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Harrie Alley Oral History

Harrie Alley
Raymond College

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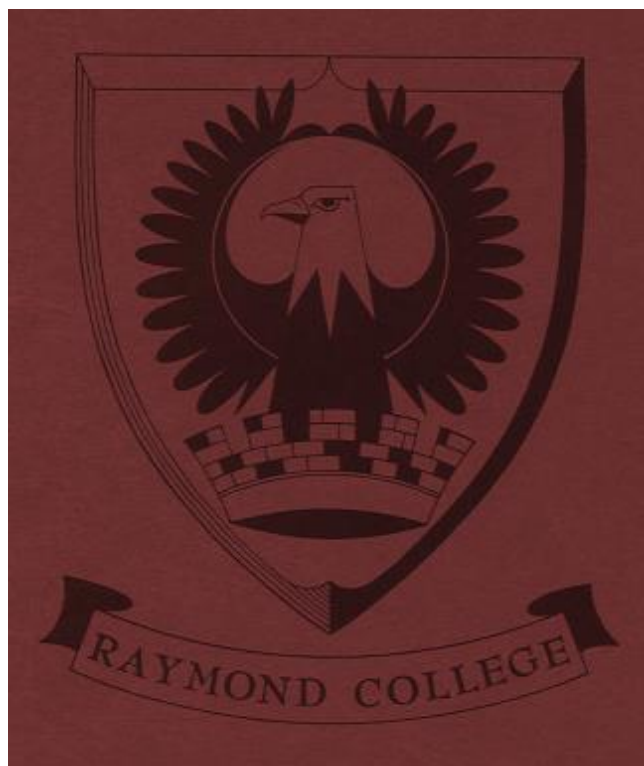
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RAYMOND COLLEGE PROJECT ORAL HISTORIES
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC ARCHIVES



Harrie Alley (1962-1965)
Raymond College Student

November 4, 2023

By Lorenzo Spaccarelli

Transcription by Lorenzo Spaccarelli University of the Pacific,
Department of Special Collections, Library

Harrie (Walker) Alley Interview

Transcribed by: Lorenzo Spaccarelli

Lorenzo Spaccarelli: So to begin today's interview, hello, my name is Lorenzo Spaccarelli and today I'm going to be interviewing Harrie Walker. Today is November 4th, 2023 and we are conducting the, we are holding this interview in person in Pacific's Stockton Campus Library. So if we could begin, can I ask what your name is for the record?

Harrie Alley: My legal name is Harrie Walker, but on all my art and my poetry, other writing, I use Harrie Alley.

Spaccarelli: Nice. Perfect. And so the first question today will be what years did you attend Raymond College?

Alley: I don't remember. I don't do numbers well. Let's see. I graduated high school in 1961 and for a year I attended College of the Pacific and the subsequent year was the first year that Raymond was established. So that- I was in that first class.

Spaccarelli: And did you go for three years at Raymond?

Alley: Yes, I did.

Spaccarelli: Okay. So you were the very first class from '62 to '65.

Alley: Yes.

Spaccarelli: Perfect. Okay. So then what was behind your choice in attending Raymond College?

Alley: I felt stifled by University of Pacific. What I was getting in terms of education was kind of rote, by the book, read the textbook, take notes in the lectures, and then spit it back. And that's what I had gotten in high school. And that's what my dad had promised me from a very early age, I would not have to do in college. He had, my dad had promised me that in college, I would find other people who had wide ranging curiosity and liked poetry and liked to- loved to read and wanted to know about everything. And I did find some of those people at University of Pacific, but they were kind of few and far between and mixed in with people who were interested in pledging sororities and so on. And that was not, I wasn't happy about that. And the social situation at University of Pacific that insisted that girls should wear girdles so they didn't jiggle and inflame, supposedly, the male population on campus. And that we should wear dressy dresses and nylons and heels to football games in support of our team. That wasn't a culture that resonated in- with me in any way, shape, or form. The interests were just completely divergent.

Spaccarelli: Makes sense. So you did that for a year at the College of the Pacific.

Alley: Yes.

Spaccarelli: What made you decide that Raymond was the way for you to go instead of going to some other school completely?

Alley: Well, one of the people that I had met who had wide ranging interests was a guy named Tom Farley. I met him hanging out at the Y and he had heard, he was from the Bay Area and his experience was much larger than mine. I didn't know how to navigate the world well enough in order to say, Oh, I think I'll go to a different college. I was just there and I didn't know that I had agency at that point. But Tom dropped the Raymond College literature in my lap and talked about it with enthusiasm. And I said to myself, yeah, I like that idea. And I'm not sure if it's what, if it was in the original literature, I'll have to go back and look. But either then or in some of the early gatherings of Raymond students, the first gatherings of Raymond students, when somebody said, maybe it was Warren Martin said, talked about life and studying being a continuum with everything connected and how the divisions between studying science and mathematics and poetry and whatever, are somewhat artificial. And that totally spoke to me because the world, that's how I allowed myself then to see the world as interconnected and really a glorious thing to explore.

Spaccarelli: That's fair. So you saw the opportunity, you thought- it resonated with you and you went for it.

Alley: Yes. And of course I have to check out the finances, but since it was three-year college and I had just already done only one year, my parents were able to support me in making that choice.

Spaccarelli: Nice. Nice. Okay. Okay. Moving on then. So what were your first impressions of Raymond College when you started?

Alley: I thought that meeting up in the wilderness, as we did on that first retreat, was kind of weird, but really interesting. And I had the accompaniment, I had companions, Edwina Aquino was someone I knew and we transferred together. And so I was busy, I was not so busy making, forming impressions as absorbing, absorbing information. Remember my experience of the world was very limited, very small at that point, but what I was getting, I loved. And then when classes began, I really also loved the, the insistence on having, knowing something to be true or feeling something to be true. But then, perfect. What's the information behind it? What leads you to that? And what led you to that? And are any of those assumptions? And are we, do we have facts behind any of them? That was a whole new sequence of ways of thinking to me. I liked analysis previously. At UOP, my favorite, one of my favorite classes was a philosophy class. But I hadn't, I hadn't thought in exactly those ways before. So the classes began by training my way of thinking about the world.

