

# SCHEDLER HONORS COLLEGE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

## Morrie Mullins Oral History Interview Transcription

Narrator Name: Mulins, Morrie

Interviewer Name: Ramos, Anacaren

Date of Interview: 03/18/2022

Location of Interview: Remote Interview - Zoom Recording

Acronyms:

Speaker 1= Anacaren Ramos

Speaker 2= Morrie Mullins

UCA = University of Central Arkansas

### Interview Summary

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Morrie Mullins conducted by Anacaren Ramos on March 18, 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.

**Speaker 1** [00:00:01] All right. If you will please state your name, the date and time, and where you're located right now.

**Speaker 2** [00:00:12] Sure thing. I didn't get a recording notification is it recording?

**Speaker 1** [00:00:15] Oh yes. We're just doing like the voice recordings.

**Speaker 2** [00:00:19] Oh, I'm Morrie Mullins. It is March 18th, 2022, around 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time, and I am in Loveland, Ohio.

**Speaker 1** [00:00:31] OK, so we're just going to start with you. Where are you from? Just tell us a little bit about that.

**Speaker 2** [00:00:43] Sure. I was born in Alexandria, Virginia, kind of in the northern Virginia, D.C. area, and moved to Arkansas when I was about seven. My dad had been a government attorney in the Department of Labor and decided he wanted to live long enough to see his kids grow up, so he became a law professor instead. Having a professor as a dad is probably one of the things that was a little bit influential on me. We lived in North Little Rock in Arkansas from 1980 until I went to grad school, and my parents still live in the same house.

**Speaker 1** [00:01:33] All right. Was most of your life with spent in Arkansas and North Little Rock?

**Speaker 2** [00:01:47] You know, I used to be able to say that, but I left there when I was in my early 20s. I only lived there since I was seven, and I've lived in Ohio for over 20 years now, so most of my life mathematically has been spent in Ohio.

**Speaker 1** [00:02:09] All right. If you'll just tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up in Little Rock.

**Speaker 2** [00:02:20] Little Rock was— I thought it was fine, at the time. There were always odd elements to it. When I was in third grade, my first year, I didn't go to the school that was a half mile from my house because of the bussing system that was in place, because of the real pervasive inequalities in terms of ethnicity and race. So I was bussed in third grade to Pine Elementary and didn't actually start at the elementary school near my house until fourth grade. That was odd to me, because issues related to diversity had never been something that were noteworthy in the northern Virginia, D.C., area. There were so many folks from different backgrounds and different ethnicities represented in the school that I went to, because there were so many government employees of various stripes, that it felt like people are people. It was weird to get to Arkansas and to have that bussing being one of the first experiences I had of school. I was really fortunate in the high school that I got to go to, North Little Rock Northeast High School. I was part of the last class that graduated from there and I was part of a class that contained some really ridiculously smart people. Our valedictorian, is like an M.D./PhD. neurosurgeon at Vanderbilt now. The person that was right behind him, I think she is med school faculty in South Carolina, and I may have scraped into third place, so it was great to be around people who were that smart. Because I would like to say that it made me humble, but it didn't. It made me competitive, and I didn't get humble until my second year of college.

**Speaker 1** [00:06:11] Yes.

**Speaker 2** [00:06:13] That was a rambling answer.

**Speaker 1** [00:06:15] No, that's perfect. That actually leads into our next question kind of about high school and life after high school. How did you hear about the honors college?

**Speaker 2** [00:06:39] How did I hear about it at that time? That's a really good question. I believe it was not really on my radar when I was in high school. I didn't even apply to UCA coming out of high school, I only applied in two places, so I had a terrible strategy. I applied to Hendrix, I applied to University of New Mexico. I have no idea why those two. I ended up at Hendrix and realized that

it wasn't right for me. Anyway, there are two possible sources for how I learned about Honors. One, the person I was dating at the time was a UCA student, but she wasn't an honors student, so I don't know if she had mentioned it to me. But it's also possible that the professor who had taught— it was not a freshman comp. class that I took at Hendrix, it was kind of very similar to an honors class; it was philosophy, and very interdisciplinary. It was taught by a man named John Churchill, and he was an academic dean there at the time and Dean Churchill— I think a couple of years later left Hendrix to become the national president of Phi Beta Kappa. He may have been the one who told me about the Honors College. I'm really not sure where I first heard about it, but I do know that I started looking at leaving Hendrix because it was super expensive, or it seemed that way to me at the time. I am the oldest of three kids, I was looking at how much my parents were having to pay to send me to Hendrix and knowing that there were going to be two more coming after me. I looked to UCA because I was dating someone who was going over there and I knew it would be less expensive and there was an honors college and there were scholarships available. I was going to have to give up a National Merit semifinalist level scholarship if I left Hendrix, so I was trying to find ways to fund things. Scholarships through honors looked really good. And I got some information and managed to get an interview with Norb.

