

Transcript – Jeannette Dora Black '30

Narrator: Jeannette Dora Black
Interviewer: [Naomi Herwitz?]
Interview Date: November 22, 1982
Interview Time:
Location: Brown University, Rhode Island
Length: 2 audio files; 51:44

Track 1

Nomi Herwitz: [00:00] This is an interview with Jeannette Black, an alumna of Pembroke College, class of 1930, conducted by Naomi Herwitz, a student, at Brown University. This is taking place in Providence, Rhode Island, on November 22nd, 1982.

(break in audio)

NH: OK, Jeanette Black, let's start with some general background to you. Can you tell me something about your parents and your family, and where you grew up?

Jeannette Dora Black: I was born in Providence and lived here almost all my life. My father was a physician in general practice, and my mother had been a schoolteacher before she was married. I was the youngest of five children. I had [01:00] three sisters and one brother, all older than I am.

NH: Did any of them go to college also?

JDB: Yes, they all did.

NH: Did any of them go to Pembroke or Brown?

JDB: My brother went to Brown, and one of my sisters went to Pembroke.

NH: OK, where did you go to high school?

JDB: Classical.

NH: Was that a coed high school, or was that an all-girls school?

JDB: Yes, yes, it was coed.

NH: It was? OK.

JDB: It's a public high school.

NH: OK. How many of your friends from high school went on to college?

JDB: Oh, quite a few of them. In fact, of course, Classical was basically college prep. And the simplest thing was to go to a local college in those days, so that, oh, probably 8 or 10 of the girls, [02:00] and probably as many of the boys. I really don't remember exactly.

NH: So you weren't an exception in going to college. That was something that –

JDB: Oh, dear, no.

NH: – people from that school..., OK.

JDB: Oh, Classical has always been college preparatory, as far as I know.

NH: That's true, yeah. Yeah. OK. So, did you choose to go to Pembroke, or was it because it was closer? Or...

JDB: Actually, when we were being [used?] at this, it was the cheapest way I could get a college education because of – actually, I had a chance to get a four-year scholarship, with board and

tuition thrown in, and I knew I could get it because it was a matter of a contest, just taking college boards and whoever came out better got it. And I knew the other person who was going to take it, and I knew I'd have no problem. [03:00] But my family wouldn't let me do it because it was so expensive to go away, and at that time, it didn't cost very much to go to Pembroke. After all, I was almost in walking distance, so that was what I did. It was not really my choice.

NH: So you would have liked to have gone to that other school?

JDB: I would have preferred to go away. I had nothing against Pembroke, actually.

NH: Did most of your friends also go to Pembroke, the other people from Classical?

JDB: There were, as I say, there were 8 to 10 of the girls who went on. I don't remember exactly where, but there were a number of people.

NH: OK. What did you expect to get out of college, out of that four years? Was it a preparation for something, or was it just that you wanted to?

JDB: No, I had, well, I had no particular feeling as to what exactly I wanted to do. In fact, I never really got around to [04:00] knowing that I was doing what I should be doing until many years after. And partly it was that I didn't know myself, and it was partly that nobody was able to figure out what I was supposed to be doing. I liked everything, you see, I did pretty well in everything, and they couldn't advise me as to what I ought to take. They just said, well, take whatever you're best at, and this, of course, didn't work, as you can't tell by the marks what it is you want to do for your life.

NH: I'll agree to that. Were there any required subjects, classes, or things that you had to take?

JDB: Oh, yes, we had requirements.

NH: Can you tell me about them?

JDB: For the first two years, I think, you had to work off requirements, and then you could major for the last two years. And you could take on this work. [05:00] The requirements? Well, we had choices. There was a requirement of one science there, and one math. You could substitute argumentation for math, if you wanted to, but I didn't. I took the math. Oh, dear, I forget what the requirements were.

NH: OK, do you remember if there were any phys ed, I mean, gym class?

JDB: Oh, yes, yes. We had four years of required phys ed, and I didn't enjoy much of it.

NH: OK. In general, did you mind having requirements? Or was that –

JDB: I minded the phys ed requirements, and for simply practical reasons. It wasn't that I rejected exercise. I loved exercise, but what they did was really not very bright. [06:00] They fitted phys ed into the regular class program, which meant that, you see, we had to change into a gym costume, and change back out, hopefully, taking a shower. And you just couldn't do it in the time we had, especially if you were to take classes on the Hill, which I did most of the time in the last two years I was there. And the general attitude of the gym department was not exactly conducive to my enjoying it.

