

**\*Approved**

SCHEDLER Honors COLLEGE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Carl Olds Oral History Interview Transcription

Narrator Name: Olds, Carl

Interviewer Name: Ziegler, Griffin

Date of Interview: 04/02/2022

Location of Interview: Conway, AR (Remote Interview - Zoom Recording)

Acronyms:

GZ = Griffin Ziegler (Interviewer)

CO = Carl Olds (Narrator)

UCA = University of Central Arkansas

Interview Summary

The following is a recorded oral history interview with Carl Olds conducted by Griffin Ziegler on April 2, 2022. This interview is part of the Schedler Honors College Oral History Project where current students and alumni are asked to reflect on their time before, during, and after being in the UCA Honors College.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than prose.

The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator.

**GZ** [00:00:02] This is Griffin Ziegler with the Schedler Honors College Oral History Project. Today is April the 2nd and I am interviewing Carl Olds, who is at the University of Central Arkansas campus in Conway, Arkansas. We will be talking about Carl's experience leading up to during and after their time in the Schedler Honors College. Please state your name and age for the recording.

**CO** [00:00:31] My name is Carl Olds. I am forty eight.

**GZ** [00:00:35] What year did you enter the Honors College?

**CO** [00:00:39] Fall of 1990.

**GZ** [00:00:41] When did you graduate from Honors College?

**CO** [00:00:43] I graduated Honors in May 1994. From UCA in May 1995.

**GZ** [00:00:50] What are your pronouns, Carl?

**CO:** He/him.

**GZ:** Where are you from?

**CO** [00:00:56] I graduated from Conway High, but I'm originally from Michigan. Grew up in Michigan but moved to Conway in the early 1980s.

**GZ** [00:01:07] What town in Michigan?

**CO** [00:01:09] Lived in East Lansing for seven years.

**GZ** [00:01:13] So what brought you to Conway?

**CO** [00:01:16] My dad got a job at UCA in the foreign language department, so I grew up around campus and knew about the Honors College long before I wanted to apply.

**GZ** [00:01:29] So did you, off the bat, know that you were going to UCA just because your dad worked there?

**CO** [00:01:35] No, I applied to a few places. I really wanted to go to Hendrix, honestly, after my experience at Arkansas Governor School. But then even after I got the scholarship at Hendrix, I looked at the bill and went, “Oh, UCA sounds a lot better.”

**GZ** [00:01:58] So you said you were from East Lansing, right? What was it like growing up there? Was it a small town? Was it a big town?

**CO** [00:02:07] East Lansing is a college town. It was very similar to where Michigan State University is. I remember having a great time. It was a great school. I definitely remember that. My first grade classroom had students in first, second and third grade in it all together with three teachers. And we were all working in packets at our own individual paces and it was a huge giant classroom. And it was just it was really, really cool. Some weird 70s experiments like they did.

**GZ** [00:02:46] Did you like that form of education as opposed to just going back to the standardized format for high school?

**CO** [00:02:58] It was it was very interesting. Right when I moved to Conway and started in our public schools, I tested ahead in reading and math. And so I moved here in second grade, but ended up taking half of my classes in the third grade and was jumping back and forth between the grades all through elementary school. At some point, I was going to be moving to the junior high or the

middle school, and they had to decide to put me in one way or the other. I went ahead and moved up, and I was younger than most of my classmates going through high school.

**GZ** [00:03:38] How old were you when you started high school?

**CO** [00:03:41] I started high school, I guess, at about 12. I mean, I was 16, barely 17 when I graduated, so.

**GZ** [00:03:53] Wow, that is really young.

**CO:** Yep.

**GZ:** So that meant that you entered college—I mean, most people enter college at least 18, so they're adults. What was it like for you entering college two years younger than most freshmen?

**CO** [00:04:13] Honestly, I didn't notice an awful lot. I was probably emotionally less mature than some of my classmates, but I loved the Honor College, [it] really helped me feel like I had a home at UCA, so.

**GZ** [00:04:34] How would you compare living in Conway to living in East Lansing? Did you prefer one over the other?

**CO** [00:04:42] No, I mean, I feel like I had a pretty good, pretty good raising. I lived at home even during my five years at UCA. I spent most of my waking hours at the Honors College. Luckily, the Forum was open until midnight. Most of those nights, and even if I wasn't studying, I was generally there hanging out. Only went home just to eat and sleep.

**GZ** [00:05:20] So, you mentioned your dad's career at UCA. What about your mother? What did she do for a living?

**CO** [00:05:29] She worked for a while in the continuing education department at UCA. There were, I remember, hanging out with the two of them while they worked on campus. Somewhere around 1986 or so before I got to UCA, my dad left campus and started working in Little Rock Public Schools. My mom ended up leaving UCA as well, and she worked for the Arkansas Gazette for a while, and then ended up going to Winrock International and worked on publications for them.

