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Joy Elaine Daley Interview Transcription

Interviewers: Mark Naison, Donna Joseph

Interviewee: Joy Elaine Daley

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Dr. Mark Naison (NS): Welcome to the latest of our interviews with leaders of the Eta Omega Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Today we have with us Joy Elaine Daley, who has been a leader of Alpha Kappa Alpha, locally, nationally, and internationally and has also had a distinguished career as an educator in the New York City public school system. So we always start off our interviews by asking people to tell us a little bit about their families and, you know, their growing up years.

Joy Elaine Daley (JED): Okay. Before I say anything, let me thank the president of Eta Omega Omega chapter Donna Joseph for affording me this opportunity. And for the chair and the co-chair of the archives committee, April Fowler and Saudahd Mohamed, and of course, Dr. Naison. Thank you ever so much for making this a reality. It's always good to document the present so that folks coming behind can have a sense of what has happened before they were here.

MN: Yes. By the way, let me say one thing. My students who have been transcribing the interviews have learned so much. You know, who started off with people like Irma Clement, whose lives go back to HBCUs in the Jim Crow years. So my students are learning about so much history of the country as well as, you know, New York, the Bronx, and of course this wonderful sorority. So, feel free to expound at length about your family, your childhood, and all the things that made you the person you are today.

JED: Okay, well, let me say I am one of six, three girls, three boys. And if you – if six was to have a middle, I would probably be the middle child being number four. I went to elementary and high school in Jamaica, a teacher's college in that country, Shortwood Teachers' College. So I am a trained educator. Then I came to the United States of America on a scholarship to Lehman College, where I pursued a degree in urban studies. What shall I say, growing up in Jamaica was

quite a fun experience because you had the run of the mill. We were the only grandkids because my mother is an only child. My father is one of two. And when we got into trouble, we'd run away from our parents' home to our grandparents. I can remember on one occasion when I ran away to my grandparents and I would pass my parents' house – like I didn't know anyone there, like they were strangers. And stayed with my grandparents for about two weeks.

MN: Wow.

JED: Then my mom came for me. And of course my grandfather warned that she should not punish me. And I got off the hook with whatever it was back then. But I had a great childhood, with lots of attention, love, and care, because again, we were the only grandkids. So we were the only ones to dote upon. Coming here to the United States of America, to Lehman College, I was fortunate enough to meet Dr. Charlotte Morgan, who was a black studies professor at Lehman College, who asked me to be her administrative assistant. And in doing so – she at the time was grad advisor to an AKA chapter. And so she started to tell me about this sorority and the work that the sorority did, and encouraged me to join. At the time when she was telling me about the sorority, I just equated it to a cult. And so I said, I'm not getting involved in any cult. I didn't come here for that, so I did not answer her one way or the other. But I started to do my own research on Alpha Kappa Alpha, and what I discovered was so impressive that in the fall of 1985 – I decided to pledge. So my membership in Alpha Kappa was a Christmas gift. Because I crossed in those days – those were the terminologies we used. I crossed the 23rd of December, 1985, 2 days before Christmas, and I've been active ever since that day. Eta Omega is the sponsoring chapter for Xi Xi- which was the Lehman chapter- so I must give credit to the leadership then for the support that was given to Xi Xi, and so when I graduated from Lehman College in 1986 I transferred into Eta Omega Omega chapter and have been there ever since, because I do believe in loyalty and I see Eta Omega Omega as the parent. I see Eta Omega Omega as a parent. So no matter what, you have to honor your mother and your father, that your days will be long. So as long as I'm in New York, I will always be a member of Eta Omega Omega chapter, because that's the place that gave me birth in the sorority through Lehman College.

MN: Now did you settle in the Bronx when you moved to New York City?

JED: Yes, yes. I lived on 18 West 192nd Street, and every time I got to the city I said I must pass there and see if that house is still there. 18 West 192nd Street. And that's where I lived. And then I moved from there to Pitman Avenue. I kinda, Dr. Naison, I kind of do the – what the show said – moving on up on the east side or whatever side. I kept moving out because I went to Pitman Avenue to live. Then I moved from there to Pearsall Drive in Mount Vernon. And then here, here I am in the town of Newburgh, and I think –

MN: Newburgh. Wow.

