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## Interview with Blair Whitney Ligon

Blair Whitney Ligon

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**LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview OH #272  
LIGON, Blair**

**LIGON, Blair**

Class of 2011

*Interviewed:* May 29, 2013

*Interviewer:* Martha Manning

*Index by:* Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

*Length:* 00:45:44

Abstract: In her May 29, 2013 interview with Martha Manning, Blair Ligon, a third generation Winthrop alumna, shares her experience as an Integrated Marketing Communications major from 2007-2011. Ligon recalls the professors that made a lasting impression and shares some of her favorite classes. Ligon also expresses her pride in being a Winthrop alumna and current alumni relations employee. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communications, Alumni relations, dorm life, campus life, Class of 2011

**Interview Session (May 29, 2013): Digital File**

**Time      Keywords**

00:00:00    *Start of Interview/Interviewer's Introduction*

00:01:05    *Question:* Why did you decide to come to Winthrop? *Answer:* I decided to come to Winthrop for two reasons: one being that I'm a third generation Winthrop student so I had grown up my entire life hearing my grandmother and then my father talk about their experiences at Winthrop. They just had a lot of positive things to say, so I really wanted my own Winthrop experience. The second reason that I decided to come to Winthrop was because it was really the only place in South Carolina that was a public school that offered the program that I was interested in. So this specific program that Winthrop offered really is what kind of sealed the deal.

00:01:50    *Question:* What was that program? What did you get your degree in? *Answer:* Integrated marketing communications [IMC]. When I visited other universities they wanted me to either choose a mass com. [communications] major or a specific marketing major, and I really didn't want to do either one of those things. I didn't want to be a broadcaster, and I didn't want to work for a newspaper, and I didn't want to

- do numbers and marketing and crunching—things like that. I wanted to do public relations and corporate event planning, things like that, where I really got to work with people every single day. Winthrop gave me that hybrid major experience that I really needed.
- 00:02:38 *Question:* What years were you here at Winthrop? *Answer:* I started in the fall of 2007 and then graduated in the spring of 2011.
- 00:02:45 *Question:* And now are you working somewhere? *Answer:* I am. I'm working in alumni relations at Winthrop University.
- 00:02:55 *Question:* They saw the possibilities of using what they had put in your head. *Answer:* They did, but I actually left for a year first and worked for the Community Blood Center of the Carolinas in Charlotte and did donor relations and community relations with them. So I was really able to leave Winthrop with all the skills that I needed to have a career and get started, but then I really missed Winthrop so I came back as an employee because I missed it so much.
- 00:03:18 *Question:* So you applied here and they accepted you as an employee here. Where do you work on the campus? *Answer:* I work in Tillman Hall on the third floor in the alumni relations department.
- 00:03:30 *Question:* I bet you have fun there. *Answer:* I do! I get to specifically work with a lot of students transitioning them into an alumni role, so it's fun being a recent grad, and what most people consider a young alumni, getting to work with those current students because being on campus and that lifestyle is still so familiar to me. So it's really, really wonderful and I love that Winthrop really reaches out to its graduates, and that they trust their programs enough to know that their graduates are the best of the best. They prove that by hiring us. It's really nice.
- 00:04:11 *Question:* Did you have to take any kind of entrance exams when you came to Winthrop? *Answer:* I took the SAT<sup>1</sup> and the ACT [American College Testing], so I guess that's considered an entrance exam. They were difficult. I do not consider myself a great standardized test taker, but I did okay, and I had a really good GPA [grade point average] from high school. So that was able to help me.
- 00:04:35 *Question:* Where did you go to high school? *Answer:* Lewisville High School in Chester [South Carolina].
- 00:04:40 *Question:* How many were in your class? *Answer:* I think there were 72, and I was

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<sup>1</sup> Originally the Scholastic Aptitude Test, now the SAT Reasoning Test. The acronym no longer stands for anything, but is still commonly called the SAT.

third in my class of 72. So it was nice; it was a very small high school, which that was another thing I liked about Winthrop because I came from such a rural classroom experience, going to a huge state school would have been overwhelming, but Winthrop still gave me that small student to teacher ratio that I needed to be a successful learner. So that was really nice.