**GZ** [00:06:09] Why did your parents leave UCA? Did they not like teaching at the school or were there better opportunities for them?

**CO** [00:06:21] Honestly, yes. Honestly, pay was the biggest thing.

**GZ** [00:06:29] Yes. Can't blame them there.

**CO** [00:06:35] I look at the public school salary schedule all the time and go, "Man, I could be making, you know, ten or fifteen thousand dollars more than I'm making at UCA." But I couldn't say "fuck," and that will be a problem for me.

**GZ** [00:06:55] Is there another reason why you like UCA?

**CO** [00:07:00] I love the kids that I have, especially teaching freshmen. I teach mostly freshmen here on campus, and they are young and eager and wild-eyed and absolutely just love what they're

doing. I love what I do, and it's considerably less paperwork than my friends who do teach in public schools have to deal with.

**GZ** [00:07:27] And what is your job here at UCA?

**CO** [00:07:30] Currently, the academic director at the Muse@Short/Denney Residential College, so I live here on campus and teach classes in one of the residence halls.

**GZ** [00:07:45] What kind of classes do you teach?

**CO** [00:07:47] I teach some first year success courses. I teach some film courses.

**GZ** [00:07:54] What is your family dynamic like? Do you have any siblings, any close extended family?

**CO** [00:08:01] I've got two sisters who live fairly close, one in Conway and one in Morrilton. I've got two children who are 19 and 18 and live with me here in the dorm on campus.

**GZ** [00:08:15] What's it like living in the dorm? Do you have your own separate kind of, I guess I could say, apartment? Do you have your own apartment kind of thing?

**CO** [00:08:25] It's kind of like an apartment. I have my own living space. They carved it out of a couple of rooms. In fact, we had Honors students in Short/Denney for a little bit while while I was in school and the floor that I'm on was an Honors floor. So part of my room used to have one of my good friends living in it when he was in school.

**GZ** [00:08:52] I interviewed a graduate who said that he lived Honors housing in Short/Denney, which did kind of surprise me because they only ever told us that first it was Wingo Hall, and then it was Farris Hall. Did Wingo Hall come before Short/Denney or was it after?

**CO** [00:09:10] I believe Short/Denney was before. I think they were in Baridon for a year right after it came online, too. But I think those students were mixed in with Honors students, and so I don't think it was set aside specifically for Honors housing. I don't know, but I lived I lived off campus, so I was not a part of any of those things.

**GZ** [00:09:42] Did your parents have any influence over your education?

**CO** [00:09:47] Sure. I mean, my dad's a teacher. I guess it was always sort of predetermined that I would come along that path and do that. And certainly he knew Norb and Rick from his time teaching here at the university, so I had it in in that way.

**GZ** [00:10:05] When was the first time that you met Norb?

**CO** [00:10:14] The first time I can remember meeting him was probably my interview to join the program, but I imagine I saw him quite a bit.

**GZ** [00:10:29] What were your first—I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt.

**CO** [00:10:33] No, I'm good.

**GZ** [00:10:36] What were your first impressions of Norb?

**CO** [00:10:41] Just absolutely brilliant. You know, as soon as he started talking, he was incredibly engaging. But to even just someone who didn't deserve to be listened to, I always felt like he was listening to me. He always asked my opinion about things. Always asked. You know, tried to include me in the conversation instead of just talking at me. And that was one of his absolute strengths.

**GZ** [00:11:15] I've heard a lot of accounts, like from my peers who have interviewed other graduates and of course, the graduate I interviewed, they all had similar accounts of Norb. Did you have like a personal connection with Norb?

**CO** [00:11:32] I did. I mean, I certainly got to know him a little bit during the first two years. But in my third year I was I worked as a mentor who was helping out with one of the Core classes. I think I was a fourth semester student who was helping out with Core II with the previous year's students. And so Norb had a group of us that would meet once a week and would prepare, of course, materials and prepare stuff to talk about in small groups. And he really kind of took us under his wing to work with us in that course, because that course was all about searching for community. And so he made a little community out of the student mentors as well. Then I worked with him later. I think I did a two year seminar with him, but then he was a thesis. We did a tutorial in Oxford tutorial together during my senior year. So, yeah, going to teach him material once a week was one of the most inspiring experiences of my professional life. I can definitely assure you that.

**GZ** [00:13:11] Could you tell me more about this mentor program? I'm sure you've heard of the mentor program that they have now, but it sounds a bit different.

