

Transcript – Carolyn Ann Converse, class of 1964

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Carolyn Converse: Hello! This is Carolyn Converse. I was class of 1964 and I'm being interviewed by Kathy Kane who is a friend of mine here in Glasgow, Scotland. I've lived in Scotland for over forty years so I may be using terms that you're not quite familiar with but I will try to keep to the American equivalent if possible. Okay Kathy, please go ahead.

KK: Okay, well I hope that my accent will be understandable to you. I'll be speaking in Scottish all the time so – anyway, I'm sure it's not too different. Do you want to start Carolyn by just telling us a little bit about your family and childhood?

CC: Well, I grew up in Wilton, Connecticut, which is, as you know – perhaps know – in the far reaches of Fairfield County near New York City. And things – I lived there for my entire childhood, from about first grade to twelfth grade. But my father became increasingly ill and he died when I was fourteen. And after quite a bit of hardship because he wasn't able to work all the time. And my mother remarried a bit over a year later so I didn't have a background where we could afford, really, to pay for my university education and I, of course, was interested in getting a scholarship. And that was one of the reasons, of course, why I ended up at Pembroke, is that I applied on the early decision scheme which means you have to put down just one place that you want to go, and I got in on the early decision scheme. So by the autumn of my final year of high school I knew where I was going and I had a scholarship which covered my tuition and I think about half of the room and board. And I had to raise the rest by working on campus and, of course, saving up and working over the summer and so forth as well. I didn't get any funding from my family at all.

KK: Okay. There's a terminology here, which I don't really understand that is a "coordinate college?"

CC: Oh right –

KK: Could you maybe explain that?

CC: Well this is one of the reasons why I ended up at Pembroke. In those days there were, of course, the state universities so I could have gone to University of Connecticut but there was a lot of pressure in our town, which was sort of a well-educated town, to try to get people into ivy league universities if possible, or the equivalent. Now, in those days most of the ivy league colleges – those were Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Princeton and so forth – did not have, were not coeducational. They were just for men. And there were some colleges that were called the seven sisters which were intellectually high-flying sort of places for women only. So there was Vassar, Smith, Mount Holyoke, and so forth. But I didn't really want to go to a women's college and some of the ivy league universities had coordinate colleges which were semi-separate. Brown had Pembroke, Harvard had Radcliffe, and Columbia had Barnard. Now, I didn't want to be in New York City. The nearest was really Brown and it seemed a nice place. My mother and I drove over there and we had an interview. Of course, from Connecticut it wasn't very far, but as it turned out we then, in 1960, moved to Maine. So I would've been actually closer if I had come to Harvard instead of Brown. But anyhow that's beside the point.

So, at Pembroke in those days there was a separate [5:00] campus which was where the halls of residence were. There was a separate library, here was a separate alumnae building it was called but it was an administration building, and a gym. But we took our classes at the main campus and, of course, being a science student I was over there most of the time taking classes there.

KK: In my own case, I was the first person in my family to go to university and there wasn't a background in the village that I came from of people going to university. I mean, would you say that was the same for you?

CC: No. I don't know if you remember when I retired and Howard was making these comments – he said I was the first person in my family to go to university – I wasn't. I was the first to graduate since 16-something-or-other when there was a reverend who came over on a ship from

England. But my father went to – my family I think had financial problems, really, you know, and American universities can be quite expensive. My father went to two colleges because his mother wanted him to be a minister the first year and then he went to Ohio State for two years but he never finished. And I think it just got harder and harder for him to work and keep up with his studies and also Ohio State is a big athletic school and they wanted him because he was a good track runner. And his father also went to a teaching college but didn't finish either so there's a sort of history. And my grandmother went to – on the other side of the family – went to a ladies college, a two year college, in Maryland, KeeMar College, and she actually then went to Columbia but didn't finish. So there is a tradition of starting but not finishing.

