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Kristina

Today is Wednesday, June 2, 2021. I am Kristina Bilello, a Reference librarian at Pace University and I am here over Zoom with Dr. Nicholas Catalano, Professor Emeritus, at Pace University.

Kristina

Let's begin. My first question starts at the very beginning of your early life. Where were you born? Can you tell me a little bit about your schooling: high school/undergrad/grad school?

Prof Nicholas Catalano

I was born in Brooklyn, NY, raised in Brooklyn, until I got out of college. I went to Bishop Loughlin High School, which is a parochial school, a parochial school scholarship school with all sorts of smart kids. They were amazing. And in high school, I played basketball, played music, was in shows. I was president of the Student Council, president of the senior class. All those kinds of things.

After that I went on to Manhattan College to study in this very special liberal arts program that they had there which they don't have anymore. That was very rigorous. Extremely rigorous: 25 credits a semester. Some semesters we had no lunch. We read everything. The theme of the course was the heritage of Western civilization. So in freshman year you went from a class in Greek philosophy to one in classic Greek Fine Arts to a class in Greek history to a class in Greek literature, to classic Greek science and math and politics, I mean so you learn the world that way.
It was amazing... and the second semester was Rome. Second year was the medieval world, third year from modern and fourth year contemporary. So it was a great education and really held me in good stead for all the work that I've done in teaching. A Masters and a PhD was a piece of cake after this. That's how rigorous it was, but it was really great.

Kristina

*It sounds like you were an achiever from an early age. Was there something that drove you to it or did you just like school?*

Prof Nicholas Catalano

I like school a lot. As much as I love teaching and I loved it desperately, I think I love being a student more.

At five years old I started playing the clarinet. But if you have some talent on an instrument, it shows in six months.

So there I was, playing and playing. The teachers were all excited and there was and there still is, a kid's program at Juilliard on Saturdays for gifted kids to go and study. So at 7 years old there I was, attending the Juilliard School. I stayed till I was 11, at which time I became a member of the Musicians’ Union and started playing professionally. And as far as that's concerned, it never stopped.

Kristina

*That's great!*

Prof Nicholas Catalano

It was wonderful, we had great teachers there. Darius Neo was in my class at the time, as were people who were older than I was, in the arranging and composition class. Dave Brubeck was there, Burt Bacharach. Good times. It was wild.

Kristina

*So this dovetails with what you told me, and maybe what I heard from another interview. Can you talk about your early career plans? I think you plan to become a musician, but then it changes?*

Prof Nicholas Catalano

Yes I did! I was at Juilliard one Saturday and I had my saxophones and flutes and clarinets, and was heading out through the basement to go on the subway, and a door opened. And I heard this incredible music and I just stopped. Because I was transfixed, the music was just so marvelous. I didn't know what it was. They had sound studios at Juilliard those days. So I was nery and opened the door and I saw these five black musicians playing this music. And I stood inside.
Finally, one of the guys said to me, “Hey kid, what do you want?” I said, “I just want to hear the music.” And he said, “OK,” and they were back the following week and there I was. For an hour listening to this.

Now this was when I was just about 10 1/2 or 11 years old. And nobody knew who these people were at the time. I can tell you now that it was the Miles Davis Quintet.

(Photo of Miles Davis by William P. Gottlieb, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

Kristina

Wow!

Prof Nicholas Catalano

John Coltrane and Bill Evans and Miles, of course. Oh gosh. Art Blakey on drums. [Paul Carter] on bass. It was incredible, but at the time they were not...quite famous, they were getting there quickly, especially Miles. So....

I spoke to some of my classmates and we were already out playing commercial gigs, dances, proms, bar mitzvahs and so on. I was doing a lot of stuff. And after a while, after a couple of years or so, we went out and searched for jam sessions where we could play this music because it was just so wonderful and we all loved it.

One night at the Cafe Bohemia… This is a few years later. We were able to sit in with the great Max Roach, spectacular, famous jazz drummer. And we said, “hey Max, can we sit in?” And he
said sure, so we did. He said, “I want to introduce you to my new co-leader. I’m starting a new group and his name is Clifford Brown.”

And that’s the first time I had ever heard Clifford and there we were on the bandstand playing with this incredible player. When we finished a few tunes and we went home, my friend Chester, who was the trumpet player, said, “Let's go by the river. I'm going to throw my horn in the river. I'll never be able to play like that!” And the rest is history. I went and saw Clifford and Max a few more times and then of course, segue dozens of years…

Oxford University Press asked if I would do a book. I said I would write about Clifford Brown. They said yes. I wrote the book, (Clifford Brown: The Life and Art of the Legendary Jazz Trumpeter) published it in the year 2000, I guess, and now it’s being set up for an HBO movie.

So a lot there in that sequence.

**Kristina**

*So it seems like you were on a pretty solid trajectory towards being a musician for the rest of your life, but then...*

**Prof Nicholas Catalano**

I was…I wanted to do it and I was a good enough player. I wasn't the greatest but, I was a good player.

So by the time I was 14 or 15 I was playing a lot and even had done a couple of recordings...However, I was basically able to play in contests and clubs where there was a lot of drugs going on. In those days, it was very difficult. I watched famous musicians shooting up with heroin.
And it was a scene that was very difficult. The musicians were never really appreciated that much except for the cult crowds. Recording was difficult. There were a lot of problems I said to myself, well, you know. Instead of doing this, I think I'm going to go to college. And so I did. I never regretted that decision because studying in college, I was a philosophy and a math major with literature.

And as soon as I left there, I came to Pace. And I began to produce a lot of jazz. In 1973, Dr. Edward J. Mortola, who was our president [of Pace University], said to me, “Nick you, you're doing this show business stuff. You're doing a lot of different things,” so he made me a director, a University Director for Performing Arts.

(Stock photo of Dr. Edward J. Mortola, past president of Pace University, n.d.)

**Kristina**

*Can I back you up slightly? So far we know that you were in the music arena in New York City. But then you had a change of heart because you saw the drug use and you wanted something longer term. How were you hired as a faculty member at Pace, and did you know anything about Pace before coming there?*
Prof Nicholas Catalano

I met a wonderful guy who was the chairman of the English department at Pace New York. His name was Dr. Robert Dell. And, I liked him immediately. There was a great, great rapport. I was not so terribly thrilled with the academic world or the people in it. I was a little bit different, cut from a different gib, so to speak, from that world. And then I met Dr. Mortola who was president and I was immediately hired.

I started teaching at Pace New York in September of 1964.

And then Dr. Mortola said, “Look, we're starting this new campus in Pleasantville. It's brand new. I'd love you to be able to go up there. From what you've said to me, you want to do a lot of things, to help the school grow.” And I said, “Sure, that's exactly what I want to do.”

And so, in February ’65, I went up to Pace and began to be involved in a lot of stuff, I founded the Drama club. The Wig and Mask society. We started doing our own plays. I had a chorus, a Glee Club, and a band…Then the newspaper I started, which was called A Pace Profile at the time.

And a couple of years later I started the football team in 1968.

Kristina

Can I just stop you there and just ask a few interim questions?

