

SCHEDLER HONORS COLLEGE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Mollie Henager Oral History Interview Transcription

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Interviewer Name: [Triplett, Cam]

Date of Interview: [03/16/2022]

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

Acronyms:

MH = Mollie Henager

CT= Cam Triplett

UCA = University of Central Arkansas

COB= College of Business

PA= Pedagogical Assistant

SGA= Student Government Association

TAG= Travel Abroad Grants

Interview Summary

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Mollie Henager conducted by Cam Triplett on March 16th, 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 [00:00:03] I'm going to say a short little intro. First, before we do it, how do you pronounce your last name? I don't want to mess anything up.

MH [00:00:13] Henager, it rhymes with vinegar.

CT [00:00:15] This is Cam Triplett with Schedler's Honors college oral history project. Today is March 16, 2022, and I am interviewing Mollie Henager, who is at her office at UCA in Conway, Arkansas. We will be talking about Mollie Henager's experience leading up to, during, and after her time in the Schedler Honors College. Please state your name and age for the recording.

MH [00:00:56] My name is Mollie Henager, and I am 28 years old.

CT [00:01:01] What year did you enter the Honors College?

MH [00:01:05] I started in the Honors College in Fall 2012.

CT [00:01:11] And what year did you graduate?

MH [00:01:13] I graduated in twenty sixteen.

CT [00:01:18] [laughs] Now the questions can begin. So, what are your pronouns?

MH [00:01:26] I use she/her/hers or *ella* in Spanish.

CT [00:01:32] I saw that you were a psych and Spanish major.

MH [00:01:35] I was, yes.

CT [00:01:37] It's good to ask about that. Where are you from?

MH [00:01:41] Well, I'm from central Arkansas. I was raised in Little Rock until I was about 12, and then I moved to Conway, and I graduated from Conway High school.

CT [00:01:57] Did living in Conway kind of impact you knowing about the honors program?

Because I know some people, a lot of people, didn't know about it.

MH [00:02:06] Yes, it definitely did. I know that my parents had heard really good things about it just from being in the Conway area. And then I actually went to high school with Doug Corbitt's daughter. So, I kind of knew about it through the Corbitt family. We were friends, and I think I remember talking or hearing about it from them.

CT [00:02:35] That is really cool. Did you like growing up in Conway?

MH [00:02:41] yes, it was a fun place to grow up. I think back then— it was almost 10 years ago when I graduated high school — It had a little bit more of a small-town kind of feel. It's definitely expanded a ton since then. It was nice, a nice place to grow up. I had my group of friends. Class sizes were always pretty manageable at the high school even though I graduated with like 600 people. It still felt kind of like a small town in a way. Yes, it was a nice place to grow up.

CT [00:03:22] So to hangout, did you and your friends stay in Conway, or did you travel to Little Rock a lot?

MH [00:03:30] We mostly stayed in Conway. I think we would go to Little Rock—

Like I remember one year we had like a homecoming dinner in Little Rock with some friends, or like prom, I can't remember. We would have friends' birthdays in Little Rock, but it was mostly like special occasions. I went to Little Rock quite a bit because that's where my mom lived. So I lived in Conway with my dad and stepmom, and my mom lived in Little Rock. So I would go back every couple of weekends to visit her, and I would see my friends that I still had in Little Rock. But as far as Conway people, we mostly stayed in Conway.

CT [00:04:13] Do you have a preference between the two? Little Rock and Conway?

MH [00:04:17] Now, at the age, that I am, I prefer a Little Rock right now. I'm a young adult still in my twenties and I like being in the big city. [laughs] It's not that big. I went to grad school in Little Rock, at least the first year of grad school, so I feel a little more connected to that community. I have a lot of friends there. I don't mind the commute to UCA. I love working here and it's only 30 minutes, so I just listen to a podcast or whatever.

CT [00:04:55] [laughs] What's your favorite podcast? What do you listen to?

MH [00:04:58] Well, I am a fan of true crime. I listen to “My Favorite Murder,” it's one of my favorites. I also listen to an SVU recap podcast. Then I listen to some Bachelor franchise kind of podcast. Those are the main ones that I listen to. True crime and the Bachelor, not very original. [laughter]

CT [00:05:32] I heard “SVU podcast,” and knew I had to write that down.

MH [00:05:37] Yes, it's called “That's messed up.” It's good. yes, I like it.

CT [00:05:43] So we talked a little bit about you being in high school and you liking high school in Conway. Can you tell me a little bit about your high school experience? How would you describe it overall?

MH [00:05:57] Yes, I think it was very positive. I guess academically, I felt like I was in a good place. Conway had a lot of AP classes and concurrent classes with UCA, so I was able to take AP Calculus, AP Stat, AP English, like all those kinds of classes. Then have those credits transferred to UCA. That was really great. I always felt like, you know, stimulated enough. Especially, I remember my AP biology class was so hard. It was probably even harder than some college courses I took. Anyway, I always felt really academically stimulated. Then personal life, kind of extracurricular, was in band, and the color guard. I loved being on the color guard, twirling flags. That's why I stayed in band. I didn't really care about the music part [laughs], I just wanted to twirl the flag. Then, you know, I had good friends. We had a small kind of close-knit group of friends and my family was really involved in church, so we had friends there. I just felt really supported, had great friends, and had a good experience. We were very like goody-two-shoes kind of kids. We were not rebellious at all, you know, didn't drink or party or anything. We were maybe kind of lame, but we had a good time. We had our own fun and had a really good experience, I think, as teens.

[laughter]

CT [00:07:47] That is great. What did your parents do for a living?

