

Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project

Smith College Archives
Northampton, MA

Serena Williams, Class of 1981

Interviewed by
Rebecca York, Class of 2018

May 20, 2016

Abstract

In this interview, Serena Williams remembers her introduction to Smith, focusing especially on the Bridge Program providing support to new students of color as an integral part of her Smith experience. Although she was an economy major, Williams recounts her experiences with racism on campus, as well as time spent building community amongst other women of color at the Mwangi Cultural Center. She also talks about her strong house community and favorite traditions, as well as her tenure as President of the Student Government Association.

Restrictions

None.

Format

Interview recorded using Sony EX1R camera, XDCam focus.

Videographer

Video recorded by Kate Geis.

Transcript

Transcribed by Audio Transcription Center.

Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms

Video Recording

Bibliography: Williams, Serena. Interview by Rebecca York. Video recording, May 20, 2016. Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives. **Footnote:** Serena Williams, interview by Rebecca York, transcript of video recording, May 20, 2016, Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives.

Transcript

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Alumnae Oral History Project
Sophia Smith Collection
Smith College
Northampton, MA

Transcript of interview conducted May 20, 2016, with:

SERENA WILLIAMS
Northampton, Massachusetts

by: REBECCA YORK

WILLIAMS: I'm ready when you are.

YORK: Great. OK. So, I'm Rebecca York and I am conducting an interview with Serena Williams on May 20, 2016 for the Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project. Thank you for being here.

WILLIAMS: Thank you.

YORK: So, I guess let's start with how you got to Smith. What brought you here?

WILLIAMS: What brought me here? I — my mother went to college, my grandmother has a college degree, so I knew I was going to college. So, that was not the issue. It was a combination of things. My brothers were at Yale and I didn't want to go where they went because we had spent our whole lives following each other. But I wanted to go away to college. I was — I grew up in Augusta, Georgia, and they went away to college and so I should get to go away to college. So, that was one thing. But I kind of knew I wanted to go to a small college. So, I was looking at small colleges. I knew about Smith. My mother's best friend had gone to the Smith School of Social Work back in the '50s, so, I knew about Smith from that. And then Martin Luther King's daughter had gone to Smith and she finished in 1976. And I remember that because I remember reading a *Jet* magazine and seeing the announcement that she had finished. So, Smith was always sort of in the back of my mind. But it was Bryn Mawr I really wanted to go to. So, I applied to Bryn Mawr, Wellesley, Smith, got in, and Smith did this amazing recruiting job. People calling, people writing letters — that was before internet — so, calling, writing letters, writing letters.

And I didn't visit any campus, and made the decision to come to Smith. My mother — you used to have to give a check for your deposit and the deposits were all the same to the schools. And she left me a blank check because she was going someplace, and she said, Let me know where you're going to school. And I took the blank check and I wrote, Smith. And came to Smith sight unseen — sight unseen, hadn't

— no idea. Knew about it and, as they said, had talked to alums about it and just decided that this would be the best place. It was just that. (laughs) It was just that. I don't know if that was simple — just that simple. But yeah.

YORK: Yeah. Were you a part of the Bridge Program?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I was. I came to Bridge. So, that was my first introduction to Smith. We were in Lamont House and it was actually a good bridge, a good transition. As I said, I was — come from a family where women went to college. So, I knew what college was about. But coming from Georgia to Smith was, I guess, more of the culture shock than college was in and of itself. And so, that two weeks gave me — it was two weeks then I think it was — and gave me a chance to get to know the campus, get to know other students, get a taste, because they used to do some mini classes, of what college life was going to be like. And, yeah, I was — I loved Bridge and actually became a Bridge co-director my junior or senior year. So, yes, I did come to Bridge. So, that — when school started, I was ready. Yeah. Very much ready.

YORK: What house were you in?

