

Hollie Carlson Interview

AS: Alright so this is Anna Swartwout and I'm here with-

HC: Hollie Carlson

AS: -for the Queens of Slippery Rock Oral History Project. To start off with, can you tell me where you were from and what your majors and minors were in college?

HC: My hometown is Markleton, PA, that's in Somerset County, and my major was Health and Physical Education, minor in Aquatics.

AS: Oh, nice. I didn't know we had that. So while you were in college, what activities and such were you involved in?

HC: I worked with the SGA Bookstore and then my main activity was Green and White Society. It took up most of my time.

AS: Ok, to start, what does being a Homecoming queen mean to you?

HC: Um, it was a little bit unique for me that year because two students had just passed away on campus that year, one in a car accident and one during basketball practice, so I was actually involved in the car accident where the one student passed away. So it was a little bit of a whirlwind. The accident happened in September. Homecoming was in October. So I was nominated kind of right after the car accident so it was nice to have the support of the university and my friends and family, the faculty of the university, during the time.

AS: Can you tell me how you viewed Homecoming before you became queen and then after you became queen?

HC: I really didn't know that much about it. I had only gone to one Homecoming parade my freshmen year. I don't think I did anything with it my sophomore year. I worked a little bit with

Villagefest because of Green and White Society but I didn't really have any kind of stigmas or anything like that towards Homecoming. I just didn't know anything about the process. It was kind of like a farfetched thing, like how do you become a university Homecoming queen? It just seemed like something that didn't happen to people. So I just didn't really know how that worked, so once I got involved with the process and saw kind of how realistic and feasible and not just like a popularity contest type of thing that it was. It was kind of cool to see the process happen.

AS: What was the hardest part about running?

HC: My year was very difficult because prior to- so 2011 was kind of a changing year for the Homecoming process- prior to that you had to be nominated and then meet the Homecoming requirements, which I believe were you had to have a certain amount of credits and a GPA requirement, and then you had to be nominated by a club or organization or you could petition your way into being nominated, and that narrowed it down to twenty or thirty people, I don't know how many. Then those people were interviewed by a panel of faculty members and then they narrowed it down to five individuals, so five girls, five guys. And they were the Homecoming court. So you got the sash, you were supposed to then campaign for like a week leading up to Homecoming. So they announced Homecoming court, they announced the five girls, five guys, and then there was a complaint about the diversity on the Homecoming court. So they like revoked Homecoming court that year, they like took it back and allowed everybody who submit an application or petitioned their way in to put themselves on the ballot that year. So instead of the five people that were nominated by the faculty after the interview process, it was all the people who were nominated or petitioned were then on the ballot. The university then voted for all twenty or thirty instead of five of us. And that's when they started doing it that way

and announcing court at the pep rally the night before Homecoming and announcing king and queen actually at the football game.

AS: What was it like to be a part of that?

HC: Ugh, it was bad. So bad. I mean, I was already an emotional train-wreck that year, so I was just- but watching other people, it worked out for the most part because most of the people who were originally told they were on Homecoming- because for some people they really wanted to be on Homecoming court. They really wanted to be a part of it. So some of them were really stressed out by it. They were given Homecoming court, they were afraid it was gonna be taken away like stuff like that. So it was really hard to watch because a lot of my friends were on Homecoming court that year as well and one of them, unfortunately, after they were told they were on Homecoming court then didn't make it on to Homecoming court after the campus-wide vote. So it was a chaotic week because I think they told us on Monday that they were revoking the court and then the pep rally was Friday. Yeah, it was crazy. There were meetings all week. People were not happy.

AS: I can tell. What made you decide to run?

HC: I don't know if it was a decision as much as I got nominated and I thought that it was a nice gesture from the community for me and I joked actually with the person that I got paired with as my running partner. We lived together, well not together but on the same floor, my freshmen year, and we always joked because we were kind of extroverts. And we joked around my freshmen year about how this was something we were gonna do. We were gonna be Homecoming king and queen. Never serious. And then we kind of parted ways and ended up getting paired together after we were nominated. That kind of pushed me to do it after I saw he was on court, like oh my gosh we're actually gonna do this. Like it's gonna happen. So it was

kind of fun to just be part of the experience. Everybody was so nice. I loved everybody that ran with me and stuff. I couldn't have asked for a better Homecoming court. I don't know much about the twenty or thirty- the ten of us on court were great. It was a great experience.

AS: Were you involved in any Homecoming queen or anything in high school? Or prom or anything?

HC: Well we had like basketball court, that type of thing so like basketball. We had a basketball dance where we all got crowns and stuff, but there wasn't a Homecoming court in high school. I had a small high school. Graduated with like seventy kids. But no, I didn't do Homecoming or anything like that. I was really involved in high school but yeah.

AS: Was it the Green and White Society that nominated you?

HC: No, it was PEK, the Phys-Ed Honorary.

AS: Oh, ok. That's awesome. Can you tell us a little bit about your campaign?

HC: Yeah, we, Bryan mostly, my running partner, he kind of took lead on that. Like I said, I wasn't really in the best place to really like campaign and go for it. But he was so extroverted and he was a FYRST Seminar Ambassador so he sent out a bunch of emails and stuff to the freshmen. Went to all his freshmen friends. He was in the band so he did a lot of campaigning with the band and a lot of my friends printed flyers. They hung up a lot of flyers around campus. I remember, I don't think I helped, because I remember going to the bathroom one day, closing the bathroom stall and seeing my face on the back of the bathroom door and I didn't put it there. I took it down. It was a little weird. Yeah, so my friends were a lot of help. As soon as they found out I was nominated I had some of my Green and White friends, they kind of split their time because there were three or four of us on court. They did different things for us, Facebook groups, everybody had their Facebook page and stuff like that. So that was nice.