So...you started teaching at Pace in 1964. And that's a very different time from now to be sure. What changes did you observe at Pace College and with the students as you moved from the 60s’ and into the later decades?

Prof Nicholas Catalano

You know, that's a question that a lot of people ask. For me, students are students are students. They're all kids between 18 and 21 or 17 and 21. They share all of that, all the time. They want to learn to a greater or lesser degree. They are very impressionable and when you start to tell
them the truth and you start to inspire and inject passion in the classroom… They come alive and I guess it's always been like that for me. I've always enjoyed that. Sure there's changes I mean, you know we went through the hippie generation, etc., etc. but, but as far as the classroom is concerned, for me it's always been pretty much the same.

Kristina

*So the decades changed and maybe it looked different, but still it's the same. The core is the same.*

Prof Nicholas Catalano

Yes, it's a college class. I'm teaching classical Greece. I'm teaching Shakespeare, Aristotle, Plato, and all sorts of wonderful writers. Keats, Byron, Shelley? I mean, what can be a problem in a situation like that? If you can make those writers accessible you will light a fire in students. I mean, what can I say? It's not like I'm teaching some obscure sociology of orangutans or something like that. This is really great, *great* art. And I was also teaching a course in music. And again, sharing with them, jazz etc., and you know. So that's the answer to that question, as far as I'm concerned.

Kristina

*Was it difficult for you to transition from an environment like New York City and go up to Pleasantville, which was probably much quieter in contrast?*

Prof Nicholas Catalano

No, it was not. I've been a New Yorker all my life and I've written several books about New York, etc.

Ah no, Pleasantville is… It was nice to get out of the city for a couple of days a week and so on. It actually turned into more than that because of all these activities that I was involved with.

The Pleasantville campus was very accessible. There were wonderful people and I can't emphasize enough the fact that the great inspiration for me during those years was the president [Dr. Edward Mortola]. I became close with him. He came to all the performances. He helped me with the football team; he was on campus constantly. He was hands on. People loved him. He was a *remarkable*, remarkable president. I had no idea what a college president, that a college president could be like that, but that's what he was.

And of course, you know that he started the campus in Pleasantville. Later on, the law school, buildings all over the place, etc.

So that was a big deal for me. I mean, he was just great. He supported me. He realized later on in a couple of years, when I became President of University Directed Performing Arts, he knew that would bring a lot of publicity to the school, which it did.
I can give you lists of performers that would knock your eye out in terms of what we had in the mix. We had opera. We had opera divas, we had in jazz, we had everybody you can imagine. I mentioned Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Kai Winding, Curtis Fuller, everybody! Everybody. And so the school got a lot of publicity and he was thrilled with that. I was thrilled with that.

Everybody was doing great. We did dances in Pleasantville. The only facility we had was a gym. We did dances with the ghost bands: the Glenn Miller Orchestra, Tommy Dorsey, Harry James was still alive in those days. We sold out the gym, constantly up in Pleasantville. People were clamoring to get in. They came in far from as far as Albany to come to these dances. It was wild. It was wild.

Kristina

*Let me back you up a little bit. One of the things you helped form was the first football club at Pace. What was your impetus for doing that?*

**Prof Nicholas Catalano**

Well, there were some students that insisted; it always comes from students. There were some students who said that there were, at that time in the metropolitan area, several schools who had football clubs, meaning that they were not really associated with the athletic departments but that they were sort of independent, and it became quite popular.

Because there was nothing like that in the New York area. In Westchester, Iona College, I wound up having this incredibly strong football club, a championship club, and the publicity they received was enormous.

And so, from that, students came and I said, “OK, well, we'll get this going.” I coached for about a year and a half, and then I hired a couple of coaches. And ah.. Interestingly enough, in two years we wound up… We had some really great players who are still attending the reunions that we have.

We won a championship. We beat Iona College 16 to 7 in Memorial Field in Yonkers, where there was 7000 people. I mean, this is an unheard of thing for people, who don't remember what Pace was like in those days...So they were off and running once I hired the coaches.

We started a media thing and I became the announcer! For the team.

(Prof Nicholas Catalano announcing at a Pace football club game, *Pace Yearbook: The Legend, 1976.*)
Kristina

Yes, I want to ask you more about that!

Prof Nicholas Catalano

I did that for decades and had a lot of fun with that, so it was great. And of course, I got to be very friendly with and still see wonderful ex-students and football players and with whom we've managed to communicate and share through the years. It's been great.

Kristina

I'm just curious, did you always have a desire to be a sports announcer or was it just how things evolved?

Prof Nicholas Catalano

No, no, I had no inclinations there. It’s just that, once again with all this stuff going on, I guess I was the one! So I did it and everybody loved it, so I said, OK I'll keep doing this for a while. I may have to miss some things along [the way]. I just did home games because of what was then becoming my burgeoning career in show business. I think I've told you, but I managed to get there and it was great. We had a lot of fun.

Kristina

Can you tell me a little more about this? You organized the first Glee Club at Pace. What was the impetus for that?
Prof Nicholas Catalano

Once again, students desiring an avenue for music and same thing with the drama club and so on. We organized the Glee Club very quickly. I recruited football players, everybody who I could get my hands on and I was very influential with getting people in my organizations because the kids all enjoyed all of these different activities.

So! We had a Glee Club and very quickly after a couple of years we went on tour! We went down to the Bahamas.

We went down to Jamaica. These were sponsored tourists from people in the governments down there. We recorded an album which I still have. A 33rpm album that was, I think dubbed, “Pace College on Tour”. We did a lot of fun things with the Glee Club. And they still have emails and zooms and things like that through the years that…They miss it.

Kristina

Did you ever have anyone in your Glee Club who went on to fame, after Pace?
Prof Nicholas Catalano

Well, fame is a relative word I guess. We had a couple of people who went on to do Broadway stuff. Sure they were great singers. I mean they were wonderful singers. I managed to even hire a couple of them when I was playing, doing some of my jazz gigs later on because they were that good. So sure.

Because when you have that many students and you’re going on for year after year, there's going to be a lot of talent. Talent is always there. That's the little shibboleth that I've always believed. Talent is *always* on its way. There's always going to be some talented people. Music changes, styles change, tastes change, but there's always people out there who can do things.

(Prof Nicholas Catalano directing the Glee Club, Pace Yearbook: *The Legend*, 1973.)

Kristina

*So when you became the Director of Programming Arts-Dr. Mortola appointed you to that, would that predate the Glee Club or was that after or..?*

Prof Nicholas Catalano

No, it happened in 1973.

Kristina

1973, *ok.*

Prof Nicholas Catalano

Immediately I started because of the campuses. By that time we had White Plains, Pleasantville as well as Pace New York. And so I was able to program an entire season for the University where we were. As I said, we had dances in the gym in Pleasantville. At Schimmel of course we had major shows because that was the biggest venue. We had opera, ballet, symphonic music, chamber music, dance companies. My God, we had Alvin Ailey, Martha Graham...All of these fabulous [people] and Joffrey Ballet came to Pace several times during those years and so on. *The New York Times*’ Anna Kisselgoff was a critic. She was a frequent visitor to review the shows. That's just in dance!