KK: But not finishing. That's okay. Well that was in the '60s so it was quite a time in political history. I mean, did that impact upon your studies or do you remember that being –

CC: Oh, I remember a great deal about it. I mean, the first thing, of course, when I arrived was the election, in which Kennedy was eventually elected, but I was surprised at how much interest there was on campus. People, you know, campaigning and what have you, about the election. And then there was – you know, we started out as a college that was under parietal rules and strict rules about what behavior and proper stuff etcetera. But the sort of hippie revolution was coming in at the same time that there was the civil rights movement coming in. And people were demanding things, you know, or saying this is not right, we should get more involved in things. Some of my friends, well one of my friends I know went to the sit-ins in the south. I don't know if you remember the sit-ins?

KK: Yeah.

CC: Where people were demanding desegregation of restaurants and snack bars and what have you. I couldn't ever do anything like that because I couldn't afford to – I had a hard enough time affording the bus trip home when I wanted to go home. But I did join a Quaker group and, you know, they were all very much involved in civil rights. And, you know, the university eventually partnered with a black college in the south and, you know, there were attempts to sort of help out with education.

And then, of course, we had the assassination of Kennedy which was in my – it was 1963 so that was actually the last year, beginning of the last year, at university. And, actually, I wrote an essay about that which is in the yearbook, *Brun Mael*, the yearbook. Because my friend was [10:00] the editor of the yearbook so she commissioned several articles. But that, of course, was a terrible shock to everybody. I can still remember details of that day when we found out something had happened.

But I think also that period of time there was also hanging over us the bomb. The atomic bomb, which had been a worry all through my childhood. I mean, I can remember we used to have practice against – hiding under desks or what have you in grade school and high school. And so I joined an organization called the Student Peace Union in my first year. I have no idea what it was. I went to the first meeting, there were four of us, and then they asked me to go to Boston to a meeting up there so I went up to Boston and when I got there it turned out the meeting had been cancelled and so I dropped out. It didn't seem to be managing to get itself going but this was an anti – a disarmament organization that I was involved in. So I don't think I got involved in anything political. I mean, really, from then on it was a matter of working hard on my studies but also I had various jobs because I had to make up the rest of my room and board and buy, of course, clothing and all the essentials of life that you have on the side. So I was pretty much engrossed in trying to keep up with everything.

KK: And on the academic side, did you think the standard of teaching and everything was good?

CC: Oh yes. It was great. I mean, Brown is a great place. Well, there are people who come from all over to go there because of the liberal arts education, you see? Which is something we don't really have in this country as much. As a matter of fact, is it Emma Watson who was in Harry Potter films?

KK: Yes.

CC: She went to Brown University. You know, because it's sort of well-known for liberal arts. And although I was doing the bachelor in science in biology – I was the first person to do that in the first year – I still had a chance to do art courses, creative writing. I'm trying to remember

what else. I've just written it down here. Oh, Professor McLoughlin's famous course Social and Intellectual History of the USA. Yes, those were the main ones that I was able to do. So, yes. It's a good place for teaching, I should say.

KK: And a good broad curriculum which I think is helpful to everyone because it's good to have something that you can think about that's not your main focus and then you have to switch off a little bit so it helps your studies. We should maybe just cover before we go any further, what you actually did subsequent to Brown.

CC: Oh. Right. Okay. Well, that's a long time later but yes, I went on to do a PhD at Harvard in biophysics which was actually not a department but a committee – Committee on Higher Degrees in Biophysics. And I had a studentship from the National Science Foundation for five years which may seem excessive but the first two years of the course were actually taking lectures. The people in that course came from various backgrounds. Some were physicists, a few of us were biologists, and so forth. And so we took courses at Harvard for two years, started doing research and we didn't really start our research full time until the third year, and finished up.

My PhD supervisor, who was at Mass General Hospital then, got a position at Yale so I moved to Yale during this time and helped him to move his lab. I finished up at Yale in, [15:00] oh, I forget the name of the department I was in. It was actually a unit. I think it was connected to dermatology. And then I did a post-doc in Oxford in the chemistry department with Jeremy Knowles who became the dean of Harvard a few years later, believe it or not. The dean of the graduate school of arts and sciences. And I was in Oxford for two and a half years which is where I met my husband, Alan. Then Alan said he wanted to work with a certain person at Yale so back to Yale we went again. And I was working at another lab in Yale, post-docing with David Papermaster and that's where I started working on the eye because that was one of David's main interests I guess. And then we started looking for jobs all over the UK and America. America first, and we just couldn't find, you know, both of us in the same place. Either I'd be in Saint Louis and he'd be in Boston or vice versa, that sort of thing. But we spent a lot of time looking for jobs and decided it would be better to come back to the UK.

