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Simon's Rock Oral History Project

Interviewee: **Judith Win**

Dean of Students (1979 -); Director of Counseling Services (- 2016)

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Interview with Judith Win

March 2, 2016

Bard College at Simon's Rock, Great Barrington, Massachusetts

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](#).

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“Well, [campus] was very beautiful. The students were wonderful, they were interesting and funny and quirky. I think the reason they were interested in us was because we had a lot of experience with teenagers. We had led the trips around the country in a van, eight weeks with ten kids. So we kind of knew what they talked about and how egocentric they were. We knew what to expect and we liked them. We liked that age group, we still do, that's my main interest, really, adolescents. That's what I've focused on in my clinical work-- my developmental interest, my interest in adolescent development.”

“So we were deans then and we had little kids so I remember going to a house meeting in Crosby where we were meeting with the students to go over the rules and Ba Win would give his, sort of, very hard-nosed speech about what you have to do. He probably talked about some of that, others may have; alumni still talk about some of the things he said. They didn't have YouTube so nothing went viral. Good thing, we dodged that bullet. But Za, who was maybe three or four, was wandering around in the hallways and, while we were having the meeting, he set off the fire alarm.”

“[Livy Hall] was a prince of a man. Gentlemanly, kindly. Extremely funny. He always had a joke, and he didn't even repeat them. He always had a new joke, well into older age. [...] When computers were first invented for personal use was when we didn't have them here, obviously. Nobody wanted them. Everyone thought it was a terrible thing and that word processing would be the death of the English language as we know it. The English department, particularly-- nobody wanted to have anything to do with them. The first person in the Simon's Rock community to get a computer was Livy Hall. He would send these little notes and memos that he would type on his word processor and print out. He kind of shamed everybody into-- “If I'm almost 90 and I can do this, you can do this. He was in his 80s then. Gradually, computers came in, but he introduced it.”

“Ian, his heart and soul is committed. Plus he knows Bard High School Early College. He worked at BHSEC, and he was instrumental in starting the Bard Academy, which is the Bard High School Early College model with a BA tacked on. So we’ve got something very special now and Ian is the perfect person to bring it all together. Plus, like Ba Win and like Leon and like Bernie, he’s young. He’s going to be around for awhile. He’s not as young as Ba Win and Leon were when we first started, I think they were 32 or 33, but he’s maybe 37. But he’s young. He’s a kid. And he’s energetic and he’s smart and he’s hardworking. And he gets it. And he’s inspirational when he talks about it.”

“[The thesis is] a wonderful tool and it helps kids get into graduate school. Plus, it takes discipline to do. And there’s an advantage to being small when you’re not defensively small like we used to be. Because you can do independent study, you can do tutorials, all these things, special things. You can make a four-subject major if you really, really want to! We’re not so bureaucratic that you can’t get an exception to do almost anything, there are people who will help you. Everybody knows you. And so by the time you’re a junior, you have a lot of faculty friends who want to see you succeed and will help you do things.”

“I was out on the lake canoeing and my glasses fell off, just before we were coming for the interview. I never could function without my glasses. By the time contact lenses were invented, I was used to wearing glasses. But I did have an old pair with a cracked lens, so I had to wear those. And I didn’t have a dress. And Ba Win didn’t have-- We had to stop in town and buy a dress and a pair of pants for the interview and we stopped in Great Barrington and bought a pair of pants. We worked at a summer camp, we didn’t have any clothes for this. Not that this was a dressy place, but still. So there I was in my cracked glasses and my shirtwaist dress. We were late because we looked at the map and we said, oh, we get on the Mass Pike and we get off, it’s only two exits on the Mass Pike. We were half an hour late! It’s a long way-- two exits, but it’s 30 miles! You think of two exits and when your center has always been Boston, you don’t realize that those two exits are so-- they say Western Mass, they mean Northampton. The Berkshires didn’t exist.”

“[Gill Panchy] made the best signs. [One of them in the mail room] said “Please be patient while the mail is being SORDID” It’s so Gill, it’s so Simon’s Rock. So kids would have to sit patiently until she was ready, she wouldn’t be hurried.”