

Transcript – Class of 1968, 50th Reunion with Black Alumnae

Narrators: Bernicestine McLeod Bailey, Marcia Lloyd, Sandra L. Richards, and Sharon Wilkinson

Interviewer: Mary Murphy, Nancy L. Buc '65 Pembroke Center Archivist

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MM: OK. My name is Mary Murphy. I am the Nancy L. Buc '65 Pembroke Center Archivist. Today is May 25th. It's 3 pm. We are in Alumnae Hall with a group of women from the class of 1968. They will be introducing themselves in a round robin and then we'll go into conversation about their experiences at Pembroke. So, thank you all for joining me today. Would you like to begin?

SW: Sure. My name is Sharon Wilkinson and – what were you asking? Off the record for a second.

MM: Just introduce yourself, if you would, and tell us a little bit about your family background and what brought you to Pembroke.

SW: I forgot that part. OK. So with that said, we'll start again. Erase all of this.

MM: Oh, yeah, we'll cut it.

SW: Hi. My name is Sharon Wilkinson and I'm from a family of, of college attenders. My folks went to, went to Howard actually. And my sister and father are the first Black father and daughter graduates of the Harvard Business School as far as I can tell. So we, we valued education very, very highly so there was never a question as to whether I was going to college and whether I was going to finish in four years or not. So, what brought me here was really, I think rather serendipitous. My guidance counselor at High School of Music and Art in New York called me in and suggested that I applied to Pembroke. I hadn't really researched Pembroke, I didn't know very much about it, but I followed her advice and I applied to Pembroke, among other universities. I was excepted and I was delighted to attend.

SR: I'm Sandra Richards. I'm from Boston, from a working class family. Sharon, you speak of your family always knowing that you were going to be going to college all the time. My father, though he had not gone to college, was particularly focused in that way and I became focused early. I guess because growing up in Boston and going to public schools there was at the, at the end of the sixth grade you had to choose which school you wanted to go to next. And from, in Boston at that time, if you went to only a couple of schools where you headed to college. Girls, Latin School was with that school. So, I went to girls Latin School and when I would complain about all the homework my parents would say, "Well, you chose. You chose." And my father would also pull out insurance actuarial tables, you know, people who only graduate from high school make this kind of money, people – you know. So, the pressure, the pressure was on. And I did well at girls' Latin and went to the NAACP to try to get a scholarship and they asked where I wanted to go and I said, I think it was maybe, maybe it was [Sale?], but I want to go to [Saint?] Teacher's College because neither of my parents had gone to college and so that's what we knew. And they looked at my grades and said, "No, we won't give you a scholarship to go to teacher's college. Don't you want to go to Radcliffe?" Well, no, because Radcliffe was just across the river. I mean, I knew where Radcliffe was and that was too, that was too close. So how about Pembroke? I don't know. And after that I ended up graduating from Pembroke and Brown. And here we are.

MM: Bernicestine?

BMB: My name is Bernicestine McLeod Bailey. I'm from Washington D.C. And I first learned about Pembroke, I went to a high school that was all African-American even though the teacher is, and the principal, white. McKinley High School in DC. I was out of district because they brought us in if we were of a certain intellectual level into magnet schools I guess they'd be called now, but that wasn't the term then. And actually, an African-American student, a woman from Pembroke came to my Latin class. The Latin teacher was very fun, encouraging us to go to college and so she had different people come in from different schools to talk to us. And so, the student – I do not remember her name – came in to talk to us and I was very intrigued at that point by the fact that Pembroke was, you know, Brown was a coordinate institution. So, it's Pembroke College in Brown University. I didn't think I wanted to go to an all-girls school but I

wasn't sure about coed [5:00] so I said, "This is intriguing. It's very different." I wanted to do things that are, you know, that are different. So, I said, "OK" so I applied and got in. I only applied to two other schools that are very different. One was Howard University in DC, but you know that's home, you know, it's riding the street car on the bus across town. And the other was Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh which I never saw. I hadn't really seen Brown-Pembroke until I came, I did not come up before to visit.

My family, I was the oldest of four children. My father had gone to college, Morris College in South Carolina, and actually his mother before him, my grandmother, went to the same college in Sumter South Carolina. So, there was never any doubt about my going to college. My mother did not attend, but education is very important and so they kept pushing the fact that I needed to go to college. And, of course, we were around kids and students in high school, and teachers in the churches I think the Black community at that time, and still is to some degree, very supportive and anxious for as many students as possible to attend college because we knew that education was the way out, the way toward a better future.

ML: And my name is Marcia Lloyd. I'm from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and I went to, like you, I went to the public school that funneled students into college educations. My mother's youngest sister had gone there so I was a Girls' High girl. Girls' High had a reputation far and wide because very early on when we were here one of the deans at Pembroke walked by and said, "Oh, here's Marcia. She's our Girls' High girl." And I thought, "OK." But what was interesting about that is I had not heard about Pembroke per se until my guidance counselor said that there was a visitor coming in. Her name was Claudia Perkins and Claudia Perkins was the year ahead of me, graduated – Yes she was a year ahead. May have been two years ahead actually. And Claudia was from Effingham, Illinois, and Claudia was part of the of the pressure that was happening on campus to get the campus to become more diversified. And so she was, she along with other members of this student group, were going around visiting various schools to try to recruit students. It's very interesting because in the year that we were applying for school, I don't know if the same thing happened to you, but for students who got over a certain threshold on their college boards you, at least I was sent applications to schools that I had not reached out to. So clearly, in 1964 it was a year that schools are waking up and starting to think of something different. And so I ended up applying to a whole group of schools, but I had not thought about