**CO** [00:13:22] I think this was maybe a forerunner of some of that. There were, I think, five or six of us who were fourth semester students who were going to be worked into small group leaders in



Core II class. I know I was one. Jared Young, I know was one. Gwen Ford Faulkenberry was another one. I've seen a picture. I know that there's a picture somewhere of us sitting around Norb's office talking. We had our own books, we had an extra three books on top of the books that the course had on. We would talk through some of those and we had our own class basically for that.

**GZ** [00:14:33] Wow, that sounds like a big responsibility.

**CO** [00:14:38] It was neat. Some of those experiences were foundational for me to see that, oh, this teaching thing is something that I can handle. I saw my first teaching experiences, and they were awesome.

**GZ** [00:14:55] Wow. This is that is really interesting. I've honestly never heard of something like that before. Would you say that—I mean, it sounds like it, but would you say that it helps you, it helped prepare you for your career?

**CO** [00:15:09] Oh, definitely. During this time period, I also had been recommended from my Core II instructor, recommended me to be a tutor in the UCA writing center. And so I think during this semester, I was also doing the tutor practicum course that at that time the English department was putting on to train tutors and you're doing that. And so I was getting a lot of experience in mentoring and teaching underclassmen.

**GZ** [00:15:50] What was your major in college?

**CO** [00:15:54] I started off as a political science major. I took a world lit class, the one on the gen-ed UCA core, from Dr. Philip Anderson. Found out that English was something that I loved, and so that was the gateway drug for me, and I went ahead and took another class. I took English

Lit. I figured out how that was. And then suddenly, luckily, you had a couple of really, really strong English professors who had co-taught some of the early core classes: Margaret Morgan, Conrad Shoemaker, Patricia McGraw, who became mentor figures for me. And so I stood with a foot in both camps for a little while and then finally just said, “You know, I'll go ahead and just just jump in and be an English major.” So I changed, I became an English major after a while, I ended up graduating with English and political science degrees.

**GZ** [00:17:00] Did you attend any other schools after UCA? Did you go to grad school?

**CO** [00:17:06] We graduated from UCA in '95 and left. In fact, me and two of my best friends were also in the Honors College at the time: Jared Young and Kelly Davis. After we all graduated in '95, we took the plunge. We were all in a band, all through school, and we all moved to Nashville. After we graduated in '95, we played our hand at the music business for a couple of years and it didn't work out for us there. And slowly each of us moved back to Central Arkansas. I came back and started grad school in '98 at UCA and got my Master's in English here in '98 and finished that in 2001. The work was very overqualified [sic] for the retail job that I had for a couple of more years before I got on to the faculty here at UCA in 2003.

**GZ** [00:18:09] So I did a little bit of reading on the UCA website, and is it correct that you worked with the theater department for a while?

**CO** [00:18:20] Worked in the department of what's now the Department of Student Transitions, it's called University College, taught remedial reading and writing courses, getting them up to snuff. I have worked in film theater and creative writing for quite a bit of that time as well.

**GZ** [00:18:41] So did you ever come to the UCA campus before you started attending college there?

**CO** [00:18:50] Oh yeah. I mean to say with my dad on the faculty from 1980 to '85, I really feel like I grew up on the UCA campus. I remember going to see, they used to show movies at Ida Waldran auditorium on Sunday afternoons, kind of like the way the student government does now in the student center. But they used to run reel-to-reel Disney movies and stuff in the auditorium on Sunday. I remember that really well. I remember wandering around here, just poking my head into all of the different buildings back in the day and the campus was very different in the early 80s than it is now. That UCA standing for "under construction always" is not a lie.

**GZ** [00:19:42] Yes, because even today it's still under construction.

**CO** [00:19:46] Yes, well, and 1990 was an important year for the Honors College because that was the year that they moved over to McCastlain, where the art gallery is now was where the Honors College was housed. My freshman year, while they were renovating McAlister. I had done my interview, though, in the old McAlister space. I have memories of it, and my friend, Jared's brother, was several years ahead of us. I think he was graduating from the Honors College about the time that we started so I had been up there and I had seen all of the stuff and I had seen the former Honors space. But that year that they were renovating that fall of '90 to spring of '91 semester Honors moved over to the McCastlain space.

**GZ** [00:20:47] Do you know when it moved back to McAlister?

**CO** [00:20:50] I think they were down for the one year while they renovated and then fall of '91 was when the Glenda Middleton Forum opened up, and then after they had the spaces in there, starting in '91. So it's just the one academic year.

**GZ** [00:21:11] So what was your application to the Honors College like? I don't think you guys had the I<sup>2</sup> day back then right?

