

BETHANY GORDAN: My name is Bethany Gordan, and I'm an editor at McMillan Learning. I'm here today with two of our authors, John Gardner and Betsy Barefoot, who wrote *Your College Experience*. So let's get started by introducing yourselves.

JOHN GARDNER: Hi, I'm Betsy's husband.

[LAUGHTER]

BETSY BAREFOOT: I guess that means you're John, and I'm Betsy Barefoot.

BETHANY GORDAN: So, John, tell us about your early challenges as a college student.

JOHN GARDNER: I wouldn't wish on any beginning college university student today my kind of first year, and that's the basis for all this work that's led to these books. I want to prevent students from having that. So my first year, terribly lonely, homesick, definitely immature. I was only 17 years old, didn't want to be in college, I had girlfriend 600 miles away I missed terribly.

My first roommate quit after six weeks. He told me, I'm leaving college. I didn't know you could leave college. I got a second roommate. We started calling him "Bunky," because he spent most of the day and night sound asleep, hungover, in his bunk.

My first semester grades were three F's, two D's, and one A. The A was an automatic A because I was a varsity athlete. I had no study habits. Things couldn't have been much worse.

BETHANY GORDAN: So how did you approach overcoming these challenges?

GORDAN:

JOHN GARDNER: I was rescued. I was saved by an upper class student. This outstanding student adopted me after class one day, observed that I wasn't doing very well, also observed I wasn't taking any notes. I didn't know you had to take notes. Nobody ever told me you had to take notes. I didn't take notes in high school.

So I started copying his lecture note-taking skills, and my grades began going up immediately. I owe him everything. And actually, he and I ended up being a professor at the same university for about 30 years, but that's another story. The other thing that saved me was I fired my first

academic advisor, which any student can do today. Many don't know that.

But he told me, in an advising conversation, that I was quote, "the stupidest kid he'd ever advised," unquote, and I thought, this isn't going to work. Let's get a divorce. So I got another advisor, upon the advice of another outstanding student. This guy was, again, my salvation, and we remained very close for the rest of his life. I'm still living, obviously. And he helped me pick my second semester courses by professor and faculty who were much more likely to get me engaged, reach out to me, show an interest in me. So I laid the foundation for turning things around.