##### [00:00:01.150] - Brian Shelton

I'm Brian Shelton and you're listening to Harper Talks, a coproduction of Harper College Alumni Relations and Harper Radio today on Harper Talks. I'm excited to speak with Shannon Plate. Shannon is a graduate of Harper College, a 2010 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient, and is a licensed clinical professional counselor and an author. Shannon returned to Harper in 1996 and graduated in 1999. While here, she received the Motorola Award for Excellence and was a national medalist for the Harper Speech Team.

##### [00:00:33.980] - Brian Shelton

I'm happy to be in the Harper Radio studio with Shannon. Shannon, welcome. How are you?

##### [00:00:38.600] - Shannon Plate

I am fine, thank you. And it's a pleasure to be here.

##### [00:00:40.740] - Brian Shelton

It's a pleasure to have you. We've had so few guests in the studio over the last two years. It's nice to have someone actually here. So good. Great day today to be here on the campus. So, hey, you came to Harper in the 90s. What brought you here? What brought you to Harper?

##### [00:00:55.910] - Shannon Plate

I had also been here much earlier than that, but I had no idea what I wanted to do. And so I was here for a year and a half or so and didn't do well and left and went to work. And after I'd had my children and was just kind of sitting around thinking what I was going to do with the rest of my life, I thought, well, school, I need to go to school, right? Clearly, I need to go to school. And my interests lie in two different directions, either interior design or psychology. So I talked to my husband. He said yes, all about it, all for it. My kids were all excited, and I signed up for interior design. And so I tell everybody, everybody that I'm starting College and came and I got all of my stuff. And I went to my first class, and it was as wrong as wrong could be.

##### [00:01:48.580] - Brian Shelton

Right.

##### [00:01:49.550] - Shannon Plate

It was just bad. And I sat through the first class and I left and I called my husband. I'm crying. I said, this isn't right. This isn't it. He says, return all your stuff and come home. So I came home, and then the next semester, I signed up for psychology classes. It was psychology from then on and then finished. My associates here went on for undergrad and then graduate work.

##### [00:02:11.790] - Brian Shelton

Okay, that's fantastic. I'm going to go back to something you said, though, that you started here and it just didn't work out. And so you stopped. What happened?

##### [00:02:19.490] - Shannon Plate

I was young. I had no idea what I wanted to do. I had no direction. So it's like, all right, I'll go to school for business, right? I didn't even really know what that was.

##### [00:02:30.560] - Brian Shelton

Right.

##### [00:02:31.050] - Shannon Plate

So I did some prerequisites, hung around for a year and a half or so, but again, without the direction that I thought I had when I came back. But then, which I then eventually found, then I was full steam ahead.

##### [00:02:44.780] - Brian Shelton

Okay, I think that's a really common story. I hear this a lot. A lot of students, they've gone off to whatever four year University after they graduated from high school. They go there. They totally flounder while they're there. Then they come back home with their tail between their legs, and they go to Harper and they're like, oh, my goodness, I should have started here. Yes. You should have started here.

##### [00:03:01.240] - Shannon Plate

Oh, yes. When I came back and I was in my 30s when I came back, I had no idea if this was going to work, if I could do this, if this was going to work with my family, like, I had no clue. So this was a decent risk. I mean, this was a reasonable risk. I could try this. I could come for a semester. I think I only had two classes my first semester. It was not going to cost me a fortune, and I could figure it out. And then when that went swimmingly well and I started coming back full time, the thought that I could still get my associates for such a reasonable amount of money before because I was going to have to spend a fortune later, I knew it. I had to go to grad school to do what I wanted to do so that I could save in the beginning was huge.

##### [00:03:56.040] - Brian Shelton

Yeah. It makes a huge difference in the total cost.

##### [00:03:59.690] - Shannon Plate

And it's a great school. I'm a big Harper fan. Big Harper fan.

##### [00:04:04.820] - Brian Shelton

Yeah. I had trustee Bill Kelley on the show once.

##### [00:04:10.790] - Shannon Plate

We became Distinguished Alumni the same year.

##### [00:04:12.900] - Brian Shelton

Yeah. And he said that if you took the money that you saved the cost and tuition difference between going to Harper and going to, let's say, NIU your first two years, if you took that and just dropped it in the S Amp P 500 and left it until you're retired, you'd have $1.5 million.

##### [00:04:28.500] - Shannon Plate

Oh, my word.