Spaccarelli: So like critical thinking, sort of.

Alley: Yes. And it wasn't that I had not thought critically or analytically at all before. I had, but this, this gave me a scaffold, it gives me a structure for critical thinking.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. That makes sense. That makes sense. Were there particular classes that stood out in your mind as helping with that? Like, I mean, everybody talks about IMW, but I mean, that- if you want to expand on that, or if there were other classes as well?

Alley: Yeah, Mike Wagner was big on that. Yes, absolutely. Hugh Wadman was a dynamite math teacher. He had a very wry sense of humor that I appreciated. And he was willing to, to talk to a girl who didn't have a very good sense of numbers, even, and explain, explain things to me. He was trying, we were doing problems with a- how a cathode ray tube creates images on a TV screen. And we were doing equations, and I literally could not get through to doing the equations because I was consumed. I wanted to know what happened in the black box. I wanted to know how it worked. I was always following my dad around when he was fixing things or building things when I was- and I wanted to know how things worked. And he was able to sit down with me and explain and, and, and create a model for a non math, non science person that explained how a cathode ray- cathode ray tube worked. That- I went, oh, thank you. Because I was literally in tears because I'm, I was a very conscientious student. If some of the teachers said do, do this, I would do it.

Spaccarelli: Right.

Alley: And, and I wanted to do my math homework. But I had that just big stumbling block in the way. And, you know, I'm, you know, little poet wandering in from the wilds of the valley among the tules. And, and, you know, all this stuff was new. Brand new.

Spaccarelli: Right.

Alley: So yeah, Hugh Wadman was able to do that. And I don't know about critical thinking, but Paul Ramsey's classes were in...

Spaccarelli: English?

Alley: Well, they were English classes. And, and yes, but I had independent study with him, because I was, I was a writer, and he was a poet. So yeah, so he taught me about structure in poetry in some ways that hadn't been suggested to me before. So the, the Paradise- in Paradise Lost, particularly, that was that was a big revelation to me.

Spaccarelli: Nice.

Alley: So yeah.

Spaccarelli: Okay, yeah, I do want to note, I've mentioned this a couple times as well, but you mentioned men only for your professors, I think, was it only Barbara Sayles at this time, who was a woman who was a professor?

Alley: She was, was there, we also had a professor who was a- who taught English, who was a poet, Elizabeth something, she and Sy Kahn and Paul did a, put out a chapbook together. I didn't have any contact with any of them. I didn't, I didn't take German. And my classes were with Paul and Sy Kahn. And, oh, there was another man who was a professor, who later died of cancer. And he was, he was kind of on loan from University of Pacific. And he, he was, he was a good guy, but he, I don't think he- from, from my perspective, he wasn't the teacher that Sy Kahn and Paul were. Maybe because both of them wrote poetry.

Spaccarelli: You connected with them more. That makes perfect sense.

Alley: Yeah.

Spaccarelli: Okay, moving on here. Question eight. Were there any memorable events that stood out to you during your time at Raymond? High tables, for example. Controversies is the next question, but first, just events.

Alley: Um, well, Ross Kersey and I put on the eating scene, reenacted the eating scene from Tom Jones one night. It wasn't high table, but it was, it was in the eating hall. And Paul, what was his name, the director of the food services?

Spaccarelli: Oh, Fairbrook.

Alley: Yes. Somebody had gone to him and asked if it was okay if we could do that. And so they had one table that was set without, you know, was time appropriate for the, for the movie, for the eating scene. And they served turkey drumsticks and stuff with- without knives, many knives and forks. And that was fun. I was disappointed that, that other people had other ideas beside the dramatic event and turned it into a food fight, at which point I left. I don't know. At high tables, I remember the Norwegian string quartet coming in and I forget, I think they were playing Nilsson. And the music was so evocative and fresh and clean that I, I remember just laughing aloud in delight, which was not appropriate in a concert. And I had to shush myself, but, but- that, that one was really nifty. I remember Peggy Gunn riding her motorcycle into, into the hall on... But you know, for most of them, I, I was in information gathering mode. Everything was new and strange and, and interesting and different. And so when people talk about Ferlinghetti, Ferlinghetti coming or some of the, some of the political people coming... It didn't have the impact for me that it did for them because I didn't, as I said, I didn't have scaffolding to make sense of and, and, and organize or categorize the experience. I remember as a result of some of them, Peter Windrem went to Mississippi to register voters one summer and I wanted to go. I thought that

was a really courageous and worthy and... I didn't think it was courageous. I, I didn't know enough to think that it was dangerous.

Spaccarelli: Okay.

Alley: But I thought it was worthy and noble and a good thing to do. And I wanted to go and my parents absolutely kiboshed it. So, which was probably a good thing. It was a dangerous thing to do. I remember the drama productions that, that Sy Kahn put on. We did a man, not a man for all seasons. The Arthur Miller play about the, about the Salem witch trials.

Spaccarelli: The Crucible.

Alley: Yes, we did that. And...

Spaccarelli: The Salem witch trials and about McCarthyism, right?

Alley: Yes. Absolutely. But I didn't know that at the time.

Spaccarelli: Interesting.

Alley: You know, oblivious kid from the tules. Yeah. But had I known, I would have been even happier to be in that. I, I played the lead in that. And...

Spaccarelli: (Chuckles) You played the lead and you didn't know?

Alley: Right. Yeah. And- and let's see. Oh, we did Under Milkwood as well. And I did Polly Garter in that and I loved doing that. Yeah. That was, that was a great pleasure and memorable moments for me. Yeah. That's all that strikes right now.

Spaccarelli: Oh, that's fine. That's fine. So actually, I was thinking I wasn't going to go into IMW, but I'm realizing more and more that I sort of want to. And the reason for that being is that you're saying again and again, how you came from a somewhat a limited perspective, a limited worldview. A lot of Raymond students, a lot of Raymond alums I've talked to, have said basically the same thing. They came from a small town. They had backgrounds in like farming or whatever, and they didn't have a lot of opportunity to explore what they were interested in until they got to Raymond. And a lot of them talk about how, you know, they had a conservative small town views. They got to Raymond, they took introduction to the modern world with Mike Wagner, and they came out of that class with a completely different perspective. Do you feel like that was the case for you?