**Speaker 1** [00:09:52] Do you remember the application process?

**Speaker 2** [00:09:57] I don't remember the application, but boy, do I remember that interview! This was the spring before McAllister Hall came back online and it was while they were doing the renovations. I never saw pre-renovation McAllister. I got to see the shiny new version in Fall of 91, I think, when I started my sophomore year, but with the freshman class behind me. [For the interview] I showed up on campus and got parked. I walked into the building where the Honors College was temporarily housed, and I don't remember exactly how things were laid out other than it felt like the room that they were in had been a repurposed auditorium or gymnasium. It was huge and open, and there were dividers, and I don't know if they were cubicle dividers or if they were just sheets hung from poles to create miniature offices. I showed up and found probably Glenda, although it could have been Virginia. I said, "I'm here for an interview with Dr. Schedler" and whoever it was walked me down to Norb's temporary office. In my head it is like bookshelves arrayed against hanging sheets, with books going out of them everywhere, and this guy who looks more like a college professor than any college professor I ever met, with his beard and his bow tie, he's sitting there and he stands to greet me, and I'm sure we shook hands and we talked. He asked me a variety of things, but there is one that stands out. He said "Morrie you are over at Hendrix, and Hendrix is a really good school," and I'm sure I babbled something about, "Oh, but UCA has a fine reputation as well," because at the time I was very good at being a kiss-ass. He said, "Why do you want to come to UCA?" I shared with him a story about some graffiti that I had seen on one of the restroom walls at Hendrix, and how it had kind of taken the vision I had of what the school thought it was and how it marketed itself, and just really tarnished it for me. I'm pretty sure the graffiti was something racist. He looked at me for a few seconds. Then he said, "Morrie what makes you think that the writing on the wall is going to be any different over here?" [laughter] I had never, maybe once or twice in my life, but in the moment, I could not come up with a time when I had felt so completely seen and called out -- in the best possible way -- and educated in a way that was so simple and full of truth and impactful. [pauses] I had gone in thinking I was this hot shot National Merit semifinalist, look at me, I got into Hendrix and now I'm going to come over here and interview for a UCA spot. I walked out of there going, I don't know if he is actually going to want me. I don't know if I'm going to be good enough for this. It was amazing because that was really who he was. To this day, I hear that question about the writing on the wall in my head, because it works on so many levels.

**Speaker 1** [00:17:03] Yeah, that's amazing. I know that you talked a little bit about kind of the time, in the 1990s you've seen or heard quite a few racial issues going on. So what was diversity like at the time at the college?

**Speaker 2** [00:17:38] There were a few students of color, but it still didn't feel like honors was as diverse as the UCA student body as a whole. Walking around campus was much more diverse than being across town at Hendrix, but within my honors classes, I'm trying to think how many diverse students there were in that first group that I interacted with. I know that was something Honors had a big push for in the following years. I don't remember it being a particularly heterogeneous group from a racial perspective. [pause] I'm mentally scanning class pictures right now. [pause] I don't know.

**Speaker 2** [00:19:30] The graduating pictures from that year are probably up on the wall in one of the Honors rooms. I would guess that they're not particularly diverse.

**Speaker 1** [00:19:45] Yes. Well, I do think that they're changing a little. You know, we've definitely gotten there.

**Speaker 2** [00:19:56] Yeah, well. Some of the changes that were made to the admissions process within the last, I don't know, 15 or so years that Tricia, I know, was heavily involved in— allowed honors to make some huge strides in enhancing diversity that I think have been phenomenal. I think that some of what was done was ahead of its time. Something that I'm seeing right now in graduate admissions in psychology is two years ago, most of us had to go... “We can't require the GRE because people can't go take the GRE, because of COVID.” The GRE, like so many standardized tests, has issues with adverse impact against students from black and Latinx cultures. Any standard measure of cognitive ability, for a variety of reasons, has these problems. Sorry about the dogs in the background. My wife is probably getting home. They're going to make noise.

**Speaker 1** [00:21:19] You're good. No worries.

**Speaker 2** [00:21:25] So we dropped the GRE and the diversity of the classes that we've brought in increased, and the quality of the students didn't change. It's like removing standardized testing is something that some folks that I know have done with regard to their admissions process years ago. We should have been paying more attention to that.

**Speaker 1** [00:22:00] I agree. I kind of just want to hit up on the topic of you being a freshman at Hendrix so when you transferred over here to UCA, were you still a freshman or were you a sophomore?

