

[00:02:20.290] - Speaker 1

Yeah, sure. Oh, sorry. I grew up in Pittsburgh. So yeah. I was born in Pittsburgh in 19 years too. And my mom side of the family is from like the Mon Valley Denora Minnessin area and I grew up in the North Hills. Like in Wexburg. And I never went to Century Three. Like with my parents or like for shopping for any reason. Like when I was young. But then when I was a teenager. So I'm trying to think. I was still 17. Yeah. And I started dating my boyfriend and we were both really into music and going to shows and stuff like that, and I just remember him telling me like, oh my gosh, there's a hot topic that opened up and we can drive to it. And this was like a big deal.

[00:03:33.480]

Yeah.

[00:03:34.830] - Speaker 1

And so he had the whole thing played out, he was like, okay, we're going to leave this time, we're going to drive there. And we got dressed up like we were going to like a concert or something like her, like ball chain necklace, like band shirt. You had to look cool, right? So got in his car, which I think at that time was a minivan drove from the North Hills, like 79 and I think you take the tunnels out 51 and then you get to the light and you'd have to make the right to get down to the mall. And then we always park at the same spot. I think it was Pennies on like the very end.

[00:04:25.090]

Yeah.

[00:04:25.970] - Speaker 1

Okay, so I think we parked there and then go in those doors because we went through some kind of Pennies or that kind of store to get in. And then I think we had to go up to the second floor. And that's all we did was we just went straight to a Hot Topic and then we'd literally spend like an hour in just, like, looking at the different band shirts. And I would always go to the sales director in the back trying to find something cheap and they have like awesome wonderland stuff and just like and also, like, gaming stuff because gaming was kind of just start I don't know. But yeah. And so that was the first trip and then it became like this almost like ritual or something. Yeah, because it took 45 minutes to drive from where we lived up in Wexford all the way down to Century Three. So you had to plan it out. You can be like, hey, let's go, you know? So it's usually like a Saturday or something like a weekend that you had the time to take 45 minutes to drive down, go in, spend an hour there, come back out.

[00:05:42.370] - Speaker 1

And then what would happen is me, my boyfriend and my best friend, we hung out a lot together, so we just made it a thing. Like, we would dress up in just crazy outfits just to go to Hot Topics. So this is my friend, my best friend at the time in high school. We're both like, 17. She's in like, this sparkly sequin dress and she has socks that she didn't she like halfway through walking towards Hot Topic. She was like, I don't like these shoes. And she, like, took her shoes off. She was in socks in the mall. I don't know what I have. It's a bad picture, but, like, featherboa and just like I don't know, it was kind of like a lot of my friends did the Rocky Horror Picture Show thing at the Beehive, but I never went to that. But I feel like this was kind of my Rocky Horror Picture Show where you could just kind of, like, dress up, put on whatever to try a new crazy style or something. You can just make up whatever, and then we drive The Hot Topic. And that was the place where we could just be, like, weird and have fun.

[00:06:49.930] - Speaker 1

So this was actually us sitting on top of his minivan parked outside of Pennies. And then later he got that car, which is like an old school I don't know what that is, but it's the boxy car from the 90s. So that's what we would drive in and occasionally we would go with our other friends. This is me, my ex boyfriend. And then his best friend was like, yeah, we did that. I forget when Hot Topic opened, but that was definitely like the summer of 99,001, probably 2002, I think it was like those two or three years there. Because then I went away to school and he was still in Pittsburgh. But occasionally if we were both in town, we'd, like, do the drive.

[00:07:46.930]

Yeah.

[00:07:49.910] - Speaker 1

I remember it as being like 45 minutes to an hour because occasionally he would get lost. Yeah, because we knew, like, coming down to 79, but then once we got to, like, kind of the South Hills or south of the city I don't know if you're from Pittsburgh or not, but we were from the North Hills and we never went to the South Hills. And kids from the South Hill were like, we never go to the North Hills. It's crazy. So we were familiar with McKnight Road and all that, but once we got through the tunnels and are in the South Hills, it was very easy to get lost.

[00:08:29.710]

Yeah.

[00:08:34.230] - Speaker 1

I don't know if you have any questions or whatever, but that was just like my memory was just like being 17 and 18 and 19 and store that sold band shirts and necklaces and the bracelets and stuff that we were

into was right there. And then I forgot when, but Rock America opened up in North Way Mall, like in the North Hills, and they sold band shirts and stuff.

[00:09:07.850] - Speaker 2

Yeah.

[00:09:08.630] - Speaker 1

And so then we would go there, but it wasn't the same thing. Like, Hot Topic at Century Three was like this special journey trip that we would undertake.

