

Transcript – Katharine Pierce, '62

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Interviewer: Katharine Pierce  
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Track 1

Bernicestine McLeod Bailey: [00:00] Hi, I'm Bernicestine McLeod Bailey, class of 1968 and today is May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012. I'm interviewing Katharine Pierce, class of 1962. And we're here at the Pembroke Center, located in the Cogut Center at Brown University. So, it's so good to see you again, Kitty, if I may.

Katharine Pierce: Good to see you.

BMB: If I may. I understand you're celebrating your fiftieth reunion this weekend, and so it's good to see you back. Can you at least tell us how you came to Brown in the first place, or to Pembroke, because we're both Pembrokers at heart, so why did you decide to come to Pembroke?

KP: I was a product of coeducation and so I wanted to go [01:00] to a coeducational college, and Brown was one of the ones I considered and it was not far from home, which I also was interested in thinking about. And so that's really how I came. In my day, it was possible to get into college much more easily than later, so I was able to get into Brown. And that's really how I came. I didn't come with any great passion, but that's how I found it and came.

BMB: Mm-hmm. But can you tell us a little bit about your early life? You said you weren't too far away, so that implies that you were in New England.

KP: Yeah, I was born in New Haven and grew up on a farm outside of New Haven. It was a working farm. And then I was sent to [02:00] a Quaker boarding school outside Philadelphia. And that is really what sort of spurred my interest in education and continuing my education. And so I came from George School to Brown. And there's been a lot of talk lately about the sort of tenor of Brown, and I found it – if I can jump right in – I found George School to be a place of greater diversity: intellectual diversity, and cultural diversity. Of course, it was much smaller than Brown, but there was a wider variety of students in that small environment. And when I got here, I was very much struck by the homogeneity [03:00] of the university, and I think – I think we have probably talked about that and others have talked a lot about Brown in the late '50s and early '60s.

And I had expected it to be more exciting, frankly. More filled with new avenues to explore and people I would never have encountered anywhere else, and experiences that would just kind of, you know, pull me forward in all directions. And I found it quite conservative, you know. And as I said, homogenous. I think Gretchen Tonks, is the Dean –

BMB: Yes, Dean Tonks.

KP: – described it as a finishing school for Episcopal girls or something like that. And I just was sort [04:00] of surprised because I thought of it as, you know, this great, famous university with grand traditions. And I wasn't immediately excited by the prospects of being here.

BMB: Hmm. OK, so you were drawn here by the coeducation coordinate – whatever they call it. (laughs) Coordinate educational experience, but then you expected it to be more. And then coming from New Haven – no, you were on a farm outside New Haven, so even that – that's interesting. I hadn't heard that comment before, but I can understand. Obviously, I came later on in the '60s and basically to the same experience. A little bit different, because the end of the '60s were so active. But yeah.

KP: Yeah. When people ask me about Brown in the early '60s, and was it [05:00] – how was it politically and so on, I have to remind them that we were coming out of the so-called “Silent '50s,” and 1960, '61 was not quite the beginning. It was '68, when you were here, that was the,

you know, the principal year in everybody's thinking. I mean, all the radical events that happened then. But in the very early '60s, things were not – had not really started in terms of the social upheaval, which followed very soon, but it hadn't really started yet.

BMB: Do you have any other remembrances of just the campus in general? I know you said that it was (laughs) not quite what you expected, but were you able to, by the time you graduated, find something here that made it more exciting? [06:00]

KP: Well, my experience with the *Brown Daily Herald*, of course –

BMB: Yes.

KP: – made it much more exciting. When I first came and, for the sake of a history project, we were still living – freshmen were still living in little tiny houses off-campus. I mean, like, maybe oh – I can't remember; maybe 12 or 14 –

BMB: Really?