NH: OK. How long were classes? How many, you know, do you remember whether –

JDB: Fifty minutes.

NH: Fifty minutes, yeah.

JDB: Of course, with the gym, you had to shorten it, to get dressed and undressed and so forth.

NH: OK. [07:00] So what classes did you take by choice, once you had filled up those requirements? I mean, in the next two years, what did you do?

JDB: Oh, I took all sorts of things. I tried to sample as much as I could. Political science, history, English, music. I even took art, and I was terrible at that.

NH: Did you like it, though?

JDB: Well, I had thought it was supposed to be art appreciation. And unfortunately, they made us sit down and draw, which I couldn't do.

NH: Oh, oh no. Did any of your classes take place at Brown, or with Brown students?

JDB: After I started to major, yes. The rule was, if I remember correctly – but we had separate classes, unless you had, I think, five or six people. If that many took the class, there was a separate class [08:00]. But if it was less than that, you got permission to go and take it on the Hill. And a good many of my classes were like that because in the political science department, there was just one other girl doing anything with it. I think that's very different now. And I also took honors courses, which meant either individual or small groups, seminars and that sort of thing. Those were all coed.

NH: Did you like the coed classes? Did they all seem at all different? Or –

JDB: Oh, it was just natural for me. I never paid any attention to this – it was just an irritation to have all these separate things because I had gone to a coed high school and grade school. I had a brother, too, and it...

NH: Was the administration very strict, though, about trying to keep things separate? [09:00]

JDB: Oh, they, it seemed to me, that they, more or less, worried about us unnecessarily. They felt that they should hold certain rules. But my class rebelled against some of them, and we did it successfully.

NH: Can you tell me about that?

JDB: Well, yes. We got the hat rule rescinded.

NH: What was the hat rule?

JDB: The hat rule was that you had to wear a hat if you went on the men's campus. [laughter]

NH: Oh, that is –

JDB: Oh, I understand that even before that, it had even been worse. You had to wear hat, gloves, and a veil.

NH: Do you think the school had changed a lot between the time that your sister went to Pembroke and the time that you went there?

JDB: Well, there was five years' difference, and it hadn't changed greatly. No, in fact, there were the seniors. Some of the seniors remembered my sister, knew her quite well, so, (inaudible).

NH: What was her name then?

JDB: Catherine Black.

NH: OK. When you were choosing courses, [10:00] what criterion did you use? Did you pick it by the subject matter, or by the teacher, or by the time it was offered?

JDB: Well, everything had to be taken into consideration. As I say, my general idea was to take as many different things as possible if I could. And, of course, that was a little bit easier then because now we had to – we took five courses instead of four at that time.

NH: What was the grading system like?

JDB: We had A, B, C.

NH: Was it really hard to get an A?

JDB: Fairly.

NH: OK. Do you, oh –

JDB: But it wasn't hard to get a B, at least, I didn't think so. If you really did all your work and were reasonably intelligent, you could get a B. You had to be, [11:00] well, I didn't get too many C's. But on the other hand, I didn't always get an A because sometimes I'd be lazy, sometimes I was interested in wanting to do something else more.

NH: OK. How much time did you spend studying?

JDB: Oh, that, I couldn't remember. Well, this will give you some idea. The last two or three years, I worked part-time in the Pembroke library. At that time, the reserve books were there, and my job was, chiefly, letting people have the reserve books and checking them off, and so forth. So there was no problem in getting the reading done. And it was three evenings a week, I think. And that took care of a really good chunk of my studying, although, of course, [12:00] there were a lot of things you couldn't do at that particular desk, writing papers and that sort of thing. I did it elsewhere. It was a pretty good amount of studying.

NH: How do you feel about yourself as a student, compared to the people around you?

JDB: You mean, how did I feel then, or how do I feel now?

NH: Either. I guess, how did you feel then?

JDB: Well, I did pretty well.

NH: Do you remember any particular teachers that you had, or any particular classes that stand out in any way?

JDB: Oh, I remember all of them.

NH: You do?

JDB: Yes. Well, I had a very good math teacher my first year. He was [Rudolph Blanger?]. I had a very interesting man named Marion C. Wier?, who taught Greek, had him for a semester. [13:00] There was Bob George who taught History I/II, basic history course, really excellent lecturer, remarkable – course he did. And, oh, Magel Wilder taught the Biology I/II, which I took – I'm talking about freshman and sophomore years at Pembroke. And, oh, do you want me to go on? I could go on and on.

