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Simon's Rock Oral History Project

Interviewee: **Eileen Handelman**
Faculty in Physics, Dean of the College, Academic Dean (1968-1994)

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

Date: **September 23, 2005**

Location: **Hillsdale, New York**

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

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

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Interview with Eileen Handelman

September 23, 2005

Hillsdale, New York

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](#).

Keywords: Donald Oakes, Elizabeth Blodgett Hall, Betty Hall, Bard, merger, Sam Magill, Leon Botstein, Concord Academy, Doreen Young

“[Robert] picked up the Sunday Times, and he was looking at – of all things – the real estate section. You know, that half-page, and it had a picture of the ARC on it. Bob said to me, “Did you know there’s a college in Great Barrington?” [Laughter.] I said, “College? Never heard of it! Can’t be!” I read the article. They had written up the conversion of what was a big horse barn to make the ARC. So I thought, “Well, that’s interesting. I wonder what that’s all about.” I called up Betty Hall, and that day or the next day I went to see her. We had a talk. I had some transcripts sent to her. She hardly needed me. Here was a place with less than a hundred girls rattling around. She had somebody teaching physics. What did she need me for? But at any rate, she offered me a position.”

“[Betty Hall] knew just exactly what she was doing. This was not a capricious thing. It was kind of characteristic of her to just ‘do.’ Get the important things right, and the rest will somehow get sorted out.”

“I think it’s remarkable that we got through all that. There were many, many colleges, a good number, that got started in the sixties, and their only reason for existence was for young men to try and stay out of the Vietnam war. So when that was over, there’s scarcely a one that actually made it. So why did Simon’s Rock make it? It had a real reason for being, and it clearly knew what it was. With all the difficulties, it knew what it was about. So that it was almost meant to be.”

“I think it takes a certain sense of self-confidence to have worked with Betty Hall, and a generosity of spirit that sort of looks at this woman...she accomplished a hell of a lot! Remarkable. In fact, you think of where she came from and it’s absolutely extraordinary. Give the woman some credit for it.”

“Doreen Young was a remarkable person. An extraordinarily good teacher of art history. She had a great sense of humor. She was a close friend and confidante of Betty Hall. I think Betty used

her as a sounding board very effectively. And I think she contributed, certainly, to those early ideas of Simon's Rock. Everybody loved Doreen. You won't find anybody from faculty or students who had anything less than an affectionate memory of her."

"I don't think I would have been happy at a traditional college, with all the politics of it and whatnot. Coming to Simon's Rock, certainly at the beginning, I was completely free to decide how I was going to teach this course, what textbook, and so on and so forth. [...] You couldn't just decide that anyplace else. And I think other faculty felt the same sense of freedom. Not flakiness – it was rigorous stuff – but you don't have to bore the students to death in order for a course to be serious. I think it was very different, and my sense is that that's still true today. The students come into courses ready to be a part of something. [...] I think, in a way, that teaching at Simon's Rock spoils you for teaching anywhere else. That's my feeling. And I've talked to other younger faculty upon occasion, and still get that that same sense is still there. It's a very special place. With all the changes, I think that spirit has become a part of the whole College, and what it is. I hope they manage to keep it!"