KP: – women in a house. Yeah. There were probably six or eight of them, I would say. And I think I was in the most distant one, which was called Angel House, far away. One of my classmates told me the other day it's now a dwelling; a family lives there. And that was actually a very interesting experiment to put the freshmen all in these little, very small units with a carefully selected housemother who watched out for our safety and so on. And that was [07:00] actually quite an enjoyable experience. This afternoon, after 50 years, those of us who were in our little Angel House are getting together. And we've been dashing e-mails back and forth about the nostalgia of getting together again. We arrived there fresh out of high school and we'd been assigned to roommates and somehow we muddled through our freshman year together. (laughter) Those who were more mature socially and politically and whatnot sort of helped the others and that was actually a good experience, and I was sort of sorry to hear that they did away with that. But I can see why, for security concerns if nothing else. It was a long walk. You know,

from Brown, you'd get to here but then you'd have to continue quite a few blocks more to some of the little houses. [08:00] But that was an interesting experience.

Then I was in Metcalf for a couple of years. Actually, I was room – I think I was the president of Metcalf for a couple years. And then I believe the new dorms, Champlin and Morriss, I think they were available maybe my junior year, but I think I didn't move into one until I was a senior. I'm not sure, but I'm pretty sure I ended up in Champlin. So that was a sort of evolution while we were here. I mean, that was an enormous physical expansion of the campus, those dorms, at least that was my impression.

BMB: Sure, yeah.

KP: I think it must have added a lot, many, many rooms.

BMB: Because it was still new when I came in '64, and then I think our new dorms were Emery and Woolley. They had added that on to that whole complex.

KP: Oh really? [09:00]

BMB: Yes.

KP: Yeah. One of the little houses our freshman year was Woolley House, yeah. I forget which one it was, but that's a familiar name.

BMB: Did they just do that that year, or had they been doing it before? Did they do it after?

KP: The little, off-campus houses? They'd kind of always done it, I think.

BMB: Oh, I see. OK.

KP: I think. It was kind of an old tradition. Yeah, yeah. I'd love to know, actually, why they stopped that. Somebody's research, that would be fun to find out someday what the decision –

why they made the decision, whether it was simply space or – and then the new dorms maybe allowed everybody to be more in.

BMB: Right, yeah.

KP: Or whether they decided it was an idea that had had its day. But that was a nice way – that was actually a nice introduction.

BMB: Now your major was Sociology?

KP: Yeah, Sociology [10:00] and Anthropology. Yup. And I was very happy with that. And it served me well. I went into social work after college.

BMB: Oh, OK. So that's what you did. Now, OK, so you went into social work. Did you move back to the New Haven area when you did that, or . . .

KP: No. Frankly, Bernicestine, I found, I found something dissatisfactory about the atmosphere at Pembroke and it was what I think of as the fact that at every meal, or too often at dinner, the entire conversation was the size of somebody's engagement ring, or the fact too many people were talking all the time about going to New York, [11:00] getting a job to meet a husband. And they were – you know, it was like, get a job in a big company in New York and meet a suitable husband. And I found, of course there were many interesting women in my class and I can see from the class booklet that many of them have had wonderfully interesting lives, but I found that was that sort of focus, and I remember feeling, we're so privileged to be here; surely there is a greater world than going to New York and having fun for a couple of years and then getting married. And so I found myself a job in Hong Kong teaching and I left five days after college to go around the world. My father's graduation present to me was a return ticket home. (laughter) And so I went straight to Hong Kong [12:00] and lived there for about a year and a half. And taught. The person that I contacted was the Anglican bishop of Southern China, Anglican being similar to my Episcopal background. And so he set me up in a mission school where I taught English to Chinese children.

BMB: Wow.