Brown at all until I met Claudia and Claudia give a rather wonderful presentation and one of the outstanding things she said is, “The one thing you shouldn't do is think about the money. It's a lot, but if Brown wants you, we'll find a way to get you there.” And that sounded very attractive to me. Through a whole combination of my parents, who are very intent on me going to college, and, and you know, various scholarships that I put together, that's how I ended up coming to the college. There was another component for me because while I was at Girls' High, it was also a school where I could have art as a fifth major and I knew from very young that I was a maker of things and so I, there was a real tossup between whether I was going to go to professional art school or a liberal arts school, but I really wanted to study liberal arts and art and not think of it as two separate things. So, of all the choices, and there are a lot of schools, but for instance, Radcliffe didn't have as much art at that time as Pembroke did, as Brown did, and that appealed to me. But I finally narrowed it down to RISD and to Brown, and having gotten into both schools each school was trying to sweeten the deal to get me there. I found out in hindsight that at RISD they were disappointed I didn't come because their description of me, that we were [10:00] excited that you would have been among the first to graduate. They had had other Black students, but they hadn't finished and they thought that I might. I also found out later that they didn't have a room to put me in because no one wanted to house with a Black student. I did come here because in the end I found out that I could take classes here but I could also take classes at RISD. So, after my freshman year, my remaining three years, I took two classes at RISD every semester and three classes here so it was a very rigorous time.

And just a little aside, at that time, remember we had a dress code on the brown campus and you couldn't wear pants there? So, every day I had the ritual of waking up and putting on a skirt to go to class, coming back, changing to go down to my RISD classes in the afternoon, coming back, putting on a skirt for dinner, and then in the evening doing whatever I wanted so I could study or whatever. And that was like every day! So, now it sounds so antiquated, right? Really, you know? But, but, that's actually what I did for years here and for people who weren't involved in the arts, they didn't know about that split life. But I was glad I decided to do this.

SW: We are too.

MM: So, now I'm going to ask the first open question and anybody can jump in. So, again I want to know. Really, I want to know your first – if you can think back to when you first got here. Like, your first week. What was that like for you individually? Just striking memories in your mind about your early time here. And, again, in the context of the era so it's 1964. Civil Rights Act is just passing, right? So placing yourself in the context of all of the change that's coming. Or, how – what was it like just personally? Tell us about coming to college, some of your first memories. Anyone can jump in. We'll just do a round robin now. Whoever wants to.

ML: Well, I remember one of my earliest memories is on this quad and that there were dogs, people had dogs, and there are a bunch of dogs running around and I remember just being so, you know. Do you remember that? Or do you remember seeing dogs? Oh, then my story won't have any impact. There were several, like, golden retrievers out here running around and I was walking here and one of them knocked me over, like, flat on my back –

SW[?]: Welcome to Brown.

ML: Right! But, look at this place, it's so relaxing, there's trees, there's dogs running around, maybe this isn't so bad. Boom. I'm on my back and I open my eyes and that's when I first met Elliot Maxwell. Elliot Maxwell. He's standing there looking over me, you know, so it was really funny because, like here I am, here's this blonde looking over me. "Hi! Hi, I'm Elliot." "Hi, I'm Marcia. Where am I?" Elliot and I laugh about that to this day. But this dog just brushed by me, you know, my feet went up in the air and I fell backwards, luckily on the grass instead of on the – yeah.

MM: Any other memories?

SW: Yeah well, mine are kind of one of confusion. I didn't, I didn't really know what to expect. But all through my life I've always just – whatever's supposed to happen is going to happen and I just jump in. So everything was new and unusual and different for me. The fact that I had a roommate, the fact, I mean, just the whole, just the whole experience. But it was one that I recall going into and through with this tremendous curiosity. Well, now what's going to happen?

What's, what, what is this really all about? Never, am I going to make it OK? It was just kind of well, what's coming, what's, what's, what's up, what am I supposed to be doing, what classes am I taking, how do I get to the Brown campus, you know? Some of the basic things. And one real fun memory that I have, one of my early friends who's not here this weekend, Sue [G?], Sue Levy then, she and I would always go to the early dinner and so we, so our, we didn't like to have to wait in line in the cafeteria, so we were very smart we waited the same amount of time before it opened for the early dinner. So, I had a dinner date every day at 4:30 to wait for half an hour to get into the cafeteria to have an early dinner. What were those things called? Flying birds? There was something.

ML: Birds [inaudible].

SW: It was something with a bird in it. I remember. I just do and I just didn't like them.

ML: They were so awful. [15:00]

SW: On a rather impertinent note.

SR: It's funny because I guess my memories wouldn't necessarily go immediately, saying you know, what pops into your head immediately, to the political, the social-political scene, but I would think of things like all the Black boys were short.

ML: Yes! Exactly!

SR: You know, like, how did you manage all that? And I was one of the shortest –

ML: Yeah! You were the shortest women, you know!

ML: All the Black girls went from 5' 8" up and all the Black guys went from that was from 5' 10" down.

SR: We were all short, you know.

ML: It was phenomenal! And the irony of it was, did anybody notice that?

BMB: We did...

?: We certainly did.

SW: Be politically correct ladies.

