

Transcript – Lorraine Estelle Adler, Class of 1945

Narrator: Lorraine Estelle Adler

Interviewer: Amanda Knox, Pembroke Center Assistant Archivist

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Location: Zoom

Length: 1:35:23

Amanda Knox: All right, so good afternoon. My name is Amanda Knox. I am the Pembroke Center Assistant Archivist. It is Thursday, March 26, 2020, at 2pm, and I am here on Zoom with Lorraine Adler Rosen class of 1945. Unfortunately, Lorraine and I could not be together today because we are in the midst of self-isolation and COVID-19, which is something I'm definitely going to want to ask you about towards the end. But today, I want to thank you so much for your willingness to share this story. As you can imagine, we don't get to interview a lot of members of the class of 1945 anymore so I'm very excited to be speaking with you today, even in this kind of distant and weird way. But as we get going, I kind of want to start your story from the beginning, and I'm wondering if you would not mind [1:00] telling me a little bit about where you grew up and what your parents did, if you had any siblings, just some kind of basic background information like that?

Lorraine Adler: Well, I grew up in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, and I had a younger brother, four years younger, and went to elementary school there and junior high, and then to Woonsocket High School. It was a small town, it's today it would be called a suburb of Providence, I guess.

AK: Right.

LA: Rhode Island is such a small state, and there were no highways. You know, we had to go to Providence on Louisquisset Pike, a two lane highway. It was all that was required in those days, or that many cars we didn't have traffic jams or rush hours.

AK: Right.

LA: And my dad's [2:00] whole family lived in Providence. He, he grew up in Providence. So it

was very familiar to me because we went every Sunday to visit relatives. In those days, it was, we were a very close family. Families visited on Sunday. And so my recollection is going almost every Sunday to visit my grandparents in Providence and my aunts and uncles and cousins. We had a very large family there. And we were the only ones in Woonsocket because my dad, he was – and so, I used to say that we lived in Providence. It was a, it was a city. But, but it was fine. I had a great upbringing there and being a small community, you know, we knew almost everyone. We only had one high school. So you could go to school from first [3:00] grade right through to graduate and be with people that you knew. So, so it worked out very well actually. And that's actually why I'm going to, I went to Pembroke. My dad's couldn't see my going anywhere else, the whole family. It's so many members who went to Brown. Well, and the women went to Pembroke.

AK: Did they? OK.

LA: There was just no question. But of course I did say to him, I'm not going to commute. As long as I can live in the dorms.

AK: Right, right.

LA: At that age, you know, I said as long as I can live in the dormitory that would be fine. And –

AK: And so you, you did know all along that you wanted to go to college? You were kind of raised with the understanding that that –

LA: In Woonsocket High School there were three courses. You had to choose which course you were going to take. There was [4:00] a commercial course, a general course, and a classical course. A classical course was for students who hoped to go on to college. So I actually I took the classical course because I certainly hoped to go on to college. It is very interesting. And if I may insert something –

Melanie Brooks [Lorraine's daughter]: A little louder mom, louder.

LA: They spoke to the students who were going to take a general course, and the boys liked woodworking and all that type. So they would hope, you know, to belong to a school that would enhance their future. And today they're talking about it, that not everyone should go to a four year –

AK: Right.

LA: You know, general arts program for college. And so many boys [5:00] would do well to go into businesses like –

MB: Trades.

LA: Electrician. Trades, like electricians, and carpenters, and plumbers, and they did very well. And they had jobs right away. And in a city like Woonsocket it was wonderful for them. And now they're talking about it today, you know, that sums it, well, years ago, they had apprentices who went into a business and learned a trade.

AK: Right.

LA: So it's very practical. It really is. And, and that's, so that's how I was on that track. You know, I was just planning to go to college.

AK: So when you were thinking of going to college, what kind of, were you intending to have a career path at that point, or were you thinking more short term that you just wanted to start with college? [6:00]

LA: Well, no, I, you know, women were in a different position in those days.

AK: Right.

LA: And that was because, frankly, you couldn't, you could practically not get into graduate

school. Medicine, law, business. There weren't MBAs all over so you didn't have that trajectory. But I had some feelings about being able to do something. I wasn't thinking of, what did they say? You get your MRS.

AK: Right.

LA: And your BA together. Which was true by the way. When I graduated, we were only seven girls who were not engaged to be married.

AK: Wow. When my daughter graduated and went on and got an MBA at Columbia, she said in her class, there are only seven [7:00] girls who were engaged to be married, if any.

AK: Wow.

LA: Very interesting, you know, dynamic that's happened with the generations. Women really, when graduate school opened to women, you know, in law, medicine, business, they were ready to hit the glass ceiling.

AK: Right. Well, so I want to ask you about all of that. But take, take me back to your last year of high school. Do you want to talk about that for a little bit?

LA: Yes, because this is where I start.

AK: Perfect.

LA: The war in Europe was going on.

AK: And what year was this, you, when you're entering your senior year of high school?

LA: I graduated high school in June of 1942.

AK: Okay.

LA: In Europe, the war had been going on for a couple of years. And well, this is what I, this is exactly where I started. I was a senior in high school. War was raging in Europe which was [8:00] overwhelmed by Germany under its leader, Adolf Hitler. Great Britain was attacked. It was frightening to hear that London was being bombed and the children were being sent to Canada.

AK: So may I interrupt you briefly and just ask, how were you hearing about London being bombed?

LA: I'm coming to it.

AK: OK. OK. I'll be patient.

LA: Yeah, we were not in the electronic age.

AK: Right.

LA: That's exactly what I'm coming to. Having no television and no cell phones, we learn the news from radio, newspapers, or going to a movie theater. And to see the Movie Town News, Paramount News, 20th Century Fox News, which all appeared before the main attraction. So every Saturday, we ran to the movies, really to see, we kind of didn't care about the picture.

AK: Right! [9:00]

LA: Really to see the news. And there was never enough of it. They'd have it on for about 15 minutes. And then they put the movie on. But we really were more interested because of the news. That's how we got our information.

AK: And how was that making you feel? Like you're sitting in a movie theater with friends and

family and you're seeing this newsreel? What, what are you thinking and feeling in that moment?

LA: Frightened at what you were seeing. Actually, you know, visually, you hear, they talk about it in newspapers, you read the newspapers, you sit in front of the radio, and you hear about it. I mean, the kids today wouldn't believe it. What did you do just sit around and look at the radio? Actually we did. I mean, we always had a large radio, it was a cabinet and you went into the living room, that was where you had the big one. We all have little ones in our rooms, but the living room had the [10:00] big one. And you usually had a phonograph, you know, and records a record player. And you, we'd all go into the living room on Sunday nights to listen, you know, to  
—

MB: The President.

LA: The reporters and the news. You get, you would get most of what they were reporting, which they were saying they were war reporters, I guess. But when you went to the movie theater, and you visually saw – when you saw the Nazi troops marching in Paris, through Paris on the Champs-Élysées, I mean, you couldn't believe it. And when you saw London being bombed, I mean, visually, today they wouldn't even, you know, it's with you. I remember the Vietnam War. I mean, you sit there watching television every night you're watching it. But for us [11:00] it was, it was incredible. It was really unbelievable what you were seeing. And especially when London was gone, that was beyond really, you know, they say you grow up with these things affecting you and you do. To this day. I can remember seeing those pictures of the actual bombing of London. It was, it was, it was terrible.

MB: Resume your story.

