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## René Biber

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## **Simon's Rock Oral History Project**

Interviewee: **René Biber**  
Faculty in French 1968 - 1997

Interviewer: **Russell Miller, College Archivist**  
Transcriber: **Russell Miller, College Archivist**

Date: **October 18, 2005**

Location: **Bard College at Simon's Rock, Great Barrington, MA**

Collection: **Simon's Rock College Archives**

Contact: **archives@simons-rock.edu**

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*Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with **Rene Biber** is restricted. There is no deed of gift agreement.*

**Selected excerpts from the Oral History Project interview. The full transcript may be restricted. To request access please contact the Simon's Rock College Archives.**

**René Biber**

**October 18, 2005**

**Alumni Library, Simon's Rock of Bard College (aka Bard College at Simon's Rock)**

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“For instance, there was no grading system at the beginning. This is an interesting thing. You have to give comments. Just comments. No grades. This was the idealism of the late sixties. You don't want to...I mean, grades don't mean anything. They are numbers, they are letters. But, there were some realities that we had to face. You needed transcripts, like a conventional...with maybe a grade. So how to compromise? The compromise was, well, we are going to give secret grades. I thought this was crazy, myself. But you had those kind of idealistic types who really dominated the school. So we wanted a compromise. We are going to give a comment, but the letter grade will be kept for transfer purposes, meaning it was going to be a secret. Then you can guess what happened. Very often – too often – the comments didn't match the grade, or the grade didn't correspond to the comment. Comments tended to be rather nice. We were too nice. It's [nineteen] sixty-eight. They had to know, if they were leaving the school, what grades they had gotten. There was this minute of truth. And, of course, “How come I got a C when my comment was so glowing?” So finally we got to the traditional way: a comment and a grade, and please make them compatible!”