

Transcript – Mary Bernadette Banigan '31

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Interviewer: Jennifer Levine
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Track 1

Jennifer Levine: [00:00] Hello. My name is Jennifer Levine. Today is November 29th, 1982. I'm presently in Providence, Rhode Island, interviewing Mary Banigan, a graduate of Pembroke Class of 1931.

(break in tape)

JL: Ms. Banigan, where were you born?

Mary Bernadette Banigan: Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

JL: And when?

MBB: Nineteen ten.

JL: Nineteen ten. What was your father's profession?

MBB: He was concerned with heating and steam-fitting and that sort of thing. He had been educated in Bryant & Stratton's and specialized in bookkeeping. But the salary in Rhode Island, at that time, was so miserable in that particular area that he finally went to a shop and devoted three years to apprenticeship – and made, eventually, even in that period, more than three times what he could make as a bookkeeper.

JL: Wow. Did your mother have a profession?

MBB: No.

JL: She just... And how...?

MBB: My mother never worked outside of the home.

JL: Uh-huh. And what was the extent of her education?

MBB: Actually, I'm not sure. Because the grading system was very different from – it is today, when she was in school. And how many grades or classes, because that's what they were called, she completed, I don't know. She eventually, after her mother died, left school in order to keep house for her [02:00] father and brothers and sister.

JL: Uh-huh. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

MBB: I have a sister. I had a brother but he died in infancy.

JL: Did...? Is she older or younger than you?

MBB: Younger.

JL: Younger. Did she also go to college?

MBB: She went to nurses' training school.

JL: OK. Let's see. Where did you go to college – I mean, to high school. Sorry, sorry. [laughs]

MBB: To Classical High School, in Providence.

JL: In Providence? And you went to elementary school in Providence?

MBB: Well, in East Providence, and in Massachusetts also.

JL: Did you have any dominating academic interests, while you were in high school?

MBB: I think I was always interested in the English language, written and spoken. [03:00]
Because my father coached me and inspired me, from before I went to school.

JL: Uh-huh. Did you have any personal relationships with your teachers, in high school? Or were they mainly just teacher-students? Or were you more friendly?

MBB: Well, there were a couple of teachers that very obviously liked young people. Therefore, of course, I identified with them. It was a high school in which you were given your assignment, which you took home and did. There were quizzes every day. [04:00] There were quarterly examinations. The teachers didn't have a great amount of time to socialize with us. They were busy all the time they were in school and, I assume, a great deal of the time that they were out of school. Because during the last years in my teaching, when I taught down there, I had, I suppose, many of the problems that my teachers had. I was busy planning lessons or correcting papers or getting them re-corrected by students, all the time.

JL: Did these teachers support your decision to go to college?

MBB: Oh, yes.

JL: Let's see. Did many of your childhood friends or high school friends also go to college?

MBB: Classical was almost entirely, [05:00] at that time, college preparatory. We had three languages plus the other academic subjects. Four years of Latin, three of either Greek or German, two of French. You wouldn't probably have taken that course unless you expected to go to

college. If you couldn't do a creditable job in languages and algebra and geometry, you might have been advised to leave.

JL: So Classical wasn't just the neighborhood high school? No? Was it a private type school?

MBB: No. It's a public school. It always was a public school. But it was [06:00] THE public school in Rhode Island that was, I would say, almost exclusively, at that time, college preparatory. There were several other fine high schools that had college preparatory courses. They also had business courses and what might be called today general. Classical wasn't in that class. It was college preparatory.

JL: Were there more males than females?

MBB: Yes.

JL: A lot?

MBB: You know, it was something that I never counted, to be truthful, or thought too much about. It was evident, however, that there were more boys than girls in most of the classes. But I, [07:00] again, didn't have time to count them.

JL: And did you sense any tension, as being...?

MBB: None.

JL: None? Let's see. Why did you decide to go to college and, mainly, at Pembroke? Did any other thought cross your mind, as of not going to college?

MBB: No, never did. When I took the intelligence tests and achievement tests which they gave, when I was in the eighth grade in grammar school, I was advised by the person who came to speak with each one of us after the test results were in to go to [08:00] college.