- 00:05:08 *Question:* You still sound excited about it. *Answer:* I am because I still know so many of my professors! They're still here, and because I work here I still get to interact with them so regularly. They're still a big part of my life.
- 00:05:20 *Question:* That's wonderful. So, you're saying you think you received everything of the skills that you needed to carry on this profession you have? *Answer:* Absolutely. I can't say that for everyone of course because I didn't have every major, but my major really demands public interaction and strong communication skills. Our teachers always represented that with us and behaved that way every single day. We had no reason not to be successful because we had such good examples.
- 00:05:54 *Question:* You had good practice time? *Answer:* We did. They spoke to us like adults and they expected us to go out into the world and not just be informed about all the topics that we learned about, but to be well rounded enough to have conversations with everyone. But I think that's kind of the Winthrop mindset overall. It's a well-rounded college experience.
- 00:06:15 *Question:* You said a while ago that you still admired and you see your professors here on campus. Who are some of the ones that you really raise high that taught you what you needed? *Answer:* The first one would probably be Dr. Marilyn Sarow. She was my intro to IMC teacher, so she was one of the very first IMC professors that I ever had. She's a brilliant woman and she does a lot of work in the president's office now, so everyone on campus must see how smart she is as well. She's just done a lot of innovative things with the IMC program, and she was also the advisor of the Association for Women in Communications. So when I was the vice president and then the president of that organization I really looked at her as a mentor and she helped us—
- 00:07:05 *Question:* You were an officer in the club? *Answer:* Yes ma'am, and she was our faculty advisor over that, so she really helped us take what we were learning in the classroom and then apply it to real life and help us bond as an organization. That was important to me, but another professor I had, Ms. Bonnye Stuart and Dr. Padmini Patwardhan, those were two other women that were really influential in my time at Winthrop. Everyone was just—they were really fabulous, and they all have difference experiences to bring to the table. I love that—that they all worked in their career fields first before they became professors. They wouldn't say well,

let's look at example number three in the book. They would say well, when I was in this situation this is what I had to do, and this is what I was faced with. So it wasn't just something that you were reading—it was something that they were telling that had already happened.

- 00:08:05 *Question:* Already had applied. *Answer:* Right. They had already experienced it, so you trusted it more. You felt like it carried more weight and value than anything you would get out of a book. That was really important to me as a student.
- 00:08:19 *Question:* How was your first day here on campus? *Answer:* Ugh...I think my first day was really scary. I think the first semester was the hardest for me overall...so the first day was kind of like drowning—I mean, you're in college for the first time. I was a very young freshman. I was 17 and I just felt like the seniors that you see walking around—they just looked like they were ready to enter the working world, and you just felt like such a baby. You just set foot on campus and the professors are asking you all these things and you're in auditorium style classrooms. There may only be 40 or 50 people in the class which is small compared to most universities, but the freshman class size is a little larger in the beginning, and then your class sizes get smaller and smaller as you're at Winthrop longer.
- 00:09:13 *Question:* They sort of weed themselves out? *Answer:* They do, and it gets more specialized as you get deeper into your major, but freshman psychology 101—there were maybe 50 people in that class and I had never been in a classroom full of 50 students at one time. That was overwhelming and just learning the campus—it seems so huge when you get here at first, and now I know that campus like the back of my hand. It's like being at home. You go well, there really aren't that many building, but when you first get here everything looks the same. It's all just a big, brick, beautiful building.
- 00:09:48 *Question:* How did you use the library? *Answer:* I used the library a great deal while I was here because we had a lot of research that we had to do and we couldn't do it all on the internet of course. So many of my design classes I had to have a Mac computer to use all the adobe software, and I didn't have access to that at home or in my apartment or in my residence hall. So I would go to the library many, many nights just to use the technology that was available there because it's very expensive to have on your own. I was not a big library studier though. A lot of my friends did that, but I couldn't study in the library. I had to study in another quiet place on campus because there were so many students in the library.
- 00:10:35 *Question:* So you lived on campus? *Answer:* I did. I lived on campus my first two

years. I lived in Wofford the first year and then I lived in Phelps. I liked Phelps a lot better.

