

Allyse, I read through the whole interview and made corrections...some in color, the rest in bold.

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Salve Regina Oral History Project

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Interviewee: Joanne Shea Philpott

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Mrs. Joanne Shea Philpott is a graduate from the Salve Regina College Class of 1962. She majored in Foods and Nutrition. In this interview we discuss how she came to Salve, the Foods and Nutrition Curriculum, her post-graduate dietetic internship, social life for the students, and the presence of the Kennedys in Newport.

Allyse: Hello, my name is Allyse Zajac. It is Tuesday July 18th, 2017. I am here with Joanne Shea **Philpott** and we are doing our Oral History interview. So, my first question that I like to open with is: how did you come to Salve? How did you hear about it? What led to you coming to the college ... coming to college in general? Give me some background.

Mrs. **Philpott**: I grew up in Newport, so I knew about Salve. When it was time to look at colleges, I looked at different ones and applied, but decided I'd rather stay here in Newport and it made it easy for my parents. First of all, my Dad was a firefighter They didn't make a ton of money, so it was financial as well as a choice. And they had a good program in what I wanted to do.

Allyse: And what was that?

Mrs. **Philpott**: I wanted to be a dietitian. I had a cousin who was a dietitian who had graduated three years earlier from Salve. So I wanted to major in the Foods and Nutrition. I had worked as a volunteer at Newport Hospital. We were volunteer Nurses' Aides. We had gone through a program, we were actually taught things like changing beds, feeding patients, so on and so forth. I decided nursing was not for me, but I liked the hospital atmosphere. So I chose to do the dietetics.

Allyse: So what was that program like at Salve? Was it rigorous? What were the courses like?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Well, first of all, Salve was one of the few colleges in the country that gave you an Arts degree in a Science Program. So therefore, you had to fulfill all the Arts degree courses. Then, to do an internship after you graduated, they had certain courses you had to take. So it was rigorous in my first year and sophomore year as I had a lot of classes. We used to be on a point system then or hour system, and I ended up after a couple of years with almost fifty hours. So I had a very full [program] ... between sciences and the liberal arts.

Allyse: Kind of as a reference, how many hours would someone at that point have had? So if you had fifty hours, what would the average student have?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Well, normally you did eighteen a semester.

Allyse: Oh, okay.

Mrs. **Philpott**: I think. That's a terrible thing. I mean, you would take ... yeah, it was sixteen maybe. Sixteen a semester, sixteen hours. So that's thirty-two.

Allyse: So similar to the credits we take now.

Mrs. **Philpott** : So sixty-four. I was up higher.

Allyse: Okay. So what were the classes like? What did you have to take? What did you enjoy? What didn't you enjoy?

Mrs.**Philpott**: I enjoyed a lot of my classes. I had to take a language, which most Science programs don't require you to do. So I took Spanish, History, Philosophy, Theology. Those are more classes that in a public institution, you're not taking those classes. So you have four years of Theology, two years of Philosophy, those in addition to the general courses, Inorganic Chemistry, Microbiology, all of the Sciences. In junior year, we had a lot of labs between Biology and Chemistry courses and I would be going to school from nine in the morning until five in the afternoon every day!

Allyse: That's a lot.

Mrs.**Philpott**: It was a lot. I remember talking with Sister Rosalia ... we could not get our Theology course in for our junior year. There was no place to put it, so we put it off until our senior year. So in my senior year I was taking Junior Theology and Senior Theology. In between my Junior and Senior years in the summer I went and took the History/Philosophy course that Father Georges —can Joanne identify him? **(he was a Dominican and the chaplain at the**

Salve and also a professor.) taught. so that that was a little bit [tough]... My Senior year wasn't quite so bad. But it was the way it was, you didn't think about it. You just had to do it.

Allyse: I understand.

Mrs.: You do what you have to do. The one thing I didn't particularly care for was the ... the major was Foods and Nutrition, and you would have liked a minor in Education or a minor in the Sciences. You had to minor in General Home Economics, which was sewing, which I abhor. I never have cared for it. There was a lot of the ... General Home Ec classes. You did them.

Allyse: You just had to get them done.

Mrs. Philpott: You just did it. You had to do it.

Allyse: Could you tell me a bit more about the Home Ec major? We were researching the history of Salve before we started our interviews and we just had no idea about it.

Mrs. Philpott: Because they don't do it anymore. They discontinued the program.

Allyse: Right. Can you just tell me what it was like? What the students did? Did a lot of people like it? Did they go on in professions?