JL: Mm-hmm. And your family was in full support of that?

MBB: Yes, they were.

JL: So why did you choose Pembroke, in particular?

MBB: One reason was that several of my relatives had gone – and had done well. Another was that the income in the family was entirely up to my father and I realized that I had to do some work, if possible, as I went to college. And it's easier to find a job if you're in your own area. It was also easier without the added financial burden [09:00] of dormitory or other costs, if I lived away from home.

JL: So did you even look at any other schools?

MBB: No.

JL: No?

MBB: I didn't look at the local colleges, which I could have attended.

JL: Did you have coed classes, while you were at Pembroke?

MBB: Oh, yes.

JL: Yes. Are there any courses which stick out in your mind the most, as your favorite – or anything unique about them?

MBB: There were outstanding professors. Professor Hastings was one –

JL: What did he teach?

MBB: – was in the English Department. I suppose I already wanted to specialize in English, before I went to college. The English [10:00] Department was very strong at Brown – always has been, as far as I know. There were other people who were very good teachers, also. One was the person in charge of Geology, Professor Brown. Another was Professor Snell, who was head of the Botany Department. Another was Alexander [MacPhail?], who was in the Education Department and an outstanding authority across the country in tests and measurements. [11:00] Those were only a few. There were a great many – very able, outstanding people.

JL: Well, you first mentioned Professor Hastings. Was he a good orator or a good lecturer?

MBB: No, he wasn't. He was a very scholarly person. He, as I recall, quoted outstanding authorities that he had worked under at some time or another. He wasn't a great lecturer. But he demanded a great deal of his students.

JL: OK. Were most of your profe– of your professors male?

MBB: They all were.

JL: They all were male. Even of the year of your graduation, still all [12:00] professors were male?

MBB: Yes. That doesn't mean that there weren't any women on the faculty. But I had no female professor.

JL: Uh-huh. What courses did you take?

MBB: I majored in English. And I took as much sociology as there was at Brown at that time, which wasn't a great deal. There were, however, some very good men in the Sociology Department. They realized that there should be more courses in that field. As I said, I was very much impressed by geology, [13:00] and still am. One of the outstanding professors that I had

was Charles Robinson, who was in the field of history and archeology. He had done a great deal of digging in Greece and the Greek islands. He was a very human, pleasant person. He was one of the professors mentioned in *Gentlemen Under the Elms*.

JL: Mm-hmm. Is *Gentlemen Under the Elms* a book?

MBB: It's a book that came out last year.

JL: OK.

MBB: It's... [14:00] A summary of the scholarly attainments and the social qualities of quite a few of the professors who were there when I was.

JL: Uh-huh. Well... Let's see. As an English major, was English teaching one of your only options? Or...?

MBB: I wouldn't say so. There were some people who were interested in radio work and who went into that. It was before television, of course. There were several who were interested in retail selling and had interviews [15:00] in Macy's and Lord & Taylor's and other New York and Boston stores. I had five years of that kind of work, in one of the finest stores in Providence, Cherry & Webb's. I was not interested in making a career of it.

JL: Mm-hmm. Let's see. While you were at Pembroke and you knew your major, were you assigned an advisor?

MBB: No.

JL: Did you latch onto someone in the department?

MBB: No.

JL: It was mainly independent?

MBB: Yes.

JL: Were you more friendly or did you have a closer relationship with the professors and administrators than at high school, for instance?

MBB: Yes. I think [16:00] there were more opportunities. Because undergraduates were invited to teas, for one reason or another, and met professors and their wives frequently, in a more relaxed, social atmosphere than the classroom. It was a better relationship, in that sense, than high school was.

JL: Did you know the dean personally, of the college?

MBB: I would say yes. I had occasions, for one reason or another, to request an interview, at different times, with Dean Morris. And she [17:00] was always very gracious to me. I liked her. And years later, when I had occasion once to call her on the telephone, she identified me immediately, which surprised me very much. Because she was a very busy person and I didn't think I had made that much of an impression. In fact, at first, I thought that she had me confused with a first cousin, who had gone through a few years earlier. And I mentioned my name rather distinctly, again. She said, "I know, Mary –"

JL: Huh.

