

VCS Alumni Podcast Episode 5 - Dr. William Guiffre audio Transcript

Bob Dreeste

Welcome to another episode of The Victor Alumni Podcast. I'm your host Bob Dreeste and today I'm joined by Jenner Davis. Together, we made the trip to the beautiful Hudson region of New York State to interview a very special guest. Today's guest was a Senior High School principal from 1975 to 1990. He had several children who also attended. He is going to be turning 90 years old on November 15th and he is also a veteran of the US Navy. If you went to Victor during the 70s and 80s, you already know who I am talking about. If you don't, you're about to meet an instrumental figure in the culture that defines VCs. I can be talking about none other than Dr. William Guiffre. Dr. Guiffre, welcome to the podcast. And thank you so much for allowing us this opportunity to visit with you today. Tell us about your recent 90th birthday celebration this past weekend.

Dr. Guiffre

Well, as many of you know, we have a large family. Six daughters and one son, twenty-some grandchildren. I don't know how many great grandchildren, but they all showed up for the party and we had a great party. Really did. I saw pictures of myself I never saw before, and my daughter Mary from all on cardboard. I'll start off by saying that was a major event in my life. My wife turned 90 before me. She was not a cougar. I found her and at that time I said I'm going to marry you. And I had only met her. Yeah, but she was such a beautiful woman. She was a year ahead of me in college at the University of Rochester. I was a Navy midshipman, and she was in a nursing school, and she really just caught me. I just absolutely fell in love with her.

Bob Dreeste

Where was she from?

Dr. Guiffre

She was from Brighton, a local girl. And she was a cheerleader. And I thought she was probably the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen. And she still is. She's 90. The poor gal now has to take care of me a lot cause I have neuropathy which keeps me slowed down. My feet don't work anymore. And Ann does everything, so I'll start with that. Awesome. You've been the love of my life and stays that way.

Bob Dreeste

At 90, that's awesome.

Dr. Guiffre

And I, you know, we just celebrated her birthday same way at a party.

Bob Dreste

Victor style.

Dr. Guiffre

I don't drink anymore. Gave that up because it was good for my soul to do that. But I think that was a common thing for my generation. There was a lot of drinking, some of which I will share with you as I talk as I talk to you today. And I'll tell you how I gave that up too.

Bob Dreste

So go way back here, Jenner and I were talking on the way down, you know, where did this guy grow up? Give us a little synopsis of where, I know it's Virginia, but talk about your you know where you grew up, how you came to the and you know how your whole journey ended up.

Dr. Guiffre

Actually, I was born in Brooklyn, NY. And we were there. During World War 2 and my father was in the military for the Second World War and he was gone for a long time. He was in the Battle of the Bulge. He was a major in the 1st Army. He was a model for me. And my brother Joe, my brother Joe and I are very, very close now. We were the oldest in the family. And we moved to Virginia because after the war my father came home, he had to take over the family business, which happened to be a distributorship, which is what I was referring to a little bit.

Bob Dreste

Yeah, right.

Dr. Guiffre

I gave up alcohol finally. Mostly because I love my wife enough to recognize that if I kept on drinking beer, I'd weigh 400 pounds, which I didn't need to do. So we went to Virginia. And both my brother Joe and I thought we wanted to be a priest. So we went to Charles Borromeo Seminary in Baltimore and started our studies.

Bob Dreste

Were you like 18 at this time?

Dr. Guiffre

No, we were out of out of of grade school. This is a high school and we both studied there for three years or four, something like that. And then, well, left there and went to a full high school, which is a very good, very good school district.

Bob Dreeste

After Falls Church, What made you choose U of R as a like how did you?

Dr. Guiffre

Joe and I both have been in the seminary and we both love the seminary at the same time. And we went to public school high school for the first time. I took the Navy Scholarship exam out and Joe took it also. He was older than I was, so I won the scholarship to U of R. Scholarship.

Bob Dreeste

Like ROTC, right?

Dr. Guiffre

ROTC everything paid for, if you know anything about U of R that was a considerable scholarship, and Anne had gone to EU of R nursing school.

Bob Dreeste

Full wow. Even back then, it's probably most expensive school.

Dr. Guiffre

And she was there.

Bob Dreeste

What did you study when you went to U of R?

Dr. Guiffre

I thought I wanted to be a physics teacher. I knew I wanted to be a teacher for some reason, and I did. And I thought I wanted to be a physics teacher until I took my first exam in physics. And then I learned quickly. No, physics is not for you. So I went to my second love, which was English, right? I majored in English and education and that's how that's how started the path.