And so we came to Glasgow. It's a bit complicated explaining how it seemed like a good deal at the time but we thought it was going to be temporary and as I said we've been here for over forty years now. Alan is Glasgow University professor in chemistry and I'm at Strathclyde University so we have a good city because there are several different places you can do your work. And I was at Strathclyde – I was a senior lecturer which is equivalent to associate professor in the American system and I was there for twenty eight years and retired when I was 65. How's that for a precis?

KK: Well you've spoken very positively about your time at Brown and Pembroke but were there any low points? I assume that academically you were fine.

CC: Academically it was hard. They were aware that I had to earn money. So the first year they gave me what they thought was an easy job – being on bells, which meant I was like a receptionist in my hall of residence, in the dorm. And we didn't have individual phones in those days so if somebody came in and said they wanted to, you know, call up somebody, I would ring the bell and upstairs the bell would ring on that floor and so answering it tell so and so that her friend is here. But I got sixty cents an hour for that. And the trouble was people kept talking to me. I couldn't really, you know, do any work while I was sitting there at this desk. I did that, I babysat for Professor McLoughlin's kids. I noticed other people had mentioned Professor McLoughlin and how wonderful he was. I babysat for his kids. Somebody must have recommended me because he lived right behind the hall of residence, behind Andrews in a big house there and I got to peek in his books while I was there. He had a wonderful collection. Oh, and I even had to take attendance in one of the courses. They made me sit way in the back, everybody had assigned seats, and I was supposed to take attendance to see who was there. That was Bio 1 which was difficult to stay awake in, way in the back of the room.

And then I spent two years working in the cataloging department at the John Hay Library which is a big beautiful old library. They now have another library called the Rockefeller Library. But it was, I found it enjoyable. I liked the John Hay Library. Since I had so many labs, you know, I wasn't able to – they have [20:00] other people working in the library too but if they were in the arts they wouldn't have the same problem of scheduling. But I was working in the cataloging department. I was in charge of checking out various books in the special collections.

They would be waiting for me when I came in so it didn't matter as long as I got my ten hours a week in I would just, you know, have a little time card, I would come and check in and do a bit more work.

And final year I got some funding from my thesis supervisor, very nicely. I don't know if he was supposed to do that. And I was also a teaching assistant. I taught labs. And still, at the end, I ran out of money. I went to Miss Tonks, the assistant dean, and she gave me a hundred dollars, said "You don't have to pay this back but if you can someday, please do." Which, of course, I have. And I didn't have anything to wear for graduation and a friend of mine, believe it or not, bought a dress for me. I didn't realize she was going to do that. I had gone to her room to try some things on because she was around the same size. But a couple days later I found this box on my bed and it said "There is a Santa Claus, Miss Converse."

So I had a hard time because of the finance, you know. This was really the hard thing. I think I was missing on a lot of university activities because I was so busy working away on jobs and things. I didn't go to a single football match, I didn't go to a lot of the other campus events, because I was just too busy, you know, doing things.

KK: It sounds as if, you know, the college was quite supportive in some ways. Were there other mechanisms in place to support freshmen, to support new students? Did you have relationships with students in other years?

CC: Well I was assigned a – I can't remember her name. I was assigned this lovely lady who was a fourth year student who was on the cover of Glamour magazine – a couple of months before I started I was – oh my goodness, you know? She was obviously a very attractive woman who was socially into things and what have you. She was very nice. She and a couple of her friends took their freshmen out to dinner one night and they were quite nice but I didn't keep up with her. Yes. Just trying to think.

