

Connecticut College

Digital Commons @ Connecticut College

Alumni Oral History Project

Linda Lear Center for Special Collections &
Archives

2018

Sammi Shay '13-Brooke Suiter '68

Sammi Shay

Brooke Suiter

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

Recommended Citation

Shay, Sammi and Suiter, Brooke, "Sammi Shay '13-Brooke Suiter '68" (2018). *Alumni Oral History Project*. 11.

<https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/oralhistory/11>

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

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

Sammi Shay: So why did you decide to come to Connecticut College?

Brooke Suiter: Well I was living in North Carolina and I knew I wanted to get out of the South and my dad said, "Well, why don't you go to Stanford?" I said, "I didn't want to go that far." So, I looked at New England schools and sent away for catalogs and pored over them. What appealed to me about Conn was no Greek system and the single rooms and the location. I thought, "Ooh, you could go to New York, you could go to Boston. That will be nice, that will be wonderful." And, Rosemary Park was the president up until '62 and I had started looking in '61, right before I would have come and I thought she was very impressive. My mother had two sisters who had been to Vassar who both wanted me to look at Vassar, which I did. I looked at Wellesley. I looked at Smith. I looked at a little itty bitty college in upstate New York called Wells – way too small and way too remote. The most obnoxious person I knew, I had first met at summer camp and then she came to my prep school—I was at a girl's prep school—it was boarding, but I was a day student. And she was applying to Wellesley. No, camp and school was quite enough with her. So, I got- I applied and got in early so I never applied any place else and interestingly, when my- each of my three children, none of whom came here, none of them came to enroll but they all came to look at it. "Yup, mom's kind of place, I can see it." And they went to Duke, Yale, and Boston University. They wanted bigger, they wanted bigger which was fine, but I did not want bigger—bigger than my high school class of 32, but without feeling like you were a cast of thousands, so I would say size was the other thing.

How large was your class at the time?

We were the largest class at that point in the fall of '64, we were 350. So, they had us- all the commons rooms were given up and refurbished and had beds. They were bunk beds places. It was- it was a tight squeeze. And so all along we were the lump in the python.

SS: What if anything surprised you about the College during your time here?

BS: I was surprised—I don't know it's about the College—what I loved was that they adhered to what they said: that there were small classes, you really developed relationships with your professors. I sat down and wrote all those teachers- professors down, first and last name, without any thinking about it. How many professors do I remember. I was in their homes. It- they would come to the dining halls for dinner. What surprised me, and I had lived in Puerto Rico even though I was born in North Carolina- I lived in Puerto Rico, was the- it surprised me because I thought people in New England in the Mid-Atlantic States were so sophisticated. One of the first questions I got was, "Is this the first time you've ever worn shoes?" They woke me up when it snowed. "Johnson, Johnson come see the snow." I said, "We have snow in North Carolina. We have ski resorts in North Carolina." My freshman year I cemented a relationship with one friend and I'm still a friend, and next week- they have they're in our class and they live in California- she lives in California/. We're sitting around dinner, "What's your name, where are you from?" And she said, "Scarsdale" and I said, "Well where's that?" She had always hated telling people she was from Scarsdale because she thought people instantly- it was a stereotype. She was instantly dropped into a pattern that says, you're wealthy, you're stuck-up.

And that wasn't her at all. So she thought, anybody who says, "Where's Scarsdale?" there's the beginning of a friendship. So then- then comes spring break and she went with me to North Carolina. This was her exploration. We come back. She's talking in her dorm room and she doesn't know that I'm out in the hall, heading to the shower. And I heard her say, "We thought Johnson was bad? I couldn't understand anything her family said the whole week. She had to translate." That's been true all my life. People would say, "How long since you lived in the South?" and I'd say, "20, 30 40 years," and they'd say, "Well, you certainly never lost your accent," and I'd say, "Oh, yes, I did." My family will tell you that I talk like a Yankee and they'd say, "Oh, no," and I'd say, "listen, you can't imagine what I sounded like 20, 30 40 years ago." And then I moved back, you know, to Winston-Salem, North Carolina and there were several things I had forgotten. One was you cut off the lights, you don't turn them off and you say, "Heyharyou?) It's one breath. That's the greeting.

I like that.

Yeah, I do too.

BS: So those were my, sort of, surprises.