KP: Yup. And I lived in the school and under very primitive conditions. And so that was what I did. Right away, it was, I suppose, making a statement about a feeling that with all I had, I should, you know, get out into the world a little bit and explore in different directions. So I did. (laughs) It was quite something. [13:00] There were no American women my age. None. And I had an amazing experience in Hong Kong as sort of many – no one in the school had ever met an American before, including the teachers. And so there was a fair amount of suspicion and quite a bit of prejudice against me because the feeling was definitely that everything Chinese is superior, and why, you know, what on earth was I doing there. I must have done something terrible at home to have been sent around the world. (laughter) So it was very interesting to be on the underside of prejudice. And it was very strong. It was very strong. So all in all, it was quite an [14:00] experience.

BMB: I can imagine. Because that was when? Sixty-two, right? Correct.

KP: Uh-huh, '62, '63.

BMB: Wow. And then when you came back, what did you do?

KP: Well then, I came back to New Haven. My parents had moved into New Haven at that point, by that time. And I started to do social work for the city of New Haven. So I did that for a while, few years. And then I went to San Francisco and continued with social work. And then, I had, I came back to New Haven and was sort of burned out by welfare. It was so tragic and difficult, always fighting the system on behalf of the clients, always trying to get people everything I possibly could out of the system. But anyway, someone suggested I go to Yale, so I started [15:00] working at Yale and over the years, in between other adventures, I would always come back to Yale and I would come back to New Haven from somewhere else and somebody would find me a special assignment. I had some fascinating jobs at Yale over the years. And I don't know how much more you want of this, but . . .

BMB: Yeah. At some point, you got married. You did find a husband. (laughs)

KP: I did. I found a –

BMB: And you had children, so.

KP: Well, I found him in 1962 in Hong Kong. He is from South Africa, and he was a young accountant working at the British equivalent of Price Waterhouse in Hong Kong. And I left and he stayed. His contract was five years and mine was just one. [16:00] So we didn't see each other for 30 years, and we met again in 1993, and we were married in 1995. So my children are his. (laughter)

BMB: Ah, OK.

KP: They were well into their twenties by the time I met them. So that's my, yes, that's my romantic story. So being on my own, I was able to do all sorts of interesting things. And as I say, it was very – it was fun and comfortable to go back to New Haven and see what else, what I could do at Yale. But one of my most interesting experiences was in 1975 when the war ended, Vietnamese War ended, I found myself, because of my administrative experience at the university and my international experience, [17:00] heading up the Vietnamese refugee program at the National Council of Churches in New York. So I was with them for five or six years through the initial resettlement period. Remember the pictures of Vietnamese clamoring onto helicopters to leave at the Fall of Saigon?

BMB: Yes, in Saigon.

KP: Those people were all taken to Guam and then from Guam, anyone who could get an American to help them get out from Guam, they were brought to, I think, four places. Huge, sort of abandoned Army bases which happened to be available in the States. And then we had to resettle them from these military bases. And we had to do it quickly; there were half a million

people. And so a lot of that work was here, but then the boat people crisis started and [18:00] so I was by that time affiliated with the State Department. The State Department sent me to Malaysia where I worked on the boat people crisis for a couple of years and the end of the – at the end of that period, which was kind of '80, '81, then I went back to Yale and so on. So –

BMB: Well, let's see. Let's hone in on something else, an experience that brought you, I guess, into national notoriety quite recently. I know it takes you back to 1962 and I will preface any remarks by saying I just thought it was so ironic because I had been in a meeting here at the Pembroke Center, the Pembroke Associate's council meeting [19:00] talking about the archives and I was leaving that going to my home in Connecticut and on NPR, on the radio, I heard this piece about these Malcolm X – the tape of Malcolm X appearing here at Sayles Hall in 19– I guess '61 it was.

KP: It was '61.

BMB: And I was just so astonished, went running home. And I said, “Oh, I've got to listen to the whole thing.” Because I got the, you know, in the middle of the clip. I didn't hear the whole piece. And so that kind of got me in touch with you. And so if you can talk about that, how you wrote the paper. Because it was in the religious studies, a course that you were taking. And I know then we had the core curriculum, so we had to, you know, A and (laughs) – we had to pick a [20:00] certain number of courses from each discipline in order to graduate. But, so this was a religious studies course. Can you talk about how you picked that subject to write about?