So you could imagine. I mean, you know jazz. You don't want me to go through all that again.
Kristina

*You had major names [performing]. Did you have some personal favorites in there?*

Prof Nicholas Catalano

Yes, they were all great. The big jazz orchestras were…I did Stan Kenton's last New York concert at Schimmel.

![Buddy Rich playing drums](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0, via Wikimedia Commons)

Buddy Rich was there a lot of times. Buddy and I got to be pretty close. He liked me. He was not thrilled with the world, but he liked me, and I wound up producing for Buddy independently. I wound up producing several concerts in New York and in London. His daughter, Cathy called me last year. She said, “Nick, you did a show at Buddy's Place, (which was a club that he had for about a year.) And it was really great.” She said, “I’m going to give it to PBS.” I said, “sure, go ahead!”

So it's been great to look back at that show which had all-star musicians and an incredible band. Smaller groups! There were quintets, there were octets, with again famous *famous* jazz people. That was pretty easy because jazz, jazz has always gone wanting and the fact that we were in New York City. I mean, it was a big deal.

Kristina

*I'm wondering, as I guess many people wonder as they listen to you talk,.. How did you balance between teaching and being the Director of Performing Arts and all these different activities that you were involved in?*
**Prof Nicholas Catalano**

I was young. (laughs) It was kind of a renaissance existence. It was very much what I was always interested in doing. I had always wanted to do a lot of different kinds of things, particularly in the arts.

College teaching…Actually. I wound up teaching usually about a half load because of Performing Arts, so we only have two, maybe three classes a semester. But yes, I don't know. I spent the weekends, weekend evenings and so on, emceeing shows on all the campuses.

It was wonderful. It was glorious! It was not a lot of work. When you're in love like that with all the stuff you're doing, you're not working, you're just [enjoying].

**Kristina**

*It sounds like a wonderful life and a wonderful fit for you too!*

**Prof Nicholas Catalano**

It was great, it was great. I did it for, oh my God, almost 30 years and it was wonderful. One of the things that's been outstanding… Early on, I wanted a series for the students that wasn't so highbrow.

I discovered that in New York City, there were comedy clubs…They were quite popular in the early seventies and a friend of mine was playing the piano there and he said you got to come in and see this. And I went in there and the laughter was indescribable.

I said to Budd Friedman, who had *The Improv*… The two principal clubs were, *The Improv* and *Catch a Rising Star*.

I wanted to do a comedy show for my students, or maybe a couple of them.

[I said] I'm going to pay the comics. He almost passed out because they were not getting paid at these showcases!

But, I started. And the talent that was available, and was there, is literally a Who's Who in comedy. There's not a comic that I think anybody can mention that didn't perform at Pace, at least a half a dozen times. Who are some of these names?

**Kristina**

*Yes!*

**Prof Nicholas Catalano**

Robert Klein, Freddie Prinze early on; later on, Jerry Seinfeld, Bill Maher, David Letterman, Robin Williams, Richard Belzer, Richard Lewis, Elayne Boosler. I'm running on and on. They were *all* at Pace. We still talk about that.
Many of them, particularly Jerry, Jerry's out here and in fact I'm going to have dinner with Jerry tonight.

They've been friends for years. I mean, we all got to be really good friends. At the same time? And there were three or four shows a semester, remember, on all different campuses! So I would pick up the comics, they all performed for the students. The students went crazy for this. I mean they went *really crazy* because these people were so talented!

**Kristina**

*I can imagine!*

**Prof Nicholas Catalano**

I can't even begin to describe the intensity of the laughter that took place during this time. It's indescribable.

One or two anecdotes that I can't even repeat. That's how hysterical some of this stuff was. But anyway, sure. And also during that time in the middle 70s’ I had begun my own little production company, and was doing some of the same stuff on my own. And was hired to do it for, you know, different people. I was a line producer for a lot of people. So it all kind of worked, in that way also.

**Kristina**

*So you also had your own production company?*

**Prof Nicholas Catalano**

Yes. I did lots of different kinds of shows. From that I did music shows that were live music shows and later on we started do TV and radio things. So that all happened. In *comedy*…I remember going out to Hollywood in, I guess in ‘77 and ‘78 with a bunch of these guys trying to help them and get them stuff and maybe getting a couple of… Cable was just starting in Cinemax and HBO and so on and wound up getting a couple of cable shows to produce, which I did.

Again, the people were a who's who. If I had to list everybody…Ah, maybe someday I should try to capture all these names, but I mean, I've given you a sampling.

**Kristina**

*You listed some very well-known names...*

**Prof Nicholas Catalano**

Well, they weren’t well known in 1973, that’s the interesting thing. But as time moved on. You know we all, I say ‘we all’ because I was doing producing and maybe even writing. I even
started doing some writing in those days; but they were all you know, interested in getting gigs, etc., etc… And in Hollywood there was *The Comedy Store* and *The Improv*, and in New York, the clubs that I just mentioned.

Many of them, not just a few, but many of them became superstars. They're running show business these days.

My one friend who really was responsible for so much engineering and television and getting people started, even though he wasn't much of a stand-up comic himself, is Larry David.

**Kristina**

*Oh, really?*

**Profs Nicholas Catalano**

I mean, Larry, you know, Larry’s genius began to bloom early and when he and Jerry got together, well, everybody knows what happened there!

Bill Maher and so on. And David Letterman, David was the emcee at *The Comedy Store* when we were doing those shows. I saw the very first performance one night, one of the comics said, come on down, I want you to see this comic.

This was out in Hollywood, the very first performance of a young comic who managed to destroy an audience was Robin Williams.

**Kristina**

*Oh my goodness…*

**Prof Nicholas Catalano**

And he came over to the table and I said to him, you're amazing.

He was actually responding to heckles from the audience in perfect Shakespearean iambic pentameter. And for me, I was on the floor, *rolling* on the floor! *Rolling!* I said how did you ever learn how to do that? It was something that he had heard John Garfield had done in movies or whatever.

Uh, not true. It was John Barrymore. But anyway, I said to him that night I said, “Boy, you’re gonna be a star! Let me direct you in Shakespeare someday.” *One week* after coming out to Hollywood and doing his showcase stuff, Robin was signed by ABC to do *Mork and Mindy*. *One week!*

That's how talented he was.
Kristina

*That's incredible. You've had some amazing experiences. ...I know that travel is also one of your many passions. And one of your most popular courses is Odyssey. You started that back in 1982.*

*Can you talk about some of your experiences with teaching it over the years?*

**Prof Nicholas Catalano**

Well, I had taught this course in Greek classics and I guess it was 1982. There were a lot of my ballplayers in my classes, and one guy said, “Hey, C, why don't you take us to Greece?”

I said, well, maybe we can do that. In those days it was pretty easy to set this whole thing up.

And so we began our classical seminar in Greece.

It went on until a couple years ago. It was the longest running travel seminar in the country, and it ran itself, and it certainly wasn't because of me because, the trip was incredible.

(Pace University poster for Greek study abroad program, 2020)

We spent a weekend in Athens seeing all of the incredible sites there and then got a on a cruise ship to the Greek islands for a week.