LA: So, anyhow, I was saying that we weren't at war until December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor and Hawaii was bombed in a surprise attack by Japan. Franklin D. Roosevelt declared war against Japan, and then joined Prime Minister Winston Churchill of England as an ally. So we were at war on two fronts. And [12:00] fortunately, and unfortunately, we were not fully

prepared. Everything changed immediately in our lives. A little bit like today where everything is upside down. I have that feeling today a little bit.

AK: Interesting.

LA: Of where everything is that you know is, is changing. Even food had to be rationed which isn't happening now, right away. Each family received a ration book with food stamps for each item that you wish to buy. And when I went to Pembroke, I had to bring my own ration book.

AK: Oh, really?

LA: Sure, so the dining room could have, we all had to bring a book because they, so they could buy their food for us in the dining room. It was amazing. The country mobilized very quickly.

AK: May I ask, was your father, did he serve during World War II, or your [13:00] brother? Or did you have any family members who were serving?

LA: Yes, my father's brother.

AK: OK.

LA: My, my father was the oldest. So he was supposedly supporting the family so he was exempt. But my, his brother, my uncle, which I'm going to get to in a little while, served in World War One.

AK: Oh. OK.

LA: I'll tell you about that later.

AK: Sure.

LA: And my, well my younger brother was in the Korean War.

AK: Oh, OK. And forgive my interruptions. If you don't want to answer my questions, please feel free to keep going.

LA: It brings everything back. You know, I have a lot in here, but actually, and I'll get to it at some point. But I'm glad you are asking questions. It kind of revives my mind.

AK: May I ask also, while we're at this point in the story, how you were feeling on [14:00] December 7, when you got that news because you're just about to graduate high school at that point.

LA: And I'll tell you, yes. It was a Sunday afternoon. And we were sitting in the living room, listening to the radio, and some program. My dad loved music. So I'm sure it was the New York Philharmonic. He loved classical music. And he bought this large, I've forgotten the name of it now, everybody knew it at the time, a big cabinet playing classical records, and radio. There was a station from New York that broadcast the New York Philharmonic. So we're sitting in the living room listening and reading the Sunday paper, and the Sunday papers are there. My dad's reading the papers and listening to this gorgeous classical music, with the radio on with, you know, music, the classical music and then a news [15:00] broadcast breaks right through out of nowhere. "Pearl Harbor in Hawaii has been bombed, the whole fleet." And we're sitting there and if you want to talk about numbness, feeling, you can't. You cannot believe what you're hearing. You just couldn't believe it. I can picture now that you're saying it, I can picture it. Sunday afternoon. I can go right to it. Thank God my mind's – I don't know if it's good or bad. But I do remember it vividly. My dad, I think turned ashen, and my mother. I'm a senior in high school so I'm old enough to know what I'm hearing but not absorbing it at that point. And then I'm in high school, senior. I'm looking forward to graduation and a whole, you know, life ahead of me [16:00] and it was awful. It was just, because from that moment on, everything changed. I was – being a girl, I didn't have to register for the draft. That was very interesting. My parents said, I heard them say something about being so happy that I was a female because if I were male, I would've have to go right out. I was 17. I would have had to, yeah, and that's what

happened freshman year. Many of the boys had to register. I was young, in a way for being a senior. I was 17. Many are 18 senior year, but I was 17. And so, and my brother was four years younger, he was 13. So they didn't have that worry. But think of the families right at that moment. Look at this young sons. And you know, 18 is so young, especially [17:00] your parents, you know, with this 18 year old son. So it was a very traumatic moment. It really was. Even today, this isn't, you know, this is extraordinary what's going on. The fact that you can't even come to New York.

AK: Right. I know. Thinking about four, like four weeks ago thinking about this trip and how completely different the world is.

LA: Exactly. I didn't want you to have to come. I didn't think I had enough information for you, but then you said you had a cousin here, you could visit her and go out. I said, oh, that'd be fun.

AK: Yeah, but she's locked up in New York too.

LA: Yeah, we're on lockdown. So that –

MB: Alright mom, get back into the story.

LA: So now I'm saying, this is another thing, the attitude of the country, everybody, [18:00] every young man had to register for the military draft and could volunteer. At that time their mindset was very patriotic. The whole country at once pulled together – young, old. There was none of this, protesting never even occurred. In my lifetime, there wasn't any. I don't remember all the protests that has gone on through the years, because there was none in those days. People I guess, were very accepting but nobody was in the streets protesting. And at that point, everyone was very patriotic, and every young man, healthy young man, wanted to be in uniform and, and register and go. It was, it was very interesting, and these are young men, but there was no protesting. As a matter, it was just the opposite. As a matter of fact, only someone with medical difficulties was not [19:00] accepted. And was decli – and this was what was sad. They were given a label. They were declared 4F. So, it seemed to be a stigma for young men who weren't in

uniform. I saw that on the campus at Brown. A few students who were not in service, you know, with the ROTC, they felt badly. And I remember, now that I'm talking about it, I do remember one young man, whom I knew. And obviously he was 4F. He was, he was a Brown student on campus, but every time you saw him, he was waiting to hear from the Ambulance Corps, because he was hoping to go to Egypt.

AK: Wow.

LA: I mean it was like, so that's what made me say this, that he didn't, like saying, "I'm not 4F, I've [20:00] applied." It was, it was sad. It was terrible. And it wasn't any fault of his own if he had a medical problem, you know, some young boys do have it. And they were the only ones. And there was another reason, I never understood it, if you had flat feet.

AK: Right.

LA: Young men, which I didn't understand to tell you the truth. Is that a medical difficulty if a boy has flat feet? But the army felt that was a problem. That I didn't understand, but, but for the most part, I, they must have had allergies. They must have had something that they weren't accepted. But, but everybody was in uniform.

And I said here, then what happened, I graduated. I had applied to Pembroke you know, before, it was like in the spring, you know. I was graduating in June, [21:00] and I had received my acceptance. So I, that was the other part. Oh, I'm all set. I'm off in the fall. I'm going off to Pembroke. So even with the war on, at least in my head, I kind of knew where I was going. But then, and because the war had permeated everything, but then I received a letter from Pembroke. Brown and Pembroke were opening up the campuses for the first time in the summer. They were creating tri-semester. So my class would be the first class as we were about to enter in September of '42. If I wish to come in the summer of June '42 I would be eligible to become a freshman. So I had to think about it. [22:00] But you know, I didn't think very long. The war is raging. The world is horrible. And people are going to go sit on the beach.

MB: You couldn't live on campus.

LA: And so what happened is that I accepted and 10 days after high school graduation, I became a freshman at Pembroke.

AK: Wow.

LA: But, there was one drawback. They were not going to open the dormitories. So I had to think about it. But, in my case, I lucked out. My aunt and uncle who were both, my aunt graduated from Pembroke and my uncle graduated from Brown, the class of 1918.

AK: Wow.

LA: That's where the family goes back. That was my dad's brother. And he was a lawyer. And he was in World War One. But he decided, [23:00] he enjoyed, I guess, the life or something. So he enjoyed the point where you could enter the Army Reserve, go for two weeks in the summer, and 20 years later, you get a pension. So he did that. But, the caveat was you're eligible to recall if there's a war and so he was in 1918, right after, you know, college, he went, he went into the service. The war was ending actually in 1918. So he being in college, they didn't take him, but right before he graduated he went, and now 10 years later, he's recalled for World War Two. So my aunt was alone. He went off. He was in the Judge Advocate [24:00] Corps –

AK: Wow.

LA: As a lawyer and, and he was an officer. So my aunt graciously invited me to stay with her for the summer until the dormitories open.

MB: Tell her what street.

