

Connecticut College

Digital Commons @ Connecticut College

Alumni Oral History Project

Linda Lear Center for Special Collections &
Archives

2024

Francesca Moore '24-Amanda Hildebrand Snead '04

Francesca Moore

Amanda Hildebrand Snead

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/oralhistory>

Recommended Citation

Moore, Francesca and Snead, Amanda Hildebrand, "Francesca Moore '24-Amanda Hildebrand Snead '04" (2024). *Alumni Oral History Project*. 37.

<https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/oralhistory/37>

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the Linda Lear Center for Special Collections & Archives at Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Alumni Oral History Project by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Connecticut College. For more information, please contact bpancier@conncoll.edu.

The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author.

Streaming audio for this oral history is available at
<https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/oralhistory/37>

Francesca Moore: Hi, my name is Francesca Moore. Today is June first. Today I will be interviewing ... Can you introduce yourself?

Amanda Snead: Hi, my name is Mandy Hildebrand Snead, Amanda Hildebrand and I graduated in 2004.

FM: So my first question for you is why did you decide to come to Connecticut College?

AS: I was looking for- I was looking for a college where I could focus on history and also I was planning on being a teacher and so I was really looking at Boston University and then my mom actually said, "Why don't you see if there are any schools in Connecticut?" Connecticut was closer to where my parents lived. And when we came on campus everybody was really nice and I found out that I could major in history while also getting a certification, so it didn't have to just be- I had more options in terms of what to study, so ...

FM: Are you a teacher today?

AS: I'm not, but I work in nonprofit education, yeah.

FM: What, if anything, surprised you about Connecticut College during your time here?

AS: I think how easy it was to get involved. So, I was involved in a lot of things when I was here. I did the Student Activities Council, I did student government, I was a house fellow and there were so many different clubs. I was on rugby; there was a rugby club. I think because it's small, they- they put a lot of attention on student activities. That was great as a way of organizing with people.

FM: That's still true today. I've been involved in just so much.

AS: It's so easy, right?

FM: It's so easy to get involved, which is really nice.

AS: Yeah, and the fact that it's such a close campus community made it easy too.

FM: Where did you house fellow?

AS: I was housefellow in Wright.

FM: Wright? Oh nice, Wright's a good building. How was the senior house fellow suite?

AS: It's nice.

FM: I've always wanted to, but I just, like, I never, never did the interviews and ...

AS: It's a lot, yeah.

FM: I think I've seen Hamilton and Park and Johnson, which are also all nice.

AS: My first year was- lived in Johnson, which then was Marshall and it was- before it was renovated, and so it was- it's very run down to the point where when one of my best friends, Alex, her mom wouldn't come upstairs because she, like, it really depressed her. They improved it.

FM: Like, Johnson, the rooms have one big window now, but the walls are brick.

AS: Yeah, they're very sturdy.

FM: They're so hard to, like, put posters up and they ...

AS: Yeah, tacks.

FM: Where did you live and what was your residential experience?

AS: I was mostly in the Plex, so, I was Marshall first year, now Johnson, and second year I was in Morrisson. Third year was in KB and then, yeah, fourth year was house fellow in Wright.

FM: I always wanted to live in KB. KB and Knowlton are like two of my favorite buildings.

AS: They're so beautiful, yeah. I was lucky I was in KB kind of in the front, kind of looking at the College Center.

FM: Have you seen Morrisson since you've been back here?

AS: Not since I've been back. Did they update Morrisson?

FM: It looks really nice, really, really nice.

AS: Yeah, and living in the Plex, three of the four years I never had to go outside to go to ...

FM: Harris, yeah I know

AS: which was so helpful.

FM: Such a privilege, which is why I never lived in south, because JA doesn't serve dinner.

AS: Oh, it doesn't any more?

FM: You have to walk all the way.

AS: So do Harkness and JA have lunch or does Harkness ...

FM: Harris and JA are, like, the only two dining halls right now. I don't think JA is going to be a dining hall next year. It's going to take over Oasis. They're doing the renovation in Cro, so ... I don't know if they are going to open a new dining hall, or ...

