. And then we lost contact for three years.

And then the next time we met, I was actually looking for a job and he was working at the museum, and he was the gentleman who opened the front door and escorted me to my interview, which, of course, I got the job, but that was our second go around and then we got stuck since.

Myka Bailey:

Wow, that's funny. You dated her roommate?

Martin Lopez:

Well, I don't know if I would call it dating. I was interested in her roommate. We had both run track in high school, her roommate and I, so that was a common interest we had. And little knownst to me that I wasn't her primary interest, and so a lot of times she would ask her roommate, my wife, to visit with me, keep me occupied while she visited with other young men. And so I think that's how we developed a friendship her freshman year, my sophomore year at WT. And we were good friends, we were just different places at the time. I think maybe that's why we never made a romantic connection the first go round,

Becky Lopez:

Actually it was because he was very serious, very studious. He was very prim, proper, and I was the exact opposite.

Myka Bailey:

Makes sense.

Martin Lopez:

She had to sow her wild oats.

Myka Bailey:

So y'all both worked at the museum in the end?

Martin Lopez:

Well, after I had graduated with my undergraduate degree, I got an undergraduate degree from what was then West Texas State University in a Bachelor's in Fine Arts. So I majored in Painting and I had a minor in Sculpture. And so as a student worker from fall of '78 till I graduated in spring of '82, I worked in the Exhibits department. So certainly it was utilizing the degree I was getting at the time, and so that's when I'd been working there, I don't know, maybe a year or two when she applied for a job at the museum, and that's when the famous door opening happened.

Becky Lopez:

So I started out at WT, was at WT for about a year and a half, dropped out, got married, had a couple of babies, then it was time to come back. And I actually came back after having my first child, and I was working for the Men's Basketball department. And in those days, if the head coach was not rehired for the following year, they basically cleaned house. So I was part of that cleaning house. I was looking for a job because I had a baby at home, and that's when I went to the museum because they had an opening. And we were there five years? I was there till '87.

Martin Lopez:

I was there till 1990.

Becky Lopez:

Because then we had more babies.

Martin Lopez:

So yes, speaking of babies, between the two of us, we have four children. So we have two boys and two girls. The bookends, the oldest and the youngest, are the boys, and the middle are the girls. Of course now all adults off doing their thing and raising their families.

But I think what really connected us was that the fact that we had been friends her freshman year, and then lost touch after that year, and then when we reconnected was that we both at that time were focused on similar, not careers as much as similar goals of what we want to do to move forward with our lives at the time once we got married.

I think that knowing each other prior certainly made our second go-round a little easier because we knew each other already, although I think we both had changed a little bit the second time around. I probably was little less uptight about things and she was a little more conservative at the second go-round.

Becky Lopez:

Not conservative by much, so he's still waiting for me to become the conservative. I'm not there yet.

Martin Lopez:

But anyway, our ties have been to WTE since the very beginning, since, well, mine was prior actually to graduation from high school because come run track meets here quite often, which was one of my favorite places to run. That was always an annual track at WT, a high school track meet, which I used to love to run, and then sometimes they would host an area meet or something like that. So I was pretty familiar with WT.

In fact, had wanted to run track at WT, but the year I came as a freshman, they did away with the track program. I'm guessing through budgetary reasons or whatever. So I was rather disappointed, but I found other interests in State of WT.

Becky Lopez:

Me!

Myka Bailey:

Do y'all possibly have a favorite memory from WT?

Becky Lopez:

Oh, probably several. That one, of course, when he opened the door for me, and then we've had lots of life changes.

So we got married in Hill Chapel on campus. You know that the museum now opens up the Petroleum wing for wedding receptions, events like that. We actually had the very first wedding reception at the museum, and it was actually in the Conservation Center, which is now defunct, but I think we've had a lot of firsts here.

Three of our four kids were all born at Palo Duro Hospital, which is now, I believe, a Research Center for WT University. So if it wasn't for WT, neither one of us had ever developed the relationships, and the friendships, and even the family that we have now.

