

Rebecca Oreskes

*Plymouth, NH*

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*10:30am*

Melony: This is Melony Davis, interviewing Rebecca Oreskes. Ok so, do you remember your first trip to the White Mountains?

Rebecca: I do.. uh I um, just to let you know my family didn't come up here the way a lot of people do and hike and go to the huts but we probably came up when I was.. I think I was probably about 8 years old and we were on a road trip and I remember we drove up Mt. Washington and I don't remember anything about it except being up there in the fog and the wind and it was really cold and we were all really cranky and my father was really gung ho and so that was really my first trip. And then later on I came back, I was 15 and I did the summer science project at the White Mountain school which was studying the alpine environment on Mt. Washington and writing up a brochure for the auto road which I actually think they may still use.. they probably updated it but I think they may still use it, I hope they still use it. And then um so that was just like a 3 week program and at that time I saw some hut boys one day and we were up there and I thought oh, that's interesting and then a couple years later I applied for a job to work in the huts thinking I would never, ever get the job because a) I wasn't a man and b) I didn't go to Dartmouth and I was a kid from New York who'd never gone to the White Mountains but I did get the job and that was when I really.. from then on I pretty much stayed.

MD: Oh cool! Ok so did you have any connection to the White Mountains? Any family from the area?

**RO:** I really didn't.. I someone interestingly.. most of my grandparents were immigrants but I have one grandmother who came.. her family came in the earlier wave of immigration and they came to New England which was kind of an interesting thing and she lived in New Hampshire as a girl but had very negative feelings about it.. and never would talk to me about it so.. in essence I had this kind of genetic connection but really no practical connection. And I did.. I still have some family in the southern part of the state but we were never in contact with them.

MD: Oh, just like distant relatives?

**RO:** Yeah they weren't uh.. my grandmothers brother actually lived here and then his daughter and family so it wasn't that distant, but when my grandmother left New England and moved to New York she didn't really want anything to do with it. And they were all split up as kids.. very, very hard life they were all split up as kids so they weren't close so they were never really part of..

MD: Um, can I ask, what happened to make your grandmother to make her..

**RO:** Sure! Um well I don't know entirely know what made her so negative but um I know that her parents were immigrants and they came in kind of the early wave of Jewish immigration to

New England, so they were dirt poor, probably literally. Her father was a farmer who.. this is the folk lore I actually don't know how much of this is true but her father was a farmer who died of blood poisoning after getting kicked by a cow and then her mother went.. uh had a nervous breakdown and ended up being institutionalized. The kids, I think there were four or five of them, were all split up and the boys were sent to a farm in the southern part of New Hampshire and the girls were sent to New York. And.. I could never get my grandmother to talk about it I really wanted her to

MD: Yeah, it sounds like a pretty sad part..

RO: Yeah I'm sure they were very poor uh.. probably a tremendous amount of anti-Semitism.. I assume uh.. but because she wouldn't talk about it you know.. I don't really know

MD: Right, yeah well it looks like you know a little bit. I mean, like you said, it's kind of like a folk lore right

RO: Exactly and you piece together and yeah

MD: Kind of like a romanticized version of the story.. I'm sure it was awful. Oh, that's sad. Ok so.. Alright, let's go to this; are you a hiker, climber, writer, naturalist..?

RO: So I guess kind of all of the above. Uh when I came to work in the huts I started working out at the Pinkham Notch camp with AMC, it used to be called Pinkham Notch Camp in those days now it's the Pinkham Notch visitor center. Camp being the old New England phrase right, for a cabin in the woods basically, and I uh I'll just digress a little bit and tell you about that because it's funny because my husband grew up in Berlin and they used to always talk about going to camp they meant going to like their fishing and their hunting camp.. in the woods but I grew up in New York city and going to camp meant going to a sleep away camp or a day camp so there was a little cultural disconnect between us for a while. He said.. when we first met my parents and they were like 'did you go to camp?' and he said 'yeah, I went to camp' and they said 'well what was the name of it?' and he said 'well, we didn't really have a name for the camp' and the conversation kind of went like that. So anyway I came up to work in the huts and that's really when I became a hiker and a naturalist

MD: Just kind of.. do it all?

RO: Yeah

MD: That's cool! Um, well I know a little bit about your career, but um.. how does your work/life connect you to the White Mountains?

RO: Well, I worked in the hut system from 1979 to 19..85 and then I really want.. I love.. I was one of those people who fell in love with the White Mountains and there's a.. there kind of used to be a joke at AMC which was that AMC was the greatest detriment to higher education

in the northeast.. so I did graduate from college, I went to college in New Mexico and I did graduate from college and I intended to go to grad school but then I started working for AMC and basically fell in love with the mountains.