NH: Sure, go on. I'd love to hear about anything at all.

JDB: The poli-sci department, at that time, consisted of only two people. Goodrich was the head of – well, it wasn't really a separate department. It was part of the social sciences department, they called it. And Leland Goodrich was the man I took a couple of courses with. [14:00] And there was Theodore Collier in history, who was the head of the history department, I think. And the English department, there was a youngish man named Bob MacDougall. And David [Nall?], of course, he was extremely good. I'm trying to think here of another one. Well, let's get on to another subject.

NH: OK, sure, I just didn't want to rush you. Did you have any contact with Dean Morriss?

JDB: Oh, yes.

NH: You did.

JDB: Yes.

NH: Can you tell me about her, or about how you knew her?

JDB: She was a very nice person. She wasn't the most imaginative woman in the world, but she was very good to me. And [15:00] I've always been very grateful to her because she – when I needed a break, she gave it to me.

NH: Can you give me an example of that, or tell me how...?

JDB: Well, not really anything specific.

NH: OK. Do you remember any particular speakers that came to campus to talk, or any particular ceremonies, or major activities?

JDB: Well, if I really sat down and thought about it, I could spin up a great deal, actually. We did have some very nice concerts, soloists. And we had some interesting lectures. I remember a man from the Abbey Theater, yeah. So we walked there and hmm... [16:00]

NH: Do you remember your graduation – who spoke, or if anyone who was a special guest speaker?

JDB: They didn't have guest speakers at graduation like they do now.

NH: OK.

JDB: They don't do that, never did. [laughter]

NH: OK. Let's get back to a different subject. So you commuted to school, right? You lived at home?

JDB: I lived at home. When I was a freshman, let's see – no, I had moved over here before I got to Pembroke. I lived down on Angell Street. I walked – I don't know if you call that commuting.

NH: Were you friendly with people that lived in the dorms?

JDB: Not particularly. I did know a few of them. But in general, that was one of the serious problems at that time, the girls who lived in the city. And they were – I don't know the proportion, but they were at least [17:00] 40%, I think, and it just didn't work out that the city girls and the dorm girls got together too much. You did occasionally, you'd meet them in classes and sometimes you'd get friendly. But on the whole, I've gotten to know those girls more in the class reunions since we were in college. They didn't know me, I didn't know them.

NH: Were there any bad feelings between you, or just –

JDB: Not really.

NH: – you just didn't have contact?

JDB: No, it just was an accidental thing. Nobody did anything about it.

NH: Yeah, I see. Would you have liked to have lived in a dorm, do you think, if you could have?

JDB: At that time, I thought so, but my own experience living in a dorm was much, much later, when I spent a summer at Columbia Library School. And I lived in a dorm, and I thought, why did I ever want to live in a dorm?

NH: Why, what was so bad about living in a dorm? What was it like?

JDB: Well, it was a little bit crummy.

NH: OK. So, did you [18:00] make a lot of friends when you went to school?

JDB: I don't think so.

NH: You didn't have – yeah. Were there any people, while you were at school, that were particularly important, in terms of giving you support, or encouraging you, whether it was friends or teachers?

JDB: Well, among the teachers, oh yes, there were several – were very nice to me. That's the perfect (inaudible) I mentioned before.

NH: OK. Now, were you involved with – you were involved with things outside of classes, weren't you? I looked at your yearbook and I got –

JDB: Yeah.

NH: – what it said about you, and I saw this long list of activities.

JDB: Well, it's not a very long list, really. It should have been longer, but I tried to take a little of everything, you see, just wanted to sample things. And some things I would have liked, but they didn't fit in, and other things, I wasn't very good at. So –

NH: Well, which things were those? Do you remember?

JDB: Well, I was perfectly terrible [19:00] when I tried to belong to the glee club. I should have known, but at least I found out.

NH: Oh. At least you tried.

JDB: Yeah.

NH: But were there any things that you were involved with consistently, for more than a year, that you remember, or that you enjoyed particularly?

JDB: You mean, extracurricular things?

NH: Yeah, extracurricular.

JDB: Oh, yes, but I didn't emphasize them too greatly.

NH: OK –

JDB: Well, I did enjoy Komians while I had – that was the dramatic society which was not coed, very difficult, but I enjoyed that. But when I had to work the library, you see, the practices were in the evening, and I wasn't able to do much with that, which probably is just as well, because I wasn't really very good. I just enjoyed it.

