

This transcript has been approved by the narrator as of 4/21/22.

SCHEDLER HONORS COLLEGE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Timothy Purkiss Oral History Interview Transcription

Narrator Name: El-Houri, Noor

Interviewer Name: Purkiss, Timothy

Date of Interview: 03/22/2022

Location of Interview: Remote Interview - Zoom Recording

Acronyms:

UCA = University of Central Arkansas

ACT = American College Test

UALR = University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Interview Summary

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Timothy Purkiss, conducted by Noor El-Houri on March 22, 2022. This interview is part of the Schedler Honors College Oral History Project.

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

Speaker 1 [00:00:02] Hello, I am Noor El-Houri with the Schedler Honors College oral history project. Today is March 22, 2022, and I am interviewing Timothy Purkiss. Did I say that correctly?

Speaker 2 You got it right.

Speaker 1 We will be talking about his experiences leading up to and during his time at the Honors College. So would you please go ahead and state your name for me?

Speaker 2 Timothy Purkiss

Speaker 1 All right, welcome. This first set of questions that I am going to ask you today are just going to be to kind of get to know you a little bit better. So I believe I saw your pronouns were he and him correct?

Speaker 2 Correct.

Speaker 1 So where are you from?

Speaker 2 [00:00:45] I was born in Little Rock, so I was born and raised in central Arkansas.

Speaker 1 [00:00:54] Okay, so did you go to the Little Rock School District high schools?

Speaker 2 [00:00:59] I went to Joe T. Robinson, which is part of the Pulaski County Special School District. So, I grew up in the Ferndale kind of area.

Speaker 2 [00:01:11] Right outside the city?

Speaker 1 [00:01:14] So that's more like North Little Rock, PCSSD.

Speaker 2 [00:01:19] It is actually more West Little Rock. It is out past, if the general area of Little Rock. If you go kind of west of that closer to Saline county, so closer to Benton and Bryant, that is the area of where I grew up in.

Speaker 1 [00:01:38] Were you also born in Little Rock?

Speaker 2 [00:01:41] I was, yes. I was born in Little Rock at Doctors Hospital, which I do not think doctors hospital even still exists anymore. I think St. Vincent took over.

Speaker 1 [00:01:51] I know. I think I used to go there.

Speaker 2 [00:01:55] Right there by Park Plaza and University. University Mall does not exist anymore, but it used to be right there where it used to be.

Speaker 1 [00:02:06] Oh yes, I think I know exactly what you are talking about.

Did you like growing up in Little Rock?

Speaker 2 [00:02:13] Yes, I did. The cool thing about where I grew up, I grew up technically in the country, kind of out in the country. So Ferndale, that area, is very rural. I grew up, with lots of land and just kind of went out and rode my bike and had friends. We

would spend the whole day in the woods, that type of thing. But then also, the city was 5 or 10 minutes away. I got the best of both worlds. I really enjoyed that. I liked growing up in Little Rock and being able to do a little bit of both because I still enjoy both. I like to have my quiet time out in the woods, but I also like to go in and have entertainment, and shopping and restaurants and all those good cultural activities too. The high school that I went to was very much that as well. So, Joe T. Robinson was a county school, and we had a lot of students who lived in that area, but it was very diverse. The Chenal area, if you are familiar with it, is a very affluent area, right? So we had very affluent families, but also families from rural areas, which are kind of mixed. But then we also, because of desegregation efforts in Little Rock, they transported, or bused students from Southwest Little Rock up to Joe T. Robertson, which is much more urban, different socio economic background, much more racially diverse and much more black and Hispanic families in that part of Little Rock. It was a very mixed high school. I really enjoyed that, and I thought it was great for growing up.

Speaker 1 [00:04:02] Did it prepare you for UCA? So for instance, a lot of people came from tiny little towns, and when they came to UCA, it was just kind of like this big culture shock. Was it like that for you at all or no?

Speaker 2 [00:04:16] No, I think that is one reason why UCA and the Honors College specifically. Yes, you are right. It was not as hard of an adjustment in terms of meeting different people from lots of different backgrounds from within the state or outside of the state. Different religious perspectives, different racial socioeconomic. I was just used to that. Those were the people I grew up with, right? And I understood they all had very different backgrounds and different beliefs and things like that. But we still played basketball together. We still hung out on the weekends together, went and got movies or, sat in class together, things like that. So, that adjustment, where it was harder. I know, for some other students who came from much more rural towns or much more urban settings. For me, it was not. That was just kind of what I was used to. I could really kind of enjoy those aspects a little bit more, or not have that "get up to speed" kind of time.

Speaker 1 [00:05:23] For sure. So your parents, what were their names?

Speaker 2 [00:05:27] Yes, my mother's name is Enga, Enggano is her maiden name, but Enga Purkiss. She was actually ethnically Chinese, but she was born in Indonesia. She grew up in Surabaya, Indonesia, as well as Bangkok. Thailand is where she went to high school, and then she came here, went for college, actually, she followed her two older brothers who came here for college and she came here for college as well. Yes, so it is funny. It is strange. They are her older brothers. One came to school here to study to be a doctor, and he is retired, a retired physician now, but he started his undergraduate college, was at tall Baptist, and that's where my father went as well. They met there. And then, of course, they became friends. And that is how my mother met my father. My father, his name was David Fergus, and he is deceased. He passed away in 2009, but they were good friends in college, and then he met my mother. Her other brother, Andre, is also deceased. He came to school. He went to school just across the border. He actually went to college in Missouri, and the name escapes me. The exact college was the college, and that's right outside of Branson, Missouri. And he became an engineer. They both were in this area. Then, of course, she came and she was actually going to- She was a freshman at the University of Texas Women's, and she was studying to be a nurse. She did not finish because she married my father, and they decided to settle down and start a family in Little Rock, Arkansas. But yes, that is how she came all the way from Indonesia and Thailand, all the way to Arkansas.