MD: Oh, so it just like stopped you in your tracks?

**RO:** Yeah, in a way.. it changed my track I guess and uh.. and I wanted to find a way to stay in the White Mountains so I applied to work for the forest service.. the White Mountain National Forest and I got a.. I started as a seasonal employee and then I was just, in many ways, very fortunate to get a permanent job so then I began a career with the forest service after I left AMC. And I had several different jobs with the forest service, I was unusual in that my whole career was here in the White Mountain National Forest. In general the forest service expects people to move around a lot and the only way, typically, to get promoted is to move around a lot but I was probably more stubborn than they are

MD: [laughs] like 'I'm not going anywhere'?

**RO:** and I.. it wasn't quite like that I was sort of interested, at times, in going other places but honestly there weren't that many places that were anywhere near as appealing as what we had here. So I stayed and I was very lucky to get promoted and I ended my career as part of the forest leadership team and I was responsible for all the programs that have to do with people except for.. uh not things like human resources but I was responsible for uh.. I oversaw the recreational wilderness, heritage, public affairs, volunteers.. I'm leaving somebody out..

MD: but pretty much like.. all the people

**RO:** No.. well, yes but uh the recreation program it's not like leading events so much as managing.. when you go hiking in the White Mountain National Forest, people don't think about it like.. well where do the trails.. there's a lot that goes into that.. including trails and managing use and trying to find that balance between public use and protecting the land and so there's a whole lot to it. Plus there's wilderness.. those are designated areas, congressionally designated areas, that are set aside for a certain purpose. So managing those, being good stewards of those lands.. so all of those programs uh..

MD: Sounds busy!

**RO:** It was very, very busy. And then uh about two years ago I.. they had an early retirement offer and it was.. uh the first time I was old enough to take an early.. it was like one big advantage to turning 50 was that I could take that offer and it surprised a lot of people because in a way I was at that.. I don't know sort of.. I hate to use this word, but kind of peak of my career, things were going well I wasn't running away

MD: Yeah well ya know it's pretty young to retire.. but, hey!

**RO:** but I just.. really I don't see it as retirement at all, I just want to be doing other things and I wanted to go out on a high note. I really want to be writing um so now I'm mostly writing and also growing and selling vegetables

MD: oh cool! So do you have anything that still connects you to the forest service?

**RO:** Oh yes, absolutely! I mean uh.. you know I get phone calls asking about things and I have a meeting in a couple of weeks.. uh along with a colleague at New Hampshire Fish & Game I was really uh.. we started the Hike Safe Program.. which is a hiker safety education program and I have a meeting.. they called me and I have a meeting in a couple weeks to talk about where we left that program and what the future of that program will be. So I'm still connected, I still have friends and um.. I'm now a trustee of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests so that's not a direct connection to the forest service but I'm still active in conservation in the state.

MD: Alright, cool. Um.. so where is your favorite are of the White Mountains? Or section.. or..

**RO:** Yeah that's.. I saw that question that's a tricky one because I really love a lot of different areas um.. Tuckerman Ravine in that area has particular sentimental value for me because that's where I met my husband and I've spent a lot of time there.. uh I would say to broad areas.. anything above tree line is uh very special to me and then probably the northern part of the forest just because it tends to be quieter and I spent more time there. Uh so but I love lots of areas in the forest and I just love being out in the woods so I'm not that.. prejudiced about it. Except I do, particularly, love being above tree line.

MD: Cool, now what are your favorite things about the mountains?

**RO:** about the White Mountains?

MD: Yeah

**RO:** Well I think, and this is interesting because that's a question we asked when Doug, Mary, and I were doing our project for Mountain Voices we would ask people that and um.. so that got me thinking also about that. A lot of what people would think and I agree with is that they're accessible, they're beautiful *and* accessible. I really like the fact that they can kill people. That sounds like a funny thing to say but.. people underestimate them because they're small.. and they're very rugged mountains with just tremendous weather and to me that's exciting um.. the fact that you can be close to home and have weather conditions that are like the Himalayas, basically everything except the elevation. To me that's pretty exciting stuff.

MD: Kinda like, gets your adrenaline going?

**RO:** yeah and it just.. it's beautiful. So uh.. yeah I think that's.. and I also really the.. human and the natural connection the fact that there have been people coming to the White Mountains so

a long time that has this incredible record of human history but then also has this beautiful natural beauty I think that combination of.. the combination of humanity and nature is very interesting.

MD: Um so is there something you don't like about the White Mountains? I have a feeling this is going to be a 'no'

RO: Yeah.. No. I mean working for the forest service there was always like.. a lot of challenges and it's a real challenge to manage the amount of use that the White Mountains get but there's.. I wouldn't say that makes not like them.