KP: I'm delighted to tell you the whole story. (laughter)

BMB: Yes, please.

KP: I was taking a religious studies class on Islam with Dr. Moring, Horst Moring. And he took me aside and said, “I know of your interest in sociology. And there is a little known group called the Black Muslims, or the Nation of Islam, and I think, to a sociologist, this might be fascinating and would you like to consider writing about it?” And I thought, “Wow, I'd be fascinated.” So

that was in the fall semester of '60, '61. [21:00] So I spent my Christmas vacation – in those days the semesters mercilessly ended after Christmas, so you had to spend the whole vacation on, you know, on school work. Yeah. I don't remember when that changed, but boy. So I researched the Black Muslims in the Yale library. There was very, very little available about them. They were certainly active in New York, so I remember finding somewhere on a street corner copies of their newspaper. And my father came with me on Christmas Eve, of all things, we went to Carnegie Hall where the Black Muslims were putting on a program, a play called *Orgena*, which is [22:00] "A Negro" spelled backwards. And we were the only white people there and we heard someone behind us commenting and saying – they said, "What are they doing there?" And the person next to them said, "They must be black too." So there we were, and the play was railing against white people as the devil, and with very strong implication that white people should be done away with. (laughter) So that was quite an introduction to the Black Muslims.

And anyway, I wrote my paper and handed it in in January for the religion class. And somehow, other people in the class knew I'd written it. I don't remember [23:00] why. I don't remember whether we each read everybody else's papers, or we read them aloud, or – I don't know. But people in the class knew that I'd written the paper. One person in the class is named Lorraine Holbrook, Lorraine Sullivan Holbrook, and she and I had been to George School together. And she was the girlfriend of Richard Holbrook, who was about to become the editor of the *Brown Daily Herald*. So that was that; handed in the paper, semester over. And then in May 1961, the Black Muslims suddenly came – rose to national prominence because they rioted in the UN over something to do with Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, if I'm correct. And they were in the Visitor's Bureau and they created a huge scene. And all of a sudden, they were very close to the front page of the *New York Times*, if not on the front [24:00] page.

So that was interesting. And the next day, I would say, after that article, I got a call that somebody wanted to see me and I was in my room. Came out, and it was Richard Holbrook and Lorraine Sullivan and Richard said, "I understand you know about the Black Muslims. Would you let me look at your paper and possibly publish it in the *Brown Daily Herald*?" And so the rest is history. He published it about five days later, and in something called the *Brown Daily Herald Supplement*, which was a sort of experiment. It was a magazine-length article. It didn't last too long. I don't remember how many issues.

But anyway, he published my article and within a couple of weeks [25:00] – well, within a few days I think, a phone call came to the *Brown Daily Herald* for me from the Black Muslims. And we were all stunned at the *Herald* offices, but we returned the call and within a number of days, the Black Muslims from Bos – it was a Boston office. Louis Farrakhan– had offered to have Malcolm – arrange for Malcolm X to come here and speak at Brown. And again, the whole process was just stunning to us. Malcolm X had already spoken at Yale and Harvard, and had been turned down at Berkeley and Howard, which was very interesting to us. At Berkeley, he showed up; he flew all the way out there and the university said, “No. We can’t have him on the campus. Too [26:00] controversial.” Or, you know, too many security concerns. So the students at Berkeley found a huge hall and rented it and so he spoke anyway, off-campus. But that was fascinating to me.

So once they, the Black Muslims, offered to Malcolm X come down here, Richard and I started this little campaign to convince the university that he should be allowed to speak. We had about six meetings with President Keeney and finally President Keeney agreed. I mean, to the best of my knowledge, my recollection, it was – we were pleading intellectual freedom and the value of the exposure to any kind of idea. And he was worried, probably mostly about security. You know, I’m sure he never debated the [27:00] value of the exposure to the ideas, but he was quite worried about the campus. And I do remember, in fact I think I have it in a note somewhere, the Black Muslims assured us that they would take care of Malcolm X’s safety, and probably in addition, the safety of any who came. So it was finally arranged that Malcolm X would come and he did, surrounded by a huge phalanx of the Fruit of Islam.