**Speaker 2** [00:22:20] I came in as a sophomore. I only got to be part of honors for three years.

**Speaker 1** [00:22:26] Do you remember what your sophomore year looked like in terms of the courses?

**Speaker 2** [00:22:33] I actually took the first year courses with the incoming first year class. I believe that I did my sophomore lecture during my actual sophomore year so that I could move into the upper level, you know, junior/senior stuff, with the students who were going to graduate at the same time I was.

**Speaker 1** [00:23:05] Do you remember what your sophomore lecture topic was?

**Speaker 2** [00:23:11] I remember it, I think I called it “The Name Game”. It was based on observations I had about how people's names, for a variety of reasons, seem to create expectations for how they're going to behave, so that people with similar names often showed similar personality traits. There were, I think, exactly two people in attendance for that, in addition to me. I think Norb was there and Steve, whose last name I cannot remember now. I think he taught in the counseling program— he was a professor and I didn't even know his name at the time. When I started talking about the name Steve, he was like, “Yeah, yeah, you're pretty much right on the traits for people named Steve. I should know.” That was a weird and quiet experience. I got to move forward, so I guess it went fine.

**Speaker 1** [00:24:46] How long did you have to give the lecture for?

**Speaker 2** [00:24:52] It was probably about a 30 minute presentation at the very most.

**Speaker 1** [00:25:01] I ask this because today in the Honors College, the presentations are just 10 minutes now.

**Speaker 2** [00:25:11] We were a smaller group, I think. How big are the incoming classes at this point?

**Speaker 1** [00:25:19] I think we're— I want to say we're 75.

**Speaker 2** [00:25:28] It's a little bit bigger, although, to be fair, my Core III, I want to say was in the big room downstairs in McAllister so when we got everybody together, we had a pretty good group. I graduated with 20. If that.

**Speaker 1** [00:26:07] Do you remember your core three?

**Speaker 2** [00:26:11] Only vaguely. That was one of the things I was trying to find the the portfolio that has all the course materials. I know it's somewhere in the basement. I failed to find it. I remember bits and pieces, but it's hard to pick apart which class was which, at this point.

**Speaker 1** [00:26:45] I believe Core three, if we all still do it in the right order is the Search for Other.

**Speaker 2** [00:27:01] Is that the one that has the heavy religion focus?

**Speaker 1** [00:27:05] I think for your year you guys did because I've had other people that I've interviewed in your class and they said that's also a Core III.

**Speaker 2** [00:27:20] Well, in that case, it was— my big recollections from that class are all about what I learned from Norb about inhabiting what you teach. When he taught comparative religions -- and you've probably heard this -- he didn't just come in and talk about them. He came and spoke as a *believer*; in a way that would be easy to do in a way that felt like appropriation, frankly. The way that he presented was so respectful and so compassionate that it never occurred to me until years later that someone with less skill could have made it feel like, like all of these beautiful belief systems were somehow being mocked. And it never felt that way. I'm never going to be in a place where I have a need to teach religion, but I do end up in places where I have to teach controversial topics. Being able to “stand under” a perspective and advocate for it in a respectful, realistic way is— from the perspective of teaching and learning—to me, it's just invaluable. I think that if that's the class I'm thinking about is that's my single biggest lesson. That sense of— It's a total Norb -- understanding by “standing under,” and working to inhabit and understand.

**Speaker 1** [00:30:10] Yes. So, most of what we're hearing is that Norb did happen to come in and give lectures. Who else taught at the Honors College during your time?

**Speaker 2** [00:30:27] My very first class was with Patricia McGraw, who was featured in some of the social media stuff recently. Amazing, brilliant, creative, compassionate, encouraging and apparently ageless, because the picture I saw her on Facebook, she looks exactly like she did in 1991, which is remarkable. She was teaching. Conrad, his last name eludes me, but he was an English professor with this wreath of curly gray hair and jean shorts and Birkenstocks and scraggly professor beard. [Probably Conrad Schumaker] Rick Scott was obviously a teacher in Honors at that point. He was... I don't know what his title was since I don't think there was even a Dean. I think Norb was director and maybe Rick was assistant director, associate director. Terry, who was also from English and he gave a lecture, and I don't remember if this was a Governor' School or Honors lecture, on bathos in horror movies, and I believe he was the person who was responsible a few years later for bringing in Neil Gaiman to talk (before he got so ridiculously popular and wealthy). Terry ... Wright? Maybe that could be correct. I can't think of anyone else. I'm sure there were other folks. Even a lot of my seminars after that sophomore year, I ended up with an Rick or Norb. I know I took classes with Rick. I am blanking on all the rest.