Martin Lopez:

I would say prior to our life together, some of my favorite memories were being part of the... Because I was in an art student, we had quite a list of characters, and I would say in the students that I went to class with daily. And so, one of the things that I really enjoyed about that is meeting a lot of students from a lot

of different places outside of the panhandle of Texas, and a lot of different characters, not only with the students, but the faculty we had at the time.

One of my favorite deals is we had a professor that set up a, it really wasn't a study abroad because it was still in the United States, but my junior year he set it up where a number of us could sign up for his class. He had taught at San Diego State University prior to coming to West Texas State University, and he put together a group because he would go back to San Diego in the summers so he could teach a one-summer course.

And so there's a group of, I believe, of 10 or 11 of us that drove across the country. We signed up for that class, and so we would paint in the mornings, we stayed, we set up lease at an apartment from San Diego State University students. Remember there was four or five, maybe six of us guys. So the girls were in one apartment and we were in another. But it was a little, tiny efficiency-type place the guys were in. And so there was one bed, one sofa, so two of us asleep in the bed one night. The other night you'd get the sofa, and the other night get the floor, so we would rotate that way so that every two days you would end up sleeping in the bed. We didn't care. We were just young and having a good time.

So we'd spend all afternoon either on free time, going to the different beaches there, Mission Beach, Oceanside, all those beaches along there, and then come back and paint some more, and then go see the sites. And then we did to a side trip to the Los Angeles/Long Beach area to visit different museums, see some of the work we're studying in Art History at the time, and stuff like that. So that was really a neat experience for someone that came from a small farming community that all I knew was cows and fields, and it was a very cultural experience for me, which I'm sure something our students currently in WT that get to go to another country through studying abroad experience. It's just something that opens their mind and their worldview a little bit. So I certainly say that was a favorite memory of mine as well prior to our memories that we put together.

Becky Lopez:

I'm not allowed to tell my private memories prior to us getting together, so we'll just go with that.

Myka Bailey:

I'm glad that was a favorite memory, even though you were sleeping on the floor one third at the time.

Martin Lopez:

I don't remember really minding it much. I think so.

But I think one of the things that I really enjoyed about my time as an undergraduate student here was that first was the exposure to folks that had different ideas and different worldviews than you did. And just, particularly the major I was in, was the creativity of the people that I was with daily. Although I did start worrying about my junior year, how I was going to make a living with that degree. As it turned out, I was able to do it at the museum for five years after I graduated, which launched my career at WT, which I was here for, with the exception of three years, 41 years before I retired.

Myka Bailey:

Do you still come back to WT often?

Martin Lopez:

I'm a retired guy that walks and runs around campus a lot. In fact, I walk into this building quite a bit in the cold weather. I'll come and walk the halls to get little steps in if it's too cold to run outside. But sometimes you might see me running through campus.

Myka Bailey:

Nice.

Martin Lopez:

I'm still here. I'm just not working here anymore.

Myka Bailey:

Gotcha. So how do y'all stay involved at WT?

Becky Lopez:

So we're both members of the Theater Arts Program. We also belong to the museums, the Historical Society. We do, yes, when it's cold outside, instead of buying a membership to the AC, which would be the logical thing to do, we actually go walking around in the CC, or here in the Fine Arts building just to climb upstairs, and get those steps in, and stop and chat with people that we haven't seen in a long time.

Martin Lopez:

And we're also members very involved with alumni services.

Becky Lopez:

Oh, yes.

Martin Lopez:

In fact, we were judges this last homecoming for the... So, well, I guess you can say probably the biggest majority of our social life is WT, the advance of WT, whether they're fine arts, one of the productions, or come into one of the...

Becky Lopez:

The presentations, the Speakers Bureau. All of those programs, that's what we officially call our date night. So you pay so much upfront for the year and then all of a sudden it's like, "Hey, we can go have food, and beverages, and go see a musical or go see an art display or go to the museum and get to listen to a speaker that has some historical presence here in Texas, or even in Canyon." So it's very advantageous.

Myka Bailey:

Do y'all have a favorite event that you'll go to?