Speaker 1 [00:07:38] That is awesome. That is a crazy story. Your mom, you said she went to nursing school but then did not finish. Was she a stay at home mom and took care of you or did she do something else?

Speaker 2 [00:07:56] Yes, no, exactly. She married my father. It was a short engagement. I think they got married within three months or so. They got married right around Christmas, that type of thing. So all the wedding pictures and videos have poinsettias everywhere, that kind of thing in the church. I am actually the youngest of three. She decided to be a stay at home mom, so she was. She was a stay at home mom while my father finished his degree, which his degree was actually- He went to seminary and became a Methodist preacher and he was a Methodist minister for a while. He actually did that, but stopped before I was born. So my brother was born. My mother stayed home with him. His name is Jonathan. Then my older sister, Kimberly, is the middle child, and I was born last. So I am one of three children, but she stayed home all the way until I went to kindergarten, till I started in school, and then she started working-She actually worked for Wal-Mart for over twenty five years and retired from Wal-Mart about three or four years ago. My father, he was a Methodist minister for several years. But then by the time I was born and old enough to remember, at least , he had left the ministry and started working in a local kind of industry. He worked for several different companies doing financial type things. , helping them with payroll and account receivable, that type of thing, for a few manufacturing companies.

Speaker 1 [00:09:45] So your mom was Chinese, went to Indonesia and then went to high school in Thailand, and your father was just a white man from Little Rock?

Speaker 2 [00:09:57] Just a white guy from Little Rock, exactly. He grew up in Southwest Little Rock, so he grew up in the Asher university area, and just met her in college. Now, I guess the other part of that should say for sure for my mother's story is that the reason why she left Indonesia and went to Thailand for high school, back when they left. So kind of back in the- and I won't get too much into the history and I might get dates wrong and things like that. So I do not want to I do not want to go too far deeply, but around that time there was a change of leadership in Indonesia. There was a military coup, and at that time, in Indonesia, those who were ethnically Indonesian, there was pushback against those who were ethnically Chinese in the country. So, they viewed them, it is a very common story that you hear in a lot of countries at that time, they saw those who were ethnically Chinese had much more of the wealth in the country. There was a lot of pushback. There was a lot of discrimination and taking of property and money, and it was not quite safe for ethnically Chinese families. While her last name is Enggano, her true last name is Kwee. That is their Chinese last name. They change their last name to Enggano, which is an Indonesian last name, to try to hide their ethnicity. But at one point, her father, my opa is what we call him, decided it was just no longer safe enough, and they liquidated all their assets, took it, took everything they could carry, and left and went to Thailand, where they felt it was safer to live. That is what moved them to Thailand, and then eventually to the United States.

Speaker 1 [00:11:53] Wow!
So how did your parents influence your education? Or you and your siblings' education?

Speaker 2 [00:12:01] Yes, a lot. My parents- they were very serious about education for all three of us. I should say that all three of us are graduates of the Honors College of UCA, so, yes, my brother graduated, my sister, and then I followed in their footsteps. All three of

us matriculated through the Honors College, but they were very serious about it. They always encouraged us to spend a lot of time in our studies, do a lot of extracurriculars to the point where, when we were in high school, we all had lots of friends who worked and had extra jobs to pay for cars and things like that. They sat each of us down and told us, "We do not need to work to afford a car or gas. We want you to spend your time on your studies, on your academics. So we will pay for those things as long as you spend the time doing your academics and your extracurriculars." That was the deal. So, "if you do extracurriculars and do what we do in school, then we will pay for those things. You do not have to work. So that way, you do not have to feel like you are distracted." They were very serious about that. They wanted us to excel and be good in academics. They want us to get scholarships and go to a good college. Get it, get an education. I think for my mother, it was really important for her because she did not finish college, she really wanted us to go to college and finish it. Of course, for my father, he finished it. I think we got to see both of their points, right? So he understood the value, though he enjoyed his time in college. My mother always kind of regretted not finishing it, I think. She wanted to make sure we had every opportunity to do so.

Speaker 1 [00:13:48] Wow, reminds me of my parents. That is basically kind of the same dynamic when it comes to education. That is funny.

So, what was your dream job growing up?

Speaker 2 [00:14:02] [laughs] Actually, someone at work asked me this not too long ago because we are working on some kind of college- some kind of program for students here. We were talking about questions we might ask them. We were taking turns kind of asking each other that question, so I actually had to think about it and what comes to mind. Actually, it is kind of funny, but it is also true. My dream job when I was a little kid was a candy taster. I really thought that was- of course, that's the job you always joke about when you are a kid, but it was not so much tasting the candy it was when I was a kid, I was wanting to think about what it took to make the candy and taste it and get it sold and things like that, not to pretend and play that with kids around the neighborhood, which is kind of funny because that is a lot of what I do right now. My current role is a lot of process and procedure and kind of creating things from scratch programs and activities and things like that. It is kind of funny how those things come full circle, but when I got older and realized that candy tasting was not a great career for me to go into, I really wanted to be- it changed a lot, I'll be quite honest, I have always been really interested in lots of different things, psychology, to law, to public administration, to college administration, to counseling. So, I have kind of run the full gamut, I should say, in terms of the different careers that I thought about and was interested in growing up. I am very curious. I have always been a very curious person. My parents really instilled that in me, to be curious. It was part of them, encouraging us to really be into academics was to ask questions and explore. The best way I can answer that is that I never really settled on one dream job. It was always whatever interested me at the time.