LA: She was on, this was funny, they lived on stadium road, right – yes, Stadium Road is that little road right next to the Brown stadium. As a matter of fact, children used to park in their driveway when the Brown football games. Everybody was looking for, they would, I think they charged them a nickel or ten cents, stand in the driveway and bring the cars in.

AK: Wow.

LA: But yeah, they were right there. So she invited me to come and stay there for the summer, which was wonderful because she was alone, her children went to camp, and I stayed with her all summer. And then in September, now in September, [25:00] I'm going into the second semester of my freshman year.

AK: Right. And did you have a lot of classmates who followed that path with you? Did you start in the summer with a lot of other women?

LA: 37.

AK: Oh, wow. Okay.

LA: Yeah, that's what I have here. 37 women, most of them, day students. There are a lot of day students at Pembroke because of the proximity. And they did, but they were called day students and this is what happened. I said, I became a day student. And so we could use the day student, they had a lounge for them. They always did. I assume that went on. So they had a place to go between classes and read their books and their things. So –

AK: Was that West House? Is that what that was?

LA: That was the dorm I went into in September, West House.

AK: OK.

LA: That little brown house on [26:00] the corner of Meeting and Brown Street,

AK: I'm familiar with it.

LA: It became so many things after that. We were a dormitory, nine students and a house mother.

And, and I had a fire escape – I had the corner window.

AK: Oh, good deal!

LA: The corner room, rather, with two windows and a fire escape. The fire escape worked out perfectly, because everyone in the house could put their cold things out there in the winter, like a little refrigerator. We opened the window and everything was on the fire escape keeping cold. It was pretty good. Everybody had their cheese and crackers. And I'll get to that because it turned out to be quite funny. That's where I am right here. I laugh when I think about it. We were very close. Just nine students. That was the [27:00] first dorm that I went into in September they opened it up. I don't know what it had been, but wasn't a big, at least they made it into a dormitory. So the nine of us, and then the day students from the summer, you know, continued and then we had two large dormitories. We had Miller and Metcalf, Angel House and Sharpe House. Now I don't, they were big Victorian, huge Victorian houses that were dormitories. I don't know what happened to those. I have no idea subsequently, but, and it was a small dormitory. It was the street parallel to Brown Street, where they were also a small house like West house. I can't think of the name. I've been racking my brain and I can't think of the name of that dormitory. And I knew two girls in it and unfortunately they both passed away. I couldn't even call them. Maybe the school would know it, [28:00] what the name of it was. I, I can see it, but I can't remember the name of it. It was a small dormitory. Well, there weren't that many students. The rest came back. My, now my original class that I was supposed to be in came in in September. But I was already, you know, had a semester –

AK: You were well on your way.

LA: Yeah. And it was optional, by the way. Summer sessions were optional right throughout. You didn't have to come. As a result, it disrupted every class, because some decided to come one summer, or two summers, or not at all. So some of the girls who were sophomores when I entered, I graduated before they did because I graduated in '45 instead of '46.

AK: And you went with, for all of the summers, right?

LA: I went every summer. So I was the first class to graduate. And I graduated, as I say in my paper [29:00] here, on a cold freezing day in February. And we didn't march down the hill either, but we were at the Baptist Church down at the bottom. And, and as I say, my diploma reads, "Pembroke College in Brown University." And also what happened, right, we had professors – my first semester, the professors from Brown came down to us. We had our own classroom, library, gym, newspaper, and yearbook. We were very independent. It was, it was a woman's college basically, even though we were part of Brown. The University had different colleges. And so it was very interesting. We were, it made us, I tell you, I think it made yourself independent. I think women at women's colleges are more independent than coed because the men are always [30:00] there first.

AK: Right.

LA: So –

AK: So, may ask, do you remember anything about the, the parietal rules on campus and living in the dorm?

LA: About what?

AK: Parietal rules?

MB: Men in your room.

LA: Oh, parietal rules. Oh, well, yeah, very strict. First of all, we had to be in every night at 10 o'clock. The doors were locked at 10 o'clock. And if you weren't in by 10 o'clock, you got a pink slip. And I forgot whether it was five or six pink slips and you were out of college. I mean, you were out. I mean, so if you don't think that people tried to be in by ten o'clock. Yes, that was a parietal rule. No men upstairs, oh, no men above the first floor. Anyway, you think about it now, Brown now. No men. [31:00] We had, I, I, as a matter of fact, I had a little job. They offered us, they call it "bells." You sat downstairs and answered the telephone. You could call upstairs

for the girls to answer the phone. But if it was a young man, they had to come downstairs. No young men upstairs. So, we all liked the job. I had bells, you know, one day a week. I think I had Sunday, so you can see who's coming in on their dates.

AK: Right!

LA: You could, and the girls would say, "Is he tall? Is he short? What does he look like?" So we were very important because we could tell them upstairs, you know, if you were tall wear flats. These are things that today just sound, you know, [32:00] are kind of ridiculous. Funny. Really funny. But that, that was very important, you know, dating. And, and then as I say, so many of the young men went into the ROTC, you know, the Reserve Officers Training Corps, in which they protested, what the Vietnam War, they wanted them off campus, but they were entering the D 12 and they were all in uniform. So when you came on the campus, everybody, all the young men were in uniform of some sort. And they, and many had left. My, in my class they left for the draft, for the army, but they were drafted. So it was a very different time. It was, it was – when I think about today, I wouldn't even know the campus or what life is like. When I heard that there were [33:00] men in the dorms when my daughter went I said, "Oh my god are they" – they had a sign on the bathrooms, "Man in the john," or something. This left me cold. And as parents, we weren't too happy. We came from that era. The world changed. This is why you're interested in what was life like. Very different.

MB: Get back to your story mom.

LA: Very different. But, let's see where I am? Oh, we, we were able to take classes on the campus after the first summer. You know, the same professors who gave the courses at Brown would come down to us. But then we were invited, it didn't come really coed, but we were all invited to come onto the campus and take courses. [34:00] That opened up, for us, so many courses that we never would have taken. And it was wonderful. It was really wonderful for us. So that I write that I, I took a course in engineering. Three.

AK: What was that like?

LA: Three women in the class. They were math majors, and the rest were uniform.

AK: Wow.

LA: It was in drafting and we all did, three gals did very well. Very well.

MB: What'd you get mom?

LA: I received an A.

AK: Bravo!

LA: I was so proud. You couldn't believe – I couldn't I believe –

AK: Oh, I believe it.

LA: Yeah, right. With all the men in the class. I received an A in drafting.

AK: Good for you.

LA: Yeah, that was. Yeah. There were very good moments. That would be a very good moment. And those girls went to work at Pratt Whitney.

AK: Oh, wow. [35:00]

LA: Yeah, they were, they were really the forerunners. You know, they called the women who went to work in factories, take men's places, Rosie the Riveter I think they label them. They went in and did really manual work that men were doing. So the women basically came into their own in a funny way, you know, not funny, but an unusual way that they had to go into the factories and the men were gone. The men were gone everywhere. I mean, they were all in the service as far as that was concerned. Very different atmosphere.

MB: What did you hope to do mom?

LA: But, so then I did, well I put this, oh, well I'll just go back to West house. The Army brought in soldiers to the campus, [36:00] a teaching core. They were the ASTP and they came on the Brown campus, took courses, and lived in the dormitories. But they took their meals at the Pembroke dining room.

AK: Oh really?

LA: That's where I started to say my corner room became very popular because we could look all the way down Brown Street to Waterman Street to see, they had a marching unison through the, through Brown Street down to meeting street, and I'm right there on the corner of Brown and Meeting so everybody would run to my room and we'd hang out, look out the window, and watch them marching down through, in organization. Oh, I have a picture.

