Mary Elizabeth Johnson

It is June 8, 2004, and this is an interview with Mary Elizabeth Johnson, the Director of Creative and Printing Services at Columbia College Chicago. All right, Mary if you could tell us, what you were doing before you came to Columbia and when and why you came to this institution.

I was running my own freelance graphic design business and got sick and tired of being everybody’s whore. When you have your own business and you are freelancing—if you get a call Sunday night in the middle of dinner you go—and you do what they need you to do.

I did that for about a year and a half. Previous to that, I was working at the School of the Art Institute where I had gotten my masters degree. So, I was just sort of tired having my own business. And Deb McGrath who was working here, my friend from the Art Institute—we were colleagues there at the same time—she majored in film/video, called me and said there was an opening and would I care to apply and I did.

And what—at that time what was the job that you—job description that—

It started as a junior graphic designer. My former husband was head of the graduate school at SAIC and all of my friends were professors and teachers and you know artsy, artsy, artsy. When I told them that I was coming to Columbia, they just freaked out—

Why?

—because back then twenty-three years ago, first off, no one traveled south of Columbus Drive. No one did. This was pre-South Loop redevelopment. It was like falling off the edge of the world.

Cause they were at the edge, right? They were at the edge.

Kind of.

At the edge yes. And, Columbia back then had such a reputation for this rough and tumble unorthodox cowboy school, that my refined colleagues from the Art Institute were mortified. But I came any way.

And just was that—has—do you call it a department? Has it always been called creative and printing services?

Yes.

Okay.

Yes. And it was a department when I started here. Gerry Gall was the director. Gerry (Bert’s brother) not only ran that department, but he also was the techy for the Art Department. So, he bought and ordered art supplies. He took care of faculty needs. So, he’d cross the hall and do that job and then he’d cross the hall back to office and do his job. The Art Department was on the 13th floor in the main building back then which is why we are still there. Nobody can understand why we are on the 13th floor. Well, it was because Gerry took care of the Art and Design Department as well.

That’s interesting. So, and that was ’82.

Eighty-two, yes.

And can you describe the department at that time?

At the time we had an internal print shop in the basement, two full-time printers, later went on to three full-time printers. There was Gerry and one designer, one typesetter and that was it. That was it. And when I first started, the school was so broke, I had to bring in my own rapidograph, my own T-square. The office was so filthy, I came in with a bucket of wash water the day before I started my job to scrub the walls which had never been painted.

If you wanted to do a poster and you wanted an interesting type font, you would go out and buy your own transfer lettering. It would come out of your pocket.

It was very lean and mean. And you know those of us that have lingered long here and see the money being spent left and right,
I'm still at the point where if I accidently go home with a pen that belongs to Columbia, I bring it back because there's that preciousness about limited resources that us old people feel even today that the newer people don't.

I remember the first Christmas party I attended was in the fifth floor board room. That's how small the college was.

**It held everybody.**

Yes, it held everybody and Debbie McGrath and Anne Kennedy went to the Dominicks and bought food for the party and brought it back. And you ran to cash your paycheck because if you waited too long, your paycheck would bounce because everybody else would cash theirs. And the staff and faculty directory was one side of an eight and a half by eleven sheet of paper.

**What, if you can remember back then, your first impressions. You talked about your impressions before you got here and your colleagues at the art institute.** I walked into this building and I said to myself, I like the job, I don't know if I could spend 8 hours a day in the ugliest building in the world. It was filthy and it was falling apart. It wasn't urban chic, it was just old and tired. And being a visual person, oh, my God, I thought it was going to ruin my brain if I had to stay here all day. And then I decided to take the job. I was also briefly taken aback by the power structure, the control, the influence that Bert had. The culture of Columbia was so primal back then. The 5th floor was just a cloud of black smoke, as soon as you got off the elevators because everybody smoked, everybody. At lot of business was conducted after hours in the dark because it was such a night culture at the college. It was an alcoholic culture. There was a lot of booze flowing. It was, it was very—

**Very different from what I had known.**

On a Friday afternoon in the summertime, Jerry would break out beer in the office and we would sit and drink beer while we finished up our Friday work. It was totally Bohemian, totally Bohemian.

