

Roslyn Stutz Interview

A: Can you tell me your hometown, your major, minors, and what year you were crowned?

R: My hometown was New Castle. I was a junior and it was 1969. My major was history and comprehensive social studies. I had a psych minor. Was there always concern for me about people and others? Sure. I think that makes a difference because it's a part of the communication that you develop with other people that helps you get there.

A: What activities were you involved in?

R: I was a part of the radio station WNFT, I was Sigma Pi Sweetheart, member of the order of the emerald. I was independent. However, I did bow to pressures and pledged that year which was probably not the wisest thing for me to do because I was a lot more independent than that. As a matter of fact they year after me the very independent homecoming queen was chosen. I was in Zeta Tau Alpha, I worked in old main, I worked in the library. I was pretty active.

A: What did being homecoming queen mean to you then?

R: It was novel, it was something you never really expected. It was wonderful. What it meant to me more than anything else was people connected with me and that was important to me. I was the kind of person that if you went to lunch or dinner with me I was going to hang out and talk for a while. I think it meant that people cared about and were receptive to who I was.

A: What does being homecoming queen mean to you now?

R: It's a wonderful memory. It has spoken to my journey. Independence has been a constant part of my life. I was married for 17 years but I've been single since 1993. I'm a traveler, I'm a world affairs person. I'm a very strong woman. When I look back at it it was a part of that independence journey. I have to tell you my sorority wasn't too happy with me because they knew I wasn't going to be a normal pledge. It wasn't me. I couldn't do that. I started dating a fraternity guy who was then drafted and then suddenly I had 60 older brothers. I didn't date after that but I had all of them around me. With drugs being everywhere I was able to be in a safe place with a lot of people who cared about me. I think I was on the way to becoming a strong person.

A: How did you end up running?

R: I was a pledge for Zeta Tau Alpha but I was nominated by Sigma Pi. I was their representative.

A: How did that make you feel? That they wanted to nominate you?

R: It was great. I loved these guys. They were my brothers. Like I said after my boyfriend was drafted I was close to them. It was a bond and it never went away. There are still some that I keep in touch with. So it meant a lot to me. It was more than being popular. I didn't think of myself as pretty until my freshmen year in college when all of a sudden here they were. It was a new definition of who you were away from high school. I had gained a family.

A: Did you campaign at all?

R: Homecoming happened during rush season and so there were lots of events that Sigma Pi had. Any one of those women could have been homecoming queen but I was present for a lot of Sigma Pi events. I knew a lot of people from the radio station. I knew a lot of people from pledging. All the freshmen walking through seeing where they're going to pledge I met all of them. They knew me. So it was kind of right timing.

A: What did you think your chances were?

R: I don't know. I'm relatively okay in my skin but it was still something you think is beyond you. When I was chosen as a finalist I don't know if that surprised me as much. I looked at the other women who were candidates and thought wow. This is great company that I'm with so being a finalist didn't surprise me as much. Winning I think always surprises you.

A: Did you experience any stigma around the experience?

R: Was when women's role was still so interesting. We didn't have a homecoming king yet. It was not completely thought of a sexist event. There was some jealousy from girls who couldn't be happy for you. If you ask me if I have memories of that? I don't. Homecoming was more of a

personality competition than it was that you had to be beautiful. We had some tough interviews. We had two rounds of interviews to narrow us down. Those two rounds of interviews were staff and some others. They were in-depth interviews. The questions were not easy questions but thoughtful. I remember being happy with that. It wasn't all about whether we could make world peace. The candidates that came out of this were intellectually and in terms of communication made an impression.

A: Why do you think you won?

R: I think it was the right mix and the right time. I knew and met a lot of people. 1968 was a horrible year in the United States. People still look for things to be happy about, for things to gather around. It's a community. We were a community but it was a scary time to be a community. Whatever I represented it was because of my exposure with fraternities and sororities along with my ability to connect with people. My person over the years hasn't changed but was strengthened by this. And made me become more confidence and desirous of paying it forward, helping others. Recently I was traveling independently and I met a group of women who were also traveling independently. We ended up on part of this cruise together and they said to me how do I get to be like you. And you know I'm 67 and I feel like homecoming was a part of that. I was picked because I was me but I was the me that was going to develop into this person who would have connections. So I have connections to these women who are trying to work their way through this single journey into confident, successful women. So I don't know if I was different. I think that strain of who I was was always there but I think we all go through those pit falls of trying to fit in and I believe that's why I pledged. Cause I wanted to fit in and do some of the things that other people do. I did some but then I didn't do others. People who got really caught up in drug culture there, I didn't. I had a very strong sense of keeping myself safe, protecting myself.