AK: Oh, you have photos! Oh my god. Oh, I love it!

MB: Right here. That's West House.

LA: That's West House. [37:00]

MB: Watching the guys.

LA: Yeah, my roommate and I were, I guess we were hanging out the window. But everybody had, this is the point, they used to sing Army songs, so everybody can hear them way down coming, singing. The minute they heard the singing they ran up the stairs and they were singing Army songs. And I said to Melanie, I still remember a few words that I won't repeat. But that was it. That's a side, unusual side story. Yeah, that was, that was when I got here. It was there were only nine of us, but the minute we'd hear the singing everybody would – and they were in uniform too. But they were going to be instructors in the army. That, I don't know how they arranged that with Brown, but they did, but that was, but was our – [38:00] But we all wanted to

do something for the war effort. And I did secret work for the government.

AK: Did you? While you were at Brown?

LA: Yeah. You had to, you had to have perfect eyesight. There were seven of us and I, well, it's secret work at the time, where they, we'd have to meet in the dining room kitchen. We didn't see anybody, we wouldn't speak anybody. We had to put on infrared goggles. They sent taxis for us –

MB: What time in the morning?

LA: We were in the kitchen at six in the morning and it was an hour's work. They'd pick us up, we'd be there before six. We had to have breakfast, we'd eat the kitchen and they would give us breakfast. And then they'd send taxis for us. They'd take us over to the Brown – I think at that point it was at the Brown gym [39:00] on Elmgrove, or the Brown Fieldhouse – made it into a field house subsequently, but that I'm trying to remember. It was on Elmgrove and there's a big field, maybe there are houses there now, but huge field next to it. And we were put in there. And in those days, by the way, there was no air conditioning. Our dorm rooms weren't exactly cool. We all had to bring a fan into our rooms, because we would suffocate. There was no, you know, air conditioning didn't come in until after the war for homes and even cars. So it was a little, and I think that might be kind of a reason people didn't come in the summer. We, I used to have a course in Rhode Island Hall. That was way down at the end of the campus. And I don't, it's still there. It's like a Greek temple with columns and it's all cement. It was so cool. [40:00] Couldn't wait to get into that classroom and just sit there.

AK: I bet.

LA: There were two of them. There was another building I can't, Manning Hall, was it? But they were made of cement so they were cool. Everybody wanted to take courses in there. But you think about it, no air conditioning, it could be pretty hot in July and August.

AK: Right.

LA: So I remember doing that and, and doing secret work, it was very hot. We'd go there. It was so hot.

AK: Do you remember how you learned about this work opportunity and how you were selected for it?

LA: Well, they sent around a notice. First of all, they wanted to know anyone who had perfect eyesight. That was the requisite.

AK: Okay.

LA: And I had 30/20. I had over the top. And there weren't that many to tell you the truth. [41:00] At that point they wanted it, there was just no ifs, ands, or buts. And then you had to volunteer, of course. So I volunteered and there were seven of us.

AK: So what made you want to volunteer? Were you still feeling the patriotism of the war?

LA: I'll tell you, yes, as a woman, or as a girl, you, you feel, you feel terrible. The men are going to serve the, you know, they're in battle, God knows the news you heard. How could you just sit around? There was no feeling of fun. It was none of that. You know, between semesters we only had 10 days. There was no leisure time. And everybody was knitting, and do anything you could do, especially as women. And so I jumped at the opportunity. I mean, oh my God, I've got perfect eyesight. And so we did and we went every day. And then once in a while, once in a while, [42:00] they would take us in the middle of the night, three o'clock in the morning, we have to go out to the field next to the Brown., on Elmgrove Avenue, that field, and that Elmgrove, you know, at that point was opposite the Brown stadium. If you think about it, the location, I don't know what's there now, maybe houses. It was big open field. And we would stand in the middle of the field with binoculars and they'd have a look at the top of the Brown stadium. And we each had to report what we saw through our binoculars. It was interesting.

AK: And were they testing your eyesight, or were they testing the product they were trying to

make?

LA: Right. They were testing the product, and that's why we needed perfect eyesight to see it at night. That's why we had to go in the middle of the night with no light. And just, and that's why we had our infrared glasses, to get our eyes accustomed to what [43:00] we were going to have to see. That was, we did that every morning. By that time, you know, we were pretty good. And we would stand in the field and put on our binoculars and look up, they had told us where we have to look. And then we each have to report what, what we saw or didn't see. After the war, we found out we were part of a program – radar.

AK: Wow.

LA: That really made us feel good. We didn't know what we were doing. We were just doing what they told us to do. But there were many parts to this program, developing radar, which was very important. So then we, I really felt good about that. I had no clue all that time what I was hearing.

AK: But did they tell you in that moment, what you were doing you had to keep a secret or were you allowed to talk about it?

LA: Yes, we didn't talk about it.

AK: Not even to your parents or your brother?

LA: For a long time I didn't talk about it. [44:00] But I, once radar and everybody knows radar –

AK: Right.

LA: Once it was out, I felt very good about contributing. I mean, it was a sense of contributing. And those were the feelings in those days you really have to understand our psyche at that time. There was none of this. Now, when the Vietnam War came and everybody was protesting, the

boys are going to run to Canada. So we had feelings about it, right, wrong, or indifferent, but they were funny feelings coming where we came from and our mindset. It's very interesting. I'm still sort of I, sometimes I feel like a dinosaur. It's really you know, and having – hey, look, I never planned to live this long. Even today, they talk about people 80, you know, be careful at 80 and 85, and [45:00] I'm saying, oh, so young. And the funny thing is about this, my 75th reunion. I'm not even in the Brown monthly alumni magazine. My class is no longer reports. I don't, I knew we, there was a secretary in our class who would run an annual gift fund for the class. I haven't heard in years. One I know she passed away. So I don't even know. And of course, now it's with Brown. So, but we're not even listed, the class of '45. '46, my old class, isn't listed. I don't think the classes start until about '48 or '49. If you look at the classes, so what today I do, and we were laughing about this, the first place I look is the obituary.

AK: Oh no!

LA: But it's true. And I say, I have to tell you, I see an awful lot of people that I know. I recognize [46:00] the names. I know quite a few, which is only natural at this age.

AK: Right.

LA: So I keep saying to my daughter, am I, am I the last man standing? I knew three of those girls have comments in your archives.

AK: Oh really?

LA: Yeah. Jean, Jean Edwards, Jean. She was going, now this is interesting, she says that in her interview – did you interview her?

AK: I did not, no.

LA: Because in her interview, she said she was engaged to be married. And I said, before I even read it, I said, I bet you she married Knight Edwards. It just hit me. And I read the comment. She

was engaged forever. And I, we did have May Day. You know, we didn't have a lot of leisure. And we, and socially I'll tell you about it. We didn't have a lot of leisure. We did have some proms. And, you know, sort of. I was on the committee [47:00] for posters and all that stuff. And we had May Day, May Day Princess, you know, Queen, whatever. Very small. But at May Day, I had a pic – I couldn't find the picture. One of the girls was busy showing off her engagement ring because it was May and June they were, she was graduating and getting married. I do have that picture. That was that was the big thing of that. Show off your engagement ring. Not for those of us who had no plans, but, but anyway. It was –

AK: So tell me about that. Were you feeling pressure to get married or what were your thoughts on marriage at that time?

LA: I will say this. I thank my parents for that. I really did. They never pressured me. Oh my god. But I will say one thing which you probably know, that girls, women were told, [48:00] which is why they got married at such a young age, they were told to have their first babies by the age of 30.

AK: Really?

LA: Yeah.

