Women, Education and Leadership at Rutgers
2015
Interviewee: Carol Sas (CS)
Interviewer: June Cross (JC)

CS: It's a non-profit organization and their mission is to do community service, education, and with libraries, and working with women to women, focusing with their ... like I said, with their communities and everything, to give scholarships, and to support whatever the Federation would like to do and everything in the way of education.

My name is Carol J. Sas.

My position with the Federation is executive director. I'm starting ... I'm there 36 years. I started as an assistant secretary. In 1999, the executive secretary had left, and I became the executive secretary, and then they wanted to change the name. So in 2000, the name was changed to executive director, and I've assumed that position to present.

NJSFWC.

New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs, and then we added the ... after of GFWC because we belong to the national organization, which is located in Washington D.C.

We're from 1894. So we've just completed our 122nd year. We had our 122nd convention in Atlantic City.

Well the Federation, when they started, it was like 21 years before they got interested in starting a college. It was always in their thoughts and everything because they've always had, like an education chairman and everything. We started a purpose of ... helping out because in the beginning, we were involved with World War 1, and we had like an ... hammer sack down at Fort Dicks, we did ... did like, the US 74, even the USA had started and everything. We made ... a place where the soldiers and things could ... just mingle and have a little bit of social life before they went overseas and everything. We did a ... we raised money for ambulances for the veterans and everything, and airplanes. There were airplanes, we had like 12 to 13 airplanes that the Federation had us raise money for, and...

...they were named for ... different, you know different ... they could name them and everything, and it ... they had a very interesting ... the one in 1911, the president ... they really started thinking, because with Rutgers, it was an all-male college, and they thought that we should have a women's college, and so they started talking about it in 1911. And it took about 2 years before they really formed it with the community and everything, and then in 1913, they really got started with the ... the state needs a women's college and everything. Then in 1918 that when...became really a reality, and it was New Jersey College for Women. Then it was later called, I believe in 1956, then it got changed to Douglass college, because the President was Mable Douglass.

I know ... I had met Mrs. Alton. She was one of our presidents, and a lot of that was there before ... was there before I even started to work with the Federation and everything, but they were always interested in education and colleges and everything, and it was just interesting to see what they have accomplished over the years with the college, because most of the things that we do, are for the
college. We do scholarships, and a lot of them ... the first one really was the music scholarship, because we did the building, the music building, and that was the metathorn scholarship for music, and instruments and everything, and then in 1940 that was with the Federation hall and everything, and... trying to think...

...and they were involved with the library studies center, and later on then they did the Douglass Developmental Center, for children with Autism, and ... always donated. They ... towards the college and they worked with the college, on many factors of what we do with our projects, and the club women throughout the whole state have always been involved with the ... with the projects for the Federation, and the college.

Well they were thrilled to have something that was their own. That they were proud to be the only one in the nation to have formed ... an educational purpose for what they always wanted to do with education and everything, and so that brought the ties together with the Federation and the college, and then our building is on the outskirts of the college. We are on the campus of the college and everything. We run a program for girls, career institute. We just finished our 70th year this year when we started out, we used to have 400 girls that attended. It was for junior girls that attended it so that they would have some idea of what they would want ... they would like to do with their life, and education and everything. We have about 200 girls now that come every June for a week and spend time at the college. It first started as girls' career institute ... girls' citizenship institute. It's now Girls' Career Institute because that changed the focus, because the girls were interested in their studies as to what career they would like to go into.

The clubs within the state pay for the girls to go, and they pay $225 for the 4-day session, that they go, and the girls are very satisfied. It's very rewarding. They're a little scared when they start around that Monday because they haven't really been away from home, but it does give them the opportunity to find out what college life is all about, and that. Because they're young and they're only 17 and 18 trying to decide what kind of college you would like to attend, and then we do offer those who have Attended Girls' Career Institute, we do offer a scholarship in their freshman year, providing that Douglass is a college that have a pick they can apply for that scholarship.

The clubs have like, continuing funds, and then these sheets go out to each of the clubs, and they support the different projects, the different scholarships. Like I said we give 11 scholarships to the college. They administer ... we give them the money, and they administer the scholarship, but we name all of the different scholarships. So it's the choice of the clubs, to donate or contribute to those scholarships, which they feel necessary for the girls and everything. And my first scholarship was awarded in like 1940. We started the Pan-American international scholarship for a ... they could bring, somebody from another country, to the United States. So it was Maria Orello that was the first international.

She was from Chile, and so then ... she was very successful and everything. So I was sitting in the office one day, and we open up the mail and everything, and we received a check from her to the head ... headquarters for $50,000, so that we could write our booklet on a century of challenge for the Federation, and it was due to her contribution, and then we started ... it also started our library and headquarters. So it was to her, coming here, and she was rewarding us for ... we gave her the chance to come to America, and study, and that. And we still give the international scholarships to this day. They were always lobbying for the education, when something ... when Rutgers would kind
of ... not lean to make it the ... out of all women's college, then a ... they would go down with the dean and fight, fight for it to stay, a women's college.

Going to conventions, I remember we had ... used to have the Metathorn scholars come and perform for us exquisite education and music, when the girls would either sing or play instruments and everything. It was wonderful to watch young women ... pursuing their professions as a ... as educators, that they would move forward and go on. Just, we used to do college day, with Douglass, and it went on for ... 70 years or so, 80 years, and that was a day that the college and the Federation would do together ... inviting the schools within New Jersey to come a day, and spend their time on the college campus, hoping that it was kind of like a recruitment. So that they ... we wanted everybody to try to go ... to Douglass our college [laughter].