KK: Did you tend to make friends –

CC: It was strange you see, because I was doing the bachelor of science in biology and they had just started the course. And I don't think they thought it through very carefully because it said

that you had to do twelve one-semester courses in biology or related subjects. But Biology 1 and Biology 4 were required courses which were prerequisite for anything else in the biology department. So the question was, how could I do all of these things? So my supervisor at that time was Professor Chase, Herman B. Chase, and he put me in some post-graduate courses. So, here I was a freshman and I did a seminar on genetics with a whole bunch of people who sat around and smoked pipes and cigars and cigarettes. It was a very smoky seminar. And so I did that seminar series. And I had another course with Carl Pfaffmann from the psychology department, he's a physiological psychologist, he's dead now of course. But he eventually became vice president of Rockefeller University. He was a very well-known scientist and it was a very interesting course. And again I was the only freshman in the course, most of the people were post-graduate. It was fascinating. But because I was doing this unusual degree I sort of got to know people in the biology department [25:00] quite well, I think, as a result – post graduate students and what have you.

KK: And what about in your hall of residence where you were staying? You would meet people

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CC: Oh, well, yeah. Somebody else mentioned this. I was in Metcalf most of the time, which was regarded as the somewhat hippie-ish, oddball sort of place I think by some people. The first year, and third and fourth year, I was in Metcalf. Second year I – sophomores are the bottom of the heap as far as rooms and I ended up sharing an emergency double which means a single room with two people in it, with a girl I didn't know very well, for a year. That was fairly uncomfortable. But otherwise my friends were mostly from Metcalf or from the biology course. And I'm still good friends with somebody who was my lab partner in biology a lot of the time.

KK: And would you say that the student body was quite mixed in terms of its makeup?

CC: No! Well, this is what one of the questions – mostly, almost entirely white. Probably a lot of upper class, or at least middle class people. I think Brown is now trying – well, I know because they keep sending me letters asking for donations and things like that. They are trying to get to be entirely need-blind. That is, somebody applies and we accept them because they're good

enough, we're not going to load them with debt, we're going to pay for them. They're becoming more multi-racial, I think, than they were before. We had one black student that I knew of. Strangely, there were three Africans – Nigerians, I think, all three of them. There was a program started by Eisenhower to educate Africans and these people had scholarships and I got to know, well, one of them fairly well. But in general, it was not a cross-section of the American population. I mean, this is something which I think is good, which they're working on. I did feel sometimes very much like I was surrounded by rich people, to tell you the truth. The kind of clothes they wore, the kind of activities they had – going off to Europe on a quick trip and all that sort of stuff – was things those days I just couldn't afford.

KK: Shall we stop this?

CC: It's still working by the way. Twenty eight minutes have been recorded so far. Okay. Okay, we'll keep going.

KK: I'll carry on then.

CC: I wonder if I should close this little thing. Well, it seems to be working. I'll let it go. It's okay.

KK: You've already mentioned that, I think you said the associate dean was very helpful to you when you were running short of money. Do you have any memories of academic staff or administrative staff that –

CC: Well let me see. Well, the biology, of course – yes. There were a lot of good people. So interestingly, I was thinking about the representation of women. There was only one female professor in biology. There were a number of postgraduate students who were female but most of the staff were male – the academic staff. I mentioned Professor McLoughlin. That was the hardest course in a way because I didn't understand – that was my only history course and he used to give us a thousand pages of reading a week but I didn't realize you didn't have to read it all, just because he said "Here's a good book and here's a good book." So I labored through all

of these, all of this reading and still got a C in the course which was my only C. But it was fascinating. [30:00]

The art courses were good. I had one on American art and one on Renaissance art and the writing course was taught by Edwin Honig who, I think he was a poet. But anyhow, it was interesting writing and I got involved in that. I'm trying to think what other people – Oh. I forgot to mention I also spent some time helping out backstage at the theatre group called Sock and Buskin. Brown has quite a reputation for producing actors and writers and people who do theatre and what have you. And it was interesting also.

I'm just trying to think what other – Oh, and I did my thesis with Paul R. Gross who I think was only at Brown for a few years. Went on to MIT or Harvard. I forget which. That was interesting too, you know, doing a research project. It was on long-life forms of RNA in developing sea urchin eggs. So it involved a lot of – and then I spent the summer after I graduated at the Woods Hole Marine Biology Lab which now has a connection with Brown. I think people can do degrees there at MBL. But that was an absolutely fascinating place. It's full of everybody in science you could possibly think of who goes there for the summer. You're sort of falling over Nobel Prize Winners and what have you. So that was interesting.