00:10:45 *Question:* What was the difference? *Answer:* I'm not sure if it was the difference in the residence hall, or if it was just the difference with me because I had been there an entire year when I moved into Phelps, so I was more comfortable with living on campus. But Phelps is suite style so you got to know your roommates a little—

00:11:05 *Question:* Is that four in a suite? *Answer:* Right. Suite style, so you're just sharing a bathroom. Then Wofford was community style so it was a lot of girls and we were just young, and they stayed up until all hours of the night, and I'm just not a night owl so that was hard at first. But Phelps was beautiful. I had one of the corner rooms that had the hardwood floors and the big windows, and it just felt like home away from home.

00:11:30 *Question:* Where was your best place to study? *Answer:* I liked going out to the amphitheater before they remodeled everything because I was here before they put up all those iron gates and before they put up all that new brickwork, and it was just his grassy hill with little steps, and it was such a quiet place to go out there and study. Then I would just study in my room because during the day when the students were out in class—if you're between classes—the residence halls were actually a really nice quiet place to study. You could go in the little lobby areas and just find a chair and study for a little while. It wasn't hard to find a place to study. The campus is very accommodating.

00:12:15 *Question:* How was the food? *Answer:* Um...[laughter] the food in Thompson was okay. I like things kind of plain and they got a little bit fancy sometimes I would say. Like I just like regular mac and cheese and they would kind of try to throw some different things in there. So that was interesting. But I *loved* breakfast in Thompson.

00:12:40 *Question:* So you're one of the few that got up to eat breakfast? *Answer:* Yes, because I was not a night owl, so I would always be up for breakfast and they would make the best grits and bacon, and the ladies that worked in there were so sweet. It was like having your grandmother on campus with you because they tell you good morning and they get to know your face and get to looking for you, and if you weren't there they would ask you where you were the day before. I just don't feel like I would have gotten that—

00:13:05 *Question:* They made you feel important. *Answer:* They did, and it made you not as homesick as you would have been otherwise so I loved it, but see when I first started, or during the majority of my time at Winthrop, the DiGiorgio Campus

Center and Markley's were not there. So we always walked across the street to the Digs. I'm sorry, not the Digs—what was it—Dinkins. The Dinkins Student Union and we would eat Subway in there and the other little thing, but I don't know—it was fun. I remember one time it snowed and that was what was open and so we put on our snow boots and our big coats and walked all the way across campus just to go get a sandwich at Subway on a snow day. So that was one of my favorite memories.

- 00:13:50 *Question:* What other memories do you have about programs that were going on here at night, special programs like operas or concerts? *Answer:* My favorite things that we did were always the music theaters. I saw *Godspell* when I was here and that was fantastic. I saw *Once Upon a Mattress* which was this funny comedy about the princess and the pea story like the old fairy tale. It was so funny. There was a night that they did with all of the opera students and they could pick their favorite song from any musical that they wanted, and they would just perform them one after another after another. So it would be one from *Jekyll and Hyde* and one from *Les Mis* [*Les Misérables*], and the next one would be from a Disney movie. It was just this night of musicals that they call it, and it was so much fun. I definitely liked those better than the instrumental performances because I just love theater, and I love musical theater. I thought it was great that you would do those cultural events. I think that is so important that they've instituted that on campus because otherwise, who knows if I would have ever gone? Who knows if I would have ever given it a chance?
- 00:15:10 *Question:* So after being here in that, you would consider going somewhere else since you're out of school like Charlotte [North Carolina] or somewhere and go to programs like that? *Answer:* Absolutely. I actually have since I graduated. I guess it's the off Broadway of *Wicked* the musical—came to Charlotte, and the tickets were really expensive, but I just went ahead and splurged. I just saved and bought tickets because I just became a huge fan of musical theater while I was here. Winthrop definitely does that. It gives you a chance to experience things that you wouldn't otherwise try and then it builds a passion for those things for the rest of your life. You really do leave Winthrop with interests that you never intended on [laughter].
- 00:15:55 *Question:* How about special speakers? *Answer:* I don't know if I can remember anything specific...um...I know we brought one woman in with the Association for Women in Communications, and she was really interesting. She talked about clothing and women's clothing in the business world, and she's written a lot of dress codes for big companies and kind of taught you how you can be fashionable, modest, and appropriate at the same time.
- 00:16:32 *Question:* That was good. *Answer:* It was wonderful, and I think for my

