

Interview with Eleanor M. Addison, class of 1938

Interviewer: Charlotte V. Erwin [Morgan], class of 1987

Date: November 29, 1982

Location: West Andrews Dormitory, Brown University, Providence, RI

Interview transcribed June 2014 by Lorena Garcia, class of 2012

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: This is an interview with Eleanor M. Addison, who graduated in 1938 from Pembroke with a math major. She received her Masters in Math in 1941 from Brown. She went to work in the Providence public school system until returning to work in the newly created applied math department. [She] is recently retired. This interview is being conducted on November 29, 1982 in Charlotte Erwin's dorm room in West Andrews dormitory on the Pembroke campus. This interviewer is Charlotte Erwin, representing the Pembroke Archive project. I have some- I have a few questions to kind of go from but whatever-

ELEANOR ADDISON: All right. Go ahead.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What I'm interested in is any, your recollections of what it was like being a student here and I understand that since you were a day student it's not, like you said, quite the same.

ELEANOR ADDISON: No, it isn't quite the same. It's almost in some respects like a continuation of high school, especially if one is a commuter on public transportation system. So if one takes the bus and comes in, takes one's classes, [inaudible 0:01:12], take's part in some athletic events. I think that Brown's policy now of more or less requiring people to live on campus is an ideal solution, if one can afford it. But probably at least [inaudible 0:01:27] I wouldn't swear to that exact proportion, but I think it's pretty close, that at least half of us were what they called "day hops." And this does make a difference in college life because it precludes the possibility of sitting down with one's classmates in the dormitories having rap sessions... [break in audio]

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: ... One-third increase right there, that's a lot.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Oh yeah. It used to go up 50 dollars a year. I think it went 350, then to 4[00] and 450, and then it went up to 5[00] but they let the seniors continue on at the 450 rate, if my recollection is correct. But your-the University records can correct those figures if necessary.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: How did the Depression affect you personally? How did you come up with that money and was it very hard?

ELEANOR ADDISON: No, I was able to get it from my mother. She had enough to put me through. And I did a little bit of work here on the campus. I belonged to the choir and we got a small amount of money for that. And I corrected math papers.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: You said you got a small amount of money for being in the choir? They paid you?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yes, very small amount. And then I did correct math papers so I got something for that. And did a little bit of tutoring and in that way picked up some change, but basically the raising of tuition was not a problem for me as it was for many people. It was not for me.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What would some of your classmates that were in not as fortunate situations, how did they manage? Do you know?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Well, there was no such thing as borrowing student loans in those days. So they just worked their way through. They worked jobs on campus that one of the [inaudible 0:03:24:00] jobs in the library, which were very popular. I think those were probably the most popular. And then some of the girls who were here on campus, who were not day students but lived in a co-operative dorm and they manage to make ends meet there between a lesser amount of room and board to pay. And then the only way to raise the tuition if you couldn't get it [inaudible 0:03:54] is to work for it. There was no such thing as student loans. They did not exist then. They were something that didn't come in 'til about what ten years ago or something like that.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: I think so.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Ok. Yes?

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: How would you say the Depression-I'm interested in the Depression as a period since that's the time period we're looking at.

ELEANOR ADDISON: That's right.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Do you feel any residual effects or values from that time period? Was that a significant time period for you, in terms of your attitudes about life in general?

ELEANOR ADDISON: No, but I did realize how very very difficult it was for a large percentage of the population. I mean those were the days when men stood on the street corners selling apples to survive. And if anything I think it would probably have made me more cautious in my future financial dealings. [5:00] Conservation perhaps is the word. Knowing that money was not that plentiful, I could get by. I always had a job. But it wasn't, the money wasn't plentiful. And schoolteachers in those days didn't make very much money. Don't laugh but they were paying 900 dollars a year for teachers.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: How did that compare to the cost of living?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Well because the cost of living was much lower too. People could manage on it. Oh yes. Not happily, but they could manage.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: I'm interested, what kind of family background are you from? How large is your family [inaudible 0:05:41]

ELEANOR ADDISON: I was an only child. My father died when I was four months old. So I was an only child.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was- had your mother gone to college?