AS: So, the snack shop is going to be in JA.

FM: Was Oasis open when you were here?

AS: Yes, and the bar.

FM: Humphrey's? Humphrey's is getting a big renovation, so I'm jealous of everyone who's going to experience it. Yeah.

AS: Well, there's definitely a north campus-south campus culture. Is there still?

FM: There still is. I kind of want to live north. North is, like- North is definitely further from the academic buildings, which is like, why when you get older, you're like I don't want to get up for classes. You get up five minutes before class. I lived in Windham last semester.

AS: Windham was always very ...

FM: My classes were all, like, in Blaustein, so it was like a two minute walk to ...

AS: I was in Blaustein too. So were you- what was your major?

FM: IR- International Relations.

AS: Oh, nice, that makes sense.

FM: That's the next question: What did you study and do you have any memories of classes or professors that stood out?

AS: Yeah, one of my favorite- well, I had a few favorite professors. I took exactly one- so my major was History with Education and then a minor in American Studies and then I took chemistry class with Marc Zimmer.

FM: Oh, he's still here and he's tough.

AS: Yeah, and he was amazing.

FM: Is he the- I wonder he's the- what is that one- organic chemistry. All the chemistry students like him.

AS: Yeah, he does the bioluminescence and he's very fun to have for first chemistry.

FM: I've heard his name before, though, definitely.

AS: Yeah, he's great. And then there was a woman named Sara Silberman who had been teaching here for a very long time. I think she retired shortly after I graduated and I took a lot of history classes with her and her thing was that there were a couple of- you only had a few grades. You would have- you would have to reflect on readings you did. It was, like, a one-pager, a summary thing and so that was stressful because you knew that that was a quarter of your grade and then at the end you had a large, twenty or thirty page paper where you would, like, have to read a book and it was all this, like, you know, documentation and all this kind of stuff. And then another professor that I was- Catherine Stock, Dr. Stock, she was American Studies and she was amazing. She was very engaging. So, yeah, there were some great ones here.

FM: Do you remember, like, what your history focused on, like, mostly?

AS: Yeah, I did a lot of twentieth-century US history and then some Latin American studies and then we had some social- social- sociology.

FM: Like history, I did American history in high school, one of my favorite classes and I just didn't take any history courses when I got here and I kind of regretted that because I think I would have enjoyed it a lot.

AS: The primary sources and everything were really helpful because, like, history is always, you know, told by whoever wants to write it, but being able to read, like, oh here's what FDR was writing when he was deciding whether we were going to go to war or not, trying to, like, read between the lines and make out the narrative yourself, that was a very helpful experience.

FM: You must have done a lot of writing and I can't- couldn't do it.

AS: Yeah, wasn't there a lot of writing for International Relations?

FM: It was, but I think it was pretty manageable, I would say, and a lot of it was straight to the point, factually, factual stuff. Twenty- I've only written one, like, twenty-page paper here.

AS: Not one started the day before.

FM: I actually, yeah, regret starting mine so late was not fun. A lot of coffee

AS: Yeah, exactly.

FM: What were you involved- Were you involved in any groups or activities that were important to you while you ...

AS: Yeah, when we were talking about- it was Student Activities Council. I was involved in leadership there junior year. Senior year I was housefellow. Oh, junior year I was also Student Government Association, which was great to be part of that, see how that ran. I didn't have to run because I was a presidential associate, so the president appointed me. That was great. And, yeah, a few other clubs and then rugby. And then senior year I was student teaching so that took up a lot of my time.

FM: Was the Lab School a thing when you were here?

AS: Uh-uh, what's the Lab School?

FM: It's- I don't exactly know what it is but it's associated with our school and a lot of students do their community service hours there. They're, like, in the Education department, I think Psychology and Human Development. So they go down there and, like, spend time with the kids teaching or watching them, do observations and stuff, for whatever they have for class. Yeah, this ...

AS: Early education, though?

FM: Early education, yeah, which is fun. But it's past the- I think it's down by the ...

AS: Right across the street in that ...

FM: By Coast Guard?