Some of the jobs I had were interesting. I guess it's not relevant to this though but having to work in the summer, I mean, I also spent a summer as an assistant in the lab of a small hospital in Maine doing all sorts of tests and helping with patients and what have you. And I think I learned to pipette faster there than anywhere else because I was always doing tests in a great hurry.

KK: Was Brown, Pembroke, did it have a lot of traditions? Did it have like dinners you had to attend or things you did or didn't do or missed out on because you didn't have the money or –

CC: Well, fortunately we didn't have any sororities. They did have fraternities. But it was sort of even steven. You know, some of the men joined fraternities. The independent houses were regarded as, you know, good places.

KK: Are these like clubs?

CC: No they were halls of residences as well. A fraternity, most of them have Greek names. My father was in one at Ohio State as a matter of fact, and the idea was it was a bunch of men living together and become – it's almost like a club – in later life they might rely on each other, etcetera. But Pembroke didn't have that. We did have traditions like Father-Daughter Weekend, Mother-Daughter Weekend, which could be a bit awkward. When I was there I didn't invite my stepfather. It was kind of hopeless. My mother came to Mother-Daughter Weekend and embarrassed me by insisting on putting on knee socks and her old corduroy skirt and her walking shoes where everybody else was all dressed up. She wanted to walk all around Providence and look at everything.

Yes, and there were occasions. A lot of them which I think I probably missed. In the first year I was invited by a boy that I had just met to go to the Naval ROTC dinner dance. Which, you know, Reserve Officers Training Corps. He was this young chap and it was horrible because he didn't dance [35:00] and he was very shy and we just sat on the side most of the time and watched the older people. But I presume there were a lot of activities like that, you know, that I was unaware of. There were clubs of all sorts, there were organizations, there were religious organizations of various sorts, and clubhouses. I did sing in the university choir for a short while. Things were going on all the time.

KK: Did you feel that as a woman that you were encouraged to do everything that you could possibly have wanted to do or –

CC: Good question. Generally, yes, academically. There was this ridiculous parietal system at the time and also a very much – what I mean is the university's feeling, or the college's feeling was that we were still children, you see, and we had to be watched. And this applied to the girls only, I think. I'm sure the men were not held to all these restrictions. If we went out and were out after 10:00 we had to sign out, you see. We had to be back by 12:30 or something like that and the doors were locked, and if we were later we'd have to go ring a bell around in the main building and get let in. But you just could not stay out. I mean, there was actually somebody who almost didn't graduate because the last week before graduation she fell asleep in a boyfriend's room and did not come back at all and the university –

KK: That was frowned upon.

CC: - was thinking of not graduating her. I think they finally relented. Everybody was very upset about this. So we had the parietal rules, no boys allowed upstairs except for two afternoons a year when the doors had to be open and if there were two people in the room there had to be three feet on the floor.

KK: That was a written rule, was it?

CC: It was a written rule!

KK: Wow, all right.

CC: And then there were other rules that nobody paid any attention to like, girls may not wear trousers in the street and may not smoke in public, this sort of stuff which were completely ignored. When I first arrived we had these things called demitasse parties where some poor professor would be dragged over and the house head who was usually an elderly lady would be the hostess and a bunch of us would come along and sit around and drink little cups of coffee and make polite conversation with this poor person. And, you know, it was all gauged to keeping us in line, making sure that we were proper young ladies.

But things were going on, of course, behind the scenes. We even had somebody down the hall from me, I'm sure other people heard about this, was married. But her parents didn't know it, you see, and since you had to stay in a hall of residence unless you were married, she was living down the hall from us but she was half of the time visiting her husband, it was elsewhere on campus. So there were all sorts of strange things. I don't know. It's hard to say. Blatant hostility or discrimination as compared to covert it's hard to work out.

KK: Well, you've already mentioned that there weren't really women on the academic staff to speak of. So there's a sort of lack of role model. That was the case in probably most institutions.