Speaker 1 [00:16:13] You feel like your parents- you said that they made you very curious, did that almost prepare you for the Honors College?

Speaker 2 [00:16:22] Definitely. My father would ask us questions all the time. And I mean, all the time. I mean, it used to drive me crazy when I was a kid, and now I really understand how valuable that was. But we will be driving in the car, and he would ask me questions about billboards, right? I mean, just whatever he could, ? How do you think they got that billboard up there? How do you think that they do that? Why? Why would they put

that up there on a billboard, right? Why? Why? Why would they think that people would care to read that? So just strange things like that, right? All the time, we would be watching a TV show and he would start asking questions about, well, why do you think they would really shoot that way? Or why do you think that is funny? It was always forcing us to critically think through almost everything. Which you are right, it really did. It set us up perfectly for the types of exercises and discussions that we had and Honors all the time, right, which you are having now to write where you are thinking critically about everything, right? And then kind of working through those thoughts and ideas and trying to put yourself in someone else's shoes, right? To really think through something that is difficult. So yes, it prepared me tremendously for those discussions and I felt at home in those discussions, which is one reason why I think I was so comfortable moving into the Honors College for two reasons. I mean, obviously, I had some experience from my brother and sister who had finished the Honors College by the time I started. So also, I had learned a lot from them. But yes, a lot of those conversations that some of my classmates were really nervous about having, right? Because I remember classmates and quarter one being really nervous, like, "Oh, I hope they do not call on me and ask me to dissect this passage or or when I think about this", and I'm like, "Why not?", that is at home for me, right? That is what I do. That is what I did at the dinner table or in the car with my father all the time. I was very comfortable doing that. It felt like home.

Speaker 1 [00:18:38] That's awesome. So you said your brother and sister, I know, graduated before you got there. Did you have a chance to visit the campus before you joined the college?

Speaker 2 [00:18:49] Yes, a lot formally and informally, but mostly informally. So yes, I would. Every weekend I came and stayed with my brother or sister while they were in college and they were in college about the same time. They are closer. They are only two years apart. They were in college together, whereas I am four years away from my sister. She was already in grad school by the time I started undergrad, but yes, every weekend I would come and stay at my brother's apartment, or I would come and hang out with my sister, , that kind of thing. And they were taking me around campus. I would meet their friends. Sometimes we would go to-if there was an Honors activity going on that I could go to with them, they would take me with them. That kind of thing.

Speaker 1 [00:19:31] You were exposed to the Honors life before Honors?

Speaker 2 [00:19:36] Exactly. Yes, I mean, I was very familiar with it. , at least the more informal activities, I guess. I certainly did not go to class with them or anything like that, but I was around. I had been to the forum and hung out there with my sister, and she had walked through the halls with me, that kind of thing. It was not a new place to me, I guess. I should say when I first arrived.

Speaker 1 [00:20:05] So, did you already have it set that you wanted to attend the Honors College when your brother and sister went?

Speaker 2 [00:20:13] Actually, , so yes, I am the youngest. There are lots of things where I thought that I wanted to do something different because I wanted to just be different than my brother and sister, right to try to "forge my own path" or whatever you want to call it. Yes, for a while when I first started thinking about college, I really thought I wanted to go somewhere else, like out of state. I really wanted to go to California for college, and I applied to several schools out west. I applied to Memphis. I thought, well, maybe , that is close enough that it is another state, but it is close enough that I could drive it. I could go to

Memphis, and I had a few programs I thought I was interested in. Same thing in California. I had some friends that were going to California for college, they kind of got me interested in that. I had never been to California, to be completely honest. I was going to do something that my friends had talked me into.

Speaker 1 It sounded nice. [laughs]

Speaker 2 Exactly, it sounded cool when I was in high school. I did not actually think through how much it would cost and will take for me to get out there, when it came down to it, my mother finally sat me down and was like, "Look, we have got to talk about it and make a decision. Here are the schools you have been accepted to. The Honors College being one of them, and then here is what it is going to cost, and here is what you are going to have to do to really get there and make it work." When we started looking at that, I was like, "yes, what? It makes a lot more sense." I can get a good education. I know that the Honors College is going to give me what I need, and I know that and I am comfortable with it. So, it really made a lot more sense for me to stay here. I am so glad I made that decision because, to be honest, I do not think I would have excelled or done as well that far away because like I said, I had a lot of things that I did not have to work through and not as many obstacles when I came to the Honors College. I could just really get into the learning and the activities. You do not have to worry about culture shock, or trying to figure out where I am going to live and where I am going to eat and all those types of things. Taking those things out of the equation, I was really able to kind of get right into the academics with the Honors College. I am really glad I made that decision. But at first, no, I thought that I was going to try to rebel in a way and go do something that's completely different.

Speaker 1 [00:22:46] So how was your experience different-your approach? How was your impression of it as like the younger brother coming just to visit versus the Honors College student?

