



# TRANSCRIPTION COVER SHEET

**Date of Interview:** Month: JUNE Date: 11<sup>th</sup> Year: 2022

**Interviewee(s):** ALICIA BONNET

**Interviewer(s):** DONALD JOHNSON III

Place & Address of Interview:

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This is an oral history interview with **ALICIA BONNET**. It is being conducted on **JUNE 11<sup>th</sup> 2022** at **DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY, RIVER FOREST, IL** and concerns **Bonnet's time of being a student at Rosary College (now Dominican University) she is class of 1971**. The interviewer is **DONALD JOHNSON III**. This interview is a part of the **INSTITUTIONAL LEGACY PROJECT**. This interview has been **RELEASED**. Documentation of permissions is included in the **MCGREAL ZOTERO 'INSTITUTIONAL SAGA PROJECT' LIBRARY > ORAL HISTORIES** archival record.

# Alicia Bonnet Interview

Sat, Jun 11, 2022 4:39PM • 11:24

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

1960s, 1970s, music department, dorm life, guitar masses, student pranks, dress codes, pants, class reunions

## SPEAKERS

Alicia Bonnet, Donald Johnson III

### Donald Johnson III 00:00

I don't have to start right away. I just need a little prologue thing for documentation purposes. Can you tell the mic? Full Name, class year, the date, June 11. And just maybe a little sentence or two about what you want to talk about.

### Alicia Bonnet 00:16

Okay, that sounds great. Well, my name is Alicia Merlady Bonnet, my class year was 1971. It is June 11 2022. And how we hardly believe it. And I'm going to be talking about I was in the music department here at Rosary. And so I'll be talking about that. And I was also a freshman and sophomore here in the dormitories. So we'll talk a little bit about dorm life. And some of the crazy things we did.

### Donald Johnson III 00:51

Alright, that's perfect. So really, I'm going to give as minimal input as possible. So it's all up to you to talk however you want. We have - we are one minute in we have 10 minutes, 15 minutes, but as for the rest of the time, the floor is yours.

**Alicia Bonnet** 01:06

Excellent. Well, I'm a musician. And in those days, I played guitar. And this was just when they'd come down from Rome and said that we're going to now face the people in the mass and we're going to do everything in English. And so throughout all these centuries of Latin music, which was I think they're starting to incorporate some of that back in a little bit now, which I'm glad. But in those days, it was like, "Oh, what do we do now?" and also in trying to be in step with the times, which was 1968, we started – my friend Rita Preston and I – started doing guitar masses. So we brought our guitars and we started learning hymns and songs and writing songs to perform, well, you don't really perform – you do – you sort of, celebrate the divine at the masses. So we – Rita and I – did a lot of guitar masses and we were the first ones that started that in 1968. The other thing we did is we had a new theological teacher who came in who was a man, which was, in those days, a big deal because we were still an all girls college. So that when Father Steve would show up at the dining room, you know, all talk would cease. The poor man, I always felt so sorry for them, you know, because it was like, we were scrutinizing everyone. But he was amazing. He brought a lot of new ideas, and of course, that was the Vietnam War. So he brought a lot of new ideas of how we could think about things in our country and still be patriotic, but look at it at maybe a little bit of a different angle. And one of the things he really advocated for was for us to have a coffee house, to have a place where we could perform poetry and music. In the tunnels – we took over one of the rooms in the tunnels, and he was our mentor or sponsor, I don't know what you call it, there's a name for that person that your – you know, your faculty person that's helping you do whatever, you know-- Do you remember what the name of that is?

**Donald Johnson III** 03:27

I think – a patron, maybe?

**Alicia Bonnet** 03:28

Well, sorta, but that wasn't it either. But anyway, that was--

**Donald Johnson III** 03:31

--sponsor?

**Alicia Bonnet** 03:32

--sponsor, yeah, something like that. So he sponsored us and we started having Friday and Saturday nights down there. And we were opening it up and we would allow, you know, people would come in and a lot of it was impromptu. Sometimes there were performances. And we actually got the Chicago Tribune to come in in 1968. And they did an article on Fred, which is what we called it, and my friend Rita and I who did the guitar masses, we were the ones that