Mrs. Philpott: Yes, there were ... I'm trying to think how many were in our class ... maybe seven or eight. You had one major professor, Sister Joanne's was in charge of it. You took classes, like the physiology class, with everybody. It wasn't just us. But the courses that were just for the Foods and Nutrition majors would be about eight of us, ten at the most because you'd have juniors and seniors in some of these classes. Out of our class, I think four of us interned. There was a program from the American Dietetic Association where you would do an internship at a hospital ... university, either or. You would apply, you could only apply to two schools; that was it. You applied and on April 15th, tax day, is when you received your answers. If you did not get into a program, sometimes you were waitlisted. Most of them started in September and you would go for a year. You were in the program for a year. Two of us went to the University of Cincinnati Medical Center. That's because we also applied to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, but they had 200 applicants for ten positions. One girl went to New York, I don't remember where and I think one went in Connecticut. So I think there were only four of us that did an internship. When you went into the internship, the things that you did in college applied. I was also at an advantage because all during college I worked at Newport Hospital as a student dietitian.

Allyse: So was that through the school?

Mrs. **Philpott**: No. That was an extra. The lady that was in charge, the head **dietitian** hired me and that's where I worked. So the first year she put me in each different **department** ... she set it up like a mini internship. You'd go into Administration, you'd go into Clinical and so forth. So that was an advantage for me and for one other girl. But the classes ... we had a good time. Outstanding ... I don't think any classes I liked more than the other. I really enjoyed it more when I got into my internship.

Allyse: Did you have any professors that you really liked or any that you hated?

Mrs. **Philpott**: I loved Sister Constance. She was my Chemistry professor my freshman year. She was also the Dean of Students. She was a wonderful woman. Sister Philemon was good, I liked her. She taught Chemistry. One year we had this layperson come to teach us ... it wasn't Microbiology, damn I can't remember what it was. She would get up in front of the class and lecture for forty-five minutes/an hour. That was it. No questions. If somebody would raise a hand, "No questions!" She came from Boston University or something and of course in a large university, you're not going to be able to do questions, but in a class of thirty, we were all used to asking questions. She would give open book tests that we flunked. I didn't care for her.

Allyse: So was that very different from the class style that you were used to?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Yes. Most of us, we came to a small college because it was a little bit more personal and you could ask questions. Even in your classes, your general classes like History, you asked a question and Sister Martina (she was **History professor and Registrar**) would answer it. I didn't hate any of the nuns. I might not have gotten along with some; I did not get along with Sister Joanne's, who was the head of Nutrition.

Allyse: Why is that?

Mrs. **Philpott**: I do not know. She did not think I had a good work ethic. She didn't think I applied myself. Kinda told me I wouldn't get anywhere. You know, that was her opinion. I mean, I do know that my sophomore year, I did not do well academically. I worked besides going to school and I got a D in my major, in Nutrition. "How do you expect to do anything?" Well I said, "It's passing." I didn't get any points for it, but it was a passing grade. I took it again when I was a senior. I had time so I took it and got a B. But where I interned, I was top in the class. Sister Rosalia was another one. She was Dean of Students, no

Allyse: Academics?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Yes, Academics. And when you're a junior back then, you'd go in and talk about what you were majoring in. And she said to me, "You'll never get anywhere in what you want to do. You're better off majoring in one of the Sciences." Because I was good in the Sciences. I said, "I don't want to be majoring in Chemistry or Biology. I want to be a **Dietitian** ." So I graduated. Senior year, we took Physiology, which is a nice course, except it was given to you without Anatomy and they normally put them together. I was not doing well in Physiology. When we first started the course, we had a fridge and there were frogs in the vegetable bins. We were going to be pithing frogs so I went to get a couple of frogs and I looked and I said to Sister Brenda, "You have frogs with ulcerated legs." She said, "Really?" And I said yes so she said, "Would you please get them for me?" So I did. Well, towards the end of the semester, I asked, "Am I going to pass or fail? Because if I fail, I have to go to Boston for the summer to take a Physiology course." It was the only place that had one. And I said, "I've already been accepted." So she said to me, "Well, you'll pass. One of the reasons is you have a keen sense of observation. That will help you in what you're doing. All of this will click one day. I know you know it, but it just doesn't click." She was right. Once I got into the internship and doing things it made big sense. So Sister Brenda was good. She was tough but she was good. And the twins were good.