MD: Ok, I had a feeling that that would be like a 'what??' . Ok so um Title IX, do you know what Title IX is?

RO: I do know what Title IX is

MD: Um.. if so, what did you think about it when it was first passed?

RO: Well uh.. obviously Title IX was.. world changing for women and for girls and when I was growing up I spent a lot of time fighting for women's.. for girls sports in my schools.. in elementary school and in high school and.. it was a bit.. surprisingly I think to people probably today, it was a huge fight and uh.. very difficult. I went to a high school, I was in the last... public high school.. but I was in the last all girls graduating class and we still had to fight for sports. See it's things you wouldn't necessarily expect. So the passing of Title IX it.. you know began that.. how's this for a cliché? You know level the playing field, right, in a quite literal way. So.. I think it's great obviously.

MD: So did Title IX affect your relationship with the White Mountains? Directly or indirectly?

RO: Yeah, I don't think it did uh.. I was thinking about that question a lot um.. when I came to work in the huts women were already working in the huts. So the huts uh allowed women to work as regular crew members.. I think it was the mid-seventies. I should know that exact date, I don't.. um and before that women had worked in the huts during the war or with their husbands or at Pinkham Notch only. So but women were already in the huts when I came and so that barrier had pretty much fallen and I would say one of the really special things when I look back about the huts is that men and women would work closely together and so you learned to work with people of the opposite sex and in a way you ended up with all of these brothers or sisters.. which is not to say there weren't romantic connections also between people but I think the huts really gave anyone who worked in them this just natural relaxibility to work with people of the opposite sex. And there was a definite 'macho' culture around the huts and women get sucked into that as well so I don't.. probably more so then, I don't really know, than now. But I remember one.. I was.. the winter before I was going to be hut master at Lakes of the Clouds and Lakes of the Clouds is the biggest of the huts and to be hut master there is sort of.. kind of the top hut master position I guess you could say.. And uh.. that winter I

was going to be hut master there and I was gonna be the second.. I was the second woman hut master at Lakes, people often think I was the first and that's not true. There was a woman named Maria [inaudible] who was hut master in 1979, the year I started working for AMC. So I was the hut master in 1983 and that winter I was at an old hut mans' reunion and this.. he seemed like one of.. like a truly old hut man to me, now I'm thinking that he you know, might have been 50, I don't know [laughs] but at the time I was like 'oh this guy goes way back'. And he said to me well I'm gonna let you in on a little secret, don't tell no one I told you this, he said 'I think the huts are way better now that women are in them'. So yeah, I don't feel like I had this tremendous resistance. I'd say that culturally, it was more resistance actually at the forest service because that was a big cultural shift when I went from AMC to the forest service. So I think there were more like gender issues at the forest service than there were at the beginning of my hut career.

MD: So that.. because you worked.. when did you start working for the forest service? In the eighties?

RO: In the eighties, yeah

MD: Oh ok so Title IX had already been..

RO: Uh yeah and to get back to Title IX.. I don't think that really had anything to do with title IX, one way or the other.

MD: Ok. Alright..

RO: Although it may have, you know, in a global sense because it all was happening at the same time right.. women going in to the workforce I guess. I mean you would know more about that than me

MD: I mean, everything is connected.. so.. it's so complicated sometimes, it just makes my head hurt thinking about..

[both laugh]

MD: Alright well.. I guess you can go either.. you can tell me about your experience in the forest service because you just explained with the uh.. the huts um.. did you do the same work as your male colleagues? Or did.. were you excluded from things or..

RO: are you talking about the huts or the forest service?

MD: Well I think we should go with the forest service because it seemed like everything was pretty cool in the huts..

RO: Right, well the short answer is yes, I did the same work. I would say there were more

issues.. especially earlier in my career, less so later on. Uh and I can remember one.. I was on a timber marking crew, that's where you go out and you're marking trees that are going to be cut for timber harvesting and uh.. it was an all-male crew except for me. And I was what was called the tally person, so in those days you'd have people marking the trees and then you'd have a person who would record what trees were being marked and they would yell out.. so let's say you marked a sugar maple you know you would yell out '12 inch sugar' and I'd be keeping track of all that. So one day um.. it was.. I guess it was just bad weather, I can't remember now why. And the crew just wasn't going out and our boss brought us all together and said 'ok, we have tools that need to be worked on over at the equipment depot so all the guys can go there' and then he looked at me and said 'Rebecca, why don't you go work with the girls in the office?'

