SCHEDLER HONORS COLLEGE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT Julie Eberle Oral History Interview Transcription

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Interviewer Name: [Triplett, Cam]

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Location of Interview: [Work office] (Remote Interview - Zoom Recording)

Acronyms:

[JE = Julie Eberle (narrator)][CT= Cam Triplett [interviewer][U of A= University of Arkansas- Fayetteville][UCA = University of Central Arkansas]

Interview Summary

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Julie Eberle conducted by Cam Triplett on March 18th, 2022. This interview is part of the Schedler Honors College Oral History project.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator.

CT [00:00:05] This is Cam Triplett with the Schedler Honors College Oral History Project. Today is March 18th, and I am interviewing Julie Eberle, who is at her office on campus in Conway, Arkansas. We will be talking about Julie Eberle's experience leading up to, during, and after their time in the Schedler Honors College. Please state your name and age for the recording.

JE [00:00:32] Julie Eberle and I am 29 years old.

CT [00:00:36] What year did you enter the Honors College?

JE [00:00:40] Fall of 2010 is when I started.

CT [00:00:44] And what year did you graduate?

JE [00:00:47] Spring of 2014

CT [00:00:52] All right, so now we are about to get into some early life questions before honors. What are your pronouns?

JE [00:01:01] She/hers/her.

CT [00:01:06] So where are you from?

JE [00:01:09] I grew up in Saline County in Benton Arkansas. That is where I have lived my whole life. Did all my years of school there. All of my family is in the Saline County area, so never got too far from good old Benton, Arkansas.

CT [00:01:28] Would you say that Benton, Arkansas was a good place to grow up?

JE [00:01:32] Oh yes, it was really good, except that we did not have a Starbucks until I moved out, I think. It was a really good place. The school system's really good recreationally. It was a great city to live in, very community-oriented. My family was heavily involved in our church community and so we just always had groups of friends. My parents had groups of friends they would hang out with over at our home. My grandparents, aunts and uncles and cousins all lived in the area too, so we were with our family year around. Holidays were huge events. We would have 30 to 40 people at my grandparents' house. I grew up playing with my cousins. My grandparents had some land, so we would go out there and get into who knows what? They had a lot of opportunities to do extracurricular activities. So me and my sister, we play different sports here and there. It was close to Little Rock. Both of my parents worked in Little Rock, so they would drive to Little Rock every day, but they would be home in time for our ball games. Home in time to have a family dinner together at the house. And yes, it was a really great place to grow up.

CT [00:03:04] Who are your parents?

JE [00:03:06] Holly Davis and Jeff Davis are their names. That is who they are. So, my mom and dad, they also grew up in Arkansas. My dad, I think, started out in the Fort Smith area and then his family moved. Yes, where Cam is from [laughs]. So, then they made their way to Saline County because of my grandfather's job. Then my mom grew up in like Stuttgart area, and her dad passed away when she was really young, I think nine years old. Then they got relocated. I do not know all the details. If I sat and thought long enough, I could probably relay some, but they ended up in Benton, Arkansas, as well. So, my mom and dad actually grew up in Saline County and they got married. My dad, I think, got an associate degree, and my mom went to college for like a year. Then

they got married and started life and just got jobs that paid, and they stuck with those jobs and kind of worked their way up through their companies.

When I went to college, I just kind of had this outlook of, I am not going to just sit and do a desk job my whole life. Like, I do not know what I am going to do. When I started college, I really did not know, but watching my mom and dad, and they never complained about it, but I do not think they loved their jobs. I do not think they pursued jobs that were like based on their passions. But they are really good people. They stayed married; they are still married. So, I was thankful for that. Even though I know it was not always easy, like driving back and forth. Anyway, that was one thing that I just thought. When I get into college and pursue a career, I want to do something that I love to do, not just because it is a job that pays. Yes, that is my mom and dad. A little bit, at least.

CT [00:05:27] You mentioned ball games, that they would come to see ball games. You played sports growing up, right?

JE [00:05:32] Yes. I played basketball since I was little, and I played all the way through high school. It would have been my dad's dream if I would have tried to play somewhere in college, but that was never a passion of mine. I enjoyed athletics and I learned a lot of life skills. I am very thankful that I was involved in basketball. Softball was another one. Every summer was packed with Softball tournaments.

Then in high school, I played soccer as well for our high school team. I learned how to be on a team, how to have teammates, how to win, and how to lose. I think I definitely have a more competitive edge to my personality because we just were always competing. But at the same time, I feel like. Part of me playing so many sports and in sports for so long, all the way through high school, it was really a passion of my dad's. He loved being at our games and watching me and my sister play. There were times where he kind of was hard, as far as making sure we were practicing and if we were going to do something that we were going to not do it halfway, like really fully

invest. I think that translated into how I viewed and handled academics. If I was going to be in a certain class or take an AP class in high school, I was going to get an A in it, that was my mindset academically. And so, I am thankful for that.

But there were times it also was not fun to feel like you are under that pressure all the time and every game. But they were always there. I was thankful because you had teammates whose parents were not there, not around, not supportive. My parents, my grandparents, would show up. You always had fans in the crowd and that made you feel good as a kid and as a teenager to know that your family was there and supporting you and what you are doing. So, yes, sports, I loved it.

But then there was a part of it too, that I felt driven by my dad to compete and do well. So when I graduated from high school, I decided that I was done and in college, I was not going to try to carry the load of sports and academics and all of that. He was supportive of that. But he loves to talk about all the glory days when I was like six and made a basket [laughter].

CT [00:08:12] I had a sports dad too, so I completely understand.

JE [00:08:16] My dad was the vocal one, too. He loved to like holler at the refs. And now if he is like watching a Razorback game, he is always like "the refs, the refs just through the game." But that is just who he is. I think I think a lot of it, the way he is, you realize people are the way they are because of how they have grown up and experiences that have or have not happened to them, too. And so I never faulted my dad. But I think he always wanted to play sports growing up, but he grew up in a family that money was not like always—Not that they had trouble getting by, but I do not think he had the freedom to just like, go off and play sports. I think he had to get a job and help contribute from a young age. And so, getting to let me and my sister do those things that I think he would have always loved to have done when he was growing up was like a huge thing for him. I think it made him feel loved or like he was being a good dad in a lot of ways.