**Speaker 1** [00:33:22] No, you're fine, that's perfect. Do you remember what seminars were like your junior year?

**Speaker 2** [00:33:33] One of them that I remember pretty well with something that Rick taught that was focused around gender issues. There was a strong feminist component to it. It was interesting because— I may be filling in blanks incorrectly— but it felt at the time like there were probably more women in Honors than men. I am starting to recognize that I didn't understand gender issues particularly well, and I felt a lot of guilt about that. One of the things that I remember from that that gender seminar was Robin Servin. I don't think Dr. Servin has been affiliated with Honors or UCA in quite a while because in a way it became an unwelcoming place. The banquet I attended at the beginning of my sophomore year, Dr. Servin talked. Dr. Servin was a math professor and at the talk— I don't remember what he talked about at the time. I just remember this guy sitting up there. The guy who got up and went to go talk had the most enormous beard I had ever seen, like big grey beard and scraggly long hair. I would not appreciate until years later what a metaphor that was, because when Dr. Servin came to talk to us as part of that gender seminar she had started to go through HRT and gender reassignment surgery and talked about what it was like to be trans. I think almost everybody in the room, this was our first exposure to a member of the trans community. The person who I remembered, who had the enormous, scraggly beard, was now clean shaven, had long— I had always thought it was grey, but when Robin was Robin, it was blonde— blonde hair, and talked about how she was still married to her wife. They didn't know how that was going to be viewed in Conway. There was already some amount of discontent. I don't know how much of it was community level and how much of it was being taken to university about having this, this “person,” which is probably the kindest thing that people who were complaining called her at the time. Having this “person” teaching their students. How could this ever be a good influence on our children and our young people? Imagine, being trans in 1992, 1993, 1994. It's hard, incredibly impossibly hard for a lot of members of the trans community now, and that's 30 years ago. I would not be surprised if there were death threats. She did end up on the faculty somewhere else, but... The bravery that went along with simply being who she was, was astounding, so that was one of the big moments that I remember from that seminar.

**Speaker 1** [00:39:25] That's true. Did you know because you at the time are going through a lot of your social issues, social and racial issues going on so did you ever get to witness or see any protest at UCA or in the community?

**Speaker 2** [00:39:46] I really didn't. There was a lot that it feels like it was getting ready to happen, but the 90s to me were a weird decade. It felt like a lot of anger got sublimated instead of expressed. It may have just been that, you know, for a long time, my mantra was I just stay away from politics. I don't want to talk about politics. I don't want to hear about politics. It divides us in ways that people who have more in common than they don't end up hating each other. Clearly, a lot has changed over the years. But no, I don't recall if there were protests around campus. They were not things that I was involved in because as soon as I came over to UCA, I started dating someone at Hendrix, so part of my socializing was back across town.

**Speaker 1** [00:41:19] So now we're going through the seminars. I want to go back to that because now you're hitting your senior year and what would be known as your capstone project and your thesis. Could just tell me a little bit about that?

**Speaker 2** [00:41:33] Oh yes. I don't know what the structure is like now. Then there was one semester thing called the Oxford Tutorial, a one on one, and I wanted to do my tutorial on dreams and dreaming because I've always been fascinated by dreaming. Rick agreed to work with me, and basically every week I would find research articles or books or anything directly or remotely related to sleep and dreaming. I would read it and I would prepare notes and would come in. For an hour I would share with him what I had read, what I learned, and what I was thinking about. He would ask me questions about things like Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, which I'm still not a fan of. Stephen LaBerge, who was one of the first folks to write from a scientific perspective about lucid dreaming. I read an awful lot of Carlos Castaneda, who wasn't really writing about dreaming. He was writing about altered states of consciousness and drug culture. The altered sense of consciousness fit well. I read three or four of his books that year, plus research articles on sleep and dreaming and really anything I could get my hands on. We had a lot of conversations, and one of the things that I did was I started keeping a dream journal, because then I shared with him [Rick] that one of my quasi-goals was to develop the ability to lucid dream. One of the best ways to do that is get in the habit of writing your dreams down and just thinking about them and reflecting on them. Somewhere around, I don't know, halfway or the three-fourths mark of the semester, I actually did it. I was able to off and on Lucid Dream for a few years. Never, particularly consistent. I guess Rick was trying the same thing, but instead of being able to develop the ability of Lucid Dream, he gave himself a sleep disorder and wasn't able to sleep for more than a couple of hours at a time, for a while. I felt kind of bad about that one. [laughter] We got partway into it, and I think I'd always kind of felt like I wanted to do my thesis as a novel. At some point— Probably during my sophomore year— I was going through books about writing. I remember sitting on the floor in Hastings just going through books about writing and developing good writing habits. I wanted to be a fiction writer, so of course, be a psych major. Why not? One book says something about, you know, “Write three pages or a thousand words a day,” and I got in the habit of doing that. For most of my sophomore and junior and senior year, I was cranking out a first draft of a novel length manuscript every three months. Thousand words a day, 90 days, 90000 words. Anyway, I wanted to keep doing fiction, you know, so it's like, OK, take all the research I've done in the Oxford Tutorial and use it to build a fictional story that dreaming plays a big part in it.