were the two main people that scheduled and made sure, you know, that it was swept and people didn't leave their glasses out, you know, all the little stuff you have to do. Also, we had some great parties at Fred and I remember a couple of times in, we were in Cough-- Coughlin Hall, which was a dorm on the first floor. We were notorious. And poor Sister Cephas who was our home - hall nun, you know, oh, poor woman. You know. We never saw her hair but I met she got a lot of gray hair from us because we did all kinds of things. And some of them were – when it was someone's birthday, we would actually go to their room after they were asleep, wake them up and grab them and all of us would be going down the hall with this person wrapped up in a sheet and of course they're yelling and, you know, wondering what's going on or laughing hysterically and Sister Cephas is running out with a towel over her head trying to figure out what's going on. And we'd go, "It's okay sister, it's okay, we're just gonna, we're just having her birthday party." And we'd bring them down to Fred and we'd then, you know, have a surprise birthday party down there. And it was definitely a wonderful place to-- people to express their creative-- creativeness. And for me, in those days, I was a vocal student here at Rosary. And so I was learning opera with Sister Gregory and I forgot the name of the other nun that was the-- also a vocalist. And in those days, I didn't know enough to be able to differentiate between styles. So in an operatic style, you have a vibrato and you always have a vibrato you do not, like, go into a straight tone, and then you do a vibrato. And that's more of a pop style of how to sing. And, of course, I was down there practicing my Judy Collins and Joan Baez and Bob Dylan songs to play at Fred. And so I was in there, practicing and of course, I was doing everything wrong, you know, I did-- I was just imitating what I was hearing. And my vocal nun heard me on the way over and she really reamed into me and the next lesson because of course, I didn't know my aria that well because I was practicing folk music down at Fred. So-- and that semester, she gave me a D for vocal music, and my mother almost hit the roof, you know, she was like, "What? This is a dean?" And since then, now, I've you know, I've done a lot of things, so I know how to differentiate styles now. One of the other kind of antic things that we used to do is, of course, those were the 1968-69 was the height of like, hippie-dom. So we all had bell bottoms and big hats. So one of the things that we used to do for fun was, we'd all get dressed up as the out-- the most outrageous hippies we could think of, and then we take the bus or the train or whatever, go to the airport, and we would just walk around in the airport, being ridiculous, you know, we would just kind of laugh, and we were trying to just-- I think our goal was just to get people to laugh, and to have a good time. And but I remember we did that a number of times, that we would just take-- that entertainment those days. That's what we did for entertainment, we took ourselves to the airport and walked around. The other thing that our class did is in those days, of course, Rosary was just an all women's college and there was kind of, an unspoken dress code. And that was everyone had to wear skirts, and you know, kind of nice kind of like, not exactly church clothes, you know, not that nice, you know, maybe a step below that. And we all got together one day, and we were checking out the, you know, the book, the code, and we noticed that it didn't say that you had to wear a skirt. It just said you had to have nice clothes or something I don't remember exactly. So we decided we were going to test that. So we all started wearing pants to class, which right now you'd think, no big deal, you know, but in those days, in 68 and 69, to wear pants to class was like this big rebellion. So our whole floor wore pants to class. And this one nun, and I can't remember her name, she taught Dante. And she was a very sweet lady, but very conservative. And she saw us coming in with

pants and she now-- then spent the whole next hour talking about how Rosary was going downhill. That, you know, we were destroying the whole, you know, ethnic thing and that you know, pants were just really going to just take the whole school down into the mud. I wonder what she'd say about now that it's, you know, men are now allowed at Rosary. We have men wearing pants now at Rosary, but-- so we all would wear pants to all our other classes, which no one seemed to really care. And we'd always have to bring a skirt to-- and we'd have to throw it on over our pants just before we went into our Dante class because she taught-- said, "If any," and I don't think this is even legal these days, but she said, you know, if she caught-- if anybody wore pants in her class, you were failing her class, which I'm sure is illegal now. So how are we doing here?

**Donald Johnson III** 09:41

So far? We're at nine minutes and 45 seconds.

**Alicia Bonnet** 09:44

Well, perfect. That's about all I have to say except Rosary was a wonderful experience. And I haven't been back here for 50 years. And I'm just really enjoying meeting the women that are left and sharing our experiences with each other.

**Donald Johnson III** 10:01

All right, perfect. Yeah, I guess you did already touch on this, but maybe for like a tying question if you just want to kind of like repeat how you feel about being back for reunion and how it feels to see everyone again?

**Alicia Bonnet** 10:12

Well, honestly, most of the people I don't recognize. And I was kind of one of those lost souls because I transferred out of here in my junior year and I went to Indiana University, and that's where I graduated from. And Vicki, actually found me on Facebook, and really encouraged me to come. And so it's been really delightful. The few women that are— were— are gathering together from that first floor on Coughlin, we are having the greatest time just remembering some of the antics that we did that I already mentioned a little bit of, and yeah, it's been a really wonderful time and it's great to see it's turned into a university now. And— and— and the school is embracing new ideas. And I love the idea that the President is gonna have a dog and bring her to campus and just, you know, be a little more-- be more personable-- be more personable that people can get to know who she is. And then that kind of thing. So--

**Donald Johnson III** 11:18

Alright, yeah, if there's nothing else that was perfect.

**Alicia Bonnet** 11:21

Thanks, I think we're done.