WILLIAMS: I was in Lawrence House all four years. I never moved. (laughs) Yeah. So, right on campus. And I think I never moved — I'm a little bit [settled?], but, also, you know, run downstairs, run passed the dining room for breakfast, and then run to class. (laughter) So, I could get that last bit of sleep and — it's funny, I was at the quad yesterday and I could not remember the names of the houses at the quad, and then it dawned upon me I never knew the names of the houses at the quad. Why would I go to the quad? I lived in Lawrence House. So, I stayed on all four years at Lawrence House and, you know, different floors, but was always there. Just never had the desire to live in any other house. It was convenient to Wright Hall and Seelye Hall and College Hall — Green Street. Never wanted to move.

YORK: Did you have a good community there?

WILLIAMS: We did. We did. As a matter of fact, that's — I was sitting at lunch today with two people who were in Lawrence House and, so, it was a really good community. I think that was another reason not to move because even though, you know, you're bringing in a new class every year, it really was a close-knit house and I just remember sitting at the dining table and we could sit for hours just talking with my housemates. And we could just talk and talk and talk. It was a lot of fun. I remember being on the fourth floor. I had an aunt who lived in Lexington, Massachusetts and there was one phone on the floor. My aunt would call me very, very, very early in the morning and the phone

would ring and no one would go answer it because they knew it was for me and you would hear somebody say, Serena, it's your aunt. (laughter)

So, I would run and get the phone. But it was. It was a really good close-knit community and, as I said, those are the people that I stay in touch with now. As a matter of fact, on — and I was remembering this since it's reunion — Ivy Day. I hadn't — I'd kind of run out of money — no more work-study money. And that was before your parents could, you know, overnight you anything — (laughs) put money in your banking account from where they were.

So, I had no white dress. I had no shoes. I had nothing. And I asked one housemate, [Mary Jo Newborn?]. She had a white dress that — she loaned me her white dress. Another housemate, [Amy?], loaned me her shoes. So, it took, you know, my village to get me ready for Ivy Day and, so, even now when I see pictures of me in Ivy Day, I think about, you know, it was Lawrence House people who made sure I had what I needed. And so, yes, it was what I consider the best times. Don't understand why people move, so (laughter) it was a good community.

YORK:

Are there any house traditions that really stand out to you?

WILLIAMS:

I remember we had May Day for the seniors. So, when I was a senior — and it was actually Mary Jo Newborn. She did a skit and you would — you would — a freshman would play one of the seniors and I had some habits. One of them was I ironed my clothes, including my jeans, which was something we used to do in high school. Where I went to high school, you ironed your jeans. Well, actually, people dry-cleaned their jeans, but my parents weren't going to pay for that. So, I would iron my jeans and I always wore, like, a sweater and a shirt. And so, during May Day, they would bring you — you wake up in the morning and, if you were a senior, there would be flowers outside your door or a cup with something in it. So, she gave me a cup, which I still have to this day. So, I still have that cup.

And so, at the skit, she walks in and she looks just like me. She had — and she started ironing something. (laughs) I was — and I was like, Oh my God. I never realized that people noticed that I was ironing things. I was like how — you know I didn't like wrinkles. (laughs) That was — it was a high-school thing. And we didn't wear wrinkled clothes. And so, I ironed and nobody else did. So, she got up — so, that was — that was a lot of fun was that May Day tradition of honoring the seniors. So, that was one of my most fun moments was that big tradition.

And we used to have — well, like my houses, you know, back then that was — each house had its dining room and our people who ran our dining room — because I worked there in the dining room my first year and they would leave — if you worked in the kitchen, they would leave food out for you after you finished so you could have stuff to take to your room. We would have ice cream. They would leave ice cream out and, so, I remember fondly the women who worked in the kitchen

because of the little things they would leave out for those of us who worked in the kitchen with them. So, yeah. It was a good house. That May Day tradition is the one that's — stands out most for me.

YORK: Yeah. So, what were — so, I know that, eventually, you became President of the SGA.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hmm.

YORK: How did you get there?