Yeah, so a bit of a regional culture shock

That- that- we were all so ignorant of each other, even when- that's when McLuhan was writing about the global village and television, but in fall of '64 we would- it was still a big gap.

Yeah, that's interesting.

Where did you live on campus?

First two years in Jane Addams. The first year in the commons room.

Oh, wow. How many of you were in there?

Two of us.

That sounds great.

There was a little metal cabinet that came to about here on me when I stood up. It was about this wide. It had been the laundry room. They took the laundry room out but everybody had to still come in to use the ironing board. The only iron and ironing board were in this little laundry room adjacent to the commons room.

So you had visitors all the time?

Yeah, yeah. People would knock. There were no locks. You were given a metal box. Well, the other people had a metal box that was fixed to the wall in their closet. You could buy a combination lock to put your wallet in.

I think those are still in a lot of the closets.

Some of the old ones?

Yeah.

I don't remember what we were given since we didn't have a closet and didn't have that but we had some way to lock it up. But the doors were open so people could come in. They would just knock then say, "I've got to set up the ironing board and get the iron." They were mostly ironing their hair.

Really?

People who had curly hair wanted it long and straight so they would come and iron their hair.

Is that how they would do it? They would iron it out?

Uh huh.

Oh my gosh, that's so funny. What did you study and do you have any memories of particular classes or professors?

Of course, Of course I do. And I didn't say, my junior year I moved to Plant. You could move in a group, I think the maximum was eight.

Oh, wow, that sounds like a lot of people.

And, one of the gals in our group picked a single digit number. I was 7, 8, or 9, something like that. So we could go anywhere and we all moved to Plant.

Nice.

What was it about Plant that was so appealing?

Oh, central location. We loved the old- at that time the windows had all been replaced in those three buildings, but at the time they were- they had- they were metal-framed. The ones over the door were diamond-paned and they cranked out so you could get a really nice breeze and you were right close to the library. And I spent all my time in the library. If I wasn't in class, I didn't, you know, I was in the library, so it was, you know, really close for me. And we all liked the fact

it was close to the mailbox and it was close to New London Hall and Fanning, which is where we had most of the classes were.

Oh, interesting.

And there was a building, I'm not sure it's still there, a frame building where lots of English classes were.

Just right next to Fanning?

No, it was down that way. There's still frame building down there. Well, they said there's lots of offices in it. I said there were offices upstairs, but downstairs were classrooms.

That's a good location then.

I got married the end of junior year so I lived off campus my senior year.

How- did you meet your husband here?

No, he was the boy next door when I lived in Puerto Rico when I was eleven.

How sweet.

He had come up to Connecticut to live with you?

He did. Well the year I was a senior. I would just stay on- we only had one car. So sometimes I dropped- he worked at Electric Boat, so I dropped him then I would come to campus. Or other times, we'd do it the other way around, so a lot of times if he wanted to eat supper he'd have to come over here. So, he got to know all my friends really well.

That's lovely.

And then he would go in the library, the library was Palmer, so he would go in the reading room and read a newspaper or magazines or something while I was grinding out a paper.

What did you study, or what was your major?

I majored in history. I really thought I would major in English, but there was- and some of my classmates don't remember Hamilton and Jane Smyser. But they were here. An older couple married to each other and the department chair- we cannot figure out if the department chair was Mackie Jarrell, who was an early wife of the poet Randall Jarrell or if the Smysers, one of the Smysers was still the department chair when we started. But it looked like a buzzsaw to me and so I was advised, major in history and everything relates to history, so you could take- what

I wanted to take was philosophy and art and music and religion and literature. So that's what I did.

That's a smart way of doing it, because you get a little bit of everything.

I could get a little of everything. At that time you had to take three centuries in three different regions, world regions.

That's so cool. You really remembered your professors.