NH: Oh, well, that's important. Is it true that [20:00] the Komians instructions had women playing men's roles?

JDB: They did indeed.

NH: How did that work out?

JDB: I would have to give you comparisons on that, and I don't have any, because I never saw any others.

NH: Was it funny sometimes, or was it (inaudible)?

JDB: It could have been.

NH: OK. Do you remember when the name of Pembroke became Pembroke? It used to be the Women's College at Brown.

JDB: Yes, we were a little bored at the whole idea. They said they decided to change Pembroke's name to Pembroke. And...

NH: So you had been calling it Pembroke all along?

JDB: Yes, of course. Yes.

NH: So –

JDB: It was just an administrative thing. It didn't really mean very much.

NH: So it didn't affect the students that much at all?

JDB: Oh, no.

NH: That's interesting. I mean, if you read the books, sometimes they'll say that people were very upset about this but, I guess – or it will say that it made a big difference to some people.

JDB: Well, I think it made a great deal of difference to some people when they changed the head (inaudible). I think that [21:00] really created a great deal of feeling. It didn't bother me as much as it did most of the others.

NH: When you were at Pembroke, did you feel that the relationship between Pembroke and Brown – I mean, that there was respect between the two of them?

JDB: Yes, of course.

NH: OK, I was just –

JDB: Well, actually, the feeling – the same way that the Harvard boys talked about Radcliffe, the Brown boys talked about the Pembroke girls. My brother had teased my sister unmercifully about it. By the time I came long, he'd stopped bothering, and... But it was just a superficial matter. It didn't mean anything.

NH: Was there a lot of socializing between Brown and Pembroke, or...?

JDB: Oh, yes, yes. It all depended on how much a person socialized, because [22:00] if a girl was going to socialize a great deal, they were with the Brown boys. The college didn't help them to socialize – I will say that – but they couldn't prevent them very well. And I don't think they really tried to. It was just a matter of, they – well, nowadays, your idea is that the college wants to do this, that, and the other thing. They didn't have that much administration in those days. They didn't try to do everything. They stuck to a few things and then hoped for the best with the rest (inaudible).

NH: Do you think that was good? Did you like it that way?

JDB: Oh, in many ways, it was much better than it is now, from the point of view of, like, leaving alone.

NH: So what did you finally major in as a student? Was it you, or –

JDB: It was a combination of history and political science.

NH: OK. Just to step back again. Before you graduated, the Depression officially started.

JDB: Yes. It didn't really hit me until a bit later [23:00] because '29 was the stock market crash, and no one I knew was particularly into the stock market, so it didn't really bother me much. But by the time I finished graduate school in '31, it really was beginning. And I was very lucky to

get myself a job for a year. And it was just for that one year, and after that, there was just no job and no possibility of getting one. It was a very rough period.

NH: OK, so it didn't affect Pembroke too much in the time that you were there. I guess you were only there for another semester.

JDB: Well, as I said, it was just the stock market crash in the Fall of '29. When I graduated in '30, that was really all it was. It hadn't really trickled down to the –

NH: So people's parents hadn't lost jobs yet, or things like that, or the money they had –

JDB: Not that I remember. It was a little later that it really hit. [24:00]

NH: OK. Tell me about graduate school. Where did you go, and what did you study?

JDB: I went to Radcliffe, and I studied government (inaudible) and international relations.

NH: Where did you live when you were there?

JDB: A friend of mine from my class and I found a little bit of an apartment right next to the Radcliffe campus. And she was taking a Boston Nurses Training school course, and that meant that she would be, not placed in one place, but go all over the general area. So it worked out that it was better to have one of us in a convenient place than nobody. So we found this place right near Radcliffe, and that meant I did more of the cooking because she was going [25:00] on various types of Boston transportation so much.

NH: Are you a good cook? Do you ever –

JDB: No, not really.

NH: Not really?

JDB: No.

NH: Was this the first time you ever lived away from home?

JDB: Yes.

NH: It was. What was that like?

JDB: Oh, we had a wonderful time. Yeah, argue with each other, “My mother did it this way,” and she would say, “My mother did it this way.” [laughter]

NH: Uh-oh. What kinds of things did you argue about? I mean –

JDB: Oh, little things about cooking, housekeeping, and so forth.

NH: How did you like Radcliffe after Pembroke?

JDB: Well, it was much more impersonal, and of course, I didn't live in a dorm. It's not that I didn't have quite the opportunity to make friends with many people, and this was too bad. But actually, [26:00] it wasn't the greatest experience of my life. Well, the whole thing was, I probably shouldn't have been taking that subject because in the end, I turned up in something quite different, so.