Bob Dreeste

And then coming out of school, your first job out of U of R was?

Dr. Guiffre

U.S. Navy.

Bob Dreeste

What you that was part of the ROTC.

Dr. Guiffre

Yes, three years active in five years in-active duty in the Navy.

Bob Dreeste

And what did you do in the Navy?

Dr. Guiffre

I did almost everything in the Navy. I was technically assigned to a large ship, the Capricornia. And my wife and I were married right out of college because we had to wait. We had to wait till I graduated before we could get married. According to the terms of the contract I had for the scholarship. So that was right after we were married, I got assigned to the ship and the ship left for a tour of the Caribbean. And I left Ann staying here after we were married. But that was. That was one of the toughest things in my life. Was leaving her at shore when we were first married.

Bob Dreeste

I did my homework. Were you into, like cryptography and stuff like that in the in the Navy?

Dr. Guiffre

I was an officer of the deck underway, which means you could you in control of the ship. I was a public relations publications officer of classified material. I had a top secret cryptographic clearance Which meant I was in charge of the destruction of all the publications that were codes which we did every month and we burned them and I was responsible for that. I was also the public relations officer for the ship. Ah, I was the chaplain aboard ship. I had to lead the services every Sunday for those who wanted to come. I was also a wave guide officer. In other words, I was responsible for leading the small vessels. Those would be the The LCM, the little boats used for invasion. Thank God I never had to go. I served on board that ship until I got out and this thing I was there for three years. Then I went into Five years of in active duty. And because we had so many children I qualified for financial help as an officer retired and that was God sent. So I never paid a cent for my education. All the way up through my doctorate. And then I went back to U of R.

Bob Drete

So you after this you went back? After the Navy went back to U of R?

Dr. Guiffre

Doctorate right. It was either that or go into the beer business. And my brother Joe was already assigned to that. My dad had come back home after the war and then he died young and my mother took over the beer business briefly.

Bob Drete

Right.

Dr. Guiffre

And then Joe stepped in and I could have stepped into that too. But my relationship with Joe was just too close as my boss, right? He would have been a good boss. And everything would have been absolutely his way. Yeah. He's still that way.

Bob Drete

So you came back to U of R and got your doctorate? And then what was like the first job that you had or where did you go first? School district or when you get when, after your Doctorate. What was the first school district that you worked?

Dr. Guiffre

Brighton. And then I started teaching at the junior high school as an English teacher. I went from being a teacher of English to junior high school kids to a guidance counselor. I began to realize that things weren't all perfect in education, and the only way you could really change it is if you moved up in the rank.

Bob Drete

Right, see, this is stuff that if people at Victor, like I said, didn't know about you, I guarantee they don't know. But this is great information I never knew. That you were in the Navy, you know, went. I didn't know you went to U of R.

Dr. Guiffre

One of the things I remember about the Navy. Was that as officer of the deck in the Navy means that you have full command of the ship when your officer the deck underway, we had an officer who was the executive officer of the ship. Who had been a Navy fly boy. And then he got assigned to our ship as Executive Officer.

Speaker

Mm.

Dr. Guiffre

I had to tell him to leave the deck. And he kept talking to me and I was we were in a maneuvering situation where we were as a whole fleet of ships moving on command all ships at the same time making.

Bob Dreeste

Great. Yeah, right. Coordinated type.

Dr. Guiffre

That could involve her. What do coordinated exercises? So I had to ask him to leave the deck that gave me more pleasure than most things.

Bob Dreeste

Did it start with like get out of my face?

Dr. Guiffre

And you know, I was polite. I was courteous. Yeah, I followed military decor.

Bob Dreeste

Right.

Dr. Guiffre

I had a fabulous chief Petty Officer who was my assistant in the office. Chief Palaba great guy My work with me on the deck. It was a chief Petty Officer and I became his godfather. Oh wow, that was one of the greatest honors of my life. Fabulous man. And I remember Joe Belabaz saying, who was the guy who worked with me in the office? We did publications. We did all the paperwork. I was involved in writing a yearbook. For the ship, when we went to the Med, we adopted an Italian girl, little girl. And gave a big party for her. And then I did. Cruise. How about that? That's kind of mixed like mixed things. You did a lot of different things, right?

Bob Dreeste

Right, not just one-dimensional.

Dr. Guiffre

Well, one of the reasons I got out of the Navy was so many of the men took their took their wedding rings off.

Speaker

And.

Dr. Guiffre

Girls were grab and I couldn't do that.