**Was it—and I don't want to put words in your mouth, but was it at all a male culture?** It was a sexist culture. Sexual harassment was constant, prevalent and remember back then, you had to take it as a female or lose your job. So, there was a lot of abuses going on and a lot of pressure. And it was really distasteful.

Now, that I look back upon it, you know a lot of things happened that were outrageous. But it was a very sexual culture, very gender oriented. But it was the time as well. I mean it was pre-AIDS, pre-herpes and just no boundaries there whatsoever between faculty and staff and administration. It was crazy.

**And some others have commented as well too with students, it was so small and that those (inaudible) and they were older—**

Right.

—that there—

No boundaries. No protocol whatsoever. I mean everybody was having sex with everybody. And you know people would go the faculty retreats and come back and tell who was having sex with whom in the swimming pool after hours. I mean it was a very sexual culture. Yes, it was.

And it was raw power as well. Bert controlled the college completely. When I started MA had already begun to be ill and distracted and started withdrawing from the actual work of the college.

So, Bert had really taken over and had consolidated his powers. And Bert was a one-man show; you know one lived or died by Bert's sword. I remember when Jerry would go on vacation and I would order paper for the print shop, Bert signed every purchase order request, every one. And we filled them out by hand.

So, if you needed a hundred sheets of paper for $1.40, he looked at it and approved every single P.O. that went through this college whether it was paperclips, or a $6,000 piece of equipment. So, he knew everything that was being purchased.

**And what—when did that start to change? I mean did the growth of the college when did the atmosphere—from your point of view, when and what starts to change?** I think that first Bert just started being crushed by the sheer scale and scope of it. And we waited longer and longer for P.O.s because they weren't getting signed.

When Bert was also given the position of Provost, and he started paying attention to academic issues and curriculum issues and policy and he wasn't paying attention to facilities management as close as he was. You could feel that shift at
least as administrative staff when he became Provost. I felt that his eye wasn't so much on my stuff but it had shifted over to the academic. But then when Dr. Duff came along, it really changed dramatically and it became a very different institution.

And you know Columbia reinvents itself with every new president and that's really the watermark that I see. Duff came along and it was a crazy year and a half. And then Dr. Carter came along. It's been a crazy four or five years. And the institution has evolved with each president.

I'm curious with your depiction of the mind of sexual electricity or the culture. When does that culture, if you will, start to shift or change? And do you see that that is kind of absent today so it is kind of two extremes? It started to shift when Duff became president and Bert lost a tremendous amount of power. When Duff came all of a sudden, Columbia stopped being the rock band with all its groupies and turned into a real college. And issues became different, how issues were resolved became much more typical academic protocol. It changed almost over night.

Okay, and let's talk a bit more about your department and how that grew and changed from you came as a junior graphic designer. Can you kind of take us through your promotion—Sure.

—you know to where we are today and—

When I first started, I was a junior designer and Gerry was the director and then there was this crazy lady doing typesetting named Sherry who was married to a wild black jazz musician. And then the two guys in the print shop. And then a couple years later another gentleman was added in the print shop. So, there were three printers. And Kevin Riordan was hired as a techy. So it grew a little bit. And that shop did not grow at all until I became director.

(inaudible)

No. No. We did add one more designer. We added one more designer so there were two designers, a director, a typesetter, a techy and two print shop guys even though the college went from as tiny as it was it as huge as it was. So, it was—it was absolutely insane. The work load was crushing. So, a lot of work had to be turned away. As it was we couldn't service the entire college. We could just do a certain very few pieces. And back then Columbia was so broke, nobody could hire freelance graphic designers. That was an incredible no, no. All the work had to be designed internally. So, there were times when I was working 7 days a week, 20 hours a day literally.

