

Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project

Smith College Archives
Northampton, MA

Erin Joslyn, Class of 1990

Interviewed by
Rachel Dean, Class of 2013

May 15, 2010

Abstract

In this oral history, Erin Joslyn discusses her involvement with the student publication *The Green Age*, her experiences living in Hopkins, studying in Cambridge, England, and her work as an art history major. Joslyn also describes the overall campus atmosphere, including issues of diversity and tensions between heterosexual and homosexual students. Finally, Joslyn talks about the societal difficulties and pressures that women face, what it feels like to be back at her Smith reunion, and who she has become since Smith — working as an art historian, owning an antiques business, and working as a writer on several different projects.

Restrictions

None

Format

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

Transcript

Transcribed by Emily Crockett 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: Joslyn, Erin. Interview by Rachel Dean. Video recording, May 15, 2010. Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives. **Footnote:** Erin Joslyn, interview by Rachel Dean, transcript of video recording, May 15, 2010, Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives, tape 1.

Transcript

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Transcript of interview conducted on May 15, 2010, with:

ERIN JOSLYN

by: RACHEL DEAN
filmed by: KATE GEIS

DEAN: This is Rachel Dean, and I'm conducting an interview with Erin Barlett Joslyn on May 15, 2010, for the Smith College Alumnae Oral History project. Thank you for participating in this.

JOSLYN: My pleasure.

DEAN: What were the benefits in choosing Smith over other colleges out there?

GEIS: If you could just—

JOSLYN: Not move, yeah. That's actually an interesting question, because I did not start out at Smith. You know, I transferred here halfway through my freshman year. I had applied to Smith and a host of other colleges out of high school. And I didn't have particularly good guidance. So I wound up going to Haverford College in Pennsylvania, and it was very small, it was very conservative. It was a little too far from Philadelphia, which is near a city. It's very suburban. And I had a boyfriend at Hampshire. So, that's — basically, I was very unhappy. And I came here.

DEAN: So that — was your boyfriend the main reason for your—

JOSLYN: You know, I wouldn't have liked to have said so at the time, or even now, but yes, I'm sure that was the reason.

DEAN: And are you happy with that decision?

JOSLYN: It wasn't a bad decision. Do I regret going to Smith? No. Am I entirely happy I went to Smith? Not always.

DEAN: How so?

JOSLYN: Well, when I got to — whatever college basically I went to, Smith being, you know, in this elite group of colleges, I felt, coming from kind of a — not very privileged background. Then once I achieved that — and I was a good student here. You know, I was Phi Beta Kappa, all kinds of stuff. Everything I thought would come very easily afterwards.

And, you know, no college can prepare you for life. And so, I don't — I felt let down in a way. Not that it was Smith's fault. But it wasn't the sort of, you know, easy life that I had been led to believe. And that also women in my generation would be able to have it all, and, you know, were expected to. And I'm not sure that was Smith, necessarily, as opposed to the early '80s. You know, being, you know, maybe a young teenager in the early '80s, you were — kind of felt that you had to have everything, and accomplish a whole lot. And yeah, I expected it to come very easily after I left. And it didn't, really.

DEAN: So, did Smith live up to your expectations, or your hopes and your expectations?

JOSLYN: Yeah, I think as much as any institution would have. No more or less. I mean, yeah, I don't — I never really thought about being at Smith, and women's education, none of that really factored in, except, you know, I was happy to have a strong art history department. I was an art historian. I like the five-college system. Those things appealed to me. But it did — in terms of art history, because I did go on to have a career as an art historian. I have a doctor in art history. For a while, anyway, first career. And it did prepare me very well for that.

DEAN: What clubs and organizations and teams were you involved in?

JOSLYN: I was only involved with a literary magazine. I don't know if it's still here — *The Green Age*. And I did edit it, my senior year.

DEAN: How did that impact you?