JED: Yes, yes. And the reason I'm in Newburgh, so you should know, whereas folks love water and rivers and ocean, I absolutely positively hate the water, but I love hills and mountains more. I love hills, adore hills. And so I wanted to live on a hill. And of course if you want to live on a hill, you have to go where the hill is. So it was about seven, eight years. I kept searching and searching and searching for a home. A house, I should say. And I finally – I remember that Sunday afternoon and I drove up the hill –and I must give Yvonne Watts credit for that, a member of Eta Omega Omega chapter who lived up here in Newburgh – and I told her I was looking for a house, but I wanted to live on a hill. And so I would come to visit her from time to time and she would take me around to see different places. And I would tell her the price range I'm looking for. And so one day she said, I know a development that's going up, but it's outside of your price range. I said, take me there anyhow, let me see it. And you know, you just know when something is right. Because the minute I drove through the gate of the complex, I said, “Oh my God, this is it. This is it.” And so of course they were building the homes. You had to purchase it from a floor plan. I went to the sales office. We did the tour of the model house, fell in love with the place. So I'm on a little hill here overlooking the Hudson Valley and it's very nice. So I saw that you can appreciate this cause I know you drive up here sometimes. And you see the fall foliage and the hills and mountains and it's just wonderful. But this is as far north as I'm gonna go. No further north.

MN: Right. Now, when you moved to New York City, did you have family here?

JED: No, I have no family here.

MN: You did it without family?

JED: I have no family here. But this is the thing, Sir Naison: I am not faint at heart. I like challenges and I like adventure. And so I'll be the first to say, let's try it. So when the day came that I had the opportunity to come to New York, it did not, uh, faze me. Cause I'd lived in Kingston. I went to school in Kingston.

MN: Mm-hmm.

JED: And so I was used to city living. You know, even though I grew up in Manchester in a little country town called Porus, P-O-R-U-S. And the legend with that – you know – Jamaicans have a lot of stories. Everything is a story. The story behind that is they were travelers on foot back in the day, and as they were traveling, they stopped on the mango tree to have some mangoes and they were tired. And one said, “pour us.” And someone was nearby and heard and gave the place name “Porus.”

MN: Right. Wow. Yeah. Now when did you start working in public education? Was this shortly after you graduated from Lehman?

JED: Yes. I came here as a trained teacher, so I have a teaching degree from Shortwood College in Jamaica. And when I came here and I went to Lehman, I continued in education. So my first teaching job in New York City public school system was at PS 198 on 1180 Tinton Avenue in South Bronx.

MN: Yes.

JED: Yes. Jamie Ortiz. I'll never forget that date. And the way I got into that, of course, after finishing my degree in Urban Studies, my intention was to go back to Jamaica and be in politics.

To be the Minister of Youth and Community Development. That was my plan. And then I entered City College in the school administration and supervision program because I figured, you know, going back with just a bachelor's degree is not gonna cut it. That comes dime a dozen. You need to have a little edge. So I decided to do the school administration and supervision, again positioning myself to go back home to be in politics. I figured if I didn't do the Ministry of Youth and Community Development then I could get a stop at the Ministry of Education. And while I was at City College, as some of the terminologies, having not gone to school here in the United States of America, was a little challenging for me. So a friend of mine said to me, "Why don't you apply for a substitute license and do some substitute teaching so you can have an idea of what school is like in the United States?" So I said, you know, that's a good idea. That's a good idea. So I did apply for my substitute license, and the first – you know – back in the day, they would give you the number at the DOE – well then it was the Board of Education – to call to see if any school needs substitute teacher. And the first call I made was 198 that asked me to come in and I went there. Needless to say, I went there as a substitute teacher and ended up getting a full-time job there. 'Cause folks are always absent. So – and I guess they thought that the kids were gonna fry me. So after the first day when I was still alive and breathing - I didn't know that they were watching me - the principal asked me if I could come back the next day. And so it was a day to day achievement. They asked me, can you come back? Can you come back? And then a teacher was going on maternity leave in fifth grade, and they asked me if I would take the class, and I did. And the rest is history.

MN: Right. Did you enjoy the work?

JED: I thoroughly enjoyed teaching. I thoroughly enjoyed my work. Dr. Naison, let me say this. Every young person that I come across, just about everyone who is, um, seeking to start a career, I encourage them to go into teaching. I-

MN: Yes!

JED: Huh?

MN: My parents were teachers. My wife is an elementary school principal, so I am so excited to hear you say this.