**Speaker 1** [00:46:03] How was it presenting your thesis?

**Speaker 2** [00:46:07] It was about as opposite an experience from my sophomore lecture as you could imagine. I told people basically what I was doing. I didn't expect people to want to hear about it because I'd been to a couple of thesis defenses, it was like, you know, some people here, some people there who have felt like five, 10 people in attendance. We were up in the conference room on the top floor and with the really pretty new tables and the plush chairs. It was kind of standing room only. I decided, okay, I'm all in on the fiction part of this. I'm going to present it in character. I am

going to present it like I am my great-grandson who has done research on this story and has determined that it is likely factual. I went with it, which was tremendous fun because there was a physics major in the room, Chris Sheesly. Chris is one of those guys who never gave you exactly what you expected because I'm pretty sure he was a high school football player and was still just a legit big, strong guy, but super smart physics major too. Everything that I included as a quasi plot element related to many worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics or timelines, and all this stuff, he was just like grilling me on it in character. He didn't break character, either. That was awesome and so much fun. I don't know. Forty-five minutes to an hour long thing with the presentation and the Q and A. At the time, I was probably scared to death because I am an introvert, I'm a tremendous introvert, which makes my career trajectory make zero sense. But you know what I learned as part of my experience that day? You put me in front of a room where I have something that I'm interested in? I'm good. I can do that, and I don't know to what extent that defense of the thesis contributed to my style of lecture, my comfort in a classroom environment. It's something that had been developing my whole time in Honors. I guess I found my inner performer in Honors, too, and that was part of what I loved about the thesis defense. It was presenting it, it was sharing information, but it was also performing and that carries over into how I teach now. I'm one of few people who gets to teach the only 100-student class on Xavier's campus, and everybody else is like, "Oh, I don't want to teach a class that big. What are you going to do?" I taught 300 at Bowling Green. I played the big rooms in Honors. This is being up in front of a crowd, in front of an audience, in front of people who are willing to listen to what I have to say and who I can share something worthwhile with. That's fun!

**Speaker 1** [00:51:11] I agree. While your time at UCA is starting to come to an end. Will you just kind of speak on if you were active with the campus or just the honors. If you did any like extracurriculars.

**Speaker 2** [00:51:32] I was mainly involved in Honors, but I did do some work over in psychology. I was part of the –I don't remember what office I held– I was an officer in Psi Chi, probably some minimal responsibility, thing like historian or secretary or something. This is embarrassing. I was in the brain space of, "I need to make myself a really good paper person," because I felt that in high school and I knew I was going to go to grad school and I knew there was an application process. "Let's get some more involvement in, Morrie." Yes. I'm pretty sure I was an officer in Psi Chi, but I'm also pretty sure I stayed away from anything like president because that level of leadership was something I never, never aspired to. "He said, ironically, sitting as a department chair..." I was in Psi Chi and I did research with one of the psych professors, who I think is still there, Bill Lammers. If he is not still there he may be a recent retiree, but he was pretty fresh when I was there. Last time I looked, he was still around.

**Speaker 1** [00:53:02] Yes, I want to say– I'm curious to know if his wife also works on campus. I think so, Christine Lammers.

**Speaker 2** [00:53:18] Yes, I think I probably met her at an end of the year psychology gathering at some point. I believe his kids were young and they [their kids] probably have kids now. Yes, just reflecting on the old personal stuff, please continue.

**Speaker 1** [00:53:38] Can tell me what you remember from graduation?

**Speaker 2** [00:53:51] OK. There isn't much to it. Finished up, walked across the stage, kind of awkward, oh, hey, here's the person in the line beside me who I was dating and came over here to be near and I haven't talked to in two and a half years. I mean, graduation itself, it was kind of almost like, I'm not big on ceremony. I go mainly for other people when I go to stuff like that. Right? Parents wanted me to see me graduate. Mainly, I remember that I was going to miss the class behind



me because even after I moved up to take the junior/senior seminar classes with the other group, I still socialized mainly with the group I came in with.

**Speaker 1** [01:02:50] Yes. It's sad, but now you're graduating. If you'll just talk about what your plans were after graduation and kind of what you did go into that.