JOSLYN: Well, it's interesting. I had always liked to write, and I knew from the moment I set foot on the campus I wanted to be involved with the magazine. And then — it was a real passion, and I had actually wanted to go to film school afterwards, but it seemed safer to stay at academia, because I had been such a really talented art history student. So I stayed somewhere safe, and I really felt, when I was writing my thesis, it sucked all the creativity out of me, and I had no place to write.

But, you know, I've come back to that since. You know, I am a writer. I've been a working writer for a few years, now. You know, it's (just saying something?), and I wanted to go back to it, because that time was probably the most — fullest time I had here, the most, you know, satisfying, was working on the magazine.

DEAN: How did — what house were you in, and how did your house community affect your overall college experience?

JOSLYN: I lived in Hopkins, which no longer stands. Hopkins B and A were torn down to create a nice view for that student center. But there's nothing on those plots of land. Which is sad. I could see if they had built

something on them, you know, but they didn't. It's just — I don't know. I liked it, I never left. I had made friends, and I didn't feel like I needed to make any more friends, but now at reunion, people who moved around seem to know a lot more people than I do. (laughs) So I'm a little envious of that. But it was — I enjoyed that tight-knit community, yeah. And I was happy to stay. You know, like the center of campus location.

DEAN: Did you go abroad?

JOSLYN: I went abroad not during the academic year. I went abroad between junior and senior year, the summer I went to Cambridge.

DEAN: How did that influence your experience and—

JOSLYN: I wound up getting married.

DEAN: Oh, OK.

JOSLYN: I met an Englishman, and I got married a month after I graduated. (laughs)

DEAN: OK. So how — did you — how was the cultural difference — but were you studying there, or?

JOSLYN: I was going — well, I had applied to graduate schools there, too, and I did go — we got married, and I went to graduate school, and I got my doctorate in England. Yeah — I'm sorry, can you ask me the question again?

DEAN: Well, how was it coming back after that experience in the summer?

JOSLYN: I like living in — well, it was hard. Actually my grades slipped. I spent all my time trying to earn money to pay for my phone bills. And my focus completely changed. And — yeah, I mean, I didn't make the fullest use of my senior year by any means. It was lonely, in a way. In a strange way. I had friends who were a year older who left. That was kind of isolating. I was ready to — I wanted to leave. It's not the healthiest thing, but I wanted to leave.

DEAN: So how were your dating and relationships, and how did that affect your experience, with your boyfriend at Hampshire at the beginning?

JOSLYN: Well, I was still dating him when I went to England. (laughs) But I was having — I was having some restless feelings about that. And trying to, in a very juvenile way, end the relationship. Which I did by meeting someone else and marrying them. And I was married to him for maybe eight years, and we had a daughter at the end of it. Who is here today

with me. She's 13, yeah. So. Then I came back. Then I came back to the U.S.

DEAN: How would you describe the campus atmosphere while you were here?

JOSLYN: It was very liberal. I felt the academic standards were high, and a lot was expected. I had a professor who was very influential, an art historian, a medievalist. And I became a medieval art historian, largely due to his influence. And I had an internship with the (cloisters?) my junior year, summer of my junior year, I guess, or sophomore to junior year. Yeah, so that sort of, you know, crystallized it.

And — yeah, it's so long ago now. It really — it's hard to remember a lot of the specifics about what it was like to be here. But when you come back on campus reunion, you can feel what it was like to be here. Which is interesting, because I haven't felt that way, you know, in 20 years. You can remember being 20. You don't even remember it, you can feel being 20. That's really hard to put into words, but it's a reason to come back in itself.

DEAN: So your major was art history. And who was your most influential professor in your major?

JOSLYN: Well, this isn't — his name is Arnold (Clucas?). And he was not here very long, maybe five years. And he left — actually, my senior year he was gone. But I had classes with him my sophomore and junior years. And he was very supportive of my continuing in academia. And actually he was influential when I went to London, because he knew a lot of people there — he had studied there. And then I joined the Smith Club there, too. And actually worked at the American School part-time. And I did recruiting for Smith at the American School for a couple of years.