##### [00:04:30.160] - Brian Shelton

Right. So think about that. Think about how much money you save by coming here.

##### [00:04:34.310] - Shannon Plate

NIU is pretty reasonable right now. Let's talk about the difference between this and a Big Ten or this in an out of state.

##### [00:04:41.500] - Brian Shelton

....Or the privates in the area. Right.

##### [00:04:42.940] - Shannon Plate

Or the privates in the area.

##### [00:04:43.900] - Brian Shelton

Absolutely. Yeah. It's a huge difference that people need to keep in mind. I know while you were at Harper, you were on the Harper speech team, which I work with regularly. Tell me about your involvement with the team.

##### [00:04:53.690] - Shannon Plate

Marsha Litrenta. Marsha Litrenta. You have to take a speech class. And I was being asked to speak and was terrified to do it. So I said, I'm going to do this speech class. I'm going to do this. Right. And I was so afraid but had some kind of aptitude for this. So Marsha said, I think you should join the speech team. And I went, no, thank you so much. It's very kind. I'm not doing that. And then the next semester I took Speech II with her. And she said, come on, come on, come on. And I went, oh, my gosh, this is going to be me. I'm by this time I'm 35, 36, 37 years old, traveling with these 18 and 19 year-olds. Right. I was like the grandma. But it turned out that she had talked another returning student that I'm doing air quotes. Returning student. And so we did it together. We had the best time. It was perfectly wonderful. I learned more than I ever even thought I could learn. And then she and I went on to do we did programs. We did entertaining programs for groups for the next ten years.

##### [00:06:04.100] - Brian Shelton

Okay. That's fun.

##### [00:06:05.900] - Shannon Plate

So it became part of my career. And public speaking has been part of my career ever since.

##### [00:06:10.750] - Brian Shelton

What was it like being on the speech team? I mean, I know that you were the older person on the team, but what do you do on the speech team for people who don't know what's that involved?

##### [00:06:19.040] - Shannon Plate

It's amazing. You develop speeches in different areas, right. There are prose, there's poetry, there was speech to entertain, there was informative speeches. And so you would develop these speeches and then perform them for judges. So a speech tournament, they have one here every year. There's hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of students. You go in this little room where there's like five students and the judge, you do the speech. And if you break, meaning if your speech is good enough to be the best one out of whatever out of five or six that are in the room. Well, no, it's more than that.

##### [00:07:01.030] - Brian Shelton

The other rounds. Yeah, right.

##### [00:07:02.320] - Shannon Plate

The other rounds. So if you get that, then you go into a final round where you do your speech again. And then sometimes you get medals, like you get cool trophies. I have trophies. I have plunder from my time on the speech team. It was great. It was also made me grow in ways I didn't even know I needed to grow. Because you lose more than you win. Right. And that's no fun. Nobody likes to lose. But winning is a lot of fun. I didn't realize winning was so much fun.

##### [00:07:35.730] - Brian Shelton

Winning can be fun, but you can learn a lot from losing.

##### [00:07:38.420] - Shannon Plate

Totally. Right.

##### [00:07:40.670] - Brian Shelton

I love working with the students on the speech team. It's always a good time. I get to travel with them every once in a while and then go judge some tournaments. So it's fun. It's not my primary thing here, but it's fun.

##### [00:07:48.390] - Shannon Plate

Do you work with Haley Moulton?

##### [00:07:50.630] - Brian Shelton

No.

##### [00:07:51.710] - Shannon Plate

She is my great niece.

##### [00:07:53.530] - Brian Shelton

Okay.

##### [00:07:53.800] - Shannon Plate

And she was on the team, I think, two or three years ago.

##### [00:07:57.620] - Brian Shelton

Okay. I may have and just not know. Maybe. Okay. So you said that you knew you were going to go to graduate school after Harper. So what did you do after Harper? Did your undergraduate degree and then graduate school.

##### [00:08:09.580] - Shannon Plate

Where did you go with they went to Roosevelt. Roosevelt was on campus one day, and I knew they were local. Right. I wanted to clearly, I had two kids. I'm not going to go away somewhere. So it had to be somewhere in the Chicago area. So I had spoken to them and they were very kind to me in admissions. And so I thought, perfect, I'm just going to go to Schaumburg. Just going to go to the Chamber campus. Well, turns out you can't get all the classes at the Schaumburg campus, but they have a van that took us back and forth every day. It was by, hands down, the best deal ever. So I did my undergrad at Roosevelt and then went from there to Trinity in Deerfield to do my Masters.