WILLIAMS: I don't know. I — one of the thing — and one of the best things that ever happened to me was I ran for some office my sophomore year, which would have been — I would have had the office my junior year — and I lost. And it was good because I was like, Wow. I lost. And I need to do something different if I plan on — if I want to win. I was just always involved with Student Government when I was here and, so, my junior year — a lot of people went away their junior year. I didn't go away my junior year. So, I was on campus and got even more involved in Student Government and decided to run for President. And it was a campaign and we actually had to campaign and I would go to different houses and I would go to different parties so that people would get to know me. And it was a true campaign — and signs and things like that. And, again, this was before computers and (laughs) the internet. So, you're making signs. And I won. And I think I was pleasantly surprised.

But it was because I lost — I think it was a good thing I had lost whatever it was. I don't know if I was running for Vice President. It was a good thing I lost that year because it just sort of — I was very shy and very quiet and I knew that if I needed — if I wanted to be President of the Student Government I was going to have to not be so quiet and shy. So, I had to get out and go to other houses, not just Lawrence House. (laughs) So, yeah. And I became Student Government President. And it was — it was a defining experience — very much so.

One of the things that really was defining was [Joan Kurr Conway?] was President at that time and she would have me meet with her on a regular basis and she was a little bit imposing, (laughs) which you can imagine and she had that accent, you know? She was from Australia, so she had that accent. She was very formal as well. And I would have to go and meet with her in her office and she had a long table. I guess it's still in the Presidential Office and she would have tea brought in — (laughs) tea set. Someone would bring in a tea set and I would sit there and she would just want to know the student's viewpoints on things and so — and meeting with on a — you know — having to prepare to meet with her on a regular basis to either bring up an issues or just chat about what the students felt about something was — it was life changing in the sense that she treated me with — as if I were an adult — a responsible adult. And it's because she really respected students. And so, I had to

become that person and prepare for the meetings with her and think about my position on things because I also sat in on faculty meetings.

And so, I was no longer sort of the — just this student running around and going to parties or going over to Amherst. I was somebody who she was going to ask difficult questions, was going to ask my opinion on something, and to have to do that on a regular basis meant that I realized I was going to have to step up to the plate if I was going to meet her standard of what, you know, a student leader was going to be. So, that was good. It was good. Yeah.

YORK: So, I imagine that took up a lot of your time.

WILLIAMS: It did. (laughter)

YORK: Were you able to be a part of other orgs on campus just as a—

WILLIAMS: Um, I was in the Black Students Alliance. And one year in the Black Student Alliance I was the person who made the invitations. (laughs) So, I did things. Again, remember, this was before computers and graphic arts and I would make the invitations when we would have events because I had taken some — one studio art class when I was here. And so, that was a lot of fun. We got to use a different skill set. So, I guess, in some sense, that's one of my regrets is that when I was here I would never change the experience I had with the student government. But I sort of should of — it's like, wow, sometimes I wish I had done some other things, but there was only 24 hours in the day, and between that and — I worked in the library in the — what was it called? Reserved Reading Room. I don't know if they still have it.

YORK: They do.

WILLIAM: I guess they don't need it now. It was a room professors would put certain readings on reserve if there was only one copy of a book or something like that and, so, it was in the basement. At one point in time, it was in the basement and, then, at some point in time, it was on the first floor. And so, for three years I worked in the — I loved working in the library and I worked in the library. So, I did that. So, between working. I was co-director of Bridge. Oh, going to class. (laughs) And, you know, several — not involved in a whole lot of other activities, which is what I regret. But, again, it—

YORK: Doing a lot.

WILLIAMS: I was doing a lot. I don't know where I could have fit in something, you know? Like I only went ice skating once in the four years I was here and I was like, Wow. I should have done that more.

YORK: On the pond?