MD: Ohhhhh

**RO:** Yeah that was a bad moment and uh.. obviously I still remember it.. and what was interesting about that.. there were a couple of things. One is how horrible it felt and then later you know one of the guys said to me 'yeah I'm really sorry that happened; I felt really bad'. And I thought well why didn't you say something? You know, why did no one.. say anything? And I was a seasonal employee, I was very low on the totem pole you know, and I was a woman so i.. it wasn't a fight I was gonna take on right then and there but.. that was a bad moment. But that same guy he also.. there was a permanent employee it was a forester at the same time working on the district and actually said to her 'you should be home having babies'. So and I talked with her about that at some point and we ended up really liking this guy.. he was a good man you know.. but his culture uh very. uh traditional Berlin Frenchman and his culture just was not willing to accept women in the workplace. So we were dealing with things like that. I don't think we were dealing with as much as women who were maybe.. ten years older than me had dealt with it but there were still uh.. you know some residual things about that.

MD: Yeah once something is set.. in them.. it's hard to change

**RO:** it takes a long, long time.

MD: Um.. have you changed how you feel about the White Mountains over time?

**RO:** No I mean, I think part of life is that you do change and you know when I started they.. I didn't know them and they were sort of this.. this phenomena to me, right.. and uh you know my.. they're intertwined with some of the closest friends I've made in my lifetime. And then now.. now it's like you know I worked in them right.. for many, many years so that changes your relationship and the way you look at things, or can. But in terms of how I care about them or.. no, I would say not. In terms of.. things I notice now that I might not have noticed then because I.. because they've become part of.. so much a part of my life in terms of my life's work. Yes does that.. get at what you're asking?

MD: Yeah, I think so. Um, would you say that you feel like.. closer to the mountains over time.. or it's just kind of like you've been in love with them the whole time?

**RO:** No I think I'm probably closer because I chose to stay.. right, and that's you know.. it's one thing to love something it's another to choose to stay.. and surely there's a lot of tradeoffs to having stayed and I chose to do that and really I chose to do that because of the land, primarily.. to be close to the land. So.. so that is a change and uh.. it's not a transient.. it hasn't been a transient thing. So that's certainly a change.. it's a deeper thing.

MD: Hmm. So, you moved to New Hampshire after college.. after you undergrad?

**RO:** So I did uh.. one year of college and then I started.. after my freshman year in college I started working summers in the huts and then when I grad... I took a year off from college and I spent about half of that working for the AMC also. And then uh.. after I graduated from college I pretty much stayed up.. I moved up here. And I was still a seasonal employee at the time so I would.. in the winters I worked ski patrol at Jackson Ski Touring Foundation and then I also milked cows on a dairy farm in Conway and I taught pre-school. So I did a lot of things typical.. typical you know seasonal employee who does a lot of different things. But I still stayed and then I ended up working for the forest service seasonally and then full time. But pretty much starting in 1983 I.. I stayed.

MD: So you haven't left since?

**RO:** I mean I've left the state

MD: Oh I mean you haven't moved, you've lived here permanently?

**RO:** Yeah.. yeah.

MD: Any plans to leave?

**RO:** No plans, nope. This is the um.. you know I think my husband and I have been talking about lately about would we rather live somewhere else? And the answer maybe at some point yes but right now no.

MD: Um.. Where?

**RO:** No idea, yeah. We.. we've never gotten.. and then we don't.. we can't really agree anyway so we sort of stop talking about it [laughs]

MD: Um.. what are some other places that you've visited, like hiking-wise or mountain-wise

**RO:** Yeah well I've pretty much umm.. you know I've traveled a lot because partly when I was seasonal I would do a lot of traveling and so I've traveled.. really around the world. And uh.. all beautiful mountains you know, like the Himalayas.. the foothills of the Himalayas.. just beautiful mountains uh.. I went to college in New Mexico that's beautiful, beautiful country. I missed the water, you know. People would complain about rain and I would love when it rained.. that's..



and you know you're from the east when you get like that

M Yeah! I know they don't get a lot of rain there, huh?

**RO:** Yeah, no. But it is beautiful and that's just a gorgeous part of the world um.. and then I also did some.. I've done some short-term assignments with the forest service in the southern part of the US and the mid-west and then also in the eastern Caribbean. So yeah I've seen a lot of different places and traveled quite a bit.

MD: Alright, that's cool! It must be.. like going from the mountains.. the White Mountains.. to the Caribbean.. that's uh a big change!