I used to have to chase people to get them to go back to the airport. I mean, it was just amazing.

There are many hugely successful business types at Pace, who have said to me almost with one voice, “Dr. C, that was the greatest thing I've ever done in my life.” And these are people with 10 figure incomes!

Kristina

*What do you think made it so appealing?*

**Prof Nicholas Catalano**

It was an interdisciplinary seminar, so we took a look at all the incredible
architecture. The art. I mean, I’d do two hours on the Parthenon and everybody’s mind gets blown. How did these guys do this? Incredible architecture in the middle of the 5th century BC?

The mathematics and the amazing sculpture that they did is still being discussed. That's just in architecture.

In literature, in travel, in art, in, in the whole business of Greek history, “Hey gang, look out the window here as we're leaving from the airport to go to Athens. That's a little town called Marathónas. How far is it from Athens?”

And somebody will always raise their hand and say, “Oh my God, Dr C, it's 27.2 miles!” I said that's right, and that's where the marathon runner, according to the myth, that's where the marathoner, when the Greeks won the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC, they sent a messenger to Athens saying that the Persians had been defeated.

On and on and on. That kind of stuff. So the interrelationship, the confluence between partying. We did a lot of partying because partying was what the Greeks did in the 5th century!

I said when we went, initially I said [do you know what] partying is and they would laugh. They said, “Hey Dr C, we know how to party!”

I remember one conversation, I said, well, what do you do? [Student says] “Well, you know…” I said, “No you tell me what you do when you party.” [Student says] “Well, you know, we sit around the dorm, you know, send out for a pizza. You know have some laughs, etc. I said, “OK now we're going to do Greek partying.”

And we would go out to the different tavernas and they would learn dancing and, Greek dancing and they would be dancing and imbibing until all hours, like they've never done before. I mean, people would say to me years later, “My God! We had no idea how the Europeans, in this case the Greeks, can party like this!” So that combination… after visiting someplace all day long, …I always kept my lectures to about 45 minutes and we have supper, go out and then going out after - you know Greece is open all night long. And that's what happened. And the word, obviously, got around to the students, so that every year there were people banging on the doors. “Please can I go on the Greece trip?” And we always had to limit it. You know next year, you'll have to come next year, and so on. So that's how it went.

Kristina

Did it ever get old after all those years? Or it was always fresh every time?

Prof Nicholas Catalano

People always ask me that. “You do the exact same trip every year.” No, it's never been old for me because I've been learning and studying and loving everything that there is in Greece all my
life and there's so much that's there. It's amazing. I spoke in the Greek Parliament a couple of times.

Melina Mercouri was a Minister of Culture in those days, and they were trying to get the Elgin Marbles back from the British Museum. Greeks needed a lot of help.

It was really early on when the Greek monarchy had dissipated and the new two-party system of democracy came back in and it was 1970. So it was pretty new.

It's very difficult to conceptualize what Greece is like.

In the last few years, I had friends on the island of Mykonos. I still do Zooms with some of the classes there. And one of my friends was interested in jazz and started producing jazz concerts and so after the students went home, I went back over to Mykonos, which is a spectacular place. And wound up playing in the Jazz Festival, hanging out with my friends. I remember the first year he had 4000 people on the island, to see jazz, and we brought over American groups and so on. That was really great. I don't really have, you know, extensions in my experience for someone to describe how marvelous it was over there. [I can’t describe how marvelous it was over there.] And the students of course, gained an experience. I'll get calls from people that went on this trip 30 years ago! I mean it. Like emails…Dr C, what's happening? How's Greece? Wish I could go back!

Kristina

So it really was a seminal experience for a lot of the students...

Prof Nicholas Catalano

The best, the best of academic experience. Living the life. Not just studying, but participating in the culture in a very real way.

Kristina

Yes, yes. I think it speaks to the value of studying abroad, right?

Prof Nicholas Catalano

Oh gosh, yes. And of course the study abroad thing, out of that one trip, has grown into a whole area at Pace. I'm not sure if they're doing anything this year because of the pandemic, but…

The Greece trip will go on. There's colleagues at Pace who came with me. Everybody came to Greece with me. Every faculty member, presidents, came on this trip. Presidents, administrators, faculty, everybody in the English department came to Greece with me at least once.

They're going to try to, get it going again and so on, but once this pandemic thing is finished.
Kristina

So for sure, there's a big push, I think, to travel again, because it's wonderful!

Prof Nicholas Catalano

Oh absolutely.

Kristina

Do you have time for one more question? As I understand, you circumnavigated the globe in a sailboat. And you wrote a book about it and how did that affect your experience when you came back? I mean, you being in a sailboat for about a year and then..?

Prof Nicholas Catalano

I started fishing and sailing out here in Gardiners Bay when I was a kid. How I got out here is a wild story, when I was only 13. I started playing and my friend, who is also a musician, we started playing out here and we met people. I had taken boats out and did lots of fishing out in Gardiners Bay here, there’s amazing fishing. And we got a little sailboat and very quickly on, because of the media stuff going back and forth, did a little project for National Geographic on Gardiners Bay, which was a very famous place. Gardiners Island is the only land grant island that still exists in North America. Captain Kidd’s treasure, it has a load of stuff.

So we started to sail and, quickly on, I purchased a couple of sailboats and sailed and I had my last sailboat out here for 35 years. And as you can imagine, between show business and students and friends and family, I've been sailing out here forever.

I sold my boat 35 years later.

During that time I did a couple of races. I was not really into racing so much, but wanted to hone my navigational skills a little, and I did a piece for Sail magazine and the editor said Nick, “We're doing another circumnavigation for married couples. We have to go back to work.”

They were photographing the Solomon Islands in the Pacific for a couple of years. Why don't you join up? And you know, because they knew I was writing, that was how that happened. I picked the boat up in Palau, north of the Philippines. Sailed her down through the straits across the Indian Ocean, up the Red Sea, and when it was all finished and I came back home, I decided to focus with my writing on experiences in the Red Sea.
There are two books. One is called *A New Yorker at Sea,* which is just the story of that circumnavigation. It's a fiction, it's a Roman à clef. I mean, it is fiction, but it's not fiction. If you know what I mean.

And then I incorporated that novella into a collection later on called, *Tales of a Hamptons Sailor.*

And that book has been selling for a long time now. So that's how that all happened. There were no surprises.

I got arrested a couple of times for being an American in the Middle East when that place was exploding.

There's all sorts of ironies that took place. Cultural ironies, learning about Islam, and naturally, again, pirates, thieves everybody, the Red Sea…A million stories book. You can read the book if you want, I'll get it to you someday. It still sells a lot. People enjoy it.

*(Cover image of *Tales of a Hamptons Sailor*, publisher, Aegeon press.)*

**Kristina**

*That sounds fascinating.*

**Prof Nicholas Catalano**

*Tales of a Hamptons Sailor*. And in that book, there's five or six short stories of experiences out here in the Hamptons, which are, pretty wild. You know about the Hamptons. I don't have to tell you about the Hamptons. Being a musician and later on a writer and TV person, [I can tell you] there's lots of wild, *wild* stories that took place out here. I incorporated them into that book.