WILLIAMS: On the pond. Yeah. The pond would freeze over enough. I don't — I guess it still freezes over right now. And, of course, I had never ice skated because I was from Georgia and, my Lawrence housemates, one of them had an extra pair of skates. And so, she convinced me to put the skates on and come with her — well, come with her to the pond and we would go skating across the pond and there was something about thinking that there's water underneath this ice that meant, you know, you learned to ice skate really quickly (laughs) because you had to get across — kind of get across that pond. So, yeah. There's sometimes I'm like, Wow. I wish I had done more of those things. But, on the other hand, if I — it was only so many hours in a day. Yeah. And I was trying to do all of those things, you know?

And a sister who was here as well. She was a freshman. And I remember, like, wow, I didn't see her that often. (laughs) And part of it — I was trying not to interfere with her freshman year. But, yeah, it was a lot going on. Yeah. It was a lot. So—

YORK: What did you major in?

WILLIAMS: I was an econ major. And I came here to major in science and my freshman year was fine. I took biology and chemistry and I actually liked them. My sophomore I was — took organic chemistry and I was sitting or organic chemistry. Maybe it was the second week of school and I sat there and I was like, I have no idea what this man is talking about. (laughs) None. And the worst part is I don't really have any incentive to go and find out what he's talking about. At that point in time I realized I don't want to do — I don't want to be a science major.

So, I left the class and walked over to College Hall because you had to go to the registrar's office to drop the class. And so, I dropped. But you needed some more classes. So, they give you a list. You've got to take something. You've got to have — at the time you had to have 16 credits or some — whatever it was. So, I looked at the list and I signed up for Econ 101 and I think I signed up for maybe Gov 100 or something and I took econ — introduction to microeconomics or something — and something clicked. And I realized, like, wow, I really like this. So, I became an economics major with no idea what I was going to do with it, (laughs) but—

YORK: Yeah, right?

WILLIAMS: —I hadn't thought that through. You're 19, it's like I don't — I have no idea what this professor is talking about. I can't take this class. I had that much sense to know I couldn't take this class. So, I loved economics, but didn't quite think what I was going to do with it. So, now, when — you know, I teach — when students don't have a plan I'm like, It's OK. (laughs) Because it worked out. It worked out for me. But, yes, so, I was an econ major and loved it. At that time, it was

— you know, I took courses like comparative economic systems and urban economics and economic anthropology. And so, it was this fascinated studies of economies. So, I — that I have no regrets for switching majors. I still have no idea what happens in organic chemistry, (laughs) but, economics, that was a good decision — to major in economics.

YORK: Did you have any mentors here? Students or faculty?

WILLIAMS: There was an African-American professor here whose name was [Janella Butler?] and she taught, mostly, literature courses. And, as a matter of fact, I took, not from her, but I maybe took five or six literature courses — not just — it's called Afro Am at that time, not just (inaudible). But for some reason I loved English courses. So, maybe I took five or six of those. And she was — even though she wasn't in the econ department, she was the professor who kind of pushed me a little. I mean, I remember there was a course I took from her called — I think it was called Black Women's Literature. And this was before Alice Walker and *The Color Purple* and all of that.

So, I had chosen — we had to write a paper and I had chosen a very, at the time, well-known author and said, No, you can't write your paper on her. She gave me somebody else and I was thinking, Why can't I write on her? You know? And it was that recognition of, No, you need to push yourself a little bit and go learn about this instead of doing something that you already know. And so, she was good with that and she was also good with just sort of — she was very nurturing. She [got on well?] with African-American students at that time and was always around, always around to — and the Mwangi Cultural Center was where a lot of us hung out and you could find her in there just to ask questions or things like that. So, she was definitely someone to look to.

And there were a couple of professors whose classes I just thought were amazing. One was Professor [Zimowitz?] who is still here. I took Comparative Economics Systems from him and I remember once he gave a lecture on the Chinese economic system and the class just burst into applause because the lecture was just that good that we just all applauded. And so, that level of teaching in so many classes that really stands out for me about Smith College. Yeah.

YORK: So, Smith in the late-'70s, early '80s was really trying to diversify with Bridge and other programs. Were you aware of campus being more diverse than — or as diverse as maybe like Yale or something — another space you were.