Can you talk about because I think it's interesting and even today people don't realize the design work involved in promotions for the activities for the institution, and if you could elaborate on that.

We do, we do—now we do probably most of the design except for the Dance Department season brochure, and the theater season departmental brochures. But because I now have four designers full time and two student interns in my tenure as director, I've never had to turn a job away which I am very proud of.

I've also hired a creative production coordinator and business production coordinator in the office and they handle a lot of the non-design work so that the designers can continue doing design instead of calling up printers to get quotes like I used to have to do. They just do design and the detailed stuff gets handed off to Corey or John.

So, we do all the work that comes through our door. And it ranges from the mundane like a book marker for the library to a $170,000 very expensive high end marketing piece.

And so if someone comes to you and says I'm doing this event, where does it go from there? Because unfortunately we don't have any copywriters on staff, you have to bring me your copy, and any images you may want to use. If not, we have a library of photographs that we use and we use a lot of student artwork to illustrate the pieces. So, you'd come to me. You'd sit down. You'd give me some art direction. Who is your audience, when is this going to hit, what look do you want. Of course now we have identity standards and we are beginning to brand the college which is a whole new chapter for Columbia.

In the old days, Columbia was so entrepreneurial and the department chairs were so strong that they would come to us and say, well I want a brochure that doesn't look anything like that brochure that Ed Morris just did. I want it to look like my department.

So, we had how ever many departments there were back then, twelve separate identities. Every department had to look different than the
next department. Alexandroff backed this up because when he started the school he called his buddies in the business world, entrepreneurs most of them, said come on down, chair a department and let’s start a college. So, that work ethic and that sense of independence and that ferocious need to make a mark stayed until those chairs retired. So, now we have to conform with the branding standards and the graphic identity standards of my office and (inaudible) still allowing wiggle room so people can feel as if their program or event has some distinctiveness without violating the branding of the college.

That’s very interesting because your kind of unique perspective of to look at the structure of the college not from within in some ways but from without. Can you maybe talk a little bit more about that transition and the need for maybe that structure and how that has changed?

Columbia always used to be—it’s parts always used to be stronger than the whole. Always. So, the parts wanted to distance themselves from the reputation of Columbia. Because the Museum for instance had a much stronger reputation than the college did. They always, always wanted to separate themselves from any identity with Columbia College. They just wanted to be the Museum of Contemporary Photography. The same is true of the Arts Entertainment and Media Management Department, the Film Department, the Dance Department, these people purposely wanted to disassociate themselves from Columbia.

And did that have to do with it reputation that they didn’t see themselves as fitting in with this type school or cowboy, you know—

It had to do with the fact that if they felt they were associated with Columbia their prestige would be diminished. And now of course you know with Dr. Duff coming on board and Dr. Carter coming on board and the overall reputation of Columbia beginning to blossom, people are becoming much more willing to surrender their individual identity to the identity of the college.

And we still are the world’s best-kept secret. People don’t know about us. They know certain departments, they know certain people. A cab driver will say to me, ‘Columbia, how many students go there. And I’ll say almost 10,000. They have no idea how many buildings we have. How many majors we have. How many students we have. And you know that’s the job the new Assistant VP for Marketing and Communications, Mark Lloyd and Sam Ross, the new Institutional Advancement VP. They need to get the word out there that Columbia has matured, has value and the sum of its parts is the greater whole. The Museum is now coming back to the fold. Rod Slemmons has been a fabulous advocate for rejoining in the Columbia family and using Columbia’s resources and making it very clear that they are part of Columbia College Chicago. So, it’s getting much better. And of course the college benefits as a whole. The Dancer Center, the Season, they used to just want to be known as Mordin and Company and the Dance Center. And Columbia College Chicago was six point type at the bottom of the brochure.

And I wonder if you ask those people (inaudible) oh, no that’s not what we—so was it unconscious?

No, no. No, I don’t think so. I think they worked at it. I really think they worked at it and it worked for them. Many of these people maintained that they couldn’t have possibly gotten their funding unless they have such a strong singular presence—they would have lost the funding because of issues with Columbia which was always viewed with the jaundiced eye for so many years.