JED: Yes, I love teaching. I would not trade it for anything in the world. Because this is the thing. We know that we have students who are what I call hot potatoes. I never call a kid bad. I call them hot potatoes. And then there are kids who are very sweet and conforming. And we tend to focus on the ones that are hot potatoes. We never tell of the good ones. And I always say to folks, you know, there are certain denominations that don't go near the hell brimstone and fire denomination. I have no place for them because they never tell you of God's redeeming grace, and we have to uplift and highlight the good things that happen in education. Cause there are lots of good things. Lots of good teachers, lots of good administrators, lots of good students. And on the flip side, we have some hot potatoes, like in any other profession, that gives it a bad name from time to time. But I enjoy teaching. I am a disciplinarian, if I can say that. I believe in order, structure, and decency, and that is how I've lived my life. You prepare, you plan, you prepare and you execute. And a lot of times teachers fail because they fail to plan. They walk into a classroom, they have no plan, and you try to wing things. And let me say this, 8 to 3 is a very, very, very long time to try to wing anything. So you better plan and you better be prepared. And I find folks who plan, prepare, and execute have an easier time. And even then sometimes they find it very challenging. So teaching is alright. Teaching is a wonderful career. It's a wonderful career. And so I went from teacher to staff developer at 198. And then I was – I never told anyone that I had my school administration and supervision license at 198. And so when I was staff developer, I decided then to go back to college and complete a degree in developmental reading cause many of the students were such low readers, such low readers, and the principal had asked me now to take over the chapter one reading program, if you remember those chapter one reading programs. And so I went back to school and completed a degree in developmental reading. And while I was doing that, the current staff development – the staff developer at 198 was doing her administration and supervision degree. And so we became friends and I would help her with some of the work she was doing. And one day she asked me, “How do you know these things?” I said, “Because I did it.” She said, “How could you have done this? You have to have -you have a master's degree?” I said, “No, this is my first.” And she said, “But you have to have a master's degree before you are accepted into administration class.” I said, “Well, call me

an anomaly.” I had a bachelor's degree. I went to the interview at City College and I told them my plan. I was accepted without the masters, so I had my administration masters before the teaching degree, and she was the one with her big mouth who told the principal that I had an administration degree. And so the principal had made her his assistant principal and then I became the reading teacher. Then she became an interim acting principal at another school and I was moved up to assistant principal in a middle school, no less. In a middle school.

MN: In a middle school?

JED: Middle school, 200.

MN: Where is that?

JED: That is at West Farms. At West Farms. It is now 214.

MN: Is that the Lorraine Hansberry School?

JED: Yes, absolutely. I have a history there. Absolutely. Absolutely. So I remember I was preparing for staff development one summer when they were changing the reading program in the district to the Houghton Mifflin Literacy Program. And the principal came to me and asked me if I wanted an assistant principal job. So I said, “Sure. Just, just out of – get away from me and let me do what I'm doing.” And he said, “I'm serious.” I said, “Sure.” And he left. Then the next day he said, “The superintendent wants to speak with you.” I said, “Oh, for Christ's sake.” I said, “I'm not going anywhere. I'm perfectly happy here. I thought you were kidding.” He said, “No, the superintendent wants to speak with you.” So I went – it was Bob Henry at the time. And I went and was offered the acting assistant principal's job at 200. Now, bear in mind that all my teaching experience was in elementary ED – never had anything to do with middle school. But I always remember this little gem that I learned in grade school in Jamaica that says, “There are three things that come back in life. One, the spoken word, the sent arrow, and the neglected opportunity.” So I saw this as an opportunity and I said, well, if you can't read and you can't add



and you can't count whether you are middle, high, or low school, you know, the challenge is there. So I went and -

MN: And what year was that, by the way?

JED: Lord have mercy. Dr. Naison. I can't even – what year was it? I would have to go back and dig.

MN: It would be the early nineties or the late eighties.

JED: No, it would probably be the early nineties.

MN: Okay. Just because the context – that's the height of the crack epidemic.

JED: Yes, absolutely.

MN: The worst, absolutely the worst time in Bronx history. And you're going to become an assistant principal of middle school. And middle school is the hardest job there is. This is the consensus of educators.

JED: Let me tell you. They were bouncing now. They were bouncing, they were bouncing. And I went there and from all accounts I was successful. Because the 200 was now closed 'cause the school was so bad after a couple of years there as assistant principal. Everything was just so out of control. And they closed the school and they had 214 on the first floor in elementary school. And so they made the building into 214, pre-K through eighth grade.

MN: Wow.

JED: By this time, yes, by this time I left and I went to 116 on Fox Street as Assistant Principal.

MN: From the frying pan to the fire.

JED: Yeah. Oh yes. I know, but I have to tell you, I had a good tenure as AP – frustrated at times – but I can tell you kids and teachers didn't give me grief because I am one who always tries to have a plan and I articulate my plan and I expect folks to carry out the plan. And as Assistant Principal, I provided a lot of staff development for teachers. And if they did not rise to the occasion, I documented them and many of them were eased on down the road. And that's how I have lived my life. You provide support for folks and you tell them what the expectations are, and if they don't perform, they choose not to perform, then this is not the place for you.

MN: Right.

JED: And so after I was at 116, then 214 became a problem because you only changed the name, but the cast of characters remained the same. And by now, 214 went into Chancellor's district. You remember that?

MN: I remember that. Yes.