MBB: "– who you are."

JL: That's funny.

MBB: She was a very nice person.

JL: [18:00] Did you have a regulated day at school? Like did it...?

MBB: Well, I think that we had a regulated quarter or semester, which was defined by the reading lists that we were given. And the time that we chose to go to the library and whether or not the books were in, all of those physical things, helped us to structure our quarter or semester. As for the day, I would say that it wasn't [19:00] structured strictly. I wouldn't have enjoyed Pembroke as much, if it had been as structured as high school or if it had been strictly structured. We were supposed to attend chapel in the morning – which meant that we were to be up and dressed, and later, when we became seniors, in our caps and gowns, and in the seat assigned at chapel. There was nobody coming into the chapel itself after the program had opened. If we were late and wanted to attend... And oftentimes, there were those who, for one reason or another, an eight o'clock class, for example, or [20:00] a gym workout in basketball or some sport, would be late after a shower and dressing. They'd go upstairs, in Alumni hall, if they were determined to be present at that program.

JL: And during chapel, were there controversial subjects brought up? Or were they...?

MBB: Well, there were two of us invited, at one point, I think it was when I was a sophomore, the other student a junior, to discuss whether or not [21:00] chapel should be continued. I had the argument in favor of continuing it. My opponent had the argument to do away with it. I think that's about as controversial as I can recall. There were speakers, such as Norman Thomas, who spoke one year on Armistice Day, which is now Veterans' Day and, of course, was a candidate for the presidency on the Socialist ticket several times. That again, was controversial, I would say. There may have been many students [22:00] who did not approve of socialism. But I heard no bickering or rancor. We listened and agreed or disagreed in our own minds and dropped the issue.

JL: How long was it? An hour?

MBB: I recall that, that day, chapel did not occur in the morning as the first exercise. It came later in the morning, when, I suppose, they thought most of the students would be there. He was

an outstanding American and they wanted everybody who could to hear him. It may have lasted one [23:00] period, not longer.

JL: Is one period 50 minutes?

MBB: I would say yes. I've forgotten those little details. But I think it was about that.

JL: Did you have chapel every day?

MBB: We had it four days a week, as I recall, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, I think.

JL: And were you required to go?

MBB: Yes, we were.

JL: Did they keep a roll?

MBB: We were assigned a seat. There were monitors from our class, sophomores for sophomores, seniors for seniors. They had a certain number of students whose attendance they would take. We were allowed a certain number of cuts in a semester. [24:00] The chapel monitors were paid a very small stipend for their service. They had to be there.

JL: Do you remember the punishment if you did not attend, at all?

MBB: No. I never recall hearing that anybody was punished for it. I enjoyed chapel. The president of the university came and spoke, as I recall, once a semester. There were other professors who were popular, some of whom were very good speakers. Some had interests, very [25:00] particular interests, in their academic lives. There were some students who led some of the chapel exercises. I remember that Dean Morris was on sabbatical one year. She took a trip to Egypt. And the bursar conducted the chapel exercises. They were all experiences that left some kind of a mark on our minds, I'm sure. I recall somebody saying that the substitute dean wasn't

as effective [26:00] as the dean, although she liked her better as a person. And the answer came from another girl, “It just goes to show that the qualities that make a good dean may not necessarily be possessed by some person in another very high position,” you know. So that you learn something from all the experiences. At least that’s the way I felt toward my education, that everything in it taught me something.

JL: Mm-hmm. So... Did you go up to school in the morning and then come back about four o’clock? Or did you like come back for lunch?

MBB: No. I ate on campus. [27:00] At one point, I was in the second team in basketball, which I liked very much. I went up for an eight o’clock workout in the sport. Sometimes I would stay, if I had evening activities, right on through maybe ten or eleven o’clock at night. I was in varsity debating. And we had to practice a great deal, particularly before we were going to meet a challenger. We had one of the men in the English Department who gave a great deal of time to us as a coach. [28:00] And also, the father of one of the girls in the organization, who was a lawyer in town, gave us a great deal of time. Then when the varsity debates took place, ordinarily there would be three judges, agreed upon by the two colleges. And invariably, at least two out of the three would probably be lawyers, from around the state. That meant that we had to practice, we had to develop a great many questions, we had to meet the questions that we thought our opponents would ask. [29:00] So that we practiced quite a bit.