##### [00:08:52.610] - Brian Shelton

And how did that go?

##### [00:08:54.000] - Shannon Plate

It was brutally hard. Brutally hard. Yeah. It was wonderful, but it was really hard.

##### [00:09:00.040] - Brian Shelton

Yeah. People tell me all the time, I'm thinking about going to graduate school. And I'm like, maybe think again.

##### [00:09:06.290] - Shannon Plate

Well, the cool thing about it is there's nothing that you do there that isn't about your focus.

##### [00:09:14.070] - Brian Shelton

Right.

##### [00:09:14.620] - Shannon Plate

So you're done with prerequisites. You're done well, I had a couple of them at Trinity, but not much, but everything is. Oh, my gosh. I am going to use this when I am face to face with clients. This I need to remember statistics, not so much, but this I need to remember.

##### [00:09:31.030] - Brian Shelton

Right. Yeah. I remember in graduate school reading three or 400 pages a week and then having to actually know that info, not just skimming it, but you actually know that information and come to class and be prepared to answer those questions. And it was intense. It was two years of very intense study for me. How long was your program?

##### [00:09:49.170] - Shannon Plate

Three years altogether. Because I had an internship.

##### [00:09:52.580] - Shannon Plate

Okay.

##### [00:09:52.940] - Shannon Plate

But tomes, right. Books that were inches thick that were incomprehensible for the most part, that you, in fact, needed to be able to talk reasonably about.

##### [00:10:05.460] - Brian Shelton

Right. Yeah. You had to be knowledgeable about it. And if you weren't, they'd call you out on it. Yeah, absolutely. I was looking at your website, and I find it interesting that your practice involves marriage and budget counseling.

##### [00:10:21.140] - Shannon Plate

Yes!

##### [00:10:21.920] - Brian Shelton

Would you talk to us about why those two issues go together? Having been divorced twice, I know why they go together.

##### [00:10:32.550] - Shannon Plate

In fact, it's how I got into my field. I was volunteering at my Church, and I had been a single parent. I had been divorced and was a single parent. And then when I remarried now, I wasn't working two or three jobs anymore, and I could volunteer places. So I went to Church and I said, what do you guys need? And they said, well, how about this budgeting Ministry? And I said, that's my jam.

##### [00:10:58.730] - Brian Shelton

Right.

##### [00:10:59.150] - Shannon Plate

I wouldn't know what to do with a million dollars, but I can make five into ten. I can do that. So I learned a lot about not just the budgeting process, but how to teach that and how to be kind and compassionate when you're doing that. And somewhere in there a therapist that worked there said, hey, would you do this for money? And I'm like, yes, I would. In fact, I would. So while I was in grad school, I had a budget counseling practice that wasn't therapy, it was just budget. So that when I got my degree, when I got my license. Now I do both of these out of one place, and many people will come for budget counseling, kind of get their affairs in order and then stay for marriage counseling or the other way around because money is such a huge thing in marriage.

##### [00:11:49.530] - Brian Shelton

Yeah. So they come to you for one and then wind up for both, is what you're saying. I think that's really interesting. Tell me about what else do you do in your practice? What does it mean to be a licensed practicing counselor? What does that mean?

##### [00:12:00.440] - Shannon Plate

I sit with either individuals or couples. I don't work with kids. So I start at about age 18, and we sit and work through whatever it is that is the thorn in their side. If it's a couple, it's usually their relationship. At that point, my client becomes the relationship. Right. Not one or the other. I can't align with one or the other, but with couples that the client is the relationship. Any individuals that come in, they are my client. And so I'm walking with them as they are working through something, trying to make a decision. I don't give advice. I'm not directive in any way. Counselor. Sounds like I'm going to say, well, here's what you should do.

##### [00:12:45.580] - Brian Shelton

What you should do, right.

##### [00:12:46.440] - Shannon Plate

I know because I'm all wise. No, but I walk with people because I have this very expensive education. Bring a perspective to the table, bring a way to look at things to the table, bring tools to the table that they didn't have before. That will be useful in deciding what that next step is going to be.

##### [00:13:09.800] - Brian Shelton

Okay. What do you think the most common problem is, particularly with marriage relationships, Besides money?

##### [00:13:15.360] - Shannon Plate

Communication.

##### [00:13:16.330] - Brian Shelton

Communication.

