

Interview with Diana Regan

Interviewee: Diana Regan

Interviewer: Melissa Nichols

Dates: March 16, 2015 and March 23, 2015

Location: Olney Hall, Room 244, La Salle University

Topic: This oral history chronicles the life of Diana Regan from her birth until present-day. Regan briefly discusses her childhood and education, before delving into a more detailed story of her professional life, starting with first teaching job at George Washington High School in 1963. Regan compares and contrasts her thirty years of high school teaching experience, culminating in her position as head of the Foreign Language Department at Olney High school, with the nearly twenty years of experience she has as a college professor of French, starting at Chestnut Hill College in 1997, to her present role as an adjunct professor at La Salle University. Regan spent much time discussing her position at La Salle, including the issues which may arise as an adjunct professor, her favorite courses to teach, and the travel study program to France, a course which she constructed and now oversees. Regan spends much time speaking about these trips to France which she leads and has led since the 1960s (with high school students), including the changes which she has noticed throughout her visits to France over the last fifty years. Following discussing her role as an educator, Regan begins to speak about the various organizations which she is involved in: American Association of Teachers of French, the Alliance Francaise de Philadelphie, and the Chestnut

Hill women's committee for the Philadelphia Orchestra. She explains how and why she became involved in these organizations, as well as the purpose of each of these groups. The interview concludes with Regan reflecting on what the future has in store for her and her many professional roles.

Time Stamp	Topic
<i>(Interview Session 1)</i>	
00:00:00	Introduction of myself, Diana Regan, and the Oral History course
00:01:59	Talks about graduating from Rosemont College with a degree in French, and then entering an internship program through the University of Pennsylvania for teachers seeking certification before going to graduate school at Temple University.
00:04:41	(On extracurricular activities in high school) "I did participate in the theater, we had plays every year and I had small roles in that. Piano. I was not in the orchestra, but I did study piano. My grandfather was a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and so he played the cello."
00:06:35	When asked if there was a difference between the French language spoken in France compared to that spoken in Canada, she answers that there is an extreme difference, telling a story of her time in Quebec, and how a girl from France whom she had met there had a difficult time communicating with the French Canadians.

- 00:09:16 (Asked about differences between the schooling she received in the United States and that which she received at the Sorbonne in France) Talks about the small differences having to do mainly with getting to class on time in France and the teachers' interest in their students in the United States
- 00:13:17 She speaks about her first teaching position, while she was in the program at UPenn, as a French teacher at George Washington High School.
- 00:15:14 Talking about the end of her two years at George Washington, "Apparently the French population dropped, and you know, last person in, first one out, so I was transferred to Frankford High School."
- 00:18:28 On how and when her current position as a teacher at La Salle became available, after speaking to Dr. Blumenthal and Rita Mall, following her retirement from Olney High School in 1998.
- 00:20:17 Recounting the major differences between teaching French in a high school and teaching French at the collegiate level, "Teaching college is amazing, I love it. The kids are there because they want to be there, not because they have to be there, and there's a whole new perspective on how I teach and what I teach, and I can make my own courses, which I've done."
- 00:24:00 When asked about the drawbacks of being an adjunct professor: "Well, you know, I don't want to be politically incorrect, but yes I do. When I first came here, I don't think that I was taken, not by this department, but just generally, seriously. I know that I had a lot more experience than

some other people, just from my career, and by the awards that I had received, not that I flaunted them or anything, I did not. But sometimes I felt as though, ‘okay little girl, you just go teach your class and let the adults take care of everything else’, and again, I want to emphasize it was not within this department, because Dr. Blumenthal always treated me with respect...”

00:27:56 Discussing what those students who she has taught and have majored in French do professionally after graduation.

00:30:55 Regan begins to discuss her travel study course at La Salle by first talking about the various trips she had made to France with high school students, starting with students at George Washington High School, before becoming a college professor; has been going every year since the 1960s, except for a hiatus in the 1970s when her children were born.

00:32:44 “It wasn’t the same kind of trip as this one, this trip here was for credit, and the syllabus was there, but the ones to France, the trip was already organized, the travel agent, they just bought a trip, per say. This one, I was able to, I’m working with a travel agent, where I do the whole itinerary to match the syllabus. That’s the difference. I don’t want to say that this is a more serious trip, but it is, because they get credit and they have work to do, the ones that I took in high school was just kind of like, ‘we’re going to go to France and we’re going to look at the Eiffel Tower and we’re

going to walk on the Champs-Élysées and have croissants and that kind of thing’.”

- 00:36:56 Addressing where the program takes place: “We travel to the sites that are important for World War II; we go to Normandy, and we go to the American museum there, which is an amazing, amazing, amazing museum, every time I go there there’s something new, something different, the students love that museum because it starts with the Treaty of Versailles, the ending of World War I, and it comes all the way through...”, proceeds to talk about the various sites the course visits.
- 00:39:00 In discussing the course, talks about the large amount of pre-work which the students are required to do before the trip; several readings, including Eisenhower’s letter to the soldiers before the landing at Normandy and information about the beaches, the history of the Mont Saint-Michel, the history of the Bayeux Tapestry, etc.
- 00:42:42 Following the tour of sites related to World War, Regan and her students spend five nights in Paris, where they climb the Eiffel Tower, go on a river cruise on the Seine, visit the West Bank, as well as Montmartre, the Louvre, the Holocaust museum, the D’Orsay, and Versailles.
- 00:44:56 Explains that students must keep a journal while abroad as part of their course assignment.
- 00:47:12 Asks if its 12:00 because she has a meeting to attend.

00:47:36 End of first interview session

(Interview Session 2)

00:00:44 Explains that one of the more meaningful excursions is to the American cemetery at Omaha Beach; she is moved by the emotions the cemetery evokes from her students.

