

[00:02:08.650] - Speaker 1

Sure. So I was born and raised in Pleasant Hills, which is about five minutes drive from Century Three Mall. My family has lived in Pleasant Hills since it was founded in their early fifty s. And so I know my dad remembers when Century Three Mall opened very well. He remembers that it was touted as like, I think the largest small east of the Mississippi or something.

[00:02:33.780] - Speaker 1

I can't remember.

[00:02:37.670] - Speaker 1

Yeah. So it was like a really huge deal when it opened, and that's when malls were opening all across the country, and it was becoming a big thing. And then I was born in 1986, so through basically all of the, into the early 2000s century through Mall was the place in that area. It was where people hung out, it was where people went shopping, it was where people went for holidays. Right.

[00:03:05.000] - Speaker 1

I mean, it was just like the main attraction, really, in that area. That's what you did.

[00:03:22.650] - Speaker 1

Yeah, absolutely. So I was trying to think today of my first memories, and I know there are pictures of me my parents would always take us there for holiday pictures, right. Like with Santa and the Easter bunny. And I know there are pictures of me as a baby with the Easter bunny or Santa. At Century Through Mall, the first recollection I have would probably be around like three or four, and it was again, a holiday.

[00:03:50.220] - Speaker 1

And I know the pictures. It's a picture of my sister and I with the Easter bunny in that kind of main center area where around the holidays, they would break everything down and they would have a little village set up and you would wait in line and you paid \$5 to get your Polaroid picture with the Easter bunny. And I just remember how alive it felt when you would walk in there, particularly on like a Friday night or a nice afternoon on the weekend. It was just bustling. There were tons of people you would run into, people that you knew.

[00:04:27.760] - Speaker 1

Right. Because everybody from that area would be at the mall on a Saturday afternoon. And I just remember how just the crowds and how loud it was and kind of overwhelming it felt as a kid because it

was just so busy. I remember a story that my mom always liked to tell was that she took my sister and I shopping there and back in the they had those, like, leashes for kids that velcroed around. Right.

[00:04:59.810] - Speaker 1

And my sister, she had one because my sister and I are about 18 months apart, she had one where it just wrapped on her around our wrist, and one for my sister and one for me. And she took a shopping at Century Three, which my mom was a stay at home moms. We did that all the time. It was the kind of thing where it was like we're bored on a Wednesday afternoon and it's raining, like, I'm going to take the kids to the mall. And she always likes to talk about how I wore this thing for months and I never was interested in trying to take it off, but the very first time she put it on my sister, my sister immediately figured out how to unveil crow it and ran away in Century through mall.

[00:05:37.030] - Speaker 1

And they found her at the Horns, which the department store chain that no longer exists, playing with all the jewelry on the jewelry racks, which is like very, very much my sister. So, yeah, I just have all these very early memories of, like I said, it's feeling very active and bustling and just lots of stuff going on. As I got older, I would say the last real heyday that I can remember of Century Three mall would have been in the early two thousand s. I graduated from high school in 2004. So I remember going as a high schooler, right.

[00:06:16.860] - Speaker 1

As most high schoolers do, I would go hang out at the mall, my friends and I would go on a Friday night. I worked at the Chee Cheese that was across the street on 51 for most of high school. And so if we got off early, we'd go over to the mall and hang out and stuff like that. And I remember clothes shopping a lot as a teenager and getting in fights with my mom at the dressing rooms and going to the Hot Topic, being very rebellious, right? And I remember when I came back my freshman year of college and I would go like my grandmother would go take me shopping for clothes.

[00:06:56.330] - Speaker 1

When I would come back, that's when I started to notice it was getting a lot quieter and stores had started to close. And it used to be that when a store closed in that mall, immediately there was something that went in, right, because it was like such a high value property. And that was around the time 405 when it started to really things were closed. And then they were empty and they were empty and they were empty. And I think the last time I went would have been 2014, and it was actually a couple of days before my father had a major stroke.

[00:07:35.350] - Speaker 1

And I remember it very well because he actually was that day gosh, I'm just realizing he had gotten something for Christmas. It was right after Christmas and we had gone to the Kaufmans to return them. And Macy's, I guess we kind of walked into the mall because we were curious. We hadn't been in there for a long time. Are there any stores left?

[00:07:55.010] - Speaker 1

And at that point the mall was still open, but big parts of it were closed off. And I think there were maybe two or three stores actually left in the building. And I have some pictures that I took because I remember thinking, like, I don't know if I'll ever be back here. And remember sending them to my sister and saying, wow, look at it. Look how different it is now.

[00:08:16.560] - Speaker 1

There's nothing left in here. And there were, like, cracks in the ceiling and all that kind of stuff. Yeah. So it really kind of felt pretty especially since I left to know for it. It felt pretty quick to me that even when I was in high school, it was still very busy.

[00:08:34.770] - Speaker 1

And then it seemed like all of a sudden, in the span of a year or two, it's just everything shut down.