WILLIAMS: I think — I don't know if I was aware of it being more diverse or less diverse, you know, coming from Georgia to Massachusetts. Well, you know, Georgia was much — where I grew up — I mean, I went to an integrated high school, but it was actually more (laughs) diverse than Smith was. So, you get to Smith and there is some diversity—

YORK: Was there a [disjunct?], then, between what you were haring about, like, Smith's diversity initiatives versus what you were seeing?

WILLIAMS: No because I — you never heard that word — you never heard the word diversity initiative. I don't think we used the term diversity then. And there was definitely nothing about a diversity initiative. I think there was this idea that you wanted more African-American students on campus. We all knew that, somehow through the grapevine — I think it was the class of '72 maybe — had the largest number of African-Americans Smith had ever had and they were a very strong class and I knew some alums would sometimes come back on campus for various things — that a board of counselors made the Mwangi Cultural Center.

And so, you knew that there was this class that had had this large number of African-American students and it seemed that that was the peak and it was dropping — going down. But there was never this idea of diversity initiatives. But it was — we knew that the numbers had dropped, which was interesting. And then, when I was in the Student Government, we did something called the Race — what did we call it? Racial Awareness Panels. And it was a group of selected students would go to different houses and it was a Jewish student, a black student, an Asian student, and a white student. And they would discuss with each other first their thoughts and ideas and then open it up for questions because there were some issues that some African-American students were having on campus, being here and not feeling part of the campus, and some Asians students were also having some issues of feeling isolated. And so, we did that.

But I remember before the panels went out, the — I was President of the Student Government Associated — and then the students who were on the panels and whoever was running this, we kind of got together in a room, just informally at one of the living rooms, and started talking about what it was like to be at Smith and it was eye-opening because, for me as a black student, I didn't realize the issues that the Asian students were having or the Jewish students were having. And then, the white student was — who was on the panel — talked about that she had never met or really interacted with any African-American people and the situation she was finding herself in at Smith. And it was — as I said, it was eye-opening to think, Wow, here's this — I'm coming from Augusta, Georgia where I have white classmates whose houses I've been into and things like that. I get to Smith and I'm dealing with somebody who has never had an African-American for a friend. And it was a little bit startling because I'm thinking, Wait, this is upside down! This is an upside-down world I'm living in!

As a matter of fact, the first time anyone ever called me the N-word was walking across Green Street. And it wasn't a Smith student it was some man who ran a car and I was walking to the bank because, again, you couldn't — (laughs) you had to do it in person and you had to run to the bank on Saturday mornings because it would close. And I

remember standing across — it was in front of the library — not the Smith library, but the public library. I can't think of what it's called. And these men up there in a car and they're driving down the street and you hear that and I remember standing there thinking, Wow, this is interesting. I've grown up in Georgia and I've never heard the word and I'm here at Smith and I'm hearing the word. This is not what I expected, you know? I think I had a different perception of what I was coming to having come from Georgia and had — you know — I had gone to segregated schools and lived during segregation when — you know with the places we couldn't go and things we couldn't do. And I get to Smith and I'm like, Hmm, this is interesting that I'm talking to people who have never had African-American friends, these men are calling — you know — using this on a Saturday morning on a beautiful fall day. And so, it was just sort of not what I was — thought it was going to be in that sense.

But people were open. And obviously they had to be open in order to have this panel. The fact that we could sit there in the living room and everyone was willing to be honest about their perception and, then, as I said, we went to a few houses to do this because some houses were having some issues and — to try to help houses work through some of the issues.

YORK: Do you think the houses were receptive?

WILLIAMS: We didn't go to every house. We weren't invited. (laughs) So, there was that. So, it was an invitation. It wasn't — we didn't just bang on the door. So, yeah, I mean, the houses where you went, people were receptive. I don't know how honest people were, but I think what they say was, Well, these four, five people could be on the panel and try to be open and honest with each other. And that was the idea, was that if the people on the panel admitted to some things and talked it out, then maybe you could help other people work through whatever the issues were.