Bob Dreeste

So so, you know, one of my questions is, what inspired and you kind of answered this a little bit. Heard it in one of your prior answers there. Know what inspired you to become a principal? Why is it you're like? I want to be a principal. And like you said, part of it was like to affect any change you had to be.

Dr. Guiffre

You had to be up a little bit in. Rank right.

Bob Dreeste

If you were just a teacher, was very hard to right so.

Dr. Guiffre

Well, a teacher. Teacher upon teacher, you might have a personal influence, but there were occasions as. When I knew this would happen if I weren't a principal, I couldn't just step in and say, you know what you're doing is not right. This is not good for the kids, blah blah. I think that would be offensive to a fellow teacher, right? So I didn't do that. But when I made principal, I had some influence on as a as a counselor. Teachers would come to me and I was a good counselor. I was kind of a directive counsellor, right? Which I think I is the best. Yeah. Well, the. The other kind of counsellor were called non directive and I thought myself hell, oh, that's not a good being, a non directive. You're not going in any way, right? Just around in circles.

Bob Dreeste

So you took over for for Carl Palumbo. He had been there a long time, right?

Dr. Guiffre

Yes, a long time and was Rightly made Superintendent of schools. And then when I applied. Carl knew me. We went to the same church, things like that. So I I had known Carl

and he wanted George Miller who was a former football coach. At the at Victor and he was an outstanding math teacher, great coach and head football coach.

Bob Drete

I had him for a football coach. I mean, when I was there, when he was vice principal under you, but yeah.

Dr. Guiffre

He was a good man. Carl wanted George Miller to become the principal and the board of Education wanted me. One of the humorous things about the Board of Education. Was one of the questions they asked me.

Bob Drete

Is on your interview?

Dr. Guiffre

Part of my interview I showed up for my interview and of course interviews are very important. I had mentioned earlier that my father, when he came back from the war, took over the family Budweiser business and I happened to have a beer can nailed to my mailbox. Mailbox door that dropped down and Victor. Oh really? Budweiser can nailed from the bottom up and I was asked about that by the Board of Education. They said Mr. Guiffre. Tell me about. Beer can you have on your mailbox? I said, well, have you ever opened my mailbox? No, I said. Well, inside that mailbox I have a statue of the bus virgin. Now what's wrong with that? And of course I'm just fooling around with that. Never forget. Kind of figured I wasn't going to get the job.

Bob Drete

We're going to have some fun with them, right?

Dr. Guiffre

Yeah. And we and they when they said that and they laughed and I knew I had their job.

Bob Drete

So. Who was the vice principal when you first got there?

Dr. Guiffre

Vice Principal was Jim Sullivan. Was hired by Carl as Vice Principal and then Jim left education. Kids did not accept him. And you, no matter what you do, if the kids don't really grab ahold of you and listen to you.

Bob Drete

This kind of really ties into my next question because. And it's like, how would you describe your approach to being a principle to being the principle of victor?

Dr. Guiffre

Well, I wish I had my retirement video because I described that pretty well there and I haven't seen that in a long time. I believe very strongly that the most important person in the school was not the principal. It was. The guidance counselor was not the teachers, it was a student.

Bob Drete

Yep.

Dr. Guiffre

The students were the most important part of the school. None of us. The others, like myself, were there for any other reason but to make the students better people and learn stuff. And that's how I operated.

Bob Drete

Yep.

Dr. Guiffre

I often hug people. I didn't hesitate. I could see a football player who was hurrying from and I put my arms around him and give him a hug and say come on for a cup of coffee and a doughnut and I had kids stopping in my office.

Bob Drete

I was going to say it's like, you know, in my time there because I was there during, during your time and it was like.

Dr. Guiffre

All the time.

Bob Drete

You were the type of person that you didn't want to get called into the you know the principal's office because you were afraid of what he do. It was because you didn't want. You know, you had this rapport with people that didn't want to let you. You know, if you got to call in there, you just feel so bad. It's like, oh, no, I can't let Mr. Guiffre down. I can't. Can't end up in that office. Just can't happen. I think that's where you really had an approach that was like it wasn't. My way or the highway, it was like, you know, we're all in this together. And you know, we're all. And that's the thing about Victor. And I think it still exists today. Is that Victor is like one big family and IA lot of it too is just the fact that the whole campus is all right there. You. My kids went to Penfield. You know, these kids are going to all different schools and then by the time they get to be seniors, they all kind of amalgamate up in the the Senior High School. Victor, everybody knew everybody. All the way up and when we got there was like you were kind of like this father figure. You agree? And it was. Somebody did not want to let. You knew they weren't playing around, but you just had a lot of respect and it went both. I mean, you had a lot of respect for the students too, so but anything else you want to say about your, your approach and like?