generation that's such a struggle because people want to be independent, and Winthrop does lean towards more towards a liberal type of view these days. I think it was nice for us to all hear you can dress in something you think is fun but still business appropriate, and she talked about all of her experiences. She's written dress codes for banks and things. It was just interesting to hear her experiences through that, so I remember her.

00:17:05 *Question:* That's good. What do you think about the uniforms they used to wear? Would you like to have been there and had to wear those? *Answer:* I think I would like to wear them for about a day to see what it would feel like because I love old movies when they wear the big dresses and the long, long clothes. I just think it's fun, but I think about after a day I'd be tired of it, especially in the summertime.

00:17:30 *Question:* You'd like to make your own choices? *Answer:* Yes.

00:17:38 *Question:* Was there a dress code here when you were there? *Answer:* There was no dress code, and honestly I feel like there should have been because some of the things people would wear to class was extremely questionable. I mean, I'm all for being able to wear your jeans and your t-shirt because you are—you're going from one class to another and then a group meeting and you're not in the business world yet. You should be able to wear jeans, but coming to class in your cartoon print sleep pants is not appropriate.

00:18:05 *Question:* Others have said that too. *Answer:* Yes, I feel like that's very disrespectful to your professors so there's that fine line, but then there's the question of how you would enforce it. I don't know how you would enforce it on the student body, but I have noticed, especially in some of my public relations classes that I took in the mass com. department, we had a lot of foreign exchange students from France, and their clothing choices were very different. I think they would have hated the uniforms back in the day because some of the things they wore were...like when you do presentations and you need to wear business attire—it was not what we would consider business attire. It was a little, what I would call risqué, but that's the cultural difference.

00:18:50 *Question:* That's right. They felt they were right. *Answer:* Right, and the dresses—the hemlines were a little higher and the fabric was a little tighter and clingier. It's not things we would considered appropriate, but it was interesting to be able to be in a class with them and talk about what is appropriate in France or in all of these other cultures compared to what's okay here. But then we would have students from China and they would dress more conservatively that we would ever dress. So it's so funny when, you know I guess Winthrop used to have those dress codes and everybody was the same and now when you look at our campus we're like a melting pot of cultures and values and everybody kind of

learns from other people. You just kind of have to figure out where your place is in the mix of it all.

- 00:19:40 *Question:* What was your favorite class of all and why? *Answer:* My favorite class was Dr. Jane Thomas. She taught consumer behavior in Thurmond, and I think I took it my junior year, and it was the most fascinating class. If I could take it again I would take it today. She, for one, is just a really vivacious teacher. Every day that she comes to class you know she wants to be there and when your teacher's that way, you are that way too. But it was just the material as well. The whole class was about why people make certain purchases, or what would make you choose one brand over another brand loyalty. She taught us that you'll go into a store and because of the way the human mind works you'll touch something that's red, like a red sweater before you'll touch one that's blue. Even if you're looking for a blue sweater, you'll touch the red one first. It's just all these things that you don't—
- 00:20:48 *Question:* That's unique. *Answer:* It's very unique—that you don't understand and I feel like because ICM did incorporate so much from advertising and marketing—it helped me be better at my job, but it also helped me in the real world because I catch myself doing things and I'm like nope—that's just typical consumer behavior, I'm not going to fall for that. I don't really need it. I'm just going through the motions because Target put it on the end aisle or whatever. It was really fun because it was kind of marketing mixed with human psychology.
- 00:21:18 *Question:* So you're saying that what you learned here at Winthrop not only helps you with your profession—it helps you with your own personal life and your environment? *Answer:* Absolutely. I really feel 100% that Winthrop, or maybe even just a college education in general, it helps you be more successful as a person, not just in your career. You think about things in a more in depth way. You critically think through everything, and I don't think I'd be able to do that if it wasn't for Winthrop and my time here.
- 00:21:58 *Question:* Did you have to take physical ed. [education]? *Answer:* I did not have to. I took a few classes just by choice. I did a tennis class that was fun, but I found out I was *really* bad at tennis. There were a lot of guys in the class, and I think they were kind of frustrated with the few girls that signed up because we were just in the way [both laugh] in their opinion. So I learned I was not good at tennis. I took a yoga class which was really interesting and that was actually my first experience with yoga, and I still do yoga now, maybe like once or twice a week because...
- 00:22:35 *Question:* It relaxes you? *Answer:* It does, and I kind of thought it was more of a meditation thing, but once I tried it I realized there's so much stretching and core