DEAN: How did you do that? What did you—

JOSLYN: Well, they'd have college fairs and things, and, you know, I belonged to the club, and, you know, they had booths and things and — yeah, there was a presentation one time, I gave a presentation. Yeah.

DEAN: Did you see any issues in diversity in race or class or gender — sexuality while you were here?

JOSLYN: Then?

DEAN: Yeah.

JOSLYN: Well, you know, I was — I wasn't lesbian, but the house I was in had a lot of lesbians. But I had lesbian friends and gay friends in high school. So, you know, I was quite — it made a difference to me. I mean, I didn't want to live in one of the more conservative houses, they had

reputations, you know. I'd never want to live in the quad, or something like that. Even though it probably would've been fine to live in the quad, but that was the perception at the time, that it was going to be very conservative, and they'd bus in frat-loads of boys from Dartmouth for weekends (laughs) — it was just, like, you know, it was like a circus.

So, no, I was — I enjoyed my house, and it was — it was diverse in terms of sexual orientation. I would say slightly in terms of race. I see more diversity on campus amongst the people — the class that's here now, 2010, than I did in 1990. You know, visually. Yeah. Yeah, it wasn't overwhelmingly diverse, you know, I didn't think it was back then. I don't think any of the colleges around here were. Maybe UMass seemed the most diverse, in a weird way. But then they had the largest population.

DEAN: Did you see any tensions on campus?

JOSLYN: Yes. I saw tensions between lesbian and straight students, definitely. You know, I saw an episode where a head resident, who was a lesbian, actually stalked a student in the house who was straight. And she was expelled, or she had to leave campus at least. And, yeah, that was kind of a scandal. And I saw — I saw, even in a house that was considered progressive, you know, straight students leave after the first year. Because they didn't like being around, you know, lesbians. Or people making negative comments about lesbian awareness workshops. I mean, there was some of that.

And in terms of the black students in my house — you know, we sat, we'd sit at the same table, but there was kind of a feeling like they wanted to keep to themselves in my house. You couldn't really step over a boundary to have a close friendship. In my house. I don't know about anywhere else. And, yeah. Those were the only two things I really was aware of.

DEAN: How did you use the five-college system?

JOSLYN: Oh, I took classes at other colleges, and I definitely — “The social life is what you make of it,” is that the phrase they used to tell us? Well, I had this boyfriend at Hampshire, which was an instant social life. So I never had a lot of the social issues that a lot of the women here had. You know — and I actually liked it. I liked not having to have men in the house. I liked the privacy. I liked being able to escape my social life, and I was a pretty serious student. But I was able to have a social life that I could control. And it was all there. I could go wherever I wanted, and there was — I always had a network at Hampshire, and I had some friends at Amherst — but I mostly spent time at Hampshire. And, you know. So I had a nice social life.

DEAN: Did you have a social — did you use the social life on campus as well?

JOSLYN: Less. Less so. I don't think I went to many campus parties at all. Yeah, very few. I mean, I did go to quad party once or twice to see what it was like. You know, I would go to lesbian-gay alliance dances with my friends, you know, because they were going. But, you know, in terms of a weekly — I kind of — what I did in the weekends, I would go to Hampshire, largely. And it was like commuting. I would like stay here during the week and study, and I really did very little work on the weekend. I was very good at managing my time. And I, you know, lived sort of a different existence on the weekends. But I liked it, I liked that setup. (It worked?)

DEAN: What challenges did you face, if any, while you were here?

JOSLYN: That was the thing, I didn't face any. Everything came very easily, I felt. Academically, everything was easily — my social life was easy. Maybe that last year when I was, like, felt I was ready to leave a little earlier, I had sort of this other life. But no, that was the problem. For me, academics were easy, my social life was easy, and I felt like I had achieved what I was supposed to achieve, and everything would unfold from this easily, and, you know, with a sense of entitlement I didn't realize I had. And that there would never be any life forces to interfere with that.