I clearly remember them. I read them to him. Robert Jordan, he was a professor of philosophy. I had a whole year of the history of philosophy and I took it from 1- 2:10- 1:10 to 2:20, or something. And mind that I sat right in the front row and my notes dribble off because I would try to- because I would fall asleep. Somebody said, "History of philosophy?" I said, "Yes, but there are holes in my knowledge, because I would fall asleep." And other people sat in the back and I said, no, I had to sit right up front where I could see Mr. Jordan. Then there was a history teacher names Philip Jordan, that we nicknamed Outline Jordan, because he always put the title of his lecture and three to six major points, A, B, C, D. He later, not long after we graduated, he left and became the president of Kenyon College and stayed there until he retired. He was wonderful, just delightful. I had Edward Cranz, who taught ancient history. Tall. His son went to Cornell where he did a six-year degree and I think got a bachelor's, a PhD, and an MD, or something really impressive. Marjorie Dilley, you all have all heard about her. She was quite the force. She had taught my friend Susie Cranz's mother, because we thought anyone over forty- I look back at the pictures and think, "My God, look how young our professors were." We thought they were really old and some were antique. Marjorie Dilley was definitely, she was probably in her 60s. And Hanna Hafkesbrink, who was German, and I took a one-semester course called German Literature in English, because one of my favorite professors in Spanish, Miss Rice, said, "Take professors, not courses." And she said, "If the most dynamic professor on campus is geology, go take geology." And I took ...

That's good advice.

I took that advice, so I took some unusual courses just because people had such wonderful reputations. And one was Philip Goldberg. I took him for social psychology. Sadly, he later committed suicide. But he was wonderful, very warm and I remember- we were talking about who would have made the remark, that he said, "You girls' idea of stupid is somebody who makes less than 500 on her college boards." and "You underestimate the misogyny in the world. We have," at that time we used the word Black instead of African-American, "we will have a Black president before a woman." And I've told my children and grandchildren I'm just hoping I live long enough to see a woman, and I don't care what color she is, a woman as president. And I have a number of African-American friends who were- are older even than I, who were delighted they lived long enough to see the inauguration in '08 of Obama, so I'm hoping I live long enough to see a woman. But Philip Goldberg was so prescient, making those remarks.

Right, I'm sure at that time too ...

Yeah. Let's see, who else did I want to mention? Oh, we wanted to get an American Studies major. Oh, we did all- we did all the proper work. We wrote up arguments. We got our toes chopped off. As in not only no, but hell no. Nobody used that language, but ...

You got the message.

We got the message. George Willauer, who I understand is still around. If you didn't wear a skirt to his class, you weren't going to make it. So I deliberately wore jeans.

Good for you.

We had to put on a skirt for dinner.

Oh, woah.

You could put it on over your jeans, but you had to have a skirt for dinner and you have a skirt for Wednesday tea. Robley Evans I had for fresh- for the freshman composition class. I think he stayed a long time. Elinor Despalatovic. One of the few women I had. I fell in love with her. She just recently retired. I was only going to take the first semester of Russian history, that was all I was interested in. But I- she was so wonderful and so warm and to see a young woman-she was probably only 10 years older than we were-in that position, I just signed up for the second semester. And I ran into a classmate and she said, "I remember doing the same thing." David Smalley recently died. He was a professor of sculpture in the Art department. He was wonderful. His big claim to fame was he had played in the backup band for Joan Baez at the Newport Folk Festival. That made him pretty gold to the rest of us. Helen Mulvey taught British history and I never took it. One of those buzzsaws you just stepped around. But I will say she was on the committee when they made the decision about coed. The American Dance Festival was here. And I stayed on campus two summers in the Summer Humanities Program that Bill Meredith started, so I got to observe master classes. I heard José Limón-I don't know if you know who he is-he was very articulate in addition to being a fabulous dancer. It was late in his career. He was mostly teaching, he was no longer performing, although he would perform in the context of a masterclass. He might do a tour jeté. Jane- June Macklin, who I understand recently has retired and sadly has dementia, very sad, I took no classes with her but one of my buddies majored in sociology and thought June walked on water and June had her own horse and rode and my friend did not bring her horse here but she would ride, so she would always come back with a June Macklin story and June was here ten years ago for our fortieth. Peggy Sheridan, who recently retired from the Child Development department, was in the class above us and she and I used to ride in the van on Sunday mornings to go to town to go to church, she would go to the Catholic church and I went to St. James Episcopal. So I got to know her. We were also in the same dorm. She also got married at the end of her junior year to Tony and they spent their first summer camping in the state park down here on the coast. That saved money so they could get an apartment when school started. Eventually, because she was on the faculty here after she