**RO:** Yeah that was a pretty.. pretty sweet deal uh.. it was a short term assignment I.. I was um.. part of a disaster response program and we got to go uh.. to the eastern Caribbean as what they call 'pre-deployment team' so it was during hurricane season and they wanted people there because the year before there had been some very bad storms and they weren't that well prepared so they wanted people to go there and kind of be there and learn about the country and report back and also to be there if anything happened. When I was there nothing happened although I think the team after... I think there was a big hurricane after. But we were there um.. you know basically getting to know the country but really wasn't exactly a.. it was taxing for me because I felt sort of underemployed and I don't do that well with that [laughs] but no it was great. I mean it was beautiful, for one thing

MD: Yeah, I bet. Alright well that's.. that gives it for those. Do you want to continue on or take a break or anything?

**RO:** No, I'm good.

MD: Alright, cool. Um so you told me a little bit about your um.. grandparents so.. and you said you grew up in New York?

**RO:** I grew up in New York city

MD: Can you tell me about that?

**RO:** Sure, I grew up in New York city.. on the west side now called the upper west side, when I was a kid it was just the west side [laughs]. And uh I'm the product of just.. sort of diehard New Yorkers. And it was interesting because I was probably the one person in my family who really didn't want to be there. Which makes you think there's just some genetic thing born in us, right? I always felt the city kind of hard to take and I also grew up in New York at probably the worst time in New York; 60s and 70s. It was very um.. rough and sort of a.. abandoned almost right.. it's really come a long way since then in terms of positive development but this was during like the urban renewal era and um.. so I just didn't like it. An uh I used to.. I would ask my parents if we could move to the country and they'd be like 'no' you know, 'we live here' and

uh.. so I left New York as soon as I could. Uh to defend New York because everyone always like rags on New York, I do now love New York and I didn't I mean.. I would not have said that 30 years ago. And part of it is that my husband is from rural New Hampshire.. absolutely loves New York, and when we first went there I said to him you know.. 'you aren't gonna like it but you have to go to meet my family' and so he said 'yes' and then he was like 'well why don't we move here and uh.. it's like I created a monster [laughs]

MD: to the city?

**RO:** yeah, he loves, loves New York.. and it really helped me sort of appreciate what's good about New York and New York is a lot easier now to just be in than it was when I was growing up. So I do love New York I mean I feel incredibly fortunate to have grown up there and to have the opportunity to go back there and get my fix of culture and good food and those things, then be able to live here and.. and also to be comfortable in both worlds because a lot of people aren't comfortable in both worlds and they really are different worlds in many ways so I feel really blessed about that.

MD: It's interesting that your husband he was from rural New Hampshire and the big city is like.. and I kind of.. I mean I grew up in Nashua so.. it's kind of like a mix of the city and.. not.. but I love it up here [in Plymouth] and I don't know if I'll ever go back to Nashua

**RO:** So you love being up north, it is funny isn't it?

MD: I do yeah, I never really spent much time up here before I moved here for college, yeah.

**RO:** Yeah, and then eventually you might find like you can still love it up here but then you'll be able to appreciate it once you're away from it.. and maybe not [laughs] I don't know.

MD: I think that working at the museum has helped me appreciate it a bit too because I'm getting background on the mountains and the area and it's really cool. It's really interesting. I'm sorry, I can just hear Dr. Blaine like 'don't talk about yourself' so [laughs]

**RO:** Oh no, I think it's good to have conversation

MD: I know but.. ok, alright so tell me about your parents

**RO:** Uh my father passed away just a year ago

MD: sorry to hear that

**RO:** thank you. And he was a biochemist and he taught at Hunter College in New York. He taught health sciences, laboratory sciences and um.. I really credit him with my love of nature actually. Because we used to take walks in Central Park together and he looked at things definitely with a scientists eye so we used to take walks and he would.. we would just look at

what we saw; the trees and the squirrels and um.. he wasn't a naturalist per se but he had tremendous curiosity and a very uh.. just a smart man. So I really credit him with that. And then uh my mom uh she raised four children so she was a housewife and then she was very active in politics, they both were actually very active in politics but I sort of think of her as more active and then ultimately she was a preschool teacher. And.. which is definitely her gift, a real gift for children uh and.. she's actually just has this tremendous gift with people in general. We used to.. you know I'd be afraid to leave like a boyfriend in the same room with her and go to the bathroom because in about thirty seconds she would know more about him and he would know more about me then.. you know it would take me years to.. she just has a way with people and is not afraid to ask questions. And she's still living and she still lives on the west side of New York in the same apartment that I grew up in.

MD: Wow! That must be a trip when you go back

RO: Yeah, we're helping her right now you know just something everyone kind of goes through is.. cleaning up the apartment and helping her, she.. it's totally up to her what she does right now she wants to stay but I think in a couple of years she might actually swap apartments with a neighbor to get in a smaller apartment but um.. yeah so.. yeah and I have two brothers who are still in New York also

MD: Ok. So you said.. do you have a sister as well?