And so it was sort of a fantasy land. A nice one. And I'm glad I (break in audio) and I don't think that's unique to Smith, I might say. I think, you know, any sort of elite private college, it's going to give you that feeling — a lot of people that feeling. And other alums have mentioned this to me just in the past week. And it's something you really kind of think about as you hit middle age more. And you're looking — starting to look back a bit.

You know, I don't think — it made you feel like you could do everything, and the truth is you can't do everything, especially if you have children. And that was something that was ignored in the '80s and early '90s. The reality of a career and having children. And the reality of when to have children. I had children in my late 20s, and I had children in my late 30s. And let me tell you, I almost didn't have a child in my late 30s because of fertility issues. And you think you can go on and on and do your career first. Or if you leave early and neglect your career it really is hard to get back — none of those issues were talked about, or coping strategies. You know, they say, call your local club — but no one wants to talk about that. I mean, people are talking about it here now, amongst the class of '90.

But yeah, I mean, there's still — I think back now about a lot of the feminist rhetoric I used to spout in high school before I came here. I had, you know, strong feminist convictions, and one of the reasons I didn't come here — although I didn't really participate in that world here, I came here because of it. And then what was reaffirmed here, indirectly — you felt responsible to have it all. And — I mean, there was a constant sense of personal failure amongst those of those who

have not managed to keep it all at this level, you know. And there's a self-loathing that comes with that. And I, you know, think back more on feminist literature from the '60s, and the issues that were raised in terms of, you know, self-identity and self-worth. And a lot of those questions remain unaddressed.

DEAN: Did your commencement address — did that — it address any of these issues?

JOSLYN: Actually, you know, I really enjoyed the speaker, the new president of the Alumnae Association. I thought she was fantastic. I was almost dreading, like, can I get out of here now, I've got to find my daughter, thought it was going on forever. She was a great speaker, and, you know, she said something actually — I felt something crystallize. You know, I couldn't really believe it, but I could feel something by what a speaker was telling me, at this (break in audio) about how you have to just pick yourself up. And, the fact that, you know, life isn't over, and it still has all of these possibilities. And those are things I've tried to tell myself. I've had a lot of sort of phoenix rising from the ashes moments in my life, unfortunately. And I'm tired — kind of tired of it already.

But, she kind of made me feel like — all right, it's still possible, and for a minute — it's not something I'm really given to. There was sort of a (fission?) of sort of like a sisterhood feeling that I'd never really experienced as a student. Or any time in the 20 years since. Where I looked around and I realized I'm not the only one, and she's saying this for a reason, because this is the theme for these classes of '90, and maybe '95, you know.

People had some hard times. The recession. I know a lot of women who left to have children late who did not have them, or had trouble having them. I know many careers that were never at the same level once women stayed home with children. And it just can be very defeating. I don't know how Smith could address that to a bunch of 18-22 year olds. But, I don't know. I think it's something that should be acknowledged. That — I don't think you — I think it's very rare to have it all. It's not your responsibility. To love yourself might be about the best you can accomplish. If you can do that, you're doing well.

DEAN: Do you think this is like a gender conflict with the abilities — or, was it—

JOSLYN: Oh yeah, I think that — I think that, you know, it is very hard to be a woman. When I was here at Smith, I thought, women — what was hard about being a woman? Look at everything you're going to have. You're doing to have more than men! You're going to have — you're going to be a mother, you're going to raise your children, you're going to have a fabulous career, you're going to have everything.

And the truth is, women have a much more — I mean, I'm not saying men don't have it hard. I think, you know, if you're a single

breadwinner in the family, you've got that kind of pressure for a man. That can be very defeating and hard, especially in a recession, etc. I'm not belittling that. But I think what women have to juggle, even the women I know who work full-time and have children, their husbands work full-time — most of them go to the dentist and the doctor with the kids, and make the play-dates. It's so torn.

And if you do all those things well, it's because, you know, you're having help and you don't see your children — there's always a compromise. Always, I think, as being a woman. Always something is compromised. And the man may have self-doubt, or fear, but I don't think they have to compromise, you know, a sense of self, that women do. And — which is kind of the essence of womanhood, is compromise. And being self-effacing, to an extent, if you want to have all these things. Which, you know, in past years, it was sexist, because you weren't allowed to have them, then you're supposed to have them all, and is it possible to?