body movements involved, and the teacher was so great. It's funny because I tried so many things because they offer such a wide array of classes, and I would take one and go oh, that's not for me, like the tennis thing, but then I took yoga and I was like, oh I like this. Beginner's ballet was the one in the middle where I loved it, but I wasn't very good at it [laughter], but I loved it anyway. So that was interesting.

00:23:10 *Question:* Well, you've tried the balance on both sides. *Answer:* I have. I just took a gambit of things and I really tried to look at my Winthrop experience that way were you know—I was only going to be here for four years because I knew I needed to get in and out in four years because of what my parents would pay for, and I was like, you know what, this is my opportunity to try things I've never tried before. This is my opportunity to have high quality instruction for something that I never—

00:23:38 *Question:* And fun too. *Answer:* And fun, right, for something that I may never be able to do again. So I just tried it all. It was really, really fun.

00:23:53 *Question:* How were the weekends on campus? What did you do for entertainment on the weekends? *Answer:* There weren't very many rules. I think they had a few stricter rules in Margaret Nance, but I lived in Wofford so we pretty much just kind of came and went as we pleased. I will say there's not a lot to walk to and I think that's something the campus is really still struggling with. It was that was a few years ago—that when you're a freshman, you might have a car, but you just want to be able to walk with your friends and there's just not a lot of places on Cherry Road or Oakland to go on the weekend. So a lot of weekends I went home. I went back to Chester and we just visit with my family, and then my boyfriend at the time went to the University of South Carolina, so I would go to Columbia and spend a lot of time in downtown Columbia with him and my other girlfriends that I knew that went down there. So I don't know, that was kind of like the one downfall is that there was so much to do during the week and you just felt so supported by all the faculty and staff, but then I didn't really feel like there was a huge support from the Rock Hill community for entertaining us and really making it feel like a true college town. So we had to—we struggled to find things to do. We made our own fun, but...it was interesting.

00:25:28 *Question:* You had a car the whole time? *Answer:* I did. I had a car so we could drive around or we'd go to the movies, but you know, it costs \$10 to go the movies, so that's a big expense for a college student with a part time job.

00:25:43 *Question:* Would you recommend the college having on Friday or Saturday night a movie set aside somewhere for students to see it. *Answer:* I think that would be great, and since I graduated I think they have done that because now they have

Dina's Place, the movie theater. It's in the new campus center, but that's just—

00:26:05 [no question] *Answer:* Yes, it's wonderful, but they just didn't have that when I was there so I think they're making strides and from what I've heard they're trying to reach out to downtown Rock Hill to try to make it easier. But we would do that—we'd go to McHale's and hangout, or go to dinner. It was fun, but it was just—it was different than when I would go visit people at USC [University of South Carolina]. It's just a different environment and it feels like we have to work a little harder to make the fun here that at other schools, but it's a lot easier for them to get distracted.

00:26:40 *Question:* What would you recommend? *Answer:* They definitely got to install some type of public transportation system from here into downtown Rock Hill, and then if there's any way we could create a better culture for athletics here on campus—I know a football team would be way too expensive—but we really need to get more of our students plugged into what's happening with basketball and tennis and soccer because it's that school spirit that ties everyone together and that's what keeps people here on the weekends.