CC: I remember there was a number of postgraduate students. I took the course on electricity and magnetism in the physics department and there were three of us. Three females, I think, in about fifty or so young men, and that was a bit awkward in a way. The teaching assistant in the lab was a woman and she had a baby and so she would sort of come in and tell us what we're doing that day and then whiz off again. [40:00] The people who lived near her were supposed to keep an eye on the baby when she was in teaching but the older man who was the teaching assistant in there was quite – “Now, you girls,” you know? I remember one time he said to the boys he was going to tell them a mnemonic to remember the colors on resistors but he wasn't going to tell the girls and he took them all aside and he told them this presumably slightly off color mnemonic and we didn't get to hear it!

KK: Not even from the boys?

CC: No!

KK: So you were at a disadvantage then.

CC: Yes, a definite disadvantage. But that was unusual that, you know. We had a lot of teaching assistants that were female. I don't know. There's strange things sometimes, you know, that you hear about.

KK: Well, sort of jumping ahead to today really, you know, you obviously still keep in touch with Brown. Do you think things have changed for the better or –

CC: Well, this is a big question. Certainly, the parietal rules, I've been thinking they're really more designed for the parents than for the students because everybody knew what was really going on. I remember one time going down the hallway, knocking on a friend's door, and this boy opened the door so they were getting upstairs even though they weren't supposed to. People were, you know, ignoring aspects. We also had rules – We had a woman teaching us etiquette more or less. If someone asked you, “Could you pass the salt?” You're supposed to pass the salt and pepper and that sort of stuff. How to carry a suitcase.

And we had, we had – Oh, you won't believe this. We had posture pictures. The gym people, the physical education people, decided that their job was not just keeping us fit but making sure that we didn't have any postural abnormalities. So all of us in our freshman year had to go and have our pictures taken wearing nothing but our underpants. So you had this series of pictures, not front view, just side view and back view, of all of us. And there were all these rumors, of course, of who was actually getting to see these pictures. And then you got called in and you were told, "Oh, well your posture has got a problem here and there, you should do such and so, and stand up straighter and what have you." One girl I knew was awarded the top prize or something, you know, was told that she had perfect posture. We all had something wrong. You know, this sort of tampering in aspects of your life that you might think are not really the job of the university. Very strange. I'm sure they don't do that sort of thing nowadays.

KK: It's all to do with this attitude of looking after your whole, kind of, well being.

CC: Oh, yeah. Well, we were children, you see. We were children. And of course, this is another strange thing. When I turned up I was 18. I had several friends who were 16. And there was one girl who I had as a lab partner for a little while who was 14. They had gone to accelerated school systems, you see. The 14 year old, both her parents were doctors and she wanted to be a doctor and she actually dropped out for a year I think to grow up a bit maybe. But I felt, you know, that I missed out somehow because I hadn't. You know, I had sort of gone along slowly through to university, through high school, but I could've been there, in the long run it probably doesn't matter but it was strange.

KK: And how have you kept in touch with Brown?

CC: How what?

KK: How have you kept in touch?

CC: Well, for a while I was doing interviews. Brown has a policy that everybody who applies should be interviewed if possible and there were people applying from Scotland. Very few but I

did interview them. I finally told them [45:00] I think I'm getting too old to do this. I have so little contact with the university anymore. I was still in touch with some of my friends, but only a few. Only a few. I mean, some of them unfortunately have passed away. I missed the 50th reunion which was a couple years ago. And they produced a booklet I wrote something for. It was nice to read about those people who actually wrote something, it was only a minority who actually wrote something I think. But I tried to keep up with - I did enjoy the place. It's a beautiful place, you know, a university on a hill overlooking the city and what have you. I did enjoy it.

KK: Well you said, for example, that you repaid the \$100.

CC: Yes!

KK: When were you in a financial position to be able to do that?

CC: Oh, well, I think – I don't remember how we made it. I would send her a little bit every year just to help out.

KK: I take it many of your family attended Brown?

CC: No! You know, Kathy, this – oh, dear. That's a difficult one. We all had financial problems. I probably had higher test results on the exams you take in the college boards and what have you. I probably had higher test results than they did. My next sister went to University of Maine because we were living in Maine by then and we still were not well off financially. And my brother never finished college. He went to a technical college. He never finished it but he –

KK: In line with the male line in the family obviously? In tune with the male line in the family, not finishing things. Not finishing, yes.