**Speaker 2** [01:03:09] So I knew that I was going to go to graduate school, because the only thing I knew I was good at, at that point in life, was going to school. I was exceptionally good at getting good grades and taking standardized tests, which is awesome for as long as you can lean on that. I applied to 13, 14, 15 graduate programs, lots of different areas of psychology. I applied to so many doctoral programs that I ran out of money and ended up going to Norb and going, "Are there any scholarships I could apply for to help pay for their grad school applications, because I'm kind of tapped?" And he found money. I'm not at all convinced that it didn't come out of his bank account, but he got me the money that I needed and called it a scholarship so that I could get my applications out. Then I had to decide, do I want to go to a social psych program, or an experimental psych program, or a psych and law program, or a human factors program, or an industrial organizational psychology program? I think those were the five broad areas that I applied to. Psychophysiology is kind of a subset of experimental. I got in almost everywhere I applied to. The only places I didn't get in was the University of Michigan, Yale, and Stanford. If you're going to get rejected by places, the places that only take the uber uber smart, could be worse. I accidentally applied and got into two of the top three industrial organizational psychology programs in the country. Ended up visiting and decided to go to Michigan State. It was the right decision.

**Speaker 1** [01:05:51] Do you think that having put honors college on a resume helped getting into grad school?

**Speaker 2** [01:06:02] You know, I don't know. At the time the Honors College was more regionally recognized, so I think that being able to say—OK, here's what would have helped. I had done a semester long, intensive research literature review and then written a senior honors thesis. Yes, that helps. It would not have helped if I told them it was fiction, but being able to say I did this and then I wrote a senior honors thesis, in addition to having worked in a research lab over in psych. That piece of the Honors experience absolutely helps because one of the things you have to be able to do in graduate school is project management. Being able to show that you have the project management experience and you've got some research background and some writing background means that people admitting you, they know they're not starting from zero if they're working with you. They're starting with the skill set that you've already been developing. So, yeah, Honors, I think, and the work that I did, especially around the thesis, was helpful.

**Speaker 1** [01:07:29] Do you think that the Honors College Education helped you during grad school?

**Speaker 2** [01:07:43] Absolutely. The interdisciplinary perspective that honors gives kept me from being willing to read just inside my own field. It's easy as you go from kind of the broad base of General Ed, to the more focused study in your major, to grad school where you're in this very narrow niche within your major. Then you get even more specialized within that niche. It is easy to only read things that are directly related to the research you are doing right now, and that is a problem that psychology has as a whole. The training I got that showed me the value of reading broadly, that showed me the value of reading philosophy and religion and things from other sciences outside of the social sciences, and other social sciences -- that all played into what I was interested in and how I continued to develop myself. That carried over into and through graduate school and persists today.