MM: Would you like to share anymore?

SR: Dating was a challenge. And yes, things, a lot of things, were new and mystifying. I mean I didn't know of sherry hours before coming to campus so that was something new to get accustomed to. And, I guess probably I would imagine for most of us this was the first time that we were in interracial situations twenty-four hours a day, you know. So that was very different and also challenging and that is within a political context of the time. I think those are the things that come immediately.

ML: And challenging in very unexpected ways by the questions that can be directed at you at any time. And you were expected to know an answer as if you were the spokesperson for whatever.

SW: Can you think of any example?

BMB: I guess your hair is different. I mean, you still get that. Or civil rights, is that what you mean?

?: Well, once again I guess –

MM: The pressure points. I'd like to hear, just to pick up, twenty-four hours a day. So, if you can, for folks who are going to be listening to this, give us a picture, color that in, about an example of the times where you're really feeling it. Where did you feel it?

SR: Well, one of the things that we just – sort of a sideways answer, I do remember, it seems to me it was a Time Magazine cover at one point, and I don't think it was our freshman year, but it was “What Does the Negro Want?” And that was so infuriating. In the sense of we wanted what everybody else had. You know, dignity, access. Not to be “the negro,” to be problems. And for me I suppose one of the challenges of living interracially twenty-four hours a day is, you know, would be things that you are coming from different kinds of cultural backgrounds and different sort of frames of reference and things that I might have taken for granted coming from where I did and that other people didn't take for granted, or things like I assume that sherry hours were normal. But I didn't know anybody for whom this was a normal practice.

MM: Can I ask, what is that?

?: Like wine, sherry. Yes, yeah. I mean –

ML: They don't have sherry hours now still?

?: No, no no.

MM: I don't think that they do.

SR: The resident fellows would host sherry hours and you would turn up for sherry hours.

ML: It was a way to socialize [overlapping voices]

ML: But, it was the idea of a finishing school. Of finishing young women off so that you knew how to interact socially and –

BMB: I think that one of the crazy things I remember that I wasn't used to was pantyhose. I mean, that freshman week the guys from Brown came over, "what is this?" You know, the cheering and all of that to try to get panties thrown out the window. I said, "Well, this is not my existence."

ML: That's right!

BMB: I can't relate to this! I can't relate to this. So it's things like that, I think just cultural [20:00] differences, differences, because I grew up in an insulated Black community. Family church, everything. Coming here which is very different. [inaudible]

MM: So on that point, I always want to ask here about women's experiences during the first week in school if you are willing to share and have memories of having your posture picture taken. If you do have any memories of that, we do want to make sure to record them.

BMB: Oh I do.

ML: Posture pictures?

MM: It's for incoming, well, Bernicestine, could you share, if you want to? You don't have to.

BMB: Well, we had to go to, well, Smith B at that point was gym.

ML: Wasn't it the gym?

BMB: Yeah.

ML: The gym. Yeah.

BMB: And there was a bowling alley in the basement and I remember going down to the bowling alley and basically stripped. I mean, we had undies on, but you had to stand against the

wall and take pictures from a distance. I don't remember seeing the pictures, but they were, you know, I guess you know the whole story. They were trying to make sure your posture was perfect.

ML: Do you remember carrying the teacup?

SW: Did I miss that class? Did I miss that [inaudible]?

ML: Did you carry the teacup like the length of that gym? That was all like the last vestiges of the finishing school.

BMB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ML: You know, we were all being groomed to become ambassadors' wives, and Sharon went and became an ambassador!

BMB: Well Sharon became an ambassador! [laughter]

ML: So, you know, this is like a big leap for us. But, you know, that was the tail because we still had parietals and, you know?

Group: Yes, yes, yes.

ML: We had all of that. That was the tail end of that finishing school thinking. Yeah.

BMB: And I, well I remember that at some point that they spread each of us, put each of us in a different dorm.

ML: Right, they had us spread out.

BMB: So we had to –

MM: I would like to hear more about that. Touching on the living situation, if you would be willing to share about that, what that experience was like. It was messed up. What was that like, I mean, so you're out in the community, you're here on campus trying to forge a community, and tell us about your living situation.

SW: Well, I was, I went to one of the newer dorms. I was in Morris Hall and it didn't occur to me that it should be any other way. I just went to my room and I met my roommate who was Susan [Lukesh?], I think a she's coming this weekend, and embarked upon my college experience. So, I'm only finding out this very minute that we were deliberately split up.

ML: Well, I think that maybe they didn't think of it as spreading – they thought of it more as spreading us out or sprinkling us around –

?: Spreading the wealth!

ML: – So that everybody could have this experience. That's what I would guess, but it just meant that we were isolated from each other because we didn't, I mean, I don't think until the Black Student Organization started that we started to see each other really regularly.

MM: But you did have white roommates?

BMB: Yes.

MM: Because I know anti-Semitism on campus was – or, institutional anti-Semitism was so strong that at one point they were not allowing Jewish students to live with non-Jewish students, I believe.

BMB: Right.

?: At the time we were here?

MM: No.

?: Earlier [inaudible]

ML: Exactly earlier, that preceded us.

MM: Right, I just wanted to know if there were like these vestiges of segregation in that way.

?: Wow.

BMB: Like, I think our roommates, I think I heard at some point, that our roommates were asked?