And you said that—again, I don’t want to put words in your mouth, Alexandroff supported the but he also—he was aware of this but it worked for him?

It worked for him. It was, it was his business model and he—you know if you read his history book—he’s constantly agonizing over where’s the money coming from, where’s the money coming from. Yet on the other hand he supported that chair, strong chair, entrepreneurial, silo-like academic structure. Because in many ways it was (inaudible) it was much more fun. It was, it was sexier. The energy that was happening, the cross-pollination that was happening, the competition that was happening, it was a lot more exciting than the traditional academic model that we are following now.

And you said it almost killed him personally?

He’s commented on that one reason he had to retire was that that horrible battle that resulted from dividing the English Department and creating Fiction Writing. Dividing the baby with the sword to make the two depart-
ments he thought was the beginning of his health issues. It was so stressful.

Why was he—I mean why was that? I mean I don't want to diminish that at all but I think people are curious, why would he take it so personally and not be able to say you know—Because he loved everyone of those people. Everyone of those chairs was like his child. I remember Mike walking down the hall one day in front of the cashier's office when the college started to grow and he turned around and he looked at me and he said, who the fuck are all these people around here? And for him he began to lose the intimacy, that sense of dysfunctional family that we loved. When the college started to grow he started to lose that, that touch with everyone.

He and I used to sit down and he'd say what did you do on the weekend? I'd tell him what I did and you know the college president and I would have talks about what we did on the weekend. It was, it was a very intimate—everybody knew everybody's personal issues and problems and who was going to bed with whom.

So, it was that—it was literally that those individuals that he who philosophically parted ways and in college that was growing, he couldn't accept that. Isn't that interesting.

Yes, yes. He had to let it happen because that was the only solution but it, broke his heart and you know Mike Alexandroff was an intellectual—a firestorm must have been going on in his brain while this was happening. I'm sure it was debilitating.

I mean that—I think that too from the outside of someone reading just a description of this happening would not be surprised that that would have happened at all.

Right, right, exactly.

So, you're saying that was also part of what's going on. Because intellectually he might have said, this isn't necessarily surprising but emotionally he couldn't—Yes, yes, it was a very emotional place to be. Emotions were always highly charged all the time.

Because we were, still are tuition driven, Bert would pace those hallways counting heads of students lining up to pay their money to enroll. The drama of registration was like the solar eclipse. It was just—it was just a moment in time that was so tense because the very of the future of the school depended on how many heads walked through those doors. The academic calendar and the ebb and flow of the stress points and the release points really seemed to me as a staff person like the summer solstice and the winter solstice if you will. We were so broke for so long. It's like any family crying how's the electric bill going to get paid. Well, bring that into the workplace, day after, day after day.

Yeah, I think that's interesting because I think today everybody knows Columbia still has huge financial difficulties. But I don't think anyone individually wonders how the electric bill is going to be paid.

And back then, everybody did. It was a collective anxiety that we all bore everyday. I mean how many paperclips am I going to need to use. Will my rapidograph not work, will I have to bring in another one? You know, those people, the Tony Loeb's, the Nate Lehrmans, the Ed Morries, those people that started way back when, yes you can have your issues with them, you can talk about lack of professionalism, but they stuck by Mike Alexandroff and the college and served it morning, noon and night, and served the college very well.

Well, let's pause here.

Okay, okay.

And then we're going to come back after a short break.

Okay.

Okay. We're continuing the interview with Mary Elizabeth Johnson, Director of Creative and Printing Services here at Columbia. If I could ask you just to elaborate, briefly elaborate on the atmosphere at the college when you were first here from the prospective as a woman.

It pervaded the entire college. It was everywhere at every time at every moment in every business dealing and it was yucky. And back then you had to take it as a woman. It was before sexual harassment in the workplace even had a name. It came from the top down. You were harassed constantly. You accepted it because it was just part of the ebb and flow of the day. It got to be pretty brutal. One time and individual that worked at Columbia that was very high up in the ranks sat opposite me at the drafting table and just said I bet you're a great fuck, and blew my mind. He was a married guy. And that happened all the time.