**CO:** No.

**GZ:** You just had the interviews.

**CO** [00:21:21] I remember there was a written part of the application and essay that we had to write. I remember agonizing over that but then they brought us in, and I think they didn't even bring us in groups. I think I just I came in for an individual interview one afternoon. Probably, at the end of Norb and Rick's day, and I think I had sat down with Norb and Rick during that interview, and they apparently liked what they saw. So yes.

**GZ** [00:21:58] Why did you choose the UCA Honors College, was it just because your dad had connections or did you have your own personal interest?

**CO** [00:22:08] I remember my dad had some really, really positive and strong interactions with Norb and Rick during his time here and recommended it very highly. You know, at the time, I had felt a little bit deflated because I had my heart kind of set on Hendrix. In hindsight, I don't regret a moment of it and feel like that. I got as good, or probably, better education at UCA than I would have there, especially because of my time in the arts college.

**GZ** [00:22:41] Did you have any first impressions of the Honors College before actually joining it?

**CO** [00:22:47] I had a couple of friends. Jared's older brother, Erik Young, was in the college with his fiancée. Dennis Siler, one of the first graduates, was someone that I had known through church. And he spoke very highly of it. So, yeah, I had some good, positive, strong feelings about it before I got here and was very lucky, I think, to have gotten in.

**GZ** [00:23:14] Did those impressions change over the course of your time in college?

**CO** [00:23:19] I only got stronger and better. Honestly, I am the person that I am as a result of the time that I spent in the Honors College.

**GZ** [00:23:31] Which Honors values left an impression on you when you were reviewing the application?

**CO** [00:23:44] I remember so little of that. I remember just sort of accelerated GT nature of it was the impression that I had coming in because that sort of high school reference was all I really had to work with. I didn't know. I didn't know what a major or a minor was, really. And so when that happened, I learned a lot about the program from being in it.

**GZ** [00:24:21] Do you have any advice for potential Honors college applicants?

**CO** [00:24:31] I know Honors sometimes gets a really bad reputation, especially among the hard sciences for being not a very easy program and one that may threaten the GPA that's really important to get into med school or anything like that and just really difficult sometimes to get the classes in because, like the biology majors, all the pre-med majors and stuff, that biology major is

so incredibly intensive that it doesn't offer a lot of time for that. But honestly, the grounding in ethics, the grounding in community, the grounding in everything that Honors gives you and that learning how to learn would be a benefit to anybody, no matter what major they end up in. I think Honors has also realized that, right, I think in the past six or seven years they have really done a great job of recruiting students from those STEM areas, particularly, and wanting to bring them in to the program because they totally got a reputation for not being something that was very easy.

**GZ** [00:25:46] I can certainly testify to that, too. I started off as a music major here and I felt like the Honors College was just as relevant to me then as it was when I switched to computer science. I definitely agree with you there.

**CO** [00:26:04] Learning how to learn it's applicable to anything, and that's honestly the biggest thing I got out of the program. I became a seeker.

**GZ** [00:26:18] Did you have a minor besides the Honors minor?

**CO** [00:26:22] I had a French minor for a while. I figured two majors and two minors was probably a little bit much after a while and I gave up that second minor. But yes, I still graduated with one hundred and seventy hours or something, and which is why it took me five years of taking 15 to 18 hours. Every semester, I was young and naive and just loved learning. Took lots of classes for fun. My first film class was a class that I took for fun because I had some friends who were journalism majors who had to take an intro to film class and thought I would take the class with them. That class changed my life. So yeah, that.

**GZ** [00:27:07] Wow. That's honestly impressive, like 15 to 18 hours and you still had classes that you enjoyed.

**CO** [00:27:15] I really just worked my tail off. I worked my tail off, but I will say that Honors never made it seem like a grind. The people that were around and hanging out. Again, I didn't spend any time at home during those five years. I was in the forum non-stop. And especially before the residence halls, the honor residences, were around, everybody hung out in the forum. We played cards. Man, I don't know. We played a lot of cards my first two years. Went out and made swords and did Society of Creative Anachronism stuff on the front lawn in front of McAlister. We ran around and played McAlister hide-and-seek late at night, it was a lot of fun. Honors was a incredibly engaging, fun experience, too. Lots of conversations sitting around in the library, talking with our folks about stuff that we had done in class, just getting to know people on a really intensive, deep kind of level. I think that's where they have Norb's office set up off of the forum that used to be the library that was the Honors library for a while.

**GZ** [00:28:49] Do you know when it became official office?

**CO** [00:28:54] I don't think Norb ever was in there, but they moved his stuff out of his office into there three or four years ago, I think.