ML: They were asked. This is what I found out from the RISD experience. I met the first Black professor at RISD who told me, "Oh, you're Marcia Lloyd." He's the one that told me the story that they wanted me to come but what they were worried about if I had come, they didn't have a place for me to stay because any of the students they had asked if they wanted a Black roommate, nobody wanted one. I said, "People do that?" He said, "Well, they do at Brown." They asked each student who, who you were matching, I don't know how they did the matching, but when they finally matched it that student was asked and the student said –

SR: Well, I find that an interesting story because my freshman year I lived in Champlain, which was a new dorm too, and I had a roommate who later was able to appreciate, did not like Black people. You know, she just did not. So I have a hard time thinking that that she would have said, she or her family, would have said yes.

ML: Right, right.

SR: But there, there were, I mean – and what was that?

ML: Did you, did you say with that roommate for the year?

SR: For the year, right. [25:00] And she would do things like, you know, get up and one of the first things she would do would be to put on a charm bracelet and comb her hair or something like that. You know, so the charms would be jingling, you know, and I'm trying to sleep. You know? So it was just mean kinds of things –

ML: Right.

SR: Petty things like that. And it was only much later that I realized that other people, you know, other women, many of whom were white, also did not like her and that she was, you know, a pretty disagreeable personality. And, so it wasn't specifically –

ML: You.

SR: – Me.

ML: Right, exactly.

SR: It wasn't specifically me, you know, a Negro person who's not liked.

ML: It wasn't just you. She didn't like any person. She just didn't want a roommate.

SR: She probably just didn't want a roommate.

SR: You know, I, I mean and that was an important realization, you know, that because the whole experience was hurtful, and then to realize, well, even though it may be hurtful it's not always about race.

ML: Right. Right. Exactly. Exactly. And I had a similar because my freshman roommate, I thought everything was fine, but then at the end we had to select for the next year – didn't you

have, you could select to switch or not? And we were at a point she was fine and it was uncertain anyway what I was going to do, but then I thought, "Oh well, I should stay with her because, you know, maybe there's no one who wants to be with her," and she backed out of being with me and I was left, I ended up getting a single and that's why I ended up in the single with Marcia on the side. And Carol Carpenter. But it was a classic example that I didn't find out until the end that she really hadn't liked, you know, she said, "someone from a different experience," was her code word for it. So, with her it ended up being a racial thing and I was completely surprised.

?: Wow.

ML: Yeah. But you don't know, you know, because you're not hearing it directly from the person. You're only hearing things from what other people say and it is hurtful because you don't know where you really stand.

SR: Where you stand.

SR: Right.

SR: And then, I mean, there's all the social turmoil -

ML: Right.

SR: - that's going. And I think, I think this issue about "What does a Negro want?" maybe was our sophomore year, you know, but we're leading up to this too, you know. So you definitely sort of, you're definitely odd for any number of reasons because there are so few of us, right?

ML: Well, there were a few of us and I think, you know, each of us is our own distinct different person.

SR: Right.

ML: But for people who haven't had the experience of people like us they're thinking we're all the same.

SR: Right. Right.

MM: Do you remember where you were when the conversation happened? Were you standing in the dorm together when she said that you?

ML: Oh, she never said it to me.

MM: She didn't.

ML: I never read any explanation of why she announced that day, last minute, that she didn't want to room with me. I only heard this through other people, so I have, like I said, I don't know where I stand. I don't know if it's because of a more generic thing that it could have been anything, you know, or whether it was about that. But I was never given any explanation I just found out when it was too late for me to get a roommate. So.

SR: And it could've been both things. I mean –

ML: Yeah.

SR: – Because, in my case, it could've been both things that she didn't like Black people and she was a pretty miserable person too!

ML: Exactly, exactly. So I don't know what happened.

MM: So, other memories, highs and lows. I'd like to ask about forging solidarity with one another, also other students on campus, as things – you attended Pembroke literally at the most political time in contemporary American history, so I just want to ask about the topic of

solidarity and movements, student movements at the time if you have any memories to share on that.

ML: Well, in hindsight, one thing I would say is when I became a member of the board and I was, you know, coming to more things and I was on campus more and all that, one of the things you would hear every time you'd meet a Black alum was, "Gasp! '68! You were here for the walkout!" And I'd always say, "No, actually, we were here before the walkout." Because, number one, there were so few of us that if we had walked out they wouldn't have noticed! Number two, we got together and we started the organization that walked out. And number three, what I'm finding out is you don't know we exist! [laughter]. So, as with so many parts of my professional life where I felt, you know, very much you know, at different times excited but also alone, a dear friend of mine said, "Well, Marcia, when you're feeling so alone just realize you have to turn around, the others are coming behind you." And I became so aware of how this whole '64 [30:00] to '68, you know we were really kind of leading the way.

MM: Did it feel like you were in a political time at the time? Like, did you feel, did you have this realization that you were in a moment?

?: I mean, do you –

ML: Yeah, yeah.

SR: Do you remember that there was, I guess it was kind of – it wasn't an organization but a fledgling kind of meeting of Black students at Ivy League campuses?

ML: Yes. Yes.

?: You know, and –

ML: Soul Weekends.

SR: Soul Weekends, and trying to recruit younger students to do various Ivy League campuses. So that was happening –

ML: Yeah, absolutely.

SR: That was part of the politics of the time. Yeah, and those Soul Weekends, I mean, you know, it was sort of then you go to, I don't know, it was Harvard or to Yale and there would be more Black people there.