Speaker 2 [00:23:00] Yes, that is a good question. I mean, what I got to see was a lot of the more fun and optional stuff. Certainly, the part that I had to adjust to was the work, and really the writing. And I think that a lot of - I heard this from a lot of classmates and I hear this from a lot of current Honors students as well that, you have really got to be able to write and communicate. Yes, you write a lot. I had no way of preparing for that, right? Those are the things that I did not pay attention to. I should have, for my brother and sister, I would see them writing and working on stuff. I did not pay attention to it, right? That was the biggest adjustment for me and also not only just the level of writing and the expectation of the work involved, but the critical nature of writing. Being able to accept criticism and to realize that, "yes, I was the best writer at my high school. I was not the best writer in the Honors College", right? I had work to do and things I needed to improve upon. That was a big adjustment, accepting criticism and learning to grow from that. But again, I am so glad that I had people like Alison Wallace, who I remember the first paper that I wrote for Alison-I do not know if I have ever seen more red on a paper, and it was all constructive. I mean, it was all good stuff. It was not her just being, marking 30 things or writing notes just to do it. They were all really good. It was really good feedback, and I learned so much from that. But that was probably the hardest adjustment, but also the place that I grew the most during Honors.

Speaker 1 [00:24:51] So did you stay on campus during your time with Honors College?

Speaker 2 [00:24:56] I did. Yes, I stayed on campus all four years, but I lived in three different halls. When I started, freshmen lived in Baridon, I lived in Baridon and New Hall my freshman year. My sophomore year, I lived in Short Denny. And then my junior year is when-I do not think it is New Hall anymore. Is it Farris Hall now?

Speaker 1 [00:25:23] Well, there is still New Hall. We have both. Farris is the Honors housing, and New Hall can be Honor's housing or anyone else.

Speaker 2 [00:25:33] Gotcha. Okay, so my junior year is when New and Farris opened, it was the first year they could be used. We were the first cohort that moved into, I lived in New Hall. Okay, I think when I moved in, I think it was all Honors housing. But I may be wrong though, but I lived in New Hall, my junior and senior year.

Speaker 1 [00:25:56] Okay, so you were there when Farris was first built?

Speaker 2 Yes.

Speaker 1 Do you remember what year that was?

Speaker 2 [00:26:04] I have got to. So let's see. I graduated in 2008, so my junior year would have been 2007 or 2006. So, yes, around 2006, 2007. I remember moving into it and it was brand new, so it was really cool and I got really lucky. I do not know if I was lucky or because we were juniors or whatever, but we got one of the corner rooms, right that has the really cool windows look out. That was really cool, too. We spent a lot-In fact, I should say, while I loved my time with Honors faculty and have a lot of good memories, my best memories were with my roommates, who I kind of stuck with all through Honors.

Speaker 1 [00:26:55] I was going to ask about that. How was your social life? Were you close to a lot of the people in the Honors College?

Speaker 2 [00:27:04] Yes, I was extremely close to my roommates and suitemates. And of course, it did change a little bit, as . I mean, as , not everyone sticks with Honors, so it changed a little bit. Two of my freshman suitemates, I do not think that they matriculated after sophomore year. I think that they left Honors after that, but my roommate, freshman year, he is from Conway. I met him, didn't know him before, moving in, that kind of thing. His name was Joseph King. And we are still close friends, even though he lives way across the country. We still text and talk all the time, and same thing with my other suitemates. I think one lives in Dallas, one lives in the Benton area, that kind of thing. We all kind of still stay in touch, but we were extremely close. We lived with each other every year and spent a lot of time together. But then of course, yes, I mean, we had other friends, outside of our roommates that were in Honors and took classes together and we did things together as well. We got involved every Wednesday night, quarter night at the local Conway bowling alley, all those good things. We had lots of halo tournaments down the hall and would connect all of our Xboxes with those huge cords and things like that and we would have poker nights and things like that. Those are really fond memories. So yes, I did spend a lot of time-and of course, I had friends who were not in Honors too, but a lot of our friend groups were in Honors.

Speaker 1 [00:28:49] So how did the cohort communicate as a whole? Because I know today, we have technology, we have Group Me and other apps that we use, but how did you guys communicate as a class?

Speaker 2 [00:29:03] Yes, that's a good question. Some of us-I didn't, others did. I know a lot of the Honors cohort during my years, they would use-there was a chat group and it was kind of a big deal at the time. I think Phill Frana, which I'm not sure if he is in Honors anymore, he kind of led and kind of organized it. Gosh, the name escapes me now. But there is even a kind of a junior or senior seminar that he taught that talked a lot about this online community for the Honors College, and kind of really talking about how to create it and how to maintain it had a lot of-you can sign up to be a moderator in this online community to help kind of make sure the values and their discussions. I think even some other courses were using it at times where you could kind of have assignments posted there, readings posted there, and we could kind of put in discussions and chat ideas and things like that. there was a lot of communication there, but I wasn't as active in that. Not everyone was. For me, it was a lot of old school methods. We would check the bulletin board in the forum and things like that to kind of figure out what was going on or a lot of word of mouth in class. Certainly a lot of email, right? We had a lot of email things that would go out and pay attention that way. But for me, at least, it was a lot of word of mouth from classmates during class and then kind of checking the bulletin board.

Speaker 1 [00:30:43] Interesting. So political science was your major, correct?

Speaker 2 That is right.

Speaker 1 What was your influence towards that major?