Alley: No, I think I'm, I think I was a dyed-in-the-wool born liberal. I didn't, I mean, my dad was a Republican, but he was a very thoughtful Republican, fiscally conservative, but socially on the liberal side. And my mother was a Democrat. So, so no, I started out as a liberal. In fact, one of the things that I

complained about to Mike was not about, not about looking rationally at traditional religion, which many students did, not about looking rationally at conservative-

Spaccarelli: They complained about it.

Alley: They complained about it.

Spaccarelli: Okay, got it. Just clarifying.

Alley: And they, also, my classmates, some of them complained about their conservative views of, of- what I would [characterize] as conservative now. Of politics and life and social structures being, being critiqued.

Spaccarelli: Right.

Alley: I didn't have any trouble with that. I thought, yeah! All right! (Laughs)

Spaccarelli: Okay. (Chuckles)

Alley: But I, I did go after Mike because I said, I couldn't stand it when we were talking about economics and economics was completely heartless and did not, I mean, they were talking about trends and they didn't talk about the, the worker who was totally, whose life was totally destroyed by the trends.

Spaccarelli: Right.

Alley: And I had, I had problems with studying anything that I had emotional problems with, you know, I mean, a cathode ray tube, I'm sorry. But, but economics was giving me the same kind of problem. I couldn't get around the problem of the inhumanity.

Spaccarelli: Yes.

Alley: And the lack of empathy for the individual that, so... Mike was wonderful. He said, don't worry. And he hauled out Clarence Ayres. And that's who I did my paper on, a humanitarian economist. And yeah. So I very much appreciated that.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. No, I think- I agree with what you're saying. Economics is, is- sometimes abstracts very far away from the human and it becomes dehumanized in the process.

Alley: Yeah. Yeah. And if you, if you operate in that world, you don't give the flying fig about, you know, which is, which is very wrong. And we're, we're about to, we're about to be dumped into a big session of that. When AI puts bunches of workers, not just auto workers, not just coal miners, but whole bunches of others out of work. And you can't, you can't... If you are a government in charge of taking care of

people in your nation, you cannot, you cannot let whole sections of people just suffer. And that is the best argument for universal income that I have heard. And I have not been a fan of universal income, because we all have the Puritan background that by God, you got to work. And if you don't, if you're not willing to work, then you don't deserve nothing. And you can starve in the gutter and you deserve it. And I- the times, they are changing.

Spaccarelli: Yes. I do want to refocus on Raymond, not that I don't think that's interesting. But yeah. Yeah. Not that I'm not thinking about the same issues. But do you remember any controversies during your time at Raymond between the cluster colleges and the university, between administrators, anything?

Alley: Oh, let's see. There was always an animosity, which went past friendly competition... Verging into hostility, between the, between Raymond and the sororities and fraternities. I mean, I think there was something about somebody's bonfire being sabotaged. Somebody probably told me, I heard about it and and there were pranks of various sorts. Somebody stole DU's front door, I think, one night. And band frolic was partly an answer to- I mean, and there was the whole thing about [frats?] stealing the Natalie Wood cardboard [ficelle?] out of the theater that had something to do with that. Yeah, I was not, as you can tell, very tuned into that. Yeah, the conflict over the washing machines, you already have.

Spaccarelli: I do. If you want to retell it, it's easiest if it's in an interview format.

Alley: Oh, golly, I think I wrote to you about this.

Spaccarelli: You did, it's just easiest...

Alley: All right. Well, the students in Farley house, the girls, were, were very irritated because we, we may have been from remote little towns, but our mothers had sizable washing machines and the washing machines in the basement of Farley house were quite expensive and all of us were on limited incomes and the darn things were tiny. So... and the dryers were even more expensive. So we were moaning about this at one point and some of the guys from Price House said, well, we can rig those things so you don't have to pay for them. And what will you give us? We said, what do you want? Well, you guys can iron. We don't really know how to do that. And if you iron our shirts, we'll rig the washers for you. And it was- the deal was struck.

Spaccarelli: (Laughs)

Alley: And the rewiring was very successful and we were happy with the results, but evidently the washer company wasn't. And they came in and rewired the rewiring and put a metal box around it so that it couldn't be, be jiggered with. And our guy- we, we moaned and the guys in Price House looked at it and said, we can fix that. And they did. And this kind of went back two or three times until we were called into the common room one night and, and read the riot act about, you know, corporate,

corporate rights. And we said, you know, we're a captive audience and they're taking advantage of us and it cut no ice. And we were, we were threatened. We were told that we weren't to do that again. And, you know, I guess- nobody actually called us communists but the implication was that we were verging well into the disreputable. So, yeah, that was, that was that. And so we went away chastened, but madder than hell. And so in protest, we, and Liatrix Sweetman had a hand in this. And, and I have to say much of the colorful underwear that we dealt with was hers. So we rigged a clothesline between Farley House and Price House and put on, on it all the interesting underwear, female, feminine underwear that, that we could find from all- it was a mass contribution. And then there was also a, I don't know, a Prussian militarist flag, which we hung from that same clothesline. And there it was. And unbeknownst to us, President Burns and I guess Warren Martin, somebody else filled that, some of that in that I didn't know about. But they were coming through with a multi-million dollar donor to show off their lovely cluster colleges. And there- that was our flag and all that lovely underwear. And the rather old fellow was totally shocked and appalled. And we lost Pacific the donation, I guess.

Spaccarelli: (Chuckles)

Alley: You know, they should have just let us do our wash. Anyway, yeah, there was, there was something added to that. There was a, there was a fine. There was a couple of, couple of the guys were used to playing Potsy, Frisbee over the, over the Raymond Lodge. And in the middle of that irritation over the washers, it may have been related, they decided to roll a manhole cover like a hoop. And they rolled it right down the stairs and into the quad and you could still see the chips on the stairs and we got, we got threatened about that too. And they were, I don't know, I guess confessed or somebody told on them. And there was a fine. And they, they paid it, but they paid it all in pennies. It's a huge collection of pennies. That's that story.