**Kristina**

*Sounds like fascinating reading.*

*I have more questions to ask you, but come as we both agreed, let's stop here for now because I know you have other commitments today and so hopefully we can revisit this interview next week.*
Transcription of Prof Catalano Interview, Part 2: Intv: June 15, 2021

Kristina

I was going through your previous interview. ...Given everything that you were involved in, did you ever think of leaving your professorship at Pace and focusing full time on your other careers in writing, producing, that sort of thing?

Prof Catalano

Well. To be honest, I have been given lots of offers, especially out in Hollywood. And I never even considered changing things around. [Because], basically the pretension that's associated, particularly in Hollywood. Well, maybe you've heard it, and Woody Allen says it better than anybody else, “you know the greatest cultural experience in California, [is that] you can make a right turn on a red signal.”

Yeah, that got to me very quickly out there and, even though I had some interesting kinds of things come my way, I said no, no. I'm always going to be at that university. I need to be reminded of what's important in life and it's the university that helps me, just the classroom, that helps me do that.

Kristina

So it gave you a grounding, shall we say?

Prof Catalano

When you're getting a little crazy and you're getting a little nuts with the daily pragmatism of life and so on, to all of a sudden hide for an hour and talk about Hamlet is very therapeutic.

Kristina

That's great.

Prof Catalano

[And] it was for my students, also, not just for me.

Kristina

I can imagine. I had another question that came to me. Your early education was very focused on the classics of Western civilization. So some might say that, for a young person today, studying the authors of 1000 years ago, 100 years ago, doesn't make sense because it can't connect with them. What would you say to that?

Prof Catalano

Well, that's a really, excellent observation Kristina. I've always been suspect of people growing older, such as myself. And looking back on the things that they had dealt with, “as the good old
“days” and the times when *that* was the most important thing and *those things* were the best, etc… In point of fact, I've become convinced, thankfully, that genius is always out there and it doesn't really make any difference. So what the culture is, if people are people, all sorts of things are always going to happen.

And I think I've always been guarded that I don't become a curmudgeon and look back on the things that I've done in my life, and on the literature and the values that I've had from that, to the exclusion of what's happening now. I may not understand a lot of the stuff, and I may personally not be happy with it. But that doesn't mean that the good old days are better than nowadays, at all. I never buy into that. I think that's a bad thing for older people to say, to get connected with. On the other hand, to be honest, I resent a little bit of the compartmentalization.

For me, even though it's 2021, Aristotle is still Aristotle and Dante and Shakespeare. And you know all these geniuses and the arts and music are still…Their reputations are unsullied and the values that they have continue to the present day.

**Kristina**

*What values? What values would you say that they offer?*

**Prof Catalano**

Well, let me let me get specific. I've been very Aristotelian and that sounds, sometimes it sounds pretentious in my outlook, because Aristotle wrote about everything. In ways that for me have never, ever been equaled.

Unfortunately, Aristotle is an old graybeard figure for many young people.

Last year, a colleague, a gal who I know, my God, I wish I could have a love affair with this woman!

Her name is Edith Hall. She's a professor at London College [who] wrote a book called *Aristotle's Way* and what Edith has done, is she's taken all of the ideas, a tremendous comprehension of the comprehensive world of Aristotle. Everything you can imagine in terms of life and decisions and problems and government and personal psychological…. I mean he [Aristotle] wrote about everything! And what she's done with this *marvelous* book, is she's contemporized it. She's put it into words and phrases and even injected a few little contemporary anecdotes, so that it really revivifies the depth, the breadth, the *power*, the scope of Aristotle in a way that *astounds* me! This little book!

And the answers are there…The answers to so many contemporary, specifically contemporary problems and frustrations and injustices are in this book! Even though he wrote it, you know, 2500 years ago.
And that's pretty amazing, and I'm so grateful to her. I've only met her, seen her once, we Zoom once in a while, but she, she's accomplished something that's absolutely unfathomable! So that's the kind of thing that that does continue. People continue to do this.

Just the other day I read an essay by a music writer and someone that amplifies a very specific section of the book I wrote about Clifford Brown. I was very grateful because I was hoping that, as time went on, more and more stories would come out. And this one did, it finally did. So yes, culture continues!

And it continues unabated. It goes where it wants to go. That doesn't mean that I'm in love with a lot of, for instance, the music.

I was a jazz player as a kid. I fell in love with this music, and not just jazz, but the American musical tradition, if you will, the Gershwins, the Porters, the Harold Arlens....

**Kristina**

*The American songbook?*

**Prof Catalano**

Yes, exactly.

And I went to... This is a dumb story, but I was up in the mountains when I was a freshman, playing in the mountains. I was a lifeguard and playing in the band at night. I made like 16 bucks a week. You know, I was lucky to get it. And I came back to school in September. I was a sophomore.

All my friends, my teammates in the team and all my friends at the school; I went to this all-boys high school, Bishop Loughlin High School in Brooklyn, [they say], “Hey Nick, hey Nick! Have you heard about this new music?”

I didn't know what they were talking about, 'cause I've been away all summer. And it turns out that, during the summer, something caught fire. That was beyond description.

There was a guy whose name was Alan Freed and he, took some of the rhythm and Blues music of Black performers in the ‘30s and ‘40s and basically got together with record companies and had this new music recorded by new groups. Black and white.

And he called it Moondog*.

**Prof Catalano**

You don't know that term or you're too young. You're gonna start laughing in a minute.
Anyway, so this was on the radio in New York and it spread like absolutely like wildfire across the country.

I remember, 'cause I had now been back in New York starting to play, you know dances and proms and things like that and that people would gather around the bands like, “Play this music, play that music”, etc. One of the hit records of this time was a song that you know, called “Rock around the clock” by Bill, Bill Haley and the Comets. One of these new groups in this new Moondog music.

I mean people were screaming, so you know we played it! And in the middle of the song, there's a tenor saxophone solo, you know, an improv, improvisational solo, and of course, when you play that music, you want to play it the way it is on the record. 'Cause that's the way the kids want to hear it.

So there I am standing up playing this saxophone solo in the middle of this tune. And the saxophone solo is, (now sings the sound of the saxophone to the tune of Rock around the clock….Bom bom, bom bom bom bom bom bom bom.)

It went nuts and these kids are screaming. And I'm saying what the hell are they screaming at?

I'm playing one note for crying out loud! One note. Now remember again, my background is jazz and whatever, but I was like, wow, what, what the heck is going on here?

And the postscript to the story is that very soon Alan Freed had to give up this term, Moondog, that he used, because somebody sued him for whatever reason.

It was something that he could use and he came up with another term to supplant it and the other term was, Rock and roll.

**Kristina**

*Oh wow.*

**Prof Catalano**

So that's that story.

*(Interviewer’s note: This anecdote on Alan Freed needs clarification. At the end of this transcript I include a reference to the website, Pophistorydig.com created by editor and publisher Jack Doyle. The site includes a webpage with a detailed biography of Allan Freed and his relation to the term of Rock and roll. Here it’s explained that, “Working at station WJW and using the on-air nickname “Moondog,” Freed in 1951 was playing a mixture of rhythm and blues (R&B) music — music performed and listened to by mostly African Americans; music that was not widely played on mainstream radio.”)