AS: Oh, it's by the Coast Guard.

FM: Or, it's by the bridges and Winchester so down there.

AS: Oh, I've never been down there.

FM: Yeah, I never went over there.

AS: That's where they, I guess, send a lot of students for community service.

FM: Did you have to- did you, like, teach here at this school?

AS: No I taught at East Lyme, East Lyme High School. Four. I had four classes of high school US history.

FM: Is that in New London?

AS: No, it's- East Lyme is ten, fifteen minutes away, yeah.

FM: Okay. I work with the Holleran Center. I don't think we've sent anyone to East Lyme. A lot of, like, Benny Dover and New London High School that what we, like, ...

AS: Yeah, it's like ten, fifteen minutes away and very affluent school district, for sure. I'm aging myself. It was 2004 and there were, like, all these MacBooks everywhere. Most schools had one and it was all MacBooks in these labs and I was, like, these kids are fine.

FM: Did you enjoy it? Teaching?

AS: I did. I enjoyed teaching. I got really nervous when I wasn't in front of students. When I was in front of students, it was good. And then I got offered a job when I graduated, but I ended up- I actually ended up going to London.

FM: Oh, nice. Nice. How long did you stay in London for?

AS: Six months. It was- I couldn't study abroad when I was at Conn because of the credits I needed. It was a double major, or essentially a double major, and so this was a program where you could get a work visa and open up a bank account. The exchange rate, it was insane then, so it was great to be there, so I substitute taught and worked in a wine bar and was able to earn money, while being there, which was helpful.

FM: I wish they had that right now. I would- I would have applied.

AS: Look it up. It's called BUNAC.

FM: BUNAC, okay. I'll do some research. Okay. What was campus climate like while you were here and do you remember any, like, events or controversies that were on campus.

AS: Well, the campus- Conn felt like a summer camp. It felt like the school was a summer camp, like a J. Crew ad summer camp is what it felt like.

FM: Yeah, my friends always joke, like, we're at boarding school right now.

AS: Yeah, so it had that vibe. It was a very strong dorm culture. Camelympics was very big.

FM: Really? What? I wish we had that.

AS: Yeah, so it was a really big deal. Well, you don't have it at all anymore, right? That was really fun. Every year each dorm had their own swag. All these different- it would go through the middle of the night. There would be, like, sports things, but then also, like, Scrabble or, like, what's it- Connect-Four, or whatever ridiculous thing, and it was really, really fun. We're so sad that it's not here anymore. Thursday night events were a big deal, T and Es.

FM: Like, done by the school or, like, students?

AS: Students, like different clubs would throw them. As a house fellow you had to put on two different events for the campus during the year, so we would put on different things. There were keg parties in the common room.

FM: I'd like to bring the culture back. It's died.

AS: And there wasn't a lot of controversy when I was here, but my sophomore year was 9-11 happened and so that obviously had long-standing ripples. I remember that day very well. And, but yeah, it really felt a bit like a bubble.

FM: It's, yeah, it's still the same.

AS: What are the key events, what is the culture now?

FM: I've lived through the KB situation, what was her name?

AS: Burgin? Bergeron?

FM: Yeah.

AS: That was like the Fanning takeover, right?

FM: Yeah, that's the biggest event, controversy I've ...

AS: That wasn't last year. The year before?

FM: Yeah, the year before.

AS: And you were on campus during Covid?

FM: Yes, that too.

AS: Was that how you started?

FM: Yeah, freshman, Zoom, isolation.

AS: That's a lot. And, like, it seems like Conn did an incredible job with the testing and all that.

FM: There was extensive testing. We had to get tested, like, three times a week. We had to, like, go all the way down to the Athletic Center three times a week to get tested. There was an app that you have to track your systems on. Going out- if you were in a single room -- I think they gave everyone single rooms -- you were allowed on additional person in your room at a time. No dining halls. You had to like get our food- I forget how we got our food. I think they, like, gave you the food, like they shared it for you. You each had your own food.

AS: And that was freshman year. It was a little more normal by sophomore year?