JED: With all the failing schools?

MN: The failing schools, yeah.

JED: Yes. And so Lucille Swans was the superintendent of 85 and she had 214 on her list. And one day I got a call from her wanting to meet with me, and I'm saying, "Who is this lady? How did she get my number?" And I went, and when I went, it was a four o'clock appointment. I'll never forget – 4:30 I was still sitting, waiting on her, waiting on her, and then I asked the secretary, "Where is the superintendent? I have a four o'clock appointment. It's now 4:30." The lady didn't even bother to look at me. She was still futzing around on her computer typewriter, whatnot. So I just picked up my bag and I walked out and I went home. By the time I got home, I got a call from Mrs. Swans and I told her what happened and she asked me – she apologized and asked me if I would come back the next day. I said, "Sure, I'll come back the next day, but if I have to wait, I will leave again. So – because I'm a stickler for time. Time is money. And if you

tell me four - I can understand you might run that late, but if 4:30 comes and you're not going to meet with me, you ought to say something." So I went and she told me about the opportunity at 214 and if I would go there to be principal, and I said, "Mrs. Swans, if I am to go to 214, I would have to go as an appointed principal. I will not go as an interim." And I said, "Furthermore, I am not interested in being a principal." Cause I always think that there should be someone to take the final blow. And um, so after we talked for a long time, she said to me, "If I advertise the position, will you apply?" I said, "Sure." She said, "Okay, we will advertise it." And I left and I went home. So they advertised the position and I did not apply. Because again – remember I said I didn't want to be any principal – and I got a call from her telling me that she did not see my application in the pile, what happened? I said, "Oh my God, this lady is haunting me." And so I sent in my application, went through the interviewing process, and was offered the job. And I can tell you when I went to the school where they were lighting the bulletin board on fire, kids run around, disrupt. Teachers didn't come to class. It was just a mess. And back then it was the pass review that they had, and Dove Okeach had done the pass review the year I went there – it was the 8th of May and the year escapes me, but I remember it was the 8th of May, and it was a dismal report. And so when I got there, I met with the teachers and I told them this was my chosen vocation. I didn't go to school and do basket weaving and come out and decide to teach. I studied education. I am an educator and I am not here to fail. I said, "Now I know what all of you are saying because I have been there with all of you in the cafeteria. No one has sense what teachers, every principal is an idiot. Every principal has no sense, but here's the story," and said, "It's this idiot in charge and you're going to have to do what this idiot tells you to do. Otherwise, there'll be a lot of crime and there'll be lots of trekking, but it's not going to be me." And so I went on an aggressive staff development blitz with teachers, and I was very humane to them. And I would tell them, you know, we can't sit back and have this place run amok. This is what we choose as a vocation. And within a year and a half, the school was taken off the - we got a pass review with Janette. I can't even remember Janette's last name, but I remember the lady came from the Board of Ed and as she walked around the school conducting the review, she had stopped and told me she would come back, give her a few minutes. Only to find out that she had gone to call Dove Okeach, to ask Dove if what if the review that he had done was for this same school, because it's like night and day.

MN: Mm-hmm.

JED: And Dove told him, “Yes, it is the same school.” And so we got off the sur-list in a year-and-a-half and the school had been moving upwards because we eased some teachers down the road. We got some new teachers through the teaching fellows program. When I got there as principal, I had 35 teaching fellows.

MN: Wow.

JED: To start off the September. That's how bad it was. And we built the school and I'm very proud of the work we've done there. And very happy because everybody joined hands and hearts and the school has been a very successful school ever since.

MN: Yeah. Well, you're a Bronx hero, like many other people from this wonderful sorority. I've been very lucky to meet people who have held everything together through the worst of times and brought much better times. So I'm so glad this story is on record.

JED: It – the school, I mean – it was a cooperative effort. We all worked together. And then Laura Rodriguez then came for me, asked me to be network leader, Assistant Superintendent, in her organization – leadership organization. And I went. So actually my office from there, I went – I was with Fordham University with Anita. Anita – oh Lord, why is her name escaping me now? Anita Batiste. Batiste. Anita Batiste. And so my office was right across in Fordham Plaza, right across from Fordham University there.

MN: Okay.

JED: Until I retired. Mm-hmm.

MN: Wow. Great, great story, and that's just the public education story. Now, there's the Eta Omega Omega story, and from what I read, you were involved with creating the Rights of Passage program.

JED: Yes, I was. It started during my administration -

MN: Which is still a signature program. So tell us a little bit now about, while you're doing all these amazing things as a teacher, you are also becoming active in the sorority. So how could you do all that at once?