Becky Lopez:

Anything with the theater arts and anything to do with musicals. I adore musicals, personally. So my favorite one, and this happened when we first started being members of theater arts, was the musical Nonsense. I definitely would not take my parents to go see that show, but we had a blast.

Martin Lopez:

Oh, I think your dad would enjoy it.

Well, we do. Of course, we're both graduates of the Fine Arts College. I did my undergraduate and master's here and she, well, got her master's degree from this college in Communications.

Becky Lopez:

Both of them.

Martin Lopez:

Both of them actually. Yes, you're right.

So we have a fondness for the Fine Arts College for sure. But also one of the things I do like to do when I get the opportunity, I love to go to some of the athletic events on campus. I particularly like watching track for obvious reasons. And then of course soccer's a pretty big deal in our family as well, particularly with my kids growing up, and then now with my grandkids, our grandkids. We're big soccer folks, so we'd like to go watch the men's and the women when we can. For me, that's a way to stay involved as well by supporting through just, even if it's just being a spectator and enjoying the young people compete as well.

When we go to a production here or something of that nature. It just amazes me the talent that so many of our young people that are students here have. And I can just imagine where some of them will be 10 or 15, 20 years down the road. To us, I think to be able to support them is important because they will in turn be supporters of WT down the road when they've launched their careers.

Myka Bailey:

For sure.

Martin Lopez:

And if you're ever wondering if we're in the stands for the soccer, it's usually we're the loudest ones, especially when we take the kids with us, because they're yelling and screaming like nothing.

Myka Bailey:

That's awesome.

So we talked a little bit about how you paint. Do you still paint?

Martin Lopez:

I don't much anymore for various reasons.

Becky Lopez:

It's the honey do list. That's the various reasons.

Martin Lopez:

But one of the things that I can say after I got my undergraduate degree, because I did work at the museum, there are still things there that I painted or worked on, exhibits that have not been changed from the time I was either a student or a full-time Exhibits Technician. And one of them is, upstairs in the Petroleum wing, there's a big eighty-foot mural. I did the top portion of it, the sky portion and the clouds. And the bottom portion, that's the prairie and the grasses and stuff was done by someone that if you know the museum, 11 murals up front are done by a gentleman by the name of Rugby. His wife...

Becky Lopez:

Harold Rugby.

Martin Lopez:

His wife was working the museum when we were both there, and when I was an undergraduate student. She did the bottom, she painted the bottom part. So her and I painted that together.

Becky Lopez:

And a lot of the Rugby collection was, of course, donated by her after he passed away. So you'll see a lot of stuff. You'll also see the Petroleum section where it looks like a little cave where you go underground.

Martin Lopez:

Oh, for the drill bits?

Becky Lopez:

The drill bits. That was him as well.

Martin Lopez:

Yes. Me and a gentleman named Howard Card, who also had an art background, he and I painted it to make it look like you're underground, because they showcased the different drill bits they used back in the twenties and thirties when the old industry was booming in this area, or starting up to boom anyway.

Becky Lopez:

And in those days when we advertised the Christmas program every year, now you see the little posters or flyers. In those days actually items had to be screen printed, which takes about 20 times as long as just running it through a copier. And he actually created all of the posters.

Martin Lopez:

I would design in conjunction. Sometimes I would do on my own and sometimes I would work with my Director of Exhibits, a woman named Carol Klein. We would design the advertisement, the poster, and then I would hand screen 200, 300 of those prints, because the exhibits shop had all the equipment and stuff like that.

One of my favorite ones, which I still have the poster that's framed and everything was a gift I think was it for first anniversary from you to me?

Becky Lopez:

I swiped... When we were still working here, he did the first screen print and put it out to dry, and after it dried, I took it. And so I kept it. And that was number one of 300. And it actually ended up winning a state award for the museum. We still have it. I got it framed, and matted, and everything. So it's at our house.

Martin Lopez:

It was for an art deco show that we were putting up at the museum. If I remember correctly, I think the date on it is April 4, 1985. It was the day that we would have the grand opening for the show. We'd have a reception thing.

