

Interview keywords/topics: Ireland and Appalachia, Campus Life

Interviewer: AG

Interviewee: AS

AG (00:00):

<silence> So this is AG, I'm here interviewing AS, and we are in the Belk Library. Uh, this interview is part of an oral history project for WRC 2202, a Spring 2024 course about Ireland and Appalachia. This semester we discussed different ways of using and understanding historical information, and we are creating our own historical documents in this project. [00:00:30] Today is April 18th, and we are here at 1140.

AS (00:40):

<laugh>.

AG (00:41):

AS, what are you proudest so far in your life?

AS (00:47):

Hmm, I, okay, so I'm currently 19 and I feel as though I have a lot left in me, of course. Um, but I think the thing I'm most proud of is, um, I [00:01:00] graduated high school a year early when I was 16, and I went abroad for a year. I'd never been independent by myself in my entire life. And I decided to move to England for a semester and study there, and then volunteer in Hawaii. And during that year there I found myself and I was the happiest I've ever been. And I think that's my proudest accomplishment because it could have been so easy and much more in my comfort zone for me to stay [00:01:30] in my town forever and go to my university in that town forever. But by leaving, I just, I completely found myself and I'm so thankful I did. But that's probably the proudest moment of my life so far.

AG (01:45):

Speaking about England, how did you find England for your time away?

AS (01:50):

So for my gap year, I knew I wanted to do, um, one semester somewhere and one semester somewhere else. And honestly, this is gonna sound really dorky, [00:02:00] but during quarantine, I was just stuck in the house and all I read was Harry Potter books. And while reading them, England sounded so cool. And then I researched England a bit more and I found Oxford England, where, you know, the movies were filmed and where there was a couple good programs and it wasn't far from London. And I ended up finding a really good school for me to attend to get some college credits before coming into university. And, uh, it was an international school. And so that's how I made my decision. [00:02:30] There was a couple places I looked at, but overall I felt like England had the best fit for me. And it was also nice because it was a school that was an international college, so I got to meet a bunch of people of different, like country origin. And then with Hawaii, I just, the program kind of found me, I am big ocean girl, I love the water, I can't stay out of it. And I honestly wanted to do something to help our oceans more. They're very deteriorating [00:03:00] at the moment and I found this program that would allow me to not only be able to volunteer and help local communities within the three islands of Hawaii, but also be able to explore the island and get to see the beautiful nature.

AG (03:16):

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That's amazing that you got to do all of that.

AS (03:18): Thank you.

AG (03:19):

And that you had those experiences that they obviously shaped you and you're so young to have all of that already before you and know all of that about yourself. That's really awesome.

AS (03:29):

[00:03:30] Feels like such a long time ago as well, but it was only two years ago. I was 17 and it was, it was the best year of my life, so such a good year.

AG (03:39):

Awesome. How were you impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and how did it change you?

AS (03:44):

Well, COVID hit when I was a sophomore. Um, I was actually in Greece at the time, which is really funny because I was on a school trip and I got an alert in my phone, like in all capital, like Greek letters like screaming at me and [00:04:00] I had to translate it and it was basically like, don't go outside COVID-19 danger where anyway, had to get back into the country that day. But COVID-19 impacted me in a lot of ways. I would say when I was in high school, I was very shy and like, um, kind of kept to myself type of person. And so when like Covid happened and my school went online, it gave me the chance to have some time for myself. But also [00:04:30] through that, like I decided I wanted to do a gap year. Like, I don't think if covid didn't happen, I'm not sure if I would've done a gap year, honestly, because I was just so sick of being in the house.

AS (04:40):

Um, COVID impacted me in a lot of ways. Um, I've had it over six times now because I have a really weak immune system, and my parents knew that. So I wasn't really allowed to hang out with any of my friends. Um, because at the time there was no vaccines for it. Mm-Hmm. And that was hard. Like as a 15, 16-year-old [00:05:00] Yeah. Being in the house for most of your entire, like high school career, half more than half of it was spent in my house. And while I enjoyed online learning and I found a lot of benefits of being able to have my own time, it was really hard not being able to see all my friends because of the possibility of me getting sick.

AG

Yeah. That changed in a lot of ways.

AG (05:22):

What are the main current events or political topics of your 2024 [00:05:30] that you're interested in? And these could be local, campus, national and or global.

AS (05:37):

I, I'm interested in, I like to see what's going on in other countries, of course. So I'm always interested in what those relationships look like. I would say most currently though would be the 2024 election, uh, of the United States. I, I don't, I'm not super knowledgeable on politics, but [00:06:00] I try to keep up to

date, especially now that this is the first election that I can actually vote in. Uh, 'cause you know, I'm 18 now or you know, I'm a year from 18. So it's definitely, you know, obviously I wanna make a good decision and want to be knowledgeable, my vote. And, um, I feel like the political environment in this time and age is very aggressive on both sides. I, it's a purely a two party system, and because of that, if you [00:06:30] disagree with somebody or if maybe have different values that don't necessarily align with their political beliefs, it can cause a bit of turmoil.