JED: Now, you know, Sor – you know – I almost said Soror. You know, Dr. Naison, you should never ask that question. “How could you do it?” I always say they don't ask men how they can do two major things at the same time. But women are always asked, “How can you do such a thing?” But just remember now, it's the women that rocked the cradle. It's the women that kept the family going, it's the women in times of trouble that everybody run to. So it's not unusual for a female to have two, three irons in the fire. None of them gets neglected. It's all in organization.

MN: I stand corrected!

JED: It's all in organization and prioritization. And I have to say, I am one who tries to be organized. And I try to prioritize things. And so the sorority is one of volunteerism, where you give of your time, talents, and expertise, after work, weekends, holidays. And so, that's how I approached it. That's how I approached it. My volunteer times are always after work or on weekends or on holidays, and you find you can manage it cause you're not doing it every day. You're not doing it every day. So it's all in scheduling.

MN: So what was your first big project with Eta Omega Omega and how did it start?

JED: Well, let me say this. I came into Eta Omega Omega as president when the chapter was very fractured, very, very fractured. And I won the presidency by one vote. One. So – because I ran against a very congenial incumbent president and I won by one vote, so I knew that I had work to do to unify the chapter. And what I did do after that election when I got home, I called the regional director who was Irma Williamson Barron, and asked her if she could attend my first chapter meeting in 90..94..1991 January. 1991, January, to help me set the tone. And I knew that

I could not sit in that seat and be partial to one group over the other. I had to be fair and equitable. And throughout my tenure as president of Eta Omega Omega, that's what I tried to do. I tried to be fair and equitable and I hope I did just that because in any group, any group – be it a sorority, be it church, be it another social organization – you will find opposition. And as a leader, you have to find ways of unifying the group so that the work that you say you want to do can be done. And I was fortunate that the members did rise to the occasion and worked with me. We did a lot back in the day. We had health fair in different parts of the Bronx where members came out and different health personnel. We even had health mobiles there to provide dental service and other services to community folks. We had the – the Rights of Passage was brought to my attention by Laverne and we embarked upon it, and it became a very strong program through the years. And it is still going because every four years the sorority changes program focus, but the root programs remain the same – in that we always have an education component. We always have a health component. We always have a social justice component. It's just a matter of how you approach the work. And so we had a strong presence at Rosalie Hall, which was run for teenage pregnant girls. We had a strong presence at St. Luke's Senior Citizens Home. So we worked with – from the cradle right up, and members came out in support and worked their fingers to the bones. And in 1992 – that was when the chapter won all five First Place awards at the regional conference for the work that we did. And I was graciously awarded President of the Year that year. So, you know, Eta Omega Omega has been a winning chapter and a chapter that rises to the occasion no matter what, and we work and the members work. I must say that the members are always working and working for the good of the organization because when we became members of Alpha Kappa Alpha, we pledge to give up our time, talents, and expertise for the betterment of our communities. And we tried to live up to that expectation.

MN: Now, I have one more question before I turn it over to President Joseph. How did your upbringing in Jamaica prepare you for the kind of leadership you've been able to exercise in education and in the sorority? Who were – did you have role models for your leadership skills?

JED: Well, growing up in Jamaica, my mother was a very strong personality, very strong. I tell folks, I grew up under woman government. My mother was the one who kept us in line. My

father never touched any of us. Never. He would raise his voice, and you cry your heart out and, and you know, you have to straighten up. And my mother was the disciplinarian and the one who would always instill in us to be leaders and not followers. And then in the community we had different people who were influential. My home economics teacher was my godmother, and I truly looked up to that lady and, in fact, she was the one who got me into teaching because I really wanted to do law. I wanted to be a lawyer. And she was the one who got the application for the teachers college and gave it to me and told my mom that she should make sure that I completed and send it in. And I remember she was the wife of the Presbyterian minister, and every Christmas and Easter she would have these elaborate plays. A very talented woman, very talented. So she would have these elaborate plays. And even though my parents are Baptist and we were growing up in the Baptist church, I begged her for a part in the play, which she gave me. And I would go and rehearse. And of course I deflected from Baptist to Presbyterian. Because the Baptist Church kept you too long, I couldn't stand them! Then, I deflected and went to Presbyterian because my father's side of the family is Presbyterian and my mother's side is Baptist. So I'm the only one in my family who is Presbyterian – everybody else is Baptist. And so I admired Aunt Hyacinth and I would really – I did strive to be the kind of woman she was: very talented, very kind, very accomplished. And so I was surrounded by folks who were strong leaders and just aspired to be somewhat like them when I grew up. And the rest is history, as they say.

MN: Yeah. Let me take a picture of everybody now before turning it over to Donna, for social media and one moment. Lemme get this –

JED: So make sure you get my pretty side!