So my job at the museum at the time, big part of it was every time we would change out the art galleries, or we'd have guest artists had come in with their work, I would hang all the photos, all the paintings, or drawings, or prints, or whatever it was, set up the sculptures. I can honestly say of all the jobs I've had over the years, probably that first job out of college at the museum was my favorite, because I just got to do so many different things and it was always so creative. But unfortunately, life got in the way, need for

money, growing family. I was never able to become a famous artist, so to speak. I talked about once I retire, I would try to start painting again. But as she mentioned, my honey do list's long list and I'm not quite through it yet, so maybe a year or two down the road.

Becky Lopez:

He does have the easel, and the paints, and the brushes, everything's there. He just has to finish my list first before you can get started on his list.

Martin Lopez:

Although I have occasionally done a small painting here and there over... Like I did a pencil drawn to my daughter when she was little, I painted some flower stills before, just because I had the time at that particular time in my life, and so I would do that and then life would get busy again and forget about being Pablo Picasso.

But though I had not actively become a painter from what I majored in that degree did impact so much of my career, because it helped me become someone that's a problem solver, someone that can overcome challenges. I didn't realize that until I was older and about mid-career how much that degree actually was beneficial to the things I was doing.

Myka Bailey:

That's amazing.

Well, thank you for listening so far. We're going to hop to a short break and when we come back, I'll have more from Becky and Martin Lopez.

Speaker 4:

Donors to West Texas A&M University give more than their material support, they devote time, expertise, and commitment. WT would not be what it is today without individuals dedicated to our forward progress.

Myka Bailey:

Well, welcome back to I Am WT. This is Myra Bailey and I have Becky and Martin Lopez in the studio today. We talked a lot about the museum and how y'all were here from the beginning.

So, I just want to know a little bit about how WT has changed and how the museum has changed.

Becky Lopez:

So I think probably the biggest change has been the fact that both of us have been here, both as students, student employees, and full-time employees under seven of the 11 different presidents we've had so far. We were here when the JBK Student Center went up, when the changes to the Activity Center were there. When I first started here, the old Sub, which I think just houses UPD right now. That used to be the hub. They would have a cafeteria in there, the post office was there...

Martin Lopez:

The bookstore.

Becky Lopez:

So if you wanted to know anything about what was happening, that was a place to go. That place was packed all the time. And it was the Activity Center that was fairly quiet except in the evenings. The

Activity Center, there were multiple racquetball courts, volleyball courts, those were happening in the spring evenings, that's when things were busy. But if you wanted anything, any action during the day outside of classes, you went to the old Sub. And now it's pretty much, unfortunately, sad and empty.

Martin Lopez:

That was where my office was, by the way, over where the UPD's at, and it's still there. The grants programs with the new person that got the job that I had prior to retirement.

I think one of the things that I can say about the change is that when I was an undergraduate student here, I think we were coming off of a peak enrollment in the seventies as West Texas State University. And then I saw the change where we went from being an independent regional university with their own Board of Regents to joining the University of A&M system, and I believe that was in 1990.

And then I worked in Admissions for about five years. And during that time, we were struggling with admissions in terms of the numbers. Enrollment was dropping. And I think the biggest change I've seen once we started making headway back up and growing in enrollment, is that we went from this attitude of being just a small, down-the-road, local university that mainly just serves kids in the area, to being a little bit more of a, I don't know if I could... You could say global in a sense, but certainly more where we attract students from more than just the panhandle, per se.

And I think that, from my perspective, having been here for so many years, I saw that as a very positive for the university, that we were bringing in a lot of diverse voices, a lot of diverse type of students that had different experiences, certainly our international students. I think we had seen a lot of growth in that, and that was a big benefit as well.

As far as the museum, that was just exploding when I was an undergraduate. When I first started working there as an undergraduate, we were two different buildings. The original Pioneer Hall, the original museum with the additions that had been done, I think back maybe in the seventies or late sixties. And then you had what used to be the University Library. And then while I was working there as a student, and then later full time, the Petroleum wing, the middle section, got built from the ground up. And so I was there, worked there at that time. And that was really exciting. I was very involved in helping getting all those exhibits together inside, once the building was done. I don't know if you've ever been to the museum, but they have a Allosciurus skeleton. It's not an actual real one, but it's a model of one. So I helped put that one together.