ML: Otis True! He set up those weekends and the Black kids from all the Ivy Leagues came and surprised people. Remember – what's the hotel downtown? Was it the Hilton? What was the hotel?

BMB: The Biltmore.

ML: The Biltmore! Remember when it was a Soul Weekend at the Biltmore how startled everyone down there was? Black kids coming from all the Ivy Leagues. And there weren't that many of us because there was a handful here and a handful there. But when we were all together it started to look like a group.

MM: What about feminism within the Soul Weekends? Was there any sort of women's-specific rights layered in there as well? Or was it just fun?

SR: I'm not answering that questions again. I guess I approach everything maybe sideways, but I guess I would say that for me the beginnings of feminism in watching how the guys were trying to, trying to figure out what they were going to do about the war. Whether they were going to go to Canada, whether they were going to go into the military. And I remember one person talking about how he was going to go into the military and there would be changes, you know, a single person going into the military, how are things going to change? But you know, I mean – but that's what he was telling himself. And, and watching them struggle to try to figure out what they were going to do, what was the moral thing to do, and thinking well I don't have that. I don't

have that struggle and there's no reason why I shouldn't have that struggle, you know, I mean why do they have to and we don't? And it seems to me that, least for me, was a kind of beginning moment that I could then look back and sort of say, "Oh, this is a feminist moment when, you know, when you see that in some ways –" I don't know whether I had thought life had been equal – I don't know that I thought life had been equal, but this is one place where it just seems as though it just didn't make any sense. You know, why were they being challenged in that kind of way and we as young women were not.

MM: Hm. That's interesting.

BMB: Yeah.

BMB: I think of my, whatever, my coming of age here as being a struggle to figure out what my identity was. My identity, based on – racially just based on what was going on. So I went through a period when I would read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and I was just voraciously reading and some of my White friends thought I was going crazy and it wasn't that. I was searching. Searching for something to hold on to because there was nothing that was really oriented. There were no faculty members, no administration of color, so we were it and we were kind of, as I think Marcia said, we were kind of our own people. We were – I thought I was individually going through this because we didn't really connect and awful lot. We'd wave at each other passing on campus, but at that, you know, the early stages I think maybe our senior year, later junior sometime senior year, we started to get together more and communicate more.

ML: Which actually brought a whole lot to the table.

BMB: Yes.

ML: I get a flashback of freshman year. I was either going home for Thanksgiving or for Christmas, one of those times, and my parents, who are very social people, had a bunch of folks you know over the house and I remember you know kind of leaving Brown, and then coming home, and then you know you're kind of coming downstairs and you're sort of dressed to mingle

with all these people, and I literally remember like this like everyone in the room is Black. This is like, [35:00] I had never thought of everyone in the room being Black in my parents' home. And it was like, this is really amazing. And it was, it was completely normal, you know. The people who have had all kinds of jobs, from all kinds of backgrounds, it was like look at this. And I remember talking about it with my father afterwards and I, because he says, "You were really, this was a great night, you were so good." I said, "I really was glad to see everybody. I was so grateful to see everybody." But I said, "Do you know what it's like there?" I said, "There's no Black faculty, there's no Black administrators. The only Black people are the women who come in and change the sheets on your bed."

BMB: Yes. You're right. We had maid service.

ML: We had maid service. And I mean, I remember that moment. It was just wow. And I mean, I had gone to integrated schools but, and I had you know, my parents had you know, we had an integrated life in terms of social friends and all of that, but this was a real moment. It was like, wow.

SW: It was a visual moment.

ML: It was a real visual moment. You know, and I'm into that [inaudible]. And the idea of going back to the people asking you questions that because there is a limited exposure to the Black experience with your average White American, they don't know the richness and the breadth of that experience. So whatever they hear about Black people, well then that's how all Black people are. So some of those questions that are coming at you are coming out of that – it's almost like an innocence so you can decide to have an attitude about it but I found it more or less aggravating to say, "OK where is this person coming from? What is it they're really asking me?" You know, rather this sort of generic, you know, not all Black people are the same, you know there is a range of experiences here and they're all part of the picture because we've all been through a lot and we're all trying to move forward. I think that that's the hard thing for people to see, you know?

BMB: Just like all White people aren't the same.

ML: Yeah, all White people aren't the same, you know. And so that issue of identity, I think, was very much there. And, and then the two related in terms of the female moment is when you're talking to a guy and they make a statement, "Well I'm not expecting my wife to work." And you're saying, "Excuse me?" "Well no, my wife isn't going to work," and this is an African-American student. Yeah, see, because you know you hear it from the other, you never, you know. And I said, "Well, why would you want your, like your daughter or whoever, to come to a place like this and learn all these things and not go and want to change the world?" And he says, "Look, I want to have a wife who I support. She does not have to work and I don't want her to work. I don't want my daughter to work." I mean, this is part of that, of this male identity of how – which I couldn't fault because he was a Black male trying to realize his identity, but it was a big difference. I guess I'm not marrying you, right? I can't promise you I won't work. But it's that moment where you know, like you're kind of all together as Black people and then, well, no I'm a woman and you're a man and every experience is different.

SR[?]: And for some of us, I mean, I didn't know any Black women who didn't work.