**Speaker 1** [01:09:47] Yes. Just tell me a little bit about life after grad school.

**Speaker 2** [01:09:56] My first job after grad school was on the faculty at Virginia Tech. I was not there when the shooting happened. That was a couple of years after I left and it was interesting because when I was interviewing— I interviewed at Virginia Tech, I interviewed at LSU, I interviewed at George Washington University. Some places I got offers and some places I didn't. I also interviewed at Ohio State University's Marion Campus. That was a very different job from all the rest because Tech and LSU and George Washington – big, big universities. Like, Tech is 35000 or 40000 students. It's ridiculous. LSU is obviously LSU. George Washington is big. OSU Marion is a satellite campus where I would have just been teaching undergraduates. It was the only place where I went that I had to do a teaching demonstration in addition to a job talk. It was the place that made me feel the most like, if I ended up here it would be the most like teaching for Honors. It would have been in a smaller location, a little bit more intimate, not the massive classes. I didn't get an offer there. Did get offers at LSU and Virginia Tech and ended up at Tech for about a year and a half. Part of my learning was again, me discovering something that Norb had discovered for himself 20, 30 years prior. He used to tell the story -- and I will not tell the story, it's in the archives. The short form was him reading, I think it was the book *Small is Beautiful*, while looking out over San Francisco Bay. Reading, and realizing that he didn't want to be somewhere big because he'd been at big universities. That was what led him to leave whatever job he was at and head for UCA ultimately. I had that moment for myself at Virginia Tech. It was big and busy, and I was teaching maybe three classes a year plus summer school if I wanted it. A two and one teaching load, that might have ultimately been a two and two. Not a whole lot of time with students and very little with the undergraduates. For a lot of reasons, it didn't feel like a good fit. Now the other thing that happened at this point is that I got divorced. Blacksburg is a beautiful part of the country, but a really terrible place to be single if you have an aversion to dating students. But mainly, it wasn't a good fit. It was too big. I wanted to be somewhere smaller, so I had started in January, , and the following May I resigned. Before I actually had another job lined up. I had some feelers out and ultimately I got a visiting assistant professor job at the Bowling Green State University. Which is more of a mid-sized state school, and I loved it. I found my joy again. I was teaching the 250 and 300 student intro to psych classes, and performing! This was 2001, 2002, which meant that one of the first things I had to deal with in a Tuesday afternoon class was what happened on that Tuesday morning of September 11, 2001. Going into an intro psych class the day that happened. Engaging the students in a conversation about how we're doing and the psychology of what's happening around us. I was like curriculum? Screw that. Let's talk about what's happening in the world and how we can start to try to understand. Apparently, I found out later that I was one of the really few faculty who deviated from their course plans that day or in the days after. What? How do you not? But that goes back to everything I value about education. It has to do with the connection with the students and caring for the students, and talking to them and interacting with them as more than just butts in seats. That is again an Honors thing. The way that I approached that day, and the way that I approach every day that I find joy in teaching, is informed by what I saw from Norb and Rick and the others who came in and engaged with us instead of talking to us, or at us. I spent a year in Bowling Green. At some point in October or November someone put an ad flier for a job at Xavier in my mailbox with a Post-it note that said, "You would be perfect for this." They weren't trying to chase me out. The students loved me, maybe a little too much. Some of them tried to start a petition when they found out that I wasn't going to be back next year like, "Oh no, you have to get a new contract." I mean, it was very affirming. It was me going back to not just going to the classroom and teaching the class and here's a grade distribution, which is what I've done in Virginia Tech. At Bowling Green, I got there and I'm like, "I'ma be me." One day early on, I was in one of the big lecture classes and I was wearing fake Birkenstocks (because I wasn't as cool as Conrad). But these "mockenstocks," when I stepped there was an air pocket in one of them that made a sound. Sometimes it would go [makes a sound with voice] and I'm like, I don't need to walk on a whoopee cushion. I just took off my shoes and lectured barefoot. It was freeing, and it became my thing. I

would just take off my shoes for those big intro classes and lecture barefoot, and students were much more willing after I put the shoes back on to come up and ask me questions than when I was wearing shoes the whole time. It was a weird thing. I'm like, I'm from Arkansas so I just blame it on that -- and I wanted to be more approachable. [laughter] It worked, and I was able to make these connections. That was when I found my joy. Anyway, I interviewed at Xavier, got the offer, and stayed here. It was a small school. Small is beautiful. I went from big at Virginia Tech to medium size at BGSU, which was probably pretty close UCA. To small, where I can be me and talk about things that matter and not be afraid. I was deathly afraid at Virginia Tech about talking about what is right and what is the morally correct thing to do when you're faced with a difficult decision. That's not how corporate IO psychology is taught. Being at Xavier, I can talk about what's right. In fact, during my second or third year here, there was a point where I was doing the corporate doublespeak in teaching a grad class. You know, "We have to be careful and look out for the client, protect the client." Something like that. Somebody who'd been a Xavier undergrad was now in the graduate program. I looked at her and she had this look of profound disappointment on her face, like, "Are you abandoning what you're about to talk corporate to me?" And I stopped. Things clicked into place, and I'm like, yes, and that's one way to approach it. But ultimately, you have to do what you know is right. Do good work and do what you know is right, and that's the most important thing. God help me if it wasn't me channeling Norb and Rick and everything that I value from Honors in that moment. It was, it was a process as I went through my mind, discovering who I wanted to be and how I could use all of the formative experiences from Honors to turn into that person so that I could help students have the same kinds of formative and transformative experiences. Yes.

**Speaker 1** [01:23:19] It's amazing. I know that you said that you're a professor teaching and kind of channeling Norb. I just want to ask if there's any instances in where you came back to the honors college and gave back something?