And there were — you know — issues. There was — I can't recall — oh, a cross was burned over on Amherst campus one year and, so, that kind of got people thinking about things. There were, you know, issues with — parties were an issue. You know, people had different concepts of what a party should be, for example. The Black Students Alliance, they didn't serve — and remember alcohol was legal to drink because the drinking age was 18. The Black Students Alliance didn't serve alcohol at their parties. And so, it was just sort of like, no, these — the BSA does not serve alcohol at its parties and you go to a house party where you get a keg — you know — keg. And so, there was some differences in how people socialized and how people interacted with each other — people's experiences of interacting with different people.

I remember at Lawrence House, as much as I loved Lawrence House, we had a number of students from Korea who sat at the same table. And I'll never forget someone saying, Oh, they always sit

together! And I said, Well, everybody always sits together. The athletes always sit together, the science majors always sit together, everybody always sits together. I don't know. Why does it bother people when people of a certain ethnic group or race always sit together? Because if you walk into any house, people always sit in the same seat! I mean, that's just human nature to always sit in the same — you've got a seat and you sit in that same seat. But it was — so, it was more of those subtle kinds of things that would happen. And so, I think that was one of the purposes of the Racism Awareness Panels. There was, as I said — the Black Students Alliance was very, very active when I was here as a social organization as well as a support organization — you know, Mwangi Cultural Center. Sometimes you would just go in there and — to study. You know? I just want to sit in here and study because I just need stuff (inaudible) and not have to answer anybody's questions. But, I think, you know, sometimes, you would also have very positive experiences.

I'll never forget it was last one night, it might have been during exam times when you're procrastinating, and we were in Lawrence Living room and some of my white classmates just started asking questions about what was it like growing up in Georgia during segregation and very sincere questions — wanting to know what was this world like because they had read about it, but had never — didn't understand that it was something that had happened within their lifetime. It was something contemporary. And we actually had a very good conversation about what was Georgia like in the '60s and, then, as I said, they asked very sincere questions out of, I want to know this and I want to know what your life was like and what was happening and what were you thinking. And just one of those late-night conversations about, you know, those Smith conversations.

One of my favorite was about color — I don't mean skin color. (laughs) I mean color, you know? We were talking about colors — red and green and blue and — I don't know it just — it's exam time, everybody's stayed up too many hours and conversations get kind of crazy. But that night we actually had a very open and sincere conversation in the living just sitting there. Them wanting — just having the sincere curiosity about what was it like growing up black in — during that time period. Yeah. So, there were moments like that as well that — pretty warm moments. Yeah.

YORK: That's wonderful. So, what did you do once you'd graduated?

WILLIAMS: After I borrowed that dress and those shoes (laughter) and then I had a good day and graduated. I went to law school interestingly enough and I went to law school because, you know, I had majored in economics and everybody — She must go to business school. I remember getting the business school applications and they asked you what you want to do with the MBA and I couldn't answer it. I couldn't even fake an essay, you know? And I'm like, I can't even pretend. So, I put those

away and sat down and thought, you know, What I really been doing? Well, I've really been doing Student Government work the four years I've been here and I was really interested in law and government.

So, I applied to law schools, ended up at Georgetown Law School in Washington, DC. So, did that and my second year at Georgetown I did something called street law where, as a student, you go into the high schools in DC and you teach this class to high school students on law that high school students would need — criminal law, juvenile justice system, landlord tenant law, (inaudible) and it was a year-long class. So, that was in the back — you know, I did that. I graduated. I was interested in housing law for reasons related to having a bad landlord, worked for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, then went into teaching law and I have been teaching law now for over 25 years. And I couldn't imagine doing anything else right now. (laughter) So, that may come.