got her PhD, Tony was a journeyman plumber or carpenter, something you did with your hands. So she came back with her PhD, taught in the Child Development department. Tony, who was a recent Irish immigrant, earned his bachelor's degree and then for many years he worked on campus in the Facilities department. So if you look up Tony and Peggy Sheridan- so I know that little story about them. I saw Melvin Woody today. I had taken his class on the philosophy of history, in addition to the history of philosophy. I took a lot of philosophy classes. Marian Doro, I had her. She taught- Africa was her field. Richard Birdsall taught American history. He was- we had a classroom on the top of Fanning. And he would- he had a sailboat and he liked to sail. He would make some statement or somebody would [unclear] and he would look out the window. The class would be so quiet. And then he would kind of turn around like he suddenly realized we were there and he would say, "Just checking the wind on the Sound." And James Baird, we all loved James Baird. He taught English, but he also had a master's degree in Japanese from Columbia. He had gone to Yale undergrad. He may have had his PhD from Yale. And I wanted to go to Yale for their MAT program. It was a 12-month, what was called a the time a terminal degree. They also had it in forestry. Yale at that time, anyway, used a master's degree to weed out people that they didn't want in their doctoral program. So, if your coursework in the first year or two wasn't up to snuff, they gave you a master's and said sayonara. And so, I wanted him to write a reference for me and he said, "I'm not sending another one of my students to Yale. They don't appreciate women. They won't accept you or they'll torment you in class." And I explained to him, this is a terminal degree, it's twelve months, I take master's level coursework and meet the requirements for a Connecticut state secondary teaching credential. For that he would agree to write me a recommendation. When I got to Yale, my advisor was a newly minted PhD who had gone to Yale undergrad and he said, "You were advised so correctly." And he named professors. He said don't take any classes and he wrote it out for me. Because he said I have been in classes where there were bright well-prepared women and they would say, "So Miss Emmet, what do you think of Heraclitus's argument on page 14?" And you'd think, I mean, such specific nitpicky questions and they would keep at it and at it. He said they take pleasure in reducing young women to tears. I said, "No thank you." I avoided the buzzsaws in undergraduate, I intended to avoid the buzzsaws here. And sadly, C. Vann Woodward, who was the big historian of the South, was on leave that year. But I still got a lot of good courses in.

That's good. It was good he was looking out for you. Kind of guided you in the right direction.

Both of them, both of them were.

What else did you do on campus? Did you do any activities or were you involved in any groups?

Almost none, almost none. I can't sing and I'm not artistic and I mostly just went to class and studied. And because my boyfriend was at Cornell, I didn't get on the train every Friday evening. And- bec- but my grades were very high, so I got, after the first semester, unlimited overnights. My roommate, who did graduate, but, you know, skimmed along. And she was gone- she was so upset that I had unlimited and she had, like, ten. So she had to leave Saturday morning and you know, come back Sunday night. She would get back as late as she could.

You had to qualify in order to ...

Yes, your grades had to be high enough, otherwise as a freshman you were limited to ten overnights.

Wow. So did you have to sign out, like if you were leaving campus.

Oh, absolutely. They had- it was in loco parentis. If your mom or dad called and they couldn't find you ... You know, I mean, if it was during the day they could say you were in class. I mean my parents never called. Telephones were used in case someone was dead, dying, or in the hospital. You didn't make a phone call ...

Just to say hi.

Just. No. She was very upset that I had unlimited- she said, "Can't you give them to me?" I said, "Happily." So she would come back late Sunday night. She was busy getting ready to go Friday and we got our clean laundry on Thursday. So her bare mattress would be there Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night, Sunday night. Sometimes by Monday she would put a sheet on her bed. And I had to spend all that time. Dirty undergarments, her used panties, would be on the floor. I would kick them under the bed with a yardstick and push them under the bed because I didn't want to look at them. She played a lot of bridge and we were very different. And the upperclassmen told us, "If you go to Dean Johnson, who was the dean of freshmen and say that you can't get along with her, Dean Johnson will not let you move." But, so we were careful- I was carefully coached by the upperclassmen, "You go and point out that you have eight o'clock classes and she doesn't emerge until ten. She wants the window closed. You are used to sleeping with fresh air. You know, don't mention the cleanliness issue, you know, that you can draw a line through the dust and this is my side and that was her side. Don't ever mention anything negative about your roommate, just the problem with your different schedules." So, she granted us a change and a good friend moved in and we pulled all the furniture out and we cleaned it top to bottom, mopped all the floors. She moved in and we're still friends today.

That worked out well.

Yeah, all my friends from freshman year I'm still friends with.