00:27:10 *Question:* And that's the part that needs to grow? *Answer:* Right. It really is. It needs to be nurtured and unfortunately there's only so much that the faculty and staff can do for that because it's going to have to be the student body that decides to jump on board. I think they're already doing some things with the new freshman class coming in this year to work on that, but we'll see how that grows over the next few years, because I think that's—Winthrop has just excelled in academics, but that's something that's just kind of been on the back burner that needs to be given an opportunity to grow.

00:27:45 *Question:* Who was the president while you were here? *Answer:* Dr. DiGiorgio [snicker] was the president *all* four years when I was here, and I guess...

00:27:55 *Question:* Did you ever see him in person? *Answer:* I did. I saw him on campus, maybe once or twice, and I saw him...at graduation I guess, shook his hand there, but other than that he was more of just, a public figure almost. He wasn't someone that you thought you knew or knew anything about. I know at some schools their presidents would go to the cafeteria or just walk through and speak to students on occasion.

00:28:35 [no question][laughter] That would be really different. So that was not anything that I ever experienced. To me the president was just some person in an office. He kept the campus really beautiful. I wish we would have had a chance to know him more on a personal level, or I wish he would have come out to more events because I know he didn't come to the ring ceremony or the Christmas tree

lighting, and other things where I would have expected to see him. So that was a little bit of a disappointment I guess.

- 00:29:15 *Question:* That's what we want to hear. *Answer:* Yes. I think you need the president sometimes to kind of spear that school spirit along and if they're kind of the rock of the school—everyone is kind of leaning on that. That's something that I hope I can see Winthrop make some changes about in the future—is the way the president is able to relate to the current students.
- 00:29:39 *Question:* Would you recommend this school to your friends? *Answer:* I definitely would. 100%. When I was a student I worked in the admissions office as an admissions counselor's assistant and that was what I did. I recruited future students for Winthrop, and it's because I really do think that what Winthrop has to offer is different than you can find somewhere else. I felt like it's different in a good way and that it's valuable, but I also believe that even though I would recommend it, every person has a personality and every school has a personality. So Winthrop was a great fit for me, but it may not be a great fit for everybody. But if you're looking for a smaller school with great academic integrity, wonderful professors that care about you and that one on one relationship with your professors, I think you could not find a better place.
- 00:30:37 *Question:* How many were in your class? *Answer:* In my graduating class? I have no idea how many students I graduated with. We filled up the whole bottom of the coliseum, but I think there were only 13 that graduated with my major because it was so new, but I knew those 13.
- 00:31:03 *Question:* So your degree's schedule of courses had not been here at Winthrop that long? *Answer:* I think we were only maybe the third or fourth year they had ever had that specialized program. Now I got a bachelor's of science, but the concentration underneath that was very new—that IMC. So that was great and it was great being able to tweak the program and you could tell the professors were still kind of learning so they had a really hands on approach. So yes, I would definitely recommend Winthrop to somebody who was looking for that criteria in a school because there are probably only a few schools in South Carolina that would be even similar, and I think of all the schools that are similar to Winthrop—Winthrop's doing the best. We're the best of an institution of our caliber.
- 00:32:00 *Question:* And you were thankful you were near here. You wouldn't have to travel so far to get back and forth. *Answer:* [laughter] Right. But people said that to me—why do you want to go to a school that's so close to your hometown? Don't you want a true college experience? But, it was so weird the way when I moved to Winthrop because I lived on campus—once you get into those black

iron gates; you're in a world of your own. I could be anything I wanted to be, and I didn't feel like I had my parents looking over my shoulder or anything. I felt like I could come here and be a real college student and then when I needed to go home, I just go home, even if it was just for one night and then come back. So it was nice because I'm a homebody. I don't really like to be too far away. So I was blessed to have Winthrop right in my backyard almost.