AK: How come?

LA: That was a known fact, medical, at the time. You were better off if you had your first child by the age of 30. As a result, there was an expression that you'd never hear today, never. I mean, you know, you'd be insulted to hear that if you weren't thinking about getting married at 25, 26, 27, 30 is coming down on your head. You didn't want to be an old maid. That's an old, an old expression

AK: At the ripe old age of 30, right?

LA: Yeah. Today you're a career woman forever. You can be in your career and nobody says

anything. But, to be an old maid, and [49:00] I remember talking to some friends who were starting, that's when they would start to worry a little bit. Not the pressure of the marriage as much as having a child for medical reasons, because it was more difficult after 30, because there could be problems. And maybe even today that would be so for some people, I don't know. But maybe they were thinking of miscarriages. I really don't know what, I don't know the reasoning behind it. It was just everyone knew you should for that, for that reason. Women biologically were pressured. Men didn't have to worry about that.

AK: Of course not.

MB: Talk about your Saturday night dances.

LA: So – what?

MB: The Saturday night dances.

LA: Oh, yeah, well, socially I'm going to get to that. We were talking about May Day social. But I will say, [50:00] socially, the Biltmore Hotel had dinner dancing every Saturday night. Is it still there, the Biltmore Hotel?

AK: The Biltmore is there, but I believe they've just renamed it to something weird and I don't remember –

LA: The Taj or something?

AK: I don't remember what they –very recently they renamed it.

LA: Yeah. So many hotels are going into a chair. They're either The Taj or The Mandarin. Orientals are buying up hotels in different cities. I assume the Biltmore would be bought. It was the only really large hotel in Providence at the time. There was no, there was nothing else that was there. So that –

MB: Maybe that night there you might mention.

LA: Pardon?

MB: That you got married there.

AK: Oh did you?

LA: I wasn't married there.

MB: Oh I thought you were?

LA: No, never.

MB: Oh!

LA: My daughter just learned something. I was not married at the Biltmore. I was married [51:00] at the, there was a smaller hotel that my aunt's uncle owned. It was called the Narragansett Hotel. Very small and intimate, and they never had a wedding there. They had a beautiful dining room with dancing and dinner, dinner dancing, and a balcony. It was so lovely, but it was very small, very intimate. And they had parlors, they called them parlors upstairs. But they'd never had weddings, everything went to the Biltmore. And so I didn't want a large wedding. And that dining room only held 150 people. So my uncle was, and aunt, were very nice to me. They spoke to that, she spoke to her father, and they opened it up. I had the first wedding at the Narragansett Hotel which is no longer there. I think they tore it down. So I was a little different.

But I'll tell you, Saturday night, the Biltmore [52:00] had dinner and dancing. And if you remember, the USO was the entertainment. And they used to sponsor dances for the offices from the Newport Naval base. And once in a while the girls from Pembroke were invited to come. And as I write here, it was very bittersweet because so many of them were preparing to go overseas,

and, you know, be in the Navy overseas. And at that point with the war going on, it was raging, and you didn't know if they were going to return. But a few of them remained and there was some dating going on afterwards. And one of the girls from Pembroke did marry one of the officers. They looked very handsome in their [53:00] uniforms. They were in white. They were in white, you know, their dress uniforms are white. So, so be it. But you know, you didn't know who they were. They were from everywhere. And, and this is a sad thing really. They don't talk about this in the war. Every, some young women were rushing their engagements to get married before they went overseas. There was a lot of that going on. And I thought, oh my god, you, you rush to get married, they go overseas, and you know, with what was going on, you didn't know. And I did hear this, I didn't, I only heard this, that one of the girls who is dating one of the officers, they were subsequently married and what I heard – he came from Texas. God knows where in Texas, somewhere in Texas. And of course, [54:00] women never went down to see where their husbands came from in those days. You know, you got married. So, in those days I don't think she went to Texas. And when she got married, I don't know where, I only heard this, but subsequently she got to Texas, and I heard after that, and I don't know how long, I don't know anything, I did hear they got divorced.

AK: Because of Texas probably.

LA: It could be. I don't know. I don't know. My sister married a boy from Texas. The accent is quite Southwestern.

AK: Right.

LA: But they're not all cowboys. But anyway, those were the, the sub things that happened. And let me see if I have anything else that I forgotten to tell you as I'm going along. I told you about the soldiers. I told you about – No I think [55:00] I covered quite a lot, didn't I? Did I?

MB: I think you did. Your last sentence, mom. What's your very last paragraph?

LA: So I told you about socially, oh, this is the other thing I wanted to show you which is also

kind of bittersweet. I'm a member of the Friends of the World War Memorial. And I just received an invitation to attend the 75th anniversary of the famous battle on the island of Iwo Jima. That was a horrible battle, the turning point of the war. It was thousands of Marines were on the island and thousands, thousands were on it and thousands were [56:00] killed in that battle. It was horrible. And you know what I have here that they sent me. This is the famous picture of the battle.

MB: Put up mom. See the camera? There you go.

LA: When they tried to –

MB: Up higher, up higher.

LA: The Marines tried to plant, they did plant, after the battle, they had won it I suppose, had planted the flag. And this is that famous. They just, they sent it to me just now for the 75th. I'm invited to the service that they're having for the 75th anniversary. This battle took place on February 23, 1945. Two days later, one of these young men was killed on February 25, 1945, the day of my graduation. Now that, [57:00] that really just hit me. And I received the notices at the same time. Ironic. I'm looking 75 years and that day I'm graduating from Pembroke. And that's my story.

AK: Did you have a radio in your dorm room? Or did anybody have radios in there for you to hear the news of the war while you were on campus?

LA: We all had, we had small little, I had one at home. We each had one in our bedrooms. You always, well that's how we heard the baseball games.

AK: Right.

LA: We never saw, if you didn't go to the game, you know, you could have a team. I had a team the Boston Red Sox. I never saw them play. But I knew all the names of the players. You'd have

to have an announcer who really got you into the action.

AK: Right.

LA: So, and there was the Boston Braves. They're no longer. They moved somewhere. [58:00]  
Two Boston teams. Yeah, we heard, well, that was the other thing as I said the radio was really  
our right arm. I mean, that's how we heard. And they, and they had soap operas too in those days.  
I guess they're on television now. But yeah, that was, that was really pretty much it as far as I  
can remember.

AK: So you did not get married while you were at Pembroke. But you did eventually get  
married.

LA: Oh, I did. Yeah.

AK: And what year was that?

LA: I had Melanie.

AK: Right. We have the evidence.

LA: Right. 1947 I got married two years –

AK: OK.

LA: I went to Boston after graduation.

AK: OK.

LA: And I was there when the war ended in August of '45.

AK: Tell me about that day.

LA: May, the European in May, the European war ended. But then, by then I was living in [59:00] Boston. On August 15, 1945, the news came out about the atomic bomb that the war abruptly, abruptly, just ended. We were, everybody was just in shock. The war is over. And then the news came out about the atomic bomb. And it was very weird. Because people are in the streets, screaming, screaming for joy. Just the noise. I can, you know, I can hear it today. Everywhere, everywhere you looked in Boston on the streets where I was standing people just came from nowhere. Everybody was in the streets, screaming and then when you thought about it afterwards, it was a day of horror for Japan, but a day of joy for us because the horrors stopped. Just stumped. [1:00:00] Because this is what we were used to, you know, all these battles. And then oh, and my dorm room, we had a map. So after D day, June 6, I think it was 1944, my semesters were all put together.

AK: Right.