Another time a very high-up executive repeatedly asked me to meet
him in the lobby of the Hilton for martinis after hours to discuss business and things got pretty out of hand and some Chicago cops came over and asked me if I needed to have this person taken off me because he was French kissing me even though he knew I was married and my husband was in our apartment a few blocks away. It happened all the time.

I think and I know this as well, a frequent response when I talk about these issues is well why did you participate and women are always asked to defend themselves in that way, but I think you should address that.

What, what was the atmosphere? How did these people get away with it?
Because of their power and their status and it’s hard to understand—but our Human Resources office is only 10, 12 years old. We didn’t have a Human Resources office much less equity issues office. There was nowhere to turn because it was a dictatorship. It was not a democracy. There was no place to air your feelings.

And did you feel that you didn’t have a choice in, in agreeing to these meetings. I mean did you feel that your job would have been at risk?
Yes, absolutely. If not my job at risk, and—this is the tradeoff, my ability to maneuver and get what I want and be respected would not have been there had I not played the game. So, that’s the tradeoff with participating with sexual harassment. There is a strange benefit because you are empowered. So, that’s why we did it. Being allowed to be abused brought us some measure of power and respect and positioned us in the environment where it was raw power at all times.

Clearly you wouldn’t be talking about this now if that hasn’t changed and you spoke to that. You know when that change and that you’re confident and secure now. How does it feel to have that absent, that atmosphere, that culture?
It’s fabulous. On the other hand there’s a passion that missing today. There’s a sense of the heart and soul of the college has been replaced by corporatization of the college and all this emphasis on professionalism and best practices and the round of firings getting rid of Steven Russell Thomas for instance. There seems to be a cleansing of the college. Those people are different, not understood. And, it’s becoming ho-hum like a DePaul, like a Northwestern. Some of the good things that made Columbia so singular that went away as well as some of the bad stuff went away.

Do you think they could have kept those positive things or—maybe the eccentricity could have been kept while getting rid of that hostile environment?
I don’t think so. I don’t think so. I think that’s a natural evolution of things. I think as institutions grow and become more professional it takes a real balancing act to keep the eccentricity, get rid of the bad stuff and keep the good stuff. I don’t think it can happen. I really think it’s too complicated. It’s too hard of a goal to reach. It think it’s just the price you pay.

Could you speak to others since you came in with. Was it twenty-three years she said, other positive developments things changes that you’ve seen that you think has benefitted the institution.
Having more money obviously. You know everybody can breathe. Everybody can cash their paycheck whenever they so choose. The growing professionalism is a boon in a way. I don’t get people screaming at me in my offices any more. Why the fuck did you do that? There was a lot of bad behavior back then. I remember sitting in a president’s council meeting and a faculty—a chair got up and another chair got up and they started yelling and screaming at each other across the table, fuck you, fuck that, fuck you, fuck yours. I mean that’s not acceptable at any time, at any point.

So, there is a collegiality that has come with the maturation of the college that is much more acceptable. You know the very best parts of Columbia have not changed and will never change. And two most important things that Columbia taught me as a person: today I am utterly and completely colorblind. I can be talking to any person in the world at any point in time and two hours later I’ll say oh, that was a Black person or that was an Oriental person. Or that person was you know gay or lesbian. Columbia taught me to be colorblind, gender blind, you name it. And that life’s lesson I will thank Columbia for. I’m a better person because of that. And, Bert, despite all of his issues, treated every person the same. Whether you were a chair, or whether were Richard Woods on the facilities.
staff who hauls things up from the loading dock and assembles your furniture for you. There was a nobility every man and woman had that worked at Columbia regardless of rank. So, that—that was the second gift that Columbia gave me and one I will never forget. And today those two gifts are constantly given to everyone that works here or goes to school here. Unlike the elitism at the School of the Art Institute, not one black student in my entire class, not one black faculty member.