The big old Derrick up front in the big glass area in the big open. I remember going out to some of the area ranches in the Panhandle to get a lot of that equipment that we used in that exhibit and helped put that up exhibit. So being very involved with the whole building and learning from some other folks that came in that were professional exhibit-type companies that I would get to work with those folks and learned a lot there. So that was a big change for the museum from prior time.

And then I think the biggest change, I think that's a positive is certainly the education stuff we do. We always had that, but we really have taken it to a different level now. And I think put that education component in there was very something that wasn't as robust during my time at the museum years ago.

Myka Bailey:

Yes, I love the museum. My favorite part, though, is the bottom. It looks like an old town. I'm not exactly sure. Have you seen...

Martin Lopez:

The Pioneer Village?

Myka Bailey:

Okay, that's what it's called. Yes. That's my favorite part.

Martin Lopez:

Yes.

Becky Lopez:

So when we first were working there, again during the Christmas holidays, we as employees would have to dress up in period costumes. Martin was always the bartender at the saloon. I got to work in the Modiste, the little dressmaker store. And so I actually had to put on the lovely little girdle.

Martin Lopez:

Like the corset?

Becky Lopez:

The corset, thank you. And it was a bone whale corset, so it was the real ones that they used to wear in those days. It was so tight that it would leave marks on my ribs and on my chest, because they would sit there and show the people coming in through the village how these were put on.

Martin Lopez:

All the visitors.

Becky Lopez:

So I would stand there and they would sit there and pull the ribbons through. And so I was just sitting there sucking everything in. That was horrible, especially after having baby number three.

Myka Bailey:

I cannot imagine.

Becky Lopez:

But it was fun. That piece was horrible, but walking around in period costume, putting on a persona just for the evening, it was fun. Excuse me.

Martin Lopez:

In fact, I made the Texas Highways is that bartender inside that little deal, what I call the old Pioneer Town, because it's been redone in recent years, but the old Pioneer Town is where we would role play at, and they had a photographer in one year, and I ended up being in the magazine when they talked about the museum, and the Christmas event we would have, and things of that nature.

Becky Lopez:

And I think even throughout the years, we've had lots of opportunities as a family, or family members, to be in publications. So Martin was in Texas Highways for that.

Our oldest daughter was actually in a publication for the Admissions group when they were advertising for recruiting. Actually all four, or not all, but four of our grandchildren were actually in a publication for the bookstore when they were advertising the children's clothing line for WT. I'm trying to think who else. And one of the grandkids actually was in a publication for the child care facility here.

Martin Lopez:
Kids' College.

Becky Lopez:
The Kids' College. There's pictures of either us, or the kids, or the grandkids.

Martin Lopez:
The grandkids, yep.

Becky Lopez:
Somewhere in different magazines, articles, websites. It's been fun.

Myka Bailey:
Y'all guys are really involved.

Martin Lopez:
I think WT quickly became home for us and a place where, even to this day I still come on campus, because it still feels like home to me. I don't feel like I don't belong here anymore, because I don't work here. I feel like, I won't go as far as I own the place, but I certainly feel very attached to the place. And having seen it change so much over the years in such a positive way, and seeing the growth, and seeing the new buildings, and it just becomes part of your life that it would be sad if we ended up moving somewhere far away where it'd be harder to come...

Becky Lopez:
We'd miss it.

Martin Lopez:
On campus, just to be on campus for whatever reason.

Becky Lopez:
And I think that's why during homecoming, you'll see a lot of alumni coming in, because I think for a lot of us, if we're not here close by, it's an opportunity to come back and visit home.

Myka Bailey:
For sure. Why do y'all think other people should be involved at WT?