Spaccarelli: Wonderful, wonderful. Well, now I know why laundry is free now at Pacific. I know why now.

Alley: Indeed. Hooray, social action!

Spaccarelli: It's- yeah. Well, it's included basically, but yeah.

Alley: Well, that's a really good idea.

Spaccarelli: Okay. Moving on here about controversies. I believe it might've been Paul Ramsey, but I know that there was an English professor who left midway through the first year because of a certain connection- affair with the students.

Alley: Yes.

Spaccarelli: Do you want to talk about that or should we just leave that one alone?

Alley: It was not Paul Ramsey. I do not know what the guy's name was, something Claire. And it was, it was quite a, it was quite a scandal. I mean, she was, I lived right across the hall from her and it was very hush hush. She disappeared... Well, she, she, I don't know if I have to say that.

Spaccarelli: Don't worry about it, if you don't want to say it.

Alley: Yeah. She was, she was a very naive person. I don't, I don't know... I estimate from knowing her and I never had a class with that professor, so I didn't know him at all, that she would be very vulnerable to falling in love with a father figure who was teaching material that she found inspiring and wonderful. And the whole experience of her world expanding could have caused her to fall in love with him easily, probably without too much encouragement on his part. And, you know, she just disappeared one day. She was gone. And yeah, that was it.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. And well, I'm glad that the university and Warren Bryant Martin took a stand and said, yeah, that professor and the student, they can't, they have to leave if they want to be together. Right?

Alley: He had a family, and kids.

Spaccarelli: Oh, right.

Alley: Yeah.

Spaccarelli: That's a scandal.

Alley: Well, you know...

Spaccarelli: I would imagine it would be less so for, I know some of the professors were younger, like only maybe five years older than some of you. Right?

Alley: Absolutely.

Spaccarelli: And some of them didn't, weren't even married?

Alley: Our professors were, but there were some, there were some pretty hot English teachers at UOP when I was there. And, and in fact, one of them, one of them from UOP invited me out for- when I was at Raymond. And I thought it was rather strange. And, I don't know, I didn't- I was too naive at that point to look at him and go, yeah, right, buddy.

Spaccarelli: (Laughs) Okay.

Alley: Knowing, you know, as an adult, I would have seen him coming and gone, oh, no, please. But, but I didn't even know how to say no, really. And so I said, sure. And on that night, I, I got ready to go. And

he didn't show up, which I'm very glad of, because people who knew him, guys who were out drinking with him that night. And I asked, you know, what happened? I mean, I wasn't looking forward to the date, exactly. But, you know, I wanted to know what happened.

Spaccarelli: You were curious, yeah, yeah.

Alley: And he never contacted me after that. But, but some of the guys asked him, you know, weren't you supposed to be going out with her tonight? And he made a very crude remark, which made me very glad that I hadn't gone and that he had gone drinking instead of coming to talk to me.

Spaccarelli: Yeah.

Alley: So that was a, that was a close escape.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. Okay, well, anything else controversies-wise before we move on?

Alley: Yeah, I think I, yeah, I wasn't tuned in.

Spaccarelli: There were pregnancies?

Alley: Yes. Oh, Toni.

Spaccarelli: I have talked to Toni, though. So Toni has a, you don't have to elaborate on that if you don't want to, because I have talked to Toni, but I'm just curious.

Alley: I cannot believe, well, she was, she was, she successfully did it. I mean, and gave birth in her room. Oh my goodness, I cannot, I cannot believe that. She lived on the same floor as me and I never heard anything, but I can't believe that.

Spaccarelli: So no one knew until after she gave birth?

Alley: That's right. And the stamina and just plain guts. I mean, good for her. No, nobody knew. And we did wonder why she was wearing her coat in- when the weather was warmer. I didn't, I didn't know enough to put things together, but I remember asking her, aren't you, aren't you hot? No, she said. Okay.

Spaccarelli: (Laughs) That's impressive.

Alley: Yes, Toni is impressive. Yeah.

Spaccarelli: I got that feeling when I talked to her, she has a lot of will, strength of will.

Alley: Yes.

Spaccarelli: Okay. Moving on, moving on from controversies, if you're ready. What were your thoughts on the educational style of the Raymond teaching philosophy?

Alley: It was such a relief to get into a room where there were 10 to 15 people instead of 35. And I could, I could ask questions. And the rule was that there weren't any stupid questions. And the argument was conducted, where you could furiously attack the point of view or the concept or the idea, but you never attacked the person. And I loved it. I felt like a little pig in mud, I'd come home. And I felt that about Raymond, that suddenly I had found my people, and I had found the world that I wanted to live in. Yeah.

Spaccarelli: That's fair. To elaborate a little bit on that, talking about dialogue in class, you're talking about having those sort of discussions, debates. How well- how many of those classes were seminars, discussion-based...

Alley: All of them.

Spaccarelli: All of them, really?

Alley: Yeah.

Spaccarelli: And you found that very useful to you?

Alley: I found it just wonderful. Yeah. And, and you, and we were never asked to just absorb and spit back information. That was an absolute delight. I liked those classes, I liked every one of them, except physics.

Spaccarelli: (Guffaws) Okay.

Alley: Yeah, I don't know, Neil Lark is a very sweet man, he's, he's a truly kind and wonderful individual. I don't care if the little ball at the end of the track goes slower than the one at the front, because of friction. I just don't care. Now, if you want to talk to me about quantum physics. I will bend my brain trying to understand the models because that's fascinating.

Spaccarelli: It's so confusing too...