CC: Well, you know, it wasn't – I won't hypothesize that. I don't think that various men correspond to each other, can be lumped together like that. My youngest sister went to Boston

University and she, I mean, both of my sisters dropped out for a while and then went back because they couldn't manage it all in one go but they both graduated eventually. And my sister has a master's degree. But no one else in my family has gone to Brown or Harvard or Yale. At least of my immediate family.

KK: So looking back on your time at Brown, Pembroke, is there anything you would've changed if you could've done that?

CC: I don't know. It's very difficult to say that. I think that I enjoyed the course very much. It was hard. I was a shy person. If I was more outgoing I might have, I might have gotten involved in more activities. I couldn't afford anything, you know, if I went out to dinner my friend had to pay for it whatever it was. The only alternative would have been to take a year out and work perhaps, which would've been difficult I think. I did manage by saving some money I made a lot of my own clothes which I think probably marked me out as being a – This is a strange story but a woman down the hall from me put a sign up saying that she had a pair of ski trousers for sale and I asked her how much they were because they were my size. And she said, "Oh, you couldn't afford that Carolyn." People must have gone, "Oh, there she goes in her homemade clothes." I don't know. I don't know. [50:00]

KK: Well it seems that academically, at least, it gave you the kind of education that you needed for your future career.

CC: Oh it was super.

KK: But in that sense there was nothing about that aspect that you would've changed?

CC: It was flexible too. Brown is quite a flexible place. They allowed people to make their own courses up. That is, I had one friend who did French and Italian. Another did chemistry and Spanish. You know, you could make up your own degree courses as well as anything else. Yes, it was enjoyable. I mean, I took seminars, I went to plays, you know, and participated in helping plan the [unintelligible]. It was an enjoyable thing.

KK: An enjoyable time. Are there any other sort of recollections that you'd like to talk about?

CC: I told you about –

KK: Well, one thing we haven't covered, I see a question here, one aspect, did you have a favorite spot on campus? Somewhere that you particularly liked? You obviously said you liked the actual location of the campus but –

CC: Well, it was difficult in that classes started at 8:00 in the morning, not 9:00. I remember when Dr. Gross, Professor Gross first arrived he said, "Well! I'm not going to teach one of those." And of course he immediately found himself teaching one. And we had Saturday classes, Saturday morning. So you can imagine trying to get from Brown, from Pembroke down to the main campus when it snowed the night before and it's three blocks away in deep snow to get to an 8:00 class. I don't know if that's still the case. I loved the library.

KK: What was special about the library?

CC: Oh, it was just this old mahogany sort of place. Enormous tables and what have you. And there was a separate biology library. As we did at Strathclyde, it had books on reserve so we didn't have to buy all the books you could take them out. No body else seemed to realize this. I managed to avoid buying a lot of books. Strange things at that time. Convocations were really weird. They had us get together, the entire Pembroke, in one assembly hall room to hear a speaker once a week.

KK: Once a week?

CC: Once a week. Now, the men didn't have that because they couldn't fit them all in the equivalent building over at the main campus so they only had every other week. And they'd have the freshmen and the juniors one week and – but we had to go every week. If you had a science class you'd have it until 12:00, you'd have to go running back, go sit in this convocation where attendance was taken, listening to somebody talk about the role of women in the world or some

such thing, and then rush off to get your lunch and off to your lab at 1:00. It was crazy. And of course, one of the nice things about American universities which I guess isn't perhaps needed here yet, is that they provided jobs for people on campus. So, you know, the library was staffed by all these students checking out books and putting things back on shelves. The people who waited on tables in the cafeteria were students also. But you can imagine they had to rush back and get ready, stop, get ready, and off to their class too. One time I had this green hand come around the front of me. Turned out it was an art student who hadn't a chance to clean up after her – so, what else did I write? How are we doing on time? Are we –

KK: We're nearly an hour.