A: What did your family think of your victory?

R: Very proud, very excited. I remember them coming out for the crowning and the next day for the game. My parents weren't interested that I was a cheerleader in high school they were interested in the fact that I had a brain and could use it. But homecoming, this was their daughter. Their daughter who achieved this.

A: Did your experience have a positive or negative effect on you during college?

R: Positive absolutely positive. I would have to think really hard to think of something negative around it. I think we were the first court to have an African American woman on court. There was an ethnic awareness class that I was a part of where they loaded a class with African Americans and only put two white students in it so you could learn from other experiences and this was back in 1960 whatever. And I was a joiner. I wanted to reach out to everyone and anyone. I wanted to branch out and homecoming really helped with that.

A: How did your college experience change from before you were elected to after you were?

R: During that time, as you got into the finals there was some pressure and stress. You start thinking wow I'd like this. I think in mostly positive ways because people knew you. People knew who you were. I thought that was a bonus. I lived on a floor of physical education majors, I forgot this! I was the girly girl in the hall and we became buds. That was another group who supported me. There wasn't much of a coming out or gay community but there was a beginning. I felt that closeness, that bond was important. I wasn't just a sorority chick. Being in a sorority didn't define me. I was more than that.

A: Has your life changed in any small or large way?

R: You know I think we always look backwards to see where we are now. I think it helped with a sense of confidence and knowledge that who I was as a person and I think it also helped to foster my independence. If there's one thing that I would have done differently is I would have run as an independent. I don't have ties to my sorority sisters or anything, I left all of that. I never want to make them feel bad but if I had been true to myself and not bent to pressure I would not have joined. I think that sense of independence that I - independence is a very strong thread for me and has been through my life and that doesn't mean I don't love or want to be loved it means that I have great knowledge of who I am and what I'm capable of doing. If you love somebody in addition to that it's a bonus but if you don't your life is still rich and meaningful. Homecoming was a piece of that. Although I don't think I realized it then.

A: Did you come back to crown the queen after you? What was that like?

R: I did! I was still there because I won my junior year so it was my senior. She was an independent which stands out to me. She was the first independent and I probably thought that should have been me. She was a sweetheart. There's few things that you own. What you own is what you have inside and homecoming was an incredible experience and coming back and

turning that over to somebody else to have their own experience and their own journey was very special.

A: Have you come back for any other homecomings?

R: Early on they did things where old queens would come back. This year I almost came back. Something came up in my life and I didn't. I should come back. Slippery Rock was very important to me and a very positive experience.

A: Are there any other either thoughts or comments that you can tell us about your journey through homecoming?

R: "The Who" was there for our concert and we got front row seats and got to meet them. It was a spectacular time. It was a phenomenal experience. The big thing for me I think were the connections and the community and the communications. The warm and fuzzies. You put it away in a very nice place. I still have my scrap book and my banner. I have my trophy. It's a wonderful piece of history. I do think it speaks to you as a person. I wouldn't doubt that most homecoming queens have that same persona. You know that same, they're communicators.

A: Confidence is another thing that comes up a lot which I'm very happy about.

R: I don't see it as a sexist thing. I was glad when they opened it up to kings too. That was fair. I didn't see it as a beauty contest. I saw it as the beauty comes from within. With the way it was run with the interviews and the popular vote people really spoke to who you were. That's a thrill. It's a bonus to your life to say, 'People picked me.'

A: Thank you for agreeing to do this interview.

R: You're very welcome. I have to ask you one question, are you finding like as I watch this whole women's movement today and I look at women starting to really speak out. You know the #MeToo the whole thing. In terms of men, especially old white men needing to control women and use and abuse them in order to keep them in their place. Well all of a sudden, I believe because of President Trump, a number of issues and cause of Hillary's loss that you know women are now pushing those boundaries and saying, "Hey, you can't do this to us. You can't

control us.” And you know certainly if women had come together we would have elected the first female president and we didn’t. Women are growing. Women are growing greatly. What we saw in the 1960s for the feminist movement that was so important the beginnings of our independence, birth control and all that. I see as a second growth now. You know so that women are trying. Isn’t it wonderful? I think that, you know those things that provide you opportunities to be a voice and to help and put yourself out there those things are important. When I looked at it, at your project I googled it and then it made sense to me especially in the frame work of today’s world, where growth for women is so important and it was growth for us. I never saw myself as just a pretty face sitting on a pillow who was going to be cherished by men. That is never what it was about.