And he was, he was always there helping me practice or rebounding for me if I was playing basketball. And I can remember many days after church on Sunday, we would practice. I am thankful for that, but there are times where on Sunday I would love to have just like gone home and been a kid at home or been hanging out with my friends versus like I got to do an hour of practice. Anyways, I do not regret any of it, for sure. I enjoyed it. I am so grateful for the way I was raised and the opportunities that I was given. Being at the school that I was at and just growing up in the family that I grew up in.

CT [00:10:08] That is great. You talked a little bit about passions, and you seem to have a lot of passions from a young age like you know what you wanted to do. What were your passions when you were a child? Did you know that you wanted to do what you are doing?

JE [00:10:22] No, not at all. I think I do have passion as part of my personality. As far as, I contend, I can sometimes tend to be a high-energy person or kind of extroverted like I want to be with people. If I had it my way, we would have game nights at our house all the time. My husband is like, "No." So I love being around people. When I first got a cell phone, I loved texting my friends all the time. But passion, as far as career-wise, no, I had no idea what I was going to do.

I think the passion for athletics carried over into academics, I was very passionate like about my grades. I wanted a 4.0. I did not want to make a B in any of my classes. And my parents did not force me to do that. Once I got old enough, they made sure I did my homework when I was young and all of that. But once I was in middle school, junior high, I kind of cared about it more than they did. And so I wanted to take the hardest of the hardest classes. There's probably more of a menu of AP courses even now than there was back in 2007 at the school I graduated from. But I tried to take all of them. I think except for like Physics, I hated physics. So, I took AP chemistry, I took AP Biology, and I took AP Calculus. I wanted to be valedictorian of my class. I was not, but it was close.

So, I had passion for that, to do well at whatever I was doing. I was, like, super proud of myself when I made an A in AP chemistry. So, when I went to college, I was like, I am going to keep running in that vein, so I declare myself a chemistry major. Even though it is like so hard. I do not know why I did that to myself. It was like so hard. I was like every class was a grind, but it is like I wanted the challenge. I do not know. Anyways, I went to college, I started college at UCA which was not my original plan, by the way. I wanted to go to Fayetteville. I had two best friends from high school and they both went to U of A. So my senior year of high school, I applied to U of A. I got a great scholarship, I got the chancellor scholarship, and totally would have been doable to go to U of A. But my mom and dad were like "why not just have a backup? just in case." And another good friend of mine was applying at UCA and so I looked into the Honors College and when I realized, financially, what the package was. Basically, free ride to college, I was just like, how could I turn that down? Like, why would I do that? So, I was like, I do not know if I will get in, but I applied to the Honors College. I remember coming up for the interview and doing that whole day, and then when I got my acceptance letter, I threw Fayetteville stuff in the trash. I was like, I am going to go to UCA.

Anyways, so I came here, and I was in Honors and I was a chemistry major. It was my declared major. Just started running from there, but still did not know what I wanted to do. And that kind of haunted me I think my whole college career. And it was even harder because my roommate, three out of the four years, my roommate like knew that she knew that she knew that she wanted to be an OBGYN. She wanted to go to med school. She wanted to go to residency. And she wanted to be all about women's health. And she just had this dead set course. And it would drive me crazy, sometimes because I was like, I am so lost over here. Like I am doing well in all of my classes, but I do not know what I want to do. And then freshman and sophomore year, nobody is really like making you say what you are going to do. They are just like, "Oh, good job, you are passing college" and you are loving it, and it is all that is good. But then probably my junior and senior year, it really started to weigh on me that I was going to be graduating sooner than later. And what am I

going to do next? That was hard. So, I had many nights I would just search the internet, like what jobs are there for chemistry degree? And I think what made it harder is that I was decent. I did really well through school, and I was like. Passing, great grades, loving college, but just like did not know what was next. So that was like internally, there was just this struggle. I just would get really stressed out about it or anxious about it. Sometimes I would try to talk to people here and there.

But what I never did, and I do not know if people encouraged me to do this, maybe, but I do not remember any conversations. I never went and shadowed anywhere. I never tried to go in shadow like a professor, although I had professors in my classes, I know what they do. I never tried to go shadow somebody in the industry who had a chemistry degree. I never tried to go shadow anybody medically because a lot of people who get science degrees go to med school or pharmacy school. I just kind of like crossed it off in my mind. It was like, I do not want to go to medical school. I do not want to have lot of debt or something like that, or just like threw these ideas out. I wish I would have gone and like shadowed an intern or something like that. But I do not know.

Maybe I did it because another huge part of just my life is my involvement in church. That was a huge part of my upraising. My church and my faith, my relationship with Jesus Christ. So when I got to college, I got involved with New Life Church here in Conway, which kind of totally rocked my world because I grew up in this Southern Baptist Church and loved it like really rich community. But you go to a place like New Life, this huge nondenominational church, and you feel like you are walking into a concert. The worship team is amazing and the graphics and the production and all of it were just really well. Then to find community and friends in their college group. Then I started serving with their high school kids and just fell in love. I think in my junior and senior years of college, I spent more time with a group of like eighth and ninth-grade girls than I did with my college friends.

I just fell in love with this idea of mentoring, mentoring young people, and helping them navigate hard times in their life. Because I have walked through eighth grade and survived, and they will too. Even though they think they will not [laughter]. That was a whole different side of my life.

I felt this draw towards the church world. I did not know if I wanted to pursue a career within the church, which totally did not mesh with a chemistry degree like you do not use that in church [laughter]. But I was excelling in my degree, and I was like there is more money in that field. You get told "do not chase money." That is not the fulfillment that you are seeking in life. But then, money is a necessity to live. So, it was just this huge dichotomy of like, what do I do? And I just like sat there in the middle the whole time and like, I do not know. But all that to say, college is a really awesome experience, and Honors was a really awesome experience. I just did not have a clear-cut path. To answer your question. Now it is all sorted out, and I can tell you all the details of that in hindsight. But no, I did not know what I wanted to do when I came into college.

CT [00:19:09] Do you have any advice for the many college students that do not have a career path? I know many and I know they really could use some encouragement right now.

JE [00:19:22] Yes, yes, for sure. I actually had a student in my office yesterday and we talked for almost an hour about this very subject. I had a student in my office last semester, and we would come in and we just somehow end up talking about this topic because in college you realize college is essentially asking 18, 19, 20-year-olds to plan the rest of their life. The course of their life, which is insane. Some people are like "since the time I was five years old, I wanted to be a nurse in labor and delivery." And that is awesome. I am jealous of those people because they do not have to struggle with "What am I supposed to do with my life? What's the purpose of my life for all this?"