MH [00:07:56] My dad worked as a chaplain in a hospital, so he actually worked at UAMS. That was the place he worked the longest. And then my stepmom, she was kind of on and off working and staying at home. So she did a little bit of HR work, she worked for a nonprofit for a while and then stayed at home, kind of like intermittently between that. She has health issues, and it was just

easier to do that with having like a teenager in the house too. Then my mom, she worked in retail for a really long time, and then she worked as a nurse, an LPN, for the VA for a few years before she retired.

CT [00:08:51] How do you feel like your parents influenced your education?

MH [00:08:57] I think education was always really important, especially going to college. My dad and my mom both have master's degrees. College was never an option, I guess. It was always “where are you going to go?” or “which school you're going to go to?” Not if you're going to go. That being said my parents never made me feel pressured academically. I kind of put that pressure on myself and kind of just the way I grew up in the way school is. I was identified as a gifted kid early on and so I was always kind of attracted to do well academically and given the privilege of having the advanced classes and kind of specialized attention and stuff like that. I did take advanced classes and try to do well in them. I think the main thing that I just always remember my dad saying is “I don't care if you get a C or D or whatever, as long as you did your best.” So that was the thing, I always just tried to do my best, and sometimes I tried a little too hard, I think, to do my best. When I could have really just done my mediocre [laughs], which is something I'm having to learn in adulthood. That is not always feasible to be at your best all the time because it can be really exhausting. But, that was kind of the attitude in my house. It wasn't “you have to get straight A's” or anything. It was just do your best.

CT [00:10:42] Did that mindset carry over into honors? How did you navigate that, being really hard on yourself?

MH [00:10:51] Yes, it definitely transferred over, but I learned a lot in high school about how to be a good student. In a lot of ways, it set me up for success. But I still did put pressure on myself to get

all A's and just always turn in my best work. I think it kind of caught up to me, you know, in Core I with all the readings that we had to do and all the journals we had to write, it was just like so much content that it was like there was no way I was going to do it perfectly every time. That's when I started getting into the bad habit of procrastinating and doing things at the last minute. Which usually turned out fine [laughter] and then became a little problematic because I would still get A's on stuff I would do the night before. It just became a habit, but I think that's probably a lot of people's experience.

CT [00:11:56] Absolutely [laughter]. So, before we get into the Core I because I do want to get into that, I want to ask a little bit about the application process to getting into honors. Do you remember much about your application process?

MH [00:12:17] Yes, I do. I remember having to do a reading and writing an essay. Analyzing and reflecting on that, which I really liked. We did that in my AP Lit or Lang, whichever one, English [laughs]. We did that in my AP classes in high school, so it was like a format I was familiar with. I like that it was a preview of what classes would be like, which I thought was a good model. A lot of places they just give you an open-ended prompt or whatever, and we may have had one of those, but I liked having one that was more structured and a model for what class would be like. I remember that I really appreciated that the AP and the ACT score wasn't counted for very much. It was like a really small like seven percent or something of your application because I think I took the ACT like five times and I was really trying to get to thirty-two. My super score was like a thirty-four by the end because I scored high enough on each category, but never at the same time. I would get higher on math and lower on science. So I really appreciated that that wasn't really a big deal for honors. It was more about your writing and letters of recommendation and your interview. I thought it was a good process.

CT [00:13:50] Yes, I love the process. The fact that standardized test doesn't have as much emphasis.

MH [00:13:55] Yes. The interview, I² day, I thought was really cool. I mean, I was definitely super nervous, but I remember it being really exciting, and it was fun. The interview was set up like a class. So that was really interesting to get to see what that dynamic was like with the professors. I just remember the people I interviewed with. I think two out of the four of us ended up doing honors. So it was cool to see, like my fellow interviewer in classes in the fall.

CT [00:14:37] That's pretty cool. Do you remember who you interviewed with?

MH [00:14:42] Yes, with Doug.

CT [00:14:43] Do you remember how that interview went?

MH [00:14:46] Yes, it was intense [laughs]. I still think about it. Actually, I referenced it in my cover letter to come back to UCA.

Doug asked us “why we thought we deserved—” Because back then, which I know it's changed, but back then you got a full ride if you got into honors. So, he asked us “why we thought we deserved to have our education paid for and to get a full ride?” A couple of the people answered about having worked for it and all that kind of stuff. I didn't answer. I didn't know how to answer [laughs] that because none of the other perspectives didn't feel good to me [sic]. Then the other guy who did get into honors asked Doug, “What would you say? How would you answer?” [laughter]. I think that's part of the reason why we got in, we were both like, “I don't know, you tell us?” [laughter]. Anyway, so it's like our different mindsets—

Then Doug said that he thought it was an investment. The scholarships that paid for our education were investments in us as citizens of the world and that having been through honors and gone through the experience that we would come out as better people, better leaders and change-makers and then give back the return on investment.

At graduation, I was asked to speak during the honors commencement, and I talked about it then too, because that really stuck with me. Just giving back and that was an investment in me, so I am trying to live up to that.

CT [00:16:42] That's really cool that you got to speak. Did you graduate Valedictorian?

MH [00:16:47] No, I don't know how they chose it, but there were like a couple of different student speakers at our honors senior commencement which happens the day before graduation. My roommate, well she was my roommate for a couple of years, she kind of exceeded the commencement. I don't know if she had any decision on who would speak, but it was me and one other person. I think we're asked to give like kind of a short address to the class.

CT [00:17:24] That's really cool. So kind of going back to I² day, I² day is really your first full-on encounter with honors. Like your interview is close to how the classes are going to be, you get to tour the dorms. What were your first impressions of the Honors College?