**Kristina**
That's a big difference.

Prof Catalano

Well, I mean, but that was the music. That's the music that you know as “rock and roll” that came out of that whole tradition. And I was… Well, how can I describe it? I was…I was, really very very, very bugged by this.

This music was as elemental and as predictable and as boring to me as possible.

And I convinced myself, well, it's only going to be a style. It's not going to be around very long.

How wrong was I?

Kristina

Right, right...(laughing)

Prof Catalano

There again I'm coming back to what I said at the very beginning. For me, in music the whole scene for the last 50 years in American pop music, with rock and roll and other kinds of music affiliated with it, has not been fun for me at all.

I detest rap music but I have great respect for it because, in many ways, it's very original and creative in a way that some of the commercial, so-called rock and contemporary adult contemporary music, has not been in the last, millennium.

Kristina

True, music styles change over time.

Prof Catalano

I was lucky enough to be born and raised and play in a golden age of jazz. Bebop is, basically, the high point of jazz, since its inception 150 years ago.

And there I was. I was there.

Kristina

It's incredible that you got to see Miles Davis and hear him live.

Prof Catalano

Before they were even that that popular! Yes, it was amazing. It really was and that stayed with me forever.
Kristina

Let’s pivot... We talked about more fun things: art, culture, music. But let me ask you how about 9/11. You were a professor during that time period. Do you have memories that you want to share with us about that?

Prof Catalano

I don't talk about it much, but on 9/11 I was at Pace in New York that morning.

I was the only senior administrator that was there. I was getting ready to do some work for the Schimmel [theater] because I had a show coming up.

You could imagine what it was like as soon as this screaming and yelling started, and the planes crashed. We went out into the street and it wasn't so bad right away.

But when the building started to collapse, I mean you couldn't see. So we rushed back in. We set up a triage thing in the lobby of Pace New York.

And we waited for an hour. Two hours went by. Finally went out and started talking to some cops and said, “Well where are all these people?” And they never came in there. You know the rest of the story.

Kristina

How did you learn about it? I mean, did somebody phone you or...?

Prof Catalano

Cops out in the street. People out in the street and so on, right out in front of Pace. I mean, it was only two blocks away.

There was a lot of screaming and yelling for a long time. Mostly police and even firemen. And oh gosh, I don't know, what's the term for first first...?

Kristina

First responders, the EMT?

Prof Catalano

And we did, … what are we going to do here? I was the only obvious the senior administrator, the other guys hadn't come to work yet. There we were. So that's what happened on that day.

Hey, listen. Life goes on and I was back into my teaching and doing my stuff. The thing that stays with me actually is… Every time I drive into the city. I come up over the rise on the Long
Island Expressway. For the decades since then, the World Trade Center hasn't been there. And that gets to me personally.

In other words, that's the personal affront to me. Nick Catalano. They took that from me. We had on the 55th floor, an international Pace Association. And one of the things that I had been doing prior to that is organizing. With performing arts, I had lectures as well as recitals and performances of all of the arts, so there were lots of lectures at that [location].

I had just previous to that hired the guy who was the American ambassador to Romania. That kind of stuff went on. I spent days with Ralph Nader with David Eisenhower, people in that world OK? And so in the Pace International Center I brought people together in connection with some of the discussions and lectures and things that had to be made. I had in some international businessmen met some of these people from Uzbekistan. I had been in Uzbekistan to do some TV stuff. So anyway, it was that kind of a place, at Pace.

It was at the 55th floor of the Trade Center and I had played on the top of the Trade Center with a couple of swing bands. Just impromptu kinds of [things]. I got hired [for]. Somebody called me to take the place of somebody. I played up there. What I'm trying to say is that is the thing that stays with me a little bit. In terms of a person, just a purely personal kind of hurt that I feel. Is that part of me, was taken away.

Of course, that's nothing compared to what's come of this whole thing in terms of the world situation. I mean it's just dreadful.

Kristina

True. Yes, it affected everybody who was there. How long did it take before things were a little more normal in your teaching, classes?

Prof Catalano

Well, in the teaching thing, basically I just I went straight ahead. I was doing my stuff in the classroom. I said to the kids, Look. We gotta keep going here and I didn't really get into any huge ancillary discussions. I wound up having maybe three to five kids who lost parents on 9/11.

And these kids came from pretty nice families and blah blah blah and they were, what can I tell you? They were destroyed and I did have several sessions with them, as did other people I'm sure.

Because, losing a father, most of the time it was a father who was a Cantor Fitzgerald [employee] or something like that. This was, of course, dreadful. And for the kids in in Pleasantville who came from good families, this was going to set them up with a whole different set of rules and problems in their lives.
No, that was dreadful.

**Kristina**

Yes... *It's going to be with us, in our hearts and minds for time to come.*

**Prof Catalano**

It was a terrible, terrible thing. I personally...didn't spend too much time as I'm trying to tell you here, sitting there looking at my stomach and saying, “Hey, I'm going to be inactive,” but that didn't happen to me at all. I had a lot of things to do and I just kept going.

**Kristina**

*Yes, I mean I can see how immersing yourself in work can also help you,*

**Prof Catalano**

Oh yes.

**Kristina**

*...move forward in processing all that.*

**Prof Catalano**

Yes, and I had...Remember how long I've been at Pace now, Kristina, I had had some bad times in the late ‘60s. Because I mean I lost some of my football players in Vietnam. They never came [back].

So there was that whole Vietnamese war thing that dragged on for a long time. And this is how far back I go!

That dragged on for a long, long time and, and some of the so-called chaotic, even liberating kinds of activities that took place during the late 60s, the drug culture and all of that other business. You know you have to get students through this stuff. It was not easy. Not easy at all.

They had a tough time, those kids.

**Kristina**

*Yes, you've experienced loss early on too.*

**Prof Catalano**

I lost several of my ballplayers, who I loved, in Vietnam! They never came home.

**Kristina**

*So tragic.*
Prof Catalano

You know that that kind of inexplicable bond that exists between competitors, competing athletes who play together on a team, is so deep and so emotional. To this day we talk about that. We have reunions, you know, it's over 50 years ago that we started this team, and there are guys from the team that we still get together with up at Pace, you know they have these different reunions and things like that and we're all still holding hands. Kind of, in that way.

Yes, it was wild. That was a tough time for kids.

Kristina

Yes, I can imagine.

Prof Catalano

It was kind of fun for them and so on to wear their wonderful clothes, freedom and smoke pot and even to do other things and so on. That was the fun part of it for them. But beneath all of that, there was going to be a tougher time for them to continue in, in most of the American tracks of life.

So that derailed a lot of people. A lot of kids. And when I say derailed, I don't mean that they didn't become president of a law firm or something like that. I'm not talking about that so much, but, morally, psychologically, emotionally and so on. That was a tougher period. Probably the toughest period that I had as a teacher.

Kristina

So you mean for your students during the '60s and 70s, losing a classmate because they didn't come back from the war, That kind of loss was underneath [all that]?