LA: We had pins and Eisenhower directed the invasion in Normandy. And after that we would put pins in for every battle won. And we were going, they were winning, winning, going through every town. But they were approaching Berlin. And Roosevelt had died in April of '45 and Truman, you know, the Vice President, became President, and he's the one who ordered the atomic bomb which [1:01:00] was a godsend for this country because we had been through such horror and the war ended abruptly at that point. So everybody began, the young men all began coming back. And that was very interesting because the woman had replaced them in so many areas.

AK: Right.

LA: But, it was interesting, the businesses would take them back immediately. The women had to leave because they were –

AK: What were you doing after Pembroke? Or were you working?

LA: I went to Boston. I had, well Pembroke had a program where if you could take courses that

were related to your major, I majored in history and design, you could go to down to School of Design, and I did, I went down there and took courses in School of Design, which was wonderful. And [1:02:00] it was a whole different – and School of Design in those days, which is now a very premier design school, as you know, was just down on Benefit Street in two buildings. Then they put up a dormitory going up the hill, I think was it Angel or Waterman? Right at the bottom is a building that became a dormitory, the School of Design. And so I went to Boston, and I went into Filene's into their, I wanted to get into their display department for display and whatever. And I had taken several courses in interior design. And in those days, that was a very different day, too. Today anybody can be an interior designer. They were saying you take your bag and you go into the design building and your material – you had to be, to be recognized you should be a member of AID [1:03:00] and [Winnifred?] was my professor at the Rhode Island School of Design, and she founded the AID –

AK: Really?

LA: organization that you had to be certified. She was wonderful. I learned a lot. I learned in that class, which they don't do today. Before you come to a client, you have to present her with the room as she can see it with her furniture. We had to draw it to scale, all the woodwork, every bit of the woodwork by the inch. That's when my drafting came in good with the engineering. Because my drafting in engineering was so detailed to the quarter, eighth, and sixteenth of an inch. We had all the tools for it. And I had the T bar, my best friend. And so then you had to do a water color, that's where the art came in, and present the whole thing to her, [1:04:00] your client. They don't do that today. Oh you need blue walls, you need a coach, you need a sofa, you need a chair there, but even that was very different.

AK: So is that the work that you did after college, you were an interior designer?

LA: Well I, well, sort of. I met my husband.

MB: She should have been. She should have been.

AK: Right. OK.

LA: Yeah. I was just getting into it and I met my husband.

AK: OK.

LA: He was on 30 day leave from the Navy. He was a physician. He'd been in World War Two. And, and I met him on a blind date in Boston. I thought I'd spend my life in Boston, but he was already, it was hard in those days after the war, because there were no groups of doctors. It was all solo practice so there had to be office space and he found office space. [1:05:00] He went to a medical supply company that he knew, he was a friend of the owner. And he said, I mean, this sounds crazy today. "Oh, a doctor passed away in a place called Fall River, Massachusetts." And he said, "If you could go down there, I'm buying out the office so it's open. The space is open. I'm just buying it out, you know, the all the furniture and equipment." So my husband, I hadn't met him yet, he went down, and he decided he'll take it. But in the meantime, and the, and the reason was that he came from Lynn, Massachusetts. I had never even been up there with, you know, we southern, well I guess it was Rhode Island and Massachusetts, below Boston, never went north of Boston to Marblehead and all those places. And he had been there as a boy. [1:06:00] He was on a field trip down in Providence, in Falmouth, and he got into the water, it was so warm, nothing like Maine – cold, freezing almost the whole summer. He said he never felt such warm water. They told him that Fall River was near New Bedford and Cape Cod and everybody knew the water down there was warm. On that he went. He said if he didn't like it he could leave. I didn't, he was free, he wasn't married. So when I met him, he was going to Fall River and it was so fun. I'm from Providence and he had never been. He had been to providence once. I don't know if it's still there, Haven Brothers for hotdogs downtown.

AK: I don't think so.

LA: It was so famous. They came from all over to go downtown. He said as a group of boys they got into the car and drove to Providence to go to Haven Brothers for a hot dog. And I had never even gone down the hill. [1:07:00] But –

MB: I have to interject here, Amanda, because being more modern, I was like, I went to a

woman's college also and came out and went to a coed graduate school, the first time I was in a mixed classroom since the seventh, eighth grade. And I was like, yeah, you know, so what's the big deal? They're not that smart. That's where I'm coming from. Meanwhile, mom's coming from her era. She's intending, she's, she was gifted with skills. She's, she's got the gift of design, the eye, you heard that the eyesight, but she can also see color. She can see color and six months later say that's the same color as that. She's got these innate abilities, wasn't encouraged because of the era. As she's going along in her Boston lifestyle, she's working up there and thinking she's going to have a little bit of a career. My father comes along, much older, with a full career in place if you can picture like a motorcycle with a sidecar, [1:08:00] picks her up, takes her on a ride and that's the story of the rest of her life.

LA: Yeah. That's right, except that he innovated – one more thing, which is kind of my life went upside down. In the Korean War, there was a shortage of physicians. And they decreed, the government, in their inevitable way that any physician who was in World War Two for less than 24 months would be subject to recall. My husband was in for 22 months. He'd been on a submarine tender, tending to the young man on submarines in the middle of the sea. They would come to his ship and he would treat them he said that was incredible. He went into a hospital in Panama, Naval Hospital, a big Naval Hospital. And then he received [1:09:00] orders. The war has ended proceed home. So nobody at that point stays, because you just stayed another year. For those two months, he was recalled for two years.

AK: Wow.

LA: And Melanie was a toddler. She was very young.

AK: So you have Melanie at that time that – what year would this have been about?

LA: Early 50s. '55. Yeah.

AK: So –

LA: And so, so I have great empathy for military families. I have great empathy. I understand it,

because people, the Korean War wasn't like World War Two. You know, it came and if you ask anybody about the Korean War today I don't think they can even – Why, what are we doing in Korea? Why is there a South Korea and North Korea? That's what had happened. We had split South and North. North became the communist north. The south went on [1:10:00] to develop. And if you ask young students today I don't think they can give you the history of the Korean War because even in this country, life went on. And I remember so well, people coming up to me as though I have lost my husband. "Oh, how are you doing? How is everything going?" Like a widow. I mean, you're a war widow at a time when the country thinks they're at peace. You know, there wasn't this war effort.

AK: There was no support behind you.

LA: Right. Although my brother was, the draft was still in effect. My brother was drafted.

AK: Oh, really? Right.

LA: He was at Providence College and he went overseas. It was, so there were some families who were affected. I was because my brother went and my husband went and yet people were – [1:11:00] I'll tell you one thing, I stopped getting social invitations.

AK: Really? How come?

LA: I was alone, I guess. Maybe that happens to widows. I don't know. But I realized that, you know, weddings, engagements, they all went on. I knew people were being engaged and there were weddings, but I never received an invitation.

AK: Wow.

LA: Interesting. It's a psychological thing, I guess. I don't think they're used to military families, you know, at the time. But I know that feeling of isolation of the military wives today. I have great feeling. And for veterans, I really have great feeling for when you read about them or hear

about them. I really understand it. I really do. And I give money to organizations, the bigger ones. That's why I got the Friends of the Veterans [1:12:00] Memorial. You know, when you've been there you really understand how the children – you know, Melanie was, you know, little. All of a sudden she grew up, he came back, she was, you know, old. She wasn't the same as a few years and at those ages every year is different if you're not there for them. I still remember it, I do. But here I am. So I can't get to the reunion. I don't even know if there'll be one frankly.

AK: Well, so I mean, our, the communication we just got for this year's 2020 commencement is that it's being postponed.

LA: Oh, really?