ML: But that's right! Exactly! And, at the same time, that was his point. That was his point he made to me. He said, "Every Black woman I have known has had to work and I want to provide a home where she does not have to work." And I said, "Well, maybe she doesn't have to work, but she may need to work, or she maybe will want to work!" And that was a concept he hadn't gotten to yet. I did try. Hopefully, I don't know.

SW: We'll see.

ML: But that was a learning moment for me.

MM: Talk to me more about dating. Is anybody willing to share what that was like on campus?

SW: It was interesting.

BMB: Rare.

ML: Rare? I was thinking nonexistent.

Multiple speakers: Rare.

ML: I was going to say special.

SW: I'll stick with interesting. Rare, special, and interesting.

SR: Diplomatic. Interesting. You can color that in however you want to.

SW: Now I had some, I had some good buddies who were Brown men. And I really could have looked at one or two with certain seriousness, but I wasn't serious at the time. And so, no, [40:00] my social, if I have a date from time to time it was never on the big weekends you know, that was always a challenge. But, yeah, my social life wasn't hopping, but I did have a couple of my favorite fraternities that I like to go and go to the parties on Saturday nights. Yeah, so, but coming from my very naive experience coming into college where I didn't have hardly any social life before when I was a high school, because my parents just, just wouldn't hear about.

MM: Very strict.

SW: So. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So I'm surprised that I didn't really go the other end when I got to college because, but, but I just was very conservative about dating because I had just had that experience and so when I came to Brown, if I had a date from time to time that, that was, that was great! That was really, really great. But as I say, nothing ever, nothing ever became serious, but I did have some buddies whom I would love to see again. I hope to see them this weekend. And it's been fifty years and will we recognize each other? We might. I know. But it would be very fun to see them because I really enjoyed having them as buddies when I was here. So on

balance when you ask a question about dating I would say nothing hot and heavy but socially for where I was at the time, OK.

SR: I can remember an incident where there was going to be some double dating and so somebody had to be, you know, fixed up with someone and this conversation is going on in a room that I'm sharing with somebody or other. And I don't have a date and it never comes up that I might be a possible person to date you know. It's like I'm not there, I'm wallpaper. I don't know what I am. So I do remember that because, yes there were some interracial dating going on, but very, very little I think you know.

ML: And I had one experience like that where there were two other classmates. Both of whom were White, one of whom was Jewish. And they invited me to be the third to go up to Dartmouth, I believe, because it was going to be some weekend up there and, and then you know that this one person's friend – and they were friends, I mean, they weren't all serious boyfriend-girlfriend –but it was a friend, he was going to bring two of his other friends and so there were three of us and we got up there and the friend you know had her friend and then her, her other friend got another friend and the other guy left looked at me and he said he didn't, he didn't want that and to the credit of the of the friend of the second girl that I mentioned, she just said, “Well, you know we either all stay or we all leave.” So they ended up solving that by the first two boys getting you know, they sent that boy away and got another boy and the six of us had a really nice weekend. It was very laid back and casual but I never forgot that moment because of the people who stood up and said, “This won't do.” And the ones who said, you know, and that one guy really thought he was going to stop the whole thing and he didn't. Yeah, yeah, it was interesting, yeah. I hope I see her this weekend.

BMB: Well, I guess I met my husband here, but yeah, but that was later in my senior year. Well, kind of the end of my junior year and I guess heavier my senior year.

MM: And he graduated a year behind you?

BMB: Two.

MM: Two years, OK.

BMB: Yeah, he's class of '70.

?: [whispers]

BMB: But, anyway –

ML: Boy, you take a cue from the new duchess. [laughter]

BMB: But, before that, yeah, a few blind dates here and there I don't think any interracial. I think most of mine, my dates were African-American. Some of the taller guys, who I won't mention, you know, off and on, but nothing really serious. It was kind of more friend or you know fun. We did a lot of parties though. There were off-campus parties [45:00] because a few of the upperclassmen, because we weren't allowed to be called [to campus?] technically, but a few of the upperclassmen had apartments and would have parties on the weekends so we would use that opportunity to get together. So it wasn't really dating and it was kind of informal, everybody show-up in the spot at the same time and release tensions.

ML: Here's some music, dance!

BMB: Dance it out.

?: Yeah, exactly.

BMB: So, I guess that's about my commentary on dating.

MM: So I always, I, I have to say I know I run edgy interviews so after I ask about dating I often ask about the experience of living in the United States [pre]- Roe v. Wade passage. If anyone has any thoughts on that or the politics of reproductive justice in the 1960s at the time, which there

was none. If you feel like sharing on any of your memories. Sometimes people have thoughts on that or experiences.

BMB: It wasn't relevant.

?: Yeah, I don't think it was.

BMB: Even though, was Brown the first place, one of the first places for birth control being prescribed by Roswell Johnson?

ML: Really?

BMB: Yeah.

ML: Really? I didn't know that.

MM: It was right during that same era. It was a man, a male doctor interestingly enough.

ML: What year was it?

BMB: The year we were here.

MM: Oh, I think it was '67 or sixty – I think it was – no, I think it was '68. I think it was '67 or '68.

?: Oh, so it was the year we graduated.

?: I didn't know that.

BMB: Do you remember Roswell Johnson?

ML: Yeah, I do. Yeah, that's interesting. You mean he was the first in the Ivy League or just a personal –

BMB: I don't know, I just hear that Brown was one of the –

?: The vanguard.

BMB: – the places, yes! I guess we could historically research that, but that's what I had heard anyway.

?: That's interesting.

