

Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project

Smith College Archives
Northampton, MA

Adele Baydin, Class of 1951

Interviewed by
Sarah Dunn, Class of 2011

May 21, 2011

Abstract

In this oral history, Adele Baydin discusses her experiences living in Chapin House, what it was like being a Jewish student at Smith, her travels in Europe, and why she decided to leave Smith after her sophomore year.

Restrictions

No online access.

Format

Interview recorded on miniDV tapes using a Panasonic DVX-100A camera. One 60-minute tape.

Transcript

Transcribed by Linda Sariahmed at the Audio Transcription Center in Boston, Massachusetts. Audited for accuracy and edited for clarity by Olivia Mandica-Hart.

Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms

Video Recording

Bibliography: Baydin, Adele. Interview by Sarah Dunn. Video recording, May 21, 2011. Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives. **Footnote:** Adele Baydin, interview by Sarah Dunn, video recording, May 21, 2011, Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives, tape 1.

Transcript

Bibliography: Baydin, Adele. Interview by Sarah Dunn. Transcript of video recording, May 21, 2011. Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives. **Footnote:** Adele Baydin, interview by Sarah Dunn, transcript of video recording, May 21, 2011, Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives, p. 3.

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Transcript of interview conducted on May 21st, 2011, with:

ADELE BAYDIN

by: SARAH DUNN
filmed by: KATE GEIS

DUNN: All right.

GEIS: Whenever you are ready.

DUNN: This is Sarah Dunn, and I'm conducting an interview with Adele Baydin, Class of 1951, on May 21st, 2011, for the Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project. Thank you so much for agreeing to do this with us.

BAYDIN: I'm glad to come.

DUNN: I'd like to start out talking about how you decided to come to Smith College.

BAYDIN: Right. Well, a member of our family got married and I was from Patterson, New Jersey, and raised in Patterson, and I went to the public schools, and when a family member got married at the Northampton Inn, and so we came up for the wedding, and then there was another member of the family who had graduated from Smith, and she said to me, would you like to see the campus, and she took me around, and I really got very excited about it.

DUNN: Wonderful.

BAYDIN: And I had heard of Smith, and I didn't know very much about it, though. I really was quite naïve. Yeah.

DUNN: Yeah.

BAYDIN: So that's how I heard about it. Yeah.

DUNN: And how would you describe the campus atmosphere at that time?

BAYDIN: At that time?

DUNN: When you were (inaudible).

BAYDIN: I felt it was a very intellectual and sort of academic place, and that was what I wanted. I wanted a place where my — I would be challenged intellectually. And so that was what I was looking for, and I felt that that was what it did, too. Yeah.

DUNN: Yeah. Yeah. What house did you live in while you were here?

BAYDIN: (inaudible)

DUNN: What house did you live in?

BAYDIN: Oh, I lived in Chapin, which is right next door here, so that was wonderful, too, because I love the libraries, and I spent a lot of time in the libraries. At that time, of course, you know, we didn't have computers, so I spent a lot of time in the library, and so I liked living next door to it.

DUNN: Yes. How was the community in your house?

BAYDIN: Oh, I'm not sure, really. You know, it's interesting to me that at this reunion that I just came to, I'm the only one from Chapin House in this group, in the Class of '51? I'm the only one that attended, and I think that there wasn't too much spirit there. Chapin House — I had friends, but not really good friends. You know, but I did — I mean, I had friends there, and people were friendly, but somehow, I didn't feel that there was very much spirit there in the house, yeah.

DUNN: Did you make a lot of your friends through classes, then, or other campus activities?

BAYDIN: I met other people, yes, through the classes, yeah. And I don't think I joined any club or anything. I don't think so. And also, the girls played a lot of bridge, and I had never learned how to play bridge. And also, I — you know, I felt it wasn't easy for me to do the work that I was supposed to do, because I had — I graduated from a public school, a public high school, I'd always gone, and so I felt that a lot of the students here were ahead of me in terms of how to study and their study habits, and they were able to sit there and play bridge, and then somehow pass the exams, but I wasn't one of those, so anyway, so that was how it was. Yeah.