That's amazing. Do you get- and have you been coming back consistently for ...

No, because I live so far away. I lived 31 years in San Diego. So, I came back- the college paid for me- and I was a schoolteacher-we don't fly around the country. But when my kids were a little bit older, I think some time in the late 80s, the College paid for me to come back. It wasn't reunion. It was some thing where they were working with grads to get our opinions about things and it was people from various classes our year. And then I came to the 40th and now this one.

Wow, so it must be really different being back.

It is. And I- oh, it is. But I keep the alumni journal. You read it, the alumni magazine, and keep up with what's going on.

What was the campus climate like when you were here and do you remember any particular big events or controversies that happened?

Well, of course, if you went to here between from September of '64 to June of '68, it was the combination of the war effort and civil rights. The end the war effort, we had the first teach-in was televised in late September of '65. There was one television in every dorm and we were all packed in to the- the informal living room in Jane Addams to watch that and that really brought awareness about Vietnam and that sort of set all that off. And Dick Gregory came to campus and we had a march for that. We had candlelight marches. But I always had to be very careful because I knew I wanted to be a teacher and I couldn't afford to be arrested. So, I had to be really careful and my parents certainly wouldn't- I mean, I wanted to do Freedom Summer in Mississippi. Nope. No no. But I did register African-American voters in my hometown when I went home, because I was, you know, that was a safer environment, safer from my parents' point of view. And, Micky Schwerner was a friend of a friend of my husband's at Cornell. He was one of the three civil rights workers who were killed that summer and they didn't find their bodies until much later. James Goodman was the African-American, there was another white guy. So that was very aware. Drugs really- Woodstock was after us. I've heard some joking references this weekend to pot, but I didn't know about it at the time. I was so straight-laced. I didn't know anything about it at the time. Those were really in the war and civil war issues were the main ones. I told you about American Studies. The other one, the one reason I wanted to do this was because I was one of the two students our senior year on the committee that was to study, discuss, and make a recommendation concerning coeducation. And the other gal was going to come with me, Joyce Newman, she says, "I don't remember anything about it." I have these very clear, visual images of the room, the people in the room, the meetings we had. And Joyce said ... So, she didn't come with me. A woman who was a very active alum named Anna Lord Strauss was on the committee. A woman named Helen Leahy Buttonweiser, who was an alum, she was a big giver. She was an attorney, maybe a judge in New York. Helen Mulvey, the history professor, was on it. I don't remember the others, but I do remember those. What persuaded my vote and most of the people was that the college board had been collecting for some time a lot of extra data when they administered the college boards and one of them was "Are you planning to apply to a single-sex school or a coed?" And what they could then- and there were other extraneous questions they asked that became fodder for lots people's statistical studies, but their own study showed that the most talented students with the highest scores, both male and female, were choosing coed.

Oh, that's interesting.

And that to me was the most persuasive argument. I certainly heard Helen Mulvey's comments about, "They'll wind up taking all the leadership positions. Women won't speak out in class, because they're afraid the guys will think they're too smart or too uppity." I heard all those

arguments and had- you know, I mean it was not an easy decision. But I felt like for the College's future, we've got to pull from the brightest students, not the bottom of the barrel. We didn't want the girls who came here because they couldn't get in other places. And our second recommendation was that they not lower the standards for the male students. You know that, "Well, we want all those female students to have this kind of GPA and this kind of board scores. This guy's not too bad." Zipping your pants up the front should not be a qualification to the freshman class. And later living in San Diego in the 80s I did meet one of the first young men, mid-70s, 4, 5, 6, somewhere in there. And it was very interesting to meet him and get to know him and ask him why he had gone and what he liked about it. He was just like all my female friends in that he liked the small classes. He liked the contact with the professors. They weren't busy doing research studies and trying to get grants. He liked the fact that there was a real sense of social consciousness on campus. He liked all the things that my friends- he was very down to earth, he wasn't pretentious, he wasn't a stuffed shirt. So I felt at that point, I made the right decision.

That's great. So was it very controversial at the time? Did most students feel one way or the other?