Allyse: The Tobin twins?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Yes, the Tobin twins. Eloise for Theology and Philosophy and Sister Jean for English. Actually, I think I had Sister Donald—who was that?(she was an English professor..great teacher.) for my ... maybe my Sophomore year with all the Greek mythology and so forth. It was a fun course. Most of all, they were good. I mean, Sister Martina was a hot ticket, that's an old expression. When they got out of those habits that they used to have, she thought that was the greatest thing. She said, "You would not believe how hot those were!" I said, "Yeah, I would." All in all, it was a wonderful experience. The pomp and the pageantry of what we did. It was a different time than what we're living in now. I think it was a lot easier for us growing up, but my daughter, who has teenagers, thinks it was easier when she was growing up. So each generation thinks that.

Allyse: I think you had it easier. Did you live on or off campus, since I know you lived in Newport?

Mrs. **Philpott**: I lived off campus because my parents were much more liberal than the nuns. I would have people stay at **our** home a lot. They would spend a weekend and a lot of them came home with me because we could go out and not be in at 11:30.

Allyse: When you were out around 11:30, what did you guys do?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Well, we used to go to The Mooring. When I was in the upper class, I used to go to The Tavern. Have you ever heard of The Tavern?

Allyse: Which one?

Mrs. **Philpott**: On Memorial Boulevard. It's right by Talbots. The fellow that owned it, I knew him. We grew up in the same neighborhood. He was older. We used to go there. You'd go to the Viking, the OCs (Officer Candidates) were there.

Allyse: So there were things to do in town?

Mrs. **Philpott**: There were things to do in town, very definitely. At home, I had things to do. My Mom worked, my Dad worked, I had responsibilities. I cooked, I cleaned. We all did that. That was the way we grew up. We did a lot of things just in a group of girls.

Allyse: Like what?

Mrs. **Philpott**: You'd go to the movies, you'd go out to dinner. Typical things. You went up to La Forge ... I know after my first semester of my **sophomore year**, after I got my grades, my Dad said, "You know, it costs money to send you," and I said, "Yes, I know that." He said, "Your grades get better or you can get a job." Alright. Well, one of the other reasons I went there was that Rhode Island at the time would give you a grant if you went into certain fields. In the Science fields, I think they gave us \$300 a semester, which was a lot of money back then. I think tuition might have been \$600 a semester, plus books. You'd have to research that, but it was a good thing. I don't know what they do now.

Allyse: Well I'm from Massachusetts so I don't know.

Mrs. **Philpott**: Yeah, that was just a Rhode Island grant and the person in charge happened to be a Newporter. A lot of us got them. I think probably everyone in Newport got one, which was a help.

Allyse: I had a couple questions about the social events on campus. Like I said about researching, one of the things we came across was the Sapphire Ball.

Mrs. **Philpott**: That was when you got your ring!

Allyse: Yeah, so what was it like?

Mrs. **Philpott**: You got a date and you went and danced. The ring ceremony, it was very, very important. You had gotten your ring when you were a junior and in Ochre Court we had ... not a cotillion, the Sapphire Ball.

Allyse: It was like a prom kind of thing?

Mrs. **Philpott**: That's what it was. A college prom, or a college social, or whatever you want to call it, but it was a ball. They had tuxes on and it was very, very nice.

Allyse: That was in Ochre Court, correct?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Ochre Court. Isn't that where they have the Governor's Ball still?

Allyse: Yes.

Mrs. **Philpott**: Ochre Court. Senior year we had **a graduation ball**, it was just whatever. Do they not do [the Sapphire Ball] anymore?

Allyse: No.

Mrs. **Philpott**: Do you have a ring ceremony?

Allyse: I don't think we do. I'm going into my senior year. We barely even ordered our rings.

Mrs. **Philpott**: Have they changed the rings?

Allyse: I haven't seen them. They're not really as big a thing as they used to be, so I haven't really seen any.

Mrs. **Philpott**: That's interesting. Yeah, well it was a big thing, and of course we were all girls. No men.

Allyse: So were your dates all your boyfriends or did you just have to grab someone that was in town?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Well a lot of our friends, I grew up here, so a lot of my friends, the male friends that went to the Boy's Academy in town, had gone up to Providence College or ... you met people through them so you would get a date from that or you met an OC that you would go with. I'm trying to remember who I went to the Sapphire Ball with. I don't remember.

Allyse: That's fine.

Mrs. **Philpott**: Do not remember. I remember who I went to my senior one with, but not the junior.

Allyse: So were there a lot of social events every year or was it mainly the Sapphire Ball?

