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David Clark '73-Ann Zachary '93

David Clark

Ann Zachary

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David Clark: So the date is June 2nd, 2018. I'm David Clark. I'm from the class of 1973. And you are ...

Ann Zachary: Ann Zachary. And I represent the class of 1993, and ...

DC: I am here for my 45th reunion. And you are here for your 20-, 20- ...

AZ: Fifth. Exactly.

DC: Tell me, Ann why did you decide to come to Connecticut College.

AZ: Bottom line is I thought it was the best school that I was accepted into, but, you know, a kind of a more interesting backstory to that is how I heard about Conn in the first place, which was- I'm from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania originally, and summer before senior year on a dr- road trip to Cape Cod we stopped at Mystic for overnight at the Inn at Mystic, and my mother said, "Oh, Connecticut College is right by here." And I said, what everybody says when they first hear the name Connecticut "UConn?" and she said, "No, Connecticut College. It used to be Connecticut College for Women, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Let's go check it out." And I said, "No." She's like, "Oh, come on. Let's do this." And I don't know why I ended up getting in the car and she said, "You know," no, sorry. I said in my, I need to start again. I'm sorry.

DC: That's fine.

AZ: I said, "Mom, I've never heard of this place. I'm not interested in this place. There's no reason for us to go here." And that's in my head when in my head I said, "I'm going to end up going here. I know it." It was a good decision from the start. People have asked me, friends from my class who said, "If you had to do your college experience again, would you choose Conn?" And I said, "Yes," without hesitation. I might do some academic studies a little bit differently, but I think this would be the place to pursue the things I'm interested in no matter what.

DC: Did you have other colleges that you were interested in, but you picked Conn over that?

AZ: It- the bottom two were, the bottom-, the last two were Conn and Dickinson in central Pennsylvania.

DC: Sure.

AZ: Which, you know, they're- they're into very similar and at the time they both had yellow admissions buildings, so that was really very interesting. One of the biggest differences is that Dickinson had a Greek system that Conn doesn't. It's a very open Greek system though, as

well, sororities ... they did not have houses. They lived in dorms and all fraternity parties were open to everyone. I didn't really care if there was a Greek system on campus or not.

DC: Okay. What, what, if anything, surprised you about the college during your time here?

AZ: Well, the first thing that surprised me was how kind of isolated, it was, because you know, Pittsburgh is not necessarily considered a major city of the country, but it's a city nonetheless and I- that's the kind of life I was used to. And you know, here it's very quiet. I, you know, said, "Oh my God, there are no buildings around." You know what you know, and what am I going to do? And Williams Street was very dark. I was used to much brighter street lights. But then every time I said, "Williams Street is very dark," I had friends that said, "Really?" because they were from smaller communities and so, you know, I guess the feeling of isolation, in a way, was probably the most surprising thing, but I- I got over it. I don't want to say I got used to it. I want to say I got over it, definitely. There's a difference, yeah.

DC: Okay. Whereabouts on campus did you live and what were your residential experiences and what was your house community like?

AZ: I had a- had a very bad start, tell you the truth. So, I was in a quad in JA and you know, three of us got along fine. Three of them got along fine. But then one of- then two of us, you know, did not go get along at all. I ended up living there for, you know, two months. I knew pretty quickly this was not going to work out. And you know, my house fellow and you know- you know, resident director of residential life were saying, you know, "Oh yeah, you've got to try to work it out. You need to communicate better, blah, blah, blah." And eventually just, no, this is not going to happen. So I moved to Branford, you know, with another roommate. I think my favorite dorm was Smith, where I lived sophomore year, great view. Smith 405. I studied away, studied in France for the first- for the first semester, junior year. Came back in, lived in Larrabee, which was the quiet dorm at the time. The- it was the first year. It was the quiet dorm. It's a very difficult transition. To go from a party dorm to a quiet dorm, because you know, even if you have people who want to be quiet in there, the-, excuse me, the dorm takes on a life of itself.

DC: True.