MH [00:17:44] I mean, I thought everything was great. I remember I was kind of torn between doing honors at UCA. and going to a different school that was going to be way more expensive [laugh]. I kind of viewed UCA as like my backup school for if we couldn't afford the other school. But I think I² day really started to shift that. They are actually more like equal players. Neither one at that point was like a backup school because I did appreciate the way the interview was and that

that's how classes would be. It very different than the honors interview I had at the other university. Just seeing the dorms and learning more about like people's experience and doing—

At least when I was an honors ambassador, we did panels where we would talk about like our TAG grants and travels and stuff. That really was exciting to me, to kind of learn more about all those different aspects of honors that weren't just like—

It's such a different honors program than a lot of other universities. The other places your like “honors biology” or whatever. It's not like its own whole separate kind of like department. And so I thought that was really interesting and that drew me in a lot.

CT [00:19:23] Did those impressions of the Honors College change over time, like after you've been here for a while?

MH [00:19:31] I would say it just got better. I mean, I had a really great experience. I think everything that was shown or advertised on I² Day, was held to be true and really even better than I expected. I don't think anything changed, except just to be more positive.

CT [00:19:56] With the dorms, did you stay in Farris?

MH [00:20:03] Yes. So, I started in Farris on the fourth floor with three roommates and then my sophomore year I moved in with three good friends. I think we moved into the second or third floor and then junior year, we got a corner room with two of my friends. That was nice, it was probably the best room. Senior year, I was hoping to do the Bear Village apartments. I don't know if y'all still do the apartments. [Reacts to the Interviewer confirming that honors still do the apartments] Oh, OK. That's why I was hoping to do, but that year the sorority houses opened, and my sorority had a rule about if you were on the executive board, you had to live in a house. So, I didn't get to do that even though I had planned to for three years. But that was OK. It was fun to live in the house.

CT [00:21:02] How did you like staying in Farris?

MH [00:21:05] Oh, I loved it. Yes, it was great. The only weird part about it was whenever people ask you, “Oh, where do you live? Where dorm are you in?” or whatever, and you say, Farris, everyone always had a reaction. Like, Oh, you're one of those smart people or whatever. I was like, yes, I mean, it's my dorm, I don't know what to tell you. Everyone always had a reaction and that got old after a while.

[Reacts to the narrator] You can relate [laughter]. So, it's still a thing. But I was a psych major, so it was super close whenever I was like a sophomore or a junior and had more psych classes. I was super close to several classes there in Mashburn, but then my classes in like Irby and McAllister and stuff I had to—

It was quite a track, but it was probably better that I had to walk [laughs].

CT [00:22:04] Yes, Mashburn is right there. I remember having my general psych class in Mashburn and I would wake up like ten minutes before.

MH [00:22:13] Yes, exactly. Exactly. Yes.

CT [00:22:17] When you lived on campus, what were some of your favorite things to do?

MH [00:22:23] Oh, man, there are so many, just like being on campus, there's such an energy to it. I don't know. I mean, me and my friends, we would—

I always went to Einstein's in the student center. My friends and I would meet for coffee there a lot. That was kind of like my spot. I love coffee. I mean, I have some right here [shows coffee], so I'm literally addicted. We would go to Einstein's a lot. I always had a meal plan, you know, because of

living in on campus. So, we would get food together in the student center and just hang out and talk. I am trying to think of things we would do that didn't involve food [laughter], you know, it was mostly about food. Of course, we would like, go to the library and study together and spend long nights there, and those were some really fun memories. Especially my roommates, and I, would all procrastinate. So we would all have term papers and big tests coming up at the same time and so we would go like huddle in the library and get all of our month's worth of work done in the night. That was always very energetic and fun. I'm trying to get what else we would do. [Pause] Man, it's always just been about food, hasn't it? [laughter] yes, I mean, it's a big part of life.

I feel like we would hang out in the Farris study rooms a lot too, especially in freshman year. We would all do the readings together and write our journals, have big writing sessions in the study rooms in Farris, and that was fun. I feel like I just spent a lot of time going to my friend's dorms. I had a lot of friends outside of honors and in Greek life and SGA and stuff like that. So, I would go to their dorms, and we would hang out. Just hanging out and eating food [laughter]. That's pretty much what we did. Yes. I was I was always pretty busy besides that, like with Greek life or SGA or, you know, doing some extracurricular things. So that's kind of what I did when I wasn't eating and hanging out.

CT [00:25:09] So you mentioned getting together and reviewing the readings. Core I, let's talk a little bit about that because I know that's when the big philosophy readings come out. Everybody has to read the same thing. Who did you have for Core I?

MH [00:25:27] I had Doug. Yes [laughter].

CT [00:25:35] How was the class set up? Because I know every professor does it a little bit different. Do you remember what a regular class day was like for you?

MH [00:25:40] Yes, I remember our Core I class was weirdly in the international studies area. That was kind of fun to be in a different space. But I just remember like we would get together the week of class and read it as a group in Farris. We did that for at least like the first few weeks because we were all nervous about it and wanting to kind of already understand the reading before class. So, we didn't look like idiots and that kind of thing. So, we would get together and write our journals. But I remember like getting to class. I feel like it was very... Oh, what's that style of like asking questions? I should know this, but anyway, it was very like Socratic. I feel it was pretty Socratic the way Doug would ask open-ended questions. It was not like there was a wrong answer, but there was a right answer. You know what I mean? So, he was like he was always trying to get us to the right answer or get us to the right line of thinking, I guess. It was very much like leading the discussion but letting us answer his questions with like open thought and just like talking through our processing of the readings. It was a lot of that kind of like open discussions but led by questions that sort of guided it, and I thought that was really cool because it helped us come to understandings on our own and make the connections in our own brains without him having to like, tell us or draw a picture. Not that there is a really right interpretation, but I feel like there was always a place that he wanted us to get to. I really liked it; it was very stimulating. There definitely were days where I was like, too tired and out of it. Like, I can't sit through this like intense theoretical and philosophical discussion today [laughs], but most of the time is really enjoyable and super different from any other class that I had. Because I feel like even in like a philosophy class at UCA, unless you're just like really high level, it's still like lecture. That wasn't our experience.