Dr. Guiffre

Well, there were. There were kids in the school and who would come into my office. Because they need a hug.

Bob Dreste

Yep.

Dr. Guiffre

And that sounds awful sexy. But it. Wasn't how I at all. And the kids never saw it that way. But I remember, I can't remember the girl's name now, but she was in often to see me. And she would just come in and say I think you need a hug, right? But I couldn't do that today and there's no way. No way you could do that. Couldn't get away with it.

Bob Dreste

Right. No way. What were some of the challenges of being the principal of Victor? What were like some of the hard things.

Dr. Guiffre

Biggest challenge really was making sure I didn't treat my kids with preference. That was difficult and I had to at one point suspend one of my kids who go unnamed because I didn't want to embarrass her. And one of the funniest things I ever had happened to me was I suspended her because she took my keys without permission and went into the school and

looked over a prepared exam that she was going to be taking an exam, right? She brought one of her friends and . I did not give her my keys. Took them right now. I would not hesitate to give them my keys if they wanted to go open and play. Ah, basketball or stuff. That right? So they did have some advantages that they had as being the kids of the of the principal and but they will get.

Bob Dreeste

How how? How did you find out? How did she get caught?

Dr. Guiffre

The teacher was a very bright teacher. Recognize all her answers and all his other kids answers.

Bob Dreeste

We're like, right on point.

Dr. Guiffre

For one hundred 100% on key and he said nobody could do that. I think that was Mr. Thompson. Oh really? Yeah. Turn him in. So I suspended.

Bob Dreeste

Yeah, I don't. I don't know. Like you may be the only principle in America that has suspended their own kid. I would bet there's lesson.

Dr. Guiffre

The funny part of that was Larry McNelly was a very popular teacher, came in with tears in his eyes and he hugged me, he says, Oh, Bill, I can't believe you suspended your own kids. I said Harry, if your kid had done that, he'd have been suspended. No problem. So that was a memory I have.

Bob Dreeste

I just look back at, you know, some of the time Victor at the time was a really good. I mean the type of mischief, if you will. Was was, you know, pretty tame compared to what we see today. And I see no, it's like every once in awhile someone would do a lawn job.

Dr. Guiffre

It was. Yeah. Right, exactly.

Bob Dreeste

Somebody would break in and go. My friends broke in and went swimming. You remember those guys?

Dr. Guiffre

One of the guys he told. One of the funny, one of the big problems that Victor, I think about everybody in there was the smoking. Right. I just. That see smoke going out of John's and one time I was walking into the boys John and some guy stood in my way and before I realized that I had punched him in the gut and I said I said to him.

Speaker 3

Mistake.

Dr. Guiffre

Don't ever stand in my way when I'm trying to get into the bathroom. I'm sorry, Mr. G. Sorry as I then the funnier 1 was. What? What does a principal do when he has girls at school? Do you walk into the bathroom with a girl? Yes, if they don't listen to me. My responsibility was to keep the rules and I saw smoke coming out of a girl's room and I knocked on the door. Put the smoked cigarettes out and come out of there now. No answer as I am going to come in. I don't care what you're doing. I'm coming in there. If you don't through and and the girl will probably remember this. But she had a sense of humor.

Bob Dreeste

Yeah.

Dr. Guiffre

She was sitting on a stall. Smoke pouring over her. Right. And she looks at me when I open the door. How you doing, Mr. G? Everything OK said it will be as soon as you put that dumb cigarette out. Of the two, incense I remember vividly, and she was a sweetheart, but she just got me laughing, you know? And but the kids have to know, I would.

Bob Dreeste

Yeah.

Dr. Guiffre

Would walk out of those kinds of experiences and I would struggle. Yes. They're funny for yourself.

Bob Dreeste

Yeah, pretty much. I mean, it was nothing like I say, like some of the stuff you see today, it's, you know, that was back in the day. Was big stuff though. But what were some of the memorable moments you had during your tenure? Maybe just funny, rewarding, you know, really hard. Like when you look back, it's like, oh, I remember this one day. Oh, man. Or, you know is there. Is there anything that sticks out like? That that was just like, I mean, you've shared some of the funny stuff, but you know, it's just like a really hard thing. Oh, I'm going to have to suspend this kid and it's it's whatever it was. Was there any of that?