AZ: You know, the dorm takes on a character of itself and it's, you know, going to take many, many years to, you know, I guess to-, you know, transition into, you know, its new role, I suppose. And then, in senior year I lived in Windham, which that year only was the quiet dorm and that was because there were renovations going on at Cro. And yeah, that was very hard. That was very hard not having Cro senior year, because that was the year it was renovated. I-, I was always at Cro, you know, loved it. That's where I would study, you know, hang out there a lot, so it was difficult not to have that. And I think with the Cro renovations and something going on in KB, I don't remember exactly what, but they said Larrabee will not be quiet, not because of students, but because of other factors. So they moved the quiet dorm to Windham because Windham was a big dorm. It was isolated. It had people who, you know, definitely wanted the quiet, but they had the people apply for the quiet dorm before they said it's going to be Windham, because at the time, Windham was the most desirable. Yeah, that's the one people wanted the most. So they said, we-, no, we want to get this

population in here, but we're not going to, you know, we're going to see who really wants a quiet dorm and who just wants Windham.

DC: Tell me more about your time in France. What did you study? Where did you go?

AZ: I went to, Aix-en-Provence in the south of France, which was, I don't want to say exactly a mistake, but I was kind of encouraged to go there by one of the deans at the time, because I was told it is a smaller community. It's a smaller city. And so Paris is just full of Americans and all you'll pretty much end up doing is speaking Spanish. Spanish, oh my God, I'm a Spanish teacher as well as French, so I think that's why that's lived in there. Thank you. But I found the opposite to be true because I had a friend in France in Paris who had been an au pair for my aunt. And every time I went to visit her, we'd go out with all kinds of French friends and I and her family and I actually did end up speaking more French socially there than I did in Aix in the South. And- but that- but you know, I learned lessons from that, learned lessons from coming to Conn and you know, from my study away that, you know, when I decide to, you know, if I ever decide to go again, I need to go to a major city. Yeah. Yeah.

DC: Yeah, what did you study and do you have memories or classes or professors that stand out in your mind?

AZ: Um, clearly studied French and I also studied history, concentrated in European history. I did- I did a senior thesis on syphilis in Europe during the Renaissance era, because it was at the height of the AIDS crisis and I, you know, kind of wanted to make an impact there, wanted to make a difference. Say, you know, historically have people with sexually transmitted diseases been treated as pariahs in society, you know, how long has this trend been going on? So that was very, so that was very important to me. As far as professors go, I had two classes with then President Claire Gaudiani, Faces of Love in French literature was freshman year and Literature and Science in the 16th Century was junior year. Both classes were held at her home, in her dining room, you know, she always gave us coffee in the morning. I was not a coffee drinker, but I'm at the house of the president of the college. I'm going to accept her coffee.

DC: Right. Made sense.

AZ: Yes. And thank you and I- I did actually really enjoy the course, especially the courses I should say, but definitely freshman- my freshman year course especially, I thought. I like the works that we read. I thought she was a great teacher. Made friends from there and it was fun to have, you know, her cat jumping up on the table in the middle of- in the middle of class, but also, you know, and of course Claire did not want the cat in the room while the, you know, class was going on. So, eventually, if the cat was in the room, we learned not to say anything and we would just be taking notes with one hand and petting the cat who was on our lap with the other just, uh, surreptitiously.

DC: Le chat ...

AZ: Ooui exactement. Vouz parlez français?

DC: Oui, bien sur. J'ai abite a Geneve trois ans quand j'etais enfant.

AZ: Oh, magnifique. Right. So, Right. So for those of you listening, I just said you speak French as well, and he said "Yes, I spent three years in Geneva when I was ..."

DC: And I speak Genevese French much better than I speak Parisian French.

AZ: Well, Geneva is just beautiful. I did get the chance to visit there during my semester abroad. Yeah, actually, that brings me to one of my better stories, right, if you don't mind. So, when, during that semester, because you asked me about France also, I decided to travel to Florence for a weekend. Basically it was two full days of traveling back and forth and then just a weekend there. And while I was there I actually ran into a Conn classmate, Jay Banta, who I knew from sight, because you get to know people campus very well, but I didn't really know personally. But long story short, I, you know, went up and said hello and we ended up having dinner together twice, you know, while I was there. Made a new friend from my campus while we were on another continent, yeah. That, you know, so that- that was really fun. That's the very short version of the story in any ...

DC: What do you remember about what the campus climate was like while you were here and do you remember any particular events or controversies?