CT [00:28:29] I feel like honors classes are really different in the aspect of you get that conversation.

MH [00:28:36] Yes, for sure.

CT [00:28:38] They are more open than any other classes I have taken.

MH [00:28:41] Yes, definitely.

CT [00:28:44] Do you have a favorite Core I reading?

MH [00:28:49] I always just remember Loss of the Creature, and I love to travel now. So I really tried to apply that mindset to when I travel, not getting my hopes up of what something is going to look like because it uses the Grand Canyon example. I hope I am remembering it correctly, but I always think about when I'm going to visit a new place, to enjoy it in the moment and not let my preconceived notions about what it's supposed to be like overshadow the experience. I think that's a really great way to look at life. It's just like being in the moment and appreciating something for what it is and not what it's like to be. That one, I think I'll always think about, especially as someone who likes to travel.

CT [00:29:47] That's great. Where have you traveled to? Do you travel now?

MH [00:29:51] Yes, I am. So in college, I did a lot of traveling. Well, quite a bit of traveling. I spent a summer in India, a summer in Costa Rica, and a summer in Guatemala. I also lived in Peru for three years and traveled a lot around Peru. My fiancée is from there, so I have in-laws and I still go visit and stuff like that.

CT [00:30:24] That is really cool. Do you have a favorite Core I memory?

MH [00:30:35] Actually in the class, I think getting to the end of the semester and, talking about where is the self located and everyone having their different interpretations of it. I never felt like I

figured it out until we asked Doug, “What do you think?” And finally, by the end of the semester, he told us, how he thought about it as like sort of a web where you kind of leave pieces of yourself everywhere you go and with everyone you interact with. I really liked that interpretation of it and appreciated the way he explained it. After having pondered this question for so long, and just hearing other people's interpretations, and hearing his, and then sort of coming to terms with what I thought about it. It was this cool, like synergistic moment, I guess, of just bringing everything together and sort of having that like aha moment.

CT [00:31:48] Yes, I was going to ask you where do you think the Self is located because that is a big question that we still talk about now, and everyone has a different opinion. Where would you say that it is located now?

MH [00:32:03] No, I definitely have adopted Doug's mindset. I don't know if he still thinks that, but I do just because having lived in different places and traveled and met people that I may have met in passing but still feel connected to or whatever. I really do think it's like you leave a piece of yourself in every— I wouldn't say maybe interaction, I think that's a little too surface level, but any kind of relationship or connection you make with a place or a person, I think. Or even like an animal like my fiancée has a dog and I feel so connected to her [laughs]. Like she knows I'm there! I feel like I've left a piece of myself in a lot of different places.

CT [00:32:57] That is dope, I like that one. I haven't heard that one, and I think that is probably one of the best ones I've heard. Did you have a favorite Core period out of all four of them?

MH [00:33:16] I'm trying to remember, I think, Core IV I really enjoyed. I had. Or am I getting it mixed up with III? I think it was Core IV when I had Ellen, and I really liked her class and her way of leading things, I hadn't had her before. She really made that semester. It was different and I liked

it. We talked about— It was sort of related to where is the self located, we talked about the built environment a lot and Geography because that's sort of her specialty. That tied in together with where I thought of as the self being physically located, in places that I've been connected with. That was interesting to tie those together and the topic was really interesting to me.

But probably the most impactful was Core I. I think it was the one that has stuck with me the most and really set up the whole Honors experience. But I did really enjoy Ellen's core. I think it was Core IV.

CT [00:34:37] Do you remember what the topic of that class was?

MH [00:34:41] Yes, it was about the built environment and Geography. I can't remember exactly what the tagline of the class was, but it was about how we interact with built things. I remember we talked about monuments a lot and kind the symbolism behind that and the history behind them and how it impacts culture to memorialize things in that way, which I feel like became even more relevant recently. But I don't remember what the actual name of the class was.

CT [00:35:18] That is fine. Core IV, I believe, is right at the end of sophomore year, which means that you're going to get into matriculation and adopting your minor. Did you go through the matriculation process?

MH [00:35:32] I got my minor honors, but I don't know what the matriculation process was except doing the thesis.

CT [00:35:41] Yes, that was like a little sophomore presentation.

MH [00:35:45] Oh, man, I'm having like a recovered memory now. Yes. I don't know why I never thought of it as matriculation. I guess I did do that, I must have, but I don't really remember.

CT [00:36:01] That's completely fair because I bring that up to other people, and I feel like matriculation is a fairly new term.

MH [00:36:09] We probably didn't call it that. Is that when you do your sophomore presentations and alum come and grade you?

CT [00:36:20] Yes.

MH [00:36:21] OK, OK, I know we did that. I think I've replaced that memory with me coming back as an alum and seeing the presentations. So, I really can't remember my own experience because it has been replaced by other people's [laughter].

CT [00:36:35] That is fair. Do you have a favorite one that you've seen or graded?

MH [00:36:42] It has been a couple of years since I've done it, but I feel like i'm always so impressed by how well researched they are and presented. I can't think of a particular one. I am trying to think of the most recent one that I went to, I remember it's in the COB. I feel like someone did something. Oh, no, I did, I did one virtually just recently. Oh my gosh, I totally blocked that out, man. These past couple of years have been crazy.

I just feel like everyone brings up and talks about really important issues like that's been kind of my takeaway is like, I feel like I've heard Sophomore presentations on like sexual assault and violence against women, and I feel like I've heard stuff on like trans issues and the environment. Oh, there was one I remember there was one that was so cool about foraging and like

getting your vegetables and plants by kind of foraging around your area where you live. And it made me think of when I was a kid, we had a blackberry bush in the alley behind my house. In the summer, we used to make desserts with the blackberries that we would pick ourselves. It was just really cool; it was like foraging in urban areas or something. I just feel like all the topics are always really relevant and well researched. I just think it's really cool that, at such a young age, honors students are able to present something so thoughtful and relevant.