##### [00:13:17.270] - Shannon Plate

That's the hands down, which is how the book came about, right?

##### [00:13:21.380] - Brian Shelton

Yeah. I want to talk to you about your book because I'm looking and you've written four books.

##### [00:13:27.040] - Shannon Plate

I have, in fact, written four books.

##### [00:13:29.460] - Brian Shelton

Yes. And I'm struggling to write four chapters. How does one write four books? First off, how does one write a book? Okay. How does one write four? I guess.

##### [00:13:42.090] - Shannon Plate

One I was hired to write the first money book, The Density of Your Personal Finances, I met a guy on a plane, and by the time we got off the plane, he was going to send me a contract to write that first book.

##### [00:13:55.730] - Brian Shelton

Okay.

##### [00:13:56.530] - Shannon Plate

The fiction and the last three were self published. Be aware. It's really hard to get a book published, but the fiction came about. I've been to Ireland several times. And while I was there, I had this idea for a book. I was in line at the you want the long story? I was in line at the airport, and then this couple in front of me, clearly, one of them was getting on the plane, and one of them was not. And so every four steps, the woman would burst into tears. They would get out of line. She would mop it up. They would get back in line. Four more steps, and she would burst into tears again. And I'm like, what would that be like to be in love with someone in a different country? That would be hard. And so that started perking. So I got my undergrad degree from Roosevelt and then wrote took a year and wrote *Nothing Random*. And then when that was done, then started grad school.

##### [00:14:53.470] - Brian Shelton

Okay.

##### [00:14:54.070] - Shannon Plate

So I did it. Ann Lemont, do you know Ann Lemont. She wrote a book called Bird by Bird. And I didn't read this until long after I'd written the book. But it's that you sit down at the same time every day. You write for about the same number of either hours or words every day. This becomes what you do from this time to this time. Right. If you wait until you have time, if you wait until 11:00 at night, unless that's your time, which it is not for me.

##### [00:15:23.670] - Brian Shelton

I just don't have the willpower because I was trying that method. I was trying every morning from 06:30 A.m. Until 650. That's it. Wow. I get up at four. So I was just going to write from 6:30 to 6:50. Yeah.

##### [00:15:37.690] - Shannon Plate

Would you like my card?

##### [00:15:38.920] - Brian Shelton

Yeah, exactly. And then life starts happening and it blows up, and then you can't stick to the practice and get the writing done. So how did you stay so motivated to keep to the practice?

##### [00:15:51.450] - Shannon Plate

Well, this was my job for that year, okay. I had not started school. I had not started grad school because I was doing this.

##### [00:16:00.380] - Brian Shelton

Okay.

##### [00:16:01.120] - Shannon Plate

And that's how I am.

##### [00:16:05.240] - Brian Shelton

Yeah. You have willpower to do it.

##### [00:16:07.030] - Shannon Plate

Stubborn. I think it's the word that most people use. Yes.

##### [00:16:10.290] - Brian Shelton

There's nothing wrong with being stubborn. It's an Irish trait.

##### [00:16:13.810] - Shannon Plate

Irish trait. Exactly. And I have to tell you, it was so much fun. It was so much fun. I loved it. I couldn't wait to sit down. And then the whole rest of the day, I was thinking about what was going to happen next.

##### [00:16:26.530] - Brian Shelton

Okay.

##### [00:16:27.320] - Shannon Plate

There's a tiny little spoiler alert. There's a death somewhere in the book. Well, there's a death in almost every book. Right. And so I had talked to people in Ireland. I had to take many trips to Ireland. Such a strain. So awful. Really took one for the team there.

##### [00:16:47.850] - Brian Shelton

So awful to go to Ireland. I've been once. I thoroughly enjoyed my trip. It was great.

##### [00:16:50.800] - Shannon Plate

I've enjoyed every trip. So I had talked to all these people about what our funerals like in Ireland. And how do you do this and then came home and was going to write that section of the book. And then my friend who lives there, her mother in law died. Okay. So I turned to my husband and I went, I've been home like a week. I said I could go to a real funeral. And he goes, you have to go. He was so patient, so good. So I went back and I went to the funeral and wrote the whole thing differently than I would have.

##### [00:17:25.580] - Brian Shelton

Okay. That's good personal experience. What about the first book, the finance book? Tell me more about that. What is that about?