Becky Lopez:
Probably a lot of the reasons we said. It's an opportunity to come back and give back. So we have the opportunity either through the Arts program, the museum, sporting events, to give back to those kids, show them our support, even if it's just great job, let's make another goal, or touchdown, or that was a fabulous artwork piece that you did.

Martin Lopez:
Matter of fact, we bought some artwork.

Becky Lopez:

Oh, and we've actually purchased artwork from one of the programs.

Martin Lopez:

The art students through the art club they were having... They were showcasing some of the work. They had them for sale. And I found a couple that I liked that matched. If you go to our house, it looks more like an art gallery because most of the stuff on the walls is either my work, or work from other students, or other people.

Becky Lopez:

Or our kids' work

Martin Lopez:

Or our kids' work.

Becky Lopez:

And we have a photographer in the family now, he takes after dad. We have one of our daughters who also is a photographer, but she just does it for fun. But we did, when we purchased those two pieces of artwork at the art show, we had the young lady who had created them sign them. And when we asked her to sign it, she was like, "Why?" And I was like, "We want to be able to say we knew you when."

Martin Lopez:

She was super, super pumped.

Becky Lopez:

Yes. And she even said she was going to call her mom and say, "Mom..."

Martin Lopez:

"I sold my first pieces!"

Becky Lopez:

"I can do this."

Martin Lopez:

It was exciting.

Becky Lopez:

But it was fun. And some of the pieces are outstanding, and again, same thing. If you go out and you visit with some of these students, just even passing by... In my role right now, I do human resources, so I get to go out and help with the recruiting. A lot of the people that we recruit are WT students, so sitting there having conversations with them. And they'll bring up something, it's like, "Oh, I actually had that same experience a hundred years ago when I was here." But names have changed, but the feelings, the processes, have not. So it's that human connection that we all have.

Martin Lopez:

I would say that reason I think other people should get involved and give to WT is, well, number one I would say is the students that come to WT. If there's any way your involvement or your gift can help them complete their education here, or maybe have an opportunity to do something they may not otherwise. Because I'm very aware, like myself, that there's a lot of students here that don't come from families that have a lot of financial resources, and it's not always an easy situation for them to be able to pay for their education.

But, what we're doing through WT in higher education, we're investing in those students and we're looking at what they get here at WT, not only through their classes, but through their extracurricular activities, and stuff that they do outside of the classroom, or involved with student organizations or whatever it is, they're developing those skills and those experiences that will help them go out and be successful in whatever path they choose. And it may be more than one career. It may be they'll decide that they may be our future leaders down... Obviously they are going to be our future leaders, but they may not be aware right now that the experience they're getting, the help they're getting in terms of the education and the experience here, might become very impactful to them 10, 15, 20 years down the road.

And so it's an investment in humans and people that may not get the same opportunity if they're not able to achieve a degree or something to help them whether the career requires it or not. Education is something they just can't never be taken away from you.

Becky Lopez:

Exactly.

Martin Lopez:

No matter what you end up doing in life, it is one of those things that...

Becky Lopez:

You could lose your home, you can lose your car.

Martin Lopez:

You can lose everything.

Becky Lopez:

But you cannot lose your education.

Martin Lopez:

You cannot lose what you've gained through education. And so for me, I think that's, looking back at the experience that I had, that was very... Say, changed the trajectory of my life. I do not see it being near what it was if I would've not gone to college. One of the things is that we're both first-generation college students. So we come from families that neither parent went to college.

I did have an older brother that went for one semester, but out of the 12 kids in my family, I was the first one to enroll and graduate from WT. And that broke the dam. I had all my younger siblings got some post-secondary education, not all of them got a bachelor's, but a lot of them did. We had a lot of educators, got a lot of nurses. The grandkids now they're physician's assistants, physical therapist.

Becky Lopez:

Nurses.

Martin Lopez:
Nurses. I have...

Becky Lopez:
Teachers.

Martin Lopez:
... A great, great niece that is going to WT right now through the nursing program. But that was not something you did in my family before the first one, before I got my degree. Same thing with her. She was the first one in her family, and a lot of cousins and folks...

Becky Lopez:
Followed after.