MM: OK, so going – how are we running on time?

BMB: We are now at 4:07.

MM: OK.

BMB: So, and you have to get to the List, right, at some point?

SW: Yeah. Yeah, I do.

MM: If I could just ask one last question. I just want to make sure to allow space here at the end of the interview – I could, we could do this forever. I'm enthralled by all the interviews that we do. So, last thoughts. I guess we should just wrap up I don't want to open other cans unless you want to. So for this last moment, time of this interview, your – let me pause. 1968. Spring of your senior year. We cannot pass this interview without stopping onto massive assassinations that happened while you're just about to lead up to your graduation. So you have Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy. So if you could, please, for the listeners and users of this interview who will want to know your experience on campus at the moment, if you do recall, of the assassination of Martin Luther King in particular. I'll start there.

SR: I remember thinking just very, very clearly, here's a Black man who's won the Nobel Peace Prize and he's assassinated because he's Black. What is the future for me? You know, what is the future for Black people? Because I mean, how many people win the Nobel Peace Prize, and he's won it and he's still not good enough. So that was a real, it seemed at the time a real kind of object lesson as to what was ahead of us as we're getting ready to graduate.

ML: Right, because what he had done was start talking outside the box.

SW: That's right. Yes.

BMB: About the war [inaudible].

ML: It's not good enough we're just talking about Black folks here. We're talking about war, poverty, life, all of us together. And so that moment was really important because it's like, it's how do we figure out our lives when you become so aware that someone's trying to keep you in a box. And if you stay in the box there might be somebody who tries to, to take you out, but it's clear if you step outside the box you're a target. Yeah, it's amazing. That was an amazing moment.

MM: Do you know where you were specifically on campus?

BMB: Yeah, I remember being on vacation. I thought we were on Spring Break.

ML: We were on Spring Break, I remember. [overlapping voices]

SW: I was in a department store.

ML: Were you?

BMB: I was in DC and the riots, I remember the riots, part of DC being burned and destroyed. I don't know, because, you know, '63 was Kennedy just before I came here, so Martin Luther King Jr, it was just, what do you do? Well, we only had what? [50:00] A couple months left in our college years, yes, experience. So, I don't know. It was just very disconcerting and –

SW: Right.

BMB: Sad. I don't know, confusing, and just a lot. When we came back to campus I can't remember people's reactions. I just remember being very sad.

ML: Well, I don't know if people, I don't know if there was any campus-wide reaction.

BMB: No, I don't think –

ML: That's why I have a hard time associating it with the campus because you know, we were still coming back into this world that was very different than our homes. And I just remember when it happened, I was in a car and actually someone in a car next to drove up and yelled out the window that this had happened and I was, I thought the person was –

SW: Wow.

ML: Not, you know. What are you talking about? And I remember because I was on my way somewhere turning around and driving back home just because it felt like the safe place to be or something like I want to be around my parents or you know to ask like what just happened? Because you know, we were about to graduate and go out in the world. And he was so much a – it was more than just being a symbol. It was more like –

BMB: Yeah, because he's actually –

ML: – stability.

BMB: He had actually come to campus. '67 maybe? '66, '67?

SW: I think it was '67.

BMB: I remember shaking his hand and someone actually had a picture [inaudible].

MM: Do you have that picture?

BMB: I had it. I guess it's somewhere in some box. I'll try to find it.

MM: Yes!

BMB: But, it was a student that took the picture and he actually said to me you know, because then everything was black and white.

MM: A Polaroid probably.

BMB: Yeah. It wasn't even Polaroid, it was – yes. So, yeah, so I think that in particular. You know, you start remembering him being here on campus in Sayle's Hall –

Group: Yeah, Sayle's Hall.

BMB: – speaking. And then a year or so later –

ML: He's gone. Right. Yeah.

SW: It's poignant.

ML: And he represented a whole, I mean there's a whole trajectory of men leading up to that moment. The whole idea of the "race man" and what that meant, and what that meant to our parents.

SR: And Malcolm X was in between there.

ML: Exactly. Exactly. Exactly.

BMB: Malcolm X was scheduled to come to campus. He was assassinated before [inaccurate. Malcolm X did speak on the Brown campus in 1961].

?: Before he got here.

MM: Was he assassinated also in sixty – '68? '67?

?: Was he before Martin?

?: Yes.

BMB: I think it's in February. We were on campus at the time.

ML: Yeah, we were on campus.

BMB: Yes, so it had to be before.

?: It wasn't?

MM: No, it just blows my mind.

BMB: Yeah, because Kennedy –

MM: The violence of 1968..

BMB: Robert Kennedy, I was on my way home from graduation when I heard that in the car driving from Providence to D.C.

ML: Robert Kennedy was really –

BMB: Yes.

ML: Stunning too.

BMB: Right.

ML: Because then, of course, it triggered the repeat. So, like, you flash back to John Kennedy and where you were. Which, I think the thing about, when John Kennedy was killed, I don't know about for you, I was in high school and you know, there was like, that hadn't happened before. Do you know?

BMB: Right.

ML: So you kind of knew social things that happened and political things that happened, and then you know, your own Black experience, you had all this stuff. But that that was like a marker. The fact that that could happen in your lifetime. It'd be different if Abraham Lincoln – you know. But this actually, like, you felt very personal about it. This is something that had been taken from me, right. So then when it got to King it was like this has really been taken from me.

BMB: Right.

