

## The Oral History Project: Questions and “Food for Thought”

Over the years, a small number of individuals have been interviewed or have written about their experiences of the early years of coeducation at Yale. However, most women in the Classes of '71, '72, and '73 have not had the opportunity to contribute to the history of this remarkable period. During this anniversary year, “getting the history right” seems more important than ever. The Oral History Project (OHP) – and the companion Written History Project (WHP) – seek to do this by capturing the voices of a more diverse and encompassing group of the women, as well as others, who came to Yale in 1969 and/or participated in this extraordinary transformation. We invite you to contribute to this effort to gather our stories.

We hope the Oral History Project will enable you to share memories/tell the stories about coeducation and its context that you feel are important and want to tell. During the course of the WHP and the OHP, some individuals have found it helpful to have some big- picture/open-ended questions, as well as some “food for thought” topics, to stimulate and organize their thinking. We thought it might be useful to share some of these questions and so include them here. To be clear, we do not expect you to use these questions to construct your interview – use only what you wish to address, if any.

The “**big-picture**” questions are bolded below; these are followed by related *food for thought*.

**1. Please tell us about your personal experience of the late 1960’s and early 1970s, at the time you were applying to Yale. What was your sense of “how the world worked” for women and for men? Who were you, and how did you come to Yale?**

*Food for Thought:*

*As you understood things growing up, what were the expectations, roles, opportunities, or limitations for women?*

*What was your educational environment prior to Yale (public, private, co-educational, women-only...) and how did it shape you?*

*What were you like as a person before you came to Yale?*

*How did you see your future? What did you want to do/ be?*

*Why did you decide to apply to Yale and what did you hear about Yale from friends, parents, guidance counselors, teachers?*

*After you were accepted, why did you choose Yale?... And what did you imagine Yale would be like?*

**2. Can you talk a bit about arriving at Yale and the first years here - do you remember what your first week on campus was like? Or the first year? What were the surprises, both good and bad, in those first weeks and beyond?**

*Food for Thought:*

*What structures were in place when you came - e.g., living arrangements, dining, orientations, advising, Yale's role as loco parentis, etc.?*

*What was it like to be a woman in a newly-co-educated school; how were you treated by classmates, faculty, or people outside Yale? Are there particular stories that stand out in your memory?*

*What was the social scene like – day to day, or on weekends – e.g., who were your friends?, was there much drug or alcohol use?, where/ how did you spend your free time?*

*What was the classroom and intellectual experience like... and was the academic level what you expected?*

*What were your extracurricular interests - and how was your experience in those groups?*

*What places/situations made you feel welcomed or most comfortable at Yale – and which did not?*

*Did you have much awareness of women's issues when you came to Yale – or when you left?*

*What was the best or hardest or funniest or most unexpected part about being at Yale?*

**3. Stepping back, could you talk about your Yale experience across your years at the university, and how Yale supported, or did not support, you? What stands out most in those years personally, educationally, and as a member of the community?**

*Food for Thought:*

*What were the things Yale did well in 1969 and in its first years of coeducation? And were there things that the University could have done better?*

*What did you major in and/or what was your passion at Yale? Your favorite classes? The most valuable classes.... or most important lessons learned?*

*Who were your mentors and guides ..... were there any women among them?*

*How did the big societal issues that we now talk about frequently, which were often not overtly addressed back then, factor into your Yale experience: ethnicity, race, sexuality, gender-identity, harassment, socioeconomic status, etc.?*

*Yale was a politically active place in the early 70's. (e.g., May Day 1970, the Bobby Seale trial, the Vietnam War, Yale's labor strikes, Mory's stance on women, etc.....)?*

*How did any of this affect you?*

*What were your impressions of New Haven In that era of unlocked gates? How did you engage with the city?*

**4. Could you talk about how your Yale experience influenced you, and how you think co-education influenced the university? We're interested in your path after graduation and how Yale factored into this. What do you believe are the legacies from the first classes of women, for Yale and for the women who followed?**

*Food for Thought:*

*What did you think you were going to do after Yale –and did you do this? Did Yale prepare you for what came next?*

*Did you go on to graduate or professional school? And if so, why, and how long after Yale?*

*How do you feel life has treated you – personally? professionally? – and what unexpected “twists and turns” have there been along the way?*

*What part of Yale have you taken with you over the years? Do you feel connected to Yale now, or to the women who came to Yale with you?*

**5. Are there additional stories – perhaps in areas not touched on here – that you think are important?**

**6. If you had it to do all over again....would you still choose Yale?**

*How do you feel about other choices that you have made?*