BMB: – of Islam. Mm-hmm.

KP: Yeah, his bodyguards. And I do remember the drama surrounding their searching Sayles Hall, every window, looking behind curtains and, you know, outside and inside, and where could people [28:00] get in and get out, and upstairs and everything. It was quite a dramatic afternoon. And then he came and he was scheduled to debate someone from the NAACP, but at the very last minute, that person said the NAACP policy was such that he couldn’t debate Malcolm X because he didn’t want to give credibility to the Black Muslims. So there was some changing

around at the last minute and we found a man from Providence who spoke and did, I think, a very good job. So that was – that’s the sort of logistics of it all.

BMB: Mm-hmm. Did that make – did the experience make your Pembroke experience more exciting? (laughs)

KP: Certainly. It did.

BMB: To say the least.

KP: Goodness. [29:00] First of all, I never thought of myself as a writer, you know. And it led to other wonderful assignments for the *Brown Daily Herald*. That’s just kind of an aside, but it allowed me to enjoy the wonderful culture of the *Brown Daily Herald*. It’s old, very well thought of, wonderful newspaper, which I think it still is today. I mean, it’s a serious paper, as far as I can tell. And oh, what a delight it was to be associated with – everyone, they were all men –

BMB: Yeah, that’s what I was going to ask.

KP: Yeah.

BMB: Whether there were women at that point, because I know the *Pembroke Record* was publishing over here and the BDH, *Brown Daily Herald*, at Brown. So were you the first woman to get involved, or –

KP: No. [30:00] I remember Richard telling me that he was going to put me on the masthead, but that I would be the first woman, so he put me down with my initials, because he didn’t want to spell out the name of a woman. But, I have since – this is a very hotly debated topic – I’ve since learned, first of all, there were women on the *Brown Daily Herald* during the war, when there weren’t enough men.

BMB: Right, the men were fighting. Yeah.

KP: Isn't that interesting? Yeah. And then someone from my class has claimed, and I know she's right because she has something from the paper, that there were some women reporters earlier than my being there. So I definitely was not the first woman ever to write for them, but there didn't seem to be any other women when I was there. And so there's debate about it, but I was not the first. Not the first. (laughter) I loved the fact that women were invited to – or, needed there. Yesterday, I went to an exhibit on the history of women –

BMB: Oh, at the Hay –

KP: – at the John Hay library and in 1937, something like February 24<sup>th</sup>, the *Brown Daily Herald* staff traded with the *Pembroke Record*, and they each put out one day's issue of the other's paper. Isn't that funny? So there were women there that day too. I meant to look up that issue and see if it's there. So . . .

BMB: That's amazing. Yeah.

KP: It certainly – the Malcolm X story certainly changed my life while I was here and then later as well.

BMB: How did your classmates at Pembroke react [32:00] to your taking part in all of this?

KP: There was a surprising lack of interest in Malcolm X's being here. In fact, one member of class recently wrote an e-mail to a friend in the class saying, he don't – he doubts that Malcolm X came in 1961 because he doesn't remember it and he was here. He thinks it was a typo in the *Brown Alumni Monthly* and Malcolm X came in 1981 instead of 19–

BMB: After he died?

KP: –61.

BMB: He died in the '60s.

KP: Because if he was on campus – this person was on campus until 1962 and he doesn't remember it, so he thinks it didn't happen. (laughter) This is part of the story, and I think it's OK for me to speak for Malcolm – Malcolm Burnley is the student who has brought this story to life, and we can go into that in a minute.