Speaker 2 [00:30:53] Yes, that's an interesting thing too, I came into UCA thinking that I wanted to do psychology. I took some psychology courses my freshman year and just didn't really- I enjoyed the classes, but it didn't really stick with me. I guess the best way I put it, it didn't really strike a nerve. I kind of floundered for a little bit and just kind of took some other courses to kind of get interested in things. Of course, I took a political science course as part of the genetic requirement and really enjoyed it, and I really connected with the faculty person who taught it. Then also in some of my Honors courses, of course, none of them were particularly, especially freshmen and sophomores seminars. They were not particularly on politics, but politics often came up in discussions. I started to kind of just get more interested and had never really thought about it, other than being exposed in light to civics in high school, which we didn't really go in-depth right with with politics in that it was a very big overview. I just started taking more politics courses because I found them interesting and I liked the faculty and I liked the discussions and the coursework. And before I knew it, I was a politics major to be quite honest, and I really got into it. I wasn't sure if I wanted to for a while. I thought about going into law because, of course, a lot of politics majors did. I thought about that, but then I also thought about public administration, and that is actually where I ended up landing. I thought I would do public administration after I graduated. Long story short, I married my wife right after we graduated. She also graduated from UCA. She is a physical therapist, and she was going into grad school for physical therapy at UCA, which requires a lot of time. it is a big time commitment for that kind of thing. I decided to work while she was in graduate school and started just kind of working. And actually, library administration is where I started after college and then got into higher ed administration and then just kind of have been here ever since. I fell into politics, fell into library administration and fell in the college administration just as I went on. They were not necessarily planned. They just kind of happened, is the best way to put it.

Speaker 1 [00:33:29] That's interesting. So did you have any other major or minor besides political science and the interdisciplinary minor?

Speaker 2 [00:33:38] Yes, no others.

Speaker 1 [00:33:43] Okay. So was there anything that caught your interest throughout college where you were like, “Maybe I want to do something else”, or political science was it for you?

Speaker 2 [00:33:54] Yes, once I kind of got past my first semester, freshman year, and I should be completely honest too, looking back on it, the politics or the psychology class I took was an eight o'clock class on Tuesday, Thursday, right? So as an eight to nine thirty, my first semester on campus, maybe I did not give it a fair shot, but that is how life happens as well, right? But right after that, once I fell into politics, that was really it. I did not really switch back and forth or think about anything else.

Speaker 1 [00:34:30] Everything happens for a reason.

Speaker 2 [00:34:33] That is right.

Speaker 1 [00:34:34] So were you involved in any extracurriculars?

Speaker 2 [00:34:38] Not really, I thought about that, and that is one regret I have. I guess, well while in my undergrad, that is something I tell-now that I work at Hendrix, I tell lots of students, and I encourage them to go and actually do more extracurriculars because that's not something I actually took advantage of during my undergrad. I really spent most of my time focusing on my coursework. I did a lot- I graduated summa cum laude. I really focused and wanted to excel in my coursework. I spent a lot of time there. And then, of course, I spent a lot of time with my friends and doing social things, that type of thing and then kind of doing the extra Honors activities: going to forums and seminars and things like that. But I just never got connected, I guess, with any extracurriculars. The closest I came to-I did join the Political Science Honors Society, and there were some meetings and volunteer opportunities that I did through them, but that was really about it. I just never really got connected.

Speaker 1 [00:35:47] I get that, I mean, things get busy, and then time flies. So do you remember your freshman retreat?

Speaker 2 [00:35:55] Yes, unfortunately I didn't-I didn't get to go, I missed it. That is another big regret I had, but I ended up having-so I played basketball growing up, and one thing that I always did is that I did a lot of coaching for like smaller kids who were playing basketball. It was like peewee basketball. Then I also did a lot of basketball tournaments and things like that. I kept doing it even in college. I ended up having a basketball tournament that I already committed to and I really didn't want to miss. I talked about it with the administrators and made sure it was okay, and there were some other things that I did. So there were some extra readings. It was not the same. I'll be quite honest, I really wish-looking back, I really wish I could have missed that basketball tournament and I should have missed it and should have gone to the retreat and experienced it. I do regret that. But no, unfortunately I missed it.

Speaker 1 [00:36:58] Do you know where they went for the retreat? I have heard in the past, they took them to the Heifer Ranch, but I know for our retreat, we went to the 4H center.

Speaker 2 [00:37:13] Yes, I want to say that ours was the Heifer Ranch. I think it was a bit of a split. I think you could either go to the Heifer Ranch, or I think that there was something at the Rockefeller Center as well on Petit Jean. It is either one, or the other, or both. But I know for a fact, I do not think it was the 4-H, and I think it is when the Heifer Ranch still kind of had the global village and where you could go and stay there.

Speaker 1 [00:37:41] So how did the Schedler Honors College program change your worldly perspective, if at all?

Speaker 2 [00:37:49] Yes, no, I mean, definitely a lot, much more so than I would have thought. I think being a traditional college student, not in the Honors College, right? Because, again, I had classmates who were from-who were international students. We actually had a couple of international students, I think, in my cohort. It was just again, I hate to keep using the term, it was just normalized, we were around people from so many different places all the time. Then not only were we around them, but then we were actually actively having discussions with them in class about global issues. When, as a traditional college student, I may have sat in the cafeteria with international students and talked about a TV show, or sports, or something, but I would not have sat in the classroom with them and talked about a global issue that actually touched upon the country where they lived, or they actually had firsthand experience, or a firsthand impact on them or their family. The Honors College, I think, gave us that opportunity and gave us those connections and ways to see it through someone else's eyes who really were actually impacted by it or had been there. Of course, I also got that in my politics classes as well. I'll be honest about that, it was not just Honors, it was politics as well, but I think that those built upon each other. So, by having those conversations in Honors, I was able to have better conversations in our politics courses about those things as well. A good example is in one of my politics courses, and I am still good friends with him today. We had a good classmate who was from the Middle East and of course, at that time, and still to this day, there is conflict in the Middle East. There were obviously a lot of conversations and topics around that subject, and we got to hear his perspective, of course, how it affected him and his family in terms of those conflicts and personally. Now his current role is that he's an advocate for an offshore nonprofit that works in that area. He travels the country, travels the globe, advocating for that nonprofit and in that conflict. While he was not in Honors, my discussions and Honors, I think, helped me better understand and think about the issues at play and how they affected him and things like that. Honors, I have no doubt that it helped me have a better perspective globally and culturally to this day.