DUNN: You came in, you're 1951, so you came in right after the war.

BAYDIN: Yeah. Yeah.

DUNN: Do you remember any—

BAYDIN: Feeling about the war?

DUNN: Yeah, feeling about coming into Smith after '46, or—

BAYDIN: No, you know I really — I had come to — I realize as I grow older that I did have — and have my own children — that I had a kind of a protected home and a protected childhood and growing up and everything, because truthfully, I didn't — it wasn't discussed much at home. I didn't have anyone close to me who was gone to war. And so the war had not affected me very much. I mean, high school, you know, we did some work, or you know, for the troops, but really, that didn't bother me very much, so. Yeah.

DUNN: Do you think that — do you think Smith wasn't a very accepting place when you arrived?

BAYDIN: Accepting?

DUNN: Accepting, yes.

BAYDIN: Well, yes. But I felt also at that time, in '51, there were not too many minorities there. And you know, the people — you would be noticed if you were a minority. Now I am Jewish, and there were quite a few Jewish students here, and I've spoken to friends of mine who went to other, you know, Seven Sisters colleges, or they didn't get in. One friend said she didn't get in to Pembroke, and they sent her a letter saying their Jewish quota was finished, was filled up! But I didn't get that feeling at Smith at all. And there were quite a few Jewish students here. And nobody questioned it. It seemed—

DUNN: You didn't feel any hostility towards you—

BAYDIN: No.

DUNN: —or anything?

BAYDIN: No, I think people didn't even realize, you know, the difference too much, and it wasn't stressed at all, or anything like that. Yeah.

DUNN: Did you go abroad at all while you were here, or did you stay?

BAYDIN: Well, you know, I didn't graduate, I only went two years. But at the end of the two years, I took a trip to Europe. But my — well, she was a suitemate, we had a suite in Chapin — and my suitemate and I went to Europe for 10 weeks on a student — what they called the student ship at the time, and those were unconverted troop ships that they were not using anymore, and it took, I think, 10 days to get over and 10 days to

come back, and it was college students from all over. It was just a wonderful experience.

DUNN: Oh, wow.

BAYDIN: And then the two of us — I mean, we even hitchhiked a lot through Europe.

DUNN: Really?

BAYDIN: Because at that time, hitchhiking was very safe, and we hitchhiked — we started out — we landed in — well, we went on the Rotterdam, and we landed, I think, in Amsterdam, and then went up to London, and then came back to the Continent, and just went all over. And but at that time, when we went to Europe, my friend Laura, I went with Laura Schwab, who did graduate, and at that time, Laura's brother, during the war, had made friends with a family in Florence, Italy, and so we spent maybe about a week in Florence, and they were very, very kind to us. Apparently her brother had been kind to their family, and so they were very kind to us. And they took us up to their country home, and we spent a lot of time there. It was a wonderful experience. And we did do all the sightseeing that one is supposed to do, so that's what I did. But I didn't go abroad during my college years.

DUNN: So why did you leave Smith?

BAYDIN: Oh, I left Smith because I had a boyfriend who was at Cornell. And we were pretty hot for each other (laughter). So anyway, I transferred to Wells College over there in Aurora, New York, and I did my junior year there, and then I shortly became pregnant, so I didn't finish there either, and we — I moved over to Ithaca, we got married, and had an apartment in Ithaca, so that's what happened.

DUNN: And you still come back for reunion. I love it.