Dr. Guiffre

Normally, if if there's something very serious, if a law was broken, I always involve the police. Yeah, I would. I would not deal with a police matter.

Bob Dreeste

I can remember a few of those times.

Dr. Guiffre

I would call the state police because they didn't have any kids in school. So they would make pretty good decisions and they handle the kids pretty, pretty well.

Bob Dreeste

Right.

Dr. Guiffre

So those are those are difficult times because I hated to see kids get in trouble.

Bob Dreeste

Yeah. I can remember a few times and it was always the state police all sudden, you know, state police would pull up in front there and the cafeteria was right there and they'd come, you know, and they'd be walking somebody out, you know, and you'd be right. By them like. So. How about? Who are some of the other administrators, teachers or whatever? Do you keep in touch with a lot of them? Who are some of the ones that you know, you remember, like, you know from your time there?

Dr. Guiffre

Well, the one I've been in most contact with is Marlene Smith, and she was the person I hired to call when people when teachers called in sick.

Bob Dreeste

Yep.

Dr. Guiffre

Marlene would take care of her. Calling me and letting me know that they needed to have a substitute and she would call substitutes for me and she has said.

Bob Dreeste

Sure, Mrs. Saxby.

Dr. Guiffre

And Mrs. Saxby was there and Carol Collure So I would remember mostly the people that worked for me.

Bob Dreeste

OK. Yeah.

Dr. Guiffre

Carol Kolori was marvelous when I was working in my Doctorate because she helped by typing. I. I couldn't type and she would type my my pages for my dissertation.

Bob Dreeste

Yeah. I remember that we had to like actually type. I took a typing class with Mr. Santoro.

Dr. Guiffre

Yeah. And I never, never had. And without her help, I never would have gone through. And I can't remember the name of the young fella who was into computers, and I wasn't the computers to me. Just a fog. Yeah, and he. Set my dissertation up so it can be read by computer. And I he was marvelous.

Bob Dreeste

Yeah.

Dr. Guiffre

So those those were people I remember. Marlene still contacts me faithfully every birthday and I contact her whenever I think she needs some lifting up. She's a great gal.

Bob Dreeste

Well, I can tell you this. Everybody knows you and remembers To go far farther than I just looked you up on Facebook. That I got on that lap, but I looked. He got well over 1000 followers, so it's like.

Dr. Guiffre

You're kidding me.

Bob Dreste

No, check it out. You have, you know, and it's people like I will. I will see. I'll be out with people and they'll be like, you know, Victor, people, you know, I remember Mr. Guiffre, remember. You know, it's just like you had a huge impact on people. To this day, you know, like I say, there's a lot of people that still will bring up memories of, you know, something that happened.

Dr. Guiffre

Well, I've had choice as myself.

Bob Dreste

Let's talk a little bit about post Victor activities after. So I know that after you were done being the principal, which was 1990 around there, you then went on the school board, right? The Board of Education.

Dr. Guiffre

Yes, the Board of Education.

Bob Dreste

How long did you do that?

Dr. Guiffre

Several years. And then I decided I, my wife and I wanted to travel. So I decided not to rerun for the board.

Bob Dreste

What year is this like 95-6?

Dr. Guiffre

I couldn't honestly say, you know, when you get old like I am, those things all they all blend into a blur.

Bob Dreeste

Yeah.

Dr. Guiffre

Like I couldn't tell you that. But we went and I travelled a lot. And one of the best things we ever did we vacationed on Kiawah Island one time and fell in love with it. We bought a condo down there and when we decided to sell it, the price had gone up so high that we made a tremendous profit on the condo.

Bob Dreeste

Right.

Dr. Guiffre

And then we took the money from the sale, invested it, and then was able to rent. Until we decided to come back home to be near kids and that's what we did. So I we had a fabulous retirement and basically it was paid for by the condo we had bought.

Bob Dreeste

Right. Yeah. Perfect.

Dr. Guiffre

So it was good.

Bob Dreeste

Did you live? I read that you lived like up in the Adirondacks too, in.

Dr. Guiffre

We've been there for years. We've been there 50 some years. We have a summer home there.

Bob Dreeste

Is it right in inlet?

Dr. Guiffre

It's right on 4th Lake.

Bob Dreeste

So I know like, you know, we did a podcast with Tom Turner.

Dr. Guiffre

Yeah.

Bob Dreeste

He's from up there like lime kiln. He's up in that area too, and the Hurlbutts.

Dr. Guiffre

I remember Tom, Oh yeah.

