



Martin (Marty) Paschkes
ROBS History Project
December 4, 2006 123

Martin George Paschkes got his first name from his maternal grandfather and his middle name from his mother's uncle. He never met his maternal grandfather or his paternal grandparents. He only met his maternal grandmother. His mother had two sisters, Blanche and Fran, whom Martin was fairly close to. Blanche was married to Charlie. Her first husband, Cid had passed away very young. Fran was married to Burt, who was a traveling salesman in the garment industry, and they later moved to Charlotte. Martin said that the family all grew up together basically in Long Beach. His mother's maiden name was Gotsaken, a German name. His father was from Austria. Martin was born in the Bronx in 1945, and in 1948 or 1949 he moved to Kew Gardens. In 1952 or 1953 he moved to Long Beach, where he spent his "glorious childhood". He has an older brother who is a dentist and is extremely bright with a photographic memory. He went to Cornell and was very successful in life.

Marty was asked what his earliest memories were. He recalled his mother taking him and his older brother to Jan's Ice-cream Parlor that was down the street from them when they lived in Kew Gardens. As a child it was quite a place to him. When they moved to Long Beach, there was a Jan's there too. Martin knew the owner and the manager of Jan's. This is typical when you live in a small town. Martin played football for Long Beach High School, and after a game one night he and his friends went to Jan's. He remembered that on that particular night Jan's was short of help, so Martin was asked to wait on tables. He said there were so many advantages growing up in a small community.

What were some of Marty's memories in the early part of his life? He remembered that during the Cold War era having the "Duck and Cover" drills. He also recalled lining up in school for the polio shots.

Marty is married to his wife, Louise. While he was going out with a girl from Massapequa, he was introduced to Louise at a party. It wasn't until several years later at the University of Bridgeport that he met Louise again, and they started dating. They have one son, David, who at the time of this interview, was recently married to his new bride, Jessica. Her family consisted of a mother, father, sister and brother. Marty said that now instead of just the three of them getting together as a family they are now a family of eight. When asked if Marty sees any family traits in their son, he said definitely "yes, absolutely". He said that his wife is stubborn, his brother is stubborn and David is stubborn. Marty said that David is more like his brother, who would never ask for directions if he were lost, because that would show weakness. David was very assertive and creative when he was young. His son currently works for Univision as vice president of Internet Sales.

Marty was then asked to speak about his mother. What gave her pleasure? He felt that he and his brother gave her a lot of pleasure (anguish too). His mother was a "wonderful, wonderful" person, and Marty said that he was told that he takes after her. He loved to cook just like his mother. "She was just a nice, nice person". When he and his brother would play ball, his mother would join them. She had more time than his father to play with them.

Marty's father was born in Austria, and being a very private person, never spoke of his background or family. In fact, at his funeral, they found out that he had a brother whom they never met. While on a trip to Europe, Marty looked up the family name to see if they could find out anything about his father's past. They made several phone calls but were not successful. Marty's father never went to college. He was a wonderful man who was self-taught and very good in math. He worked for a brokerage house in Manhattan in the stock market. He first started as a runner and then worked in the back room becoming a Stock Broker. He worked in that field at Grunthal for over 50 years and retired at the age of 70.

One day, while working at the 7th Grade Center, Marty was called out of class, because there was an elderly gentleman who's last name was Paschkes, and who wanted to meet him. The gentleman had a granddaughter who was in 7th grade at the center. One day she had gone home and told her family that she had a teacher named Mr. Paschkes. They were all shocked, because it is not a

common name. Marty was invited to their home where they shared family photos. He felt that there was some resemblance in the families. They met a few times more, but then the family moved, and Marty never heard from them again.

Marty was then asked if there were other adults exclusive of family that he was close to while growing up that had a formative influence on him. When they lived on the West End, where the houses were so close to each other, he became very close with his neighbors. The neighbors were like an extended family. After 60 years, he still sees his best friend that he grew up with in the neighborhood.