And I did not ever struggle with the idea of what the purpose of my life is. To me that was always answered in the realm of my relationship with Jesus and my faith and in scripture and in the Bible, and all that, so I never struggled really with that. Although honors, you know Cam, walking through introduction to self and community was like, Whoa. You take a step back and examine, you self-reflect. Like whatever you have been taught as a kid and whatever your faith is in, you

self-reflect on that big time. And I think in the end, I came out stronger in why I believe what I believe. So, I think that was good. But it was a really, really, really neat process.

Anyway, so going back to your question, yes, I have some advice. I think the first thing you have to do with yourself is to be brutally honest. I think it is really hard in a culture is always encouraging people to chase the bigger and the better and the newer, whether it is technology and devices and things that we want that are nice and new, and all those things take money. We want the perfect resume in college. We want a resume that is built out with all these volunteer hours. We are involved in all these organizations. I think it would be better if we were brutally honest about the fact that we are all limited human beings and we cannot do everything there is to do. We cannot say yes to every opportunity. And college, I think, was a great refining process for me because you find yourself as a college student chasing all these things and then stressed out all the time and exhausted all the time. Because you are trying to say yes to so much and make sure that you are giving yourself all the opportunities that college has to offer you. But we cannot say yes to everything. It is not that we are just busy all the time, it is just that we are limited, we are limited in what we can do and how much effort we can put into things.

I think one of the greatest pieces of advice anybody's ever shared with me, my husband, is "you can do anything you want to do, but you cannot do everything you want to do." I have just held on to that statement because holy cow. America says you can do everything you want to do, but you cannot. Like nobody can. Nobody can do that and then be a happy, sane human being, enjoying their life.

Anyway, I think you have to be brutally honest, brutally honest about what you love.

Brutally honest about how much money you think you need to survive on and if you are OK with making that and not chasing. Brutally honest about what you do not like. Brutally honest about what people are telling you to do. Acknowledging this is what my mom or dad really thinks I should do, or this is what my so and so professor is really encouraging me to do, or this is what my

friends are telling me to do. Are those the loudest voices in my head, or am I giving myself a chance to say what I really want to do?

Yesterday, the student in my office was like "I was a nursing major, but I just changed my major to elementary education." You think about nursing, how we applaud all of that. She was like, "but people tell me, you do not really make a lot of money being an education." So, she is like, struggling with this and she is like "But I love kids and I love teaching, and I have always thought I would be good at it. For the first time in my life, I am giving myself permission to like pursue this." I just talked to you about how courageous that is, really, and how a lot of people see college as an opportunity to reinvent the wheel and who they are as a person, and that can be good or bad.

You just cannot let other people's voice—I am not saying do not take advice from people. We all need wisdom and wisdom comes from people that have lived longer and experience more things than us. You just need to be very selective about where you choose to get advice and wisdom from. It just cannot come from everybody. So I think being brutally honest.

The next biggest thing I would say to college students is you need to get out and actually put yourself in the shoes of someone who is doing what you think you might like to do. If you want to be a nurse, you need to go to a hospital, or reach out, and shadow a nurse. Or you need to talk to people who actually are nurses and ask them what the best parts of their job are and what the worst parts of their job are, the parts that they hate and the parts that they love. And if possible, you need to get your eyes and hands on those things. I know that can be hard and intimidating because people just are like, "Well, I do not know anybody," but that is totally not an excuse. In this day and age, with the internet, you can reach out anywhere. And so I never really shadowed. I spent a lot of my free time doing a lot of mentoring and church ministry type stuff, which I love that I do not regret doing those things. I just wish I would have freed up some time or allocated some time to go shadow, a pharmacist, go shadow, a doctor or a pediatrician. Just even giving myself an opportunity to see would I enjoy doing this. Go Shadow, a high school teacher, and go sit in a classroom. I know I went through high school but look at it from the teaching perspective. Would I like that? I did

very, very little of that. So, I think that is my next piece of advice for college students is you will come up with this idea of what career you want to do, but you actually do not know what it is like [laughter]. You might think you know from reading on the internet what it is like, but you do not until you talk to somebody who's doing that every day. So that is my next piece of advice. I think those are the two things I would say.

CT [00:26:33] That is a really good. We appreciate it and whoever is going to listen to this in the future.

JE [00:26:40] Awe, take it from somebody who did not do all those things.

CT [00:26:47] They will greatly appreciate it. I want to go back and talk about our process of getting into the Honors College a little bit, so do you remember much about the application?

JE [00:27:01] Yes. Peter Elbow. The doubting game or believing game. What is it called [laughts]?

CT [00:27:08] Maybe it is the Believing game. It talks a little bit about both [laughter]. What all did the application process entail for you, because it sounds like we read the same thing and it is pretty much been the same, but I want to make sure.

JE [00:27:31] Yes, I had to fill out an application, send in my transcripts, all of that. Then you had to write an essay to read that article. Peter Elbow's article. Then you had to write a response to that. And I forget what the exact prompt was, but was just your interpretation of what this article is about and like how that applies to life, like how you do that or is that a good thing or a bad thing? I do not know. I do not remember exactly what the prompt was, but I do remember the gist of the doubting or the believing game. It is kind of what I was talking about with putting yourself in somebody's

shoes. Like, let's say there is an idea or a theory or a point of view or a perspective on an issue or life or whatever that you disagree with or that contrasts your perspective or your point of view. How do you go through life? Do you just dismiss it? Basically, the gist of the article was you try to fully believe it. You try to put that idea on almost like you put on your outfit in the morning. Put that idea on and really think about it or feel it or see it from all angles. Before you make a judgment on if that is a true ideology or not.

I think there are areas of my life where I have done that. I think I do that better relationally. Like in a marriage, you talk about everything, or you should. If me and my husband have a conflict, or a disagreement, I think it makes me a better person to pause and reconsider his idea or his statement or his thought and then assess. "Oh, maybe what he said. He did not mean it this way, and I took it this way, but that is not what he meant." It would help me if he would realize the same thing if I say something that he disagrees with or something that hurt his feelings. I think, relationally, that is a really good thing to do with people.