Alley: Yes, but it's so worth it. Also, I was not served well by the physics class because, you know, not a math person. And I have no idea how to use a slide rule. So I was trying to do all of the calculations for physics problems in longhand with math over sheets of paper with many many zeros. I didn't understand scientific notation, either. It was just not doable. You know, I needed a tutor. I needed somebody... I needed a calculator, which we didn't have. I needed somebody to show me how to use

that high tech slide rule thingy. And, and there was, there was none of that support in that class, as opposed to what I got from Hugh Wadman. So, I have- to this day I have no idea how I even managed to pass the class at all, period. I don't know. He at least kept- kept me awake in class because when it got hot, he would turn the temperature in the room down to 50 or so, because he said you guys will go to sleep if I don't, and he was right, we were shivering and wide awake.

Spaccarelli: I believe that. I had a follow up question, and it's left my mind.

Alley: Oh, I'm glad that happens with people your age.

Spaccarelli: I, it'll come back to me if it was important. Who are the individuals that Raymond who are most memorable to you and why?

Alley: Well, the teachers who, who presented material in ways that I loved. In ways that I could access, even in, even in subjects that were not- that I didn't have any natural affinity for. And I've already talked about all of them. My nemesis, what's his name, Peckham.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, we haven't talked about Peckham yet.

Alley: The man was a self righteous ass. Yeah.

Spaccarelli: Okay, not mincing words I see.

Alley: I mean, there are stories. The only way to deal with him was to agree and do the innocent eye batting, oh you're so wonderful, Dr. Peckham, business. And, and that worked on the bugger. I mean, and, and it shouldn't have. And his behavior going after various students shouldn't have even occurred to me to ever do that, because, because before I resort, I had to resort to that. I had tried logic and reason and honesty and presenting my case, and, and he, he was just this big rock in the middle of the path that you stubbed your toe on. And he was a lousy teacher too.

Spaccarelli: Okay then.

Alley: I had US history from him. And I really tried on that one, and he didn't- he didn't bring anything to the class. There was no unusual insight, or coming at history from different perspectives, or livening the...

Spaccarelli: So it felt like high school, or something like that?

Alley: Very much. Yeah. Yeah.

Spaccarelli: I have universal agreement on Dean Peckham's administrative failures, basically, among the students I talked to. Some say he was a good teacher though. So I'm surprised to hear you say that.

Alley: I was, I was expecting something more- something more from US history. My idea of US history is, I would, if I could, I would like to polish the pewter and crawl under the Windsor chairs, and, you know, pet the carpet, the painted canvas carpets, and maybe do a few samplers and I want to, I want to get into the minds and thoughts and daily lives of the people who lived during that time. It would have been interesting to pull in diaries. First person experience...

Spaccarelli: So that's what he did, he did politics of the past.

Alley: It was US history, yeah.

Spaccarelli: Well, I mean, because you can do US history from a very- from the level of the person, but you can also do US history from a, let's talk about what the president did, like great man theory of history, right?

Alley: Dead white guys, battles, and dates.

Spaccarelli: Right. Right, yeah, yeah, that would do it, that would be deadening.

Alley: Yes. Yeah, the texts were interesting, because we had Thomas Jefferson's writings, and we had, we had, you know, those kinds of things but I don't know. He just managed to put a pall on, on all of it as far as I was concerned. And that was before... He got mad at me, or he, he became... Do you really want to hear this?

Spaccarelli: I want to hear- yes, please.

Alley: I got on his bad girl list. I had a boyfriend who was building a boat, and he had just finished the engine, and-

Spaccarelli: Another Raymond student?

Alley: No, he was, he was friends with a lot of UOP people. Bill Brotby, a Dane. And he, he was going to- his plan was to circumnavigate the world, but he was building his own boat to start with. And he had just finished the engine and it was a water cooled engine. And in order to take it out for a trial run, he stole a garbage can and filled the garbage can with water on board the boat, and then we were out on the Delta, on the San Joaquin, and he wasn't a very efficient thief because he had stolen a fiber garbage can, which proceeded to dissolve.

Spaccarelli: (Chuckles)

Alley: So then he couldn't run the engine without burning it completely up and he just finished building it. So we were, you know, paddling and poleing and it was a large ish boat, it wasn't. It was ocean

worthy size. And we got as far as the golf course by... Oh, I don't know, it was eight or so at night. And it was clear that I was not going to be able to make curfew. So I told Bill that he had to get onto the golf course and call, and he did. He called and, and told them what the situation was. He omitted significant details about why, but... By the time I got home, it was well past curfew, because, you know, what are you going to do? And from that point, and- and I was met by the committee which included Dr. Peckham and I think Barbara Sayles was there, and, you know, I- so I was, I was on the no good people list.

Spaccarelli: But they knew you were going to be back late, right, and they understood the reason.

Alley: Well, this is what I mean about Peckham. Rock, rock in the middle of the path, and totally immobile, immovable. And no excuses, you did x therefore y. So, you know, there I was and then, but from that, from that experience, he assumed that I was sleeping with this guy. He was quite correct of course, but I was not about to tell him that. And so he decided that I must be sneaking out to, to meet him, to meet my boyfriend and actually, I wasn't. But having been accused unfairly, I proceeded to do so.

Spaccarelli: (Laughs)

Alley: I mean...

Spaccarelli: That's great.

Alley: Yeah, I was really a very rule-abiding little person. But he, he, when he was accusing me at one point about sleeping- and he moved my room so that, so that instead of going on the, being on the outside of the, near the street, I was inside near the quad, and I couldn't sneak out my window. He thought I must be sneaking out my window. It was too much of a drop. You know, and I couldn't do that anymore, physically, which didn't bother me because I wasn't. And he said to me that- that was, that was the assumption that I had been, and he gave me the morality lecture about no sex before marriage. I wish I know now... Knew then what I know now, I would have had some things to say to him. But he, he had been- the resident assistant on our floor had- had been one who suggested that I might be going out the window, I gathered. And so I played the innocent with him, and I told him that she had no right to be accusing me of what she herself was doing, because I had seen her diaphragm in her drawer as she was moving. And I thought that was a pretty stinky thing to do was to turn somebody in for something you yourself were...

Spaccarelli: And this was the truth?

Alley: Yes, it was true.