JL: Did you debate against any schools other than Brown?

MBB: Oh, yes. We debated against Boston University, the University of Maine, Rhode Island State, which is now the University of Rhode Island, Providence College, Brown, Colby. We tried not to meet so many people in debate that we couldn’t get our assignments done and [30:00] couldn’t pass our courses or something like that. But we went to those places. And they came to our campus. Again, it was a very worthwhile experience, I think, to meet the people from the other colleges.

JL: Did you have a successful team?

MBB: Very.

JL: Very?

MBB: Yes. Eventually, the team was admitted to Question Club.

JL: And that's...? Is that...?

MBB: Well, that's the club – I don't know whether they still have it or not – in which the president of each of the organizations was a member, in the senior year, wore a little gold pin studded with pearls –

JL: Oh, really?

MBB: – in the [31:00] form of a question.

JL: Uh-huh. That's nice. [31:04]

Track 2

JL: [00:00] Aside from the debating club and basketball team, were you involved in any other activities? I saw fistball somewhere. Think that's what it was.

MBB: Yes, I remember fistball. But I don't recall any competition –

JL: Can you explain what that is?

MBB: – in that sport.

JL: [laughs]

MBB: There's a net. And the girls play on either side of the net and hit the ball with their fists and try to keep it in the air.

JL: That's like today's volleyball.

MBB: That's right.

JL: Is it the same thing?

MBB: Yeah.

JL: Kind of?

MBB: Not exactly. They had to keep their fist closed. I think maybe, in some other sports, they use the open hand.

JL: Uh-huh. That's true. So were these sports very competitive?

MBB: [01:00] All sports at Pembroke were competitive. It was a very wholesome atmosphere of competition between classes and then, for the varsities, competition with the girls in other colleges.

JL: Mm-hmm. So did the second-team basketball play the other colleges?

MBB: No, they didn't. Second teams didn't play –

JL: Uh-huh. They played within...

MBB: – competitively. They played competitively on the campus but not with other colleges.

JL: Mm-hmm. Did you have uniforms and everything?

MBB: Everybody who took gym had a uniform. And that's what the people who were on the varsity teams and second teams wore in competition.

JL: Was gym required?

MBB: [02:00] Oh, yes.

JL: Yes? And what was your uniform, the gym uniform? Do you remember?

MBB: It was a heavy, dark brown serge, knicker-like pantsuit, with a step-in white blouse and a jersey, dark brown pullover, socks, and sneakers.

JL: Was gym held in Sayles Gym?

MBB: Yes.

JL: Uh-huh. Did the boys attend your games?

MBB: Sometimes –

JL: And di-?

MBB: – not –

JL: Not too...?

MBB: – always, certainly. [03:00] But they did attend, fathers, brothers, Brown boys, the competitive interclass exercises that were held. All of the equipment was used, boom, box, ropes. And there were girls in each class who tried very hard to excel in the straight gym program. They

did excel, some of them. Then once a year, there was competition among the classes, in the regular gym activities. [04:00] That was held at night. And then, of course, fathers, brothers, other gentlemen attended. When there was competition during the daytime, one didn't usually see men in the balconies. We did have some very fine swimmers. There was also a women's club downtown, with a pool. And that's where the Pembroke girls practiced. It's where the competitions were held, between classes and between colleges, for women.

JL: [05:00] Did Brown have a pool on campus, at that time?

MBB: Yes.

JL: Mm-hmm. So besides seeing the Brown students at like some sports activities, did you interact with them otherwise?

MBB: Well, I mentioned that we did debate against them.

JL: Right. And share class time.

MBB: Yes, absolutely.

JL: Did you ever – did you ever go to their library? Or did you mainly stay on the Pembroke reading room?

MBB: Their library was our library.

JL: Oh, OK. OK. So could they also use Pembroke?

MBB: If they had wanted to. If there was a book there that wasn't at the John Hay, [06:00] I'm sure they would have been welcome.

