Interview keywords/topics: Ireland and Appalachia, Community

Interviewer: AA
Interviewee: JA

AA (00:00):

<silence> Okay, let's, alright. This interview conducted in Belk Library on November 6th, 2024 as part of an oral history project for WRC 2202 a fall 2024 history course. This semester we discussed different ways of using an understanding historical information and we are creating our own historical documents in this project. I, AA will be interviewing

JA (00:27):

JA.

AA (00:29):

Okay. Can jump right in. Um, where do you consider yourself to be from and what is your hometown like?

JA (00:36):

Alright, so I was born in Hickory, but over the course of several years I moved around from Hendersonville to Brevard and so on. But eventually I ended up in Black Mountain, North Carolina, which is about an hour and a half from here in Boone. And it's, it's a nice little town, Quint little downtown. It's 15 minutes from downtown Asheville. Unfortunately recently it was affected pretty hard by the hurricane and especially the town below at Swannanoa is completely wiped out. Like I went there right after the hurricane and you look on both sides of the highway and everything's just gone. But it's an awesome little community and it's right in the mountains and it, growing up there just helped drive my love for the mountains and passion for the outdoors.

AA (01:23):

So how did growing up there shape you?

JA (01:27):

Growing up there? I, well my parents worked at a foster home. It was like this big home called Black Mountain Home for Children where it was like a group home for foster kids and kids who were looking to be adopted. And I grew up for, from age nine to probably 13 or 14 there. And that place shaped me a lot like getting to know the kids and the community there and it kind of gave me a love for the, the foster system and honestly it's even made me want to adopt a kid because I got to see the experiences of all the kids there and they all want a home and that shaped me a lot. And then Black Mountain itself, it shaped a love for the mountains and the outdoors 'cause there's hiking all around mountains all around and it helped, I mean I also got to know a pretty great community there and everyone supports each other and it's pretty awesome.

AA (02:18):

That's very cool.

JA (02:19):

Yeah.

AA (02:19):

Um, so how were you impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and how did it change you?

JA (02:25):

So I actually had a pretty unique experience during the COVID pandemic. I have three younger siblings and as soon as Covid hit school was pretty much canceled for the foreseeable future, probably the next year or so and it'll be moved to online school. And my parents really didn't want my siblings to have to grow up going to online school for so long 'cause it was hard for them to learn in person in the first place and then knew that learning online would be much harder for them. So we packed up and we bought a house in Ohio where my mom's family is from and we moved up there and stayed up there for a few years after Covid and then for another year or so following that. And while I lived up there I became really close to my mom's side of the family who I had not seen that much 'cause it's like six and a half hours from here.

JA (03:16):

So it was really good and I made a lot of friends up there too. I will say Covid being, even though it was there was in-person school, but it was still partly online. So I will say one thing that happened to me was I became really addicted to technology during that time and I've seen that addiction in my life since then. And also another thing that affected me is that there was a place up there called the Washington County Career Center that I decided to attend and I wouldn't have had this opportunity in Black Mountain 'cause they don't have technical schools there. But I attended it and I studied in digital marketing for a year. And that has, since then I've decided I wanna major in marketing. So moving to Ohio basically shaped my career path. And I also learned to value loved ones more just 'cause so many people died during Covid, especially utterly people. And it's just showed me how grateful I should be to have older family. I have great grandparents up there who are approaching 90. So I've learned to love them more and appreciate them more.

AA (04:26):

That's very cool. Mm-Hmm <affirmative>. Um, so kind of shifting gears a bit, what are the main political events or topics of 2024 that you are interested in?

JA (04:36):

So <laugh> last night was obviously the election, right. And I will say I supported, I supported Harris even though I don't fully support all of her policies, I just felt like another term under Trump wouldn't be the best for this country. So it's kind of unfortunate to see Trump win and um, but my specific values in politics, I, here at App State I've seen a lot of people advocating for women's rights, which is something I haven't really paid much attention to. But since coming here and seeing everyone's support for it, I've grown to appreciate it more and lean towards the democratic values of not like a woman's right to abortion and such. And I feel like that's something that we should have. But it's also been conflicting 'cause I'm a Christian and as a Christian I've been pressured to be pro-life and support abortion bans. But I value a woman's rights more than that.