Speaker 1 [00:40:52] How did you feel as a minority in the Honors College and also did you have a lot of friends who are also minorities, or how diverse was it when you went there?

Speaker 2 [00:41:03] Yes, now that is a good question, too. I actually might-So my roommate freshman year, Joe King, he's black. My sweet mate Joe Fang, he's Taiwanese. Right off the bat, I was in-every day, every night, I was in a room with other minorities. It was immediate-It was instantly okay to be a minority. I was very lucky and I am very appreciative of that.

Speaker 1 Did you all find each other and stick together, or?

Speaker 2 It was completely random. I did not know them. Whoever did the housing assignments, which I assumed it was Glenda, Glenda Middleton. She was the admin when I was there and we just happened to be roomed together. I do not know. It was really

random, but I am so thankful that we did. And there were so many other minorities. My high school in comparison, while it was a very diverse high school, it was very diverse in terms of white, black and Hispanic, not so much Asian. I was one of two Asian kids in the school.

Speaker 1 Two?!

Speaker 2 Yes, one of two. I think the year after I graduated, I think there was one-it is kind of funny. It is a very racially diverse school, but not in terms of all ethnicities, I guess, is the best way to put it. When I went to the Honors College, all of a sudden I got to interact with other Asian students, and there were many other Asian students in my Honors cohort. It was cool because I got to talk about things and do things and go and eat foods that normally I only did in my household with my mother and my brother and sister, and I could have those experiences with peers, whereas before I didn't really have that opportunity. But then I also got to learn about other cultures as well. While I am Asian, there were things I did not know about Taiwan and Taiwanese culture. I think I learned about it from Joe. I also learned-I started learning that and or becoming aware of the differences even between different Asian ethnicities and different Asian cultures. In my high school, we were Asian, that was it. And the two of us, it didn't-we didn't get so deep into thinking, well, we are Asian, but which culture? And actually, what is Chinese versus Indonesian and Japanese and Taiwanese and Vietnamese? It was not that stratified. All of a sudden there were these different stratified spheres now, and that was really cool to me, getting to learn about that and kind of understand the differences and the similarities and things like that.

Speaker 1 [00:44:12] Yes, that's awesome!

Do you remember your thesis, I saw that it was, you said conspiracy theories. What exactly was your thesis?

Speaker 2 [00:44:27] Yes, my thesis was on conspiracy theories and the reason-So, again, going back to my father, he liked to ask questions all the time. One thing that he loved was conspiracy theories. From a young age, I sat and watched programs with him, or read, or talked about conspiracy theories all the time, and he was not a crackpot conspiracy theorist or anything like that. There were some that he genuinely believed in, right, and genuinely thought that there was something going on, but most of them, he just really liked the idea of thinking about them. They were really cool thought experiments to him. We would talk about them often, and I think the reason why is because they are just these huge nexuses that you can kind of dive into and never get out of. The conspiracy theory, at its core essence, is just this hole of information you can keep diving into and never come out of because of this endless loop of information. You are always chasing your tail. They never have an end, and that was essentially what my thesis was about, was trying to explain and talk about that, the nature of conspiracy theories. What are they really trying to define? Because it is a really broad definition. People will say anything is a conspiracy, but what really is a conspiracy, right? trying to define that because they are these hard malleable things to define. Then also trying to get at plausibility. So, what makes conspiracy theories sound so plausible to me more than others? I was trying to kind of figure out the qualities. Then also lastly, validity was the term I used. I was trying to figure out-well I think that too often we think that a conspiracy theory can be kind of a derogatory term. You say something, oh, that's just a conspiracy theory. do not believe that, but the truth of it is, there are conspiracy theories that are real, that are valid. It should not be a derogatory term that can be dangerous or, a good example: what's the difference

between the conspiracy that it took to pull off 911, Right? The actual conspiracy for it to happen, but then there are all these other conspiracy theories about 911. About what really happened or what may have happened. How do we separate those two in conversation? Hopefully that makes more sense. But it was all driven.

Speaker 1 [00:47:24] I would like to read that. Actually, that sounds very interesting. I'm always so interested in conspiracy theories. I feel like I am a conspiracy theorist myself, depending on certain ones.

Speaker 2 [00:47:37] Hey, check it out. It is at the library. Feel free to look it up, and go check it out.

Speaker 1 [00:47:42] Do you remember who your adviser was for your thesis?

Speaker 2 [00:47:51] Yes, it was Philip Melton.

Speaker 1 [00:47:55] I have heard a lot of him, I do not think he is here anymore.

Speaker 2 [00:47:57] No, he is not so. So, he passed away. I think 2018, 2019. So a few years ago, but I think he spent some time in the-Oh, I just lost the term for it, but there are certain residence halls on campus that are dedicated to science or math or writing. I forget the name of the program, residential colleges or something like that. I think he had moved over there for a while and was still lecturing at the Honors College. He was somewhat disconnected a little bit. Then he also passed away a few years ago. Philip Melton was my advisor, which was a match made in heaven because I spent a lot of time with Philip, because his academic background was in law. We would often talk about politics and political science and law because that is what my major was, but then he also really enjoyed conspiracy theories as well. His favorite, he was much more, not in terms of conspiracy theories broadly, but he was a huge JFK conspiracy theorist. He read a lot about JFK conspiracy theories, and we would talk for hours in his office about JFK conspiracy theories and going down the rabbit hole essentially off the green knoll. JFK conspiracy theories were actually my father's favorite as well. We had some really good conversations about that. The third thing that connected us too was-so I have a long history with Arkansas Governor's School, or AGS. Actually, I worked there for a long time, as I said when I was in college, but also I ran the program here at Hendricks for several years as well. He was a long time teacher at AGS and also a coordinator for the program, so we had that connection as well.