CC: Right, well, I think we're sort of – I'm just trying to think. Student council. Student Peace Union. Quaker meetings. Community work. Oh, yeah, I couldn't figure out what organization it was. It was probably the Friends or some other religious organization but we went and painted bits of people's houses down in the poor part of Providence [55:00]. And I only did that a few times but I can't find any reference to it. I tried looking online. But it was some sort of a community activity sort of thing. I didn't really leave Providence very much because I didn't have a car. It was only if somebody happened to be doing something and I got involved and went along.

Yeah so I talked about that. The liberal arts courses. Renaissance art. One of the strangest things that happened, perhaps I can mention this at the end, is Professor Honig's creative writing course. I tended to write things based on my own life and what have you, and near the end of the course I wrote an essay called "On Incompatibility" about my stepfather and mother's relationship and I didn't get it back to a while. And then a girl down the hall who told me she was involved in a literary magazine and they wanted to publish it, you see. Professor Honig had handed it into the literary magazine and said, "Here's something you might be interested in." I said, "Well, I really should check with my mother first to make sure this is okay since it's all about her." So I sent it off to my mother. In those days you didn't have copies online and what have you. Sent it off to her and she wrote back and said that she was going to get divorced from Walter and she'd put it in as evidence because there was a court case! So I didn't get it back and never got it published. But I did get it back years later. I had to go up from Woods Hole to Maine

and, I know this sounds crazy, but participate in this hearing in the court house. And of course they said, “Well you’ve written this essay, haven’t you?” And the lawyer of the other side said, “What’s it called?” And I said, “On Incompatibility.” And he said, “That’s not a basis for divorce in the state we live in.” So that was my writing experience. It’s good enough to be published but not –

KK: Not in evidence, yeah.

CC: It was fun. I mean, I enjoyed writing it.

KK: But in the end your career did go the way you wanted it to go and you’re happy with your accomplishments in your career?

CC: Well, mmm. I don’t know if I should go into later life too much but I did have some problems that slowed me down a bit.

KK: But not in terms of, I mean, you wrote a lot of papers, you were expert in your field, so you did achieve a lot.

CC: Well, according to my family I’m the only scientist. I mean, that’s a strange thing. My grandmother studied art, my mother studied art, and as you know I’m doing a little art now, but I decided to do science. And I don’t think there’s any other – it’s hard to say. Most of the people in my family, I mean, my father had a cousin who was a distinguished biblical scholar. He was a Quaker also, and he wrote books on the New Testament and so forth and was dean of – so there were other educated people in the family. But they were mostly farmers and my mother’s family were all recent, fairly recent immigrants, you know, from various parts of Europe, so they had a hard time just getting established. Well, thank you Kathy.

KK: I think we’ve covered most of it.

CC: Yeah, let me see if there's anything here I wanted to say. I didn't mention – I was talking about ice skates here. Did I mention that?

KK: No.

CC: To bring ice skates to class – what do you remember most fondly about your time here? We had compulsory physical education, of course, too, for the first two years. We had to pass a swimming test in order to graduate. Except if you really got desperate and pleaded with them you'd get away with it but you had [1:00:00] – it was a very easy swimming test. But we had to attend physical education classes and I opted in in my sophomore year, I think, to do ice skating. They had just built a nice ice skating rink at the University. And so I would come to class with my ice skates tied together and hanging over my shoulder, go off and go ice skating for an hour and then come back for another class. So that was sort of nice. Some of the nice things you could do. But it was funny how they had so many rules and so many things you had to do. Learning how to be a proper young lady at the same time which many people objected to. It was interesting.

KK: I think from what you're saying the key thing to me is that the breadth of the education and the fact the you could've gone down different paths and you obviously chose to follow a given route but you had the breadth to, from which to be able to follow any career or in biological science.

CC: It is a sort of extravagant way of educating people. For example, if you want to go to medical school or law school you, first of all, do four years of liberal arts then you go to medical school or law school which is why – I know my sister had to go see the GP when she was here visiting me she said, "My goodness that GP, that doctor was young," you know. Here it's an undergraduate course. A bit longer, but it's an undergraduate course, so people have to make up their minds a lot earlier, what they're going to do and be and so forth. But thank you very much.

KK: It's okay. Let's hope it's there.

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