**Speaker 2** [01:23:46] I mean, there was the 20 year anniversary where Rick reached out to me and asked if I could come in and give the keynote. He said, "You know, and we've got this honorarium that we can give you." I forget what it was--like 1500 bucks or something. UCA is 30 minutes from where my parents live, I'd love an excuse to come down and visit. So I asked him to just take that and put it into the scholarship fund and call it a donation from me if you want to. I think that they did. I came down and I wish I still had the talk, but I think that it no longer exists in any form that I have access to. I do know the title because it is in my CV and it is *Square Fish in a Round Pound, Reflections on Interdisciplinary Education*. I talked about the influence that the interdisciplinary work in Honors had on me and was still having on me. Because one of the things I got to do in my second or third year here at Xavier was develop a brand new [graduate] course. I took social psychology and cognitive psychology and personality psychology and mashed them all together to create an interdisciplinary psychology course with a focus on how you could apply them to Industrial organizational psychology. The very first thing I have students read is a two page article called *Are Psychology's Tribes Ready to Form a Nation*, about how we're fragmented and we don't read each other's work, and we almost never read anything from outside of psychology. I emphasize that interdisciplinary thinking is what can make us better at everything that we do. The narrower we think, the narrower the solutions are that we will come up with. The more broadly we think, the more broadly we read, the more creative we're going to be in whatever line of work we go into. I'm sure I talked about that in my speech, and I know for a fact that I used the phrase "diversity of ideas" a lot. I shared this in an email that I sent to you and Whit. After we were done [with the anniversary event], I went out to get ice cream or frozen custard with my wife and Jenny Streit. I think she was already Jenny Streit-Horn, but I'm not positive. Jennifer Fuson, who was married to Jon Kennedy until his untimely passing, was there, and Jon, and there may have been a couple other folks, but Jon was laughing. He was like, "Okay, first Morrie, that was a great talk. I enjoyed it." I was like, "Fantastic! Did you think that the students liked it?" [laughter] Now, to give context, Jon was a phenomenal guy. He kind of intimidated me. He was just this super smart philosophy major

and the kind of person who could engage with Norb on Norb's level, and be happy and excited doing it. He was like, "I was listening to some of them talking about it. [Morrie's talk] And, you know, they said, 'Yeah, it was... It was a really good talk, but wow, he is *so* liberal!.'" [laughter] I didn't mention politics at all. I just use the word "diversity" a lot, I guess. Apparently in 2002, that was still a dog whistle for, "I am a liberal, and I'm going to mess up your brain" or something. Sorry, I got a kick out of that. It was so much fun and I I was nervous about it, but same time I was coming home and getting to talk to the Honors College and my people. I was getting to see Rick, Norb, Glenda, Virginia and Jenny, who I hadn't known was going to be there. I got to introduce my wife to some of the folks. There was – I think that was one of two times that I had been back to campus. The other time was the 2017 or 18, I don't remember for sure. It was during the summer and almost nobody was around. I was on vacation. I got to meet with Tricia. I got to spend a little bit of time with Norb and have lunch with him and some of the– mainly folks from the first year class that I had been part of. Brad Moore, Brad just makes me smile. Cindy and Jarrett. Craig and Weeji. We got to spend a little bit of time with Norb, in his retirement office. Which was a very full circle kind of thing. He had a little cubby... you know, it felt like a little cubby, it might have been a bigger cubby. I don't think Norb would have let them give him a really big space after he retired. There were books piled everywhere, kind of falling over each other. He and my wife and I sat and talked, and I don't remember for sure if I'd gotten to introduce her to him at the 2002 event. [sniffing] Sorry...

**Speaker 1** [01:31:40] You're fine...

**Speaker 2** [01:31:54] It was really, really important to me that she get the meet him, that she get to spend some time with him. The Parkinson's was already affecting him pretty strongly. The speech wasn't that easy. He was still able to get around and you could tell his mind was still as sharp as ever. He was frustrated that what was going on up in here [point to head] wasn't all coming out as easily as it once had. He was still him, essentially the same glorious, glowing, brilliant, kind human being. I think that the lunch was after we met with him. That's probably the last time I got to see him in person, was as we left whatever little restaurant it was in downtown Conway, with the long cafeteria-style tables. The really, really exceptionally good southern cooking. [A long pause.] I think I told you I used to have recurring dreams about coming back to the UCA and teaching. I warned the people I've worked with here at Xavier, the only academic job I would leave for is if something came open there. [Honors College] I didn't pay enough attention when things came open, oops,[laughter] but I think that Honors has the right people in the right roles now. You just have a fantastic administration and staff. Everything I see that comes out of Honors fills me with joy and reminds me why I still do what I do.

**Speaker 1** [01:34:43] Thank you so much. This is an amazing interview, and I think this is the perfect way to end it. It really was a full circle and for me, it's amazing hearing you guys all talk about Norb. I only interviewed three people and every three of you said, you know, when you last saw him, you guys all made a comment about how his mind was still so sharp and I love that. I love how you all worded it like that. Like, I wrote it down in my notes and just hearing you be the third person to say that it does make me teary eyed because, Wow, he was very impactful to all of your lives.

**Speaker 2** [01:35:39] If we are lucky, each of us will have the chance to meet a "Norb Schedler" at some point in our life. And if we are really lucky, maybe a couple, but one is a blessing. I feel pretty fortunate.

**Speaker 1** [01:36:00] Thank you so much. I'm going to go ahead and end the recording.  
vb