

Monmouth Memories

Monmouth Memories Oral History Interview

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Interviewee: Chrissie Reilly

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Chrissie Reilly was born in 1981 at Jersey Shore University Medical Center in Neptune, New Jersey. She grew up in Ocean County and attended St. Peter's Grammar School in Point Pleasant Beach and Point Pleasant Borough High School during her childhood. For her undergraduate degree, she attended Rowan University and received her bachelor's in history, secondary education and international studies concentrations, and a minor in French. After graduating from Rowan, she thought she would become a high school history teacher; however, she realized this was not her passion. Following her education at Rowan University, she chose to attend Monmouth University and began her graduate degree program in January of 2005.

Chrissie Reilly chose Monmouth University for a matter of practicality. Monmouth University's graduate history program gave her enough flexibility to work full time in addition to being a student. She worked at Joe Leone's Italian Specialties, Princeton University, and the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM) at Fort Monmouth during the time she studied at Monmouth. Her job as a federal historian at Fort Monmouth was part of an Army-wide experiential learning program where student could work targeted jobs in their college major. This would help her to land her future career working in the federal sector. In addition to this, Monmouth University was in commuting distance to where she lived at the time and she could start the graduate program as soon as possible. Chrissie Reilly graduated from the history graduate program in May of 2009.

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Reilly's passion in history is centered on the culture and history of culinary food and Japan. What she finds interesting about Japan is that it was never imperialized by another country and has a very unique worldview. One of the strengths of Monmouth University was that she could tailor her learning experience to the historical topics she enjoyed learning about. Her master's thesis was on "Food Fight: Eating and Identity in Japan during WWII and Post-Occupation War Period." She also enjoys studying the history of black markets and how this relates to food and Japan. In addition to studying Japan, she has taken many trips to Japan over the past dozen years.

Her favorite professors at Monmouth University were Dr. Campbell, Dr. Parkin, and Dr. DeRosa. She prioritized these professors when selecting classes because of how much she enjoyed their classes. She believed that they truly taught her how to read and write book reviews correctly. Although the classes were a bit of a challenge, Reilly's professors provided her with the help she needed. In addition to helpful professors, the multitude of databases and journals that Monmouth University's library enriched her learning.

At Monmouth, Chrissie Reilly was a part of the Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society. She also attended meetings of the unofficial "History Grad Students Club," which met every Tuesday where students were able to socialize and read each other's papers and projects. Reilly also enjoyed being in a classroom with students that were just as passionate about history and earning a master's degree as she was. She spent time off campus socializing with her classmates and also worked with many of them at Fort Monmouth. Once Fort Monmouth closed, Chrissie Reilly was moved to another army base in Maryland, which led her to choose the University of Maryland at Baltimore County for her doctorate program.

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Chrissie Reilly takes into account the beauty of Monmouth University's campus. She talks about how much she enjoyed having class in Wilson and Howard Hall. She would spend time in the Rebecca Stafford Student Center computer labs studying. Unfortunately, she was only on campus during the evening after work, which did not allow her to spend much time on campus. However, she believes she made the most of her time she had on campus.

Chrissie Reilly enjoyed the classes that she took at Monmouth and believes the school prepared her for her doctorate program. Monmouth taught her how to write informative historical pieces, evaluate history critically, and weigh the importance of historical sources. She believes that Monmouth is one of the best places to earn a graduate degree in history because the school gives an individual the ability to learn about numerous topics and helps an individual decide whether he or she wants to continue their schooling. In Reilly's opinion, she believes Monmouth does a great job in preparing a student for further schooling and the workforce. Receiving the credentials from Monmouth has given Reilly the ability to receive better job opportunities.

The only critiques that Reilly has about Monmouth is that it is very expensive and there was a great deal of work she had to complete while being a student here. However, the work she had to complete turned out to be rewarding in the end. She also wishes that Monmouth had offered oral history classes or classes that would contribute to her public history knowledge, especially since her jobs require to do many oral history projects. However, Chrissie Reilly looks back on her Monmouth University experiences fondly and continues to be an advocate for the school.