AK: Right. President Paxson is very determined for it to be postponed and not canceled. [1:13:00] So they're tentatively looking at doing something in October, but it all depends on when we can get over this coronavirus and, and even so she made a good point in one of her emails that even if we get over it tomorrow, there's still going to be a period of kind of recovery for everyone to get back into their normal tracks. So they've decided to postpone it for this year. So who knows when it's going to come up again?

LA: Well that's the – I wondered about, you know, it's funny that you say that I was wondering about it. I was wondering if, if they would have it because the timeline isn't, you know, that long, really.

AK: Right.

LA: Because I don't think anyone knows.

AK: Right.

LA: So –

AK: Well, and I want to ask you about that. But first, I kind of want to hit a middle point before

we wind down. Were you living in New York on September 11, 2001? And even if you weren't what, what do you remember [1:14:00] of that day?

LA: Well, I, I remember seeing it on television because that morning I was watching the news on NBC. And it happened on television. You were watching and then suddenly, they, I guess it was breaking news that the airplane, the first tower, that plane, the second tower you absolutely saw on television. But the first tower had just gone in. You could see the plane going across. And you didn't see it on the other side of the building. And then you saw smoke. And then what, how much later, not that much later, the second plane came in and you saw that. It was shocking. And you, you know, you couldn't believe what you were seeing.

MB: Did you think about us?

LA: And –

AK: So you weren't living in New York, but, but Melanie was?

LA: But Melanie was.

AK: OK.

LA: And my cousin – [1:15:00]

MB: Gillian was 13.

LA: Gillian was, yeah, Gillian was 13, my granddaughter, but I immediately called, I remember calling you immediately, Melanie, you know about it. I called you as fast as I could. And they were all right. And to see, but my, I have a cousin who said, told me she was downtown at that point. She had an appointment, she was working at Pace University as a guidance counselor. And so she was in the area and she remembers the dust and people were running away, you know, from the area who were in it. It was terrible. That's another thing you know, when I sit down and

think of all the things I've lived through.

AK: Right.

LA: To end, I have to tell you, to end with, with what's going on now is terrible for me. Just terrible. I have to tell you, it's, I, [1:16:00] you know, you don't say you're living too long, well, you are living a long time, but you don't live long to see this sort of thing?

AK: Right.

LA: Absolutely. You know, the flu has been around forever. Spanish Flu they said 1918 – [phone ringing] Oh, I bet it's a robo call. I get them all the time.

AK: Right.

LA: I have to get my glasses on to see who it is. Yeah, it's a robo call.

AK: So, just, well, one more question about 9/11, if I could? I, that was the first, I was very young. I was in the fourth grade when that happened. But that's the first real moment in my life where I remember a huge amount of patriotism kind of following that my dad was working at our local fire department and he went to volunteer in New York, and it [1:17:00] was just a real turning point kind of of my life. And as you were saying of World War Two, I kind of imagined my life as, you know, kind of being defined by that moment. But how would you compare the maybe the patriotism or the way people were after 9/11 to the way they were after Pearl Harbor, for example? Was, was it similar or did it still seem like very different moments?

LA: It was a little similar feeling? There was a glimmer of feeling that the whole country is riveted on this. It affected the whole country, the feeling, I would say, of all the things that have happened, and all the little wars, you know, the Gulf Wars and whatever, even the Vietnam War was horrible because it, the country, the country was divided. You know, it was unnecessary, we shouldn't have had it. And the boys were saying, "Oh, We're going to [1:18:00] Canada, you

know, we're not going to be drafted." And I was shocked. I'm trying to pinpoint when protesting in the streets started. That, the first protest in the streets was so foreign to me. You see this in other countries, people protesting, but you never saw it in this country. They were, I don't know. We were accepting. We would be upset, but nobody took to the streets and screamed the way it's been going on. I find society today is completely changed. I find, I say to my daughter, technology is racing ahead. It's, it's moving, everything is moving so fast and you can't keep up. But human nature never changes. Kindness, selfishness, greed, goodness. [1:19:00] That's all part of human nature and that does not change. You see it today, the same, people are people. Human beings are human beings. And technology does not change that. You, you learn your, you react differently to technology, but there's an impersonality. I think there's a closeness today that I have not seen. I wait for pleases and thank yous. Like, somebody holding a door open would shock me.

AK: Right. It's the sad truth, isn't it?

LA: It's terrible, that's what I'm talking about. It sounds petty, but this is what makes up civilization, courtesy and kindness. On my desk, my granddaughter has it now, she took it. I've been here for five years. My husband passed away in Fall River and we had an apartment here [1:20:00] because when Melanie was at Columbia, we thought, this is another thing, we thought New York was so expensive the rents were out of sight. And she had to have a roommate so they could share the rent. And then at one point, one of her college roommates, so she went to Abbott Academy in Andover, so she had a roommate from there. And they all kept up. They were very friendly. And one of her roommates, I think it was from Abbott, was working in Texas. And she couldn't stand Houston. It was too hot. And she said to Melanie, "I'm coming up to New York and I will share an apartment." And that was great. Melanie was all ready for her. She came to New York, she lasted maybe two weeks. She was a bond salesman. She had her career. She hated New York. She couldn't stand it and she said to Melanie, "I'm going back to Boston." [1:21:00] She left her and Melanie couldn't afford the rent. I mean, it was like \$600 a month, which was obscene to us at that time. So my husband said, "We'll buy her an apartment." And then she went to work for *The New York Times* and I said, she said she needs deductions. We'll take a mortgage and interest so she'll have some deductions. So we bought her the apartment. And then when she

got married, and she was in the apartment, another thing, for seven years. You know, she was, she was working, she had a career and she was moving up. So I mean, they, you know, her generation were the first, they weren't running to get married. They were running to improve their careers. And she was there for seven years. Then when she did get married, I said to my husband, "Why should we sell the apartment? We can come down to New York, we don't have to stay at a hotel and we'll use the apartment and then maybe there'll [1:22:00] be a grandchild. So we can bond." You know, because my husband was in practice. He was so busy. We couldn't, we didn't live near each other. I remember my granddaughter, we stayed one Sunday night, went home early Monday morning, my granddaughter saying, "Why can't you be here all the time?" Sunday night, everybody goes with their grandparents out for dinner in the city. Well, they live near one another, in the city it's nothing to go out for dinner. So that was interesting. So we kept the apartment. So when he passed away, he said to me, "You can't stay in Fall River alone." I have to tell you, it's only five years ago. So I was approaching 90. So he said, "You can't be here alone." And even in Providence, so many of my family was gone. So he said, "You got to go to New York." And we had the apartment. So I said that's too small for me. So luckily, there's some luck, an apartment came up for sale right on the same [1:23:00] floor, down the hall.

AK: Oh wow.

LA: My daughter called me quickly. She said, "Oh, there's an apartment for sale." And because I was saying, "I can't live in this." It was fine as a pied-à-terre. So I bought this apartment where I am now. And I've been here, I can't believe it, five years. I just had my birthday. It's unbelievable. I have my dearest friend, my dearest friend who shared an apartment in Boston before we were married, she too, we were in the same position. And we had a wonderful time, you know, sharing an apartment in Boston where I was living. I thought I'd spend the rest of my life in Boston, is now here. And we were laughing. She's going to be 96 next month. And the two of us talk every day. We have a won, we laugh, we have a wonderful time. And we're amazed. So we've been together over, oh my God, more than 75 years. [1:24:00] I said, "We should write a book on this friendship."

AK: Absolutely.

LA: We started as two young girls. I, I wasn't quite 20 when I graduated from, I ran through college. I really literally ran through Pembroke.