MN: I know that from my wife and daughter. Okay. Here we go. Everybody's looking great. Thank you. Okay. Donna, take it away.

Donna Joseph (DJ): Okay. Thank you Professor Naison. Thank you, Soror Joy, for joining us today for this historic interview, that we can keep the legacy alive. Some of the questions Professor Naison addressed, so I'll go through them quickly and then add a few that I jotted

down here if that's okay. So, we know that you initiated into Xi Xi chapter here in the Bronx. So can you tell us about the transition into Eta Omega Omega? Did you do it right away or was there like a time lapse?

JED: Oh no, I went right away into Eta Omega Omega chapter. There was no time lapse. I graduated in June, of course, we had the hiatus. I went to Boule in Detroit – never forget that. Boule in Detroit. And then I came back and in September I went straight into Eta Omega Omega chapter. So there was no lapse.

DJ: And so that was September, 1986?

JED: Yes.

DJ: Okay. Okay. So in five years – from 86 to 81 – what leadership positions did you have prior to becoming president?

JED: Oh my God. Donna, you know, I don't remember that. I know I was Ivy Leaf Reporter.

DJ: Okay.

JED: I know I was Ivy Leaf Reporter in the chapter. I know I was Leadership Development Chair – I think. I was Pecunious Grammateus. But I don't – I don't remember the order now. I honestly don't. But I would always serve on committees at the chapter, regional and international level because I'm one who believes that you must be involved in order to learn the organization. Or anything that you're doing – you have to be involved to learn, to grow and to know. And so I was always involved whether I was leading or I was following, I was always involved.

DJ: Absolutely. Because within five years, you moved up to president and won all of those awards. So clearly you had the background. So, one of the questions here was being a member now for over 35 years, what is your fondest and most impactful moment?



JED: Well, let me just go back and say something. Sorry Donna. Winning all those awards is not just attributed to me, it's to the chapter, it's to the membership of the chapter because, you know, you can lead, but if nobody's following you and believing in what you're doing, it's all for naught. And so the members rose to the occasion and did work their fingers to the bone and that's how come we were successful. Now in 36 plus years, cause this is my 37th year – your question to me is what again?

DJ: What was your fondest moment?

JED: In the chapter? Of course, winning all those awards and putting the chapter on the map, everybody knowing Eta Omega Omega chapter until this day. Until this day, you go someplace and say “Eta Omega Omega chapter” and sorors will say, oh, that's Joy Elaine's chapter. And I know some folks have gotten into trouble for saying that because folks say, “No, it's our chapter.” But we have been on the map ever since. So that to me is credit to the membership of the chapter for continuing the work, for continuing the work and to be known for the work that we do to help mankind. We have kept that going. I also would attribute some of my success to paying careful attention to the rules and regulations of the organization. Everybody knows that I am one with constantly telling folks to know your documents and abide by the documents, abide by the rules, because when you abide by the rules, you cannot go wrong. You cannot go wrong. So at the chapter level, unifying the chapter and putting the chapter on a winning path from 1992 until now, that to me is a major accomplishment. And one that I am truly grateful that I had a small part in, in playing in, in that. And then at the regional level, I, as you know – Professor Naison wouldn't know this – but I started the first regional treasury in the history of Alpha Kappa Alpha and eliminated assessing members for regional expenditures.

MN: Wow.

JED: I am very proud of that because I don't think members are independently wealthy, and I don't think we should be taxing members if we don't have to. You tax members if there's a dire need. And so I am very proud of that. The leadership meeting that I initiated every January in the region that still goes on until today. I am very, very proud of that. And then at the international

level to be a small part of the group that helped to elect Kamala Harris – our member – as Vice President of these United States of America. I stick my chest out 10 times more, even when I think that she's of Jamaican descent because her father is Jamaican. And so I am very proud to be a little part of that history. So I can say, Soror Donna, Alpha Kappa Alpha has been good to me as I believe I have been good to Alpha Kappa Alpha.

DJ: Thank you. So, earlier you mentioned Charlotte Morgan. Are there any other members that influenced you greatly on your journey through Alpha Kappa Alpha?

JED: Absolutely. Absolutely. I don't know if you knew Soror Ruth C. Easley, she's a former North Atlantic Regional Director. Soror Ruth Easley and Soror I Pew, and I'll tell you why. I came in the organization under Soror Ruth Easley and Soror Ruth Easley was a very business-like person – very business-like. She started all her meetings on time, she was no nonsense. She paid attention to the business of the organization and I loved that. Cause I believe that when you gather, you take care of the business, then you play at the end. And then, Soror I Pew was the epitome of congeniality. Soror I Pew would never pass up greeting a member. She could be 10 hours late – if a Soror wants to greet her, wants to speak, Soror I Pew is going to speak. And so I looked on those two ladies and I said to myself, if ever I become a leader in this organization, I would like to be across between the two. Not as hard as Soror Ruth and not as soft as Soror I Pew. But I would love to be a cross between the two. And so I admired those two ladies and I would oftentimes speak with them and glean information and knowledge from them. So it was Charlotte Morgan, my advisor, who was my first – the first person to influence me when it comes to Alpha Kappa Alpha. Then Ruth C. Easley and I Pew.