[00:08:44.330] - Speaker 1

Yes, it was, because, like I said, it was such a big part of my childhood growing up. It was just something that we always did. I would say we were there probably at least once a week, whether it was to just click in and grab something or just to go walk around or whatever it was. And my grandmother had actually passed in five, and we talked about that a lot. We still talk about in my family anytime Century Three comes up, my grandmother was probably there every other day.

[00:09:17.040] - Speaker 1

My grandmother was a shopper and like an old school, 1950s, like, department store shopper, right, would buy anything on sale even if she didn't need it. Would buy kids clothes for the kids that were three sizes too big and put them away, like hardcore Century Three shopper. And anytime it comes up to this day, somebody in my family is always like, oh, your grandmother's rolling over in her grave that that place closed. She's so upset. She spent so much time there.

[00:09:43.610] - Speaker 1

So it was it felt really sad. It felt like a place that I feel like the older you get, you lose these places in your life where you felt kind of warm and fuzzy and they're no longer there. And I remember coming back in

college, and it felt good to be walking around. It was a place that I had a lot of good experiences, and the fact that it's gone now is really sad.

[00:10:14.670] - Speaker 1

Oh, gosh, so depressing. And the roads around it are so bad, right? I mean, there's just crazy potholes. Nobody's maintained anything. And every time I pass by it, I just have this vision of those lots just full.

[00:10:28.750] - Speaker 1

I mean, you would go on a Friday night and you could not find a parking spot anywhere. You'd walk half a mile from your parking spot to get in. So to see this huge space and to think about how about the traffic used to be around there and all the people and all the sounds and everything, and Christmas time. And to think of that and just see it now sitting there just completely empty is emotional still sometimes when I pass by it.

[00:11:01.210] - Speaker 1

Yeah, there's a lot of anytime these things come up about, is it going to be torn down? Is it going to be UPMC is going to buy it or whatever. We always send the articles around in my family because we are curious and we care about what happens to that space. And we always talk about how we hope something goes in there. But then any time an article comes out about somebody interested in buying it, we're like, no, no, I don't want that to go in there.

[00:11:28.390] - Speaker 1

I don't want a hospital, but I hope something goes in there.

[00:11:35.930] - Speaker 1

Yes, a warehouse or something. Yeah.

[00:11:41.070] - Speaker 1

And the same thing we were sending around. We were like, well, I don't really want Amazon warehouse there. I know, exactly.

[00:11:56.770] - Speaker 1

Yeah, definitely. I remember I was a really big fan of music as a kid and as a teenager. And this would have been before, like Best Buy and Circuit City were open. Really the only place to go buy CDs was at the mall.

[00:12:15.310] - Speaker 1

The first CD I ever owned was Mariah Carey's Fantasy. I bought it at Century Three Mall. I bought a lot of things there. There was Suncoast Video and I was really into anime in high school. And that was like the only place you could do eBay. But it was really expensive.

[00:12:32.170] - Speaker 1

And so I remember saving allowance money to buy like a \$30 right, which is like \$60 in today's money. Like a 30 imported VHS from Japan of some anime that I liked. So I remember doing the loop of like because there were two CD stores most of the time, and so if something wasn't at one right, you would go check the other. I would go to Suncoast. I would see what videos everybody had.

[00:12:59.110] - Speaker 1

So I just remember like this loop that I would do the bookstores. My mom was a really big reader, and so I remember spending a lot of time in the Walden books that was downstairs, where she would be in her section. As we got older, my sister and I would be in the sections. We liked looking at books.

[00:13:21.170] - Speaker 1

The video game stores. Again, there were two of them always. So you check one to see if they have what you wanted and check the other one. So, yeah, a lot of those the Hot Topic I mentioned, I was really into that stuff in high school, so I was at the Hot Topic a lot. But yeah, I can vividly and I know you mentioned in the questionnaire about like dreams and haunting.

[00:13:44.840] - Speaker 1

I can vividly like there are literally times where I will close my eyes at night and I can't fall asleep and I will see walking in and looking at stores. I mean, that's how ingrained it was so comfortable to me. And I literally think to myself, like, wait a minute, was that the toy store was there or was that the dollar store? I can't remember what order they were in, but it was the same for so long and it was like good memories and something that I just went to over and over and over. And so it has that level of comfort for me.

[00:14:39.630] - Speaker 1

Oh, totally. 100%. Yeah. Especially as, like, a teenager. I remember before I could drive, like my mom dropping us off and saying, okay, we'll meet at the entrance at 08:00 or whatever.

[00:14:53.310] - Speaker 1

And barely having any money, I couldn't buy anything, right? Didn't have any money. Maybe buy you go to Gloria Jeans and get like a fancy ice fruit fruit coffee drink and just, like, walk around.

[00:15:08.790] - Speaker 1

And I remember when I was really little, seeing teenagers, especially in certain there were certain spots in the mall where they would all kind of congregate and being intimidated by look at these cooler kids.

[00:15:30.730] - Speaker 1

I would say the only time I was really scared was I remember going at one point in college, and this was when things were really starting to shut down. Like, the mall was maybe a quarter empty and there just weren't many people in there. And I remember they had started to kind of shut down. Parts of them all, like, lights were out in certain spots. And I just remember feeling a sad but be, like, uneasy.