CT [00:38:34] I really enjoyed matriculation and not just doing it but seeing everybody do it. There were some interesting topics. So jumping to your capstone because I feel like that's a very interesting process. What was your thesis?

MH [00:38:58] So I did an ethnographic study in Guatemala. I guess it was not a whole summer, it was like a little over a month that I spent in Guatemala. So, the title of my capstone was kind of silly. [laughter] “Coffee Beans are People too: an ethnographic study and creative reflection on coffee farm living in Guatemala”. So, I stayed on a coffee farm in Guatemala that a fellow honor student’s family had a connection through her friends at the coffee farm. So we both went. We were in the same year. She is now a registered dietitian, but she was doing like nutritional research, I guess, there and I was just doing like more cultural research. Anyway, my thesis went through a lot of different iterations and ideas before I came to what I actually did. But after spending time on the farm, there was a family living there and I was really inspired by the kids who were living on the farm. And so, I ended up writing a children's short story bilingually in English and Spanish as my artistic piece of the capstone. Then I just wrote an artist's statement explaining the process and where I learned and tying it into the cultural and academic themes.

CT [00:40:39] That is really cool. What was the decision behind your thesis? How did you come to that? Because you said you switched a little bit. So how did you come to that one? Like, how did you know that's what you wanted to do?

MH [00:40:54] Well, I knew I wanted to do something in Latin America because I was almost a Spanish major, and I knew I wanted to do something cultural because I wasn't going to do anything like nutrition-based or history-based or anything. I mean, I studied psychology, so I like I want to do something cultural in Latin America to sort of bring together my two fields. And I guess culture was more like Sociology, Anthropology, but whatever it does not matter. But I knew that's what I wanted to do, and it just worked out that my friend, who was in Oxford with me, also wanted to do something. She knew she was going to go to Guatemala, and she was like, "I don't want to go to Guatemala by myself, and you want to do something in Latin America. So like, let's go together." And so we did. So that was really awesome, and we both got funding to go, TAG funding.

Anyway, I wanted to start out doing something a little bit more in the literature. In Latin American literature, there are these things called *testimonios*, which literally translates to testimonial. It's basically when someone has faced tragedy or hardship, they will write about it and express it in a creative way as a way to share that story. It's like a genre, I guess, of literature, Latin American literature. I thought about in my research, living in Guatemala, my plan was to do interviews with people who lived there and then turn those into like fictional testimonials, but based on like true stories. I guess my research kind of guided my project, which in science you're not supposed to do that, but I feel like, in cultural and creative things, you do want to do that. Sometimes it's like let the culture of the place and the experience guide you. So I adapted from there and I didn't get to interview as many people as I thought I would, and I felt like they weren't really like my stories to tell.

I have a lot of nieces and nephews who were around the same age as the kids who lived on the farm. I just was so inspired by the universality of childhood. I mean, we played together just like

I play with my nieces and nephews despite language barriers and cultural barriers and things like that. I was just really inspired by them. So I was like, you know, I'll write a story and I'll do it in English and Spanish. Spanish as a way to capture their culture and their story but then in English as something that I could share with my nieces and nephews. That would kind of bring two worlds together, right? And show there is a universality to the human experience, and so just having it bilingually like makes it more accessible to both. Kids in Latin America or Spanish-speaking kids here and English-speaking kids. I never published the story or anything, though. [laughs] That was just my reasoning behind it.

CT [00:44:45] Is the story archived at all?

MH [00:44:49] It is, yes.

CT [00:44:51] That would be really cool to see. It's really cool. Have you always been interested in learning Spanish?

MH [00:45:00] I guess since high school, I started taking classes, and to graduate with honors at Conway High School, you had to take a language. So, I started taking Spanish. I took Spanish lessons in elementary school, but it was only for like a year and I learned like how to count, you know, and numbers and stuff. But I was really interested in it since I was young and I just started taking classes. I had planned to minor in it at UCA, but I had time to major. Then traveling abroad is really what sealed it in. I studied abroad in Costa Rica. I did a language school there and that really kind of solidified my wanting to really learn Spanish and get fluent at it.

CT [00:45:52] How was your time in Costa Rica?

MH [00:45:55] It was awesome. Yes, it was so great. We had a lot of fun. It was about six weeks. I guess we did language classes for, I think, a month, maybe a little longer. But it was like every day, like five hours a day. We lived in a homestay, and I stayed in the same homestay as my roommate, honors roommate, from UCA, so that was super fun. We traveled on the weekends and got to see the country. Yes, it was really awesome. I think being able to travel so much in college, that was a huge and unique perk to honors. I feel just so much sympathy for the students in the past couple of years because you all have not had those opportunities, which just makes me so sad because that was like one of the biggest formative things that I did in college was travel so much. And I didn't have to pay for much of it myself because of the travel abroad grants and stuff that I had.

I am not trying to brag. [laughter]

CT [00:47:16] COVID has been hard. I believe they opened it back up recently. You can go some places. I'm happy about that. Maybe a senior year trip. I ask about Spanish because I'm interested in learning again. I've been pretty on and off with it. Do you have any tips that can make learning a little bit easier?