**GZ** [00:29:05] I talked to the other graduate that I—or the other alumni that I talked to, he also brought up Mcalister hide-and-seek. Did you ever come in contact with Bradley Moore?

**CO** [00:29:16] Oh yeah. Brad is still a great friend of mine. I think he's the one who lived in the room where my son currently lives. It's kind of weird.

**GZ** [00:29:30] What a coincidence!

**CO** [00:29:31] Full circle. Well, he's one of the things I said, but that's one of the things. The folks that I met in those days are folks that I still have contact with, that I still talk to regularly, and a bunch of us have made it back to UCA campus there, a bunch of us who are on the faculty now.

**GZ** [00:29:58] It definitely seems like—I mean, there definitely seems to be the case. It's interesting that so many people, despite how long it took them, they've always returned to the Honors College. Bradley told me that he didn't return for 10 years, but he still came back. Do you think that you will always be involved in UCA and Honors college?

**CO** [00:30:31] Even if I weren't on the faculty here, yeah, even before I got my position here, I was involved with alumni things. I had moderated some of the sophomore lectures. So I think that idea of giving back was something that was instilled in us. But that idea of creating and maintaining that community of like-minded and like-seeking individuals was something that was important to us then and remains so now.

**GZ** [00:31:10] All right, so I'm going to ask you a few questions about housing, even though I know you didn't stay on campus, but did you eat on campus a lot?

**CO** [00:31:21] Eating on campus like in the cafeteria, probably not. Going over to whatever the restaurant was at the time in the student center, yes. Papa John's at the time was across the street where Donaghey Hall is now. Went over there and got pizza all the time, especially since it was across the street from McAlister and walked over there and spent way too much money. They were folks having stuff delivered to McAlister all the time. We'd get together, pitch in, and get a pizza.

**GZ** [00:32:03] I mean, honestly, I don't blame you. If we still had a Papa John's directly across McAlister, would probably be there a lot more.



**CO** [00:32:11] It was a grocery store when I started school a little, just a little co-op grocery store and then a no-name pizza brand moved in there during my freshman year, and then Papa John's, I think, took it over my sophomore year and it was there for a while before they moved over onto Farris, where they are now.

**GZ** [00:32:36] Did you feel like the campus was in an accessible location to you?

**CO** [00:32:42] It was for me. I lived over behind Smoking Oaks. I was probably two miles from campus, but I was here all the time. I didn't do a lot of going back and forth from campus to home, but the campus was incredibly friendly for someone who road a bike or who drove up here from home.

**GZ** [00:33:07] How much has the infrastructure of campus changed since you first attended UCA? I know there were a lot of buildings added.

**CO** [00:33:15] They've added buildings, but, honestly, the biggest thing is they've closed campus off to vehicles for the most part. When I started, behind the rear doors to McAlister was a small parking lot. They had six or seven parking spaces back there and you would go out from there out to that. There was also the road that goes in front of McCastlain, I think, was a road there for a while, and they closed that off at some point. So they have closed the center of campus off to most motor vehicles to make it more pedestrian friendly. They had a couple of little Checkpoint Charlie stations. They had one right in front of Wingo for a while that you had to check in and show your ID when you came onto campus during the evenings back in the day. The tennis courts used to be over where Manion Hall is now. None of the Brewer Hickman, Stanley Russ', none of that was there back in the day. So this has changed quite a bit.

**GZ** [00:34:43] How did the Honors College program change your perspective?

**CO** [00:34:50] My worldly perspective. I can't even imagine a life where the Honors College wasn't part of who I am. It became part of the way that I looked at the world as a seeker instead of someone who felt like that they were an authority on stuff. Even now I come at things from that kind of perspective much more readily and easily because of the training that I got, the sort of academic rigor that they had. I never felt like I was on firm enough ground to become an authority, I was always someone who was ready to soak in other people's perspectives, other people's points of view. I was never an authority on anything because they were always there was always more information to gather. I learned a lot. I certainly knew a lot about a lot of different things, but I was, but I never sort of had that, I don't know, academic conceitedness that a lot of folks tend to get and that was definitely instilled in me during my time in Honors.

**GZ** [00:36:15] That definitely seems to be the common theme of Honors promoting, seeking knowledge as opposed to gaining it and being arrogant in a sort of authoritative way. Would you say that way of doing things is better than, let's say, your standard Honors College where you just take a few extra classes and that's it?