[00:16:02.960] - Speaker 1

Like, I don't know if there's somebody in that corner. It's weird to be in this giant space, but there aren't any people here. Just generally, especially because it was a place that usually felt so good, like, kind of gave me the willies.

[00:16:29.210] - Speaker 1

Well, I'll tell you one that again is in my family, Lore, is that when we were kids, my parents, every couple of weeks since we're two kids, my dad would take one of us, my mom would take the other one, and we would go to dinner or something. And that was their kind of one on one time. And there was a night where they both decided without the other one knowing, that they were going to go take us to the mall. Right, because that's what you did. And it was a Friday night, and it was packed, right?

[00:16:58.590] - Speaker 1

It was like, impossible to find a spot. And so coincidentally, my mom and my dad came in from separate directions down the same aisle and saw this guy about to pull out and both put their turn signals on, and my dad snuck in more quickly than my mom and parked. And I remember my mom saying, oh, my God, who is this? Ahole, just cut me off and stole my spot. And it was my dad.

[00:17:27.770] - Speaker 1

So that just shows, right? It was like cutthroat out there trying in parking on a Friday night. I have a good memory of one of the last memories of my grandmother when she was alive, when she had taken me shopping. I think it was right before I went to college. And so she told me she was going to buy me things to go to college.

[00:17:48.740] - Speaker 1

And I remember really wanting a pair of really expensive Nikes. And at first she was like, I'm not going to spend that much money. And then after a couple of minutes, she said, well, but they'll last you for college. You really need them for college, right? And I remember just talking to her about her telling we sat down at Cinnabon, which was right across from the shoe store, and her telling me how proud she was of me and how excited she was for me to go to college and all this kind of stuff.

[00:18:15.430] - Speaker 1

So, yeah, again, just so many really good kind of warm, fuzzy memories. I know that I got in fights with my parents shopping and stuff like that there, but I don't really remember that stuff as much. Oh, I just thought of one more. I'm sorry.

[00:18:35.310] - Speaker 1

My mom took my sister and I holiday dress shopping. She always dressed us in matching dresses because we were so close in age and we did not get along as kids. We were really nasty to each other. And my mom said, okay, well, that one's too small. I'm going to go get another one.

[00:18:55.730] - Speaker 1

You guys stay here. I'll be back in a minute. We were maybe like nine and ten, and my sister made some comment to me that I did not appreciate. We were both in the dressing room together, and she was standing in front of the mirror, right in the dressing room. And I was behind her and she made this comment, which I didn't like.

[00:19:12.420] - Speaker 1

And I went like this to the back of her head and smacked her head into the mirror. And she chipped the front too?

[00:19:24.850] - Speaker 1

No, it was a regular one. Like she had to get it repaired and she still complains about it to this day. And my poor mom came back. She hears like, screaming and crying from the dressing rooms and is like, oh my God, I hope that's not my children. And unfortunately, it was.

[00:19:42.720] - Speaker 1

That's the only really not so pleasant memory I think I have.

[00:20:03.890] - Speaker 1

I would like to see it be something that is like a community gathering space, which is really what I think Century Three was at its core. Like I said, you always saw people you knew there, and that's where things happened and that's where people went. And I would love to see it. I don't know what that would be like a recreation center or something like that, but something where people in that area can get together and kind of see and be seen and have a good time. I think that's kind of where my priority why the idea of like, an Amazon warehouse doesn't feel right.

[00:20:42.290] - Speaker 1

It was just so integral to the community that I would love to see it be that way again, whatever it is.

[00:21:01.650] - Speaker 1

I've seen, like the videos that people have snuck in and taken now, which is definitely creepy.

[00:21:10.710] - Speaker 1

I can't think of any that I've heard of ghosts or other urban legends or anything like that. From there.

[00:21:22.930] - Speaker 1

I'm not sure if anybody else has talked about this. But one of the things that is really sad to me about how this all happened is I do remember when the mall started to go downhill. There was a lot of discussion in the community that it was because Pat had started buffing from Kerrick directly to the mall and from lower income communities directly to the mall. And I remember hearing people say, well, you know, it's because they bust in all these poor people and black people that the people who live in this area don't want to go there anymore, they don't want to interact with those people. And I remember feeling really sad about that, really kind of disgusted that I hoped it wasn't true and I didn't like hearing people talk about it, that it could be true.

[00:22:12.970] - Speaker 1

But I just wanted to note that because I think it's a very interesting that might be true, that might be part of it, because you look at other malls and you look at some of the Southwest Village or Russ Park right. And they didn't suffer the same fate that Century Three did. And you have to kind of wonder, why is that?

[00:22:42.930] - Speaker 1

But having grown up, particularly in Pleasant Hills, which of those communities around there, I think is whiter and richer and more kind of upper middle class, kind of a little nose up in the air, I remember thinking like, oh, my gosh, I hope that's not true. But I also could see people being like that at some people being like that, and that really was disappointing.

[00:23:15.790] - Speaker 1

Yeah, of course. Thank you. Awesome. Well, best of luck.