Prof Catalano

Well, not just that problem, but mixed with that was the whole business of, let's face it, the drug culture basically militating against the establishment. The whole business of Nixon and Watergate and the phoniness of that world. The tremendous, the tremendous preoccupation with civil rights! That was a big, big deal and you know that accompanied that whole business. I mean, this was all going on at the same time.

And so was it a tough time! Kids wanted to march, they wanted to...kids are kids. They're all very idealistic. They wanted equality and justice, and this is even before, that period I'm talking about is before the liberation of women! You know that didn't happen until a decade or so later.

Which was, thank goodness, one of the miracles of American Society, but I mean, you know I keep coming back to it. I'm saying the Vietnam period.
This was a terrible war and, basically, the realization that America had stumbled and fallen and engaged in much immorality was a shock to just about every generation.

**Kristina**

*Hmm, right.*

**Prof Catalano**

This is before your time Kristina, you weren't even around then, so it's hard. I'm trying to get you to see all these disparate things going on at the same time.

It was really crazy. Just one quick anecdote. I was teaching in my Shakespeare class. I was teaching Julius Caesar. And we had a speaker come up to Pace and the kids were all bananas. You know this is going to be a revolutionary talk and we're going to get into this whole craziness, etc.

“Dr. C, are you gonna come?” and I said, “Yes, I guess I'm gonna show up,” and sure enough I show up that night--I'm not gonna tell you who the speaker was until I'm finished here. But the speaker was, basically, rabble rousing, using the same rhetorical devices that I had been teaching in Julius Caesar in the Shakespeare class.

OK, everybody in the Shakespeare class by that time, they’d read the play. They know what happens, but what Shakespeare is really doing in that play more than anything else is exposing the power of revolutionary rhetoric. You know the speeches of Julius, Cassius and Brutus and Marc Anthony, and the devices that they were using.

And I was taking the kids through all that stuff which had originated with the Greeks and was very, very, very, complicated stuff, but very powerful! And you know, references to Hitler and all sorts of things. So I'm teaching this and we go through it. And that night I go to Willcox Hall and the place is packed, not just with hippie students, but with parents and teachers and a lot of people. And the speaker happened to be a black comic who I knew. [Dick Gregory, as per Dr. Catalano.]

He started the evening talking about the hypocrisy and the evil of the older generation.

He came back to it a couple of times. *The older generation has really set us up for all the hypocrisy in politics.* And then he comes back a few minutes later. *The older generation is really holding us back, and making us crazy.* And finally, by the end of the speech he was saying, *this older generation is the enemy and we have to revolt!*

You know that kind of stuff and everybody in the room, *including the older people*, gets up and starts cheering.
Because what this guy has done is the same thing that Mark Anthony is doing in Julius Caesar, and there I am probably the only person in the room that's very aware of what's happening rhetorically.

So I got pretty depressed. I said to myself, Holy smoke, it certainly hasn't ever changed. So the next day I get into the classroom and the kids are saying, Hey Dr. C, what did you think? And let's discuss it!” and I was depressed. I said, “Nah, I don't want to talk about it. Finally I said “Look, let me ask you this question. Did anybody make any connection”—and these were good students—“between what we were talking about in terms of the power of emotional rhetoric and what happened last night?”

Nobody raised their hand.

I became even more depressed, which I've continued my depression in the 50 years since then. I've written a lot about this.

There's been no answer to this, and we've just seen exactly what can happen when big lies are told and people are emotionally and psychologically captivated. You know what's been going on for the last four years? All this horrible stuff that that you know Trump and his cronies, etc..

So that's really continued, and there's really been no way that in political structures that we can get beyond this. In ancient Greece, democracy started functioning after lots of decades of experimentation, started to function just about at the beginning of the 5th century.

And this was the miracle part about it, what everybody talks about. All the citizens of Athens could go up to the pinax and in front of the Acropolis. And no matter if you were rich or poor, it was pure democracy. You could get up and scream and yell and do what you wanted to do, etc. And this is what we look back on and say, wow, this is what they started! And what an incredible thing this was. The truth is, that very soon after this wonderful freedom ushered forth people began to realize that the real power in government now lay in the hands of people who could speak persuasively. And so, how do you learn to do this? Well, the sophists and the speech teachers all came flocking down into Athens, made a fortune, teaching some of these different techniques. Incidentally, Kristina, there's hundreds of them. Nobody ever even heard of these things today, but I have, obviously, spent a lot of time writing about them and investigating them.

So sure enough, this is where the first, if you will, persuasive rhetoric began, and some of the persuasive rhetoric is on the side of the angels. But a lot of it is on the side of the devils. As you know! You know the big lie and the people...And again I don't mean to contemporize, but nobody wants to get vaccinated. But what are you crazy? What are you nuts? And you know all the election is totally fixed and you know it's illegal. But there's millions of people in America who believe this!

And so what is all that about?
It goes back to the Greeks.

Kristina

Well, let me take it back to the perspective of being older versus younger, and let's say, what is something that you would tell your younger self, given the perspective that you have now?

Prof Catalano

Oh gosh.

You know, I was really pretty lucky as a kid in college. Somehow, because of the fact that I was involved in everything from A-Z, my fraternity brothers used to say, “What are you going to do when you get out of school to make a living?”

And I'd say, “Well, I can't focus on one thing the way you guys are doing, I want to do a lot of things and so I'm going to go to a university.”

I made that decision.

It was, incredible that I was able to make that decision at that time because I haven't regretted it for one minute since then. It was really me telling myself about who I was, even though I didn't realize who I was at 19 or 20. I mean, how much do you really know? But somehow I had instincts about that, maybe because of my childhood and acting in Julliard, I don't know what it was, but yes, I tell people ever since then… There's a quotation from Aristotle, the life of the mind is everут.

And for me that's been such a gift that I've been able to have. Basically because of my career at Pace!

Kristina

Yes, it’s allowed you to indulge all your interests, really.

Prof Catalano

Oh, and to investigate. Now that I've gotten so much older and I write more, one of the things that I've shared with a lot of people… Growing older has not been for me some major problem, basically because I'm constantly confronting what I call revisionist thinking. I'm constantly learning and saying to myself, boy, I thought this situation was like this, but it's not exactly like this, it's just different and that learning process is for me exciting. It's always been exciting. And now that I'm in my dotage, it's still very exciting.

I just wrote a piece on China¹. I've been to China. I've been a great admirer of a lot of things that most people in the West hate. Karl Marx was in many ways a great, great, brilliant philosopher. You know what happened in Russia was just a bunch of gangsters, but what
happened in China was, and in Cuba was a little bit more idealistic and a little bit more of an attempt to overthrow the evils of industrial capitalism, blah blah blah blah blah blah blah.

When you go to China, you could see that there's a lot of happy people in China. Mao managed to… I'm old enough to remember when people were saying your kids are starving in China and that was true. Well, they're not starving anymore and that system of living and so on did a lot of great things. However, …this is what I wrote about recently. Now we have a guy who's been in power for seven or eight years and he's not a Maoist. He's not a Marxist.