DJ: Thank you for sharing that. What impact – I'll start on the chapter level and then if you could answer chapter, regional, and then international level. What impact do you think you made on Eta Omega Omega and then as regional director and then international regional director during the pandemic? What were some things that impacted the community at large?

JED: Well, with Eta Omega Omega – I think I said that repeatedly – with Eta Omega Omega, the work that we do in the community, it cannot be denied that Eta Omega Omega has been very

visible and very much a force in the community. I just look on the emails that I get from time to time, from the political issues and social issues. The chapter is very much involved. Recently, I think we were involved in some lot of housing. That is, folks can apply to get low income housing. We do that. We keep the community informed. We do have the mentoring program that we do with the young people, the political education where the community is informed and asked to come out to hear and discuss the issues that affect them as well. So Eta Omega Omega is out there, the chapter is out there working and trying to keep the community abreast of what's going on and doing our parts. So I have to say kudos to the chapter for the work that's being done now. As you know, as regional director, I was seldom there, but I kept up with what is going on through the newsletter and notices that have been sent out. And then at the regional level, you know, what I have done already with the region in bringing back a very business-like atmosphere for meetings starting on time, ending on time, for following our documents, and fiscal responsibility. And I'm very proud of that. And then as international regional director, I took the same approach because the chapters are scattered far and wide, far and wide. And Professor Naison, you may want to know that the international region has chapters in about 12 or 14 different countries.

MN: Wow. Wow, that's incredible.

JED: And so my task was to supervise all those chapters. And I can tell you I was able to visit 12 of the 15 graduate chapters on their home turf. Had it not been for Covid, I would have gone to South Africa and Tokyo – I missed those.

MN: Oh my God. Wow.

JED: And Windsor, Canada, because the pandemic struck. Because I believe if you are to supervise folks, you have to go where they are and see what is going on, see what they're doing to be able to help them. Now that came with a lot of challenges because, you know, it's many different time zones. So when it is seven o'clock, 7:00 PM in one country, it might be 1:00 AM or 3:00 AM here in the United States, but I knew what I signed up for. So I would always tell them, if you have to call me, call me. Do not translate the time to New York time. If it's seven

o'clock your time and you have to call me, just call, and it's okay if I'm sleeping, I'll wake up. I'll speak with you. I'll go back to sleep. It's okay. I knew what I signed up for. So even though that was a little challenging, I was able to support chapters and support the members and try to keep them up to speed with the ways of Alpha Kappa Alpha. Because sometimes when you are so far away from the parent body, you're not always operating according to the rules of the organization. And as regional director, my job – one of my jobs – is to make sure that chapters follow the rules and that had been due. And I think they were appreciative of that fact. Then at the international level, of course, having been a part of the social justice platform that educated the citizens across these United States of America that helped to elect Kamala Harris, that is a major accomplishment and one of which I'm very, very proud. Now, although, like anything else, Alpha Kappa Alpha is a microcosm of society. We have the good, the bad, the ugly, the sick, the lame, the lazy. The good, the bad, the ugly, the sick, the lame, the lazy. So as much as we've had a good run and all this goodness, we did have some challenges.

DJ: We have a few more questions here. There was – I know you talked about programs – you mentioned the Health Fair, Rosalie Hall, St. Luke's, Rights of Passage started while you were in office as president. We also had here – are there any fundraisers that stood out to you during your time as president and regional director and throughout?

JED: Oh, yes. So yes. Oh yes. Oh yes. So yes, I tell you, and I don't know if we'll ever come back to it, but as much as I am not a water person, I did like the boat ride that we had and I did look forward to the boat ride as much as I don't like water because that was such fun. The camaraderie was great. The food to me – when I went on the boat ride – it was like a food tasting time for me because there were certain sorors and everybody brought their own little something and I would be getting from this one and that one and that one. I did like the boat ride and thought that it was a good mix for the community and sorors to bring us together to socialize and have a grand old time. I don't know, like everything else, it may have run its course, but maybe one day can be revisited and I don't know. But the boat ride, that was my favorite fundraiser.

DJ: Oh, I would agree. We were on that journey until Covid, but maybe – maybe in the future. The other thing that I just wanted to mention for the record, while you were president, is also

when our foundation started. Can you give us a little – I mean you are the inaugural president. Can you tell us how that got started, why, and the vision of our foundation?