How did Marty become to be an educator? He said it was just “circumstances”. He started out in Nichols School, which was a school for Business Administration. He then transferred to Bridgeport, where he got a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration. He then attended the Roth school for a Masters in Business Administration. At the time, the Vietnam War was going on, so he applied to Officers Training (OTS and OCS) where he did get in. At the same time, a neighbor who owned a private School for the Emotionally Disturbed asked him if he would teach there. He accepted the offer, although he didn’t have any teaching certification or experience and saw that he really enjoyed teaching. At the same time, he was taking a number of science courses, because he wanted to go into Optometry. Instead, he became a science teacher. He then took some state proficiency exams and got certified in math and social studies. He said he ended up with 7 certifications by the time he left Brentwood.

Marty attended Long Beach Schools starting with the 3rd grade in Central, then the junior high school and then Long Beach High School. He said that he had really great teachers there. One he could never forget was Mr. Joe Caruso, who was a history teacher who had a way about him that made you want to learn. If you had detention with him, he would take you outside, and you had to work on a rock pile crushing rocks. This was his form of punishment. He had another history teacher, Mr. Poppa, who taught from a Yoga position on the top of his desk. Martin also attended several colleges after high school including Nassau Community, Suffolk Community, LIU, Stony Brook, Nichols College and University of Bridgeport. He liked his Physics teacher at Nassau Community College, who was a wonderful woman. In school, Marty participated in several sports including football, baseball and wrestling.

Marty was then asked what his least favorite subject was in school. He said it was languages, which he did not do well in. He got two years credit after taking 4 years of Spanish.

Martin's first paying job was in a deli called Lucky Twins. He also worked as a cabana boy at a beach club and a camp counselor. At one point he opened his own camp after having directed two other camps. He said that owning and running a camp is a very hard job. Over the years he has worked with thousands of children. He says it keeps you young and is very rewarding.

Does Marty have a favorite season? He said that he always enjoyed summer. Summer is a time for vacations and the beach. When asked what his favorite aroma as a child was, he said it was cooking aromas, because his mother was a wonderful cook.

Was there a tough decision that Marty had to make either personally or professionally? What is it that made him proud? One of the toughest decisions was deciding if he was going to continue in education. Originally he entered teaching to avoid the draft. When they ended the draft, with his degree in Business Administration, he could have then gone into business. Staying in education and obtaining his degree in education administration was a decision he was glad he made, because he loved working in Brentwood. To the answer of what made him proud, he said that there were a lot of things he was proud of. He is proud of his son and how he turned out with all of his accomplishments in life. Marty had always given him the leeway to try different things. Marty is also proud of a lot of accomplishments that he himself has had with students. He has had students stop him in the street or in stores to thank him for having helped them. He said that means a lot to a teacher.

When did Marty first come to Brentwood? How did it first come to his attention? He said it was in 1970 when he had gotten married and was working in a private school making very little money. He had heard about the Brentwood School District in an ad in the newspaper. He figured he had nothing to lose in applying, although he did not have any education credits. He did say that he had a lot of credits in science, which was something Brentwood was looking for. He met with Ruth Rosenthal, who was the Assistant Principal of East Junior High

School at the time, and she said he got the job. He then met with Steve Howland, who had just become principal of the building and hired him that day. He then attended Stony Brook University to take the education courses that he needed in order to get his teaching certification. His student teaching was waived due to his previous teaching experience at the private school.

He was then asked what his first impressions of Brentwood were? What was his experience like his first year of teaching there? He said it was a challenge. They were growing years. He said it was a strange mix that we had in Brentwood. For example, in his second or third year at East Junior High School, there was a student who yelled, "Hey, Mr. Paschkes!" and took his pants down and "mooned" him right in the hallway. Marty ran into that student 25 years later, and the student apologized to him. Marty then said that he only had good things to say about Brentwood. He thought it was a great district. One of the things that did strike him was the way that everybody interacted. Different types of people, but they all worked well together.

Marty was then asked what he saw as the biggest change in the district since he started working there. The biggest change he sees is in the gangs coming in. When they used to break up a fight, they didn't have to worry about guns and knives, and now it's a thought. Now if you break up a fight or something, a student might threaten you. A lot of the new students coming into the district are coming from countries that are war torn, so the only thing they know is violence and survival. The value of life in these countries is not the same as it would be if you were born in the United States. Brentwood has gone through a lot of changes.