BAYDIN: Oh yeah — well, I haven't — this is the first time I've really come back. Ten years ago, the class of '01, my granddaughter, [Sadie Dingfelder], graduated, and so I came to Smith for her graduation, which was also the 50th reunion for my class. So I participated a little bit in the reunion, but mostly we had a lot of family here for the graduation, so mostly I was involved with Sadie and the graduation, you know. So that's what. And then, you know, really, I must say this, that I was thinking seriously about coming to the reunion, but I wasn't sure about that. So they sent me all the reunion materials, and Dr. [Antonetti], who's in the library, the professor who's in the rare books section, I had taken a course with him just very three-day course with him during the summer a couple of years ago, and I really just loved it, and he is so good. So I saw Dr. Antonetti was giving one of the classes for the

alumnae, and so I said, “Oh, I have to go back.” So it was really to see Dr. Antonetti, and I just happened to be here for the reunion, but then everybody was so nice, I was kind of nervous about coming back for the reunion, because I really had not spent too much time with Smith people. I come from West Florida, and the Gulf Coast, and that group, that alumnae group, is not very active. I was disappointed, because previously, I had spent 12 years in Tucson, and in Tucson, we had a wonderful group, and while I was there, oh, I was very active with them, in fact, I was actually president of the Tucson group for a year, I think, or maybe two. I think it was just one year. And I just loved it. So I was very disappointed that the west coast group was — is not very active at all, and but that’s how I happened to come back, because I saw that Dr. Antonetti was teaching one of the classes, and then I thought, this is my 60th reunion, and you know, I might not make the 70th, or you know, I guess it’ll be 65th, but I thought I’d better come back now, and be in a reunion, so I did that. And everybody was very warm and friendly. Very warm. And I’m so glad I came back.

DUNN: Great.

BAYDIN: Yeah.

DUNN: So — I mean, I think that that’s really impressive, actually, that you’ve come back for your 60th reunion. That, you know, must have been a very strong connection with you in here, in Smith College. Do you feel that there was — do you have—

BAYDIN: Oh, oh, oh yeah. Well, I felt — yes. When I lived in Tucson, I just liked the women so much in the club, and really, they were so nice, and I didn’t know too many people there, so I thought I would join the club, and then they were really so nice, so I thought I would join the club, and then they were really so nice, and I made a lot of friends, and we had different offshoots, we had a book club, and we had, at that time, an investing group, and you know, it was just a very interesting group, so that really was the first time that I got involved with the Smith group. And by that time, I was 55, I think. Yeah.

DUNN: Nice.

BAYDIN: So I really did like it. And can I tell you about my granddaughter who graduated?

DUNN: Yes, of course.

BAYDIN: Well, her name is Sadie Dingfelder, and my first husband was Mr. Dingfelder, Simon Dingfelder, who is her grandpa also. And Sadie lives in Tampa. Her father and stepmother and brother were living in Tampa when I moved there about 11 years ago. So I was pretty

involved in, not raising them, but certainly getting them through high school, and Sadie's mother, her own mother, her blood mother, moved up to Atlanta, so the kids had a stepmother, but I was very close with them, and really, yeah. So I lived nearby, and I was very close with the grandchildren. So anyway, when Sadie was thinking about college, you know, she asked me where to go, and so forth, and she looked at a lot of colleges, but I really encouraged her to come to Smith, and I'm so glad I did, because Sadie just absolutely loved it. And she's done — it did great things for Sadie. I mean, she got a lot of confidence, and she had a lot of talent, and a lot of potential, and I think that Smith brought out that talent and that potential, and she's really been doing very well since she graduated, too. Yeah.

DUNN: Oh, that's so great.

BAYDIN: Yeah, I'm really, really thrilled. So — and I felt that way about the women that were here at the reunion, that they were really real people, you know? There was nothing put on, they're just real people — most of them, anyway. I think almost all, really. And they were so warm and friendly, and bright. And bright. You know, they know about things. And so I really feel that this is the place (laughs).

DUNN: Well thank you so much for coming in.

BAYDIN: Oh!

DUNN: Do you have further?

BAYDIN: OK.

GEIS: No, I think we're good. This is great. Thank you so much.

DUNN: Thank you so much.

BAYDIN: Oh, OK.

DUNN: Thank you.

BAYDIN: I hope that was enough—

DUNN: Oh, yeah. That was wonderful.

BAYDIN: —information.

DUNN: Wonderful. Thank you.

BAYDIN: OK.

DUNN: Thank you very much.

BAYDIN: Good.

DUNN: Sorry, they're always so quick when we do them on reunion, because we go through —

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Linda Sariahmed, July 2011.