[00:09:21.290] - Speaker 2

That's awesome. Do you remember if the mall was driving back then and how when it started to decline?

[00:09:31.210] - Speaker 1

Yeah. So my memories are of just like okay, so you would, like, park in the car, like smoking cigarettes on the car park. And then I remember going in, like, the double doors, I think the Pennies. And we were just so carefree. The one time I remember me and my exboyfriend, we literally danced through the double doors because we were just like, it's playtime. It's fun. Why? I don't know. Go through. And then I think we had to go up an escalator. From what I remember, the department store we had to walk through, I had people in it and people were shopping and there were, like, families and kids running around. And I remember, like, it smelled was there an Annie Ann's? A pretzel store or something?

[00:10:24.010]

Yeah.

[00:10:24.520] - Speaker 1

Okay. Because I remember I thought smelled like pretzels.

[00:10:28.190]

Yeah.

[00:10:29.750] - Speaker 1

But then we walk straight from whatever that department store was. And I remember I think it was on the second level. And I forget if it was on the right or the left. But the Hot Topic store just had. Like. Glass in the front and then there was. Like. The door in the middle that you would go in and there'd be so many

times when one of us would still be shopping. And so the other two people would just be sitting out front. Just. Like. On the floor.

[00:10:59.270]

Just.

[00:10:59.620] - Speaker 1

Like. Chatting or whatever. Like. Out front of the Hot Topic store. And they didn't care. It's just like, whatever. I don't even think we ever went to the food court, literally. My experience with Century Three model was, like, going through those double doors. It was like a bay of doors through that department store, and I'm just walking straight to a Hot Topic.

[00:11:22.910] - Speaker 2

So it's like, the only mall that had a Hot Topic, I guess, at that time.

[00:11:27.410] - Speaker 1

Yeah, it was the only one in our region. And then I went to school. I left for college in September of 2000, I guess.

[00:11:41.050] - Speaker 2

Yeah.

[00:11:41.610] - Speaker 1

And I remember thinking it was so cool that the city I was in, their mall, had a Hot Topic, and I could get the bus from my dorm, like, to the front to the front door of that mall and, like, go shopping at Hot Topic. So, like, one of the first things, whenever my ex boyfriend came to visit me at school, we got on the bus. We took the bus to the mall and we went to this new Hot Topic. Why? I don't know why it was such a special thing, but it was just like I don't know, like, it was like this free space. It was like going to a concert. You dressed up, you got, like, your ball chain, your newest band shirt, and you went. And then just like sometimes you would meet other people interested in music. Like, we would talk to the people that worked there. My ex got to know some of them, but yeah, I don't know, it was just a lot of freedom just being ourselves, and I don't know, it was cool.

[00:13:00.290] - Speaker 2

That's awesome. So did you ever visit CenturyThree after your teenage years?

[00:13:07.110] - Speaker 1

No, my only experience after that was I still have relatives that live in Denora and Minesin, and so we drive down 51 and you just see it and we'd pass by and there'd be some cars in the lot, and I might say, like, oh, hey, that's where we used to go. But that was it. And then I forget when I learned about I had heard about it, like, being in decline, and there was kind of like I don't know if it was a Facebook group or what. Something on social media was like, oh, Century Three is going down. And it wasn't surprising because all the other malls in America were very similar trajectory. So, yeah, I think I was just like, okay, well, that's the way of things. I didn't really expect it to survive because it was so huge. Like, Ross Park Mall was declining, but then they kind of, like, rebranded and now they're like all like, high end stores. But it's a smaller mall, so yeah, I don't know. There was no sadness attached to it being abandoned. I would just go on YouTube and see the people sneaking in and like the abandoned mom, like the dripping water and all these things.

[00:14:40.620] - Speaker 1

But my favorite, I think, was when Pittsburgh dad tells the story of the birth of Century Three. Have you seen that?

[00:14:50.500] - Speaker 2

No.

[00:14:51.300] - Speaker 1

Oh, my God. It's hilarious.

[00:14:53.550] - Speaker 2

I'll have to check that out.

[00:14:55.420] - Speaker 1

It's really funny. Yeah. Did you find that Pittsburgh dad? It was just on YouTube. I forget. I think he specifically talks. I think he has an episode just about Century Three.

[00:15:09.820] - Speaker 2

I should definitely check that.

[00:15:12.210] - Speaker 1

Yeah, but it was a perfect description of the birth of Century Three mall.