AK: Right.

LA: I was three semesters, 10 days between semesters I was in and out. So when I got out, I was very young. Matter of fact, my husband thought I was older, because I already had – when I met him I had already been graduated for a year, I'm working, had my own apartment. So that was, you know, I always say, acceleration running through Pembroke helped me because when I met my husband, I would have been a senior at Pembroke.

AK: Right, right.

LA: Instead of out in the world working with my own apartment. So actually, it worked out. And she, and she too, so, and ironically, we lost our husbands within two months [1:25:00] of each other.

AK: Wow! Really?

LA: When she was selling her house and I'm selling my house, I had built the house. I loved every inch of it. I designed it and built it. I loved it. But you have to do what you have to do. And she would call me on the phone and say, "I'm crying all the way to the dumpster." You know, it's your house and you have to empty and get rid of it. I'd say, "well so am I." So we always joke we've cried together walking to the dumpster after our husband's passed away. But within two months, her husband passed away in June and my husband passed away two months later in August. So she, and I'm living here in New York. And she's now living up in Westchester because her daughters live up there. And they wanted her, you know, she's in Bos, she would have spent her life in Boston. So here we are. I said I, I thought I'd be in Providence.

AK: Right.

LA: But here we are. [1:26:00] I said, we're both in New York and we meet once in a while for lunch. Her daughters, they like Melanie, and they're all the same age. So they drive her down and we all have lunch together. So she just said to me, she said, "You're catching up to me," because I just had a birthday in February and she's having one next month. And she's going to be 96. And she's in good, good shape as, as much as you can be in good shape at this age. Well, we're lucky because we don't have dementia. I had that, that's the one thing right now that is truly bothering me. Dementia with younger, younger friends, which is very sad, very sad. But you can't do anything about it. You know, you can talk to them but they have no memory of, [1:27:00] you know, what you're talking about, let alone knowing what's going on. And I get off, that's the one thing that depresses me today, is, you know, my few friends that I have left those that have dementia, I can't be, they, they had no recollection.

MB: Amanda, when we finish this conversation, I'm going to ask you how to do Zoom because we downloaded Zoom for mom and so we have our own account, but we don't know how to set up a meeting the way you set this one up for us.

AK: Sure, we can definitely go over that.

LA: Oh, good!

MB: Because that will take mom to the next level with the ones that are still without the dementia.

LA: Thank you, Melanie. I didn't think of that. You know, poor Melanie, I really don't know enough about the computer to check little things I should check. So I said to her, you know, I wrote this out on email, you know, the notes, but I sent them to you so you'll have them and you can print them out and look them over. [1:28:00] Because I press send, and she said you're supposed to see everything that you send out in email. I said, I tried and I tried. I had Amanda's email, I've got everything, but I can't get my email. Melanie came over and said, "You see those three lines? Press that."

AK: Yeah, right, right. It's all trial and error really.

MB: There's water right there.

LA: Oh, good.

AK: Well, so before we move on, this was Zoom 101, I'm going to take you to honors level Zoom, but before we end our formal interview, do you have any last words you'd like to say about Pembroke, about the war years, about anything else that you would like for us to get in your interview?

LA: Well, excuse me. Well, I don't know because I know, you know, Brown and Pembroke became coed. Pembroke, is now a plaque on the wall I think. [1:29:00] Right? And I don't know. Andrews was built after I graduated, Andrews dormitory. So I don't know, and I haven't been back. So I don't know enough. I went to reunions, of course, but I don't know enough of what is really going on in Brown and Pembroke. The one thing I do remember when they changed the grading to pass and fail, that threw me, that really threw me. Is it, so they still have that format?

AK: I don't think it's required. I think you can make that an option, but I think they also do traditional like A through F grading.

LA: I see. You know, because we had, I mean, definite rules. If you had, you could have four Ds from freshman year to senior year, which would give you [1:30:00] a D each semester and you and you could make it up, of course. If you had an E, you were out.

AK: Wow.

LA: Yeah, if you got Es, I think two s, you didn't stay. I mean, that was the, and that was very strict. And, because I remembered, I was my freshman year, that first semester, I took a psychology course and it was a double course, the first semester that I was in college, 10 days

after high school, and you were marked on the bell curve. The bell curve you had in the class, there were some sophomores, maybe even a junior, who would pull up the curve and you're a freshman. There were four of us sitting in this classroom for the first time with, and any grade you got would be a double rate for the semester. [1:31:00] And I'll never forget it, I got a C. In high school I never even saw a C. I mean, I strive for A's, but here I'm overwhelmed by upperclassmen. And this huge Professor Hunter was the professor, and he was a very well-known psychologist. He wrote books. Very, I think there is a Hunter Lab. There was a psychology lab named for him.

AK: Oh, interesting.

LA: But, I was thrown. Oh, I was blown away. I never saw another C after that though, thank goodness. But those two Cs I had while I was at Pembroke for that freshman semester in psychology, I never forgot it. Never forgot it. That was funny. But you see, we had grades then and they were very strict. And so I mean, a D, if anybody got a D, I felt sorry for them. I said, boy, they're, they're walking on thin ice. And if anyone got an E, one more E and [1:32:00] you're out. So I wondered how pass fail worked, how do you grade someone pass or fail? There's a lot of leeway there. So I wonder about that. I did wonder when that came in, but obviously it works for whatever or however.

And, and of course, with Pembroke gone, and it's Brown, it's all Brown now. And then you say, people say, where did you go to school? I hesitate. If I say Brown, "Oh, oh, you went to Brown!" But I think to myself, well I really – Although actually, once they allowed us on campus to take courses at Brown, I don't have as I said to you, my diploma reads Pembroke College in Brown University, which they don't have. That's all, it's all Brown now. So people don't even know Pembroke ever existed. But that's true with many. Harvard had Radcliffe and [1:33:00] Tufts had Jackson. I mean, it was many colleges, male colleges that went coed. Vassar was a woman's college who went coed, and men, I couldn't believe men going to Vassar. So there have been many changes and I understand them. I'm not, I'm not part of it so I haven't been in part. And Melanie, I sent her to a private girls school when she was 15, which was part of Phillips Academy in Andover, and they were separate, but then they too became coordinate –  
MB: Coed, coed.

LA: Coed?

MB: They became coed.

LA: But you were coordinate first.

MB: What?

LA: I think you were coordinate for a year.

MB: No.

LA: Well, you were out anyway. You graduated. I, I as a parent, I don't think I would send a 15 year old to [1:34:00] co-ed

MB: Best thing that ever happened!

AK: Was all girls education?

LA: Oh, the education? Yes. Obviously you had the dormitories.

MB: Well, no, they don't have they do have coed dorms at Andover now, but I think it's a little more half the wing then they meet in the bathroom or something.

LA: Well that's what I'm talking about that's part of it.

MB: In college it's every other room or –

LA: There are suites and college. I don't, I don't understand any of that. As I say, I'm coming from a different world,

AK: Right.

LA: And, you know, you accept what is and what is it is, but yeah.

AK: Well, I thank you so much for sharing your world with us today.

LA: Thank you.

AK: I think this is going to be a very popular interview. I cannot wait to make it available to everyone.

LA: You can edit it any way you want.

AK: We are going to stream it in its entirety so that everyone has full access to your story. Thank you again so much for – [1:35:00]

LA: Well thank you very much. I really appreciate it. I'm interested, I'm talking about that I'm in the archives of the University. I said, "That says it all."

AK: Well, we're very happy to have you. Thank you so much.

LA: Well, fine. Thank you. Melanie, were you going to ask Amanda –

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