There's — I just don't — I feel like — I do feel, you know, questions of gender, and the place of women in society, are just still very open and unaddressed. And maybe, you know, some of the issues affecting women now are narrowed down. Maybe there's a little bit of reality that, you know — oh, OK, yeah, you have four children, and it's hard to go back to work. You know, it's hard to work from 7:00 in the morning to 9:00 at night. You know, there's some acknowledgement of that. But I'm not sure really what's being done about it, unless you're really affluent, and you have a lot of help.

DEAN: Why did you come back to the reunion?

JOSLYN: I wasn't going to come back. I never thought I would ever come back to reunion. I remember I was just not a reunion type. My network of friends was small, and I hadn't seen most of them, I would say now, in 18 years. I had one close friend from Smith who helped me through my divorce when I was about 30, and we had a falling out. But other than that, like, people from my class, I was not in touch with for, you know, 18 years. And not even by mail or email — maybe 15 years. But, it's very second nature to see them, and I'm very glad I did see them.

DEAN: So why did you decide—

JOSLYN: Well, one friend of mine who I had been close to, who lives in the South, and I don't ever really have an opportunity to see her — I asked her if she would come, because I wanted to see her. And she came, so.

DEAN: Are you glad you came?

JOSLYN: Yeah, absolutely. I am really pleasantly surprised by how much I've gotten out of reunion. I didn't expect to get anything but to see some old

friends. And I think I've gotten some validation and closure I hadn't expected.

DEAN: How so?

JOSLYN: I'm not the only one struggling with the same issues that a lot of people don't want to talk about, you know. And kind of a reunion, and like Facebook culture — you put out all the things you've accomplished. All the things you've done. And people don't talk about, you know, the disappointments, or the hardships, or the stuff that makes you really, you know, tick, and relate to one another as human beings. You know, the stuff that's the essence of being human. It's covered up, you know, so you can put on a good face about how great your life is. But I guess, you know, that really — people are sharing, like, lots of positive stuff, but there's also a place to acknowledge, you know, your actual life. Which I wouldn't expect. And, yeah, and that, you know, you're not alone with these issues. And they're real. And then also a kind of sense of hope — yeah, well, you know, you can still do something. You can still try. So, that was affirming. And I hadn't expected that. I really hadn't.

DEAN: What have you become since Smith?

JOSLYN: Professionally? Or personally?

DEAN: Both?

JOSLYN: I had — my first career, I was an art historian. I have a doctorate in medieval art history from the University of London. And at one point I had a book contract. And I had a baby at the same time, when I was defending my thesis. And I had a British husband, and we moved back to New York for his job, and he left me with an infant. And no friends and almost no money at one point. (laughs) But, I applied for jobs all over the country, and I didn't really have any references from the U.S., and I applied for jobs for two years, and I couldn't get an academic job. And I wasn't sure I really wanted to leave New York, either, with my child, because it was hard. I couldn't imagine starting afresh and finding child care. And I wasn't sure I wanted to leave her, because I didn't know if I'd have any more children, because of, you know, if I would ever meet anyone, or choose to have more children.

So I stayed in New York, and I had an antiques business, and while I did that, I did the one thing I always wanted to do — I wanted to be a screenwriter. So, I applied for a fellowship at Columbia. I had a fellowship in the Center for Creative Writing. And, in my thirties I wrote six screenplays. I was an in-house writer for Handmade Films. I was a head writer on the *Eloise in Paris* movie that they are producing. And none of these things ever happened. I made a living as a — you know, a for-hire writer for projects that never went into production for

many, many years. And I got very tired of it. When you write a screenplay, it's not like a book. It's not like you put it in a drawer, and it exists. It doesn't exist unless it's on film. A book, even if you never publish it, you know — someone in your family could read it. It's accessible, it exists, in a different way.