JA (05:36):

So it's been conflicting. Yeah. Another thing I've really been advocating for is climate change. Especially after the hurricane. I mean that was, and it's crazy 'cause people deny that climate change is a thing. But it's definitely there. I mean science proves it. I mean I feel like we're doing nothing to help with it. Like

we can't stop it but we can curb it. But I feel like especially under Trump, he's probably gonna try to boost the economy and it's just gonna get worse I feel like. And I feel like we need to do more, especially over these next 50 years or so. I mean we're gonna run out of fossil fuels in 50 or so years and we need to conserve our resources and figure out more sustainable ways of getting energy. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, another thing I support is education. Because I'm in college and <laugh> I need all the help I can get through the government. And the last thing I support is conservation of nature because I love the outdoors and I wanna protect them and keep them from getting developed.

AA (06:37):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. Um, I mean obviously those are very big changes that we're gonna have to deal with as the election has just happened. Yeah. You know. Um, so how do you get your news and information about what's going on in the world?

JA (06:56):

Honestly, I don't pay nearly enough attention to the news as I need to. The main ways I find out about stuff is through Instagram and Facebook, which are my main social media feeds. And I mean obviously it's super biased so I try not to take everything too seriously but there's some stuff I see that hits me and I believe it. Uh, I also use Google News on my phone which has a variety of news sources and I usually tend to rely on the bigger ones rather than the smaller ones, although they're still all biased. And the, since I started college I've actually been working with the Appalachian and marketing. So doing the marketing, I see a lot of stories in the Appalachian so I also get some news from there, especially about the college itself and the surrounding area, which is nice.

AA (07:45):

Are there any specific like um, profiles or pages that you look at when you're scrolling on like Instagram or Facebook?

JA (07:53):

Not necessarily, no. I've taken advantage of some of the Appalachian states free newspapers and stuff, especially the New York Times. 'cause they may, they cover all the big political news and stuff.

AA (08:06):

Cool. So, um, switching gears to school, um, what are your opinions or beliefs about going to college generally and the value of having a college education?

JA (08:18):

I mean I feel like college depends on the type of person you are. Like if you're really craving and you're really willing to put in the effort to go to college, you definitely should go to college because the outcome will be worth it because you can get a job you enjoy and you can make money doing it. And I feel like that's great but it honestly just depends on the effort you're gonna put in. Like if you put little to no effort in, you're not gonna get anything outta college and you're gonna have wasted who knows how much money going. But if you put in a ton of effort you can profit off of it and make a fortune coming outta college. And not even just a fortune, but you can be doing the things you enjoy. But other people can, like I know some people, especially going to the trade school in Ohio, they were focused on getting a job right out of high school.

JA (09:05):

So I, I mean which is great because you could do welding, carpentry, et cetera and you can make uh, great money off of it. And there's several people who enjoy doing that. So if you're that type of person then that's great. And it's also, I feel like college is just a great transition into living an individual life instead of just being sent right out of high school, trying to find a home, trying to find a job. Like you go to college, you have a dorm, you get tons of experience and the field you're working in, you have so many resources to help you get through. Mm-Hmm <affirmative>.

AA (09:36):

So is your college experience what you expected or were led to believe in high school?

JA (09:42):

It's actually a lot less stressful than I expected. I mean I'm taking 18 credits this semester so it's pretty busy. But honestly I still have like so much free time to get stuff done, especially homework. Like I have, I mean the latest class I have goes until three. So I have the whole evening to do whatever I want and I can fit several clubs and organizations into the evenings too. And it's honestly, it's been a great experience. Like I've gained a lot more experience than I expected I would gain. 'cause this is only my freshman year and I've only been here for like a semester. But already I've gained so many resources, so much knowledge and different fields. I mean met so many people, connections. I mean it's been a great experience.

AA (10:27):

Do you think that's specific to Appalachian State or do you think that would, if you ended up going somewhere else, that that would also

JA (10:36):

Be the case? I mean I don't know 'cause I mean I feel like Appalachian's great state is great for my personality and I fit in well with everyone here. So I guess it depends on the college. Like I could, I don't know, like I considered gonna community college and I feel like if I went to community college I definitely wouldn't have the same connections that I have here living with other people and I wouldn't have the same resources.

AA (11:05):

So speaking of app, how and why did you decide to come to app?