Martin Lopez:
Education was just not something you aspired for because it wasn't part of what was known to the family at the time. And so that is another reason.

Becky Lopez:
So we're showing our age is what we're telling you basically.

Martin Lopez:
So I think if you're able to, and you have the resources, or you're just looking to be able to help in some way, that you should consider WT as a place that you can use your resources to help, particularly because a lot of what helps students directly isn't stuff that is funded by the state, doesn't necessarily get funded by the tuition and fees that the students pay. So that money that if you're able to give money, it can help students in a more direct way.

Myka Bailey:
That's really cool that both of y'all were first gen, is that what they call it?

Becky Lopez:
Yes.

Myka Bailey:
So do you have advice for maybe someone who's a first gen?

Martin Lopez:
My advice other than, don't ever give up on that goal or that dream, if that's your goal is that I want to get a four-year degree or go on to grad school or whatever, is that you got to just stick with it, and realize that if life happens doesn't mean that that dream or that goal dies, just means I got to take a detour for a little bit, but never give up on it.
Because what you're doing is you're not only helping yourself, you're helping subsequent generations behind you. Your degree is not only your degree, it's your future family's, it's your siblings degree, it's your parents' degree, because what you gain through an education is so valuable that it not only changes

your trajectory, it changes all those people that are part of your life's trajectory. So I would say stick with that dream and find help when you need help. Don't be afraid to ask for help. If you need tutoring, ask "Where can I get help?"

Becky Lopez:

And don't be afraid to talk to your professors, your instructors, your TAs, anything like that. And I'm going to interrupt you here for a second.

When I came back to get my degree, I did like everybody else. Got to take care of those basics first, English, and Math, and all of that. But then once I got to that point where I needed to make a decision as to exactly what I wanted to do, I was struggling.

I had conversations with Martin, but then I ran into a gentleman that was the Dean for Fine Arts, and that was Dr. [inaudible 00:37:01]. He was the one that we went out, had a cup of coffee, had a conversation, and he said, "This is what you need to do. This is what you need to focus." And we spent... And I think I actually met Dr. [inaudible 00:37:15] through Martin, but he was the one that said, "This is where your world lies." And sure enough, I did exactly what he said, and it opened so many doors for me. It was wonderful. But don't be afraid to ask people, because sometimes someone sees something in you that you don't see in yourself, or even your family members because they're too close.

Martin Lopez:

Dr. [inaudible 00:37:42] was my thesis chair when I was working on my master's program.

Becky Lopez:

And that's probably how I know.

Martin Lopez:

He was quite the character.

Becky Lopez:

In fact, he's still, well, I don't know if he's still teaching, but he is actually a president of a university up north now.

Martin Lopez:

In Missouri, last time I had contact with him.

Becky Lopez:

And it's interesting, the people that we meet. I know Martin, I'm sure Martin remembers this when he was a recruiter in Admissions, he actually was the one that recruited Russell Lowery-Hart from high school to come to WT. And now you've seen everything that he's done for Amarillo College, and now he's moved on to another role.

But, I don't know that Russell would've come to WT if Martin hadn't had a chance encounter with him at a recruiting, because it wasn't planned.

Myka Bailey:

For those who don't know, will you speak a little bit on who that is?

Becky Lopez:

Russell Lowery-Hart was, up until recently, the Amarillo College's president, and he actually received multiple accolades, not only for himself but for Amarillo College, just through all his work. He was with Amarillo College, what, five, six years? Something like that?

Martin Lopez:

Sure. He was at WT prior to that.

Becky Lopez:

And while he was at WT, he was actually student body president.

Martin Lopez:

But after he got his doctorate degree, he came back to WT as an employee for, I actually think he was in the Communications department when he first got hired, and then he became involved in Administration. I think he left, he was Associate VP of Academic Affairs or something of that nature of his title.

Becky Lopez:

And then he moved to become president of Amarillo College.

Martin Lopez:

And that's the other thing I think is that that's why I love students so much is that you just don't know where they're going to end up once or out in actively working in their careers and what impact they're going to have on the community and others.