AZ: A lot of- lot of events. Some, you know, pretty sad ones. I think that, I don't want to say really defined the era, but definitely stood out. Starting with the death of a classmate in a plane crash sophomore year, fall- fall of sophomore year. She was going to Martha's Vineyard to visit her mother. Susie Custer's her name. Her- the plane was piloted by her uncle who also died in the crash. And at the time we were in- we were not- I don't want to say we were friends, but we were acquaintances; we knew each other. We were in a psych lab together. And it was weird. She's just not in class anymore. And there are times when people just aren't in class anymore and you know, but this time it was a very, you know, different reason and you know, I sensed it. And the College, you know, really came together, you know, to mourn her and to celebrate her, you know, as well. There was a memorial service for her in the chapel and people were asked to wear pink, which was her favorite color. And they said, you know, no black please, because we want this to be a celebration ...

DC: Sure.

AZ: of her life. Sadly, three years after graduating, we had lost three more classmates to three different reasons, natural and unnatural causes. I'll just leave it. At that senior year, there was again-, very sadly, there was a kidnapping and rape in the Arboretum of somebody not from campus, but it did spur the discussion on campus of, you know, well not spur because this, this is always being discussed, you know, what does, you know, constitute a rape? And I mean, this was probably what, you know, the narrowest definition. This, like, this was a stranger, you know, taking someone off the trail. A friend of mine was upset because he was supposed to be doing research in the Arboretum, and then he came back to my room, was in Windham at the time, so it was the closest, and he was angry that he wasn't allowed to because the police were there conducting an investigation. I said, "If they're actually conducting an investigation, that's something serious." And then several minutes later a friend from the class of '94 started screaming, "Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God." And she was

hysterical. She was absolutely hysterical. It turned out that she had been in the Arboretum at the time and heard the screams of this woman. So, and she, you know, now realizing, you know what it was, and I don't know if she was ever actually asked to testify as a witness in the case, but I think she may have been.

DC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's tough.

AZ: Another interesting event of fall of 92. Uh, Bill Clinton was elected president. I remember ...

DC: I was going to ask about that.

AZ: Oh, you are? Okay.

DC: Well, I was going to ask what was the- what was the mood on campus the night that he was elected?

AZ: Well, in the room I was in, it was jubilant. Yes, it was ecstatic they were, you know, definite, uh, definite cheers. Uh, I don't know if it was that the Democrats were in one room and the Republicans were in another room, but let me go on record in saying the country was not remotely as divided, as it was, you know, now. Now it's just- now people you know, will refuse to associate with someone of the opposite party. It was not like that then, you know. It- it really wasn't, you know, when people would talk to each other. It's like, "Oh, well I, I'm happy about this. Oh, well I feel, nah, I don't know." I'm not sure, you know, but you- apparently the president of the College Democrats and the president of the College Republicans were best friends at the time.

DC: That's so ...

AZ: Yeah, so it was, you know, it had been 12 years of a Republican presidency and so we were looking forward to something new. And it was also the first election that I was able to vote in because I was 17 during the previous one.

DC: Right.

AZ: You know, so I got my absentee ballot out in time and, you know, it was- proud to be able to do that.

DC: Do you- do you remember that most of your fellow students did vote ...

AZ: Yes.

DC: in that election?

AZ: I think so. Yeah. I think.

DC: But the ones that were old enough too, which is everybody, 18 and above ...

AZ: Yeah.

DC: most of the campus.

AZ: As far as I know, yes. I remember every- everybody I asked. I think so. But there wasn't- yeah, I know there wasn't a lot of, "No, I'm not going to" or anything, but I do-, yeah, I do think people were responsible about that. A lot of it, probably because it was the first time, you know, they were able to,

DC: Yeah, that's good to hear. Good. Can you talk a little bit about your life after Connecticut College? How did your experience shape your life after graduation, if at all?

AZ: Yeah. Um, I continued studying French, got my Master's degree. I'm now a French teacher and a Spanish teacher as I-, you know, as I've mentioned earlier, did not study Spanish here. I, you know, I studied it in high school and be- and beyond Conn, went back, I studied at Ohio State University, went back to live at home, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for four years, and then I moved up to the Boston area. You were talking about that earlier. Now where are you from?

DC: Uh, I was born in Concord, but I went to Wellesley High School.

AZ: Okay, sure. So I live in Medford now and I used to live in Watertown, so right next to Belmont that you were talking about earlier today. But that's one of the places that I chose to live because I had friends from- from here that lived there, you know. They were, you know, from there. So ...

DC: That's one way the Connecticut shaped your life is you wanted to be near friends ...

AZ: Yes.

DC: who are doing similar things ...

AZ: Definitely

DC: in the same area, geographic area. I hear that story a lot too.

AZ: Oh, really?

DC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Good. How do you keep in touch with classmates?