RO: and I have sister. Who recently moved from San Diego to Massachusetts, which everyone always goes 'why?' um.. and she's teaching at Harvard, that's why. Because I think that's the only thing that would probably get her out of.. would have gotten them out of California

MD: Oh, well there we go! What does she teach?

RO: She teaches history of science

MD: Oh cool! That's very neat. Um and what do your brothers do?

RO: One of my brothers is senior managing editor for the AP, Associated Press, so he's big into journalism. And then my other brother is an actor. So we all do very different things.

MD: Yeah! That's a very broad.. spectrum. That's cool though!

RO: Yeah, which probably says something about my parents that.. that they had four kids who are all successful but all in a very different ways.

MD: Yeah! Um.. school.. how did you like school?

RO: It depends where.. how far back you go um I hated like high school. Absolutely hated it I went to um.. New York has these, what they call, specialized high schools. They're public

schools but you have to take exams to get in to. So I went to one of those specialized high schools which was supposed to be.. you know.. and I'm sure they are very, very good schools, but uh.. I went to one called Hunter.. Hunter College high school and I was not happy there and uh.. for lots of reasons. Probably because I was very idealistic and my mother always worried that I was too idealistic and I'd always be disappointed because of that.. just kind of an interesting thing to think about and um.. I had sort of high ideals for not wanting to be taught to get into a good college but wanted to be taught because I wanted to be educated and then it.. so things weren't going.. things were OK I mean it wasn't like I was failing out but I was unhappy and then my.. what ended up being my last year, which was including my junior year, I wanted to take uh.. I had taken all.. basically all of the English classes they had to offer because I.. it just was what I was interested in and then they wanted me to just kind of go back to the regular class and I knew I'd be bored so I asked them if I could take.. do an independent study.. I was only 15.. I mention that because the rest is sort of shocking that people would treat a 15 year old this way.. but anyway.. I asked if I could do an independent study project on Moby Dick which.. seems sort of remarkable to me now, right! And uh.. to make a long story short they said no and they were very, very cruel about it.. and uh so in the end I said OK you know I gotta get out of here. So I ended up going to college quite young. I went to St. John's College which is a Great Books school, there's campuses in Annapolis, Maryland and Santa Fe, New Mexico. And it's pretty much an all required curriculum based on reading great books of western civilization, and it's really a very, very traditional liberal arts foundation so there's.. there's.. there's four years of math and four years of science and there's language.. people assume it's just the arts, but it's not it's really what liberal arts was meant to be. And so I went there, I started in Annapolis.. did a year and a half in Annapolis, took a year off, and then went back and graduated from Santa Fe. And St. Johns is a weird place and um there's lots of good lots of bad but I was very happy in St. Johns.. I mean I'm totally glad I went there. And my intent was to go have that as my foundational education and then you know, go to grad school and..

MD: but then..

RO: but then, yeah, [laughs] the rest is history!

MD: but then the huts happened [laughs] um.. how long.. so you did three years in Santa Fe, you said?

RO: I did uh.. two and a half, a year and a half in Maryland and two and a half in Santa Fe.

MD: Oh.. wow that's a long time there, huh?

RO: Yeah.. yeah.

MD: Did you stay there throughout? Or did you like move back in between?

RO: No I stayed. Once I went from Annapolis I stayed in Santa Fe. They have a joke at St. Johns.. you can go back and forth as long as you're in good academic standing, and a lot of people do their junior year at the other campus they call it 'doing your junior year abroad'. But I went and

I stayed and I was happier in Santa Fe because there are mountains there so.

MD: Oh yeah. Was um.. where you were in Maryland was that like kind of a city setting?

**RO:** It's Annapolis which is where the naval academy is uh.. so it's on the bay and it's beautiful and if you're interested in the ocean or sailing it's an absolutely fantastic place to be.. it wasn't, kind of, the right fit for me. I love the ocean now but.. I've never been a sailor and uh.. it's very, very historic and.. which a lot.. you know it's beautiful like red.. everything's red brick but I just.. I just needed a break I think like a lot of people figure out in the middle of their college that it's like 'OK , I just need a break. And St. Johns is very intense and I was just like I gotta get out of here for a little while so..

MD: Um, OK so hobbies? What were your um.. as a child or adolescent I guess.

**RO:** Uh sports I really liked sports, I liked.. I was like in love with the New York Mets, but I like watching sports..

MD: At least you weren't a Yankees fan

**RO:** Now I'm a Yankees fan

MD: Ohh! No whatever I don't care.

**RO:** And my husband who couldn't care less about sports but he should be a Red Sox fan but he'll be a Yankees fan just to egg people on

MD: Oh yeah one of those..