Mrs. **Philpott**: They had mixers, you would go over to Mercy Hall and they would have mixers there. I'm trying to think what else they did socially ... nothing comes to mind.

Allyse: Alright, that's fine. One of the questions I had was how was the relationship of the campus, everyone at Salve, with the neighbors, particularly Wakehurst.

Mrs. **Philpott**: Mrs. Bruguière, who didn't want to see the penguins?

Allyse: Yes.

Mrs. **Philpott**: It's amazing, the Holy Ghost must've come down and enlightened her afterwards. They were alright. The O'Donnells lived right at the end here. You know, you went from Ochre Court over to Angelus. They were right there and Mrs. Bruguière, and basically that was it. The Preservation Society was fine. No, I don't remember any problems with any of the neighbors except for Mrs. Bruguière, who **said** what she said, but never anything to us. We walked around, you could walk anywhere. We walked in town. I would walk to school.

Allyse: Where did you live in town?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Do you know where St. Joseph's Church is?

Allyse: Yes.

Mrs. **Philpott**: The street that goes right by it, Mann Avenue. I lived there.

Allyse: Oh, okay. That's not too far.

Mrs. Philpott: Not it wasn't. I also used to walk to high school, which was at the top of Narragansett Avenue, the St. Catherine Academy. So it was basically just walking down the street from there. I had a car, sometimes you'd drive but we would carpool. Somebody would drive, and we'd all get up here and a lot of times I walked home because my classes went so late. And nobody ... unless they were studying, we did that sometimes to accommodate our friends. But we all got along, too. Day people that came here that were day students and full-time students, we got along well. As I said, it was fun.

Allyse: Was it mostly commuters or were most girls living on campus?

Mrs. Philpott: I don't know what the percentage was. I really don't. There were a lot ... I think our class might have had about seventy in it and I would say the bigger percentage were on campus, they lived on campus. Commuters ... there were quite a few that came from Providence for the day and a good group of us from Newport, none of us stayed here. I'd almost have to look at a yearbook and figure it out.

Allyse: Don't worry about it. Your graduating class, we were at that lunch, and you all seemed pretty close. Can you just talk about how you've all stayed in touch over the years? Whether it's the programs or reunions through the school or just getting together.

Mrs. Philpott: Well coming to the reunions, you come to the big ones and you keep in touch that way but a lot of my classmates, I've been friends with from first grade, from Newport. I've lived all over the country and I would come back to Newport and I would say, how is so-and-so? "I don't know, I don't see her." What do you mean you don't see her, you live in the same town? "We don't get together." So I would come back and this one girl says, "You can use my house." And I would just send invitations before emails and we'd have a get-together. Now, they were both high school and college friends, so we would get together when I'd organize it. So now they do four times a year; the Salve girls get together.

Allyse: When did that start?

Mrs. Philpott: I don't know. It's been a while, but we would do it just at someone's house and then, I wasn't here and they started I think saying, "Let's just get together." They didn't need me to see each other and get together four times a year. And you catch up, which is nice. It's like the high school. We didn't do anything last year because I didn't do it. So I'm coming back in September for a wedding, so I said, "I will send emails out and the 19th of September we'll all get together." I have organizing skills. Didn't know I had them when I was younger. So you keep in touch or someone keeps in touch with someone, you talk to them and it's that network of just speaking.

Allyse: I get it. So have you been involved at all with the University since graduating or has it mostly just been social stuff?

Mrs. **Philpott**: No, I haven't been here. I went away and interned. I worked in Connecticut for three years. I was back in Newport for a couple of years then I went to California and I haven't been here. So no, I haven't done anything. Helen is very involved, which is good. I think if I lived here, I would be.

Allyse: Okay. You talked a bit about how even though you were in the Sciences, you got an Arts education. Do you think that prepared you for your career or just for life in general? Do you think it gave you an advantage?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Well yes, I do. It's so narrow minded, so tunnel vision if you're doing just Sciences. You need the liberal arts. When our daughters were going to University of New Hampshire, when the first one was going and they said that they had their basic courses they had to take, regardless of what they were doing, it was basically a lot of liberal arts and the Humanities so that you would have a more well-rounded student and a more well-rounded look at the world. I think they did that here. I think it's an advantage, I really do.

Allyse: So it definitely prepared you?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Yes, it did.

Allyse: I have one question that I've been asking everyone and I do it last. Do you have a favorite Salve memory, like an anecdote or a moment that you really liked?

Mrs. **Philpott**: You know, what I really enjoyed doing was ... we had a smoker downstairs. We used to go down there and play bridge.