BMB: Yes, we should, yes. [33:00]

KP: But Malcolm Burnley and I have both been quite intrigued by the lack of publicity and for example, some – the records of President Keeney are available, his calendar. There is not one mention of his meeting with Richard Holbrook and me. And there – it was not in the calendar, the Brown University calendar for that week. And so I would have to say, there was not much interest. In my old records, I found two notes from dear friends saying, "Congratulations, it went well," or something like that. But otherwise, I don't remember any celebrity or anything. We just had fun at the *Herald*. It was close to the end of the year; it was the middle of May, so there wasn't that much of the year left and then it just sort of faded away. [34:00] Funny. (laughter)

BMB: Yeah, so let's talk a little bit about your relationship with Malcolm. You know, we can tell the story of how Malcolm was doing a paper here. I actually met his professor, and she said that she had asked her students to go to the John Hay, or to the archives and use primary sources to find something to write about. And you know the story better than I do, but apparently Malcolm Burnley, who is graduating Sunday, came across the tape. So if you can talk about the tape, you know, how you got it, if you – you know, how you found it, how it ended up here.

KP: Well, at the end of the year, we were sort of cleaning up the *Brown Daily Herald* [35:00] offices and somebody said, "This is a tape made by a radio station, a tape of the Malcolm X evening and I guess we'll throw it away." And I sort of said, "Well, if you're going to throw it away, I'll take it," assuming it was one of many, and thus not of any significance. So I just kept in a small box of souvenirs that I couldn't bear to throw away for many years. Every now and then, I'd open that box and think, well, I shouldn't keep that tape because you couldn't play it

anymore. But finally in 2010, I felt that it had to be of value somewhere and that somebody with modern technology could certainly re – what do you call it? You know, re-record it or whatever and make it valuable.

So first I called the Providence radio station, which I think had made it, probably WPRO. [36:00] And they were not interested at all. I sort of asked, “Do you have archives?” and they just weren’t interested. Then I called the Brown station and they were not interested. So then having worked in the Yale library at one point, I know about archives, so I called the archives in the library and they said they would take it, not terribly enthusiastic. But anyway, they said they would take it. So then Malcolm Burnley was looking through the old *Brown Daily Herald* and he actually found a picture of Malcolm X. And being named Malcolm, you know, that’s another story that way, but he then decided that it would be interesting to write about Malcolm X’s coming to Brown and found the tape that I had donated to the archives, found that tape. And the archivist wrote – university archivist wrote to me and asked if he could talk to me and [37:00] that was the beginning of our story together, our wonderful Malcolm Burnley, who, by the way, has just been hired at the *Atlantic Monthly*.

BMB: Oh, that’s fantastic.

KP: Fantastic, yup. Yup.

BMB: Yes, so.

KP: So, his story was picked up by – his article was picked up by the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society. And they made the story somehow come to the attention of the Associated Press. And then from there, we were published – it was published in hundreds of newspapers, hundreds from San Francisco to Saudi Arabia. I think you may know, someone called from Saudi Arabia asking for the Arabic translation of the article. (laughs) And we were all over public radio and various magazines online, including the *Atlantic* and the *New Yorker*. [38:00] And it was just partly because there is a resurgence of interest in Malcolm X big time. He would have turned 87 on May 19<sup>th</sup>, and for some reason, people are very, very interested. And it was interesting timing for Malcolm Burnley.

BMB: Yeah, and I think there was just a conference at Columbia, I'm going to say about a month ago, that dealt with Malcolm X and his –

KP: Is that right?

BMB: I think, so. So it's a very exciting time. I know when I was here as a student, I read his autobiography. I was just very caught up into that, because as you say, coming to this campus, I came here as someone who is African American, and the homogeneity [39:00] disturbed me. And so I was just searching, searching. And so one of the pieces that I read was his autobiography. And he was scheduled to come here to Brown to speak, but it so happened that he was assassinated just before, I think it was shortly before, you know, like a week, or within a month. So that's my take on it. But yeah, so how has your life changed since your notoriety? Is it still going on? Has it quieted down somewhat? Or what were some of the experiences around that, and how's your relationship with Brown and Malcolm? Malcolm Burnley.