**RO:** I actually like Boston, I mean if it's not between New York and Boston I'm for Boston. Um.. and reading and uh.. animals, I guess I was really into animals and uh.. yeah boy.. it should be very obvious, huh, what your hobbies were as a kid

MD: I couldn't tell you what my hobbies were and that wasn't even that long ago! Um.. did you have a lot of friends?

**RO:** I was definitely one of those people, I probably still am, who had like a few close friends and not a big circle of friends definitely not an extrovert

MD: I feel ya! Um.. how about a best friend?

**RO:** Yeah, I had a best friend like in elementary school and then a best friend in college. You know.. I'm not.. I feel a little.. sort of sad about this; I don't have like a best friend from when I was 4 years old to now.. my sist.. my sister does, I'm like 'wow, how do you do that?'

**RO:** makes you kind of jealous, right?

**RO:** Yeah! It's like what do.. that's a pretty special thing and I don't have that. I feel pretty like wow I have one friend from college that I still keep in touch with which is.. you know there's other people who have like.. all these friends from college and I don't, but I've got one friend and it's neat because when I do see her which is not very often, you really feel like time hasn't passed and you're still um.. so that's, yeah.

**MD:** I think it's important.. I think having a lot of friends is.. I don't know it can be.. scary. I mean people are so.. nasty sometimes.

**RO:** Yeah especially today with Facebook and just like.. what's that about, yeah.

**MD:** I like to surround myself with like.. a couple of good people and keep the bad ones away

**RO:** Yeah, that's how I feel. Yeah me too. I feel really lucky like I think I mentioned earlier, my close.. really closest friends are people I met working for AMC, so I have like thirty year friendships from people I met working for AMC. And some of those are.. I.. you know are really.. they're like family, they feel like family to me um.. so I do have those friends

**MD:** It's amazing how friends can impact your life

**RO:** Absolutely, yeah.

**MD:** um.. ok. And what was your major? Did I.. did we get there?

**RO:** Well St. Johns..

**MD:** Oh you said liberal arts

**RO:** Liberal arts, everyone basically takes the same classes and.. which is one reason it can get.. it's a very, very small school like.. I think five hundred people in Annapolis and.. each campus. So by the time we.. and your four years with the same people, pretty much.. so.. and you're reading the same books and you're in the same seminar so by the end you're kind of like 'OK, I've heard like enough of what you have to say [laughs].

**MD:** Um ok so, what were your favorite subjects? English, I'm assuming.

**RO:** Well, in high school; English uh and history mostly because I had this unbelievable history teacher who was one of those teachers who changes your life and um.. I feel very bad.. he died a while ago which I only sort of found out after the fact and.. I never really told him that so I always.. like feel.. you know I kinda hope he knew but um so but English for sure uh.. although my best teacher was in history. And then at St. Johns uh you know you didn't have.. you didn't have like English, you had seminar, you had math, you had science and language

MD: oh OK nothing exciting?

**RO:** well, I think it was all exciting some things were just a lot harder for me you know.. math uh has always been a lot harder for me than other people and um at St. Johns though I have to say I loved it, I didn't love it in high school but at St. Johns you were kind of allowed to ask questions and I actually got, in high school.. it's all coming.. it's like coming back like a flood now. But I got thrown out of a math class because.. we.. it was a geometry class and the teacher said points in Euclidian geometry are like sand, and I said well no, they can't be like sand because sand you could count sand, and technically.. based on what Euclid said, you can't count points. And she said, rather nastily, 'well do you want to count all the points of sand on the earth? And I said that's not the point, if I want to, it's the fact that I could. In theory I could, in theory I can't count all the points in the universe, but I could count all the points of sand. So she was like nasty and.. she ended up throwing me out of class and told me not to bring up irrelevant, philosophical questions. Then I got to St. Johns and I was reading uh.. Euclid, basically, and there's a little footnote where it talks about points.. and there's a little footnote that says 'some people liken points to grains of sand, but that is not correct ', and I almost mailed it to her! But I.. I let it go. So.. so I did like math, the point of all that was I did like math at St. Johns because it was.. it's just interesting, but it's still harder for me to get my head around.

MD: Well that's cool, so that.. it was kind of more like open to like.. helping you, instead of just shoving it in you?

**RO:** Absolutely and the point there is that you're all learning together um.. and in fact at St. Johns everyone is called Mister or Miss, including the professors. Like you never talked about your professors, they're called tutors and it's like Mister you know. what's his name. And uh.. the idea is that you're all students learning together basically. It didn't always work you know, as well in practice as in theory but.. but the idea was that you're.. you're there to learn, to become educated.. or to begin the process of becoming an educated person

MD: Well, the school that.. the high school that I went to was a very small school but we addressed our students.. our parents.. teachers. Our teachers [laughs] by their first names.