Spaccarelli: Okay, okay.

Alley: It was absolute truth.

Spaccarelli: Okay.

Alley: Made me mad. And, you know, we didn't, in those days... We didn't discuss, in mixed company, things like diaphragms. I mean we didn't even discuss ladies underwear in mixed company, you just, you know, it was a social rule, and, and a very uptight Methodist College. And, you know, at least, at least I made the man blush but I stood up and marched out of his office in high dudgeon, which- and then I proceeded to go out and meet my boyfriend, using the bloody door.

Spaccarelli: (Laughs) That's easier.

Alley: I'm not going to climb out the window.

Spaccarelli: Okay, no, that's- that's great. Other memorable individuals before I asked the follow up question that I had previously forgotten?

Alley: Oh, let's see.

Spaccarelli: They can be students as well, I mean they can be anyone.

Alley: Well there are certain, there are students that I remember. Liatris was amazing. She could do anything with her hands. She could look at a picture of a person on TV, a model or somebody wearing something. A dress or something and she could go home and sell it. And I mean, Liatris was always gifted at anything craftsy or anything else with- she makes glorious quilts now. And let's see, Karl Van Meter, I was totally in awe of because he was so smart and he had a photographic memory and he was just so big and he was so nice at the same time. Norma Jean Stoltz. I, I didn't really know how to study. You know, I'd always just kind of read things, and nobody taught me- then then I would remember. I would just remember it, I would, and I would just read history or something over and over again and I'd write it down and these dates and these names. Very inefficient, and, but I, but I never had any instruction in how to study, to, to, you did it. She was so politically analytical and she had such a wealth, even then, of social knowledge about, about other countries, and, and I watched her studying and some of the things that she did made sense to me and helped me study. Leslie. She was a poet and kind of a wild, free spirit and... And I looked at her with wonder, because she was, she was a character. And this came from Sausalito and in, which was the Mecca of culture and, you know, it's right next to San Francisco, it's the Bay Area, wonderful stuff. Yeah.

Spaccarelli: You don't have to list every single student who was particularly memorable but Leslie is only one of those who I have not yet heard about. So, that's fantastic. Okay. I wanted to ask that follow up question that I forgot earlier. Thoughts on the educational philosophy... I wanted to ask about your experiences as a woman in some of those classes. I've had several alumni who I've interviewed, several women who say that, in some of those seminar discussions, they were overpowered by their male

colleagues who wouldn't stop talking. Do you remember that to be the case? What do you remember about that?

Alley: Well, that never bothered me, because I never had any trouble saying what I wanted to say.

Spaccarelli: What do you mean? You didn't want to say very much and so that was okay with you?

Alley: No, I think I said a fair amount. I mean, I've talked to- I've talked to Pete Windrem about how I really suffered through physics and Pete's response to me was sort of this wry comment. He said, no, and you did not suffer in silence. So, I have a feeling that I was fairly mouthy.

Spaccarelli: Okay.

Alley: Also Edwina and I... Edwina and I came in, and we, we were... We had had our freshman year already, and for the rest of them, it was their freshman year. And we at that time smoked.

Spaccarelli: Dean Peckham had opinions on that, I'm sure.

Alley: Oh, I'm sure he did, yes. Yeah. And we were, we were the older women. And, and I didn't realize that exactly. Because I was such an innocent about so much that went on around me. But, but we had, we had a totally unearned mystique about us. That- I forget what this was a response to...

Spaccarelli: It was a response to if you were able to speak, get to speak in classes without being overpowered by the men.

Alley: Okay, so I had a feeling that those guys didn't overpower me. They may have, they may have backed down a little bit more for me, and, and for Edwina, than they did for others.

Spaccarelli: Do you think, was it also increased confidence on your part relative- because you had that additional year before you got, before you got there.

Alley: It may have been. I kind of got a reputation for speaking truth to power.

Spaccarelli: I see that.

Alley: I mean, there was once in... Oh my goodness, who was the lovely man who taught philosophy, the philosophy class. It was...

Spaccarelli: Lewis Ford?

Alley: Lewis Ford. Yeah, a sweet man, and I shouldn't have done this to him, but I did. He was, we were questioning something about the beliefs of Lutheranism, and, and this- the, I think the sex before

marriage issue was being discussed in class. And I think all of us were feeling very forward thinking and brave and cutting edge to be even discussing that out loud in mixed company, it was, it was definitely not something that the society in general would have approved of.

Spaccarelli: That's, yeah, probably for '62, I would... Yeah, that seems radical for '62.

Alley: Yeah, it was. And, and, and we were very impressed with ourselves for being that radical. But he made the argument. Quite, quite from his own personal beliefs that sex before marriage was not acceptable because the purpose of sex was to produce babies. And if you weren't going to do that, then it was not ethically supportable. And I, and I said, I looked the man in the face and I said, well, in that case, we might as well all sit around and masturbate.

Spaccarelli: (Laughs) I bet the class was silent.

Alley: It was, it was. I, yeah. I think, I think class was over at that point. I think he dismissed us. But, you know, logically, that's logically consistent, but yeah, I didn't. People didn't talk over me much.

Spaccarelli: (Laughs) They wanted to hear if you would say something like that.

Alley: I think, I didn't do a lot of those, and I embarrassed the poor man and I, I do feel sorry for that because he was a genuinely a man of faith, and, you know...

Spaccarelli: But that follows logically...

Alley: Yeah. Anyway.

Spaccarelli: Interesting.

Alley: Yeah.

Spaccarelli: Okay, moving on, if you are ready.

Alley: Yes, let's do that.

Spaccarelli: Okay, what issues were you involved in that stood out in your mind as important to the growth and development of Raymond, especially as a member of the first class?

Alley: I didn't have that much of an overview. I was pleased to be... Warren Martin would tell- tell us. He would tell us who we were and what we were accomplishing, and why what we were doing was a good thing, periodically, and... And my response would be, yeah, what he said. And I didn't... I didn't, as I say, have much of an overview. I didn't, I didn't have the scaffolding, but I was pleased to be... I was pleased

to be a member of that group, because I felt, I felt that we were doing something important and unique. And I didn't need to be a chief, I was happy to be an Indian. You know, even a squaw, you know, fine.