NH: Why did you go to Radcliffe, then, and study that?

JDB: Because I thought I was interested in it. And I was given a scholarship, and I had the Anne Crosby Emery scholarship, so I could be a senior. And this was for a year of graduate work, and Professor [Burghers?] advised me not to take my year at Brown if I was going to be in that subject. He said you'd do much better if you went to Radcliffe, so I did that.

NH: I was reading in the yearbook, in the following year, when it has lists the names of people, I mean, people who graduated and what they did, and they mentioned you and your roommate finding a record player, which you named [27:00] – a phonograph – which you named Gene Ware. Do you remember that?

JDB: No, I don't. But I remember Gene Ware very well.

NH: Who was he?

JDB: He taught music – music appreciation – and I took a couple of courses, and I enjoyed them very much. They were supposedly snap courses, but I enjoyed them, so I took them anyway.

NH: That's good, that's good.

JDB: That's interesting. I never knew that that was in [the yearbook?], yeah?

NH: Yes, it was. It was in the, I guess, 1931 yearbook. OK, let's see. So what did you do after graduate school? What was your degree in, your graduate degree?

JDB: Government.

NH: Government? OK.

JDB: And I found a job at the World Peace Foundation in Boston, which I had for a year, and then (inaudible).

NH: What did you do in that job?

JDB: Hmm?

NH: What did you do in that job?

JDB: Oh, it was a (inaudible) type job. It's hard to describe it. [28:00]

NH: OK, and then what did you say about not having a job after that? Can you –

JDB: Well, there was no job. So, at that point, everybody realized that they weren't going to get any job they wanted. And so the idea was you might as well try for a job, but it doesn't matter what you take in school, you see, so you might as well take what you like, because you're not going to get a job in it anyway. And that summer, after my job finished up, I took an opening for something practical. I took typing and shorthand, and believe it or not, this course was given at Radcliffe.

NH: It was?

JDB: Yes.

NH: Did a lot of people take it?

JDB: A fair number, because they all [29:00] were concerned about getting a job. And I know that I mentioned this one time, many years later, to one of the people connecting the Radcliffe they had great difficulty believing that Radcliffe had ever taught anybody shorthand and type. But the idea was really that they had to – joined up with the Katharine Gibbs School, had Katharine Gibbs teachers do the, get the classes, and they'd be at Radcliffe, and this was done by the personnel department, just trying to get jobs for these poor girls who didn't have any chance of getting over the wall.

NH: OK, let's go back a few summers. When you were in college in those years, what did you do in your summers?

JDB: I had a part-time job in the Providence Public Library.

NH: Now this job that you had after graduate school, after Radcliffe, was that in Boston?

JDB: Yes.

NH: Did you live [30:00] in that same apartment then?

JDB: No, different apartments. Actually, I had a room for a while, quite a while, most of that year, actually. Had a room near Harvard Square.

NH: How did you like Boston and Cambridge?

JDB: Oh, it was great.

NH: What was it like, then?

JDB: Oh, it was much less hectic than it is now. It was really very nice. There wasn't all of this mess around Harvard Square at all.

NH: You mean crime was nice? What do you mean by "very nice"?

JDB: Well, crime and junk. But it was a very pleasant place to be, and Boston was very handy and you could get tickets to perfectly wonderful things for 50 cents apiece.

NH: Oh. What did you consider perfectly wonderful? What were the – do you remember –

JDB: Oh, we got to the opera once or twice, the Pops and various plays. [31:00]

NH: Were you able still to go to these things during the time when you didn't have a job, when things started being (inaudible)?

JDB: After I lost the job, I had to eventually come home, because that was the end of my (inaudible), done my eating.

NH: OK, sure. OK, I didn't ask you about this yet, but what were your feelings about Providence at the time? I guess you'd lived there for a long time. You must have known it fairly well, I guess, certain parts of it?

JDB: Well, yes, I knew Providence. I grew up here.

NH: Were you fond of it? Did you not like it, or do you remember it?

JDB: Well, what did I have to compare with it?

NH: That's a good point. Well, OK, after you came back to Providence from Boston, then you had –

JDB: Oh, I really loved Boston. In fact, I still like Boston with all its problems. But I think at this point, I would just assume liking Providence as anywhere I could think of. It's had its problems, but it's a very good place to live.

NH: People complain about the rain a lot. Do you think it rains more here than [32:00] other places?