The student body was more in favor of it, but it was probably, and I don't recall that we took a survey, but it was probably 60-40. I mean it was not 90-10. There were a lot of people who had come here because it was a women's college. The alumni were very strongly in favor of keeping it a women's college, "I came here, it was Connecticut College for Women. It needs to stay Connecticut College for Women." But we learned the history. The College was founded only after Wesleyan, which had women, threw them out. And civic-minded citizens said women needed to be able to get a college education in the state of Connecticut. And as you probably know, they held a contest basically and this farm was donated and the citizens of New London raised the money to build New London Hall. And that's why the College came here.

It's funny because you say you weren't involved in a lot of activities on campus, but it sounds like ...

Well, I- you know, I was involved in the first student course critique, but not clubs and things. Things that I was interested in.

Yeah, but you made these really influential decisions that have shaped our experience at Conn. I was an American Studies major ...

I paved the way. You know, we just created our own. I took American government, I took American political thought, I took, you know, American lit. As I said, I took the classes I wanted to take. And then I thought if I had to take something in East Asian history, I don't want to stand alone so I took religion courses. You know, so, I'm thrilled- as a teacher- I was a teacher for 40 years from '69 to 2009. I was always looking for ways to integrate the curriculum, English and social studies or whatever the kids were doing. And I'm so thrilled to see that's what the College is doing. It's best practice in education.

So what other ways do you feel like your time at Conn shaped your future. Obviously, you became a teacher and I think that was influential for you, but how else has ...

The personal relationships, the friends I've had. I did not keep up personal relationships with my teachers, other than Bill Meredith, who was the writer in residence, because he founded the Summer Program in the Humanities. He and Dartmouth did one, the very first one of '65. And I was a dorm councilor and then summer of '67 or '8 I taught in the program and we followed the kids up. The idea was to find bright kids who were not on the traditional college track. Give them experience on a college campus, nurture their intellectual curiosity, expose them to things—they were in the poor inner city schools, so we took them from Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford, and New London, and then follow them up. So then we had to- I would borrow Bill's car and drive to Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford, and of course New London was easy, and visit with the kids. Their guidance counselors helped and their teachers picked them out, hand-picked them. Largely African-American, there were not as many Hispanic students at that time, but it was looking at kids who were off the traditional paths. So that push for diversity really came from Bill Meredith, the summer of 65, getting the grants. So that was the other thing I wanted to make sure got into the College history and archives, the crucial role he played in that. And they read one of his poems today at the memorial services, so that was really sweet. I did keep up with Bill the most, of all my teachers.

You have such an impressive memory.

Yeah, I know.

Don't ask me what I ate last week.

Like the year and everything.

It was- it was very vivid in my mind. And I took a lot of grief from my- not my parents so much. My parents had lived in New York and Boston and traveled and lived all over the world, but my extended family were very hurt and offended that I didn't go to Agnes Scott or a Southern school and- so it was very formative. And, of course, as I said, the political- I came from very liberal parents. I have one ancestor who was tarred, feathered and hung from a tree for being a Scallywag during Reconstruction in Mississippi in front of his wife who was dragged out on the porch so she could see it. So, I came from a family that- we took pride in their history, pushing back against norms. They always said about one of my aunts, "Honey if she could have found a Chinese Jew who grandmother was a n-word, she would have married him." So,

And it sounds like you said you keep in touch with a lot of your classmates ...

Not a lot of them, but the- our little core group. And we started about five years ago getting together, four of us, now that we are, you know ... Two of us are divorced, two are still married. We have- we're all retired, so we have the- a little financial freedom, freedom from

responsibilities, so each one of us has taken a turn being the hostess and coming up with something to do together. So ...

That's fun. Where are the other places ...

We did a Road Scholar program on the founding fathers in Charlottesville, Virginia. And so spent the day- we went to- we had lectures in the morning and then we went to Madison's home, which is in the process of being restored. We went to Monticello. Lots of things in that area. We went down to Fort Lauderdale, one gal lives there. So we explored that area, which none of us knew anything about- we went to an alligator farm, took a boat ride in the Everglades with this fascinating woman who had always lived in the Everglades and she knew so much about the flora and fauna and the ecological and environmental threats to the Everglades. And so, we- you know ...

Yeah, you've been all around.

each one of us is like, "Come and meet my part of the country. So I hosted them in the mountains of North Carolina, which continued in their 70s to be an eye-opener to my friends.

Oh, my goodness. So it must be really interesting being back here on campus after 50 years.