AS (06:38):

And I think that's unfortunate because these politicians aren't meant to be idolized. They're supposed to represent us. And I think kind of going to, you know, war and head to head for them is a little ridiculous. Obviously I want someone to represent our country the best that they can. I think that's what everybody wants. But when it comes to [00:07:00] destroying like relationships and, uh, differing with people and opinions, that is what I disagree with. But I'm a democrat and, um, so obviously my choice is limited to that. Um, but I, it's definitely something I'm trying to keep up with, you know.

AG: Does your family have the same beliefs as you?

AS: They do. Um, which is surprising because my town is, doesn't have the, like, you know, it's, it's mainly a more [00:07:30] conservative town, which there's nothing wrong with that. However, my, uh, family is a bit more progressive, I guess you would say, or more, uh, liberal or more democratic, um, because of the values and stuff like that.

AS (07:44):

Something that's really important to me is a economy and like the current, like state of the world. Like, I think that I, I mean, I want to have a family and I don't want them to grow up in a world that they won't be able to experience the same natural landmarks [00:08:00] that I did. Yeah, exactly. Or the same type of clean oceans. And so, for example, there's something called the Project 2025, uh, that has been released by the Trump administration, which is something I disagree with. And it, it does, focuses on efforts that would highly impact the environment in a very negative way. And so that's the type of stuff I mainly keep up with. I want someone who can represent our country, but at the same time make sure the actual country isn't, you [00:08:30] know, deteriorating as we speak.

AG: Exactly. Now, how do you get your news information about what is happening?

AS (08:37):

So I, I do listen to a couple podcasts when I can. I really like NPR or even the BBC, which I know is a British, uh, bot, uh, like podcast, but it helps me stay up to date on everything. Mm-Hmm. Um, but also I don't, when the news is on I'll watch it, but I'm not particularly the type to turn it on because [00:09:00] my dad's a big news person or my friends. And so I always get the information somehow, but I would prefer to read it from non-biased sources on both ends. Um, so I think NPR is a good, you know, in the middle.

AG (09:15):

Yeah. Now switching gears a little bit to talk about, um, App State and what it means to you. How and why did you choose to attend App State?

AS (09:27):

Mm-Hmm. So I get that question a lot [00:09:30] actually, because majority of this campus or the majority of the students that attend the school are from instate. And I live about 10 hours away. I'm from Oxford, Mississippi. And so, um, it's a bit of a ways away. And I always get the question of how did you choose a school or why did you choose a school? Honestly, I was trying to decide where I wanted to go to school, and I knew my interests laid in sociology and criminology, and there was a really good program here for that [00:10:00] as well as this was like, you know, again, COVID impacted a lot of tours. This was one of the only tours that I could do that they, you know, allowed. And I got to actually see the campus in person. And, um, I also just liked the, overall, I liked the town, but something that mainly drew me in is, like I said, like I studied abroad for a year and through that experience that became something really important to me. And App State has one of the best study abroad programs in the country. That's, and so when I heard that and I liked the campus [00:10:30] and it, I could get home in a day if I really needed to, I decided that this was a good campus for me. And, uh, it has a lot of things that I appreciate, like football and Greek life and all those types of things.

AG (10:41):

How did your family react to you going out of state for college?

AS (10:45):

Well, originally I was thinking about going out of the country, so I think they were much happy that I was only going a couple states away. Um, after my little time in England and Hawaii, I was like, oh, I wanna go to England now, or I wanna go to Scotland, I wanna go to Ireland. And they were like, Hey, [00:11:00] let's maybe tone it down a bit, which to be fair, I understand. Uh, it's college is four years, so, but, um, they were happy for me. They loved the school when they toured it, they really liked it. They also liked, um, like our town is kind of a similar vibe, I guess, of Boone. And they just thought it was a good spot for me. And so they were happy for me to go. They were sad, of course. Like I don't get to see them as much as I would like to. Um, but [00:11:30] they were happy for me. They knew it was a good decision for me to come here.

AG (11:33):

Could you describe the first few weeks of your undergraduate experience and tell me about a transition from home to campus? And you mentioned you're moving from a different state. Mm-Hmm. Um, so how did that, uh, go your first few weeks here?

AS (11:49):

Well, um, I grew up in an SEC town, uh, where Ole Miss is and how the girls decorated their dorms. There was very like, professional, like [00:12:00] I'm talking all the works. Like they would hire people to decorate their dorm. So I, um, brought two car loads full of stuff for my freshman dorm, um, because it's not like I could just go home and get something if I forgot it to be fair. Right, right. Um, and so when I moved in, I think I moved in like August 17th or something like that. And, um, I moved into Raven Rocks and it was such a cool experience. Like I lived in a [00:12:30] dorm before when I was in England. Mm-Hmm. So I, you know, was kind of used to it, but moving in everything and kind of situating it how I like it and being on campus the first couple weeks of undergrad were really interesting.