JA (11:11):

Uh, so it's kind of a long story but originally I had six different schools in mind and the two big ones were Chapel Hill and UNC, chapel Hill and Brevard College. And I visited UNC Chapel Hill and I kind of enjoyed it. I mean not as much as apps day, let's just say that, but I really wanted to go there 'cause I have a great business school and I'm doing marketing so I thought that'd be a great opportunity. But I got rejected unfortunately. And that's simply because I'm an out of state resident and they have a 18% of students who are accepted are mandatory out of state and the other 82% are in state. So it was very competitive and I just wasn't fit for it. So, so then I shifted gear to looking at Brevard College, which I loved 'cause it was in the mountains and for part of my life I grew up in Brevard so I knew some of the community like

my uncle taught at Brevard College and I mean I liked it but they just didn't have a very good business college and it was also extremely expensive being a private college.

JA (12:19):

So I decided against it and after that I had never come to App State until my junior the summer between my junior and senior year of high school. And I didn't really know anything about it. I mean the only connection I had was that my uncle went here but I came here and I just loved it. I mean the business college is super nice and the people were super friendly and there's the great campus culture. And then I went to Western Carolina University, which was my other choice. I was debating between these two and Western just didn't seem to have as great like a community as App State and their business college was also super small. So in the end I decided to attend App State, which is like probably my five outta six option <laugh>. And I mean I just love the mountains so I wanted to stay in the mountains which kind of drove me away from going to NC State or UNC in the first place. And I definitely don't regret coming here. <laugh>.

AA (13:16):

Cool. So how would you describe your community, um, and what is the most important thing that people should know about this community years from now?

JA (13:26):

Uh, I mean I live in the Watauga residential college so it's, they're super community based which is really awesome. And like their seminars are like nine people total and we all talk and the teacher kind of is just there to lead us on and I mean everyone gets together weekly and we eat lunches together on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So I've grown through a really great community in that residential college. But also App State as a whole, there's just a whole ton of community here and there's just so many clubs, there's over 400 clubs and organizations. So no matter what type of person you are, you can most definitely find a fit somewhere in the college and definitely find a place for you to fit in and be part of the community. And I mean the teachers and faculty and staff here are also super supportive of students and they wanna see them succeed. So you know, overall App State is just a great community and I love it.

AA (14:27):

So how do you think um, the Boone community has changed in light of the recent natural disaster and how do you think the community will continue to change based on the events of the hurricane?

JA (14:38):

So as soon as the hurricane hit, I stayed for like three days and I left to go to Black Mountain. But in the days that I was here it was super amazing just to see everyone come together and want to help. Like right after the hurricane came people were willing to go rescue, people were bringing food and water and supplies and just an abundant amount of resources and it was so awesome to see. And moving to Black Mountain, which was affected even more than Boone, it was basically the same thing. Like I worked at a pres, I volunteered at a Presbyterian church and we had rooms just full of everything. Like the courtyard was just filled with water, there was food, there was food everywhere, like so much. There was clothing, there was generators, there was everything you could need. And we had a surplus of everything just 'cause so many people had gathered together and brought the resources everybody needed.

JA (15:32):

And I mean small businesses and restaurants as well, were doing all they could giving out free food supplies, et cetera. You know, it was amazing just to see that. And I mean it was the same here in Boone too. Unfortunately I wasn't here for a lot of it so I didn't get to see it all. But, and I mean after Hurricane Helen, I'm really hoping that the community will continue to grow closer and realize that we all need to rely on each other, especially college students too. And I'm hoping that the community will continue to grow closer and the businesses will continue to collaborate and help each other out and help the community out as well. Yeah.

AA (16:10):

Um, and then finally, why do you think it is important for people of the future to hear about your experiences of the events of 2024?

JA (16:20):

I mean, it's been a super important year. I mean the election, the hurricane, I mean even Covid four years ago or so, I mean just so much important stuff has happened that's gonna shape our future. And I think it's really important to look back in this pivotal point in time and just to see the first person experience of what happened and the perspectives of what happened. And I mean, looking back you can also see how much the community and experience has changed. Like I'm hoping it'll grow closer in the future. And I'm hoping we can look back and see how it all started during the hurricane and yeah.

AA (17:00):

Alright. Thank you.