JDB: Well, I suppose if you're a Californian, you wouldn't like that.

NH: OK, so, what year was it that you moved back home?

JDB: Must have been '32.

NH: How was this Depression affecting your family, your parents working and the financial situation here?

JDB: Well, it didn't affect them too seriously because it wasn't a matter of losing a job. At that time, two of my sisters were teaching school, and those jobs were safe at the time. So it didn't affect the family quite as much as some families had been affected.

NH: Did you ever consider teaching school?

JDB: Yes, [33:00] and I didn't want to. One of the few things I knew about what I ought to be doing was that I didn't want to teach. And it was very difficult explaining this to my family and various other people because they couldn't understand why I didn't want to, and I had trouble explaining it to them at the time. But I was right. I would never have really enjoyed a teaching job, and I ran into a job that was very much right for me, I think.

NH: Which job was that?

JDB: At the John Carter Brown Library.

NH: When did you start working there?

JDB: Thirty-seven.

NH: OK, and what exactly did you do?

JDB: Well, at first I did a little bit of everything, and later on, when they enlarged the staff slightly, I was able to specialize in the events.

NH: Was that a part of Brown at the time, not a part of Pembroke? [34:00] That library, was that used by both Brown and Pembroke, or...?

JDB: Well, it's used by everyone. It's not, well, you probably don't know anything about it, right?

NH: I don't know much at all, yeah, that's true.

JDB: Well, we'll start then. It was originally a private collection started by John Carter Brown, who collected, I think, in his house on Benefit Street. And when he died – well, John Carter Brown started it, his son kept it on – and when he died in 1900, it came to the university. And they built a building on campus at the corner of George and Brown Streets there. And so it has nothing special to do with Pembroke, but any Pembroke girl certainly could use it who wanted to, or who was up to it. It's not an undergraduate library but [35:00] anyone can use it, and also people who are not connected with the University. We had many people from elsewhere, these other institutions and other countries.

NH: OK, now, at this time, I guess this is several years after you graduated from college from Pembroke, what were your friends doing? [How are they after the Depression?] How'd they fare?

JDB: Well, most of them had managed to get jobs by then, I think. Some of them had jobs all along, not particularly wonderful jobs, but they managed – some in library work, some in teaching. This is what I knew about mostly.

NH: You think having gone to Pembroke was a particular benefit for you or for them? I mean, was that a prestigious school, or a school that carried much weight?

JDB: Oh, it was a good school, yes. [36:00] I guess, I don't understand just what you mean there?

NH: I guess I'm also beginning to realize that, I guess, during the Depression, it didn't make that much difference in where you're – I guess... Well, we'll move on. So, wait, in the five years between – before you got that job at the John Carter Brown – from I guess, 1932 to '37, what did you do in those years?

JDB: Well, I was home here for a while, then I had little jobs, one kind or another, a variety of them, and then for two or three years, I had a job in New York.

NH: Doing what?

JDB: That was part of the time with the World Peace Foundation which, at that point, had started itself a branch in New York, and afterwards, for the League of Nations Association. But it was more or less a dead end for me because I realized that this was not what I really [37:00] was interested in doing. I wasn't sure what I was interested in at that point.

NH: Were you finding any discrimination against you as a woman? In any things you were –

JDB: Of course, all the way along.

NH: All the way along?

JDB: Oh, yes. On the other hand, it wasn't terribly serious because I always found that I was discriminated against by other women, as much as I was by men.

NH: Really? Why would they discriminate against you?

JDB: Well, things like in competition, that sort of thing. And also socially, the married women discriminated against the unmarried women, and there's a whole lot of that sort of thing. But I really survived the discrimination pretty well.

NH: Can you give me a –

JDB: We were always conscious of it.

NH: You were? Always (inaudible)?

JDB: But it was something that you couldn't fight, and the type of discrimination that would have – still exists.

NH: What type were you thinking of, or do you mean? [38:00]

JDB: Well, we didn't have any laws for that, you see. And what you have in the way of discrimination, but the law doesn't touch it. It was –

NH: Do you mean in terms of hiring, or wages, or –

JDB: Yes, the whole bit.

NH: – all those things? The whole bit? Do you think going to Pembroke helped you deal with that more, or –

JDB: What, I don't understand what you mean here, whether you mean going to college helped me, or going to Pembroke especially?

NH: Well, I guess I mean Pembroke especially, because it was a women's college, going to school where –

JDB: Oh, dear.