Bob Dreeste

We when I was in high school, we would go up there every year to the Hurlbut's. Had they had owned all these little camps and they rented them out online.

Dr. Guiffre

Right.

Bob Dreeste

And you know Jerry Stryker.

Dr. Guiffre

Oh yeah.

Bob Dreeste

Whole bunch of us Kevin Beatson and we all go up there and rent all these places out. Was absolute. I mean, great place up there. So we're in the in the town of New Windsor, New Windsor here. How long have you lived here?

Dr. Guiffre

Six years. And this this has been this is a home that's owned by my daughter and her husband, and we rent it. It keeps us close to the kids here. Yep, and all our kids are in this area. Umm, not in the same way but like for example Mary is not too far away. We moved here because we thought we were both getting older. Her he and I were both getting older. We better be near our kids. Sure, because when you get this age you you have things, yeah.

Bob Dreeste

It's perfect idea, yeah.

Dr. Guiffre

Yeah.

Bob Dreeste

So one of the one of the parts I really want to talk about too is. Your book writing. How many books have you published so far?

Dr. Guiffre

66 published.

Bob Dreeste

In the genres all children's books, right? Talk about that a little bit about how, how, how it came to be and what the books are about and things like that.

Dr. Guiffre

Well, there, that was a labor of love. But it kept me occupied. And now the reason I liked it so much was it brought me into contact with kids again. Right and. It started when Beth, my, second oldest daughter. I am was always losing her glasses I wave. And she would say honey, have you seen my glasses? And you would get that over and over and over again. Well, you can hear that just so much before you, before you have to hold your tongue or lose your wife on the other. I said no, I have not seen your glasses. Where'd you leave them? And I said, Dad, why don't you write a book about that? So that came the first book, which was grandma's glasses, and I used the names of all my grandchildren that were alive at that point as. Those who helped me find her glasses or helped her find their glasses. And that's how I started. And that book went over so well.

Bob Dreeste

Well, was it in? But like bookstores or how?

Dr. Guiffre

It was. I found the publisher who would publish it. Publishing a book is difficult. Nobody knows you have to. If you're a famous person, Sir, you know like. Hillary Clinton write a book and see.

Bob Dreeste

Right over it.

So, did you do any book signings for summer?

Dr. Guiffre

Oh, tons of book signings. They were always fun and I've done a lot of books, book sales with all my books and one of my daughters has been. Very good with going with me. The put the books down. We have still have signings so.

Bob Dreeste

If some if somebody out there wanted to get some of these books, I mean would like a place like Amazon have them if you want on to Amazon and.

Dr. Guiffre

No, I decided that was too much of an effort, right? Oh, I still have some books, but I. I'm not active in selling them, but if anybody wanted to. Really get a head of the book. They would just have to get a hold of me on e-mail and say how's chances are getting some books and then they can pay for them.

Bob Dreeste

Yeah. But careful what you wish for, because there's probably a lot of the books. Are they? What age are they geared toward?

Dr. Guiffre

Readers and their grandma's glasses was the first one. Eddie the elf would be Elvis. 2 Christmas books. Another thy're they're probably the most literary of my books.

Bob Dreeste

Right.

Dr. Guiffre

One about the first gift of Christmas which tells of Christ shall need in a blanket.

Bob Dreeste

Yep.

Dr. Guiffre

She's looking for a place to stay. And he gives Mary his blanket that his grandmother had made him. And that becomes the first gift of Christmas ends up as being the first gift of Easter. One, it's agood story.

Bob Dreeste

Yeah.

Dr. Guiffre

An author who once again lives in Kiawah but doesn't want to leave because he has a good there and my father feed him all the time and finally decided. Look, Oscar, there's lots of good food for you to eat. You're going to have to get it on your own. And it's a lesson in leaving the house.

Bob Dreeste

Yeah, they all have a lesson in them. Yeah, it's awesome.

Dr. Guiffre

And the elf who would be Elvis? And that's just a fun book. But Eddie, who wants to be Elvis Presley impersonator and he becomes one and he wins a prize.

Bob Dreeste

Right. What characteristics, qualities do you think make for a good principle?

Dr. Guiffre

Well, I first, first of all, I think its most important, essential for a principle is to know himself. Know who you are. Know who you aren't and don't think you have all the answers 'cause you don't, so be humble. The second, don't be afraid to love the kids. You need it. Want it? They thank you for it by showing you love. And that's not such a bad thing to have.

Bob Dreeste

Applies to life.

Dr. Guiffre

It does know who you are.