FM: By sophomore year they definitely- they definitely changed. We- I think we just had to go to classes in our masks. I think that was the biggest thing.

AS: What's the campus culture like now?

FM: It's definitely- I don't think it's as normal as, like- I don't think we had the same experience as, like, the class, the year exactly before Covid. Things have been, like, pretty normal, compared to other schools, pretty much the same as all the other schools, right?

AS: Are there special events?

FM: Special events, we do throw events- we still have Florialia.

AS: Oh you do have Florialia! I was going to mention Florialia before I was- do people still bring out their couches and everything? No? Everyone would bring out their couches and stuff.

FM: Really, I want to see those. Like- the class, like, '80- I forgot what class, I think '89 or something, you had, like, Florialia t-shirts. We don't have that. But we have Florialia. We don't have the house- housing competitions, but every house fellow has to have housing events, so each house, like, has their own events. SGA definitely builds a lot of little events on campus.

AS: And Student Activities Council is still around.

FM: Yeah, SAC does a lot of that. What do we have? Fall Ball ...

AS: Do you still do Festivus?

FM: Festivus. What- did we have Festivus last year? I don't remember.

AS: Festivus was so much fun.

FM: People don't go to the events any more.

AS: What do people do? Are they hanging out in their dorms? Do they go downtown?

FM: Yeah, but it's never fun. You have this one, like, bar that people, like if you're under 21, whatever, you can get into. It's called Shaking Crab but they shut that one down, so ... People try to go to bars, but the bars aren't fun and then they complain, then but they don't go to campus events. Yeah, like Fall Ball, you go and there's ten people in a big room.

AS: We didn't have Fall Ball.

FM: Really?

AS: That was in the '62 Room?

FM: Yeah.

AS: There was something every weekend in the '62 Room. My friends and I would dance like crazy. Every once in a while the Coast Guard would come up and you would always know, even if they weren't in uniform you definitely know who the Coasties are.

FM: We only really collaborated with the Coasties for, like, I think MEChA. I think that was one connection with them, so for their club they always do crossovers, but we don't get to go down there.

AS: Does Unity House still put on some events? They had some great events too.

FM: I think this year we've had a couple events. So, freshman year, nothing. Sophomore year, not really. Junior year, I wasn't here for the fall, so I don't know what happened, but the spring, not really. I guess we had a couple. I don't know. The social scene on this campus is not the same anymore. It's not very active partying and stuff. They don't try. People just don't go to events.

AS: People just stay with their friend group or what have you?

FM: Yeah, pretty much. What else do we have?

AS: We had AOL. Well, we didn't have phones then, so it was, like, AOL and the messenger, so you could leave people messages saying where you were and you'd be, like, on your computer and it would be, you know, Oh, Christine Culver's at the keg here, okay so we're going to the keg. That's how we ...

FM: We have this- it's called Yik Yak. It's like an anonymous. It's, like, every campus has their own Yik Yak portal kind of thing and it's anonymous, so people post "Where are we going tonight?" And that's how you find out that people are going out to the ridge or people are going

to the bars. So could know. Do you want to talk about your life after Conn? So, how did you experience here shape your life after graduation, if at all?

AS: Yeah, I mean, well, I met three of my very best friends here. Two of us were roommates freshman year and then the third lived down the hall. Alex Ortiz lived down the hall from Jaclyn Cocchiola, Beth Chase and me. We were in a triple in Marshall and then down the hall was the man that Beth ended up marrying, Aaron Schuman and so they've, you know, they stayed my best friends all the way through, so that certainly shaped it, like created this group of friends. And then, I think- we were talking with all of the different activities, that helped a lot in building communication skills and leadership skills and so I went into nonprofit and when I got back from London I worked for Teach for America for, like, eleven years, on their recruiting team and I used a lot of what I'd learned at SGA or Student Activities Council, like, here's how you set up events or here's how you take clear notes and here's how you know what people need to do next. I do think the well-roundedness of Conn and, like, the types of books that we had to read or the studying that we did helped with getting a better worldview. So that was useful. Yeah, I've been in nonprofit ever since. I was at Teach for America for a long time and then another one called Europe and then now at Genesis Works. I'm kind of staying close to the education side, just not in the classroom.