AZ: Well, how does anybody keep in touch with classmates? Facebook. Yeah, that's true. Actually, one of my-, one of my friends who's here today, we, you know, lost touch for a while and then got in touch again a few years after graduation because, for some reason that year I just decided to send Christmas cards to every single person I knew.

DC: Good for you.

AZ: You know, just relatives, friends. And so I was able to get, you know, back in touch, you know, with her that way. And there are a lot of people from other classes that I'm now in touch with, again, because of Facebook. You know, it is difficult because our reunions have our class, but they don't have our friends from adjacent classes, you know, or the other classes that we knew. So that's, you know, so that's one, I don't know, say one thing I'd like to see change because that's difficult to change, but I guess those are people that I'd like to find another way to, you know, see more often, even if that's every five years, because that's still more often than it is now.

DC: Sure. Did you attend Tim Armstrong's speech last night?

AZ: I did not. I am here ...

DC: Did you know him when you were?

AZ: I didn't. I didn't, but I'm here with my best friend from, from Conn. We stayed in a hotel off campus, because, let me be honest, I wasn't into drunk college students when I was in college and so I'm not into older people acting like they're college students now. I'm also here with my one-year old and she's here with her three-year old and so, you know, we just let it so it was kind of past their bedtime.

DC: Yeah. Any other, any other classmates that you remember that stand out in your mind?

AZ: My friends, Adam and David, who were both dads themselves. They're babysitting my daughter right now, so I was like, "Hey guys, can you do me a favor? Do you wanna be two men and a baby right now?" Let's see, other ... A lot of my friends came from the Conn Christian Fellowship at the time, which is an organization that I, you know, I eventually stopped being a part of, but I kept the friendships from there and that I'm very happy about.

DC: Good for you.

AZ: Thank you.

DC: In thinking about the College today ... kind of a two-part question ... Is there something from your experience that you wished students today could have? And more importantly maybe, is there something happening on campus now that you wish you could have experienced?

AZ: Oh my goodness. I'm looking around this library, which is absolutely beautiful. I wish that the Lear Room was here when we got- when we got- when I was here, you know, and the renovations, you know, are just gorgeous. The- the Plex, Fa- Father Larry, who was a wonderful priest at the time was, you know, he compared it to Howard Johnson's a lot, and that was a perfect d- perfect description of it. I came back to visit in 2000, so I did come to my five-year reunion in 98. Then I came back to visit in 2000 and the Plex had been completely renovated and, you know, we were with a friend who came with us who was not,

who did not go to Conn and we had to explain, "Okay, you've got to understand it did not look like this when we were here." That's why we're getting, you know, so crazy and getting so excited about what it looks like. So it would've been nice to have the modern amenities. I'm really impressed with the basement of, or the ground floor, I should say, of Blaustein right now. The Center for International Studies in the Liberal Arts did exist while I was here. I chose not to take advantage of it then, and I stand by that decision. I believe it was a wise decision for me at the time. It's probably something I would do now, you know, if I were to come back, pardon me. One thing, I- I don't think academically, you know, or, you know, with amenities-wise, there's anything lacking that's, here today. What I do wish that students today would have is what we talked about earlier, is, you know, conviviality among political parties, you know, like getting together, you know, for a discussion, not for an argument, you know, necessarily, and I know there are people that can still do that. I'd like to be one of them, but people are so afraid to bring it up these days. I mean, it's always been difficult, you know? But even more so now, you know, and I'd like, you know, I like to see the current students have-, being more unified. On political fronts.

DC: Sure. Technical question for you: When I was here, I had to type my papers on an electric typewriter. Nowadays kids have, you know, tablets that they can compose their- of their college papers right there on their, on a screen. You are somewhere in between. Tell me, technically, how did you produce a term paper?

AZ: For seven semesters with the typewriter as well, with the electronic self-correcting typewriter. And did I use pica or a leap font, you know, 10 or 12. And then I asked for a computer for, you know, for, Christmas, because you know, I was doing my thesis. It was definitely going to be much easier to work in my room on got a Mac Classic. I have promised myself I'm never going back to a desktop, you know, laptop it is all the way. I mean- I-, you know, at home I prefer to use the computer on the couch, not, you know, not at a desk. So that is-, you know, I literally put it on my lap. It's genuinely a laptop for me. But yeah, the typewriter ... And that's another interesting story is that my roommate when I moved to Branford was hearing impaired. So she had- she had hearing aids that she took out at night and she was also an early to bed person, but be- it actually worked out well because, you know, when she took out her hearing aids, she couldn't hear. I was able to type papers late into the night without disturbing her.

