

Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project

Smith College Archives
Northampton, MA

Paula Ferris Einaudi, Class of 1965

Interviewed by
Tanya Pearson, Class of 2016

May 15-16, 2015

Abstract

In this interview, Paula Ferris Einaudi discusses her desire to attend Smith from an early age and the limited choices available to women at that time. She reflects on her feelings upon arrival as a freshman and the personal transformation that occurred during those four years. Einaudi details her house community, social and dating life on and off campus, the political climate during the Women's Movement and Civil Rights Movement, as well as gender, sexuality and the evolution of Smith's student body. Einaudi expands upon her post Smith life and career, specifically how Smith remains an influential presence via networking and alumnae.

Restrictions

None.

Format

Interview recorded using Canon Vixia HF.

Videographer

Video recorded by Kate Geis.

Transcript

Transcribed by Julia Bozer, Audio Transcription Center.

Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms

Video Recording

Bibliography: Einaudi, Paula Ferris. Interview by Tanya Pearson. Video recording, May 15-16, 2015. Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives. **Footnote:** Paula Ferris Einaudi, interview by Tanya Pearson, transcript of video recording, May 15, 2015, Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives.

Transcript

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Sophia Smith Collection
Smith College
Northampton, MA

Transcript of interview conducted May 15, 2015, with:

PAULA FERRIS EINAUDI
Northampton, MA

by: TANYA PEARSON

FERRIS EINAUDI: — graduation last year and got a photo taken in the hallway or wherever we were.

PEARSON: Yeah.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Yeah.

PEARSON: My mom's never — she's been here once since I've been here, but she calls. Like, I called her on Mother's Day, "Is Gloria Steinem going to be there?"

(laughter)

FERRIS EINAUDI: I like your mom.

PEARSON: Like, "Oh, you'll visit if Gloria Steinem's going to be there."

FERRIS EINAUDI: That's why it's OK for you to be here? She's a graduate?

PEARSON: Yes. Yeah. Alright.

FERRIS EINAUDI: So if I need to take a sip of water during the taping-

PEARSON: That's fine. You can drink it while you're talking.

FERRIS EINAUDI: That's what I meant, yeah. OK.

PEARSON: But if you need a break, just say, "Stop!" OK. This is Tanya Pearson interviewing Paula Einaudi on May 15, 2015, for the Alumni-

FERRIS EINAUDI: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. You know what I feel very strongly about?

PEARSON: What?

FERRIS EINAUDI: Using the name I had when I was here. So, Paula Ferris Einaudi.

PEARSON: Oh, OK.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Alright? Do you mind?

PEARSON: Sure. So we can just — you'll just cut that. Or we can just leave it.

GEIS: That's fine. Actually, we're rolling, so that will be included in the transcript.

FERRIS EINAUDI: That's fine.

GEIS: Alright.

PEARSON: OK. I'll just start over, so we're just starting fresh. This is Tanya Pearson interviewing Paula Ferris Einaudi on May 15, 2015, for the Alumni Oral History Project. Thank you very much for being here.

FERRIS EINAUDI: You're more than welcome.

PEARSON: I'm really excited from our conversation that we had on the couch yesterday.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Good.

PEARSON: So I guess just start from the beginning. How did you choose Smith?

FERRIS EINAUDI: How did I choose Smith? By the way, should I be looking there, or at her? OK. I chose Smith in eighth grade. I haven't met anyone who's made that decision younger than that, unless they were granddaughters or daughters of alumni. But my mother told me a lot about colleges as I was growing up. And I was the youngest, so I was watching what my brothers were going through. And somehow the idea of Smith just got to me. And I knew I wanted to be an exchange student in high school. And I was lucky enough to be an American Field Service exchange student, and that just locked it in. I mean, Smith was the leader forever in Junior Year Abroad programs. And that was just critical to me. So-

PEARSON: Did you have family members who had gone to Smith, or was it just-

FERRIS EINAUDI: No. No, I just had a momma who told me a lot about — and in my day, of course, if you wanted to go to a really good college, and you were a young woman, you had your choice of seven. And Smith was just the most appealing to me.

PEARSON: How did you feel when you first arrived, like your first couple of months as a freshman?