FM: Do you live in Connecticut?

AS: I live in Brooklyn.

FM: Oh, okay. I'm from the Bronx.

AS: Oh are you? Nice. I was in Manhattan right after college until two years ago and then my husband and I moved to Brooklyn.

FM: Do you like- which part of Brooklyn?

AS: Right now, kind of on the cusp of downtown Brooklyn, Cobble Hill, and Brooklyn Heights and ...

FM: I don't know anywhere in Brooklyn.

AS: I'm moving to Boerum Hill.

FM: That's great, nice. Did you have, like, the Walters Commons office and the Study Abroad office and stuff when you were here?

AS: I don't remember, actually, because I didn't get to study abroad. A lot of stuff was in Cro. Mostly in Cro.

FM: Really? The Walters Commons office is now in Blaustein in the basement.

AS: Yeah. No, Blaustein needed a makeover when I was here, yeah.

FM: Because I was- back then it was the library and they kept the third floor, like a library, kind of.

AS: I don't remember. I think it was all, no it was offices when I was here. The library was just here. And, again, this was dark.

FM: I wonder what it looked like. Now it's so bright.

AS: It just had little slivers, like, yeah. It was very, very- it was very 70s. They did a nice job. It was depressing.

FM: I don't think I would want to study in here if ...

AS: It was only if, like, I was progressing so hard and I needed no distractions. I would go to the corner of the third floor of the library and do that.

FM: They have study pods in Blaustein, couches and make a good setup up there. Nice, but ... Like three- three- six- what do you call it, three corners. If you lose your corner, it's just like you can't go back. People stay there for hours. You have to leave a book there, so people wouldn't ...

AS: Is it still Honor Code where you could take class- take finals wherever you want? Yeah, that was helpful.

FM: Blaustein's the building that we use there right now. Do you know Noel? Has he been working here for a long time? Noel Garrett? I wonder how long- He' the best. But he facilitates the finals for the most part. The ARC does -- Academic Resources Center -- they're the ones who, like, facilitating. Did you keep in touch with your classmates?

AS: Yeah, those three friends, obviously. Yeah, we've been through everything together. And then, yeah, some other great friends too. I always see some folks from Conn.

FM: How does it work with coming back? Did you just decide to come back or did you, like, chat with people from the class year, "Oh, I'm going to go," and then people decide to go?

AS: A little bit of both, so us, the four of us decided that we were going and then Aaron -- who's married to Beth -- like, he's connected with the soccer team so he knows who's going from the soccer team. Then, like, each of us have a couple friends outside of that group and then you start to know who is showing up. I missed fifth year and then didn't come back until fifteen and fifteen was really fun and so all of us who were at the fifteen will go back at twenty.

FM: Are you enjoying ...

AS: Yeah, it's fun.

FM: How was the soccer team back then?

AS: Not good. I was just talking to Aaron about it. He was, like, the original guy who had started the program and he had been there for a long time until the program was a bit on the decline, but now it's amazing.

FM: It's really good. They won the championship two years ago. We went pretty far this year. I think the soccer team is the biggest with turnout, like students to watch the games.

AS: The teams were not good when I was here. Sailing was good. Sailing was fun.

FM: Sailing? I don't know. I've never watched the sailing team, yeah. The basketball team, they were pretty good this year though.

AS: I thought there were some pretty good track runners too.

FM: Track. Track is pretty good, yeah. We're good at track. But track meets are so early, so I never make it down there to see the games, but ... But, my friend was on the team two years ago. I would go watch, but, yeah. They're good. Do you want to see this last question?

AS: Sure. In thinking about the College today, is there something from your experience that you wish students today could have, something on campus now that you wish you could have experienced. Yeah, I think that- I think the camaraderie on campus- I'm always sad to hear that things- that, you know, campus events aren't a big deal, that people aren't as into it. Camelympics, that was so central. So, that- I wish that would come back. I do appreciate- I feel as though Conn is still a bit of a bubble, it feels as though it's wrestling a bit more with issues that are happening outside of the gates, like- whether that's like being more integrated ... Well, you tell me, it feels like it's a little more integrated with downtown New London.