[crosstalk]

00:32:59 *Question:* You mean graduating third in your class? You received scholarships to Winthrop? *Answer:* I don't know if Winthrop awarded me any scholarships, but I had the Life Scholarship, and then I got several other community scholarships because of my standings in school and my GPA and SAT score and things, so those community scholarships definitely helped. When my grandmother actually—I didn't realize this until the year that I graduated. I think it was maybe a few weeks before my commencement ceremony—my dad told me when my grandmother who was a Winthrop alum—when she passed away she left us money and that that had also been helping to fund my time here at Winthrop. That was really special to me and that's another reason why I treasure my degree so much.

00:33:45 *Question:* And you worked harder with that—thinking about it didn't you? *Answer:* I did, and by that point I was almost finished, but it's like, wow, the fact that my grandmother didn't just leave a little legacy you know, she really made sure I was going to be able to accomplish what I needed and she was going to make sure that Winthrop experience was there for a lot longer than she was going to be here and that was really special to me because I still feel like because of our degrees and because I'm a Winthrop girl just like her, even though for her it was Winthrop College, and for me it was Winthrop University, we're both Winthrop girls and now I feel like I'll never lose her because we have that connection in us. It was hard to lose her.

00:34:30 *Question:* And this was your mother's mother or your father's mother? *Answer:* This was my father's mom. That whole side of the family we have a lot of Winthrop alums. She passed away when I was in high school—when I was a junior so she never ever knew that I was coming to Winthrop and it's like it all worked out like she had it planned the whole time. I didn't choose to come here just because of her. There were a couple of factors that played into it, but it's funny how in the end she still had a hand in it all the time. So I think that maybe that was a God thing.

00:35:02 *Question:* Is there anything else you'd like to add? *Answer:* I can't think of anything right now other than just...I don't know. I'm excited to see where the

university will go. Being a young alumni I feel like there's so much in front of me and I—I know and I really would like to do another interview in 20 years and see how much I could remember and how much has changed because I think that the campus just grows so rapidly. Just in the time—I've been out of school two years and so many things have changed. They're just improving and polishing and growing and I'm just—I'm afraid if you look away for a second you'll miss it and you won't even know where you are because so many buildings are going up. So I hope that as they grow I really want Winthrop to still maintain its true integrity and what it's really all about because it's a special place to a lot of people. It's my home away from home. It really, really is. So I think that's it.

00:36:25 [no question] Absolutely. It's fun. It's...easy. Well, and then being back on campus as an employee now gives you such a different perspective because you're used to being a student and I still feel myself thinking of myself as a student so often.

00:36:45 [no question] I am and it's fun though and you worry about different things. When you were a student you were worried about what your fun thing is going to be on the weekends or going to the basketball game on Friday night, but when you're a faculty member or staff member, now you worry about budget cuts and you know, who's going to be the new president and how that's going to affect each department and how each department works together. So just your concerns, and your, um...I guess, just the things that you pay attention to change. Right. It is, but your priorities within the success of the university just immediately changes when you become an employee. You feel responsible. You feel like you have to do your very best every single day because we need to make sure Winthrop stays...That it keeps growing and that it's still the wonderful place that we remember because there are students here that are still going through their experience and we want it to be the best it can be for them. So that's—it's funny how immediately you feel so responsible for everything that happens. You feel like it's up to you to keep it a good place for everyone who still needs it to be there.

00:38:05 *Question:* Do you know of any people that were graduates of Winthrop that are now employed on the campus? *Answer:* I don't know, but we just started a faculty-staff alumni group. I don't know what the total number was but we had an event a few months ago out at the Shack, so that was kind of fun over at the Winthrop Lake. I think maybe 25 people came—25 or 30 people and I know that was a small percentage of the total number. We printed up t-shirts that said proud work for my alma mater because we are a special little group of alumni that—we're employees, we're alums, and we were students and we care about the university in a way that's different I think than other people.

00:38:55 [no question] I'm probably close to it. I think that there may be a few that literally started as soon as they graduated last year. I'm probably at the very bottom tier as far as the baby alumni go, but I love it and it's so fun because we have the freshest perspective of what it's like to be a student. We haven't lost that mindset yet, so it's really fun.