NH: – it was mainly, it was –

JDB: I can't answer that, really. I really can't. I just don't pay that much attention.

NH: How about going to Pembroke, as in college, I mean, just getting a college education?

JDB: It was fine. Oh, it was fine because we had exactly the same education as the men, and it was always a good school.

NH: OK, so, now, [39:00] I guess I just want to know more about what this World Peace Foundation was? I know nothing at all about it.

JDB: Well, see there were relatively few jobs in the field of political science. And at that time, there were a relatively small number of organizations that were working in international relations, and that was one of them. It was a foundation started by a publisher, Ginn & Company. It was the Ginn money that started the peace fund. It's still going. I don't really know what it does now. I don't have any contact with it for many years.

NH: OK. What did you think of New York when you lived in it? So that's I guess your third city, I guess.

JDB: I thought it was going to be very exciting, and it was for the first year or so. But it became evident that if you had to live on a very small salary, it was not a very good place to be, [40:00] and I didn't enjoy it as much as people who made about four times as much.

NH: OK, so then, I guess you came back here and –

JDB: Yeah.

NH: – and in a few years, you were working at the John Carter Brown.

JDB: Oh, I came back to work there.

NH: You came back to work there. Was there a job opening, that you knew?

JDB: Yes.

NH: OK, and then there was World War II. Now how did that affect your whole scheme of things?

JDB: Well, I considered joining the WACs. I was just at the upper age, well, almost at the upper age. And then I decided that it was a little too heavy because the physical requirements were a little more than I could probably manage. And so I just stayed with it, and we lived through it, so far as my job was concerned. The [41:00] university stayed open for us, (inaudible), and soldiers in training and then maybe in camp. It was a very interesting period. We had some very nice groups. They wanted to amuse themselves, and they worked up a band, none of them knew how to play anything, got a hold of instruments and they played, whether they could or not. And they would go up on campus every afternoon and stand a treat, because they took the flag down, which was really a delight. We'd go off and watch them.

NH: When you say "we," do you mean you and other people that worked at the library? Or –

JDB: Yes.

NH: OK, were you aware of anything changing at Pembroke or Brown, in terms of more people taking courses at Brown, or necessary consolidation?

JDB: Well, during the war, I always remember Professor [Kenney's comment. He saw [42:00] a Pembroke fellow coming out of one of the fraternity houses, which was not a dormitory, I don't know. And he said, "Times have certainly changed." And, of course, at that point, Pembroke was a [inaudible] university. And he said, quoting Kipling, "It's Tommy this, and Tommy that, and Tommy go away. But it's thank you, Mr. Atkins ,when the band begins to play." I've always thought of that, as something that was very pertinent to the situation.

NH: OK.

Track 2

NH: OK, I want to ask you a couple more questions about when you went to Pembroke in that time period. Were there any particular political issues or social issues that were strong at the time, that you remember?

JDB: Oh, yes, there was the Smith and Hoover election in '28, and that was very hotly contested. And, oh, I suppose, I don't remember that I paid particularly any attention to all the politics, then.

NH: Were other people paying attention to that, or was that something that wasn't a major force on campus?

JDB: I don't know.

NH: OK, so how many years did you work at the John Carter Brown Library?

JDB: Oh, '37 to '74. I retired, [01:00] and then I went back part-time for three or four years.

NH: OK. What other friends of yours also got involved in working with Brown or Pembroke or anything after graduation?

JDB: There's one of my classmates that's the head of the science library, worked (inaudible).

NH: Did you keep an eye on Pembroke? Did you ever just sort of watch what was going on, or was any –

JDB: Of course, we were conscious of that, yeah. (inaudible).

NH: OK, when it did merge with Brown, finally, was that a surprise to you, or did you think it was coming? And you said it didn't upset you, I think you said, it didn't –

JDB: No, I don't think so. I had a friend in the Pembroke administration at that time, so I kept hearing rumors and so forth. It didn't surprise me, all because it had been in the wind for a long time. [02:00] In some ways, it was too bad, but in most ways, it was inevitable. Of course, I can't really judge the affects now. I'm really not involved in the administration of the University enough to know about that.

NH: That's true. I'm sure it was a lot of things that they did. One thing that I read somewhere that I thought was curious, was that some people felt that there were some discriminatory policies at Pembroke against black people or against – I guess ethnic discriminations. And they hoped, maybe, by this consolidation, some of that might cease.

JDB: Well, there was a problem there, but I felt that it was not a real thing. It was just put that to make trouble.