I do not think I have necessarily done that in other areas of my life. Maybe to some degree, I have. For example, I have mentioned that my faith in my belief in the Bible has been a big part of my life, so I know there are other belief systems. One of my best friends grew up in Iran and basically was Muslim from the time she was born, had that stamped on her birth certificate. I had had another friend in college who grew up in Arkansas, grew up around Christianity, but in college, she just decided this is not for me, and that is not what I believe. So, then I have a decision to make, if I want to be her friend, to look at her point of view. Now that does not mean I have sat here and read the Koran or read these other religious philosophies, all of them, and fully tried to believe them myself. But I have tried to learn more about those things. Mainly because when I come in contact with a person that I love, or I am close with as friend, that is just part of being somebody's friend. Like knowing about them and knowing what they believe and why they believe it and discussing those things. I think true friendship, obviously, you talk about more than surface-level stuff. So, I

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think all that goes back to Peter Elbow. I really got off on a tangent didn't I [laughs]? The

application process included that essay and the regular application stuff.

CT [00:31:35] Do you recall, I^2 day?

JE [00:31:42] Is that the day you come on for your interview? Yes, I remember it.

CT [00:31:47] Can you tell me about what that day was like?

JE [00:31:51] Yes. We sat in a room, me and some other people who were applying for the Honors

College. I cannot remember if it was Adam or Doug, but one of the instructors sat in the room with

us. They gave us this topic and they said, "here's a controversial idea." I think the topic was, books

versus paperless content. Books have been the traditional source of like disseminating information

for the past hundreds, thousands of years. And now we have the internet. Do you think that the

world is eventually going to do away with books and be like fully an online world, or do you think

books and paper copies of things are essential? So, we just debated it. I think they just wanted to see

who was willing to listen to other people's opinions, who was willing to speak up about the issue

and come up with good points of view and deliberately consider things and reason things. So we

talk through that and then I do not remember anything else. I think we probably met Rick Scott,

who was the dean at the time. I do not remember what else we did. They maybe gave us a tour or

something, but I do remember that part of it.

CT [00:33:16] Which side of the argument did you take?

JE [00:33:21] I did not say this, but in in my head, I was like, "I think it is kind of ridiculous to

think that books would ever become obsolete." There is something about having a hard copy that

you can underline and highlight. You never know what is going to happen to the internet, especially like. One day the internet might not be a thing. I think having something hard copy something that cannot just be [snaps] deleted is pretty essential. So, I think there are several reasons for that. When somebody receives a piece of mail, for example, as the simplest form I can think of, there is an emotional response to you. You get excited. Well, I do not get all excited to check my mailbox every day. But if it is a letter from somebody, there is an emotional response to that. But then there is also I think it appeals to other things too. So, I think that is a side I argue.

CT [00:34:34] So I^2 days when you get your first sneak peek into Honors life. You get to tour the dorms. Your interview is set up how the Cores are. What were your first impressions?

JE [00:34:49] I really wanted to get into Honors College. I had not decided if I was doing UCA yet, but I at least want to be accepted. So, I told you, I am competitive, right? I was not afraid to speak up. I was pretty vocal. I was not like trash in anybody's ideas. But I also was not afraid to like, play devil's advocate. You do not want to come across as domineering either or confrontational, and honestly, I really was not a confrontational person. I still would not label myself as confrontational. I do not know why that word has such a negative connotation to it. But I think that I definitely wanted to make sure I was part of the conversation. I wanted to give a good impression. That is why you are there. You are being interviewed; you want to give a good impression. I think I loved everything that I saw. The dorms blew me away. Farris Hall, you are like, "I could have my own room." I love the campus. I think I loved just the feel of like Honors being this micro-community within the campus overall. I think I was really drawn to it.

CT [00:36:15] I know some honor students meet their future roommates at I^2 day. Did you have that experience?

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JE [00:36:26] Oh yes. I want to say it was like an S.O.S. orientation day that that happened because

I know we had another day too. Like once your accepted. I do not know if I met them on I^2 day. I

might have met the girls that I eventually did room with, but I do not know if we decided we were

going to be roommates then. I knew that another girl from my high school was also applying. So we

were like if we both get in, we will room together. Then I think it was that S.O.S orientation day, we

had two other girls in our group that were also going to be an Honors and we were like, "Let's all be

roommates." I think it happened that way.

CT [00:37:10] Do you have any advice for potential applicants?

JE [00:37:20] Do not put all your money in one hat. Apply to UCA and Honors, apply to other

places too. Give yourself an opportunity to get out there and look at different universities and

different campuses and colleges. I know it is probably hard to like to decide. Like I said I did not

know what I was going to be doing at the time, so it is not like you can always make the judgments

of like, "well this university would be better for me because I am going to go to medical school."

Honestly, I think any university in Arkansas, most universities, you would get a pretty decent

education to go to medical school or go to wherever. Anyways, I think you need to explore other

places. As far as applying to Honors and UCA, I do not know. This is actually a really good

question. I feel I need think about it.

CT [00:38:22] That is fine

JE [00:38:25] Yes, maybe let's revisit this before the interview is over.

CT [00:38:33] That is cool. I would definitely make note of it. Who did you have Core I with?

JE [00:38:43] Donna

CT [00:38:45] What was that like?

JE [00:38:48] I was intimidated by Donna at first.

CT [00:38:52] She was also my Core I professor.

JE [00:38:54] Really? Were you intimidated by her too?

CT [00:38:58] Slightly. She is very smart.

JE [00:39:03] Very smart. I feel like I cannot say anything stupid. She was like always knitting. And I was like, well, maybe she is not mean. People who knit are not mean, right [laughs]?

So, I had Donna. I think the experience was very good. We would meet for core I, and then she would throw a topic up, and then we will debate it and discuss it. This was the first style of class I had taken where it was discussion-based. I wonder how seriously I took the readings. Like how well prepared did I come to class ready to discuss and debate? There are probably classes I did, but then there are probably classes where it is like, oh, I had an exam, and I just did not read that journal article super in-depth and probably could have gotten more out of it. I would love to go back and actually reread some of those things now.

I think it was overall a really good experience learning to discuss ideas with your peers.

Controversial ideas. Also, I was so young, did I even really get the idea, the total gist of these ideas or these thoughts are things? But you got to start someplace, right? So, but yes, it was a really good experience. I remember being kind of mind blown like is the class, is this what we do? We just

come here and talk. That is awesome. I do not have to sit and take notes the whole time. So I really liked it.