Speaker 1 [00:50:09] What Honors Professor would you say had the biggest influence on you throughout college?

Speaker 2 [00:50:19] I saw that question and I was thinking, "it is a really tough one to answer", because all of them did, I know that is a terrible answer, but it is also very true because, I do not know if this is true for all students, but it depends on the time, right? I felt like I had the right Honors faculty members at the right time when I needed them. Then my freshman year, I needed someone different than I needed my sophomore year just because of where I was and what I was studying. I guess a good example of that, my Honors core one, I had Donna, Donna Bowman. Although it was only partially because she actually was pregnant. So she actually gave birth during that and during that semester. I think Rick Scott actually finished off my Honors core one, which is actually really interesting to have to start off with Donna and then go to Rick, but, at that time, I actually, during my senior year of high school, I lost my best friend. Suddenly, we were in a car

accident together, he passed away from that car accident, I was in a really interesting place. My freshman year and core one, one of our first writing prompts was talking about something very personal or something that gave you kind of hope. I chose to write about that, about how that tragedy gave hope. I found hope out of that tragedy, and I could not have had a better faculty person at that time than Donna to talk through that situation, because of Donna's background. So her background in theology and spirituality was perfect at that time, and we had some really good conversations about what I wrote about and I needed that at that time. Then fast forward, I talked about Allison. When I was really struggling with my writing and not dealing with criticism well, Allison was the perfect person I needed at that time to really talk through why it was okay to be critical and why it was okay to build it up. Then fast forward, I mean, certainly, Philip Melton was a huge influence for me during my later years because we spent so much time talking about my thesis and he would go down rabbit holes with me about conspiracy theories and politics and really get at that. All of them did. Adam Frank was another really big influence for me. I took him for a nonprofit course, and that has been really important for everything I do now because I do a lot of creating things. That was what that course was about, creating non-profits and trying to find purpose and mission in those, but also just talking about Asian culture and philosophy with Adam as well. They are all great, I guess, is the best way to put it. They all had a big influence on me. It was just at different times, is the best way to put it.

Speaker 1 [00:53:40] Were you there when Norb was there at all?

Speaker 2 [00:53:44] I was, Norb was getting to the end of his teaching career when I was a freshman. I did not get the chance to take him for a core. So he was not teaching any courses or anything like that. He would come and he would lecture during core one, especially. He would come in and do some lectures for the whole group. Of course, I got to experience his undying lecture, where he comes in and says "I'm dying", and talks about-everyone gasps when he comes in and says it. It was very dramatic. I do not know if you have heard about this lecture. It is a very famous lecture. We all sit down and he comes in very serious and somber and looks at all of us and gives us all his stare as he often does and just says, "I'm dying", and just leaves it there. Everyone gasps and is not quite sure what to do, but he does it. So to actually talk about death, we talk about philosophy because we are all dying. That is what he brings it back to. I got to experience that lecture, and I am so glad I did, because that was one of the most impactful lectures I have ever been a part of, and he gave several others-I would say, I think he gave maybe two or three lectures for our core one, but I think that was it. So he was starting to lessen his teaching load.

Speaker 1 have you ever had that one on one interaction with Norb?

Speaker 2 Not while I was in Honors, but afterward I did. I worked at UCA for several years. I worked at UCA from 2012 to about 2015 or so, about three years, and in my role there as a staff member, I had lots of one on ones with Norb. I worked in the library. I ended up working in Torreyson for three years. Norb would come often because the office I worked in would help him get books and papers and for his research and essays and things like that. Norb would just come in, sit down in my office at my corner chair, and we would talk about the latest thing he read, or the essay he was working on. I miss those conversations so much because they were, I'm sorry, I miss him, I guess is the best way to put it. Yes, we would just sit there and talk for an hour. When it is Norb sitting down in your office, you put everything else on hold because it is just he-He commands your attention in a good way. I did get valuable one-on-one with him after Honors, and those were incredible conversations. Hearing him talk about how he was thinking about writing this

essay, but was not quite sure and would want to read a few more things before he really dove into it. He would get really excited about it once he kind of made that decision, "I'm going to write this essay", he got really excited and we would start talking about, "These are the things that I need to read, can you get them?" That was really cool to be a part of that. And then I got to see him afterwards to the full life cycle of his thinking and his writing. It is like he had just finished this essay, he either loved it or hated it, like, "Oh, no, I think it is terrible." He'd be really honest, "I wrote this and it was bad", or, "I wrote this, and I think it is great, do you want to read it?" Of course I want to read it! Those were really cool. But it was actually after Honors that I got those one on ones with Norb.

Speaker 1 [00:57:51] That's awesome.

So if there were students who were thinking about applying to the Honors College, would you encourage them to apply?

Speaker 2 [00:58:02] Oh, yes, definitely. I talk about the Honors College as much as I can. When I worked for Arkansas Governor's School, I had the chance to work with high school students, the best and the brightest in the state. The best, the brightest go to Arkansas Governor's School before their senior year of high school. A lot of those students would ask me questions about the Honors College, but they found out that I was a graduate and I would always give them honest feedback and tell them these are the things that I love, these are the things that were challenging, these are the things you need to be ready for, right? These are the types of students that I was around if you are really interested in it. A lot of those students ended up going to the Honors College. In fact, Patricia, I would often talk with Patricia after every session and be like, "Hey, these are the students that you need to contact. These are students that really need to be in Honors." These are the types of students-there are a lot of similarities between the types of students we wanted at Arkansas Governor's School and Honors College because we wanted students that asked questions, were curious, and who were willing to take ownership of their own academics. There are a lot of similarities there. Emphatically, yes. Anyone who is ever thinking about Honors, I'm more than happy to talk to them and we will sit there and I would probably tell them way too much, not to cut myself off because I can talk about it for four hours.