So we had to move from Brooklyn, where we lived for a long time, about 18 months ago, to the suburbs, which is a huge kind of shift which I really didn't want to do, and it's a hard adjustment, but once we got settled there, I wasn't — you know, I'm not really working anymore. I decided I would write a book. And so I've been working on a novel that I've had an idea for a long time. My little one — that's my last child — is three and a half. I'm going to be 42 next week. I know he's my last child. I'm getting kind of tired of having little children. It's been almost thirteen, fourteen years. And I'm home with him more than I was with any of the other ones, because I was working.

It's hard, it's hard. You think it's going to be great, and it's isolating, and it's joyful, but it's really hard work. Just even without the physical toil. Emotionally, it's a lot. Especially when there's no other little ones to play with. They play with you. And it's work, sometimes. Sometimes it's fun, but — you know, if you want to do other things, if you want to write, and you have very limited times, during naps, or a two-hour preschool, you're compromised. You know, you're compromised being a mother, because you feel guilty you want to do something else that's not just raising children. And I don't think men have that.

No, men don't have that — for the most part, men do not have that struggle with meeting the needs of their children and their professional life, or having a professional life. There's no question. You know. Sometimes I feel, like, burdensome that I'm not working and bringing in money, you know. My husband's job is sometimes hard. He works in finance, in hedge funds, it's not a good time. And I feel like — but what if he — you know, he can't just say, "Oh, I'm not working." You know, he's always working. He doesn't have the option to just — in his mind, he doesn't have the option to stay at home with our children, because he makes a lot of money. Or did, you know, to support everybody. I don't know if he ever thinks about that. But it never crosses his mind. I mean, that's where it's easier. It doesn't cross your mind. It's not a conflict. You just do it. It's hard, it's a slog, I'm sure, and other issues. But there's no sense of conflict, I don't think, that women have all the time.

DEAN: Would you, even with the false sense of — like the bubble, the Smith bubble, that's what we call it — would you recommend your — you have two daughters, right?

JOSLYN: I have two daughters. I have a daughter and a step-daughter who are two weeks apart in age.

DEAN: OK. So would you recommend for them to apply and go to school?

JOSLYN: Absolutely. And my step-daughter really would like to come to Smith. And I think she'd be a good fit, absolutely. Yeah, she loves all the pictures of Ivy Day, and the buildings — and I think she would do well at women's college. I think it would be good for her. My daughter, I think, would be just fine anywhere. And I can't tell her anything what to do. I have no idea what she's going to do, you know. I think she wants to surf and climb mountains, like, on a daily basis, so, maybe that's going to be hard here. I don't know where she'll go.

DEAN: Why would you recommend it for them, even though the problems you've had with it?

JOSLYN: Well, I think a lot — some of those problems — you know, none of those problems are really unique to Smith. I mean, I can't really fault Smith for not providing an answer, because I don't think society can in general. Maybe Smith sees itself as being, you know, it's a woman-centered place. I'm not sure they have any more answers on the subjects I've raised. I don't fault them for that, because there are no easy answers. But, I don't see any issues I've had being, you know, Smith's fault, at all. And I think, you know, the positives are, you know, worth it.

And yeah, I think a lot of the things I've mentioned would kind of — at a co-ed college or university you would have the same issues as a women. I don't know. But to tell you the truth — if you go to school with men more in those four years between 18 and 22, maybe you have a different perspective, but I don't know. I've talked to women who've gone to other schools, and they say the same thing about, you know, children and balancing. And I do hear the sense of, like, the entitlement issues. Of, you know, life would be easy. I hear that more from people who went to schools to Smith or any — you know, Smith or Mount Holyoke, or Harvard, or whatever, that they had the golden ticket, and that was it. You got into that school, and it would be — everything would unfold, like I said, like a dream. I think like my husband — went to the University of Texas, you know, and kind of worked his way through. And he had never had any illusions that life would ever be on a silver platter. And, you know, maybe that's the curse of privilege.

DEAN: So what difference has a Smith education meant to you, and would you make the same choice if you had to do it again?