[00:15:19.150] - Speaker 2

Yes. I think it was like one of the largest malls at the time was built, so it definitely was huge. But you just looked at a hot topic. So you didn't explore everything.

[00:15:32.470] - Speaker 1

No, maybe we went to the bathrooms once, literally. Yeah. It's a really funny thing because, like other malls that I go to, I go to the different stores. I think part of it, too, is because we were in unknown territory. We were from the North Hills.

[00:15:49.940] - Speaker 2

Yeah, that makes sense.

[00:15:50.810] - Speaker 1

We were in the South Hills. We didn't know where things were. We were like, okay, we're just going to go in and go to this one store and go out.

[00:15:59.590] - Speaker 2

Yeah.

[00:16:00.790] - Speaker 1

I don't know. But it was a good yeah. There it is. Rap century three by pittsburgh.

[00:16:08.650] - Speaker 2

That yeah. Also check that out.

[00:16:10.730] - Speaker 1

Yeah, that's really funny.

[00:16:14.770] - Speaker 2

Have you driven by it since it's been abandoned? Since 2019?

[00:16:22.450] - Speaker 1

Yeah. Whenever I visit my family in Denora and Manessen, we always either go 51 down or 51 back. So kind of see it and it's kind of like, oh, okay. Like just kind of hanging out. But I've never gone, like, in a parking lot or gotten close to it. I heard that maybe Amazon build a warehouse.

[00:16:53.000] - Speaker 2

Yeah, they're thinking of building, like a distribution facility.

[00:16:57.910] - Speaker 1

Okay.

[00:16:58.410] - Speaker 2

I don't know if they would, like, use the existing structure or just knock it down and put a warehouse there.

[00:17:04.450] - Speaker 1

Yeah, that'll be interesting.

[00:17:07.510] - Speaker 2

Yeah.

[00:17:08.770] - Speaker 1

So in your game, are you going to incorporate Amazon people coming in and trying to take it over, but people are fighting them off?

[00:17:18.640] - Speaker 2

That's interesting. Or destroyed or something. But yeah, no, it is like your story's really cool because now I feel like a lot of shopping is not as personal and it's just like online.

[00:17:37.050] - Speaker 1

Oh, yeah, that's a really good point.

[00:17:39.690] - Speaker 2

These days. I don't know. I guess well, me and my friends, we go through seeing a lot. But yeah, it is kind of sad that everything's being digitalized.

[00:17:53.430] - Speaker 1

That's a really good point. Because just that whole experience and I think with online shopping and then also just like having technology available to us because we didn't have cell phone. We were 18. Email was out, but it was like, wow, what do we use it for? There was no like Facebook wasn't out yet. So you had to get together physically in a physical space to hang out with your friends.

[00:18:29.470]

Yeah.

[00:18:30.300] - Speaker 1

So it was like going to concerts or going to I remember going to the Beehive and South Side was like a big deal because when you're under 21, there's only so many places you can go to. So I remember going to the Carnegie Library with my friend in Oakland. Yeah. We go to the oversized room and just check out giant art books and just hang out. Yeah. When you're 17 18 19 and you're just like you're trying different clothes. And we weren't really into music and I don't know, just having those spaces where you can just go and hang out with your friends and there's not going to be like a 50 year old or dog coming over to you and being like, hey, stop that. Or like, why is he wearing no Polish? Or just like weird social, cultural, whatever. Norms. There were those few spaces in Pittsburgh where, like, Beehive, you could just go and do whatever and meet people and be artsy and weird. Carnegie Library, you could go and be artsy and weird. And for us, the hot topic was that too. We just went and goofed around and laughed and had so much fun.

[00:19:54.990] - Speaker 2

That's awesome.

[00:19:56.030] - Speaker 1

Yeah.

[00:19:57.810] - Speaker 2

And it's sad that people live in that area. Can't do that anymore.

[00:20:02.250] - Speaker 1

Yeah. I don't even know what 17 18 19 year olds do now, like, go campaign. I don't know. The whole mall experience, I feel like, is different when you have this available too, because there was a whole anticipation about getting dropped off at the mall and when are my friends going to meet me? You couldn't just text me, like, hey, are you here? Yeah, I'll be there in five minutes. I remember once I'm being stuck at

a different mall, not Century Three because we said we were going to meet at a certain time, but then something happened with my friend back home and the Chinese kept there for like an hour. So I literally sat on the floor at a mall for like an hour because we were meeting right at Annie Anne and I couldn't move because then she wouldn't know where I was, so I had to stay there. So it's like yeah. These interactions with physical spaces I think are just a part of it is kind of lost because as long as you're connected to this, you can't fully experience the physical space.