And do you think that with those lessons, will it be harder or do you see that that respect of diversity that taught and you say that you think it will continue. But do you see that being threatened at all with the college being more expensive and— Of course, and you know the numbers are declining. We all know that there are fewer minorities and ethnicities involved today than years ago. Our kids have to stay in the dorm now their freshman year and pay tuition which means we are the exact same costs as a year at DePaul. Everything economic drives diversity or lack of it absolutely.

I also think that leadership, some levels of leadership they talk diversity but they don’t walk diversity. I’m not seeing that. Mike Alexandroff had that commitment to diversity. Imagine back then when the school was so small, it didn’t matter if you didn’t have a high school diploma or couldn’t read a ruler because attention was so focused on you, your brilliance, your core competence whatever that might be was discovered and you were allowed to bloom and to mature. Traditional white men’s hurdles were not put in your way to be a success.

It was the mission living everyday at Columbia when it was small. Everyday somebody that couldn’t have succeeded someplace else succeeded here.

I mean my husband used to teach here, my second husband, he taught in the Art Department, Interior Design. He had kids in his class who could not read a ruler and did not know what an inch was. And there was no way to get them up to speed so that they could become an architect or an interior decorator. But we took their tuition dollars and then they drop out and then we get in trouble because our attrition rates are so high, and the cycle continues.

What other challenges do you see facing the college? Or what has been the most important challenges since—since you’ve come. I mean you’ve talked about some certainly.

I think the challenge will be to—this is an old admission slogan that everybody hated—realize it’s potential, really grow up, start a capital campaign, get an endowment, not be tuition driven, be able to offer students all of the amenities of any other college, if it is to survive. A student center, microwaves in the hallways, places where students can sit and talk. Even in the old days when we were the cheapest school around it didn’t matter. And our hallways were urban rough and unappealing.

But nowadays there is such competition for good students. I really think that’s the major challenge ahead of us. The academic restructur—of the identity that we’re working on now will help get us there, if we really need to grow more to be able to do more exciting things to keep up with the technology. It’s endless. It’s just endless.

What do you miss the most that’s no longer here?

What a great question. I would have to say Ed Morris. He loved me so of course I loved him. He was cantankerous and feisty but a fabulous gentleman, well-traveled, well-read, very sophisticated, great sense of style.

I also miss Nat Lerman. Nat was a great guy. Tony Loeb. Tony was fabulous and exciting and an artist. Though they committed many sins, it is the group that I miss the most.

Does it—do you struggle with having mixed feeling about yeah—

Totally. Totally. It’s looking back at your adolescence and the crazy wild things we all did and going oh, my god we survived to adulthood. And you look back on it through the midst of time with a sense of romance and longing and danger and unpredictability. And now, everyday I come to work I know pretty much exactly that’s going to happen.

Back then you never knew what the hell was going to happen.

But it’s interesting that you have described the college as kind of in some ways as an individual growing up. That you know those early years were dangerous teenage or young adulthood and creeping old age.

We are all grown up and boring and ho-hum and very safe and
predictable and respectable and I think that is a natural evolution. Most entrepreneurial companies/colleges go through that evolution and then they reach a point where they have to mature in order to survive, or the collapse inward on themselves. That’s standard business model and I think Columbia followed that.

Because you just can’t underestimate the power and the charisma of Mike Alexandoff who kept it all together. When Mike was on and speaking to a group or an individual, he was something to behold. He was magnificent, attractive, charismatic, articulate, compelling. And his leadership kept it all going. You would remember the last time Mike spoke about something you believed in or he believed in. And that charismatic leadership is and was so important.

I wanted to ask you what kept you here because you talked about some you know pretty negative forces and constant force as well. What kept you here over those years and what keeps you here today?