ELEANOR ADDISON: No.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: She hadn't.

ELEANOR ADDISON: No, only through high school. [clears throat] Excuse me.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Did she push you to go to college or was that kind of a decision you made on your own?

ELEANOR ADDISON: That was my own decision but she was-she backed me up 100 percent.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Were you born in Providence?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Born in Woonsocket. Northern part of Rhode Island. [coughs] Excuse me.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was Woonsocket like when you were a child?

ELEANOR ADDISON: I left there at the age of two and a half. I have no recollection of it.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: So where did you spend your childhood?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Providence.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: In Providence.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yeah.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was Providence like when you were growing up? How large was it?

ELEANOR ADDISON: If anything, a little bit larger than it is today because people have now started in the last ten years or since the war, since the Second World War, moving out into the suburbs. So that your surrounding communities have become larger, whereas Providence has shrunk by several thousand. It was up over 200 thousand when I was a youngster and it's what

around 170 something thousand now. Something like that. There's been a vast drop over the years. So it was a larger city with a much more active downtown section than we have now. We had several department stores in those days and they were all flourishing. That is as much as anything flourished during the Depression. Once the Depression ended and the Second World War started, then they all flourished. There was plenty of money then.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was the main industry of Providence back then? Do you know?

ELEANOR ADDISON: To what it is today, still, the biggest or largest employer of people in Providence in those days was Brown & Sharpe. Then, of course, they moved to the country. But the low priced jewelry trade manufacture was and still is one of the biggest industries in Providence.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Like the factory outlets and that kind of thing?

ELEANOR ADDISON: No, I mean the manufacturing of it. I don't mean the outlets. I mean the manufacturing of [clears throat] relatively inexpensive up to quite expensive jewelry.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Of the people that you grew up with, how many of your friends went on- especially your women friends- went onto college?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Well, I went to Classical High School and if one went to Classical High School it was pretty automatically assumed and actually did take place in 90 percent of the students, we all went on to college. It was a prep school. It was a public school but a prep school. Pure and simple. So the friends I made in high school all went on to college. Not all, they didn't all come here, of course, but they did go to college.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Was there a large percent- was there a lot of professional types? And was that a big part of the economy here in Providence? The lawyers, doctors-

ELEANOR ADDISON: Oh yes. That's always been a big percentage of the population. Oh yes. But I think it's even more so today. Definitely.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: I'm not that familiar with this area but I understand that there's several ethnic groups that live in Providence.

ELEANOR ADDISON: That's correct.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Portuguese and Italian and all that. Were there several different- did that exist then?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Oh yes.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Where there lots of different religious groups at that time?

ELEANOR ADDISON: The number of religious groups then would be the same as it is today with maybe a few esoteric [both clear throat] religions that have crept in the last few years. [10:00] You know like Baha'i and some of those, which were not there in my youth. But basically, the religious distribution remains the same.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: You majored in math, is that correct?

ELEANOR ADDISON: That's correct.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What- could you take any courses at the University? Was that from Brown or Pembroke? Did it matter? Could you switch around?

ELEANOR ADDISON: When I came-no, when I came to the University, all our freshman courses were strictly feminine. Some of them were held on the Brown campus but most of them were held here. After that it was a complete mix.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: After your freshman year you could take courses with-

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yes. Well, you could in your freshman year but generally what was offered, was offered right here on the campus. The professors came over here. And so the first year we didn't have too much in the way of classwork, classes on the other campus. But once the freshman year was over then most of our classes and courses were over there.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: When you say it was strictly feminine, do you mean it was just-

ELEANOR ADDISON: I mean the classes were all female.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Were all women. The subject matter was not strictly-

ELEANOR ADDISON: Oh no, no. The subject matter was great. We had a first year math was taught at Pembroke and just as first year math was taught at Brown. Biology we took over at Brown but it was an all-female class and it was taught at that time by the only woman in the biology faculty.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: How many of your professors were women?