Bob Dreeste

Do you think principals today face a whole different set of challenges than when you were a victor? Or do you think it's about the same or is it different?

Dr. Guiffre

I do. No, I think it's. I think there's been a lot going on in our society that.

Bob Dreeste

Just the whole social media.

Dr. Guiffre

Yeah. And I think the biggest one of the biggest challenges is the electronic self. Know the the cell phones.

Bob Drete

Facebook and all the you know.

Dr. Guiffre

Yeah, all I kind of saw. And I would find that very difficult to deal with.

Bob Drete

It's such a tsunami of it, too, that it's almost tough to even put up some type of defense against it.

Dr. Guiffre

That means that you've got to have. You got to be recognized. I want to deal with that stuff. You got to deal with it. You just can't let it run your life. Youyou have to be in control of your school and you not let your school be controlled by outside forces. So.

Bob Drete

When was the last time you were up the school?

Dr. Guiffre

And like, well, it's been been recently because every time we come by the Thruway, there we go out, get off.

Bob Drete

And take a little swing through.

Dr. Guiffre

Yes, she'll stop at our house and try to say hello to the people who bought it.

Bob Drete

There, which I was. I was. I was telling you earlier as a good friend of mine bought it and raised his kids.

Dr. Guiffre

Yeah, yeah.

Bob Drete

All went to Victor and absolutely like you know.

Dr. Guiffre

They have handled the house beautifully and we still have the pond there out back.

Bob Drete

OK. Yeah.

Dr. Guiffre

They were beautiful, but they reproduced. And we put in the rainbow. Brook trout.

Bob Drete

Yeah.

Dr. Guiffre

That's. That was a great fishing pond, probably. But we went by the high school couple times. We just drive around the campus, but there's such a build up in Victor. That's way, way, way, way too crowded at this point.

Bob Drete

I mean, I go to football games up there and. It's still the same. Know it's. You know you're, you know, you're a Victor, but it's just kind of huge scale. It's like, you know, college football game now.

Dr. Guiffre

Well, it's got it has a reputation as being an outstanding educational place and that's why people come to Victor and that's a good thing. And you know, you've had some great teachers there and. Most of them probably are gone or something. I don't go back to Victor for. Remember reunions? Reunions. No, I. I just can't anymore physically. But it doesn't mean I don't remember them.

Bob Drete

What do you think your biggest accomplishment was at Victor?

Dr. Guiffre

When I first came to Victor, the BOCES kids were looked down on. They were literally looked down on if you were BOCES. That's the way many people saw him. So I started a program

that was. A focus of focus on BOCES. And they had they had special day, where they presented what they were studying right, they presented it to the to the classes and then we had a luncheon which they would prepare. And that became very successful program and the boasts kids felt like they were respected and I was very proud of that. Then I was proud of the fact that I was able to bring to Victor some very good people like Bob Burkey, who was a comedian, and I remember he one time had. A teacher up on stage and and he was talking about men normally don't pay attention to their socks. See, they often put on different socks and he has he has a Leon Robinson.

Bob Drete

Oh, I remember Leon.

Dr. Guiffre

Leon. Great teacher. That had to lift up his pant leg, And sure enough, there were two mismatched shots. And everybody roared. One of the toughest things to deal with was the death that occurred in Victor under my command. I remember one of the young girls died. I can remember her name, but that was actually tough on me because my kids knew all these kids.

Dr. Guiffre

And one graduation, when some somebody I think, committed suicide. And I remember. How hard that was to deal with after graduation. Mr. Palumbo came up to me afterwards and said that's the best way nobody else could handle that Bill, and he meant. So I took that as a real but and that was also the time when the rain opened up a graduation. And it came down and poured this one. You know the kids rushing like crazy, so nobody had a chance to really talk to anybody. The other ones that died were. Then Leon Robinson died from histoplasmosis because he had gone up in the attic to deal with bats and he caught a the problem was caused by the patent droppings.

Bob Drete

I remember. He was a big and imposing.

Dr. Guiffre

He was a massive man, amilitary guy. He was a fabulous man. He's a good teacher. Industrial arts, a good coach track team, yeah.

Bob Drete

Yeah, coached a few different teams. Football too.

Dr. Guiffre

And George Miller, George Miller was. Actually unbelievable. Because George was such a good vice principal and I didn't know what I would do. And I actually ended up hiring John Dwyer. John Dwyer, Bob's father. He had a nickname then, as a hanging judge. He came in. Judge Dwyer, he came into fell in as a as a vice principal did an absolutely excellent job. Fabulous job and we still are in touch because he's part of the family. Bob married Mary, my daughter Mary.