##### [00:17:34.380] - Shannon Plate

It is kind of a step by step. Some parts of it are dated now because technology has come so far. But it's a step by step kind of manual in how to manage your finances in a way that will get you to financial freedom. So get out of debt, spend less than you earn so that you can save. Because if you're starting way out here, if you're starting with a lot of debt and don't know how to manage things, to even stop creating more debt.

##### [00:18:08.370] - Brian Shelton

Right.

##### [00:18:08.950] - Shannon Plate

Having steps, having definitive steps to take is really helpful and to make everything very visible, have it right in front of you. And again, now there are so many apps. There's Mint, there's Every Dollar, there's all these things that can be on your phone that can alert you when these things happen.

##### [00:18:29.830] - Brian Shelton

Right. Is the book still available?

##### [00:18:32.690] - Shannon Plate

I think it is. I think if you went on Amazon, you could get it for a Penny. A Penny plus 399 shipping. Yes.

##### [00:18:42.590] - Brian Shelton

Maybe I get it prime free shipping.

##### [00:18:46.050] - Shannon Plate

It's out of print. Out of print.

##### [00:18:49.360] - Brian Shelton

So rare copy. Yeah.

##### [00:18:51.080] - Brian Shelton

Okay. That's very cool. Another thing I was noticing on your website, you talk a lot about empathy.

##### [00:18:56.340] - Shannon Plate

Oh, gosh, empathy.

##### [00:18:57.820] - Brian Shelton

Tell me about empathy. Why do you talk about empathy so much?

##### [00:19:00.530] - Shannon Plate

Because it is.

##### [00:19:01.880] - Brian Shelton

Define empathy.

##### [00:19:02.710] - Shannon Plate

Empathy is the capacity for understanding someone else's feelings. It's not feeling their feelings with them. It's not. Oh, you're sad. So I'm sad. It's oh, you're sad because this so it's emotion plus situation equals empathy.

##### [00:19:24.130] - Brian Shelton

Okay?

##### [00:19:24.680] - Shannon Plate

You feel sad because your tires flat and now you can't get to work or you feel frustrated because your tires flat. Now you can't get to work, right? You feel sad because you can't make yourself sit down and write in the morning.

##### [00:19:39.540] - Brian Shelton

Right.

##### [00:19:40.320] - Shannon Plate

So it's the kind of vision that you learn to almost gift someone because it's completely other focused. Empathy is completely other focused. It doesn't matter how I feel about your situation. It makes absolutely no difference if I have felt the same thing.

##### [00:20:05.520] - Brian Shelton

Right.

##### [00:20:05.990] - Shannon Plate

That's not even a part of the discussion. This is all about you, okay? You feel blank because blank.

##### [00:20:14.070] - Brian Shelton

All right. And what do I do with that? How do I help someone with empathy?

##### [00:20:19.110] - Shannon Plate

First of all, and especially in our culture, the way it is now the very act of giving time.

##### [00:20:27.390] - Brian Shelton

Okay.

##### [00:20:28.470] - Shannon Plate

And being completely other focused is so unusual as to be Haley's Comet. Everything is brevity now, right? We're texting, we're emailing, we're quick calling, we're all Instagram and Facebook, and very little is face to face. So to sit down and look at someone and gift your time and your skill is huge.

##### [00:20:54.210] - Brian Shelton

So an essential part of empathy is listening. Yeah.

##### [00:20:57.810] - Shannon Plate

It's listening and responding well because you can listen well and respond badly, right? I can listen to you and then say, oh, I know exactly how you feel because I went through that same thing last year and this is what I did. And you're going, who cares, right? You're not me. Our situations are not the same. And honestly, I don't care what you did. Right. It is caring without self, but it is doing that. It's doing it in a skilled way. It's doing it with some learning behind it. So that was the Care Talk books with little tiny skinny books that are very specific in how to do that, how to gift someone of your time and care.

##### [00:21:46.950] - Brian Shelton

I have a weird question for you. Does that make you tired? Do you feel emotionally exhausted from listening to people all day for work?

##### [00:21:56.090] - Shannon Plate

No. Because again, it creates distance. I care deeply about my clients, but their problems are not my problems. I have to be able to do my job well. I have to be able to leave that at work.

##### [00:22:12.540] - Brian Shelton

Okay.

##### [00:22:13.060] - Shannon Plate

But my care can be can be deep and meaningful because it doesn't have anything to do with me because it's not based on shared experience. If good counseling was based on shared experience, I could never work with someone that was in the tsunami unless I was in the tsunami too. Right. And then my experiences would get all mixed up with theirs. So good empathy creates distance. It's work. My job is I love my job and my job is tiring, but it's not tiring because I'm so involved in everybody's emotions.