NH: Can you tell me more about that? There was a problem when you were there?

JDB: No. Not while I was at Pembroke. Well, actually, as far as [03:00] the blacks were concerned, there weren't any in my class. But in my sister's class, for instance, there was a very nice, bright girl. She told me that she came back to her fiftieth reunion, and it was all a delight. We didn't happen to have one in our class.

NH: No reunions –

JDB: Reunions, yes, but we didn't have any blacks.

NH: Oh, you didn't have any blacks. OK, I get it.

JDB: No black member of the class.

NH: Oh, you think that was for financial reasons? There weren't that many black people then that could afford it?

JDB: Well, there were very few around here, you see. We had a very low black population. And of course, there was, probably, a low percentage that went to college.

NH: Were you aware of any other discriminations, any other ethnic ones, or against any religious groups? Or was that an issue at any point?

JDB: Well, there might have been a difference between the Catholics and Protestants, but not serious. [04:00] Far the less in the University, I think, than outside, either case.

NH: OK, , so wait now I'm going to ask you, were there reunions for your class at any point, at different points?

JDB: We always have reunions.

NH: You have?

JDB: I didn't go to the first couple or so, but I found that since, I have enjoyed them.

NH: Tell me about them. What is it like, seeing your friends, seeing the people that you meet so rarely?

JDB: Well, my class always had a lot of fun through the years. We really enjoyed them. And each year, we managed to persuade someone who had not come out to come, and they enjoyed it, too.

NH: Oh, that's great.

JDB: I wasn't able to get to the fiftieth. I wasn't around, I was (inaudible), whatever.

NH: Now, did a lot of the people that you know get married? Was that a big deal?

JDB: A lot of people didn't do it, [05:00], a lot of them didn't. It was a rather low percentage of my class, I think.

NH: That got married?

JDB: I think so.

NH: Any particular reason for that that you can think of?

JDB: The Depression.

NH: You mean, they had to go out and get jobs, and they weren't able to?

JDB: Well, the men couldn't get married. They couldn't get more than a job at a very low salary, and you just couldn't get married until a certain point you could set up a household.

NH: That's interesting because, I mean, I would have never thought of it in that way, but a lot of people – I've been reading books, how some people felt that a career and – this is still true – a family might be a conflict for a woman. And just going to college might make her socially outcast, you know, in certain circles, and be like that.

JDB: Well, perhaps it did, I don't know. But having a career and children [06:00] was very close to impossible. Even now, it's very difficult. No matter what they say, it's extremely difficult. On the other hand, I know people who managed it. In fact, I knew people in my mother's generation actually – some friends of mine whose mother and father were both doctors, things like that. It is unusual.

NH: OK, here is a question I forgot to ask you. Did your mother go to college?

JDB: She went to the what was then called the Normal School – a teacher training college.

NH: Which was here, or...?

JDB: Oh, yes, right here. It became the – it was the Rhode Island Normal School. It became the Rhode Island College of Education, and eventually, it became Rhode Island College, having moved two or three times in the meantime.

NH: Yeah, OK. [07:00] You think you were affected by that? Or the fact that she had gone to college in – and, I guess, because your brothers and sisters were also...

JDB: Oh, yes, it was the normal thing to go to college. It was no big deal. I would have been very unhappy if I couldn't have.

NH: OK, OK. Now what have you done since you retired from the job at Carter Brown?

JDB: Well, as I said, I went back working part-time to training someone to do the type of work I was doing. And I did that until I had an illness, which cut down on my level of work activity, so I haven't really done so much since. But I, of course, I keep in touch.

NH: OK. And what kinds of things are you doing now?

JDB: I don't do a great deal right now. As I said, my activity level is pretty low My energy, [08:00] is not too much.

NH: Now, this is a sort of whimsical question, and you can answer any way you want. If there were things you could have done over, or things that you would have liked to have happened, I mean, if you had all the money in the world, are there things that you would have done differently, do you think?

JDB: Well, actually, so far as my job day was concerned, if I was running at a job, it was the best, not at all, not from a magic point of view, but from an interest, in satisfaction, it was

extremely interesting. And I've always said that it was the most interesting job which they thought out.

NH: That's good.

JDB: It would have been nice to have more money, I think.

NH: OK. That's about it for the questions that I prepared to ask. Are there any things that you wanted to say, [09:00] or that haven't been covered that are important?

JDB: I think you've covered a great deal.

NH: OK. Thank you very much.

JDB: Oh, you're very welcome.

NH: OK.

- END -