There was a point in time when I was going to quit. Many, many years ago I was very fed up. But then I got breast cancer. And when you get cancer, you’re tied to your insurance and preexisting conditions. And that compelled me to stay more than anything else. I’ve read articles from the cancer survivors who have said their careers stood still from the moment that they were diagnosed.

And that sort of kept me here even though it was a battle a long time ago. And then the economy tanked when I considered leaving again. And there were no jobs in graphic design anywhere. People are still trying to recover from that. So, then the economy kept me the second time.

But overall my longevity speaks for the college. I worked the Field Museum, Shedd Aquarium, School of the Art Institute, private agencies, had my own business and this still is the best. It still is the best because and this is very Mike Alexandrian, you can invent yourself everyday. You can decide what you want to do, what you want to focus on, what your interest is. You can craft your job to make it the work of art that you want it to be. There’s still is—though we are becoming more corporate—a lot of freedom to focus on what you want to.

And I have been able since I’ve been director to really do with my office what I have wanted to do. My boss, Mike DeSalle is the best boss I’ve ever had in my life. Mike is sweet, kind, gracious, normal and has given me everything I’ve asked for. When I wanted new staff, he gave it to me. When I wanted a new space I got it. And he’s basically left me alone and trusted me to do a good job.

So, I stayed here because of Mike DeSalle to a great degree.

That’s interesting because you kind of describe it more not from on top but from within your chain of command so to speak. You’ve got some of that freedom and (inaudible) design, structure (inaudible). Anyone else today in addition to Mike DeSalle who you see as key to college’s cohesion or success or strength or future that you care to mention?

I think the person on the hot seat right now is Sam Ross. We really need to look to Sam to bring money into this college for everyone’s success. The people that I credit for being brilliant and keeping Columbia alive, Murphy Monroe in admissions is fabulous and Debra McGrath. Debbie is probably the most brilliant person in the workplace I have ever known and her brilliance in her field is so important to the college. And I view Deb as my mentor here.

She brought you here you mentioned earlier. I would have loved to have heard some of your conversations over your tenure.

When did she get here? She was here long before I was. She started working—

Were you able to talk to each other about issues or—
No.

She was your mentor. Back then women didn’t talk to women about it. Never a word. I never shared my experiences with anyone nor did anyone ever share theirs with me.

See, I think and we only have a few minutes left but I think for young women or women who haven’t had a similar—an experience in the workplace in the workforce in a corporate or academic and for men they have no idea what you’re talking about. But why not? Why (inaudible) having these informal conversations with the president wouldn’t you say you know what, what’s going on is really wrong. And I think that that—I mean I understand it but I think that’s the big question mark that we still have—that we haven’t faced. That yes we have a sexual
harassment policy but people are like why did you put up with that. Or why didn’t you talk to other women or why didn’t you do something about it? And do you have any thoughts on why? I think because it’s so—it’s like why don’t children talk about incest? Why don’t women talk about being raped or being abused by their spouse? It is so personally revolting and embarrassing and humiliating that you don’t talk about it. You didn’t talk about it back then. And it plays to your sense of lack of worth. I must not be worth it to be treated this way; it strikes to your lack of self-esteem.

And power or lack of.
Right.

So, I mean if we get somewhat philosophical about it, but talking to another person that also doesn’t have that power or is kind of at your same level—Wouldn’t have solved a thing. And it’s deeply embarrassing. You just didn’t talk it. Just like back then you didn’t talk about lots of other things. Another person I do have to mention is my best buddy here at Columbia whom you interviewed, Paula Epstein who you know has been here for a very long time and is the real salt of the earth, soul mate and there are many days I don’t think I could have survived here if it wouldn’t have been for Paula’s love and friendship and presence here.

So, there were people you didn’t talk about it, there were people you relied on or were able to—Talk about other stuff.

And strength and support.
Yes. Yes, very much so. I never talked about it but you did talk about all the other issues that were whirling around.

Well, I want to thank you for the interview. But in our last moment, is there anything else that maybe I didn’t get to or didn’t touch on, you know.
No.

So, I really appreciate it.
Thank you.