JL: Uh-huh. You said you ate on campus. Was that at one of the cafeterias? Or was...?

MBB: Well, it was the cafeteria in Alumnae Hall. And then there were two or three coffee shops in the area. We didn't eat in the dormitories.

JL: Uh-huh. Did the borders eat somewhere else?

MBB: I really couldn't say.

JL: Uh-huh. Well, like we have a meal plan –

MBB: Yes.

JL: – where you just take your ID and they stamp you in every time you eat. Did you just pay every time you went in to eat?

MBB: That's right.

JL: Oh. Let's see. [07:00] Were women's rights campaigns active on campus?

MBB: I don't recall that there was any organized campaigning for women's rights. In the debating society, there was a year when it seemed that we and the other women's colleges were all including the topic "Women's place is in the home." I recall that, as the topic for debate, when the year opened, ordinarily, in [08:00] men's or women's colleges, you discovered, as you received the first invitation to debate against a certain college, that they had selected, usually, a topic. They were evidently going to develop both sides, affirmative and negative. And with some college, they would be on one side, with another college, they'd be on the other side, so that it kept everybody on our toes, for each debate. That's all I can say about women's rights. That's [09:00] all I recall.

I never heard a professor who seemed to be opposed to women's rights, who had any kind of dislike for the aggressiveness of any of the students at Pembroke. We were encouraged to assert ourselves, to understand what we were talking for, to be polite. But that sort of thing did

not come to our attention through the faculty. They were presenting material and listening to our [10:00] discussions and holding discussion periods. They didn't have time to take sides on those issues, if they were around at that time. And some of them were. Because the first woman had been elected to the Rhode Island legislature. And she was a very aggressive person, very able. And she was very anxious that women receive equal pay for equal work, with men. Also, one of the English teachers, a very experienced teacher, [11:00] at Classical, was fighting, among the teachers of the city, under the same banner. She referred to her plea as equal pay for equal work for high school teachers. So that the issues were there. But we were not indoctrinated with them by our professors. If we had come out and had asked them... For example, at a rehearsal in the Debating Society, if we asked for an opinion, we might have received it. Nobody asked for it, as far as I ever heard. So that I can't say what the opinion [12:00] of any of the people I was meeting was.

JL: Mm-hmm. So was there any real male-female competitiveness or tension within the classroom?

MBB: I doubt it. I doubt it, very much.

JL: OK. And Pembroke and Brown had separate student governments.

MBB: Yes.

JL: Was student government very popular, at that time?

MBB: Was very popular at Pembroke. We had some very outstanding students, who were very much involved in it. We had very good parliamentarians among the students. But their aggressiveness was always [13:00] tempered by common sense, I think.

JL: Mm-hmm. OK. Back to the debating for a second. Do you have a recollection of your most memorable debate or the most controversial subject or successful debate?

MBB: Probably the most controversial subject was the one stating that a woman's place is in the home. The most exciting? No, I couldn't recall one that was more exciting than the others. We were always keyed up [14:00] and on edge until the judges had given their decision. And then we started right in listening to our coach, who told us what he hadn't liked. And we had to look up more material and rewrite some of our briefs and get ready for the next one.

JL: Did you have any common sources for gathering your debate material? Or did you gather it from everywhere?

MBB: We did it on our own. Each one of us did it for herself. However, it was permissible to meet a challenge [15:00] by reading what somebody had written who had covered the side of the topic that we were going to cover in the next debate. That wasn't considered cheating. As a matter of fact, there wasn't a great deal of it done, because we all took notes in as short space as we could and most of what we amassed was in our minds. And we really weren't seizing on somebody else's material.

JL: Let's see. Was there much interaction between the borders and the day students? [16:00] Did it make a difference in relationships?

MBB: They didn't see a great deal of one another, unless they were working in some organization, which happened. One of our very able debaters was a dormitory girl. And we became good friends. When we meet, the people who spent their four years as dormitory students now, and for many years, it's surprising to me how friendly we are, [17:00] even though during those four years we may only have passed each other on the campus half a dozen times and said hello. You see, our backgrounds are the same. We had, more or less, the same set of values and goals. When we meet today, it's as if one of us city girls had been a dorm girl and vice versa.