##### [00:22:55.510] - Brian Shelton

Okay. That makes sense. Yeah, that makes sense. I think what you're saying to a little bit is this idea that I think a lot of us have come to know over the years as we grow and mature, that a lot of times if you need advice about something that you're wanting to do or shouldn't do, asking someone who knows you very well might not be the best solution, right? It might be best to go to someone who's completely outside of your sphere of influence.

##### [00:23:20.870] - Shannon Plate

That's what Google is for.

##### [00:23:22.230] - Brian Shelton

And that's what Google is for...

##### [00:23:23.960] - Shannon Plate

If you're going to ask advice. And I think what we do as people is assume people want our advice. There's quite a lot of UN asked for advice floating around out there. I think a good rule of thumb is assume no one wants your advice unless it's asked. And even if someone does ask, you there's only two options with that. If I give you advice and it goes well, what have you learned?

##### [00:23:52.150] - Brian Shelton

I learned that you give good advice.

##### [00:23:54.670] - Shannon Plate

And if I give you terrible advice and it falls apart.

##### [00:23:59.260] - Brian Shelton

It's all your fault.

##### [00:24:00.970] - Shannon Plate

It's all my fault That's right.

##### [00:24:01.790] - Brian Shelton

There's not a lot of win, actually, in giving advice.

##### [00:24:04.810] - Shannon Plate

Yeah. Students will often ask for advice about majors and where to go to school and things like that. And I just always ask them to tell me what it is that you really are wanting to try to do. And then I can only tell you what some possibilities are, but I can't tell you what to do.

##### [00:24:19.520] - Shannon Plate

Right?

##### [00:24:19.650] - Brian Shelton

Right. I used to teach filmmaking and my thing, I was always, I can't teach you to be creative. I can give you all the tools to be creative and put you in the position to be creative. But your creativity has to come from you, right? Yeah. So I totally get it.

##### [00:24:36.050] - Shannon Plate

I don't have clients that say, oh, come on, just tell me what to do. Even though I'm not going to. They know I'm not going to. Right. Please tell me what you think I should do. Nope, I'm not doing it.

##### [00:24:48.850] - Brian Shelton

So you became a Harper Distinguished Alumni in 2010. What was that like for you?

##### [00:24:54.150] - Shannon Plate

I have to tell you that that is in the top probably three greatest honors of my life.

##### [00:25:05.320] - Brian Shelton

Wow. Yeah.

##### [00:25:06.020] - Shannon Plate

Harper meant so much to me. I had a wonderful experience here. And this was when I realized that because I had been on my own, very entrepreneurial. So I counted on myself for encouragement or that kind of thing. But when I got here, there was nowhere in my life that hard work was rewarded more than at Harper.

##### [00:25:35.390] - Brian Shelton

Okay.

##### [00:25:36.350] - Shannon Plate

If you worked hard, there was somebody standing right there saying, hey, I've noticed that you work hard. How about this? Why don't you join this? How about you do a commercial for Harper? How about you get into the Phi Theta Kappa? How about you join the Speech Team? There was someone standing there waiting to be encouraging. And I'm like, wow, I love it here. If I could have stayed here all four years, I would have.

##### [00:26:07.310] - Brian Shelton

Yeah, I hear that a lot.

##### [00:26:09.550] - Shannon Plate

And the teaching was outstanding, and the place is beautiful and there's art hanging everywhere, and the bathrooms are always clean. I mean, there's nothing not to like here.

##### [00:26:19.620] - Brian Shelton

Right. While you're telling me that I just lowkey looked you up on LinkedIn real quick just to make sure, because I kind of lowkey harass our alumni about this. You have Harper College listed on your education, on your page, on LinkedIn proudly. And sometimes when I'm interviewing people, I'm like, you're a Distinguished Harper Alumni, and you don't have Harper College listed on your page.

##### [00:26:40.940] - Shannon Plate

Give me their names.

##### [00:26:41.510] - Brian Shelton

Yeah. Low key. Shame them. Right?

##### [00:26:45.870] - Shannon Plate

You bet. I have my diplomas in my office just in case anybody's going.

##### [00:26:49.430] - Brian Shelton

Check it out.

##### [00:26:50.180] - Shannon Plate

Did you actually graduate Harper's right there proudly hanging.