JOSLYN: I don't know if I would have made the same choice, but nothing against Smith. I just don't know. I mean, the way I wound up here, again, was all these bad decisions I've made in life is for love, and affairs of the heart. And, you know, I've never really had any emotional, sort of — an intellectual meeting of the minds. I applied to Smith. I didn't have any guidance.

If I had come to Smith — if I did choose Smith all over again, and I really can't say if I would or wouldn't — I know I wouldn't regret it.

And I certainly wouldn't discourage any of my children. I would encourage my children to. Yeah, it's a good education. And as far as women's colleges go, you know, in terms of the social life issues, and if they have to have men around, or whatever — I feel like there's no issue with that at Smith. I think that you — it's really a nice balance of, if you want a heterosexual social life, you have a lot of control over it in a way you don't have in other places. And it's not a negative, at all. I mean, I think Smith is really well-positioned and well-balanced in that place that — you know, I wouldn't even say, well, it's a woman's college or not.

I mean, I can't — I'll tell you this. I can't say I made any stronger relationships with women because I went to a women's college. I don't — I never felt I came out of here closer to women. You know. I felt there was a lot of, you know, bitterness and cattiness that went on. I don't think my friendships with women were any stronger. I may feel like maybe I missed out having male friends, but I've had plenty of male friends since. I mean, I really don't — I think too much is made of, you know, it's a women's college, you know, in terms of how your life is going to be in terms of — you know, your relationships with men or women. I don't think it was really an issue for me then or now. Yeah, I would recommend it to my children, sure. Yeah. I have.

DEAN: Do you have any advice for current or future Smith (inaudible)?

JOSLYN: Well, it's the kind of advice they don't want to hear, because it's what I've been telling you. And that's the problem. People don't want to hear that. Although, I don't know how women this — 20 years later feel. Because I was never — I was, you know, a teenager, you know, in the Madonna era. The first Madonna phase, you know, with the gloves and the lace. And that was really, you know — women in the '80s, you know, with the shoulder pads and everything, they made you feel like you had to have it all. And you were going to have it all, so don't even worry! It's yours!

I don't know if women think that now, young women. I don't — maybe they've been disabused of that, and I've missed it, because I haven't been in contact with women that age. I have, you know, my children aren't that old. Maybe they don't have those illusions. Maybe they're going to be better off. Maybe they — or, so, there's nothing to tell them in that respect. They know it's going to be a compromise. Although, I don't know. You know, like shiny new pennies out there at Ivy Day, and, you know — it was being part of — it's being human. They're going to be disillusioned on some level. I mean, maybe a couple of them won't, and, yay, good for them. But, I think for most people, you just are not prepared to imagine the type of things that can happen to you in life.

I can't say I fell back on a network of Smith friends, you know, I didn't. I had one friend from Smith who nursed me through my divorce, but she could've been a friend from any college. You know, if I was disappointed in something, maybe I thought I would have stronger

female friendships. But I had regular female friendships. Regular friendships. You know, nothing extraordinary. I do find this, though. This is interesting. It's all sort of—

JOSLYN: —twenty years later, I valued my Smith education more, in terms of — like Ivy Day was more than I thought it would be. And I had friends — people who I was casual friends with or acquaintances that I've met over the years in other contexts, I've become very close friends with, who went to Smith. I'm not sure why. I'm not sure it's bad — it must have something to do with the experience. But it's definitely — there's a lag, a time lag, for me, in appreciating, you know, my college years here specifically.

DEAN: Well, we're running out of time. Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

JOSLYN: No, I'm just really glad I came back for reunion. It was — it's sort of, like I said, crystallized a lot of things for me in a positive way, which I hadn't expected, so it was a really nice surprise.

DEAN: OK, thank you very much.

JOSLYN: Thanks.

GEIS: You have two — you have a daughter and a little boy?

JOSLYN: I have a daughter, a little boy, and I've raised my two stepchildren since they were three and five. And they're 13 and 15.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Emily Crockett, May 27, 2011.