JL: Do you remember any general clothing styles of the time, on campus, or any fads?

MBB: I recall [18:00] that a great many girls, during that period, had little blue serge business suit, so to speak. And my mother was a very fine seamstress. She never worked at it except for her own family. But I remember that she made me one of those suits, which I was very proud of, because so many of the girls had them. And practically all girls and women, at the time, were wearing a little cloche hat. During the last years, it seemed that almost everybody let her hair grow long. And [19:00] we had it up. Other than that, I don't recall any similarity in our clothes, except for gym.

JL: Mm-hmm. And it was a uniform. OK. How did you spend you summer, while you were going to the university?

MBB: I worked, in Cherry & Webb's –

JL: Oh, that's... OK.

MBB: – all summer. Again, we had a compatible group. They were there from eight or ten colleges across the country. Was a very quick passing, [20:00] very pleasant summer. They were from all the local colleges, University of Michigan, New York University. It was fun.

JL: OK. What did you do after you graduated?

MBB: I trained, in Providence, to teach. I trained in junior high school, Nathan Bishop, over on the East Side – and worked in the graduate school. We didn't get jobs which we had [21:00] expected, because the Depression had already set in. When we were completing our year, I think, as I recall, in May, the superint– the superintendent sent one of the assistant superintendents to meet with the entire group that had trained that year. He told us that the officials had expected that we would be appointed, if we completed the course satisfactorily, he was very sorry to inform us that they were going to appoint nobody. Most of us went on the substitute list. [22:00] And we substituted from one to a few years. That was another kind of experience, of course. We rose every morning and waited for a telephone call. If it came, we were told what school to go to, what teacher was out and we took off immediately, for a day, usually, in a strange school and

certainly in a strange classroom. It wasn't the pleasantest kind of teaching. Oftentimes, at the end of the day, we had to assume that we wouldn't be back the next day. [23:00] And, of course, we couldn't take any books home or... We weren't expected to give any assignments. Again, the next day, we waited to be called. But as I said, it was a kind of experience that had some value.

JL: So the Depression didn't really affect you while you were in college but the year after?

MBB: No. It came at the... Yes, it came before I graduated. The stock market crash occurred in '29.

JL: Right.

MBB: Yes. It was there. But our president, President Hoover, was constantly saying that prosperity was just around the corner.

JL: Right.

MBB: And [24:00] at that time, I think, most people believed that it was going to be a very short depression. Which of course, it wasn't. Actually, it was concluded only by World War II and the manufacturing and the preparation that was carried out for the war.

JL: Mm-hmm. Was there a large dropout number in school –

MBB: No.

JL: – no –

MBB: No.

JL: – at that time?

MBB: No.

JL: Was your family or any of your friends severely hit by the [25:00] Depression?

MBB: At least one was. Yes.

JL: Did you have a favorable impression of FDR?

MBB: When he was elected, I was hopeful. From having listened to him, I hoped that he was going to do something effectively, immediately. Of course, he did – so that I wasn't disappointed. I [26:00] have to say that I couldn't accept a third term for anybody. And naturally, a fourth term was out of the question.

JL: Right.

MBB: I think that he did a great many things that are commendable. Certainly everybody, to the very poorest people, called up their hope in some way, which was very inspiring. It was wonderful to see the way that things were turned around.

JL: Mm-hmm. [27:00] Well, I guess back to your job as a teacher. Was it difficult at that time being an educated woman in society or, no, was not at all?

MBB: I never found it difficult. I think that, among the social science professors that I had... And I didn't have a large number, because it wasn't a large department in those days. I did take some courses in other places, in the same field. I never took any in which the professor was more able to explain [28:00] the country and the government and all, that I was involved in, than my father was. He was so able that I suppose I was saved from being depressed about things, because we talked them over. And there was never any pushing on the part of my parents – “You should try to get another job. You should try to go into something else,” or anything like that, even after I was appointed and for very small pay. They knew that I was doing what I wanted to do. And they accepted it, with no [29:00] criticism whatever.

JL: Mm-hmm. Were many of the women that you went to school with pursuing careers as teachers?