CS:  No, I didn't go to college. I would have loved to have, but a ... I was a caregiver for my family and everything with my mother and father, and my brother and everything so it was kind of ... I wanted to make sure my children went to school, so they ... went to college and community college, and I still say some day, I still might ... I might get in there and still go to college because I really feel it's ... it's so important for education.

Even though I have done very well myself, not doing ... I always ... I feel like ... something's missing out of life, and ... it's like I do envy everybody that had gone to college. I didn't have the opportunities when I was younger because I was always like, taking care of the family, and family to me always came first, and yeah.

It is. Myself, my daughter, and my granddaughter, and I have another granddaughter. When she needs community service for school, she comes over to headquarters, and says "Gram what can I do over here to volunteer to help you out?" So she comes in so ... but so ... it's really nice to work with the family. We're like the 3 musketeers over there at headquarters.

[laughter] I don't know. You just ... it's just something that happens. That is ... but they all, they both enjoy being at the Federation and everything. It's subjugated them too because of all the various women that come into the building, and the programs, and different things that we do offer our club women throughout the state, because we do have our department ... we have an Arts Creative Department, an Arts Performing, and Education, a Conservation, a Home Life, a Public Issues, and International Outreach programs. We give all of these programs to our clubs. These are suggestions that they can work on.

This is ... it's not something that they have to do. They may have their own programs that they like to work on, and we do a ... hope a lot of the clubs to get lots of money for scholarships for their high school seniors to continue on with their educations.

How important the Federation is to Douglass? I think that it's very important to the Federation at Douglass college. They're very proud of the college, and I believe that the college is proud ... that we were one of the founders of the ... one of the founders. We are the founder of the college, and we've worked very well together all of these years that that's been in existence. And we hope that the closeness always is there for us and the college.

We always wanted it to stand on its own entity, just be Douglass College, not the ... they were against Rutgers University, but they just felt like ... we wanted to know where our funds would be going. We
would like it to go to the colleges where the founders of the college. So, we're still working together with the university and everything, and hope we ... we had hope that that residential part wouldn't have had to be in there, and we would have still been Douglass College.

CS: Mabel Smith Douglass, she was the first president of a ... the Federation, and her thoughts were also with education and everything, and she ... she did a lot with the education. She then left a ... to become dean of ... you know there's Dean of the College.

And that each one brings something different to the Federation, which makes it challenging for the clubs and everything, and there's always something new that comes forward.

From headquarters when I started in '80, there's been a lot of changes. It really has expanded because now I do know that the college is open for ... their studies like ... the college itself is still women, but their classes are for co-ed, and that was changed since I've been here. And a ... it seems like they're a lot more students at Douglass that have come up through the years, and everything. I know the traffic has increased tremendously [laughter], and I've seen, you know, with the different buildings, and what's going on now with the new building over here, by the Drama, on College Avenue.

Right now they're working with raising the money for the 100th anniversary, because they want to give each of the outgoing seniors who graduate in 2018, they're going to give them a book on the history of Douglass. So, they're raising funds for that at this particular time.

Each graduating senior will receive a copy of that book. That's what they had asked us to ... if we would be interesting in doing something like that- It's like about $7,000 to uh ... print enough copies for the grad ... for the graduating seniors. I would say approximately further scholarships. It's somewhere in between ... fairly close to, anywhere close to $15,000 to $20,000 each year that they give for their scholarships.

Right. Because a lot of the scholarships well the ... earliest one was the music scholarship in the '30s, and then the Pan-American one was in the '40s, and then the other ones seemed to come in the late '40s and the '50s and everything. So then our membership was a lot higher and everything, than it is now because ... so many women going back to work and everything, that have had to drop out, but then they ... eventually after they retire or so, they do come back with the Federation, which we're very happy that they do.

I think women's clubs are very, very important, because they service their communities. They educate their communities on so many different things that are helpful with their communities. A lot of them have started with their libraries, their food banks, their fire squads, their police ... for the safety of the police, you know. They have given them the vest, and everything to them. The libraries are very important to the Federation because, we were named from Trenton, the national Federation, and the state library as contributing so many books. When they ask for books, when you ask a Federation club for books, you better have your trucks ready to haul them away [laughter], because you will get inundated by the outpouring that the club women will do. If you ask them to do a project, you know that project will be done. They take it wholeheartedly.

There was always somebody, that was there to keep an ... to ... I say ... to keep a watchful eye so that everything was going right with the college and everything. We always conversed with all of the deans
and everything. I've been involved with like, Dean Mary Hartman, and Dean Shaler, and Dean Ambar, and now Dean Lit, and that. We've always had a very nice rapport with the deans.

CS: My favorite? I would have to say was Mary Hartman, Dean Mary Hartman. She ... not that the other ones weren't ... but she always had that ... that love for the Federation, and she would always ... seem pleased for what we always did for the college and everything, and ... whenever you spoke with her, she was right there with her energy, her time, and her talents to always guide us in the right direction and everything.

It's not that the Federation like I said, we ... the Rutgers University is, but we feel that the money that we've raised for scholarships, we still want to make sure that they do go to Douglass College students, and that's so ... if and when whatever happened that, they would open it up, I don't know what the Federation would do because they really want it to go ... since we're the founders of the college, they do want it to go to the girls, to further their education, in leadership or whatever they pursue.

We would probably have quite a bit because our ladies would come out in full force [laughter] to go to Trenton and ... put a bill through or to veto a bill. They would be in full support, the Federation, and if Douglass needed our help, we would be ... we would be right behind them.