00:04:42 (Answering a question regarding the different dialects within France)
“Yes, there are different, in the Southwestern part, of course there’s a huge influence of Spanish, they roll their ‘r’ and there’s always a little bit of a Basque, not too much, but in the Southeast, of course you have the Italian influence, the words are long and the nasal sounds are they’re very nasal. It’s more sing-songy, the language. In Brittany of course they have their own Breton language, which is making a comeback, for years there it was prohibited to speak Breton”.

00:07:50 (On American stereotypes of the French) “My say that the French are cold and they hate the Americans, this is not true. This is not true at all and I always give the example that the Parisians are not necessarily the most welcoming people in the world, but then again, when was the last time you were in New York City? It’s the same idea”.

- 00:11:05 In response to a question about the climate of France following the terrorist attacks on a Parisian newspaper in January 2015, Regan explains that there was no noticeable rise in police presence or public political activity, and then proceeds to speak about changes she has witnessed in her approximately fifty years visiting France.
- 00:15:16 (On Paris as a global city) “Yeah, absolutely. It definitely is more global. As I mentioned, I see a lot more tourists from other countries other than Western Europe. So, yes, it has changed that way.
- 00:18:45 After asking about any possible expansions to the travel study program to France, Regan speaks about her desire to work with the La Salle Art Department to do a travel study course focusing on Gothic architecture in France.
- 00:21:39 (Explaining a professional organization, the American Association of Teachers of French, which she is involved in): “It’s a national organization, actually it’s international, in the year 2000 we had a huge conference in Paris, and at the time I was part of the executive board, I represented the eastern part of the United States, not the whole eastern coast, but the central: New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and part of New York. No... yeah, so I was the representative for those areas and in some cities there’s a chapter of the American Association of Teachers of French, there’s one here in Philadelphia, at one point I was president of that, and then I was elected to the board.”

- 00:24:00 Explains that the American Association of Teachers of French is a good organization to support French teachers through these conferences which includes presentations by vendors, French teachers, and consultants from various book companies; Regan has made several presentations at these conferences.
- 00:28:10 (On the influence of the American Association of Teachers of French in high school curriculum): "I was on a team that wrote benchmarks for, not only for the state of Pennsylvania, and also for the city. When I was department head (at Olney High School), I was working with a team of other language teachers, and we wrote benchmarks, in other words we took those standards and we narrowed... expanded, not narrowed them, we kind of explained them, but in detail as to how to apply these standards and we did it with benchmarks and that was for the city of Philadelphia."
- 00:30:50 (In discussing the new technology which is present in French classrooms and the best ways to become a successful foreign language teacher): "I think for a teacher to teach a language they really need to go to the country and do a course. They have to be immersed for them to really get into it..."
- 00:33:45 Regan discusses the role of the Alliance Francaise de Philadelphie, an organization which she had been president of for nine years before recently retiring, stating that the mission of the Alliance is to promote French language and culture in the city of Philadelphia, through French

classes at all levels, as well as different activities, such as wine tastings, a jazz night, and the supporting of exhibits of French artists in the city.

00:38:35 Regan discusses the Alliance Francaise's approach in teaching French for different levels and different purposes, such as French for academics, business, and travel.

00:40:53 (Answering which of her professional positions is the most rewarding):
“Oh, teaching, I love teaching. Why? It's obvious, I love teaching and, you know, encouraging the students to open their minds to learning and also by promoting what I love, you know, French and the French language...”

00:43:37 Regan begins to discuss her involvement with the Philadelphia Orchestra, and provides background information about her family and their individual roles in music, such as her grandfather, who played cello with the Philadelphia Orchestra, her great-uncle who played with the MGM Orchestra, and her uncle who played piano at the former 500 Club in Atlantic City.

00:46:56 “After that and maybe about a year later (organizing and chairing a luncheon for the Chestnut Hill Committee for the Philadelphia Orchestra), I received a phone call from the president of the volunteers and she said, “We'd like you to chair opening night, 2014,” and I said, “Woah, wow, I didn't see that coming,” and so I said, “Can I get back to you?”, and I talked to my husband, because it was a lot of work, and I talked to my

husband, and he said, “Oh, sure that would be nice,” and I talked to my son, who loves the upper echelon of everything, and I said, “What’d you think?”, and he said, “Why wouldn’t you? Of course you’re going to do it!”. So I got involved there and I did chair and the theme this past year was, 2014, was *A la Francaise*, which is right up my alley.”

00:50:57

When asked about bringing more young people into the Philadelphia Orchestra’s clientele, Regan discusses the deal which the orchestra has with college students, where, for \$25 for a pass for the entire season, students can use their pass for any performance. With the pass, they go to the performance, and, if there are seats available on that night, an usher will take the student to any open seat. Regan stresses that this is important because it reaches out to the college student, a demographic which the Philadelphia Orchestra has been struggling to reach out to in the past.

00:53:16

(On plans for her professional life in the future): “There’s a project now I just found out about, a friend of mine is trying to raise money for the Ukrainian, the people who were shot down in the airplane over the Ukraine last year, and it’s a very exciting project, she’s, I’m not even going to go into it, but, you know, I may be working with her on that. I’ll stay teaching as long as, I don’t know, every year I say, “Well maybe this is it,” and I think, “Oh gee, I’m going to miss it,” so I’m going to stay. The organizations, yes, the Orchestra, as long as, as long as I feel that I’m doing something for the Orchestra; the professional organizations are kind

of taking a back seat, it's kind of like, 'been there, done that', thing and I'm always looking for a new challenge..."

00:58:00

End of second interview session