**CO** [00:36:46] One of the things that I love about the way that UCA does their program is by making it a minor. It can affect your program and your studies, no matter what major you end up in, and it ends up enhancing and making you a better biology major, English major, music major whatever, as opposed to most of the other places that I see Honors is just sort of an advanced track in whatever your major is, right? So you take advanced English classes, special English classes, which is cool, but it doesn't give you the sort of breadth of knowledge. I don't want to become one of the reasons why I didn't go get a PhD in English after I finished with, because I didn't really, I

couldn't think of anything that I wanted to go and become a super expert in. I liked the breadth of knowledge factor that Honors gave me, more so than the sort of intensive depth that a lot of programs try to do.

**GZ** [00:37:56] So, did you have a freshman retreat?

**CO** [00:38:00] Yes, well, fall of 1990, we went to Meadow Creek in Fox, Arkansas. They piled us onto a couple of the UCA buses. I remember those very well. I try to think of the driver's name—hung out with him for quite a bit, but it was a fantastic way to really deeply get to know my classmates over that weekend, and so that was a fantastic experience.

**GZ** [00:38:32] It really sounds like it. I remember while we didn't have a freshman retreat because of COVID, we had our sophomore retreat and there were a lot of experiences there that will never leave me. Are there any specific experiences you have from the retreat that you would like to talk about?

**CO** [00:38:53] Man, so, so many. I remember they did that. The year that I started fall of 1990 was one of the first big expansions in class size that Honors had. Most of the classes to ours, I think had 15 to 20 students in them. Fall of '90, they expanded to 60. There were 60 freshmen in our class and they took a lot of us out there, and it was a really big group. So we had four small groups in Core I. At the retreat, I remember they brought some musicians in and taught us some ballroom dancing and it was just a neat experience. We got to listen to some fantastic music and dance with each other. It was a fantastic way to get to know each other. I remember that there were some of us who asked to sleep on the deck at the place that we were at, and so we slept under the stars. And it was so cool. And I remember hanging out and we played some basketball with Rick on one of the decks;

and just found ways to get to know each other in formal kinds of ways and start those conversations.

**GZ** [00:40:28] So I know this is a little off-topic, but I noticed you were at the Founder's Day event. What did you think of Rick's speech? And do you still keep in contact with Rick?

**CO** [00:40:42] I still talk with Rick. Occasionally talk music with him quite a bit. One of the guys he's collaborating with is the guy who sang with the band that I was in. So, yes, we still talk. I still talk music. We still talk stuff. I don't talk to him as much as I would like to. But yes, still quite a bit. As far as the speech? I loved the way that he took me back to experiences that I had and hopefully made those experiences real to you guys because the arts college is a very different animal now. But those fundamental core values remain one of the things that I love about Dean Smith's role now. Her tenure as dean has been to preserve the character and preserve some of the tradition that we that we had in the past while still maintaining it for the, you know, the campus that currently exists in the environment that currently exists.

**GZ** [00:42:03] If there was anything about the Honors college that you could change, what would it be?

**CO** [00:42:09] About my experience in it or the way that it works today?

**GZ** [00:42:14] I'll let you answer that question how you feel fit.

**CO** [00:42:18] Man, I got so much out of my time in the program the way that it was. I honestly don't. Being connected with faculty from different parts of campus again turned out to be a very foundational experience for me. I liked the sort of self-driven nature that the junior and senior years

offered. Had some fantastic junior seminars with folks that I stayed connected to. I had a science fiction literature and film seminar with Terry Wright who was a professor in the English department at the time. Later on, he would become my boss when I became the academic director in Short/Denney. He became the dean down the road and just, you know, and seeing those people and seeing them progress and grow. And at the same time, watching me do that was a pretty incredible experience. I honestly can't think of anything that I would change.

**CO:** If something that fundamentally changed that, maybe I don't know how well for the better, but it was during my—I think junior year was the first year. I think that we started having Honors housing when they established the Honors housing first in Baridon and then Wingo for sure. I saw things change in the program. People started hanging out in the residence hall rather than in the forum. And to some degree, I think that started some of the ivory tower perceptions that people started having around Honors students when they started getting preferential treatment in housing and then in priority registration and some of those things. There definitely became a little bit of a backlash before I graduated. I saw some of that and in some of the faculty perceptions of the program. I think they've done a great job of addressing those in the time since then but part of me still hates to see them living in their own places instead of being integrated into all of the different pockets of campus. I think Honors did more good outside of Honors than it did inside of Honors but again, I didn't live on campus and didn't see that from quite the same perspective, so I'm not sure how it was from the perspective of the folks who actually were living in those in those spaces. Definitely was a little bit different for me, because as someone who came to campus and hung out in the Honors College area and the forum, after a while, people stopped coming to the forum. I had to go to Wingo during my senior year if I wanted to see my friends. You are living in the program, so that definitely was a little bit of a change. Whether it was for the better or for the worse, I don't know.