While working in Brentwood, Marty was involved in many programs and activities. He started the PTA in East Junior High School. He started the Jeopardy program where the four junior highs challenged each other. He started the stock market in the school. He said that he could honestly say looking back that there were a lot of things that he involved himself with, with the help of others, which were very positive. He said that previously having taught in a school for the emotionally disturbed really helped him teach in Brentwood.

What did he see as his job description and purpose for doing what he did for 35 years? Mary said that he was motivated, because he enjoyed working with

the kids and the staff. He said they had a lot of fun. "In order to work in a district like Brentwood, you have to really like the kids, you have to like coming to work, and you have to like the people you are working with." "If you don't have those 3 things, you can't survive in Brentwood for a career, because Brentwood is not the easiest district to teach in." "It's a frustrating district, meaning that you want the children to learn, you want them to pass, you want them to be successful, and sometimes it's like fighting, because they don't see that. The children don't see you helping them. They think it's you against them, which it's not". Marty said that Brentwood is a district that has a terrific vocational program, but because of the Federal Acts where the students are required to pass so many tests, there is no room on their academic schedules to take advantage of these programs. The district needs more of the vocational training, not less.

Mary was then asked if he still had contact with his former colleagues. He said that he meets with them at a monthly breakfast get-together.

Was there anyone who was most helpful or a mentor for Marty when he first started working in Brentwood? There were a number of people like Ruth Rosenthal who gave him the support he needed and Steve Howland, who Marty said made it an enjoyable place to work. Many of his colleagues were also very helpful. He said you could learn a lot from seeing how other teachers teach.

Martin was asked if he had a favorite year. He said that he had all good years, but that one of the things that came to mind was when Steve Howland retired. Marty was working on putting together an event for Steve's retirement, and since Steve was a very big Giant fan, Marty got the Giants to come to East Junior School to play volleyball against the faculty. Steve was thrilled, and all the money made on the event went to the Make a Wish Foundation. Steve was presented with a plaque and he got to shake hands with his "heroes".

What are some things that he is proud of during his career in education? One of the things that he was very happy with was when he partnered up with Jim Doik, the math lab teacher. Steve was teaching the D track math classes at the time. Together he and Jim were able to get 80% of their students to pass the RCT minimum math competency test that was required for graduation. This was a major accomplishment, so much so, that the district wanted to send them to other schools to teach their teachers how they did it. Many of the parents were

thrilled to see their children pass too.

At one time, in the early 70's when the district was on split-session, and Marty finished at noon each day, he opened up a gourmet store in Locus Valley. His first year's salary in Brentwood was \$4,500.

Marty's last assignment before retirement was Assistant Principal at the 9th grade center working with Peter Perlow, John Galaris, Frank Carnase, Joe Forte and Jose Suarez. Martin retired in 2004 and was asked what he has been doing since. He said he plays tennis, golf and loves the beach. In February he goes out to Utah to go skiing. He enjoys cruising and fishing on his boat. He does a lot of shopping and cooking.

Why did Martin decide to retire? He just got a feeling that it was time to retire. He felt that there was a change in the building going on. Most of the people he started with had left. He didn't like a few things that were going on in the building. He felt that the building needed a change. There were so many things that he wanted to do, and he had his health, so he thought it a good time to retire. At first he thought that he was going to miss working, but after getting a taste of retirement, he really enjoyed not working. He said he is very happy not working.

Was there any thing about all his years working in Brentwood that he would have done differently? What he would have liked to do was become an administrator earlier, and instead of being an assistant principal, he would have liked to be principal of a building. For the most part, he would not have changed everything that he had done.

What is he going to miss? He said he's not missing anything. He went to last year's end of the year party and stayed only for about an hour. Since so much had changed, he felt like an outsider.

What advise would Marty give to a new teacher starting out? He said that, "the most important thing is that you have to enjoy what you are doing. You have to like kids." "The purpose of being a teacher is to make them successful." "The purpose of being an administrator is to make the teachers successful." "So what the advice is, enjoy what you are doing, love the kids and if you don't, get out."

How would he like to be remembered? Marty would like to be remembered as someone who cared and went out of his way to make life a little bit better. "If you can make life better for the kids, the families, the teachers.... whatever it is... for anybody, you are a winner." "If you can do that, that's all you need."