Allyse: In which building?

Mrs. **Philpott**: In Ochre Court. Go down the stairs and you take a left and it was over in there. I used to enjoy, and I would do this probably two or three times a week, I would go in and talk to Sister Constance. That's my good memory of Salve, along with all the others, but that's an outstanding one. She just had a good outlook on life and she was just easy to talk to. It was just, you'd go in and sit and chat.

Allyse: What did you usually chat about?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Just about life in general. A lot of that. I can remember one time when we were freshmen, one of the girls was leaving and I said, "Oh, that's really too bad," and she said, "No. Everybody doesn't need to go to college, Joanne." You know, I was what, seventeen? I had just turned seventeen before I got into college. She said, "It's not for everyone. It's important to like what you do. If you don't like the job you're in, if you hate getting up in the morning then you need to go somewhere else to find that self-satisfaction to do what you want to do and make a difference." So that stayed with me a long time. That's my fondest memory. I loved going to college. I could probably be a perpetual student. I don't know if I could get good grades but I could go and audit classes.

Allyse: Actually, I just thought of something. While we were at lunch, we were talking about the picture of girls from your class seeing the Kennedys. Can you talk about that at all?

Mrs. **Philpott**: I can remember one day, we ... always knew when he was in town, and he would go down the end of Ochre **Point Avenue** to the Robert R. Young estate. I don't know whose it is now. There was a pool there and he would swim in the pool for his exercise. So we always knew when he was down there. We bopped down there one day. We're walking, he was coming out. He was driving a car, convertible, he had a blue alligator, Lacoste shirt on, matched his blue eyes. Jackie was there and little Caroline. He stopped and he spoke with us. No problems whatsoever. You would see him there. When I was in high school, I was going to the beach one day and this little car in front of us was making a turn and they put their arm up and pointed for a right hand turn. I was going past him and I thought, "Oh, that's Bob and John Kennedy." We knew ... we were in a car, the girls and I knew where he was going. So we took a shortcut over, so we were there and they stopped and chatted. They were very, very good politicians. **laughter** Friendly politicians. When he was in town, you always knew it. She liked Newport kind of because people kind of left her alone, especially after he was ... assassinated. You'd see her, but you didn't bother her. It was nice to see them at Mass.

Allyse: So they were around a lot?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Yeah, they were. She used to go ... there was a shoe store on Bellevue Avenue and she had big feet and she would go in there to get shoes. And the reason I know is I have big feet. When I was in college, I had a size 10 shoe, but it was extremely narrow. You couldn't find nice shoes and this man that owned it was a friend of my Dad's. He would go to New York and he'd get back and say to my Dad, "Tell Joanne I have some shoes for her so come up and check them out." Back in the 50s, I was paying \$50, \$60 for a pair of shoes, but they lasted me for years. He was picking up shoes for her, but much more expensive than anything I would get. She would go to the stores on the Avenue because she grew up ... she spent summers here.

Allyse: That's really cool.

Mrs. **Philpott**: People didn't know who she was before all of the ...

Allyse: Hoopla?

Mrs. **Philpott**: Yeah. Her brother used to ... when we were in high school, we used to go to this place called McGann's over near the Point, near Connell Highway, whatever. Her brother, her step-brother would come in. He enjoyed ... he would hang out with people from Newport in the summer because they were "normal people," is how he put it. We enjoyed the simple life. I think he's dead now, which is too bad. So that's the thing with the Kennedys.

Allyse: Well that's really cool.

Mrs. **Philpott**: Yeah, it was.

Allyse: I'm out of questions, so if you have any fun anecdotes, anything you feel you should share, it doesn't have to be necessarily about Salve, now's your time to shine.

Mrs. **Philpott**: Off hand, I can't think of any. The only one I can think of is when we were interning and in Cincinnati it was very hot and humid. We were up on the third floor of a dorm and there were four of us in the room and it would get hot. Humidity and heat was awful. So we had gotten a fan, maybe from the woman who was in charge ... anyhow, it was on the windowsill plugged in and one day I was making my bed and I knocked it and out the window it went.

Allyse: Oh no!!

Mrs. **Philpott**: It was funny, when I brought the fan back and said, "We had an accident," the lady was very nice about it. I was lucky I didn't kill someone walking by. Anecdotes ... no, not really. Like I said, it was something you went to every day and you loved it. I didn't hate going to school. Some people just did it because they had to. As I said, I partied sometimes, but then I straightened up. It was a wonderful experience.

Allyse: Good. In that case, I think we can end it there.