FERRIS EINAUDI: That's a good question, because as much as I loved the idea of coming here, I was also pretty intimidated. And I think if you talk to many of my classmates, we were all pretending that everything was very cool and we could do anything, but we were terrified. We were absolutely terrified that all of those private school girls had a much better background than we did, and how were we ever going to make it? And I've learned a lot of the private school girls felt the same way. This was a very intense academic environment. And of course it's the first time that you're away from home. So I would say intimidation is the number one — the intimidation, and then worry about not showing that you were intimidated.

PEARSON: How did you fit in overall, and did you have a feeling that there was a typical Smithy? Because you hear about Smithies a lot, or a Smithy woman. Did that make you feel like you had to live up to-

FERRIS EINAUDI: Well I sure knew I had to live up academically. And I was very worried about that. I think one of my coping mechanisms was athletics. Because I knew that I could handle a softball, and I knew I could play tennis, and I knew I could swim better than most people. And that was really critical. And I would say the faculty member that really helped me through my four years here was not an English professor or an Art History professor, it was Rita Benson, who was the crew coach, and she was the swimming coach. I didn't do crew, but I sure did swimming. And I was Head of Lifeguards, which is the synchronized swimming group. And she instilled in all of us this sense that we could do it. Not only could we do it, but when we graduated we were going to be great alumni. So she was really critical to me. She believed in me. And that meant a lot. It really helped me.

PEARSON: What was your house community like? What house did you live in? You kind of just mentioned the teams that you belonged to. Any other clubs or organizations?

FERRIS EINAUDI: I was in SOS. I spent some time doing some tutoring. I went to the Clark School for the Deaf and helped freshman year. But I was in Hopkins House, which was then made up of three different houses. There was — there still is — Hopkins House itself. But then there was Hopkins A and Hopkins B, which are gone now. They've been gone for 15 years or so. They were right behind Chapin House. Now, I asked for Chapin House. And I will tell you, Hopkins B and Hopkins A were really not in very good shape at all. And so I spent four years walking past the gorgeous Chapin House every day. And another thing, we were truly weird. I mean, the fact that there were 20 — I don't know, 15 of us that graduated — only three come back for reunions. That gives you an idea of the social misfits that the class of '65 in Hopkins House was. Anyhow, I'm sure they'll never watch this video, so I can say that.

(laughter)

PEARSON: How would you describe the campus atmosphere? It could be socially, politically — just in general, and then I have some more specific questions.

FERRIS EINAUDI: In general. OK. Wow. Socially, what I remember the most — of course, you know, it's a women's college. And the guys' colleges were all guys' colleges. I mean, now, today, they're all coed. But Friday night, guys would simply descend on campus. So there was a huge dichotomy between what the school was Monday through Thursday and what it was Friday through Sunday when it was basically a coed place, at least during the day. And it was lots of fun. There were always plenty of things to do. Politically, you know, Betty Friedan's book was published during our sophomore year. That was revolutionary for the country, and it began a consciousness in our collective sense of community. But it was also the beginning of the Civil Rights movement. One of my favorite classmates from Hopkins House was very active, and there was a whole group of students that went down during spring break to North Carolina to help get people registered to vote. There were people that went to Alabama our senior year, and that was — you know the movie that just came out about Martin Luther King — well they were involved with that. They got themselves arrested and didn't come back after spring break because they were still in jail. I mean, pretty active. So anybody that wanted to could really get involved in the Civil Rights movement. And by senior year the war in Vietnam was really becoming a bigger and bigger issue. And we had teach-ins. You know, three years later, by the time the people that were freshman — we called them freshman in those days — by the time they were seniors, they were practically shutting the college down. But in '65 we were having teach-ins and just becoming more aware of what was that tragedy of our generation.

PEARSON: And I do want to — I would really like you to tell the-

FERRIS EINAUDI: I'm going to need some more water.

PEARSON: Oh, sure. To expand on that story that you were talking about before the interview, because you know now Smith has this reputation of being like a lesbian institution.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Don't say that. Don't say that. It is a place where everybody feels safe.

PEARSON: Yes.

FERRIS EINAUDI: OK? That doesn't make it a lesbian institution. I mean-

PEARSON: Oh, no. I just mean from researching the way that it's seen.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Sure. Sure. Right.

PEARSON: Yeah, so I-

FERRIS EINAUDI: Or the way many people perceive it.

PEARSON: Yes.