It is. It is. And on Friday night I was sitting next to a woman, no- Thursday night because we got here early. We had never had classes- I'm watching the time. We had never had classes together, we had never lived in the same dorms and after the end of the dinner, I said, "Where have you been all my life. This is like a kindred spirit." I've met two classmates like that. One I knew some and then this other gal I knew not at all. It was like, pick a name out of the phone book. So, you know, life goes on. You keep making friends, you keep finding special people.

Yeah. Are there a lot of people from your class here for this reunion?

I think they said 70-some. We were 350. 47, I think, they said had died. So we didn't graduate 350, that was down a little bit. And so, you know, a good percentage have passed away. One gal was going to come, her husband died Tuesday night. Totally unexpectedly. One friend has the same back issue I do. S=And she said, "Oh, I just can't come." We tried to talk her into coming and she said, "I don't want people to see me." And I said, "I'm coming," and she said, "I can't. I can't," so ...

70 is still a really good turnout.

I think it is. It's 20% of the freshman class is here. And then when you count the attrition, it's a higher percentage. I don't know how many are still on the list. And I have the distinction of being the only graduate whose name or face does not appear anywhere in the yearbook. I'm not even listed under "not pictured."

How did that happen?

Nobody knows. A good- a good friend of mine was the photo editor. She said to me this time- she said, "How did that happen?" I said, "I have no idea." And I had forgotten about- I didn't buy a yearbook and one of my friend's husband was looking through and he said, "Brooke's not in here." She said, "Look under J." "No, she's not under J." "Look under F. Look under B." He said, "I promise you, I went to the index. She's not in the yearbook." But I have plenty of friends who remember that I was here and I have the diploma framed and on my wall.

Yeah, that's what matters.

We didn't get to all the questions. Was there anything we forgot?

Yeah, the last one was, it's kind of, being around here this weekend is there anything that you've heard about the College today or see that you wished was there when you were on campus?

I just like to see the things we started, you know, like integrative studies, coeducation, political awareness, global awareness, that that the College has built on that. The foundations, the things that were important to us, have been built on. So that's exciting.

Yeah, it must be exciting to see that you planted those roots and ...

I'm going to be gone before, you know, before long. You know, you're 72, the clock is ticking. You know, and I said that once to my students and they were horrified. I said everybody has a fatal disease, it's called life. It comes to an end. You don't get a do over, you don't get to say, "Oh shoot, I wasted my teen years doing X, Y, or Z." You don't get to say, "Okay, let's reboot and go back to 10. I'd like to go back to 10 again. I wasn't nice to the girl in fifth grade."

No, that's good advice. So, you've created this wonderful legacy at this school.

I'm excited about that. And I- I- my- we didn't talk about it, but my spiritual life is very important to me. And, it really started before I came here. But I went to St. James Episcopal in town. I became Episcopalian, well, committed to the Episcopal Church while I was a student, although did it back in North Carolina and although I made a donation to the College, I went to the memorial service today. There were probably 50 or 60 people there and when I came out, I told the- President Bergeron was standing next to the lovely young woman in the hot pink shirt that's in charge of Advancement. I prayed before I came that I would know what to do and they need chancel handrails and I said I have become so aware of issues relating to mobility and ability and that's what I'm going to give: handrails for the chancel.

That is really wonderful. That is so special.

In memory of my classmates.

In so many ways, you're increasing diversity and accessibility throughout campus and just making this a place for everybody to lay their roots.

Oh, yeah, I do- after I had my dad in a wheelchair you know I became a real advocate and then I wound up in a wheelchair. In December of '08 I fell hiking and broke most of the bones on the left side of my body. So I had to learn how to walk again. I had three surgeries. There's one of them. I was told I would never have the use of my right arm again. I learned to do everything with my left arm, but ... So, it made me very aware and I learned from my doctor too. He said most people will be quote, unquote disabled at some point in their life. You know, all you have to do is go skiing and do something nasty to your leg and you are often looking at months and months and months of wheelchairs and surgeries and wheelchairs and surgeries. And when I was laid up I would watch tv and all those young men in Afghanistan that were 19 and I said, "There will be no whining from this woman." I had 60 years of a body that worked perfectly. I could do everything I ever wanted to do.

You have a really good perspective and that's such a thoughtful way to leave a legacy.

Thank you, it's been such fun to meet both of you.

Delightful.

I have thoroughly enjoyed our time. I am sorry we went way over.

Oh, that's quite all right.