Becky Lopez:

Or the impact that you're going to have on that student.

Martin Lopez:

Well, that's true also, working with students. I think I feel young because I was around college students my whole time, my whole career. So I talked to college students probably more than I talked to people my age when I was working, and that's one of those things that makes WT very...

Becky Lopez:

Unique.

Martin Lopez:

Unique and dear to my heart.

Myka Bailey:

So I'm just going to run back to something you said earlier, Becky. You talked about how you came back to get your college degree, and I was just wondering for those who are, maybe they had to leave for some reason and they're scared and hesitant to come back, if you had a piece of advice you'd give them.

Becky Lopez:

I would say, do it.

Here's the thing, and I will tell you right now, because I actually had this same conversation with someone two days ago. They wanted to come back to school, but they were sitting here thinking, "I'm 10, 20, 30 years older than the typical college student. What am I going to get out of this?"

I went back, I think I was maybe 10 years older than the typical college student when I returned. And I learned so much from them, things that I had forgotten, because when you're young, there's a lot of things that you do and know and say that we, as you get older, you lose that. It was nice bringing that back, bringing that vitality back into my learning, into my education. But also at the same time, I also caught myself being like the mama duck. So it was like, "Okay, we have a project. There are four of us. You will do this. I am not going to accept a B. I have to have an A. So I'm going to make you have an A as well."

So yes, and that unfortunately, I don't know if that was the mama duck or the A personality I have, but one of the two.

Martin Lopez:

Get the returning student in your group.

Becky Lopez:

But yes, but get a returning student in your group. If you are a student, typical student, and you have a return, grab that person, because I guarantee you, he or she's probably the one that's going to bring you cookies or the munchies, because they're going to say, "Oh, you know what? We have a late study night. I'll bring the food and I will make sure that everybody knows exactly what they're supposed to do." And they will take the lead.

Martin Lopez:

It's just never too late.

Becky Lopez:

Never. No.

Martin Lopez:

It's never too late to come back and complete a degree. And most times when you do that, it opens up other avenues and other doors for you. But it certainly, who doesn't want to be around people that are enjoying life, and are so energetic? They're at a time in their life that this is a great time.

Becky Lopez:

And it's a nice reminder.

Martin Lopez:

It's a nice reminder.

But to students, whether you're returning or traditional student, by all means enjoy the experience. Don't make it a drudgery. When you go to class, go with an open mind. When you have opportunities to do things outside of class, whether it's with a group, or just volunteering somewhere, all those things help you...

Becky Lopez:

Become you.

Martin Lopez:

And a better person that's going to make a better career, or employee, or whatever you choose to do once you graduate.

Becky Lopez:

And don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone.

Martin Lopez:

Yes, comfort zone.

Becky Lopez:

I will tell you right now that my worst classes have been and will continue to be Biology, but yet I have children and grandkids who are so into science, and even now I help with the science programs, but I have no clue what I'm doing until I literally have to sit down and read. But it's insightful. And now I'm learning things that I thought, "Oh, I really hate this class." And you will. All of us have that one particular subject that we struggle with, and it's okay.

Myka Bailey:

So I have one more question for y'all, and it might be really difficult, but I know y'all can do it. If you had to say in one word, what would WT mean to you? What would that word be?

Becky Lopez:

Home.

Martin Lopez:

I would say home as well. Home is a place when you walk in, you feel like you belong there. So, from that aspect, it's home.

Myka Bailey:

That's crazy. Y'all have definitely embodied that and showed that, and I love that y'all guys are so involved. It makes me happy that people want to come back. I know that I'm staying in the area, so I hope I'm in the exact same way.

Martin Lopez:

There you go.

Myka Bailey:

Well, thank you so much for y'all joining us today. Really appreciated our time together.

Martin Lopez:

Thank you.

Myka Bailey:

Yes, thank you so much, y'all.

This transcript was exported on May 10, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

Becky Lopez:

That was fun.

Myka Bailey:

If you want to hear more, go to www.wtamu.com/podcast. Thank you, and as always, go Buffs.