**RO:** Was it a public school?

MD: It was but it was um very small it was an alternative kind of.. for the kids that need help..

**RO:** Yeah. Did you like it?

MD: I did, I think it completely changed my life.. my life would be totally different if I had continued in high school.. normal high school, um..

**RO:** Well high school is a nasty thing

MD: I.. I'm so glad that I didn't have to experience that but..

**RO:** Yeah.. well it's a tough time of life, right? They say your brain is completely rewired in puberty and.. so you're going through enough, right, just physically and then you're like put into this.. like these horrible places. I.. now I know people who loved high school so I gotta be a little careful but for some of us..

MD: Some people have an easier time. It depends on your personality and your like.. everything.

**RO:** So if you fit in, it's great and if you don't its

MD: Like the golden boys and the golden girls

**RO:** It's just easy to get lost.. just easy to get lost.

MD: In my high school I got.. it was very, very small very like.. sort of intimate you might say. So it was.. it felt like a very loving atmosphere.

**RO:** People cared about you

MD: Yeah.. yeah. But I missed out on a lot like prom.. and dances and all that stuff.

**RO:** Yeah, me too. You probably didn't miss that much.

MD: I probably wouldn't have gone anyways, [laughs] but I didn't have the option.

**RO:** Yeah, exactly [laughs]. Yeah I don't think I did either. I must have had one but I don't remember that at all.

MD: {rambles} anyway enough about me, I'm sorry. So I guess so.. where I went, after this.. alright well why don't you tell me about when you met your husband

**RO:** So we met uh when I was working for the forest service actually, he was one of my first bosses uh but.. you know we weren't having an affair or anything, and then but we me.. and I had met him actually many years.. well not many, but a few years before that when I was still working for AMC, he doesn't remember this but I do, when I met him uh up at Hermit lake, on Mt. Washington. And uh he's a retired snow ranger who worked at Tuckerman Ravine for like forty years, he's quite a bit older than I am and uh.. so he had a long career up at Tuckerman.. was kind of, you know, the guy up there and um.. then he retired before I did and uh we shared basically that love of the mountains, that interest in the mountains, also love animals and uh.. he's from Berlin.. Berlin, New Hampshire and uh.. yeah.

MD: Alright.. um do you have children?



**RO:** We don't have.. um he has three grown children from his first marriage but we don't have children together.

**MD:** I noticed that you hadn't mentioned any, I assumed that you hadn't.. um well you said he has grown children, so does he have grandchildren?

**RO:** He does he has 2 grandchildren who are uh.. one just started medical school and one just started dental school So we got a doctor and a dentist

**MD:** Oh, wow! So they're like, fully grown.

**RO:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah true even the grandkids are fully grown, yeah.

**MD:** Wow. Are you close to his children at all?

**RO:** No. Um [pauses]

**MD:** I'm sorry, you don't have to share!

**RO:** No, no! I'm actually.. I am close now to his son um.. who lived with us for a little while because he was having a lot of problems. And his daughter Pam.. but we all got along now is the point, but it was kind of one of those sad family things for a while where.. one of the daughters wouldn't talk to me and..

**MD:** Oh, OK. Well you're the.. the new..

**RO:** Yeah. You know and it was a really.. it's a good life lesson that people can be grown but there is still something about your parents and your vision of your childhood that sort of doesn't matter if you're grown and it's also very hard for people to look at their parents as adults.. you know, not as your parents and so.. you know, it's all part of learning, so I learned a lot about that. But I.. you know, now we all get along and I'd say I'm probably.. somewhat close to his son and.. to his daughter, one of his daughters.

**MD:** Well, that's good. Um.. so you said you're working on.. you write, you're a writer.

**RO:** Yeah, so right now the project I'm most immersed in right now is helping Brad write a memoir about his time in Tuckerman

**MD:** That's your husband?

**RO:** That's my husband, Brad Ray. And uh.. because he has tremendous stories. He was really one of the early um.. avalanche forecasters, probably in the country, but certainly in the east. And so he has great, great stories about what they were doing up at Tuckerman in their early

days, and how they were learning and.. and then he has great stories about search and rescue and just about mountains and about knowing the mountains and.. he is an absolute example of someone who stayed in one place and got to know a piece of land in a tremendous way so.. so we're working on that and then I have some other projects that you know, I hope to get to eventually and then I.. I write some articles here and there on quite a few things.

For instance, although my high school had been all girls, it never had a baseball or softball team until boys were admitted. So when team was being established girls had to try out with the boys, but none of us made the team. We had to fight to get a girls softball team. It took some struggle to get other sports teams for girls.