And I always think, you know, back to, like I said, some of the really good teachers I had here when I'm teaching — sort of role modeling. And then, the other thing I do is, with Joan Kurr Conway, I will never forget, I think occurred, you know, after — the SGA President then serves on the Trustees Board for two years as SGA trustee and there was some issue on the board and, of course, I took a different position than Joan Kurr Conway, which was just — the hubris of youth that I could take a (laughter) different position then people would also listen to me.

Of course, she won whatever the (laughter) the issue was when the vote came down. It was — but she came over to me and she told me she was proud of me or holding my ground on the position and she also said to me, If I have not taught you the important of process, I have not taught you. And I always think of that and, you know, sometimes, I'll put other words in there other than process. But it was how — the ownership she took, that if she had not taught me, she had failed — not that I had failed, but that she had failed at teaching if she had not taught me something. And so, I always remember that when I'm teaching that sometimes, you know, it's not that my students fail or it's — what — am I teaching them what they need to know? And, you know, there's no reason for people to know these things if I don't teach them. I must teach them this because they don't know this and people aren't born knowing what to wear to an interview. They're not born knowing so much and I always remember that line — those two things. (laughter) Why did I even think that I was going to persuade people to vote my way? But, you know, that's being 21.

So, as I said, the vote went her way, but I always remember her coming over after everything was done and just saying how proud she was that I held my own in that debate and I take that with me also, as I said, that one line when she said, If I had not taught you, then I — you know — this thing — then I have not taught you. And so, I do take those lessons from her when I am teaching.

YORK: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Mm-hmm.

YORK: That's great. Let's see.

WILLIAMS: Oh, if I don't say this—

YORK: Yes?

WILLIAMS: —you can't put this on the internet. I have three sisters who went to Smith! (laughter) I just want you all to know that. I must acknowledge that. (laughter)

YORK: You were the first.

WILLIAMS: I was the first. (laughter) It's like oh my God. Then, I had a sister who was a freshman when I was a senior.

YORK: OK.

WILLIAMS: And then, I had three sisters who were here at the same time. One was a freshman, one was a junior, one was a senior. I missed that fun time. (laughter) So, I—

YORK: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) stories.

WILLIAMS: Yes. The mint Milano cookie story. Because my mother, at one point, would send, you know, you used to get them — you call them — care package! (laughter) And she would send one because why would you pack three different care packages? It's going to Smith college for one of the three. And she sent one package who whoever got the package first ate the cookies and, (laughter) so, all the others didn't get them. So, I love hearing their stories of the time — that one year when the three of them were on campus together.

YORK: [To pick it out?].

WILLIAMS: (laughter) They lived in different houses and they had different friends because they have very different personalities. But I have to always remember that and I always say, They didn't follow me. I did not recruit them. I did not say one word to them when they were deciding where to go to school because I did not want to influence them. And so, my — as I said, one sister was a freshman my senior year and, then, the others followed them — followed — I think, you know, followed her because they were very close in age. So, yeah. So, I come from a family of four Smith women. And you should just also know this for the archives that my mother had a scrapbook that she made when she

was in college and we donated it to Smith because it was like, well, you've got four Smith women in one family. So, even though she was not a Smith woman, she was in some sense. You know, she sent her four daughters to Smith, so there's a little piece of her in the archives —

YORK: That's wonderful.

WILLIAMS: —here. But I was like, Oh my God. I forgot my three sisters were here. (laughter) So, yes, you'll have to interview them. (laughter)

YORK: Yes. Definitely should tell them about this.

WILLIAMS: Yeah. (laughter) Yeah. Well, the one big interview — because, as I said, when my sister was a freshman, I was a senior. I — you know, I was trying to give her her space — so trying not to get too much influencing of her about anything. Well, she was a science major. So, but, yes. I must mention them before they do something.

YORK: Wonderful. Do you have any — questions?

GEIS: I think I would just (inaudible) this was really great.

WILLIAMS: Oh, thank you.

YORK: Yeah. This was wonderful. Thank you. We'll get you off to the panel.

WILLIAMS: Oh, I'm going to start the panel. Right. (laughter) Thank you so much.

END OF INTERVIEW

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