FERRIS EINAUDI: But since I've done admissions work since 1979, I get really, really tired of people saying, Oh, you want to apply to Smith, oh I know why. Excuse me. This is a place-

PEARSON: Yeah. No, that happened to me.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Yeah. I'm sure. I'm sure. And it's such an injustice to everybody, because this is a place that celebrates women.

PEARSON: Yes.

FERRIS EINAUDI: All kinds of women. OK. Having said that, in 1961, '62, '63, it was not a place — and no place in the country was — where lesbians could freely admit to what their sexuality was. And you know there were just whispers in houses. “Do you think she is? Do you think she isn't?” But there were also whispers about, “Is she a virgin? Is she a virgin?” OK? Because we were all very curious, but also it was something that was very private. You just didn't talk about it except with your closest friends. So what I was mentioning to you before was about my little sister. So I come back as a sophomore, and I've got a freshman that I've been assigned to. And she's very bubbly and cute, and she's from South Carolina. And we had a good time. We did things together. And then my junior year, I was gone. But someone told me during the year that she had been moved to Northrup House. And when I came back senior year, she was not at Smith at all. And I asked someone at my house, I said, “Well, what happened to Dorothy?” And she said, “Oh.” She said, “Let me tell you.” And I could see her eyes got — she was really angry. And I got angry also. Evidently she was moved to Northrup House because there were whispers that, Oh my gosh, she's a lesbian. And I assume that they assumed that there was a relationship between her and maybe the woman that told me the story. I don't know. I don't know. But, OK, so she's moved to make things safe, presumably. Well, by senior year she was gone — my senior year, her junior year. She was evidently asked to leave because she was a lesbian. OK? That's 1964.

PEARSON: Yes.

FERRIS EINAUDI: OK? How times change. Alright? Because by the early 80s, when I was doing admissions work, the main issue that we had to fight was, “The only reason that you apply to a women’s college is that you’re a lesbian. Why else would you want to go?” And it was very difficult, especially when you had articles in the New York Times and the Washington Post that were highlighting the “lesbian issue” at women’s colleges. It was a really misogynistic way of dealing with the fact that, as a society, we were becoming a lot more open about talking about sexual things. And, sure, there are lesbians at Smith. There are lesbians at Yale, there are lesbians at Oberlin, there are lesbians at whatever the local community colleges are. Hello! But it was only the women’s colleges that got criticized. It drove us crazy. Because we were trying to recruit the next generation of Smith students, and we wanted them to be as diverse as possible.

PEARSON: Yes.

FERRIS EINAUDI: And so, yeah. Anyhow.

PEARSON: I’m trying to — we don’t have that much time left.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Oh, too bad. I can go on and on.

(laughter)

PEARSON: I know. Was Smith a fulfilling place for you personally and academically? Or one or the other? It seemed like there was a lot to balance, because you were involved in so many things.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Yeah, it was a — and we know we’re all growing up, and we know — oh, my gosh. You know, What are we going to do afterwards? When I — I don’t know if you know, I’m on the Board of Trustees now. And I’ve stayed as an active alum for decades. When I see what’s available today, for today’s students, I get very angry with my classmates that think that, Oh, Smith really isn’t quite the school today that it was in our day. That’s bologna. It is such a better school today than it was. The Career Development Office opens up worlds to these students, the kinds of internships that they can have during the summer that show them what is out there, that give them opportunities to get a leg up. I was a language major. So, the CDO — we become aware of the CDO only as seniors. I mean, in the spring — not the spring, probably in February of our senior year. I was an Italian major. Well, then I had two choices. I could teach Italian, or I could go to work for the National Security Agency and translate newspapers. That’s a little narrow. It’s a little narrow. Today, I would have far more — I would be opened, my eyes would be opened to far more opportunities. So that doesn’t really answer the question. The atmosphere — tell me again?

PEARSON: Oh, it does. Just, was it fulfilling for you on a personal level as well as an academic level?

FERRIS EINAUDI: OK. By the time senior year came — actually, by the time junior year came around, I was no longer intimidated the way I had been freshman year. So it was very fulfilling. And I had wonderful Art History courses that really helped me for life, in the sense that I had never been exposed to art before I got here. But I would say that the really fulfilling part of Smith— I should say, another fulfilling part of Smith — has continued as an alum. Because you are part of a worldwide community. And it's there for all of us to take advantage of, and very few colleges have an alumni association as active as ours. And that's part of being a Smithy.