Spaccarelli: You were happy to follow.

Alley: I was a happy follower. Yes.

Spaccarelli: Okay, okay. What was the conversation around civil rights, feminism, community activism and the war in Vietnam and how did Raymond support those conversations? We can break it down into each one individually. So civil rights.

Alley: Well, we were for it.

Spaccarelli: Okay then. And Raymond was supportive of that.

Alley: Yes. Yes, and Pete was gonna go. Pete did go. Yeah.

Spaccarelli: Despite being very white, right, my understanding was, it was very white at Raymond.

Alley: We didn't, we didn't have any concept of privilege. We simply walked around and breathed the air, and didn't, we didn't know. We were, we were totally, a hundred percent ignorant of that. I think the closest we came was- to realizing that was a few of us heard Sy Kahn's stories about what it was like to be Jewish in the south. And, and that was jaw dropping. Amazing. What? You mean that really happened? So, no, we didn't know.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, that makes sense. Okay, next one, feminism. I know you said you weren't using the word feminism but stuff like the feminine mystique was coming out around this time, right? So there was the proto feminism beginning to percolate. Was it, was it not? Were you thinking about some of those ideas?

Alley: Not specifically, no.

Spaccarelli: Okay.

Alley: I was writing poetry.

Spaccarelli: Because even the underwear seems like a proto feminism protest or you know... Like, curfews, or...

Alley: Well, where it, where it impinged on my personal rights, it made me mad and, but I kind of generalized it as, it's the overarching culture, the man and stick it to the man whenever you can get away with it, was a good thing. I mean, part of the reason that I moved away from, from, so happily

from University of Pacific was that- that culture that wanted me to- that sent me lists of clothing, appropriate clothing for what I- what to bring to, which included gloves and hats, which are- and and nylons and girdles. And these are, this is how you were supposed to dress when you go to chapel every Sunday. You know, as if. Yeah, I'm going to go to chapel every Sunday? I don't think so. So, so yeah, proto. Yeah, don't tell me what to do. Don't impinge on my life.

Spaccarelli: Right. But it wasn't, you didn't have the philo- like the framework to say this is patriarchal. Like those words weren't being used in that sense.

Alley: No, no. When I originally went to UOP, my father realized that they had put me in a boy's dorm, which was the equivalent of the apocalypse at that time.

Spaccarelli: Because Harrie?

Alley: Because Harrie. Yeah. So he asked me with a quirky smile. Do you want to just show up and watch them all run around and panic.

Spaccarelli: (Laughs)

Alley: I wish I had said yes. Like I said, you know, innocent little, no, we've got to tell them, it's going to be too embarrassing, Dad.

Spaccarelli: (Laughs) That would have been really funny.

Alley: Oh, it would have been funny.

Spaccarelli: Peckham would have freaked out.

Alley: Peckham wouldn't have known, it was the year before.

Spaccarelli: Oh, right, right, right. It was before Raymond, oh, at the university.

Alley: Yeah.

Spaccarelli: Oh, right, right. Oh, yeah.

Alley: It would have been fun. I didn't know enough to, to appreciate the opportunity. But your question.

Spaccarelli: Next question. You mentioned chapel. So, a lot of people have told me that there were a lot of Methodist kids of Raymond but it wasn't a majority, by any means. Do you, when you started at the

University of the Pacific, was it a high- was a high percentage of Methodist kids? Especially if chapel was like, something that was assumed. Were there that many Methodists?

Alley: I don't know.

Spaccarelli: Okay.

Alley: I wasn't a Methodist. I didn't really care about somebody's affiliation. I suppose religious affiliation was important to some people, but, you know, it was assumed that everybody would go to chapel, just because, because of the social pressure.

Spaccarelli: Right. Okay. Moving on then, community activism. Do you remember any during this time? I know this was early.

Alley: Other people. Yeah, Peggy Gunn volunteered in some kind of, you know, I'm not sure what downtown. But, no, we weren't... I didn't know people who were involved in it.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. Moving on then, last one, this was early, but the war in Vietnam. Were you beginning to think about it at all? I mean, the threat of the draft wasn't quite there yet, not for you but for the men around you. But what- did you think about it at all?

Alley: I don't remember it. I, I... If I had, I would have, would have kind of been kind of on the same order as my response to civil rights is, you know, civil rights good, war bad. You know, yeah.

Spaccarelli: Okay.

Alley: I was very, very, very unconnected to anything political. Extremely ignorant. When Kennedy was assassinated... I, I had no, no emotional reaction to the enormity of the whole event. It was, it was a news event that was being talked about. And I, again, I had no scaffolding, no framework. I ended up writing a poem about it, because my boyfriend at the time pointed out that it was something that I bloody well ought to be caring about. And I thought, Oh, okay. See, see, judging what's important, what's significant. I wasn't there yet.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, no, that's- okay. And then about the point about Raymond supporting these conversations, these are touchy issues. Did you ever feel like- Professor Ford is maybe an example of this- but did you ever feel like Raymond shut down those conversations about these topics, even if they were touchy?

Alley: No.

Spaccarelli: You felt like Raymond was largely supportive of a discussion.

Alley: Yeah.

Spaccarelli: Even if the leadership would say, well...

Alley: Right.

Spaccarelli: Even if the leadership disagreed.

Alley: Yeah. Right.

Spaccarelli: That's good.

Alley: There was, there was never. There was never any censure or censorship that I experienced.

Spaccarelli: Good. That's good. Yeah, okay.

Alley: That it?

Spaccarelli: Yes, well, four more. Getting there. What contributions do you feel Raymond made to the local communities?

Alley: No idea. No scaffolding. I know, I know Peggy went down to serve in a, yeah, I don't know, soup kitchen or something.

Spaccarelli: If you want a break, by the way, we can take a break, that's, that's perfectly fine. Okay, we have just a couple more, but just, just saying. Okay, sorry, soup kitchen.