KP: Well, I –

BMB: As a result of it?

KP: Yeah, I have to say, it completely – I don't know – broke open any feelings that I had about [40:00] Brown. I didn't come back – I think I may have come back once many, many years ago. Like lots of people, my sentimental, strong sentimental attachment is to my high school. And I go there all the time. I find people are often loyal to one or the other. So I haven't really been back to Brown. And this sort of reviving so vividly this wonderful period in my life, the excitement of being part of the *Brown Daily Herald*, and with Richard Holbrook there as the editor, that was a tremendously exciting time of my life. And it's all just come back double and triple fold. And getting phone calls from friends from Texas and Louisiana saying they sat down [41:00] with their morning coffee and opened the paper, and there was my picture with Richard Holbrook. It's been – I've had e-mails from all over the world. It's been just amazing, fascinating, and all due to my wonderful Malcolm Burnley. We are so fond of him and he has

come to our house, and so on. We had supper with him last night. And I owe him so much because that one small episode was really the most extraordinary experience that I ever had at Brown, and it's just all come to life and made me feel much more generous towards the university, (laughter) to be reminded of this.

In fact, I had the great pleasure, and I hope it's not speaking inappropriately – one day, Malcolm Burnley and I were at Brown looking up something. We went to the *Brown Daily Herald* office [42:00] and they present us with a book. And we're turning these pages, 50-year-old pieces of paper, we're looking like this to find something. And I said, you know, "Isn't this digitized?" "No, it's not." So anyway, long story short, it was my great pleasure to pay for the digitization of the year '60, '61 and to make that gift to Brown in honor of Richard Holbrook's memory.

BMB: Wow, oh that's fantastic.

KP: Yeah. It was Richard – lots of people ask about Richard Holbrook and just, I know that time at short, but he – you could see the seeds of his greatness then. He was confident; he was far-seeing; he had a brilliant sense of what things should be done and how we're going to get there to do them. And we remained friends. He came to visit me in Hong Kong when he was back and forth to [43:00] Vietnam. Yup, yup, on his assignment. First assignment with the State Department was on the Hamlet Program in Vietnam. And I've reconnected with his – with Liddy Sullivan, Lorraine Sullivan, his first wife and look forward very much to talking to her at length. And so it was really – this whole last few months have been a transformative experience for me, really.

BMB: That's fantastic.

KP: I'm so grateful for the fun, the tremendous fun of looking back at all these old papers and realizing that what was done so long ago, has become relevant.

BMB: Mm-hmm. So has it – coming back to Brown now, has that changed (laughs) your experience – well, it hasn't changed your experience, but do you see [44:00] progression based on where it was then and what it is today?

KP: Well, it's been very interesting, the e-mails that have been going back and forth between us class members. As one of my friends said, Brown had always seemed so far away to her. But it's really fun to remember these friendships that we had. And I just can't wait for this afternoon when we're going to have our Angel House get together, the ones of us who started together as freshman. It has been wonderful to reconnect and to read the brilliant book that somebody has made with pictures of us then and now and a little summary of what everybody has done. And oh, this is just – these few months have really been the time of my life. It's just been so exciting. [45:00]

BMB: Well the campus is much more diverse now. (laughs)

KP: Much more, much more diverse. And much more crowded with buildings, new buildings everywhere.

BMB: Yeah, so a lot of them have come up in the last decade even, and the Pembroke Walk and all of that work. Of course, they took some buildings away, but all the buildings along that walk are new, so it's a very much-changed campus.

KP: Well I remember years when it was the most popular college, Brown. I mean, it was the hardest to get into I think, because it's a little smaller maybe. But extremely popular, and it's good to see it. I assume it still is.

BMB: Yeah, so as the – but are you still getting calls from around the world, or has that kind of quieted down?

