

Oral history of John March, transcript

Interviewee: John March hereafter referred to as J.

Interviewer: Annette Dreier hereafter referred to as A.

A: The following is an interview with John March. John is a College of the Atlantic alumnus and was a student during the first years of its operation. He is presently a writer and editor of the Harvard Business School Bulletin. The interview took place in Sam Eliot's office on the first floor of Kaibler Hall on the morning of October 11, 1982. My name is Annette Dreier and I conducted the interview.

J: I guess I'm not sure how far back you're reaching -- whether you're just interested in 1972 or...

A: Mostly the beginning years, say the first five years or so, but we're also interested in comparing then and now. But at this point we're just trying to get the early years down.

J: Well, you know I think if you're looking for sort of an intellectual history of the college, maybe that's more what Sam is doing, but frankly a lot of my memories of the early days of the college are emotional ones and have to do with the things that I was going through and the friendships that I still count as one of the most lasting gifts that I received from the college and which I feel maybe doesn't bear especially on what the history of the college should be about, you know, as an intellectual endeavor because while I had a number of good teachers here, the thing I retain most strongly from those early days is just a feeling of warmth and good-fellowship and all those vague, nice sounding things that it's hard to poke and prod at them too much. They begin to sound all the same. So, I mean do you want to ask questions?

A: Whatever's most comfortable to you. What you were just talking seems to fit in with the idea of community and, you know, maybe you could talk about that a bit. Did that hit you instantly when you got here? Did you have to work on it?

J: I'm just concerned that in any history of the college that that would be overstated. I mean I feel that the college is that but it's also a lot more than that. But I just don't want to be the utopian voice saying, "Yes, it was a wonderful, small, warm community." I don't feel that that adds much to my history of the college.

A: Maybe we could just start with some background, then.

J: Sure.

A: When were you at COA?

J: I was in the charter class. I came in 1972, in that fall. And I had come after having gone to Reed College in Portland, Oregon for a year and then having left Reed and spent a year working and traveling. And when I learned that the college, as maybe still very people up -- not through a publication but indirectly by word of mouth, someone who had learned of it mentioned it to me as a place I might be interested in, and I looked into it. I guess it was winter of, what would that have been, '70-'72 around January or February, something like that, about '72 -- I was in Vermont working with some friends and I decided over here for my interview. And at that time there was very little going on in this building. I guess, I'm not sure whether Sam was even here although he must have been because I think I remember seeing Mary Kay. And my interview with Mel Cobb. And there was a billiard, I remember that, there was a billiard and I was supposed to take a bus out and the snow fall was so heavy that the buses weren't leaving the island so I ended up, I was marooned here for about three days. And of course everyone who worked here went home in the evenings and that just left me and two women, Jill Talbot and Dicky Coleman, I'm not sure whether you're aware of them yet, but they were working here, I guess they had both come

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