AS (12:42):

Um, because it just went by so fast. I think I met over 200 people those first couple weeks because I, 'cause I'm a very talkative person and, um, I just would go outside and be like, oh my God, are you a freshman? Awesome. I love your skirt. What's your major? Let's go get coffee. Or [00:13:00] let's go to lunch. Or Oh, can I join you in this game of soccer and or, oh, can I put my hammock next to yours? What are you reading? So I was very, I knew I had a bit of a disadvantage coming in from out of state because I didn't know a single person at the school. And, um, while I liked that, I also knew that I, the first couple weeks really do matter and I wanted to be able to make friends. And during those first couple weeks I did make a lot of friends and I actually met my current roommates that I live with [00:13:30] during the, like, first week of school. So, um, I think it just went by really fast. It was kind of a haze, but it was like a blissful haze. It was a really good time. And I, I, um, I enjoyed meeting all those people and every now and then I'll see someone I talk to for like 10 minutes on the first day and be like, I know your face.

AG ([13:51](#)):

It pays to put yourself out there.

AS ([13:51](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. That's what my mom says.

AG

Yeah. It, it definitely does.

AG ([13:56](#)):

Um, what would you, what kind of advice would you give to [00:14:00] next year's incoming students?

AS ([14:02](#)):

I would say to don't come in with a long list of expectations. Life is very up and down. And I remember coming into my freshman year, I told myself I need to have a 4.0. I need to be part of at least 10 clubs. Um, I need to be an active member on campus and I need to volunteer and I need to find a job and I need to get this and that. And honestly, [00:14:30] you'll find your place on campus, you will find your friends, everything will fall naturally. Try to get yourself out there, but also it's okay to take things a bit slow. My advice to any incoming freshman is always to enjoy your freshman year because it will go by fast. And I know they're probably sick of hearing that, but also specifically Boone related, I give them start looking for housing immediately.

AS ([14:54](#)):

Um, that is my number one recommendation to any freshman. I'm in a sorority, so I have a lot of freshman [00:15:00] friends because I, you know, they're incoming into our sorority. Um, and I, my biggest advice to all of them is, listen, I know it's very early, I know it's like September or October, but you need to start looking for housing now. I know you probably don't even have an idea who your roommates are, but the housing crisis in Boone is so bad. I spent half of my freshman year jumping in between different, like five different housing spots because my, you know, it was just a long, complicated situation. There's not enough housing for the amount of students [00:15:30] that are admitted here. So my number one advice is let things fall into natural place. But also, please, please, please start applying to housing as soon as you can. <laugh>.

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AG (15:40):

That's great advice for Boone.

AS (15:41):

Yeah.

AG (15:42):

Um, what was your, uh, what does the word Appalachian in Appalachian State mean to you right now?

AS (15:50):

Well, when IF when I think of Appalachian, honestly, the first thing I think about is how the very first time I came to North Carolina was for the tour of App State. Mm-Hmm. [00:16:00] And I remember booking a hotel to stay in for a night with my mom and a lady on the phone goes, just a reminder, we don't say, we say it like Appalachia, like throwing an Appalachia.

AG

Oh, she corrected you? Yes. Oh.

AS

She was like, just a reminder, this is how we say it. Like it will offend people. And I was like, okay. And so whenever I say Appalachia, I think of her saying it's pronounced Appalachia. Um, and so that's what I kind of think, I think of, I don't have mountains and I don't have this [00:16:30] beauty where I'm from. It's very flat in Mississippi and we certainly don't have the Blue Ridge Parkway.

AS (16:36):

Um, so whenever I think of Appalachia, I think of the nature and the beauty around it. I think of like the sunrises on the Greenway and the Blue Ridge Parkway and the, you know, how it looks like it's blue even though it's not. And all those pet things that make Appalachia, Appalachia. And then for Appalachian State, I would say, I think whenever [00:17:00] I would think of Appalachian State, I think of, I always think of Appalachian State as a constant summer, even though it gets very cold here, but during the spring and during the fall, it feels like everyone is just outside for the first time. And it's just a community that comes together. And like, if you go out on Sanford right now, there's probably like 40 people. Mm-Hmm, on Sanford playing like hacky sack or like laying out or doing homework or hammocking. [00:17:30] And honestly, I just like the, you know, the bit of the chill community that is here. Because for example, I brought my hammock home for summer and I tried to put it up on campus at Ole Miss and I got told off. So, uh, they don't allow hammocks there, which is they don't allow hammocks. No. Which is crazy because upstate you can put a hammock anywhere. Yeah.

AG (17:49):

So different

AS (17:49):

Here. Yeah. And so I just think it's, it's like a community for students, which I think all colleges should be.

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AG ([17:55](#)):

That's a great way to put Appalachian, a community for students. Mm-Hmm. So overall, I'm [00:18:00] hearing that you've had a very positive experience .

AS ([18:02](#)):

Here. I have and there's definitely some ups and downs with any college experience. Like, I'm pretty sure freshman year I called my mom once or twice and be like, I wanna transfer. It's too cold here, <laugh>, I can't do it. Uh, but I'm really glad I didn't.

AG ([18:19](#)):

So gllad you stayed. Well, that concludes our interview

AS ([18:22](#)):

Thank you so much for having me.

AG ([18:24](#)):

You're welcome. Thanks for being here.