MH [00:47:44] Yes. I know this is not feasible for everyone, but if you can go to a Spanish speaking area for an extended period of time, like a month, that is honestly the best way to do it. Just because you're hearing it all the time and your brain gets into the mode of just hearing and speaking Spanish all the time. So when I did that in Costa Rica, I went from, like going there I had a pretty good grasp on Spanish, but it was like I was always translating from English or Spanish in my head. Then once I was there studying it and living there, it flipped the switch in my brain where I switched to Spanish. Like my thoughts, didn't originate in English and were translated to Spanish, it was like they were originating in Spanish. So that's really the best way. Beyond that, there are Spanish-speaking neighborhoods in central Arkansas, try to spend time in those neighborhoods. There's a lot of like really great like taco trucks and food trucks and stuff like that in Southwest

Little Rock and Hispanic restaurants or like signage everywhere that's in Spanish. The population is so Latino there that everything is in Spanish, so it's a good way to get exposure.

I think watching like anything in Spanish– I'm sure people have told you to watch Netflix like Spanish shows. But I would say, don't watch them with English subtitles, watch them with Spanish subtitles because it's so easy to like, read the English and then not listen to the Spanish. But if you're having to listen to the Spanish and read it, then I think it helps because it just switches you into that brain. So if you have like a base of knowledge where you know like your colors and how to count and like basic conversation, then you can watch shows because there is so much of it is like. The visual aspect, like you, can watch shows in Spanish with Spanish subtitles, and you'll be able to follow along and you'll learn a lot more than watching it with English subtitles, I think.

CT [00:50:07] Thank you so much for that. I wrote down the advice

MH [00:50:11] Duolingo is your friend, Duolingo is your friend. I mean, I wouldn't say it's the best way to learn, but it definitely helps you, like, maintain things you have learned and like, learn new vocabulary.

CT [00:50:23] Yes. Kind of backtracking, I've been meaning to ask you about your Oxford tutorial because I know that it had an impact on me and a lot of my cohort. Do you remember who you had for Oxford Editorial and how that was?

MH [00:50:41] Yes, I had Ellen. It was great, it was awesome. I remember we had our class in the forum and it was like it was so cool because it was sort of like a big workshop. Almost every class was like workshopping ideas with your peers, which I found really stimulating, and it really helped my process.

I mean, we did read stuff like, I think that was the year, the semester we read the Art of Bullshit. I don't know if you all still read that but we read it. Maybe that's an Ellen thing, I don't know [laughter]. But that was cool. I hope I'm not making that up. I hope I'm not throwing her under the bus, but I know we read it at some point. I think it was in Oxford.

We didn't have too many readings, I think that semester or they were really light and then always tied back to your process, like writing and coming up with a topic and all that kind of stuff. Ellen was really great. I think the way she like, the way she kind of lined up the assignments or the ideas we had to bring to class, and the way we talked about it. It really helped my process. If we had not done it that way, my peer, who I went to Guatemala with, she never would have known that I was somebody who could go with her. I would have never known that that opportunity existed, so it could have looked very differently if it was more assignment-based and less talking through your process and workshopping.

CT [00:52:25] I view it the same way. it was very different from the rest of the honors classes. Very workshopy [sic].

CT [00:52:36] So as a side question before we move on. The Art of Bullshit, I'm interested. What was it?

MH [00:52:43] I feel like a lot of it was talking, which I could be totally misremembering, but I think the point was you kind of have to be able to like fill in the gaps when you don't really know what you're going to say just to get through your process. It doesn't have to be perfect the first time, and you have to know how to fill in the gaps. And sometimes that stuff, if you just write and you just bs it, it actually can come out pretty good. Of course, in your final drafts, you want to back things up with research and stuff. I think it was kind of just talking about it's OK to sort of B.S. your

way through it, especially in the beginning, because you're not going to know the perfect thing to say every time. At least that's what I remember. I don't know. I could be making that up [laughter].

CT [00:53:43] I definitely do that right now.

MH [00:53:45] Yes, definitely check it out because, I mean, I still remember it, so obviously it had an impact. Sometimes you just have to get something on the page.

CT [00:54:00] That is my motto every time I write now [laughs].

MH [00:54:06] To get words on the page. Yes, yes.

CT [00:54:09] Do you still talk to people outside of honors. Well, now that you graduated, do you still talk to the people you talked to here?

MH [00:54:18] Yes, I have several friends from my honors year that we're pretty close still. A couple of really good friends from honors still. I think I have kept in touch with probably Ellen the most. I was her PA for one of her core classes when I was a senior, so we became pretty close. I reach out to Doug from time to time. They were the professors I had, like the most repeated times. So definitely still keep in touch with them. And since I'm on campus, I've been able to stop by the honors area in the McCastlain a couple times and I see Patricia around and stuff. I definitely have like friendships that will last a lifetime from my friends in honors. Yes.

CT [00:55:26] Cool, do you have a professor that you feel like impacted your Honor's experience the most?

MH [00:55:33] I mean, I sound like a broken record, but I think Ellen and Doug, both really influenced me a lot. Like I said because I had them the most. There were other honors professors who I know had a lot of impact on other students, but I just didn't have as much exposure with them. Ellen and Doug, both taught me a lot of lessons.

CT [00:56:03] Great. I wanted to ask you a little bit about Norb. Have you had many encounters with him?

I know, unfortunately, he passed away before my cohort got here. How would you describe your experiences with Norb? How would you describe him as a person?

MH [00:56:23] When I was a student, he was retired, so I don't think I ever had a one-on-one interaction with Norb, but he did come to things and come around a lot. So, I remember seeing him at things, and sometimes he would speak briefly. I just always remember him having such a calming presence and just seeming like someone who was very thoughtful and caring. I remember his bow ties [laughs]. He always looked so academic. So it was kind of like, of course, he founded the Honors College. He's like, so thoughtful and so academic. That is the honors experience, that was like the honors persona. I just always remember him having a very positive sort of radiating positivity and thoughtfulness and caring spirit. So very positive. I wish that I would have been there at a time when he was more active and more involved and could have spent more one on one time getting to know him. I was grateful we got to meet him at all. He is such a legend.