ELEANOR ADDISON: I can think of only two, except for the gym instructors.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Oh, wow. That's really interesting.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yeah. Women professors were almost an unknown quantity. They didn't start coming in for many many years after that. The dean was a woman, of course. And Dr. [Magel Craig] Wilder, who taught biology, was a woman. And then there was a woman who

taught speech. We all had to take speech for one semester and that was taught by a woman whose name is long since gone from my memory. And those are the only women I know on the faculty at that time.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Tell me about the dean. What do you remember of her? Did you- because some people had specific memories of her.

ELEANOR ADDISON: I remember the dean as being somewhat austere. I remember her as not being in favor of young ladies who wanted to major in math or the sciences. I also [laughs] remember that she considered the class of 1938 the most uncooperative class she had ever met. That will give you an idea.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Yeah. What was her name?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Morriss. Dean Morriss.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Dean Morriss. Yeah. So she didn't really encourage to branch out into the science.

ELEANOR ADDISON: No. She didn't. She didn't. I thought she tried to discourage. I can remember one classmate who wanted to go take a pre-med course and then eventually go into medicine. And she said, 'Don't be ridiculous. You'd never get into medicine.' Well, the young lady finished Brown and she got into Johns Hopkins med school. So much for the dean.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: So much for the dean. That's interesting. So there was, at least from the dean, there was social pressure to take the certain kinds of traditionally women's courses.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yes. I think one could say that.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Was that present? Did you feel that kind of pressure influence from other sources?

ELEANOR ADDISON: No.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Why did you choose Brown? Pembroke.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Because I could afford it if I lived at home. I could have gone to Rhode Island College or in those days it was called Rhode Island College of Education but I had no desire to go. I took the exams, was admitted, and then said no way. I could not afford to go away to college. But if I could live here I [interviewer coughs] could afford a liberal arts education.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was Brown's political reputation, in terms of political activism on campus and stuff?

ELEANOR ADDISON: I think it was pretty much new.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Was that about the same as on other campuses, would you say? [15:00]  
Other Ivies?

ELEANOR ADDISON: I don't really know. I have no way of knowing. I think the general feeling at the time was that everyone was struggling to get through the Depression and I don't think they had too much time for activism. Many people were working hard to work their way through this university. If you have to do that you don't have too much time to become active in other things.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was the workload like in general? How many hours a day would you study?

ELEANOR ADDISON: We had five courses a year. I think you only have four now, don't you? Four a semester. Yeah. We had five.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: You can take as little as three.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Well, we had five. Period. And that continued all through college and it continued when I was in graduate school. And then just the semester before I got my masters degree they decided that four courses would be sufficient. So that anybody who came along, let's see the classes of '40, '41, went down to four courses a semester instead of the usual five. As far as the studying is concerned, well... time has erased, I'm afraid, most of that from my memory. If one majors in math and takes physics and things like that, it's a case of doing one's studying on a day to day basis because these are things that have to be in, have to be in, have to be in. Every class meeting usually there was an assignment to be held. This is not necessarily true in English and History where you might have a paper but you might have four or five weeks to prepare it. You might let it slide and then at the last minute try to get it in. So with the sciences, I think it's more or less a steady studying rather than studying in spurts, as [inaudible 0:17:09].

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Did you feel that- well did having a college degree help you in getting your job? Would it have been possible for you to teach math with say a high school diploma?

ELEANOR ADDISON: It would depend on the school system. Theoretically, one was expected to have graduated from a university before getting a certificate to teach on the high school level. See the old Rhode Island College of Education prepared people up through the junior high level. And theoretically, regular colleges and universities prepared them for the senior high level, but this did not always follow. There were crossovers.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: So if you were very good at teaching or something you could teach high school with a high school diploma or-

ELEANOR ADDISON: Oh, not with a high school diploma. No, certainly not. But you could go into the high school in some instances if you graduated only from a teacher's college as opposed to a university. There were crossovers there.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Did you go straight-did you start working right after you graduated?