##### [00:26:54.280] - Brian Shelton

Yeah, I always talk about that with folks because I think folks in our College Foundation would Echo this. A lot of people, when they go to school and they go to a community College when they leave, what they identify with is the place where they finish their undergraduate degree and that's whose T shirt they wear and who they donate to at giving time and whose homecoming they visit and that sort of thing. And it's like, wait a minute, wait a minute. What about us? I always like to check and see if people are listing Harper on their LinkedIn profile.

##### [00:27:23.930] - Shannon Plate

Absolutely no disrespect to the other two fine institutions I attended. But Harper was my favorite, hands down.

##### [00:27:32.450] - Brian Shelton

Well, speaking of giving, you started the Distinguished Alumni Scholarship or co started co founder.

##### [00:27:39.280] - Shannon Plate

I was asked to head it up. I wish I could say that it was my idea. It was not. But I was asked to head it up.

##### [00:27:47.740] - Brian Shelton

All right. So tell me about the scholarship. What's going on there?

##### [00:27:51.570] - Shannon Plate

I harassed many times, harassed every distinguished alumni. And we gathered over the course of six, seven, eight months or so about $18,000 towards the scholarship. We wanted it to be endowed so that it would give every year.

##### [00:28:14.180] - Brian Shelton

Right.

##### [00:28:14.840] - Shannon Plate

So my thoughts, because if you're going to shoot, why not shoot for the stars? I wanted $100,000 in there.

##### [00:28:20.920] - Brian Shelton

Okay.

##### [00:28:21.320] - Shannon Plate

And I'm still harassing people so that we could give it someone an entire year of Harper with the interest that that produced into perpetuity. So now what happens is and again, still harassing people. It gets a little larger every year, which gives it a little more interest, and then we throw a little more on top of that.

##### [00:28:47.670] - Brian Shelton

Okay.

##### [00:28:48.330] - Shannon Plate

And then that will give the person that wins enough to make a substantial difference. I have to tell you, we read probably 25 applications that are vetted for the Distinguished Alumni Scholarship. It is the hardest decision to make.

##### [00:29:07.340] - Brian Shelton

Right.

##### [00:29:07.770] - Shannon Plate

I wish we had five of them to give out. I wish we had ten of them to give out. Student on top of student hardworking doing everything that they can do in sometimes dire financial situations where this money is going to make a big difference.

##### [00:29:26.010] - Brian Shelton

It's life changing.

##### [00:29:27.010] - Shannon Plate

Life changing. This could be the difference on whether they get to come to school or not. It's humbling.

##### [00:29:33.880] - Brian Shelton

Yeah. Well, let me ask you a question then, because something I'm personally interested in, I think people listening might be interested in. How do you ask people for money? Nobody wants to ask people for money. Right. Like that's. Like a big no, you don't talk about money, right?

##### [00:29:48.160] - Shannon Plate

Yeah.

##### [00:29:48.420] - Brian Shelton

How do you ask people for money?

##### [00:29:51.430] - Shannon Plate

It was easier for me because we were distinguished alumni.

##### [00:29:54.810] - Brian Shelton

Okay. So there's a cohort group. They know who you are.

##### [00:29:58.080] - Shannon Plate

Well, they didn't know who I was. They know now. They kind of dread my emails.

##### [00:30:00.890] - Brian Shelton

Right.

##### [00:30:03.190] - Shannon Plate

But we're in a cohort, and we're in a cohort that honored us, and we all love Harper. So to go to everyone and say, you guys, it's the least we can do, it's the least we can do. Look what Harper has done for us, right? So was it guilt? Yeah. Okay. I think there was guilt in there. Yeah. I'm checking all the psychological words guilt.

##### [00:30:30.300] - Brian Shelton

I think it's you to come and work on our scholarship fund.

##### [00:30:33.350] - Shannon Plate

Oh, no, because I'm still working on mine.

##### [00:30:35.490] - Brian Shelton

You could do two at a time.

##### [00:30:37.670] - Shannon Plate

But people were kind and people were giving. And it really has gone very well. That's good. And so we get together, not in the last few years, but usually we have a dinner at my house to choose the recipient and have a wonderful time.