Bob Dreeste

He married Mary, OK.

Dr. Guiffre

He's got good taste. Bob's a great guy. And Bob now provides us with English muffins always.

Bob Dreeste

Nice.

Dr. Guiffre

He's a fabulous cook and he's every time he comes or Mary comes, we get about a dozen of his English muffins there. Thank you, Bob. They're always good.

Bob Dreeste

All right, one of the last questions is. What advice would you give someone who's just starting their very I finally got my dream job. I'm going to be the principal of XYZ. What? What would you tell them? Know you. Let me let me just give you a little bit of advice. You know what would it be?

Dr. Guiffre

Don't think you have all the answers. Recognize you don't. Be humble. Be consistent in what you want to accomplish. Know what you want to accomplish and go for it. Get make sure your staff goes along with you. Don't tolerate any nonsense from anybody. Be loving. Recognize that the kids are the most important part of your job, not you. Not your administrators, not your guidance counselors, but you are in charge. And if you love your job and you love your kids, you'll be a success.

Bob Dreeste

Awesome. I'm just gonna, like, read a couple things here. When I was doing the research for this, there was a picture of you. Don't know if it was. It was one in one of the papers. I think it could have been when you were leaving, they did an interview or you were, I don't know, but. You got a bulletin board up behind you and there was stuff tacked up to it. These are a couple of sayings. You said, you know, don't think you have all the answers. One of the sayings you had tacked up there was teach thy tongue to say I do not know, and that is so true. I mean part of part of our society is nobody ever wants to say. Gee, I don't know the answer to that. I'll Get back to you. Everybody's just too quick to be like if they think they say, I don't know. It means you know.

Dr. Guiffre

Let me let me give you some too on this, Mr. Palumbo, and I didn't agree on what constitutes a neat office? He was very, very particular about what he did and he would come in my office and he would say Bill, why don't you clean up this messy office? So I found a poster and stuck up on a bulletin board and if a messy desk is a sign of a messy mind, what is an empty desk a Sign of and I've put that in the middle of the poster. my, poster board and Carl came in. He turned and looked at it and said I got the point Bill, but Carl had a good sense of humor, too.

Bob Drester

And then the other one that I I was, I was like, wow. You had one up there that says teaching is the art of awakening the curiosity of young minds. Probably remember that from I know it wasn't yours, but it was one that you thought enough to put up. So is there anything you want to say to just, you know, this is your time, just say anything you want to? Know all the people that are going to listen to this and you know kind of like you know.

Dr. Guiffre

I think a little bit more reflection on Leon Robinson and the ones who died. They were so important to me. And what happened when Leon died, the victor choir sang and was one of the most beautiful services I ever saw. And then I've never forgotten it. And I not been in contact with his wife for his child, and I wish them the best of their still life.

Jenner Davis

His son is a Section 5 football referee.

Dr. Guiffre

Oh.

Jenner Davis

I do know that because he's been in touch with some victor, he works with some Victor alums that do that also and he's done quite well, yeah.

Dr. Guiffre

Oh good. Yeah.

Jenner Davis

As you're turning 90 and you've probably been quite reflective with the family gathering this past week and you've got a couple more days till your actual birthday, what would you tell your younger self? If he knew if he knew, now what? Back then, what you know now, what would you tell your younger self?

Dr. Guiffre

Have faith in yourself. But, but you really do have to have faith in yourself. My life has been very influenced by my faith and ah, if I'm not saying that you can't have a good career without a faith, but I think it's very important to know yourself and in getting married. If you marry somebody who has a totally different idea about faith, it'll be a lot more of a struggle to stay together. So. Find your faith and keep it strong. That's important and I have a great belief in God and great belief in Christian Church. I have great respect for those who are not Christian. I have a great, great respect for those who are atheist as well. They're all seeking their own path, and that's because the good Lord gives us free will to do that. So follow the free will that the Lord had given you, but make sure you don't offend him in the face because he won't like that.

Bob Dreste

Well, again, I want to thank you for this time is been absolutely awesome trip with an absolute awesome person and I know I'm speaking on behalf of every single, even the ones you had to come down on once in a while. Speaking on behalf of every single person that went to Victor during your tenure there, as principal, we are so honored and thankful that you were the person. Shepherding us through those years and all.

Dr. Guiffre

Your others out there. I can't tell you how much you made it meant to me.

Bob Dreste

Thank you.