Like I said, behind all the discussions in the journal articles I think in Core I, you start this journey into self-reflection. The framework of who you are and what you believe and what you have been taught to believe. I remember I had just gone on a senior trip the summer before I started honors. Two of my very best friends we went on this trip, I think our moms came. We went to Europe for a couple of weeks and traveled to all these places. It was really cool. And one of the places that we went was the Vatican in Rome. It is in Rome, right? Yes [laughs]. The Vatican is rooted in Catholicism, which I did not grow up Catholic, but Catholic is supposedly Christianity and we share the same root faith. I just think it was a very surreal experience. Going someplace that had existed for thousands of years. It was a very beautiful place. Very serene, very peaceful. But then my two friends that I was with had grown up Methodist, which again is another vein of Christianity. I had grown up Baptist, or at least in a Baptist church. But I was just like, what do these words mean? What is Baptist? What is Methodist like? I did not know what Baptist meant. Nobody ever taught me. I was kind of frustrated by that idea. They talked about as methodists they learned all about the Methodist faith and like what being Methodist means and all this stuff. I was like, "Why did not I learn about what Baptists?" I just started questioning all this, and so I was coming off of that trip into Honors and then all this other Confucianism and Daoism, and Eastern thinking. You are reading all this, and you are just like, "Well, what am I?" I can literally ask myself these questions like, here is what I have been taught growing up. So, you do ask the questions, "What else is there?" and "are these ideas true? Do I believe them? Do they carry any weight?" So, I think it was all a really good thing, but there was all that turmoil going on underneath as well.

CT [00:43:28] A true search for the self.

JE [00:43:32] It was a search for the self, but I enjoyed it was good. I think it is a good thing for young people to do. I do not think people would naturally go on that journey without being prompted to buy a course, they are being forced to buy honors [laughter].

CT [00:43:54] If you prefer the discussion-based style of teaching the Honors presented to you?

JE [00:44:06] I think it is good in certain realms, I do not think it would work for every discipline. So now I am in chemistry and there are times when I discuss things with my students, but I do not think discussion-based would work. I teach a class of a hundred students, so I think there are limitations on when discussion-based is appropriate. I think you have to have a smaller group, or you have to break a huge class down into smaller groups. But even then, I think having an instructor there in our group was really helpful to continue to kind of guide and navigate the discussion. I think if you just broke students up and sent them on their own, I do not think much would happen. S

So you have to look at the size of the group for the discussion based to be appropriate. I think you have to consider the topic. In chemistry, there is a lot of math involved and math is pretty objective. Ideas of religion and the liberal arts topics are a little more subjective. So, I think discussion-based tend to work better in those more subjective topics where there is not necessarily a right or wrong, but it is good to discuss both ideas and see it from different angles. Whereas in other topics, no, there is a right or wrong. Two plus two is four. So there is no debating it. Then there is probably other things to think about, too, but those are just the first things that kind of jump out to me. Do I prefer it, though? Again, I love it. I love discussing things, and talking through things, but I think it just depends on what your subject matter is at hand.

CT [00:46:13] Do you like the small class sizes?

JE [00:46:16] Oh, yes, I think that is great. I think the more intimate you can be, the better. I think people learn better. I think people are more willing to speak up when it is a smaller class. Like I said, I teach a class of 100 students right now and everybody is so scared to raise their hand. They do not want to look like an idiot in front of 100 people. So, when I say, "All right, does anybody have questions [laughter]?" They do not. They do not ask. Like, very rarely. Last semester, I had a student who was never afraid to speak up, and I thank that student so much. Even this semester, I checked in on her. I was like, "I want you to know you changed the dynamic of our classroom." And yes, sometimes maybe her question was like, well, I actually just talked about that, and that is Ok. Like, I think other people in a large group just are not so willing untill I voice something, and so they just sit there confused or lost. They would rather sit there confused and lost versus ask a question. So I think the small, intimate setting is really great for discussion-based stuff.

CT [00:47:25] Honestly, bless the people that can raise their hand in a gigantic class.

JE [00:47:29] Yes, bless them, everybody needs them because I guarantee you really 15 other people have that question. And more so it is a good thing

CT [00:47:39] Big groups say it can be so intimidating [laughs].

JE [00:47:42] Are you in any really large classes?

CT [00:47:45] No, but earlier on I took some science classes that were always packed with 40 plus people. I was the one to email the professor afterward and ask questions because it can be scary.

JE [00:48:00] Yes, I try to tell them that too, that I am available outside of class and some people are like, I know that I am confused, but I do not even know what to ask right now. Sometimes they

are in that spot, and sometimes they just need to come like, talk it through. So, I try to tell them, like, Come see me, but they are always intimidated to do that, too. Anyway, yes. I do not know. Everybody is different.

CT [00:48:27] That is true. Did you have a favorite reading from Core I?

JE [00:48:33] Do you have like a list? Do you know what the reading were?

CT [00:48:45] Oh, I can try to find one right quick.

JE [00:48:49] Did we read some Marxism and existentialism? I know we read like Confucianism, and Daoism. We read Sartre. Who else did we read?

CT [00:49:10] Sartre was one of my favorites. I want to say Socrates.

JE [00:49:17] Who was the existentialist? Was that Sartre?

CT [00:49:24] It might have been.

JE [00:49:28] I liked the readings that kind of asked, what's the purpose of life? I feel like having grown up around Christianity, that is a pretty clear answer. Like what the purpose of life. A very hopeful answer, like a very encouraging answer. So, looking at that question from different angles was like really interesting to me. Looking at the purpose of life through the lens of—I do not remember all the details of it, either. I just remember being perplexed. I probably could not even define existentialism right now, like the details of that ideology are. I will say in my adult life that there is a teacher I really like to listen to. His name is Timothy Keller. He has pastored a church in

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Manhattan, New York, of all places. Can you imagine having a church in Manhattan? I mean, your audience is just going to be all kinds of people, which is what you want, but he is like a very well-read person too. That is what I appreciate about him from like an Honors standpoint is like he talks about Sartre, and he talks about Marxism, and he talks about all these things in his teachings, and he considers them when he is teaching a message. I am like, "Oh yes, I remember I read that one time," but I do not remember, like all the details of it.