##### [00:30:53.470] - Brian Shelton

That's fantastic. I love it. I love that you're giving back in that way. And that group of people is giving back in that way as well. It makes a huge difference. I donate to the College in the year through the Promise Fund and then particularly to the radio station Fund and do the same at my undergraduate institution as well. And then you get the little Harper always the foundation does a really great job. They'll send you a little notes from a student written or you get a little video. And the cynic in me is like, yeah, thanks a lot. But the warm hearted person to me is like, that's really cool. They sent me a really nice note. I appreciate that. Yeah, I appreciate it. It's fun. I always ask all the guests on the show, what advice do you have for two groups of people? Okay. Someone who is maybe considering coming to Harper College but isn't sure that kind of undecided student. Oh, I'm going to go off to whatever school. And the other one is advice for current Harper students about what to do while they're here.

##### [00:31:54.900] - Shannon Plate

Okay.

##### [00:31:55.360] - Brian Shelton

Yeah.

##### [00:31:56.570] - Shannon Plate

For people thinking about coming, other than just saying yes, do that.

##### [00:32:03.400] - Brian Shelton

Right.

##### [00:32:07.290] - Shannon Plate

I would ask them to look very carefully at reasons they wouldn't come. It's kind of a slam dunk in terms of quality of education and reasonable financial costs. All of those are kind of a gimme. So I think it's more about, well, gosh, why wouldn't you do that? And for some students, it's well, I want to go to away to school. I want to have away to school think, well, you can kind of mimic that. You can get an apartment close by. I mean, there's things you can do to still avail yourself of everything that Harper has to offer, which is Legion. Legion. You will find people here that will that will hugely help the next step of your education. I got a large scholarship at Roosevelt because of how well I had done here.

##### [00:33:06.380] - Brian Shelton

Right. I see that a lot.

##### [00:33:08.720] - Shannon Plate

It can only help. It can only help. So I think that's what I would say to people. I mean, if they're not sure about Harper, Then there's lots that you could say and there's many people that you could speak to, but the quality of the institution has never been in question. What would make you not come, I think, is a bigger question. Okay. And for people that are here, stay. Right. Don't just go to class and go home.

##### [00:33:40.660] - Brian Shelton

Yeah.

##### [00:33:41.240] - Shannon Plate

Stay. Go to a play. I mean, the last two years have been very difficult, and we've not been able to enjoy everything that harbor has always offered. But I think there's a place you can play pool. There's a million places on campus where people meet, have a cup of coffee, do your study group here, speak with professors afterward, take a swim, really enjoy the campus, do things that you wouldn't do anywhere else.

##### [00:34:13.260] - Brian Shelton

Right. I talk about that with students all the time. The College experience is much more than going to class and taking a class and doing your work. It's meeting other people and meeting people that you wouldn't necessarily meet otherwise as well. Right. And people from different places and cultures and backgrounds, and that is part of what shapes you as a person and that's part of what College is about. But so many students are so focused on I've got to collect these credits to graduate, and they're not concerned about the big picture of what the education really is.

##### [00:34:42.990] - Shannon Plate

And there are so many clubs, so many extra things that can be done here that are way fun. I mean, totally fun, but that can also help incredibly, once you go to your next institution. My son was here for his first year and played pool. He's always played pool and was got so good here that when he went to ISU he was on the pool team there. They won. They sent him to Vegas for this incredible, like, national pool thing, which was the weirdest thing I've ever seen in my life.

##### [00:35:22.260] - Brian Shelton

What did you do at Harper? I learned to play pool.

##### [00:35:24.810] - Shannon Plate

Exactly.

##### [00:35:26.070] - Brian Shelton

That's great. Well, Shannon, I could talk to you all day. I really appreciate you coming on the show today and being here. I thank you for everything that you do for the foundation and for our students.

##### [00:35:34.370] - Shannon Plate

Pleasure.

##### [00:35:35.160] - Brian Shelton

It's fantastic. It was fun to talk to you.

##### [00:35:36.970] - Shannon Plate

And you.

##### [00:35:38.430] - Brian Shelton

I look forward to maybe having you again sometime.

##### [00:35:40.750] - Shannon Plate

I'd love that.

##### [00:35:41.570] - Brian Shelton

Okay. Shannon plate is a graduate of Harper College and a 2010 distinguished alumni. If you're enjoying Harper Talks, please subscribe and while you're at it rate and review us so that others might find us. Harper talks is a coproduction of Harper College Alumni Relations and Harper Radio. Our show is produced by Shannon Hynes. This episode was edited by Brian Diaz. Our online content producer is Ashley Rosenthal. Our theme music was created by Aidan Cashman. I'm Brian Shelton. Thanks for listening.