He's a plain ordinary autocrat who’s trying to stamp out, just like everybody else who has been autocrat for thousands of years, and what he's doing with the Uighurs in the West is, is like Hitler. So it's that horrible kind of thing again that human nature…

It depends upon leadership so many times. And so I was disillusioned because I'm assuming that the China that I love is not anymore.

Not now. Not with these guys. Maybe it'll get back to some of that someday. But not at the moment.

And so I wrote that piece. I don't know if you read it.

Kristina

Yes, yes I read it.

Prof Catalano

I mean, what's going on over there now is pretty scary. I called it I think, computer genocide. It’s wild!

Kristina

It's terrible and I'm surprised that actually it's not been talked about more.


Prof Catalano

Well, that's why I wrote that piece.

Very few people know about this, even in Washington, that the discussion there… It's Xinjiang, which is a Western province. Where these 12 million people who are… They're not Han, they're basically Muslims, and under Mao… When Mao made the revolution there, he introduced 55 cultural minorities and gave them freedom in the old China of the Revolution and that's gone!
That was something pretty interesting that happened during those days that not too many people talk about, but that's gone now with this guy.

He doesn't want any of that. He don't want to hear anything about it, and there's torture and horror and misery and genocide going on. Just like there was with Hitler. Same thing.

Kristina

Right? Right, well, the oppressed overthrew the oppressors, and then now the oppressed are oppressing the oppressors.... It's this circular thing.

Prof Catalano

That's right, that's right, I even I use that, I use those figures in my essay, I remember. Yes, absolutely, that's very depressing. But that's the way the world is. What are you going to do? Leadership is so important.

I've just finished reading both Obama books.

I had, again I don't want to pat myself on the back 'cause I don't like that at all, but I had great instincts about this guy in 2008, and my instincts about just exactly how great these people were, both him and his wife have been far surpassed.

And I see that in reading the books. These remarkable, remarkable people, astounding!

I'm thinking about writing a piece about the irony, because since I've been a kid, I've been very much in love with black culture and its accomplishments. And now we see in in these people, Oh my God, I mean what they've done and how they, how they lead their lives!

And I don't know if you've read these books, but I recommend them heartily, heartily. They're astounding, just astounding. I'm talking too much, Kristina.

Kristina

That's great. Yes I have a long list of books that I need to read and it grows ever longer.

Prof Catalano

I know.

Kristina

So yes, I want to keep this to an hour but I know you have so many wonderful memories to talk about.

Prof Catalano

Alright, let me let me say Kristina right now it's a pleasure being here today. I've been interviewed 5000 times in the last 20 years. It's a pleasure to talk to you.
Kristina

Ah, well, thank you so much. I'll just ask one more question. Are there any specific individuals or events that were made unforgettable for you?

Prof Catalano

In my whole life? Oh gosh. Yes. Many, many, many…

I can't think of,… there's been so many wonderful highlights in the creative world, and in the performing world, and so on...I can't think of anything.

I guess I'm coming back to it again. I'm struck, I don't know what your politics are, but I'm struck about the power. The irony of the insidiousness of having this great president in the White House, followed by a guy who I had met several times in the old days and, Oh my God, I couldn't believe it, but this is what happens and I'm not sure who just said it? And I think I quoted it. Free elections are, I think it is Obama. Free elections are no guarantee of democratic prosperity. That's a hard thing to absorb, but it's true.

Hitler was elected. People don't realize that he was an elected official.

Yes so, but going back to what you're saying, I don't know. There's been, maybe, are we going to meet again? Is that what you want to do? You want to do another one of these?

Kristina

I was thinking of wrapping it up on this second interview. Unless there are things that that you wanted me to ask you?

Prof Catalano

Oh no no no no. However you see it, is fine with me. If I had to think I would think about and tell you probably a dozen stories about high points and things that have happened, etc.

The most amazing children that you can imagine. I have three daughters, me and King Lear.

Kristina

Oh I didn't know that.

Prof Catalano

I have to scratch my head every day.

Because these girls are…Oh God it's amazing to me. Not only do they have the amazing character and virtue, which principally their mother has instilled in them all through the years, but they're enormously successful in their careers. My eldest daughter is clinically testing a drug for Alzheimers.
Which is amazing to me and we go through this every day. She started her own company years ago, and she's in clinical trials with this Alzheimer's drug at Yale and Sweden and Australia.

**Kristina**

*Wonderful!*

**Prof Catalano**

My kids are friends. That's really special for me.

**Kristina**

*That's wonderful. Did they go to Pace?*

**Prof Catalano**

One of them did. The middle one did for a while.

Susan went to Barnard. Victoria was at Pace, and Adrian was at UConn.

But they're all New York City kids in the sense that, this city makes you a little bit, it's a cliché now, but this city does make you a little bit tougher and a little bit more competitive. And in that sense it's a great place to grow up.

**Kristina**

Right, it's that old adage. If you can make it here, you can make it anywhere.

**Prof Catalano**

That holds a lot of water. It does, it really does.

The girls are spectacular. As is their mother, who is an amazing woman, amazing.

**Kristina**

*Well, congratulations.*

**Prof Catalano**

So now what's happening in your life? You're very happy at Pace from what you've told me. You’ve been continuing for a while there, right? Where do you live?

**Kristina**

*Oh my husband and I, we live in Brooklyn.*

**Prof Catalano**
Oh sure, I was born and raised in Brooklyn, up in the East New York section. So I'm a Brooklyn boy. And I'm very thrilled that I'm going to be able to root for a Brooklyn sports team for the first time since 1958, when the Dodgers left. I was a Dodger fan.

**Kristina**

*Oh right!*

**Prof Catalano**

There hasn't been a Brooklyn team since then and now that we have the Brooklyn Nets, and they're terrific, so I'm a sports freak as you can tell.

**Kristina**

*I'm surprised you have time for that interest as well.*

**Prof Catalano**

I'm hopeless, I had the New York Giants at Pace in the summertime, training in the summertime in the late 70s and early 80s.

**Kristina**

*Oh really, I didn’t know that!*

**Prof Catalano**

It was during the time I started the team at Pace, the football team. Andy Robustelli called me. He said we need a place. I said, “Yes, come on up here!” And so they trained in the summertime for about 6 years.

And it was thrilling for me. I had been a Giants fan. I went to film sessions, and some of the ballplayers took my classes in the summer; I was teaching in the summer school, because there was nothing else to do in Pleasantville. And during that time, the Giants had undergone a period of moribund activity. Bill Parcells came up there, and they basically won the Super Bowl, which was wonderful, wonderful. So I was thrilled. I was thrilled.

**Kristina**

*Wow, that's a great story.*

**Prof Catalano**

My sports thing is painful sometimes because I love it so much.

**Kristina**

*Well, thanks for including that additional fascinating anecdote at the end.*
Prof Catalano
Well you guys enjoy Brooklyn and, hopefully you are enjoying it.

Kristina
Yes, it really has so many wonderful things going on and so much to enjoy, especially now that it's reopening from the lockdown.

Prof Catalano
Yes, it is great. Once again Kristina a pleasure. I thank you for taking the time for all of this. It was wonderful.

Kristina
And thank you so much for giving me this time to interview with you.
Bibliography