ELEANOR ADDISON: No. I did a year of student teaching and worked part-time at the University while I was doing it. I was working on my Masters degree and working for Professor [Andrew Hamilton] MacPhail on educational measurements. Working on a project for him. And then that became a part of my Masters thesis. See we had to do a thesis in a Masters in those days. I think they don't so much now.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was that project?

ELEANOR ADDISON: We were trying to determine whether the exams given to students entering would have any- give us any indication of how well they might do. The scores were broken down into language and sciences. And we tried to find out whether there was any correlation between how well a person did on the entrance exams in those fields and how well that person did once he or she was in college. And as I recall it, I found relatively little correlation. Not enough one way or another to use it as a valid measurement of what one could expect.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Was that- did they have the SAT then?

ELEANOR ADDISON: [20:00] [sighs] They had something but they probably called it by a different name.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: But it was the same idea?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Same idea.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: The verbal and the math.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yeah.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Did you- have you been married?

ELEANOR ADDISON: No.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: You never did.

ELEANOR ADDISON: No.



CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Okay this is sort of different separate.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Okay.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was Brown like? Okay, when you were here was there much cultural diversity? 'Cause that is what they stress now. People from all over.

ELEANOR ADDISON: We had practically no Black students. And Brown was not as well known even though it was an Ivy League university. Not as well known in those days as it has become since then. So I would say that the largest number of the students came from the East. We had very few from the Western part of this country. Few from the Middle West. But they were mostly Easterners. I can think of only one or two Blacks in the whole time I was here. At least amongst the women. I'm not so sure about the men but I think that would [inaudible 0:21:17]. It wasn't until much much later that you began to get the great ethnic diversity, or racial diversity, I should say. [Interviewer coughs] There was always some ethnic diversity naturally but there wasn't a racial diversity.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: This is what you were saying about the financial situation, were there a lot of kids here that were upper middle class? And what was that like? Were there people from all classes? The whole range?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Right across the board. The whole range.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: So there was okay. What- let's see. I noticed in, I was looking at a yearbook and it said you were on the program committee.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Don't ask me what it is now after all these years. [laughs] I haven't a clue what we did.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Do you remember any speakers that came to campus? Any memorable ones?

ELEANOR ADDISON: I remember that Lise Meitner came. She was one of the few women Nobel prize winners. She came while we were in undergraduate.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What did she win the Nobel for?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Physics. That was M-E-I-N, might, M-E-I-N-T-N-E-R was I think the spelling of her name. I know she came. One of the early deans, what was her name? She came and gave a lecture. It was excellent. [inaudible 0:23:05] She was one of the very early deans of Pembroke, but not the first by any means. You wouldn't have a list of the deans, would you?

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: No, I'm sorry. I don't.

ELEANOR ADDISON: She wasn't Lida Shaw King, she wasn't Margaret Morriss, of course. She was in between there.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: She would have been like sometime in 1910 or something like that?

ELEANOR ADDISON: No later than that.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: 1915?

ELEANOR ADDISON: I don't remember the dates. But no, I would say into the 1920s off hand. Cause I don't know how long Dean Morriss had been here before I came in '34 but she'd been here a few years. I would say it went up to the 19- maybe I'll think of the lady's name before I leave, but at the moment it's gone completely out of my head. And many of the other speakers tended to be local. Nothing very inspiring for the most part.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was it about this lady's speech, this dean, what was it that she said?