00:39:15 *Question:* Do you ever go over to the cafeteria and eat with the students now?  
*Answer:* I do. I'll go over there occasionally and we go to the campus center *a lot*. They have a new place there that makes salads and baked potatoes, and we go over there and hang out and other advisors from other organizations—I'll sit down with them and talk about what all of our students are doing and kind of try to come up with new ideas. I work with the student alumni council—I'm their advisor—so that's when I really have the most student interactions. It's funny because they call me ma'am and they're very polite, but I'm only 2 years older than they are, or 3 years older than they are. They're very respectful as I would expect Winthrop students to be, and hard workers, but it's just so funny because they look at me, I guess because I'm an employee like I'm just ancient. Right, like, oh she's just old, she doesn't understand anymore, but they forget that I was in their shoes just a few years ago. Just a very short time ago I was there studying for finals and making all of those decisions and worried about where my first job was going to be. All those same stresses and all those same pressures that they feel now I felt too, and I remember what it was like. I like being able to be there for them and support them through those things. Well, some of them do. I'm sure there are a few that don't, but I have about 40 students in my organization, and I would say I have more than half of them communicate with me on a regular basis about what's going on in their life.

00:40:58 *Question:* Do they ever meet as a whole? *Answer:* We do. We usually meet every other Wednesday night to do general body meetings, but we'll have more meetings during certain times of the year. They work homecoming and alumni reunions, so we do a lot of meetings in the fall preparing for all of those alumni to come back on campus because they love hosting those women when they come back. We have so much fun at those luncheons, and then out at the tailgating they like hearing all of the old stories. I think that's so strange because usually people in their teens and twenties don't like hearing about the past, but I think that's something that makes Winthrop unique is that we all feel so connected with each other that we want to know. We want to learn because we want all of our experiences to be tied together and that's why those traditions are so important.

00:41:55 *Question:* How do you feel about them being here? *Answer:* I like that they've been here just because I feel like that was going to be one of the really big things that Winthrop was going to need to grow. Well, and my dad was a student here so without him, who knows if I would have ended up here. He loved his Winthrop

experience and I think they've done a great job of incorporating the men into campus. I think they're having trouble even finding a place for all of them to live. They're going to have to build more male housing because it's growing. Word got out I guess that there were so many girls here then all the boys wanted to come. It's interesting, and I think it adds to a classroom dynamic just like I said earlier about having those international students. I'm sure when it was all female people were very focused, but I liked having different perspectives of all different types of people because when you go out into the business world—the real world—you're going to have to interact with everyone and so that classroom is almost like a miniature society. Functioning and communicating with those different types of people—it kind of just prepares you for what's about to come in your life. It was good. I liked it. [referring to her future children] Yes, we have a long, long time. I have got more things to accomplish first, but I think it'll be exciting and I'm looking forward to whenever I do have a family, you know, going out to Winthrop basketball games and being able to share with them the stories and the memories that I had. I bought my dad a brick on Scholar's Walk for his birthday this year; he turned 51. When we were walking down Scholar's Walk, of course it was all new to him because that was not there when he was a student, but we walked around campus and it was so funny stopping at Thurmond and the amphitheater and Byrne's Auditorium and listening to him talk about his experiences there and mine. Like we stopped at the amphitheater and I talked to him about how I'd go out there to study and things and he goes "well, that's where I first watch the Rocky Horror Picture Show, and we brought things and it was like a big play out there—a big movie that they had brought a big screen," so it's just funny how different landmarks on campus hold such different memories for each person, even within the same family like we all have different memories of all those special places. It's like the prettiest place in the world. I don't know how anyone can walk down through our campus and not think that it's gorgeous.

00:44:55 [no question] Well, I would do that because I worked in admissions when I was a student. I mean, college fairs are fun. But that's thing. I think you just have to be honest. Winthrop might not be for everybody, but I'm 100% sure that Winthrop was for me and that's what I can say without a doubt—is Winthrop was the place for me. I think other people that are here and that have stayed, I think they feel just as passionately about it as I do. Maybe for the same reasons, maybe for different reasons. I don't know.

00:45:44 *End of interview*

*Blair Ligon (#272)*