**GZ** [00:45:41] Well, it's definitely a very valuable perspective. I think most of the people we might be will be interviewing or have interviewed have lived on campus, so I really appreciate hearing that perspective from you.

**CO** [00:45:54] Thank you.

**GZ** [00:45:57] Do you remember anything about your Core I and Core II classes in the Honors College?

**CO** [00:46:06] I loved them. I remember for one, we had big group that met in the old Harrin Hall back when it was where Department of Philosophy was, and a big lecture hall over there. I had a small group then we would split off into small groups. My small group leader was Dr. David Scottco who was a psychology professor. So half of the time we met in Harrin and half of the time we met over in Mashburn. My first experience in the rat maze that was Mashburn. Met some great friends that I still have to this day, but honestly, the biggest things that I got out of Core I were mostly those big group discussions. Especially the lectures from Norb, some of those early history of philosophy that still comes across in those classes. My Core II class, they did an experiment that was the first year that the search for community[sic]. They divided us into ethical platforms, we had a communist group and we had a socialist group and we had a capitalist group, but I think I ended up with the Communists and we each had to campaign. I think we had just come off of a presidential campaign. So we campaigned for the upperclassmen to vote for which community they felt had the strongest ideological selling points. We had a big campaign season and tried to persuade everybody about the ethical foundations of our particular platforms. And then we had some debates over those things. It was awesome. It was great fun, had a great time doing that. It was really neat to interact with each other and interact with those ideas, really taking on and believing those ideas. We

played the doubting game, the believing game for real that semester in a way that we didn't in really any other time during the program.

**GZ** [00:48:41] Would you say that was like the service project of Core II? Or were you, well, go ahead, sorry.

**CO** [00:48:49] We didn't really have, yeah, we didn't do anything out in the community quite like they do today.

**GZ** [00:48:57] So the way they split you up, were these like your separate small groups that you were in with the small leader? Okay, gotcha. Do you remember who your small group leader was?

**CO** [00:49:10] My small group leader was Dr. Margaret Morgan, another English professor. Again, she was the one who recommended me to tutor in the writing center on campus, and I maintained a strong relationship with her even after I got that. She just retired from UCA, probably 10 years ago. She was the director of the Center for Teaching Excellence on campus when I started becoming a faculty member and so maintained a really strong relationship with her as peer rather than teacher/student.

**GZ** [00:49:48] Were there any other professors that you had a personal connection with that you didn't talk about before?

**CO** [00:49:55] Definitely the English professors, Dr. Shoemaker, who came in and taught really strong components in our Core III and Core IV classes really loved, especially Native American, mythology and a perspective that he brought that was really, really strong. Patricia McGrath, again, another English professor who was fantastic. I loved my time learning, just soaking her up.

**GZ** [00:50:34] What was your thesis?

**CO** [00:50:38] A couple of aborted attempts. Did a junior Oxford seminar one-on-one with Norb, for a while, that ended up not panning out into anything that I really wanted to pursue and write about. In my senior year, I did a tutorial with Jonathan Glenn, who's now a senior administrator of Wingo. I had a really strong experience with him in a medieval English literature class in the English department and touched base with him to be my thesis guide. And I ended up writing a really, really expansive literary based something about Grail mythology and heroes and mythmaking, and brought in some religious perspectives and literary perspectives in. It was all over the place and a giant mess and a great time and a great experience.

**GZ** [00:51:51] Who was your mentor?

**CO** [00:51:54] Jonathan Glenn was my primary reader. Michael Schaefer, I think, was my second reader. Norb also gave some strong input on that, especially on the religious end.

**GZ** [00:52:16] So I think you guys had a challenge week, is that correct? Or would that have been after your time?

**CO** [00:52:24] Challenge weeks were pretty strong before I got there. Challenge weeks became kind of faded, a little bit, during my time there, and then they came on again after my time. They concentrated during my years on weekly high tables. High tables were really strong during my day. Once every couple of weeks, we would get together and just discuss the topic as an Honors community. We would throw ourselves out, we would bring guest lecturers in and stuff. It was really neat. I remember a couple of really strong guest speakers that were brought into campus. I



remember Rick brought in John Densmore, the drummer from the Doors, and he came and did some presentations on campus, I think he was a campus speaker as well. Then had him over to his house and invited a small group of us, especially the music inclined folks, and the program got to hang out and have dinner with him. It was such a cool and such a neat experience, just hanging out at Norb's house and just talking talking shit with some pretty impressive folks. Was an incredible experience I definitely couldn't have gotten anywhere else. My favorite of them, though; a friend of Norb's, I think Norb had met him at his time in Princeton. A writer playwright named Norman Dietz came in and I think he was on campus for about a week, and had another small gathering, small group gathering at Norb's house and really loved sitting down and talking with him about art and about theater and about—man, just some really cool conversations. About where I was going and watch what I want to do with my life and things like that. He was really one of the neatest people I think I've ever personally gotten to come across.