ELEANOR ADDISON: She was a very interesting person with a tremendous sense of humor. The ability to put her thoughts into concise English. Without any hesitation. Without any hemming and hawing as I'm doing now. And she was very very amusing. Very amusing. And I think she must have been from all account a very very wonderful dean. But she left, I believe, to get married. And then she was called back as an interim dean before Dean Morriss came. That much I can tell you about her. I can't think of her name.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Let's see...College life. Was there an attempt to provide things like counseling services and were there resident counselors? [25:00]

ELEANOR ADDISON: Well, I don't know what was true in the dormitories. But there was some counseling service. On a rather small scale. It wasn't as highly developed. Counseling was not as highly developed as it has become since then.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: So it was not popularized to-

ELEANOR ADDISON: No. If you were in trouble with some subject or something like that, you could usually go to the professor for help. Or maybe some conversation. But basically there was very little. Very little.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Were the professors pretty accessible?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yes.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Could you go and talk to them?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yes. Definitely. Definitely.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Did they encourage friendships between student and teacher? Sometimes that happens.

ELEANOR ADDISON: I wasn't aware of it. At least as far as women were concerned.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: So that was more of between the men?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Very likely. Very likely.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What were rules and regulations like back then? Was there dress code and things like that?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Not as such. People who lived on campus perhaps would dress a little more sloppily. They [inaudible 0:26:38] than those of us who had to appear on public transportation. Dress basically was fairly conservative.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Would that mean, did people wear pants back then?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Pants were not very common then. You wore pants if you were going skiing. You wore pants if it was very- if you were going out and there was heavy snow. But other than that, no.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Did you go skiing?

ELEANOR ADDISON: No. But I'm giving you that as an example of when one would wear pants.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: As a day student, did you have to go- did you have mandatory chapel?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yes, we did. Once a week.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Oh. I was under the impression that it was every day or something.

ELEANOR ADDISON: No. Thank God. [both laugh] No, once a week.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: So you were- do you remember, what can you tell me about the sports that you were involved in? Weren't you on the bowling team or something?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yes, I was on the bowling team. I played fistball. I tried some archery. We tried all of these things. We didn't always, we weren't always on teams but we did have plenty of sports activity. Actually, we were required to take gym. Actually, what they called Swedish exercises the first year. And then after that, we were free to choose from anything that was offered we could have, we could take as long as we took so many periods of gym a week. But that's it. It could be a sport. It could be, oh yes, one other thing I forgot. We had to take a

course called rhythms. [laughs] Now rhythms consisted of, well, what shall I say? Cavorting around the gym in little short, tight fitting jumpers and tights. I suppose it was the precursor of modern dance. And we did have to take that. I'm sorry I had forgotten that. And then other than that we were free to do as we wished. And by the senior year, if you had fulfilled all those obligations you could forget about going to gym at all. You didn't have to take anything. You were absolutely free.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: If you'd done it for the previous three years?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Right. And if you'd passed your swimming test. Oh yes, that was another thing. You had to pass the swimming test.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Was that, was all this in addition to the other four courses?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Five courses. Oh yes.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Five, yeah. It was not the fifth.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Mm-mm. No.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: So you had five academic, then?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Correct.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Was there sports and being in condition and being fit and running around is so popular now but was that- were there people in your class who were very interested in the athletics and being very, very fit and stuff?

ELEANOR ADDISON: [30:00] They would be a very, very tiny minority. That was not the big thing in those days as it has since become. There were a few girls who were very, very good in a number of different sports, but the number was very small. You must realize the class was small too, you know.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: How large? What was the size?

ELEANOR ADDISON: About 125.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Oh. Okay. That is small.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yeah. I think when we graduated we were down to 100, but I think we started with 125.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was the more popular thing to do extracurricularly? Well, not necessarily 'the one thing', but the type of thing that would be more popular?

ELEANOR ADDISON: The theatrical group here at Pembroke was very popular for a number of people. They called themselves the Komians. K-O-M-I-A-N-S. And that was very popular. But other than that, I don't recall anything in particular that was terrifically popular while I was here.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was chorus like? Did you get to travel around with the chorus?

ELEANOR ADDISON: No, this was, no, no. You mean the chapel group? No, we just sang at the chapel on the one-day a week that they had it.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Oh. Okay.