FM: They're trying. It's been pretty- it's improved a lot.

AS: That's good, because it really used to be like, oh, New London's over there and Connecticut College is here, so I think integrating there and even I think, like, the different- I was so far from it, but I was following some things on line, like, about reckonings with what was going on with racial relations or what are the experience of students and faculty and, like, how are students speaking up for that. Like, we're trained to think about things critically and I think that ... I'd be curious, do you think that Conn's doing enough to kind of build- not a- building awareness isn't good enough, but to actually take action on, like, inequities or challenges that we're seeing, or ...

FM: They do ask a lot of the time for, like, student opinion. They host events and panels for students to come in and voice their opinions, so I would say that they're trying. I would say they're not the best, but they're definitely trying. As a student of color here, it's definitely, like, sad. I think for four years three or four people, they've made a transition of the directors of Unity, like, and a lot of them are just going to places because they feel like they're going to be treated better elsewhere, so it's, yeah.

AS: Yeah, how does that make you feel?

FM: I mean, not good. I guess it's, like, it's sad because Conn promotes diversity and taking care of, like, all of the students on campus and just as a student of color you're not really seeing that, so, yeah, but, I hope they do better. They're enrolling more students of color every year, so ...

AS: Domestic and international or ...

FM: I don't know about international, but domestic definitely, so I hope that pushes them to do more for students of color since there will be more people, more catered to, so ...

AS: Yeah, representation and just, like, voices. Yeah, when I was here a lot of the diversity, in terms of like racial and ethnic diversity came from international students, which is important and that's helpful and also, just like I think building a wider net, but I have- how did you choose to come here?

FM: I knew an alum that taught- well, he went here and he told us that it was a really good school and I didn't really know much about college. Like, I'm an immigrant. My parents didn't know about college that much. So, like, I trusted him and, yeah, I'm here. We've also had issues, like DIEI and CCSRE, which is the Critical Race and Ethnicity program and just like funding and, like, getting- hiring professors and staff and faculty that work for those programs. Faculty of color, hasn't been like ...

AS: People feel unsafe?

FM: Not unsafe, but it's just, sometimes it's better- not better but more relatable to hear from people who are- their skin color, when they're talking about, like race and those type of issues and, you know, we don't have that that much, so, and just implement in those departments would be nice.

AS: Yeah. I'll be curious to see what the new president will want to do.

FM: I hope she's good, yeah. Well, do you have anything else? I was going to ask you something else. What was your favorite coffee shop when you were here?

AS: There was- there was only, like, one. You guys have got so many more coffee shops now. There was one, I think in it was KB, Coffee Grounds.

FM: It's like culture music, the coffee culture, Coffee Grounds culture. They've been a neutral space, but it was like the Coffee Closet, Coffee Grounds culture that goes on. Yeah, they host a lot of events, Coffee Closet, like trivia night and, like, live music. Coffee Grounds have- what do they have? Like, Jeopardy kind of events and stuff and they also do live music.

AS: Is a cappella still big here?

FM: Huge. Like, thirteen a cappella groups on campus.

AS: I can't remember the boys. It was like Conn Chords and something else.

FM: The Conn Chords is one thing, Swifties, there's so many. I did, like, sound for one of the events and it's like three- two hours long because there were so many groups, yeah, but ... The culture behind that. It was a whole lot- lot of stuff. I remember my friend tried out for one of the groups and didn't make it. She was, like, really sad about that for a while. It's, yeah ...

AS: I tried to be a tour guide, like, three times. I got rejected each time.

FM: What am I doing wrong? I'm trying to see what we have here that's like ... Improv groups? Did you have that?

AS: Maybe one, but it wasn't that big, no.

FM: We have those. That's all I can think of. There are some nice things here still, but the culture needs to come back. But that's the end of our interview.

AS: Thank you.

FM: It was nice chatting with you.

AS: You too.

FM: Bye.