MBB: There was a kind of an attitude, on the part of some, that they wouldn't teach if it was the last field open to them. As I look back now, I think that may have been the result of a little feeling that the only career open in earlier years, to a woman, was teaching. And they weren't going to be pushed into that area. A few of them became teachers, after training in [30:00] another field and following it for a while, and made good teachers, very good teachers. I wasn't thinking of any other career and... I did, however, admire some of them for the fields that they went into. There were only three girls in my class who majored in economics. And one of them spent her whole career in that area, not in this state, and did a masterful job, went right to the top as an administrator. The other two married [31:00] very soon after graduation and – [31:04]

Track 3

JL: [00:00] At that time, did the decision for education and career conflict with the decision for marriage and family?

MBB: It didn't in my case. I can understand that it might in some cases. Because of costs right here in the city, if a teacher married, she lost her tenure and went on the substitute list. She might leave on Friday afternoon as a full-fledged tenured teacher, be married Saturday, and come back Monday morning as a substitute teacher, at a greatly reduced salary and with no tenure and so on. And I saw [01:00] it happen. It was cruel.

JL: Yeah. Were you still teaching – well, of course, you were still t– when they started to...? Do you remember when they started to overturn all those rules?

MBB: Yes. Of course, I was there at that time – yes – when there was the beginning of the union and when there were strikes in the city here and in other places in the state. It was hard, very

hard, much harder, I'm sure, for the men who had families, although there were women who were doing jobs, within their families. [02:00] They couldn't be classified.

JL: Mm-hmm. Do you still keep in touch with many of your friends from Pembroke?

MBB: Oh, yes.

JL: And you're still involved with the university.

MBB: Oh, yes. I just served my last period on the fund drive. I have five days – or evenings between October and the middle of November. And I served last year, also.

JL: And the Phone-a-thon?

MBB: That's it.

JL: Oh, OK. Were you totally in favor of the Brown-Pembroke merger?

MBB: [03:00] I think I was. I suppose that part of it was done for an economic reason. But so many times, the economy does bring on changes for the better. And nowadays, certainly, they wouldn't be happy with two separate colleges. I'm sure that they are doing much better under the merger.

JL: Mm-hmm. Have you any second thoughts today about your college career – or anything you would have done differently while you were there?

MBB: [04:00] No. No matter what is put into the curriculum, I realize always that I would have preferred to be majoring in English to majoring in any other subject. I do, however, say that, if I had the chance again, that I would take more economics. After I was teaching social studies as well as English, I realized, of course, that I was no economist and that the economy affected everything that was done. [05:00] I had to apply for some workshops and do a great deal of

reading and inform myself about the whole business of economics, especially, much of it at the beginning, elementary, that I should have taken in college. You see, we had the three options – we were to take two out of three – a semester of sociology, a semester of political science, a semester of economics. We'd take two out of three. Well, I preferred political science and sociology. If I were doing it now, I would [06:00] probably take political science and economics. Sociology would have been easier to make up on my own –

JL: Right.

MBB: – then the other two, which, I feel one needs a professor to present material.

JL: Well, seeing as you were a teacher for such a time, have you any advice for students, especially females, today, just concerning higher education?

MBB: If the student decides to teach and wants to teach, nobody's going to stop her. [07:00] If she goes in for teaching, she certainly should explore the curriculum and the opportunities beyond the twelfth grade. She should move up to teaching in the college – if she feels that it's something, again, that she wants to do, that, for her, there's a challenge and that she will meet it for the good of the students. It's as simple as that, to me. If I were doing it over again, I'm sure that I would aim to do some [08:00] college teaching, if it was only, in the beginning, extension teaching in a college, just part-time, in order to see whether I wanted it that badly or not.

JL: Well, looking back at your years at Pembroke, have you a dominant memory – a dominant memory or impression of your years there?

MBB: I liked Pembroke, very much, all the time I was there. And to this day, [09:00] I have very good friends, that I see regularly. And some of their children have gone to Pembroke. Some have gone to other places. I follow their children's careers and, in one case, even the career of a grandchild. I love Brown.

JL: OK. Thanks, so much, for your cooperation.

MBB: You're welcome. [09:39]

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