I mean, one of my favorite stories — I hope we have time for this. Was Jill Ker Conway talking about — this was at some conference that I came back to. And so, she was President from '75 to '85. So, it was in the early '80s. And she was talking to this whole group of volunteers. And she said, "You know, people ask me how I am able to raise money from corporations and foundations." And she said, "You know, I'll go to Exxon, and I'll be sitting in their board meeting, and I'll be surrounded by a lot of older men. And they would look at me and say, 'This is the board of Exxon. You are the President of a women's liberal arts school. Why should we give you a quarter of a million dollars, which is what you came to ask me for?'" She said, and her answer was, "Let me ask you this question. I'd like to know what the six major cities are where you have offices. And I will send you a report of the difference that Smith women have made to those cities." She said, "I never get turned down. When I send them the report, and I show them" — and this is the 1980s, alright? So we're dealing with graduates from the '30s and the '40s. This is before the women's movement. These women are always Head of the Historical Society, Head of the museums, Head of the boards of education, Head of every important community hospital association, whatever. They are making every one of those cities better places. And they're doing it, or many of them were doing it, as volunteers. The difference that they were making. Because Smith women graduate, and they are committed. And, to me, that is something that I did not appreciate. I had no idea, when I was eighth grade, and I decided I wanted to come here. But I have enjoyed being an alumna for 50 years, and I have enjoyed being part of this wonderful, great alumni community that then was mostly volunteers, but today it's just at the highest ranks of our professional life. So I just feel very luck to be a part of it, and I'm glad my mamma taught me.

PEARSON: That's a good closing, and I feel like you kind of answered this, but I always like to ask alums, do you have any advice for current Smith students or for those about to graduate?

FERRIS EINAUDI: Current Smith students — first-year students, so they still have a ways to go?

PEARSON: Yeah, sure.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Alright. Take courses that you don't know. You know, listen to the upperclassmen and ask what you should take. I've met so many students over the years that have come here convinced that they were going to become doctors. And then they take Geology 100 or something else, and they fall in love with it. I mean, college should be about exploring new ideas, trying out new things, listening to other people, and so forth. So that's for a first-year student. My advice to a senior is, learn how to use the alumni directory. Learn how to be connected to the Smith Club where you live. Learn how you can find out who the chemical engineers are in Seattle, Washington, if that's what you need to know. The Alumni Association is here for life, but it's up to you to make it happen.

PEARSON: That's good advice. We have many questions, but we don't have time.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Oh, too bad. Too bad.

PEARSON: Thank you very much, Paula.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Oh, I've loved it. I've loved it.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Julia Bozer, June 2015.

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PAULA FERRIS EINAUDI
Northampton, MA

by: TANYA PEARSON

FERRIS EINAUDI: So I'm in completely different clothes. (laughter)

PEARSON: I know. This is a two part-

FERRIS EINAUDI: Is that going to matter?

PEARSON: Oh, no. It's fine. It's interesting.

FERRIS EINAUDI: OK. Yeah. The pins are the same.

(laughter)

FERRIS EINAUDI: I need a little water before we start.

PEARSON: OK. I'll just wait for your signal. OK. This is Tanya Pearson again, interviewing Paula Ferris Einaudi on May 16, 2015 for the Alumni Oral History Project, take two. (laughter). Thank you for coming back. I did have a few — you were very forthright yesterday. And I just felt like we ran out of time.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Sure.

PEARSON: And you were talking about things that people don't generally want to talk about.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Ah. OK.

PEARSON: If you could elaborate a little more on what social life was like on campus, relationships with friends, dating, anything like that that you're willing to expand on or talk about.

FERRIS EINAUDI: OK.

GEIS: Paula, can I get you to move that napkin down?

FERRIS EINAUDI: Yes.

GEIS: Thank you.