Alley: Yeah, I'm not sure it was a, it was a mission or a kitchen or something. But, yeah.

Spaccarelli: Pretty disconnected.

Alley: I certainly was. And I suspect the rest of us were privileged and ignorant about it. Young ones were...

Spaccarelli: Okay, moving on here, has Raymond College met your expectations as an institution and as education? And why or why not?

Alley: Oh my goodness. Yes. It, it's shaped my whole life. It shaped my view of the world. It set me up for disappointment that not everyone in the world can discuss issues logically and with factual information, which led me recently to shake my head about people who somehow seem to live on earth two. But it also allowed me to be accepting of those people as humans, you don't, you don't ever argue with the person, you don't ever go after the person, you go after the facts. You go after the argument. That is the

basis for being able to talk to diametrically opposed people who want the same things from life on the Maslow pyramid of human needs.

Spaccarelli: Right.

Alley: Yeah. So, those are the, those are the bases on which you can live with these people and say to them, things like, Yes, well, let's agree to differ, or, Yeah, I can see that you get your information from different sources than I do. You know, and then go on to other stuff because there's lots of other stuff.

Spaccarelli: That's fair, that's fair.

Alley: The Raymond people still comprise my people. There are, there are some in, in life that I found also, but, you know, the majority of them are Raymond people that I'm still in contact with. Because, partly because we have this life-forming, life-changing experience that we shared. And partly because our basis for going about living are understood. If I meet somebody from Raymond that- from another class that I haven't known- my immediate emotional connection is to feel that they are trustworthy, and that they are somebody I'm probably like. Now I may find out- find out differently later, but not from the start.

Spaccarelli: Right, right, right. That's fair. That's fair. Okay, moving on, question 16. The one you were waiting for. How has your education at Raymond influenced your career and your life choices?

Alley: Well, yeah.

Spaccarelli: Yes, it did.

Alley: I was always going to be a teacher. It certainly influenced my development as a poet. I am- just, just recently published in a couple of anthologies, work that began while I was at Raymond, and I've worked on it and polished it, and now it's ready for publication and has been published. And my experience at Raymond showed me how to go about enrolling in graduate school, the Iowa City workshop, poetry workshop. So, yeah, it was... I don't think that could be anything... Any greater influence on my life than that experience. I mean, I've got the people. They're my people. I've got my avocation as a writer. Through my whole professional career as a teacher. I always taught writing, as one of the things that I taught. And, yeah, it's huge.

Spaccarelli: That's fair. That's fair. Okay, and then the last question. So I turn it over to you and that is what we not covered in this interview that you still want to discuss?

Alley: I know we, we already discussed a few things that I hadn't imagined that I would be telling you about.

Spaccarelli: It's, it's, it's no problem. What I want to say right now is that if there's something that you think later, oh, I don't want that in there, you can tell me, and I can cut it.

Alley: No, I'm... I am what I am.

Spaccarelli: I'm just saying, so, yeah, but continue. What have we not covered?

Alley: I just want to reemphasize the sense of getting there and stepping into the world that I belonged in. Being chained and having the chains drop away. And then everything that came after supporting that sense of... Yes, expand, discover, and search. Just a feeling of immense gratitude that I happen to be in the right place at the right moment to have fallen into that lucky experience. Yeah. Oh, nope, done.

Spaccarelli: Perfect. Did you want to say anything more about liberal arts colleges and your thoughts on that, as we did before the recording started?

Alley: If I could, I could in some way influence the introduction of that kind of breadth of curiosity or breadth of exploration into the professional degrees that are going to earn somebody a living. If there were a committee I could go work on or if I could volunteer my time to work with a section of those people on writing, on getting in to- because that's what I do. I get- to get in touch with self expression and even memoir writing that is, something that they could relate to writing about because scientists and engineers, while I'm in awe of what they can do, often can't write worth beans. And I could teach a puppy dog to write. And it's just, if somewhere, if there was could be some match between people like me, who can- who can do that for professional degrees and professional degrees valuing that. It would be really really neat. The Raymond, the Raymond essays are a small toenail-hold on, on that still. That breadth of exploration. I hope that program continues to be supported. And, and I think that there are people who are, who are much more attuned to how you write the right program for a college, a university that I am, who could and have made suggestions.

Spaccarelli: Yes, yes.

Alley: And if there were some way to get those suggestions implemented. I'd be willing to spend a lot of effort. I have no idea what I could do.

Spaccarelli: Right.

Alley: But, yeah, that. They need that. If you're an engineer and you retire. What are you going to do? If you're, if you're, if you pack a broad liberal arts education. You've been making your living as an engineer. And when you retire, you look around and you say, Oh, okay, I could do that or that or that or that or that or maybe I'll learn to play the clarinet or you know, something. It prepares you for having a life, not just doing a job.

Spaccarelli: Very well said.

Alley: And a life... You know, there are times that every job that you just trudge through, because there are parts that you're not, you're not going to find inspiring or interesting or you know. You just gotta do it because it needs to be done and you do it, and that's- takes home your paycheck and it pays the rent and the bills and, and puts the food on the table and clothes on your kids backs' and things like that. And you do that for a lifetime. But there's a lot more to life than just that. I'm, I think I'm happier now as a retired person. Volunteering in the art gallery, painting and writing poetry and, and responding to critique groups to help other people who are writers improve their work. I think that's making me happier now than I've ever been in my life. And I don't have to be sleep deprived to do it. Yeah? Yeah. So that's, that's what I would hope a college would do for everyone who comes through its doors and graduates. That, yeah, you got, you got to have a day job. Sure. But you got to also know what the other stuff is. You got to know what the areas to explore might be, what the questions that you might ask might be. That's what I didn't have when I came into Raymond. I didn't know what the questions were. I didn't know what the range was, I didn't know what I could look for or ask for or imagine. And a life without the ability to imagine widely is much poorer. And Raymond gave me that, that ability.

Spaccarelli: Wonderful. Okay, I think I'm going to call it there.

Alley: Okay.

Spaccarelli: Thank you so much. Let me stop this.