**GZ** [00:54:52] Those are some really, really incredible experiences, I don't think you would get experiences like that out (outside) of the Honors College. Do you agree?

**CO** [00:55:00] Definitely wouldn't have got that as an English major. The really strong support that I got in the Honors college definitely made that possible.

**GZ** [00:55:17] So how did the Honors College impact your resume or any job opportunities that you had after you graduated?

**CO** [00:55:27] Definitely became a talking point, that Honors interdisciplinary studies minor, especially as I started heading into academic careers. It definitely paid off especially as I came back to UCA having had the experiences that I had and having folks who knew what I was worth and I knew my writing. My scholarship definitely paid off in a huge degree. The two things that got

talked about as I was doing job interviews during that time period was the Honors College and the second one was my time in boy scouting. I was an Eagle Scout. Those were the two things on my resume that popped out and that inspired conversation.

**GZ** [00:56:24] Let's see. Would you encourage prospective college students to apply for the Honors College?

**CO** [00:56:31] Oh, of course, that's a foundational experience of my life.

**GZ** [00:56:39] Is there anything that you learn from the Honors college that is or has been applicable to your personal life?

**CO** [00:56:48] The interconnectedness of all branches of knowledge. What I loved about Honors was that literature wasn't divorced from all of the other things that I could have studied. Literature and music and politics and business, all of those things, it's all learning, and when we split it up into all of those different major areas in some sense we do a little bit of a disservice. What Honors did was bring that back together to show and enhance the connections between all of those different areas of knowledge that very often get siloed in other places.

**GZ** [00:57:32] Was there any or were there any particular things that sparked your interest in class or from a reading that you chose to continue pursuing after the Honors program?

**CO** [00:57:45] I had a couple of opportunities to perform. The freshman class back in our day, as we were learning about existentialism, one of the things that we did was we put on a play every year: Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit*. I don't know if they still if they still perform *No Exit* among the freshman class anymore,

**GZ:** I don't think so.

**CO:** but they got several of us together to do it. We auditioned. We tried out, had an upperclassmen who directed the play. So I was the lead during my freshman year and then during my sophomore year, I took on the role of director and I directed the freshman presentation of it and we performed it up in the forum a couple of times for parents and classmates. And it was just a really cool and neat experience. Again, that sort of performance aspect is something that I certainly took into my music, but is also a part of the whole reason why I enjoy teaching the way that I do. Being in front of a class and performing the skill set I got doing things like that are just as valuable as the stuff that I learned in my graduate courses.

**GZ** [00:59:00] Do you feel that the Honors College continues to strive or live up to the standards established by Norb and the first generation of Honors faculty and staff?

**CO** [00:59:11] Yes, I still love going to McAlister and talking with the faculty up there. Some of them are faculty that I knew. They've hired alumni to come work there and then the folks that they've hired in there, the new blood that they've brought, in has done so much to expand that knowledge base that they're working from. Fantastic.

**GZ** [00:59:39] Do you contribute back to the Honors program at all by attending alumni days or donating money?

**CO** [00:59:46] Where I can. I went into education so that I wouldn't have to be burdened with excessive wealth. But definitely share during drives where I can.

**GZ** [01:00:04] And I mean, I kind of already knew the answer to that. I saw you at Founder's Day. I would have stopped the talk but I had to leave early to do another interview.

**CO** [01:00:14] It was a crazy day and there was a lot of rain, so.

**GZ** [01:00:19] Well, Carl, is there anything else you'd like to say before we close it out? Any more comments?

**CO** [01:00:24] I'm sure there are so many more experiences that I haven't even touched on, but, honestly, biggest things that I remember from my time in the program were the personal connections that I made to everybody. Fellow students, not just in my class, but the classes ahead of me. I have great friends who were mentors for me as I was matriculating through the program, and then I hopefully paid some of that forward with the classes that came in under me. So, we really weren't segregated by class. My class interacted and did a lot of stuff with the other classes, the personal connections that I had with the instructors, again, definitely paid off for me as I became peers with them down the road. The connections with the material that we talked about and worked with—the Honors College for me is all about those connections, and those connections have really brightened my life and enhanced my life and broadened my life in ways that I totally can't imagine differently without Honors in my life.

**GZ** [01:01:46] Well, thank you for your time, Carl. This concludes our interview, I'm going to go ahead and stop recording.