CT [00:57:55] That is beautiful. I love when the alumni talk about Norb.

MH [00:58:02] Yes, yes, he was such a sweet man for sure.

CT [00:58:09] You seem like you were in a lot of extracurriculars, both in honors and out. What all were you involved in while you were here?

MH [00:58:24] Well, so the main things were I was in Greek life and I was on the executive board of my sorority for two years. Then I was on SGA for two years. I was an honors ambassador. Those were the main things I was involved in. I was on a campus ministry for like the first-year couple of years of college, but I ended up not being very involved in that later on. But yes, those are the main things that I did, which all took a lot of time. No, not the honors ambassador, the honors ambassador was chill, but the other two things were very involved.

CT [00:59:10] Was it hard balancing Greek life, SGA, and honors?

MH [00:59:16] I think yes and no. I feel like in a way, it pushed me because I think I'm more productive when I'm busier, just because I have like less time to work with[laughs]. I tend to be a little more focused and get more things done in the busy seasons of life. I think when it's chill, I tend to chill out a lot and it's hard to stay focused in those moments. I think I think it really helped me figure out how to prioritize and how to balance things when I am so busy. There were a lot of times I was exhausted, and I don't know if I could do that now. Like six years later, I don't know if I could be as busy as I was then. But yes, it was a lot of late nights, early mornings, and coffee.

CT [01:00:12] [laughs] I feel you. So after Honor's experience, how did the Honors College impact your resumé and your job opportunities?

MH [01:00:29] Oh, I mean so much. I ended up going to grad school at the Clinton School of Public Service, and I was the only person in my class to have come directly from undergrad. There was one other person. He graduated a semester early, so like December 2015, and then he came to

the Clinton School in the fall. He was the closest one, but other than that, I was the only person in my class to come directly from undergrad. Which was kind of crazy because everyone else had a couple of years of experience. At least a year doing something like AmeriCorps, or Teachers for America, or City Year, or working somewhere, or having gone to grad school or have worked in a sector of something for a long time. I was unique in that, and I definitely think that honors had everything to do with it because I came into grad school and even though I was like the least experienced person, I felt more prepared than a lot of people because of the rigor of honors. Also, because I had taken like not just honors, but at UCA. I had taken a couple of Statistics classes and research methods classes for my psych degree, and we had to do that kind of stuff at the Clinton School. I could of skipped every single class and gotten an A because it was the same thing I had just studied UCA. So, I definitely was so prepared thanks to honors and UCA in general. It was kind of wild. Not to put anyone else down, everyone else was so great and intelligent in their own way, but it was kind of crazy to see— Some of the people in my class came from really big, really good schools, and I felt like I, academically, had a leg up because of honors. It was pretty wild.

That was just grad school. I think it definitely helped me career-wise too. A big part of my job now that I've been doing for a few years at other jobs too, is grant writing and I would not be the writer that I am without honors for sure.

CT [01:03:10] Definitely, Honors really gets those writing skills up [laughs].

So you mentioned the Clinton School and that is your grad school, can you talk a little bit about your grad school experience? What did you graduate with and things like that?

MH [01:03:29] I think Honor's really influenced me in my decision for grad school, too, because at the Clinton School of Public Service, you get a master's in public service, which is very similar to like public policy or public administration. But it is a lot more community-focused. Yes, that's how I describe it. It's more community-focused. Some people do go into politics and education and

things like that, but it's very community-focused. So having had the opportunities I had in honors, especially traveling, and just having such an open kind of applicable field of study in honors.

Interdisciplinary is what the minor is called.

I feel like the Clinton School is very interdisciplinary. You can get your NPS and literally do anything. It's so open and sometimes that's a little bit hard because then you're like, "I don't know what to do with this," but at the same time, you can really take it and do whatever you want with it. Public Service, we mostly studied— We did research methods classes, we did a program planning and development, we talked a lot about community development and like top-down versus bottom-up kind of development. Everyone does International service projects and that's how I got connected to Peru. I did my project there. Having studied Spanish at UCA and gotten to travel, that influenced what I did with my project in the Clinton school.

Everyone does a yearlong field project, their first year in a group. We worked with a local nonprofit in Little Rock. Then you do a capstone your second year and I did that in Washington, D.C. at a women's empowerment nonprofit.

It's a lot about like research, monitoring and evaluation, program design, not in the computer sense, but like programs for organizations and nonprofits and communities. That's a lot of what the Clinton School is, and it's a lot of fieldwork. Which is really great because I came out of it with a lot more experience than I went into it with. That propelled me into the nonprofit sector for the first four years after the Clinton school, three to four years. That eventually led me back to higher ed.

CT [01:06:23] Cool. You mentioned that you did a capstone in grad school. Was there a similarity between your capstone here and your capstone in grad school?

MH [01:06:36] No [laughs], it was very different. I mean, the only similarity, I guess, is that they were both pretty international. So in grad school, I was doing what's called a social network

analysis, which isn't just like social media, it involves that, but it's about like the networks you build with other people. Going back to that network of yourself [laughter].

But It was with that women's empowerment nonprofit in DC and I got to interview participants in their economic empowerment program. So it was women who were business leaders in their respective countries, in their respective hometowns. I interviewed them about their experience being in the cohort of the nonprofit and how the support of having each other as a network helped them in their business. And so that was my capstone.

Doing the interviews and the international component, I guess there was a bit of crossover from my honor's thesis, but it was very different in that I was told what to do. I was given this fellowship to go work with this nonprofit, and they were like, "Here's the project we have for you to do it," and so there was no developing my research questions or the idea for my project. It was just like, do this thing and call it your capstone. That way was very different. But that was ok because I was pretty brain dead by that point [laughter]. I was like, please just tell me what to do.