I really did not love reading all the eastern thinking and philosophy. I remember having a hard time connecting with those.

CT [00:51:31] Do you know that teacher's name?

JE [00:51:37] Timothy Keller

CT [00:51:40] I missed that.

JE [00:51:44] He does not just one angle. Obviously, he believes in Christianity, but he really tries to reason like, why is that even a logical belief? And to do that, you have to consider other points of view and perspectives. So, I appreciate that he includes that and does that.

CT [00:52:10] I definitely made not of his name.

JE [00:52:13] Yes. He is kind of old school. His church was Presbyterian. I do not know if you understand that. It is a little more traditional and he looks like your average grandpa like, bald head. I think especially if you have an Honors bent to your college experience that he is somebody you could listen to. He has got some books out, too. He is actually a very well-published author. One of his books is called The Reason for God. He did a whole series of his podcasts that walk through that

book, too. Sometimes his readings are so dense that I have to read things two or three times before I can move on, which I felt I had to do with Honors readings, too. Do you feel like that? Like, I read that, but I have no idea what that just said, so I need to read it again. Sometimes his readings are like that, too.

CT [00:53:10] I went back and read one recently, and it took me a couple of times.

JE [00:53:14] Yes, I think that was the hard part about Core I, too. It is like I wanted to learn it, but I could not grasp it all in the first read.

CT [00:53:27] So I feel like you have to ask this question to anybody who went through Core I, the search for the self. Did you ever locate the self? Where can your find it?

JE [00:53:40] [laughs] I remember Rick talked about like body, spirit, soul. He talked about the self and where is the self. I feel like before I even came to the Honors College, I would not have considered myself lost. Like not knowing who I was, I think I learned more about myself. I do not know if you ever fully answer that question, though in your lifetime. I think. I think life is a progression, it is a journey, it is not an arrival. Like in Honors College, I was not a mother, I was not even a wife at that point, I was just an individual. And now I am married, and I have children and I am stepping into new roles of my personhood. To say that I had found myself completely. That self has changed. I am still discovering who I am as a mom. So I do not know, I think there was a side of me that remained rooted and grounded in what I believe the overall purpose of life is like and what I hope in, and what brings me encouragement when I look at our world or like current events and can get discouraged about all the evil you see in the world or all the suffering you see in the world. Or when you hear about war or politics or things that you feel are correct or things like that. I have something that I believe in that steadies me and brings me hope.

To be honest with you, what I believe in just personally this whole idea and this philosophy of Christianity, it is not about finding yourself at all. It is about surrendering yourself and dying to yourself and becoming like the person of Jesus. So, to ask me, "did I find myself like?" Well, for me, finding myself is about it is about losing myself. If that makes sense, I do not know. It is a very it is actually a very freeing process, I think. So that is kind of a unique question. I think I am learning more and more about myself. There's a scripture in the Christian Bible, in Philippians, that talks about he, who began a good work, and you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ. And I think that scripture kind of symbolizes this idea of what I said, like, life is a journey and what's happening inside of you is not complete until your life is over. So, I do not know. I do not know if I can say yes or no.

CT [00:56:48] That has been the most unique answer I have gotten to that question. I think that is really cool.

JE [00:56:54] Really? What do other people say?

CT [00:56:56] Well, you get the classic, "I do not know where it is still," some people adopted some of the professor's philosophies of where it is. I believe somebody recalled Doug saying it was little pieces everywhere that you leave with people and places as you go along in life. Some people say it is right here [points a chest]. [laughter]

JE [00:57:30] I am not cool, and I cannot do stuff like that. I do not know, Cam. What do you think?

CT [00:57:42] That is interesting. I am trying to recall what I said, freshman year in comparison to what I might think it is now. I do not know. I do not think that the search for the self ever

necessarily ends, so I cannot really say where I think I found it or where I think I could find it, because I think I have yet to find it.

JE [00:58:15] There is more to this life, who you are going to become, how you are going to change, there is things that used to be really important to me that are not important anymore. I think part of your journey with self is this balance of interests and values. I think our interests really change over time. I think we would define ourselves a lot by our interests, like what kind of music we listen to or how compatible we are with somebody, especially if you are interested in finding somebody to spend your life with, somebody to get married to. You tend to judge their interests. I used to be really interested in playing basketball. Interests change over time. You laugh at what you were interested in when you were 12 years old now, right? Thank God, you are not interested in that anymore.

Then there is this idea of values to your life and your values are like what you think it means to be a good person, which I think Honors talks a lot about. Values in a community which is Core II. I think your values are things that should not be changed by your circumstances. They should not be circumstantial. Values should withstand the opinions of people. Not to say that you cannot adopt a different value as you grow and change. But who you are, and how you respond to people and situations are built off of those values that you think are important and you build your life on. You tend to surround yourself with people who have values similar to you, but I would also argue that it is really, really good for you to surround yourself with people who have different values than you. II

I'll go back to my friend in graduate school who grew up in the Middle East. I am so thankful for her. I'll go back to my friend in college who did grow up Christian, and then decided, "I do not believe in this stuff anymore." I am so thankful for her. It has made me assess my own values to say, "Are these the right values? So, your interests change. I think your values, you build on them. Anyways, yes, I think you can add that little bit to like self as well. I do not know.

CT [01:00:46] I also shared a syllabus with you, from Core I, just in case. I wanted to give you the chance to be able to look at it.

JE [01:01:05] Oh, here it is. Core I. Oh, wow, this is going to take me down memory lane. Oh yes, the loss of the creature, Plato.

CT [01:01:27] It might be slightly different.

JE [01:01:36] Journey in the dark. Interesting. Muhammad and the Koran, I do not remember that. Marx, I remember Marx. Wealth of nations, I remember reading that, but I cannot tell you what I said. Darwin, Darwin has been a part of it.

Maybe this was actually in one of Allison's classes. I took a class from Allison, Ecological Economics. And we read—Now, I cannot think of it, but it talked, and I am surprised I do not see some of this in Core I. Learning about humanity by looking at nature. I cannot remember what the reading is.

I see Ralph Waldo Emerson. Yes, I remember reading that. Though, some of the things we read in her class later on, though, that I was like, that could be actually fit in Core I. Some of this I feel like has changed. Woman is Body? We definitely did not read Woman in a Man's World. I do not think we read that. Sexing the Body, how biologists construct human sexuality. Definitely did not read that. I am not going to say it is a new issue, but I feel like it has become a more predominant issue than when I was in college.