ELEANOR ADDISON: It was a choir. It wasn't a chorus really. But it was not anything to travel. It was just that we sang a couple of hymns and that was it.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: How about glee club? Was that-

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yes, they had a glee club. Oh, another thing. I'm sorry. There was one other thing you did ask. Many of us were interested in the very good mathematics club, which was a combination of social and learning experience. That was a mixed group with the men. That was very active. I belonged to that. That was very active. Then, I believe there was a French club now that I think back about this. And there probably was a German club.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: For the math club, would you get together and have combined socializing?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yeah. It was socialize with lectures, and usually the lectures were given by the members of the club. We would be assigned a topic to get up and lecture. And the staff, as well as the students, came. And then we had a social hour afterwards. And then we had one or two really big parties with it. We used to go out on a picnic towards the end of the semester and we used to have a big party around Christmas time. 'Cause it was a large group. Being both men and women it was a very large group. So clubs of that type were popular.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: I'm just curious. At parties what kind of music did you- was it dancing music?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yes, generally. But quite often it was by means of a record player. We didn't hire anyone to come and play. Yes, it would be dance, yes.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: That's interesting. The relationship between Pembroke and Brown, how was that? Was there any tension between that? 'Cause I've heard that there was a lot of-

ELEANOR ADDISON: Well, the men looked down on the women somewhat I'm sure. And sometimes the women got snotty against, you know, versus the men. But on the whole, if the

number of Pembroke is who marry Brown men is any indication all I can say is that the friction cannot have been too great. [both laugh]

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Was there a lot-Did people drop out to get married?

ELEANOR ADDISON: I don't recall anyone in my class doing so.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: But they would get married after graduation?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yeah.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was the structure of the college calendar? Was it like it is now?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Very much the same.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Two semesters?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yeah.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Did you have your exams after Christmas?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Mm-hmm.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was the student feeling on that? Was there every any-

ELEANOR ADDISON: I don't think it occurred to us to worry about it too much. This was it and so we accepted it. People were more apt to accept things then than they are today.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Uh-huh. Just appreciate them for what they are.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yeah. Right. Right.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: [35:00] How did you- how do you feel that having gone to Pembroke affected your life, or in general, after you graduated?

ELEANOR ADDISON: I probably would never have come to Brown University to work had I gone elsewhere to school. Because it's through contacts here and working part-time that I gave up the teaching end of the business. Because it was mostly, it was a time as it is today when there were very few teaching positions. There was plenty of substitute work but there was no future in that. So I said, this is not for me and I came up to the University full-time.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What did you do exactly at the University?

ELEANOR ADDISON: I did a number of things. I worked first in the office of the Graduate school. And we had at that time a section in that office that worked in connection with applied mathematics. Now applied mathematics was instituted at Brown in 1941 when the late Dean [Ronald G.D.] Richardson of the graduate school gathered together a group of scientists, most of whom had left Germany, and started a School of Applied Science. It had another name but it was funded by grants from the government. And then after the war it became an actual department funded by the University. That would have been 1940... I think it was '46. It became- the University decided that it would pick up this applied mathematics work and make it an actual division within the University as opposed to pure math. They're two separate division as they are today. So I transferred from the Graduate school and went into the division of applied math. I worked on technical papers, monographs, reports. I even did some of the drawings for them.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What kind of drawings would that be? For like medical illustrations?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Not medical. This would be more of the engineering type. And as a matter of fact, I still do it today as a part-time job for them. If they have some texts that they're printing that need illustrating, I do it. And I continued doing that even though over the years with the division my job changed. And when I...towards the end, I was the division's financial officer. I worked on the contracts and grants more than anything else. Budgets. Preparing budgets. And when I left that was my job. The job just changed. Evolved a bit over the years or I took on new things to do. And once or twice, you know, if you do something once or twice you automatically acquire that job. And if this gets added to all the others so that-

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: People remember that as the thing that you do.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yeah. That's right. But that was what I was at the end. A financial officer for the division.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: The scientists that you said were mostly from Germany?