DC: Sure,

AZ: You're not the first person to mention a typewriter to me today, either. I ...

DC: I just think about things like word cor- spelling correction, and the- just the ability to compose on the page as- as fast as you can rather than have to worry about fixing your corrections and so forth. That's much, much more efficient way to type turn papers now than what we had to do. We just, we had to book extra time just for the physical work of typing a paper.

AZ: Well, I've al- personally, I've always been a pretty good speller. If it was- if I was writing as I was typing, and then I suddenly had different thoughts and having to waste the paper and take it out and start all over again. That was inconvenient, you know? And that doesn't exist anymore.

DC: Not on the question list, but I- I like to ask this of- for everybody. If you- if you could- had the money to fund one building at Connecticut College, what would that building do? It could be a dormitory, it could be department.

AZ: I have the answer to- I have the answer to this question before you asked it. Yeah, because I told you about my- my roommate, my initially bad roommate situation freshman year. In talking to one of our deans at the time, she said, "Well, you know, when you have a lot of money you can donate to create a dorm that's all singles." And so that's what I would do. So, I sometimes go by initial- my initials, which are AZ, so I said the dorm should be called AZ. Yeah, and a friend of mine said, "No. It should be called Annie Hall." I don't even know. I don't go by- even though I don't go by Annie. So that is, you know, so that is my first response. If I'm going to do something, based on my interests, it would be either with, you know, probably, a building dedicated to languages, but we have that already. And or something dedicated to the arts, which we're now getting. So, I'm off the hook. So, I guess it is back to the dorm.

DC: Yeah. Yeah. Good for you. I- I heard from, uh, Andy, who's the director of admissions. We had him at our council meeting earlier this year and we asked him, "Is there something we can do for you?" And he said, "Yes. If you could just blow up all the other dorms that aren't in the Complex, because when students come here, it's difficult for me to have them go into the older dormitories and say, "This is going to be a great place to live.""

AZ: A classmate of mine last night said, "You know, like at the time we thought, 'Okay, this isn't great on the inside, but it's fine, we can deal with it.'" And then she said last night, "I don't think this has been updated in 25 years." You know, there was no literally no light in her room, so somebody had to bring her a lamp,

DC: I don't know how many more minutes we have, but ...

AZ: Three.

DC: Okay, as you think about, this is a question I tend to ask of students whom I'm mentoring, and I think you answered part of it already, but of all the classes that you had here at Connecticut College, tell me which one you liked the most and why, and which one you liked the least and why.

AZ: Well, the most was probably-, I mean, at least the one that stands out the most is Claire Gaudiani's Faces of Love in French Literature from freshman year. Then there was least, oh, and my other favorite class was Italian 101-102, which was throughout the entirety of senior year, because of that trip to Florence really made me want to learn it. Yeah, that was a class I'd study for, extra, you know. I real- yeah, definitely really loved that. Least, I took, you know, an astronomy course, which, you know, I disliked because I- it was not a- it was a lot more physics than star gazing. So, I was a little confused about, you know, what to expect from it, I believe. And then there was a religion course that I took. Ironically, right now I would study, you know, religious history a lot more because it's something I was interested in and this particular class just, you know, wasn't up my alley. Although I would- I remember a classmate saying it was one of the best courses that she thought she had had, you know For

me it was just, you know, kind of difficult. I took it because of my, semester away. I was behind in credits, yeah.

DC: Yeah, but you learn from all of them. That's, that's the thing that I- I find when I ask that question. Even if folks-, students still say it wasn't my favorite class, but I still learn things from it that I- that still stand me in good stead. And I think that's always- that's always important to find out.

AZ: Yeah, yeah. I can't, you know, I can't say what I remember from those classes, I'll be honest, you know. But I guess I can say it kind of, you know, led me to know what I do like and don't like.

DC: In the time we have left, tell me what you want to tell me.

AZ: I think I already have.

DC: All right.

AZ: Yeah. I think because I was thinking about this and I said, "What are the most important things?" And I ...

DC: That's fine. Yeah. I just didn't want you to anything out at any other stories that you wanted to put in.

AZ: Well, I appreciate that. Thank you. All right. Nice to meet you.

DC: Indeed. Enjoyed it.