CT [01:03:32] This is actually the most recent Core I syllable I could find, and this was in 2008.

JE [01:03:38] This is from 2008? So maybe that was in there.

CT [01:03:42] It might have changed when because I know it is changed a lot since I took Core I.

JE [01:03:57] Some of this stuff I remember. I honestly, it has been so long that I would have to go back. I mean, it has been over 10 years since I have read this stuff. I probably could not very well discuss the details of these readings. So, I really do not remember which one was a favorite.

I think I remember trying to do the doubting and believing game. But having grown up in, as I said in this Christian, in a Christian family, and with Christian ideology. Growing up reading the Bible. I really did question some of those things at one point, my husband and his college experience really question some of those things too. So, it was good to read these other things and I am glad I did. I think where I landed was that it strengthened what I believe and why I believe it. So, I think in the end, I never really held on to any of these philosophies dearly. If that makes sense.

CT [01:05:20] Do you have a favorite Core?

JE [01:05:29] I feel like I really liked the search for community, but I have also really forgotten some of it. I know we did this community project. I remember we went around, and we talked about the power of positivity or optimism. I remember we went around campus, and we wrote positive, encouraging things on the sidewalks with sidewalk chalk. We actually get a lot of research on how optimism and positivity affect you mentally and affect you relationally and why people tend to have like a negative bent or a positive bent on life. We discussed words like "happiness" versus "joy". I really like that, but I also felt like we did more project group stuff versus just sitting and discussing in Core II. I took Adam's linguistic class for core three. I know is a good class, but it was not my favorite. Core IV is maybe where I took Rick's. Rick and Chad's Beatles class. I do not know if they still teach that, or Chad does. That just hit on like a very personal passion. My dad was a musician. I grew up on the Beatles, like listening to them, so that was really cool to take that as really fun.

I also really liked Allison's ecological economics course. I do not know at that point if you are counting Core I, Core II. But that was like an upper-level elective course that I took. I had never really thought much about our environment and ecology. Then also connected that to the world of economics and how those two intersect. So, I learned a lot in that class. We talked about ideas of sustainability and. I think in that class, you can tend to worry the world is not going to make it. [imitates classmates] "We will not have any resources left and humanity will not be able to survive. We do not have renewable sources that are good yet" So you can tend to fret about those things and those big ideas. Then too you feel locked in a system that. Like our world runs the way it is and like I can recycle, but what can I do really to change the course of how things are used in the manner in which they are used. You feel powerless to like change some of these big ideas or problems that you see. But I think they are really good to read about and to discuss because you never know what can come from that. I liked I like that class a whole lot.

CT [01:08:51] I wanted to ask you a little bit about transitioning into your Honors minor. So you have those sophomore presentations. Did you have sophomore presentations at the end of sophomore year?

JE [01:09:07] I do not remember a sophomore presentation. What would that have been?

CT [01:09:16] We call it matriculation now. It is in late spring where all of the sophomores have to create a presentation to and honors alumni come and they grade you. You have to present to a group of your peers. I know ours took place over Zoom because of COVID, but I think they typically take place in person, and everybody comes to watch them. It is just a little short presentation over and something that you research, that you are passionate about and afterward you get to get your Honors minor.

JE [01:09:53] I mean, I know I did a thesis at the end. My junior and senior year, you are like really honing on that. I do not remember doing sophomore year. Has that always been a thing?

CT [01:10:09] I am not sure if it has always been a thing. I know in recent years it has though. S8ome of my older people had it, but they could not remember much about it. The older that you got.

JE [01:10:22] To be honest, I cannot remember very much about it. And if I did one, what I did it on, I do not remember.

CT [01:10:29] That is fine, we can talk a little bit about your thesis. What was your thesis?

JE [01:10:34] It was an interdisciplinary thesis. After taking classes Allison's class and being interested in the idea of Ecology, I had been doing research in the chemistry department all four years while I was an undergrad. I really liked all that too. And so, I wanted to do something that applied chemistry, specifically biochemistry, to environmental issues. So, it was called the Harbinger. Essentially, we picked a crop that is like a major production crop in Arkansas. It was like rice or soybeans. Those were my options. You know there is like this major movement for like organic foods and organic groceries. It is pretty normal now. Organic stuff tends to be a little more expensive. Organic farmers and then these huge commercial farmers tend to like be opposed towards one another. They each think their system of farming is the correct way. Then these big cash crop people who are farming huge farms. Their goal is we are trying to feed billions of people. We have to feed billions of people every day. You cannot do that with a small farm. But then these small farmers, local farmers, they tend to value the product over the quantity. Like the quality over the quantity. Is what we are feeding people safe, or are we beefing up our animals on hormones? Are we spraying our crops with these pesticides? Is that OK to do? Obviously, if you are organic.

you do not use those things. Well, I should not say do not use those things, but you are very selective on how you treat your plants or how you treat your animals. And so, I specifically took soybeans. There was this chemical that they used and would spray over their fields for growing soybeans that seem to be like this miracle product. It was the ingredient in Roundup. Do you know what Roundup is?

CT [01:13:03] Is it a spray?

JE [01:13:04] Yes, you can buy a bottle from Wal-Mart. My dad would go get a bottle of it and spray it on the weeds in our driveway. They would use Roundup commercially, the ingredient in Roundup is called glyphosate. There was like this golden period in farming where it is like they could just spray this on everything, it would kill any weeds that were trying to overtake their farms. A weed called pigweed, and it would become this monster weed and it would just overtake their soybean fields. But they found you could spray essentially Roundup and it would kill off all the weeds. It just did a very good job. Then the issues farmers have on these huge, farms are like minimize and just farming seems to be better.

So, I looked at that chemical. But then what happened is they used it so much that the weeds became resistant to that. Then it was awful. Like, no matter what they sprayed these weeds, are they taking over their field and like the commercial farmers found themselves in this huge hole because they just overused it. Almost like people say, every time you have an infection, do not just run and get an antibiotic because you can build up antibiotic resistance, the bacteria anybody can build of antibiotic resistance, then you do not have antibiotics to actually work when you need them. So that is what happened on the cash crop scale with Arkansas soybean farmers. So, I went back and forth between some small local organic farmers and these huge major farmers. I would go interview them. I would ask them what their opinion was about the other system of farming.