FERRIS EINAUDI: I am going to need it occasionally, unfortunately. But I can imagine it's distracting. So, social life. Social life for people who were extroverts was a lot of fun. But I mentioned yesterday, I lived in a house that had people that were not as at ease in social situations as I was, for example. And many of them went through four years without ever having a date. And I think that was hard for them. But, so, if you were an extrovert it was a lot of fun. And guys would come down from Dartmouth, or Yale, or Amherst, or whatever, every Friday night. This was an era before the sexual revolution, I would say. And (coughs), excuse me. The pill had just been invented the year before — or patented, I guess, the year before. But of course it was beyond the reach of undergraduates. It was beyond the reach of unmarried women. That was not to say that sexual lives were — this was not a nunnery, let's put it that way. And I know in the houses we would often play word games and try to decide was she or wasn't she. By that we meant, was she or wasn't she a virgin. And occasionally we talked about was she or wasn't she a lesbian. And it was really just talk. I mean, it was — and it was, kind of, whispered. It wasn't anything that was overly discussed the way it is — or, taken for granted — the way it is today. I mean, in my day, social life — the rules were that guys could come upstairs in the houses three afternoons a week, on three weekends. Rally Day and — I've forgotten what the other weekends were. Float Night, whatever that night was in May. Between 2:00 and 5:00 in the afternoon, with the door open and three feet on the floor. OK? That's 1965. By 1971, the rules were guys could only stay overnight 27 nights in a row. So, you know, you can get an idea of this real revolution that happened in very few years — after.

And what had happened in the meanwhile? Well, the Vietnam War had happened. The Civil Rights movement had happened. And people were really angry about the war, and guys were going off and getting killed, and lives were on the line. Colleges were being closed. And suddenly, rules that said you can only be upstairs two afternoons a week, a year, with three feet on the — it just sounded irrelevant. So social lives changed enormously. And that is not to say that memories of the Class of '65 were in a convent. We certainly were not. And there were numerous girls that left after — I say girls, yeah, we all called ourselves girls in those days — that left after freshman year, or sophomore year, because they were pregnant.

And one of the most poignant stories that we knew about, at our 40th reunion — we put a book together every five years, our class. And this woman wrote her story in the 40th reunion book. And it is the most poignant story. It's worthy of publication, it's so well written. But the story is really a tale for those times. She and her boyfriend were semi-engaged. She had every intention of marrying the guy. And she became pregnant, and she realized she was pregnant I think the summer of

sophomore year. She went to tell the guy, and he was out of there. She was a goner. I mean, here — and, sorry, her life just fell apart. She went home to Michigan. Her family was irate that she had gotten herself into such a predicament. Abortion was not an option, although it was for numerous girls. I mean, there were plenty of people that got pregnant and went off to spring break in the Caribbean or someplace, and we never knew about it until they told their best friends years later. In her case, she was sent to a home for wayward girls, or whatever it was called in those days. Horrific stuff. She has the baby, she has to give him up — give her up — for adoption. And it was really painful. And then life went on, and she picked herself up. She got a job. She finished college, she got a job, became a college counselor in the school system, and blah blah blah.

Twenty years later or so, the — a lot has changed. You know, I mean, early on, when you gave your child up for adoption, that was it. You could never have a chance of seeing them again. This woman, at age 40 I guess, looked for her daughter, and her daughter was looking for her at the same time. And they met. And they looked so much alike. And both of them came to our 40th reunion. And we had read their story, and it was just a love fest. And they're both back here for the 50th.

PEARSON: Oh wow.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Yeah. And it's really wonderful to see. But anyhow, that will give you an idea-

PEARSON: Yeah.

FERRIS EINAUDI: I mean, that's kind of a story that simply does not happen today. And in terms of the lesbian question, I can't remember — it was simply not acceptable. I told you this story yesterday, right?

PEARSON: Mm-hmm. Yes.

FERRIS EINAUDI: And boy, things changed from that point of view, certainly. Because, let's see, I graduated in '65. By the time I came back for my 20th reunion — and I was already doing interviews in the early '80s. And that's when it was very difficult to be interviewing or recruiting students for Smith because the word was out in the field that this was a “lesbian school.” And so was Bryn Mawr and Wellesley, and, you know, why else would you come here? But I think we talked about that yesterday.

PEARSON: Yeah, a little bit.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So-

PEARSON: Yeah. I know that you know Sid.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Sid Dalby?

PEARSON: Yeah, College Admissions.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Yeah. Yeah.

PEARSON: But how — I don't know if we talked about your — what you studied academically while you were at Smith and how that influenced your career choices after Smith.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Right. Sure.

PEARSON: Like, I'd like to talk a little bit about what you did and how your Smith (inaudible).