Speaker 1 [00:59:38] That is awesome. So we are almost out of time, but I want to ask you if you could pinpoint one feeling or some nostalgic feeling that the Honors College gave you or one specific memory that is the most memorable. What would it be?

Speaker 2 [01:00:02] Oh, yes, that is tough because there are so many, but for me, I think the coolest and the one that I had to talk about is, and I do not know, this is still a tradition or not, but at least when I was a student. Leading up to graduation from Honors College, there are several things that Honors College students would do, and one of them was there was a senior banquet. I do not know if there is still one or not. I hope so.

Speaker 1 [01:00:29] I think so. I am not a senior yet, so I do not know.

Speaker 2 [01:00:34] I hope that there is because they are really great. We had a really great senior banquet. I mean, it was a very nice affair. It is a very formal banquet. All the Honors faculty are there, all the honor students are graduating. That type of thing. It was very intimate. It was a good opportunity to sit down and have a good meal and talk, talk to those before graduation. I think it happened kind of the week before graduation. So there are several events. There is a banquet. And then we were defending our thesis that following week and then we graduated and took our picture for the forum and all that good

stuff. In fact, I think we took our picture for the forum right after the banquet ceremony because we were dressed up anyway. The memory that I want to share is that I was asked to speak at the senior banquet for the class, and that was a tremendous honor. And I was really honored to accept that, but I was also incredibly nervous. I was like, "Of course I want to speak!" I was always happy to speak in class. I guess they assumed that, "yeah, Tim always talks in class and has things to say. Yeah, he would love to get up and talk for the class", which I did. But I remember I spent weeks, I mean, as soon as I found out that they wanted me to speak, I was in my room trying to figure out what I was going to say. And I was like, "what am I going to say?" So I felt like I did say something very prophetic. Since I am talking to the Honors faculty in the class. I ended up just throwing it all out and just writing something from the heart, and saying something from the heart and talking about what is next. I ended up talking about- I think the question that I posed was "what is real life?" When you are graduating college, it is time for you to go start your real life, right? That is what I heard so many times from people when I told them I was about to graduate. I actually went around to every Honors instructor and asked them, "what is real life?" I would ask Donna and Norm and Doug and Adam, and they all gave me a different response in terms of, well, what is real life? What does that mean? A big part of my speech actually I shared-I shared a few of their quotes and their comments in terms of what they thought real life was. And then I talked about what I thought real life was, and I included a few jokes that my dad convinced me to include, and luckily, people laughed. I felt good about that, but it was a really cool moment to culminate my Honors career, essentially by addressing that group because it was a group that I still love and I am still honored and treasure that memory. I think I still have that speech somewhere. I think I saved it because it meant a lot to me to get the chance to do that.

Speaker 1 [01:03:51] Do you still keep in touch with any of the Honors faculty?

Speaker 2 [01:03:54] Yes, I do. Actually, I talk with Patricia quite a bit professionally and personally. I still talk to Adam as much as I can, and in fact, I think our daughter's dance is at the same place here in Conway. Donna and I have communicated about a few things. There were a few projects I think that connected to the Arkansas Governor's School, that kind of thing. There have been interesting parallels. I still try to come over and visit whenever I can and walk the hall and go and sit in the forum for

Speaker 1 [01:04:36] A little reminiscing.

Speaker 2 [01:04:37] Exactly, reminisce and see who is around in the office. I can put my head in and say hi and talk about memories, that kind of thing. Of course, life happens and I have little children, which has made it harder to get around as often as I used to. But no, I definitely try to stay connected as much as I can.

Speaker 1 [01:04:57] Well, that's awesome. This has been really fun. And I am so glad you allowed me to interview you today. Hearing about your experience is really interesting. You are the only people that I have interviewed that's not just white. That is good. So I have different perspectives, and I am also Middle Eastern, so I can kind of relate with some of those things, for sure!

Speaker 2 [01:05:28] I hope that the Honors cohort is still fairly diverse.

Speaker 1 [01:05:34] Yes, it is, I know there are a handful of people-I mean, my roommate the first two years, she was Filipino and German, or not German. Somewhere in that area. Yes, but she is half Asian and half from some other foreign country. And I also

lived with two black girls. So it was me, the Asian girl, and two black girls, and I know there is another Asian boy. I know I am the only Middle Eastern, but there are a couple of Asian people, some black people, and that is kind of it.

Speaker 2 [01:06:24] Well, I am glad you have got a very diverse cohort.

Speaker 1 [01:06:29] Oh, yes, my room was full of people that were all minorities. Yes, it was like two black girls, an Asian girl and a Middle Eastern girl. So it was really fun. Very similar, but it was great. Thank you so much for allowing me to interview this morning, Timothy.

Speaker 2 [01:06:47] It has been so great talking with you too, Noor, and I hope we can stay in touch, so do not hesitate to reach out.

Speaker 1 [01:06:54] Yes, of course, of course. And I'll keep you updated on the process of this whole project. All right. Well, you have a wonderful rest of your day.

Speaker 2 [01:07:03] You, too.

Speaker 1 [01:07:04] Bye bye.