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Ultimately, I was trying to, like, bring some kind of coalesce, Like these two contrasting

views. I went to different conferences. It was actually held in Little Rock that year. I lucked out. I

just was able to drive down and go to it, and it was a lot of Theology, I say, theology, but like the

philosophy of organic farming.

So, Fayetteville will host like this farmers association for like a lot of the major cash crop

farmers. So, I went there too and listened to like just some of the language and the attitudes of the

farmers and just compared and contrasted those. Then I follow this story of glyphosate throughout

my thesis about what happened and why it happened and maybe what some of the pitfalls with cash

crop farming can be and maybe how organic farming can address some of those issues. But then I

also looked at like some of the pros of cash crop farming and how maybe organic farms could adopt

larger farming systems using organic methods and like, can we find a middle ground for

accomplishing providing quantity and quality products.

CT [01:16:12] Who was your mentor for your thesis?

JE [01:16:18] **Allison**

CT [01:16:20] Before we continue, may I pause it?

JE [01:16:24] Yes. Yes, absolutely.

CT [01:16:32] So a little bit about your life after Honors. How do you think the Honors College

impacted your success?

JE [01:16:41] I think I move forward from Honors College being willing to consider other people,

other people's points of view.

That is actually a good question. Well, what was really cool is after I graduated from honors, everything worked out, I ended up getting into the graduate program up at U of A in Fayetteville. So, I went up there and my incoming class for my doctorate degree was largely international. It was awesome. There were people from Africa, from the Middle East, from India, from Vietnam, from China, from all different parts of Africa, actually. It was this little micro-community like I have never, and I do not know if I will ever experience it again in my life. Me and my husband talk about it all the time. We were new to the Fayetteville area and these people were new to the United States, to the country. It was like we all needed family and community. So we kind of just all adopted each other as like family. We ended up getting a rent house. My husband did and we would just have people over all the time.

So, moving on from honors, thinking about these foundational things, spent some time discussing yourself and discussing your community and other ideas too0. I think it was just really cool to apply some of that. Obviously, these people have all different backgrounds and different ways they think about things. My husband grew up in a Christian community as well, so we both hold these common values, and it is like our friend from China would sit and just ask us all kinds of questions all the time, like "why do you give some of your money every time you get a paycheck? Why do you do this thing called tithing? Why do you do that? Why is sex before marriage such a big issue in this idea of Christianity? Like why is that it?" So, we just discuss these things, and we would hear his point of view and he would hear our point of view.

My friend from the Middle East, like all the time we would discuss the community that she grew up in and she wanted to leave Iran like she did not want to live any longer in her country. She wanted to come to the United States. You hear that from a lot of people like they want to come and live in the United States. Not everybody. The United States is not the best country in the world, but there was this draw for her to come here and get away from her community. She was like, "women are so heavily oppressed in my community," and the government. We had a lot of long conversations.

After being an Honors and like practicing, discussing different points of view and hearing people out. You realize people are not a project to win to your point of view, people are just people. You do not need to have an agenda. I think that is one of the major things wrong with the Christian community. Christians go out into the world and have an agenda to make other people Christians. You cannot treat people like that. People can tell when you are treating them like an agenda. And so Richard and I, we share life with these people and we were not afraid to tell them what we think or believe about life. They were not an agenda to us. They were not a project to us; they were literally family. They were giving us a form of love and community that we so needed at that moment, and we just happened to be able to provide that to them as well. It was really amazing. We would bring them home for Thanksgiving. We would take them to the lake. My husband's family has a lake house. Our friend from China, his name is Z, to watch him get behind a boat on the lake, on an inner tube. He is a 30-year-old man. He is like screaming like a child, it was the funniest thing. There is just all these really wonderful moments that if I had not gone through Honors, I may not have had the same perspective. I may have treated people somewhat like an agenda.

I think Honors helped me see other points of view are ok, and it is good to discuss these things. To approach people as what they are, they are people. To have empathy in your heart towards them. I think that is one of the major things. I am sure there is other ways too, but I would probably talk for longer than I need to [laughter].

CT [01:21:34] Before we ended, I wanted to give you a chance to revisit that question from earlier in the interview, did you have any advice for potential applicants?

JE [01:21:47] I think they need to have a realistic idea of what they are going to step into when they get into Honors. Not that they are going to be totally prepared because you are never prepared for the next season of life. You do not know what you are always stepping into. But I think that they

should be ready to self-reflect. I think Honors does a pretty good job about being transparent, about what it is about, the search for self, and the search for community.

I think applicants need to know that this is a program unlike any other. It is an amazing program for that fact. They just need to be ready, along with all their coursework and the friends that they are going to meet and the discussions they are going to have in class, they need to be willing and ready to internally struggle with these ideas. I say struggle in a good way, not in a bad way. Really walk through the things that they are going to read and think about them and consider them and not dismiss them the way I probably did sometimes [laughs]. Yes, struggle is a vague word I feel like, but I think it is the best word I can find. To struggle with maybe what their life has been built on so far. Then to struggle with what else is out there. To compare and contrast and hopefully, you leave a stronger person because of that and a better person.

CT [01:23:26] I think that is great [laughs].

JE [01:23:29] You are being nice to me, Cam. I have been going on for an hour and a half now. You should be on spring break now, so you are being nice to me.

CT [01:23:40] Do you have any last comments that you want to go down in Honors history?

JE [01:23:46] Oh, that is a major question. [sighs] I do not. I am very thankful for Honors. That experience it it brought me close to some really amazing people. I love the instructors and how approachable they all are. Allison is somebody that I kept in touch with for a long time after I finished college. I am thankful for the way they taught the classes and were open to students and shared their lives with their students. I think it is an incredible program. I hope the program continues to evolve the way people do. I know that what they have is a long-standing tradition, but I

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also hope the program itself grows and changes, however, they see fit with the times and with the generations.

But I also hope there is a part of it that always stays. I do not know how to define it either. There is just no other program like it, and I hope it stays that way. The core values of what Honors is, I hope those never change, but I hope that it evolves in the ways it needs to to serve the generations that come into it. That is my last statement. That was a paragraph [laughter].

CT [01:25:14] That is completely fine. Well, I would like to thank you for your time, Julie Eberle. This concludes our interview.

JE [01:25:23] OK, Cam, thank you so much. Take care. You have a great spring break.

CT [01:25:29] You too.