FERRIS EINAUDI: Well, alright. Sure. Well, I wound up as an Italian major. I went to Florence for my junior year. Loved it. And during my senior year, a fellow Italian major said to me in December or so, "Paula, I met this really attractive Italian. And he's a good friend of Demetrius, the man that I've been going out with. And he's asked me to find him somebody to date for the semester break. And would you be interested in seeing him?" Well, that was 50 years ago.

PEARSON: Yeah.

FERRIS EINAUDI: And so we were married a year and a half later. And, let's see. He was at Cornell, a PhD student. So I wound up doing my graduate work there. I got my Master's degree there. And then he finished his PhD at that time, and we went off to the University of Toronto, where I taught Italian. And he had a Post-Doc. And that was a very interesting time because I had taken French 11D my senior year. It was one of the best courses I had ever taken because not only did it teach me French, it taught me how to teach languages. I mean, this college has been way ahead of the game in teaching languages for 50 years. And so at the end of senior year, I really could speak French very well.

Well so, anyhow, here I am, two years later, and I'm asked to teach Italian courses at the University of Toronto. And I walk into class, and I'm given my assignment. And I said, I'm just teaching them in Italian, right? I mean, hello, this is a foreign language. That was a whole new world to these students. They had not been exposed. They had only been exposed to basic language courses taught the way they were taught here in the United States in the '30s, which means you get sentences to translate, and you go to the board the next day, and you write the answers on the board, and then you discuss where the mistakes are. Really god-awful teaching. So to make a long story short, it was such a shock to the rest of the faculty. I was this 23-year-old new arrival, and I was a real threat to the rest of the faculty without having any idea, because the students loved learning Italian and not hearing any English

in their classroom. That was the only way I knew how to teach. The professors were aghast, because here was somebody that really knew what she was — had a much better way of doing it. And to make a long story short, they were so threatened by it that I was given a letter at the end of the first year. And I got this letter the day after the student reviews of all the courses taught at the University of Toronto were given. And I had received from the students the next to highest review of the entire university. Right, now I was not teaching Theoretical Physics, right? I was teaching basic Italian. But that's pretty good. And if you're the Department Chair, you should be taking notice of that. Instead, the man writes me a letter, and he says, "Well, we're going to renew your contract for next year, but you need to know that that will be it. That will be it." (laughter) I laugh about this now because I have a friend who wrote the Dean of the College. He was so incensed, and his wife had been a teacher in the Department. He was so incensed that he wrote the Dean. And he said, "I want you to know how things are going, how my taxpayer dollars are being used at the University of Toronto." And I just was very honored that he wrote the letter, that he took the time to write the letter. I didn't dream that the Dean would take it seriously, but he really did. And he looked into it. There was an investigation of the Department. And to make a long story short, A, I was rehired, and B, the Department Chair was relieved of his duties as the Department Chair.

PEARSON: Holy cow.

FERRIS EINAUDI: So there I was, 24 at that point. That was really quite a pleasure.

PEARSON: That is not what I was expecting. That's not how I thought it would end.

FERRIS EINAUDI: I know. Yeah. So, however, what that put me on notice about was the fact that, if I wanted a career teaching anything on the college level, I was going to need a PhD. And so my husband at that point got a new position in Colorado as a Fellow in this brand new institute that was just starting in Environmental Sciences. And so we were going to be off to Colorado where they were just starting a Linguistics program. And that was grand for me, because I had audited a couple of courses at the University of Toronto while I was teaching and loved them. And what I realized was, you know, I was an Italian major, but I really didn't love poetry. I enjoyed literature, but I really wasn't very good at analyzing literature. But I loved the language, and I loved studying the history of the language and how Latin had changed into French and Italian and Spanish. That's Linguistics. So here was the University of Colorado starting a program in Linguistics, starting a PhD program. And that's what I wound up doing. And so I started my PhD thinking I would major in Romance Linguistics, but I took a course in Native American languages, loved it, and loved the man that taught those courses. So I wound up specializing in what was called then American Indian

Linguistics and wrote my thesis on the language of the Biloxi Indians in Louisiana. And for a while — and my PhD thesis was published. And for a while I could safely say that I knew more Biloxi than probably anyone in the world. Because the last Biloxi had died out in the '30s. It was a dead language. And actually, as I think about that, as I thought about it even then, that was a pretty sad commentary, both as a lifetime accomplishment and as a statement about how we've treated our Native Americans. Because they're — well, we have just had a terrible history.