CT [01:08:24] I meant to ask about this earlier, but I lost my note for it, and I have now rediscovered it. You came in and left at some pretty pivotal political times [laughs]. I wanted to ask about how was it coming in with that election in 2012 and then how was it leaving with the 2016 [election]?

MH [01:08:53] Oh, my gosh. I'll say I wasn't very politically minded or involved at that age, I mean, I was 18, so I voted for the first time. I think, you know, my upbringing probably was the main thing influencing my perspective on politics, which is way different than I view things now. I think honors had a lot to do with that. Honestly, just the environment of critical thinking and looking at your community and what you can do to help others influenced how I felt about politics and the world.

Then I was in my first semester of grad school during the 2016 election, and I'm not going to lie, I was depressed. I was at the Clinton School Public Service, right? So you don't have to be a Democrat or progressive or anything to be at the school or be involved with the school because it's really just named after Bill Clinton. There is no political agenda tied to the school. That being said, a lot of us were very disappointed. There was a wave of depression that came over everyone. I remember the canceled class for the next day, and they were like, "Just stay home and grieve". So, yes, that was tough. It was really tough.

The dean of the Clinton School, who has since retired, he actually had a class about the election. It was an elective. I think I took it, or at least I watched it on live stream. He was one of the only people that was like, "I don't know, it could go either way," and everyone else is like, "whatever, he's not going to win." Then he did win, and we were all like, "Oh shit". Yes, it was rough. We were all disillusioned, I think, especially after the previous four years.

CT [01:11:07] Yes, I definitely get it. It is one of those where you remember exactly where you were and what you were doing when you heard [laughs].

MH [01:11:17] I had bought champagne and we were having a watch party at my house. I was like, "Oh my God, the first woman president".

I did drink the champagne, just not out of celebration [laughter].

CT [01:11:30] I completely understand.

MH [01:11:35] It's behind us now [laughter].

CT [01:11:49] I am so sorry; I am remembering a lot. Would you recommend the Honors College to future students or just students who come by?

MH [01:12:07] Oh, one hundred percent. Yes, definitely. I think it truly is so unique, especially for a public state school. Not that UCA is a bad school at all, I think it's a great school. It's my job to fundraise for the university, so of course I love it. I think just honors in and of itself is like on an Ivy League level. No question.

Back then it was free, but now at least it is a lot more affordable than other schools who have the same quality of education. Just the community is lovely and the people that you meet—

The size of cohort, it's like having an Ivy League education, but in a tiny, tiny school. A [indicates size] group of people, but with the resources of a big school. It is just such a conglomeration of the best things. Highly recommended.

CT [01:13:20] Definitely a unique program.

MH [01:13:22] Yes.

CT [01:13:24] Do you have any advice for current students and future students?

MH [01:13:34] A couple of things. Going back to the loss of the creature thing, I think just enjoying everything in the moment and not trying to put pressure on—

I think a lot of times when we are in college, we are going through the experience to get a degree, to get a job. Like, yes, I guess that's the point, but I think just enjoying the process as you're going through it and enjoying the experiences you have and the growth that you have is such a big part of it. I think even the process of being a college student is more valuable than a degree you get because it just changes you as a person. Anyone, well not anyone, can get a bachelor's degree at the end of the day.

The experience you have, that's what's really unique to you and really affects you as a person. I think with honors, the things that you learn can be applied in so many different ways to like anything that you choose to do. So I had the mindset of not really worrying about my specific career after college. I know a lot of people have specific ideas like: "I want to be a physical therapist or a teacher" or whatever, and that's great. But if you don't, don't worry because you'll find it and there's no reason to worry about it right now when the main thing you should be doing is enjoying your experience and learning and growing as a person and doing all of that will lead you to the right career path.

Then taking advantage of all the opportunities that you can. You are young and your bodies are very resilient at this point in life. So if you have to do a couple of all-nighters, probably not the healthiest thing, but now is the time to do it. When you're twenty-five plus, it is a lot harder. I sound like a grandma, but it's really true. It goes downhill fast, let me tell you [laughter].

I think just taking advantage of all the opportunities that you have, even if you feel a little stretched thin, if you're going to do it all, now is the time. Just at least finding one thing that you can really get involved in and take advantage of the opportunity to learn a new skill or grow in a way or just have the experience just for fun. That is also valid.

Travel, if you can. Yes, that's a big one.

CT [01:16:38] Do you have any closing statements or any important things that you feel need to be said and need to go down in Honor's history?

MH [01:16:49] [sigh] Honors history. Well, I feel like we've said a lot today. I know I can talk a lot. I have been impressed with honors since I first was introduced to it, and I continue to be impressed not only by the program but by the people who come through it. I love staying involved because I love seeing the kinds of students who are in the program now, and I think it just keeps getting better and better. Every year, I'm more and more impressed. Truly, I said this in my remarks at the honors

commencement, but I think the people, the young people, going through honors now are the people who are going to change the world. You will do that, even if it's just in a small way, in your little corner of the world. I think just the positivity and the critical thinking skills and the leadership that comes out of honors, it really has a huge impact on the world.

I hope that as many people who can stay in Arkansas— Because this is a place that really needs people like honors students and honors graduates. I'm of course, I'm not one to talk, I went and lived abroad for three years. But I think if you ever can come back and give that return on investment, I think that that's a great way to invest in your community and make the world a better place. That is it.

CT [01:18:45] That is beautiful. Before we close, may I screenshot shot? I forgot to do this at the beginning.

MH [01:18:52] Oh yes, okay, let me fix my hair, though I know that it will not get any better [laughter].

CT [01:19:00] I want to thank you for your time, Mollie Henager. This concludes our interview.

MH [01:19:16] Thank you, Cam.

CT [01:19:17] I appreciate it.