ML: It was like, you know, it was just the whole reality of that violence being so personally affecting I think is what I remember most about all of that. Which of course now in this time of so much violence happening on all kinds of levels it's – that time seems almost quaint, you know.

SW: May I suggest that we end on a higher note and then just maybe have a couple of words of are we happy we came to Brown? Are we happy we came to Pembroke? Are we happy [55:00] with our experience fifty years ago?

BMB: Are you?

SW: Yes.

BMB: But also add, I don't know whether you want any historic – well, what we've done since Brown or how we think Brown –

MM: Take as much time. I don't want to take your time today, so I think –

SW: It doesn't need to be long, but yes. On balance, I'm very happy with my, with my time here. I kind of stumbled into international relations because I really had made up my mind of what I wanted to major in. As it turns out, it was the right thing to do. I went from there to, ultimately to the foreign service where I had a long and successful career. So looking back, even though and I remember one of my professors who was a former CIA officer who was fabulous and I was totally fascinated I was surprised I didn't go into the agency, but I didn't. My father thought I did, but I didn't. The State Department. But even I wasn't aware of it at the time when I taking my classes, I was I was being well prepared. It was the entire Brown experience, the whole interracial experience, the getting along with people, moving on through with, with success, that I look back and I'm, and I'm very grateful that I had the opportunity to attend Pembroke. That it was kind of offered to me as I think it was kind of offered to all of us and I'm very, very grateful for that. And so I just wanted to end on that note.

SR: No. I think without a doubt, it on balance was a good experience in terms of getting a top notch education, being challenged to be able to, to think, you know, to know how to work hard, and the achieve. You know, the achievements that you can be proud of. And developing some friendships that have you know, lasted for fifty years.

BMB: Do you want to talk about your career at all?

SR: Well, based upon that I mean, I studied literatures here. I went to graduate school in dramatic literature, and I became a university professor.

MM: At which college or university?

SR: Northwestern.

BMB: Looking back I'm glad I came here. Right after I graduated I didn't want to see the place ever again. And so I got, I find it hard to believe since I'm up here all the time, but for a period of ten years or so, that's, then, I don't ever want to go back. But looking at it now, I mean I can see all of this that has blossomed because I was here. I came in as a math major, left as an economics major. Left with no real idea as to what I wanted to do in life. Was hired by I.B.M. shortly after. So I think it's the name that helped even, you know the name of Brown, even though a lot of people, you know, Pembroke. Pembroke State College, teacher's college somewhere in North Carolina.

MM: Yes!

BMB: No! Pembroke College. Because we were here before the merger and so, no, Brown University. But I think that obviously helped me get hired by I.B.M. and it held its weight throughout my career at I.B.M. and then later on. It was after I did the I.B.M. thing that I started consulting in information technology so I think that's helped and even now I live in a town where there are tons of Brown people you know, Alumni. It's weird. But, all in all, it was the right place, you know, things happen for a reason. I got to meet some nice ladies. [laughter] And we got to know each other. Children coming, or you know.

ML: Yeah, I was going to say both your children came.

BMB: Yeah.

MM: And you. Would you like to share any last things?

ML: Well, for me Brown has been a really great experience and part of what's been really useful is the way that it's helped to bridge the world of academia with the world of fine arts. And then I you know, have gone on to have a very active professional art career at the same time that I've [1:00:00] been a college professor teaching fine arts.

MM: Which I was going to say, where is this?

ML: At Massachusetts College of Fine Art. And I'm a Professor Emerita now. And I ran the graduate program there and set up a lot of other painting and printmaking structures that grew out of things that happened here. It was – by having the Brown-RISD experience which was necessary then for me to have a full experience it's been interesting over this period of time to see how the art program here has gotten so much more developed and that in fact you get RISD students now who come up to experience some of the things at Brown. So that's a wonderful thing to see. And, but I think all in all Brown has been a really – I have many fond memories of the place, not the least of which is the aesthetics of it. That the actual architecture and the prevalence of, of the green space, and the way particularly that's been more greatly appreciated over the last number of years. But when we were here it was more like a hidden gem and then when you actually transcended the hill and came to the top and the juxtaposition of the space and the buildings and all of this is a very important part of the experience here that I think, particularly in the last twenty-five years has been more, even more greatly valued and attended to, which really shows now.

MM: It is beautiful.

ML: Yeah, it really, really, really shows and I think that that helps shape everything because when you're you know, young and impressionable and trying to find your way, I think that to be in a space that feels as full and rich and varied as possible is like setting up the soil for something wonderful to happen.

SR: And I'm going to just tag on to that a little bit that, that we were at the point also where Brown allowed you to construct your own major. So I did a combination of English, English and French literature. And I guess – I don't know whether there was a certain kind of trust that by the time we got to junior year that we sort of had some sense of who we were, you know, and what our interests would be and what our intellect was, and so we were able to do that with that. That was important too.

SW: Well, I give Ira Magaziner or a lot of credit for that because he was the one who really, that I remember, who really stepped forward and pushed for –

?: And that's what [inaudible]

SW: I think that's one of the things that Brown still is top of the list for. So that happened at the time just about.

MM: Well, thank you all so much. Bernicestine, you pulled this together. Tremendous. So I thank you for taking this time out of your very busy reunion schedules to sit with me today after for this conversation. It's just, your story now becomes part of the archive and we are so happy to have your history as part of this collection. So, thank you.

Group: Thank you.

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