AS: That actually leads me to my next question, about how social media came in to play. Did you guys jump on that?

HC: Yeah, straight away. My friend Kate actually created a page for Bryan and I, she managed that, I didn't. I didn't do any of that. I'm kind of technologically impaired so thankfully she helped me. She was a Communications major so she kind of took care of the Public Relations kind of things. So she created a Facebook page. Instagram wasn't so big yet whenever I did it, so it was mostly just Facebook. Twitter a little bit. I think it was Kate, I know somebody put an ad in "The Rocket". It wasn't that long ago but it feels like forever ago.

AS: Before you were obviously elected queen, what did you think your chances were, especially with everything going on?

HC: Zero. Like I had no- because of everything that happened we had didn't know if we had to get a car for the parade because we didn't know if we'd be on court, we didn't know what was happening. I just called my friend who had a Jeep, I think I tried for a convertible, and I just told her to get the Jeep and take the top off. I don't even know if I got candy until the morning of because I like wasn't even planning on being in the parade after we got court revoked, like oh they're voting on thirty people, I'm not even gonna make the court at this point. So no, I didn't think it was gonna happen. And then they announced king first and Bryan was definitely well loved on campus so there was a lot of noise and they announced queen and nobody heard it. So I just saw Sammy like walking at me and I was like, what are you doing, because I didn't hear them say anything and she like started putting the crown on my head. I was like, ok, are you sure?

AS: Did you encounter any stigma around Homecoming queen or Homecoming in general?

HC: I didn't really but I think a lot of that was the people I was surrounded by mostly at that time because the people that were involved in my situation were also Green and White Society members so a lot of my friends at that time, the people I was spending the most time with were all my Green and White friends and I think there were four of us on court. So it was a lot of Homecoming all the time. So I was just surrounded by people that were all about Homecoming and my friends were so excited for me and I didn't really- I wasn't really exposed to people who weren't my people at that time so I think, had it not been that time in my life, I probably would have, being a Phys-Ed major, I think a lot of my friends probably gave me a little bit of slack for that, but everybody was really good to my face about it anyway.

AS: After you won, did anything change or was it more support?

HC: It was more support. Everybody was really good about things. We got to do some things on campus. We had to go to the daycare and read to the kids one day. And I worked at the bookstore so there was this lady who had a probably eleven-year-old daughter and they had this event on campus that was like a "Bring your daughter to work day" and she asked me to like surprise her with the crown and stuff. So I brought it and let her wear it around for the day. Just stuff like that. So it was fun to get to do that kind of stuff during the year.

AS: Why do you think you won?

HC: I mean, I think a lot of it had to do with how involved I was on campus. I knew a lot of people, being a Phys-Ed major, that's one of the bigger majors on campus and Green and White obviously, I got to know a lot of people on campus, we were involved in a lot of stuff. And honestly, being running partners with Bryan helped a lot. That kid knew everyone, being in the band he knew everyone. So with all of his campaigning and go-getting attitude. I don't think with him it would've gone my way.

AS: What did your family think of the whole Homecoming and whenever you won?

HC: They were stoked. My whole family- my mom, my sister, and my grandma came for Homecoming and it was freezing that day. I remember, I didn't really get to see them much. They dropped off candy that morning, because like I said I didn't buy anything, and I remember looking up in the stadium and seeing my grandma with this scarf like wrapped around her head and they were like crying they were so happy. So they were really excited about it, especially because everything had been so difficult in the last month. So they were excited that something good was happening and they were happy to be there.

AS: Has your life changed at all since becoming Homecoming queen?

HC: I don't think it changed my life in any way. But I think that I'm somebody that really connected with Slippery Rock before any of this happened, but I think since it happened I definitely have even more of a stronger connection to Slippery Rock. Like I love coming back, I love being here. But I think I would feel that with or without Homecoming. But it's definitely a bonding factor to wanting to be here.

AS: Did it positively or negatively affect your college experience?

HC: Oh, definitely positively. It was a bright spot of that year. It helped a lot that year and brightened my spirit. I don't think without having done that that semester that I would have made it through that semester, which is a little dramatic but it was a tough semester and it was something to look forward to, which was nice.

AS: It was a happy distraction. Have you come back for any Homecomings besides the one for 2012?

HC: Yeah, well I was still here for 2013. Because I was here for five years. So I was here for junior year, I passed down on my senior year, and then I was still here a fifth year. And then I

came back the year after that. And then, maybe I came back for two years, but I didn't come back this past year because the strike stressed me out so I didn't wanna be on campus for that.

AS: Did it have any effects on you after college, either personally or...?

HC: I mean I always put it on my resume just because it's a conversation starter and people love to talk about it. They're just fascinated by, kind of what you guys are talking about in this process, they're fascinated by how it happens. How do you get to that point? So I just put it on my resume under activities and stuff like that. And it never fails that when I interview out of my two-page resume that that's the one they wanna talk about. So it's definitely helped me in that way. People wanna talk about Slippery Rock and Homecoming and my experience here.

AS: It seems like it was something very positive so you wanna talk about it. Well thank you.