KP: It's quieted down.

BMB: It's because – I think it's the nature of [46:00] of the times. It's – and then there's something new. (laughs)

KP: Yup. Not long ago, I was asked to – I got a call maybe two months ago from a black radio – a black TV station in Detroit asking me if I would debate the head of the Black Muslims. And –

BMB: Hmm, interesting.

KP: – defend my position, which really was that I felt separation would not be the solution to the racial situation in this country. But that was sort of startling (laughs). And I think I convinced them that I would not be a very interesting participant because I hadn't really kept up with scholarship about the Black Muslims, and I really would not be – I really wouldn't want to do that. But otherwise, things have calmed down.

BMB: Oh, because that was your opinion 50 years ago? I don't know whether it's changed or not, but . . . [47:00]

KP: Well, I still don't see separation as the way. I mean, I think we're all here together and we need to work together. And I think that's the only solution, and hate is not the answer. And I think the Black Muslims may still feel some animosity, although as I said, I haven't kept up a great interest in the Black Muslims.

BMB: Right, yeah. Well. So here you are at your fiftieth reunion; how many people are back?

KP: Two hundred and fifty, something like that.

BMB: Are you kidding?

KP: A lot of people. The timing of this is another extraordinary aspect of this story, that this would happen the year of my fiftieth reunion. You know, if it were the thirty-second or something, it would be one thing, but the fiftieth. [48:00] (laughter) And my classmates have

written, you know, saying they look forward to talking to me about it and a couple of them wanted to know if they could room with me (laughter) this weekend. So it's just thrilling. And I must say, my husband has just joined in – jumped in with both feet with this whole experience; he's as excited as I am and he's back with the book now in the hotel room trying to memorize who everybody is. So this just – it's just thrilling to be here and be back at Brown and on this occasion and following right on the footsteps of the great Malcolm Burnley Malcolm X story.

BMB: Yeah, because it's at least your third trip since February, correct?

KP: That's right, yeah. Yup. [49:00]

BMB: Because I know you were here when Malcolm Burnley presented at the John Hay.

KP: That's right. And then we came back again for his second presentation. Yup. Yup.

BMB: So, exciting times. OK, any thoughts, any other thoughts about, I don't know, about Brown or your experience? You know, we're certainly glad that you gave us this opportunity to talk to you about –

KP: Thanks.

BMB: – about your experience and your life.

KP: I guess I have to say, it still seems like a tremendous privilege to have been able to be here, you know, with wonderful faculty and the traditions, conservative though they may have been. They were of value to us, and we [50:00] grew up here and, you know what, I will never take for granted the privilege that my being here really was, and I'm sure it still is for anybody who's able to come here.

BMB: Yeah, it's interesting. You know, I guess when you're in it, (laughs) you don't quite appreciate it.

KP: That's right.

BMB: And I could say the same thing. And I guess a lot of the students here today are very happy, but I think during the '50, '60s, when things were – yeah, it was just a different time and so I would basically say the same thing too. I did not really particularly – you know, I just wanted to distance myself from Brown, but you evolve and you realize that it really was worth it. So I think we're getting close to the end. [51:00] I want to thank you again for this opportunity. It's been a pleasure indeed to have met you. You know, I met you back in February and I was really pleased to do that, and I hope you enjoy your fiftieth. And I hope this is not the last time you come to Brown. (laughs)

KP: Well thank you, Bernicestine. It's been so lovely to meet you and this was a privilege. And I hope someday, some of these memories will be of interest to somebody doing research about Pembroke. So . . .

BMB: Yeah, so with that, as I said, I hope you enjoy the rest of the weekend.

KP: I think we will.

BMB: So you're planning to stay here through Sunday [and march?].

KP: Yes we are. Mm-hmm. Yup

BMB: Fantastic.

KP: We're here for the weekend, yup.

BMB: OK. All right.

KP: So, well this was a pleasure.

BMB: Thank you.

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