I'll leave it at that. Anyhow, so I got my PhD thinking, OK fine, now I'll be able to teach on the college level and live the dream, blah blah blah. Wrong. Because in the meanwhile — I jokingly say I was a victim of the Vietnam War. Well, hundreds, thousands of PhDs in the 1970s were also victims. Because what happened was, while the Vietnam War was building up, no professor wanted to flunk students because — guys, because they knew that if they left college they were going to be drafted and sent to a war that they didn't believe in. So that's when grade inflation really started. And so guys stayed in college in record numbers. And so the college population exploded, alright? Then, in 1973, they did away with the draft. OK? So, what happens if they do away with the draft? All those guys that are in college not because they want to but because they were avoiding going to Vietnam, they leave college. OK? So the population is down. Meanwhile, if your college population is huge, and you have professors who have been on tenure track positions, you've got to give them tenure. OK? Because you had all these people to educate. Well the college population suddenly just, you know, diminishes and plummets. Well you've got all of these professors that are in like Flynn for a generation or two. Alright? So those of us who were new PhDs, we could brag about having a PhD, but we weren't going to get a job. So I wound up having a job but as an adjunct. Do you know what that means? It means non-tenure track and very low pay. I loved my time in the classroom. I wound up teaching for eight years at Georgia Tech, Italian and Linguistics. I loved my time in the classroom, but I really, really hated thinking about how I was being used. And it's not just me, it's 50% of the college teaching population across the country teaches in adjunct positions. It's really one of the scandals of American education. That's a story for another day. (laughter) So when we moved to Maryland, which is where we live now, I said, "I need a change. I need a change." And so, 23 years after graduation, I called the Smith College Career Development Office.

PEARSON:

Oh.

FERRIS EINAUDI:

Can you imagine? And I will forever be grateful, because Barbara Reinhold, the Head of the Career Development Office, took my call, cold call, and stayed on the phone with me. The tears were streaming down. I mean, I was desperate. We had just moved to this new city. I didn't have a job, and I needed to be contributing to the family, and I couldn't. And she listened for half an hour. And she said, "You know,

Paula, it really sounds as though you love being in a university atmosphere.” She said, “Has it ever occurred to you that there are jobs other than teaching at universities?” Well, no. It had never occurred to me. So she said, “I have to charge you ten dollars for this. But if you send me ten dollars, I will send you a printout of every Smith alumna in whatever states you choose who are working on college campuses.” And she wrote me a list. And of course today I could do this myself with the alumni directory. But we’re talking about 1988. And so she sent me this list, and it gave me their names, their addresses, their physician, their major, what house they were in, and their contact information. She said, “Now, you can’t ask them for a job, but you can ask them for information, and for ideas, and so forth.” It was a tremendous help. And it was also a real introduction to the ageless women’s network of Smith College, because I was able to use that list and also get in touch with members of the Smith community in Baltimore. And within six weeks, I wound up in Development, which is what I did then for more than a generation. So I was hired at Johns Hopkins, and there was a position in the School of Nursing. And it turned out to be an ideal position, because this was the school founded by women. It’s a profession pioneered by women. And the alumni of this school were as fiercely proud of their school as Smith alumni are of Smith. And so it wound up being a very happy time for me. And so I started out as an entry level, in an entry level position, and wound up as the Associate Dean.

PEARSON: Wow.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Yeah. And it was a very happy time for me. Yeah.

PEARSON: Paula, I appreciate you coming back a second time.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Oh my gosh. Is our — our time is up?

PEARSON: It’s already over again.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Oh my gosh. And that’s boring stuff.

PEARSON: It goes by so quickly.

FERRIS EINAUDI: It does. It does.

PEARSON: But I just looked. And I’m like, It’s like 4:30 already.

FERRIS EINAUDI: That’s swell. I am so honored to have been part of this. Well, thank you. Thank you for inviting me back.

PEARSON: I really appreciate you coming back. Yeah.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Oh, thank you.

PEARSON: Maybe I'll see you tomorrow at graduation.

FERRIS EINAUDI: Oh.

PEARSON: Do you know — did you hear—

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Julia Bozer, June 2015.