JED: Well, Sorors, that foundation got started because as long as I was in Eta Omega Omega chapter – I left Xi Xi and got into Eta Omega Omega chapter and heard them talking about this foundation. And I didn't even quite understand what it was. But they wanted to start this foundation and they wanted this foundation, but no one would put this equity in to start the foundation. So when I became president, I decided that it was talked about enough, so let's make it into reality. And since it was something to raise money to help with the programs of the chapter, I embarked on making it a reality and tasked Elmira Jackson Taylor – at the time she was Elmira Jackson - to research and send in the initial application. So that's how the foundation started. And when it started, to show you how much we didn't understand, we called it Eta Omega Omega Service Project Inc. And only to find out that the sorority did not want us to use the Greek letter names in the foundation name. And that's when the Eta Omega Omega's Community Project Inc. was changed to Wheeler, Wilson and Johnson Incorporated. I still have trouble saying that name, you know, and of course since it materialized under my leadership, I was the first president of the organization. But that's how it got started. Cause I wanted to make the reality since it was something the chapter wanted.

DJ: Great. Thank you so much. Which still exists today. Very viable. And so – just looking over your years of leadership - President in the nineties, Regional director in the early two thousands, and then recently, international regional director – what are your thoughts for the most pressing issue for our sorority moving forward?

JED: Well, I think the most pressing issue for the sorority right now is education. Education. Members need to know the purpose of Alpha Kappa Alpha. We initiated a number of sorors during Covid and even prior to Covid. So I'm not blaming the folks who came in Covid. Even folks who came in before Covid, they came in and they really don't know the tenets of the organization. And I think the way you learn about the organization is to immerse yourself in the work. Immerse yourself in the work. Because in going to service projects, we talk, we chit chat,

we reminisce, we talk about what's going on. We talk about what's coming up. And Alpha Kappa Alpha is one of the most disciplined, if not the most disciplined organization I've come across because she has a little pamphlet – a little something for everything she wants you to do. So I say to members, avail yourselves of these manuals and read them. Start with the constitution and bylaws and manual of standard procedures and just read them. Read it through. To see what is required of you as a member so you won't get into certain pitfalls. Because I can tell you, as Regional Director, there are many chapters that come to me where members challenge the presidents and this, show me, show me, show me. And I often tell them, I don't do well with this Missouri soror. You're from the show me state? Then stay there because nobody will show you anything. Nobody has to show you anything. As a member, it is your job. It is your duty to know the provisions of the constitution and bylaws, and in good faith, abide by. That's what the Constitution and bylaw says. As a member, it is your job to know the rules of the constitution and bylaws and in good faith, abide by, and when you don't, penalties or sanctions will be handed down against you. Now, if as a member you don't know something and you ask me “Can you tell me where to find that?” I can see that. But to constantly badger and “show me, show me, show me, where does it say, where does it say,” it is ludicrous. And so I think we need to go on an education blitz and let members know it is their right and it is their duty to know the organization and abide by the rules. So that is what I see as the main problem right now, not knowing the rules of the organization. And, I don't do well with “I think, I feel, I believe,” Because Alpha Kappa Alpha is not an organization of I think, I feel, I believe. It's an organization of rules and regulations that we must follow.

DJ: And so with the education and the different programs that the chapter's done – the sorority's done – over the 37 years that you have in the organization and then your myriad of leadership experience, what would you say is the legacy that you would like to leave behind?

JED: It is quite simple. If at the end of the day, sorors say, “Soror Joy was fair and equitable,” I am fine with that. I am fine with that. What you do for one, you must do for all. And when you follow the rules, you will do just that. So at the end of the day, being fair and equitable is what mattered to me. And even in my professional life as a principal, that's how I run my school. I

tried to be fair and equitable to all. Didn't have mess going there, did not have mess going there because what I did for one, I did for all. And so at the end of the day, that's what matters to me.

MN: Soror Joy, you are such an inspiration. I am surrounded by people who don't come to meetings or to classes on time, don't answer emails, don't do what they're supposed to do. And to hear someone who all her life made sure there was a framework of reliability and responsibility – you are what we need right now when so many people are running away from responsibility. I am so glad that I had a chance to be part of this experience with you. Thank you.

JED: Thank you ever so much for having me, Professor Naison. Thank you very much.

MN: And thank you Donna, Saudah, and April for setting this up. Whichever student we assign transcribing this is gonna have a very interesting experience. Maybe they'll even answer my emails more quickly. I was the kind of person who said, “You don't answer my emails in 24 hours, I'm firing you.” And I was told that was unreasonable.

DJ: April, Soror Saudah, do you have any questions before we stop the recording?