ELEANOR ADDISON: That's correct.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Were they, were they- when was that?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Well, they had, remember, they had escaped from Hitler's Germany just prior to World War II and they'd been in other places scattered throughout the world. And the late Dean Richardson and some people from the National Science Foundation in Washington and other groups got this group together and brought them to Brown. And we ran courses in applied mathematics. They not only were funded by the government but the students who took these courses. And they were all on a graduate level. Many of them on a post-doctoral level. The students who took these courses came from all over the country to take them and the government gave them their expenses too. Because this was a science about which not too much was known in this country. It was well known in Europe. It was not known here. And it

was decided that since we had entered the war perhaps we had better know a little bit more about this science and the uses to which it could be put.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: I know nothing about it. What, in general, what is it?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Applied math?

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Applied math. Does it have to do with engineering or what?

ELEANOR ADDISON: It is related to engineering, it is related to biology, it is related to economics. [40:00] You can relate it to almost anything. The name is what it says 'applied' mathematics. Now, today the students can have a double major in applied mathematics and physics, applied mathematics and engineering, applied mathematics and biology, applied mathematics and economics. Or they can just be straight applied mathematics. It was a graduate program for the first ten year or so and then they began to bring courses down to the undergraduate level too. And it became very very popular and still is. It is, as I say, the application of mathematics to other sciences.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: You've lived in Providence all your life.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Right.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Since you've been here. How do you feel about the social changes that have happened during your lifetime here, you know, since you've been here for a long time?

ELEANOR ADDISON: I think when one has been here a long time the changes become so gradual over the years that you really don't notice them happening. It's a gradual change. And I don't think there's a great deal of difference now than what it was then. The same tensions exist to some extent that always existed. The same social structure exists pretty much as it always existed. Of course, we have a great many more people from the Caribbean area and the like than we did. And now of course, we have the people from Southeast Asia. We never had those before. But the Hmong people, the people from- oh, the Koreans too. That's not Southeast Asian though. In case you don't know it, Providence is one of the five cities in the United States with the largest population of people from East Asia.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: Oh, no. I didn't know that.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Laotians. All that area that's been in the war that we've been so involved in for so long.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: I wonder what-do you have any idea why they would come here [inaudible 0:42:35]



ELEANOR ADDISON: Yes, I do. Various groups sponsored a few of them. And once you've brought in a few, then the families follow and others follow. And so it goes. This has always been true of any immigration. A few came first and then they told others and they came. And they told others and they came. This has been true of every wave of immigration that has come into this country in general and Providence in particular. Somebody has to come first and write home, 'Oh this is quite a place to live. You've got to come.' You know that sort of thing. And that's how you build it up.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: I have a question about that. The bringing of the group of scientists for the applied math. Were they just, were they fleeing from Germany because they were intellectuals? Or were they Jewish mostly or why was-

ELEANOR ADDISON: Some of them were Jewish. Some of them just couldn't stand Hitler's policies. One man, in particular, had a lawsuit against Hitler but he didn't stay to find out how it would come out. He left and went to Turkey. And then he won the lawsuit and they wanted him back and he said, 'No way.' And eventually he came to this country. As a matter of fact, he was the one who became head of the applied mathematics group.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: He won the lawsuit and so the Germans wanted him to come back?

ELEANOR ADDISON: Yeah, in Turkey. But he spent nine years in Turkey before he came to America.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: What was his name?

ELEANOR ADDISON: That was Professor [William] Prager. P-R-A-G-E-R. He's written up in that *Gentlemen Under the Elms* book that's out. You may have seen it in the bookstore. He's retired. Well, he's not retired. He's dead.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: ...I don't, if this is a personal question just tell me and you know, feel free. I can erase it or whatever.

ELEANOR ADDISON: Okay. Is that running? Oh, yes it is. Okay.

CHARLOTTE ERWIN: It's running. Was there any- is there any reason why you didn't ever marry or did you just didn't want to?

ELEANOR ADDISON: I just wasn't particularly interested in it. But that's not a very good reason [laughs][45:00] but that's the only reason I can give you. I just did not meet up with anyone I particularly care to think I'd spend the rest of my life with.

[End of Interview]