

Transcript – Stavroula Balomenos Demitre '53

Narrator: Stavroula Balomenos Demitre

Interviewer: Joyce Tavon

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Part 1

Joyce Tavon: – Class of '84 and today I'm interviewing Stavroula Balomenos Demitre, who's always gone by the name Starr, and she's class of '53. Today's date is February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1986. OK, I'd like to start out by asking a little about yourself and your background. Maybe you can tell me a little about your family and where you grew up.

Stavroula Balomenos Demitre: Well, I was born and raised in Portland, Maine. I was born in 1931. I was born of Greek parents. My father came to this country when he was about 15 years old, although at that time, they lied on his age so he would not be put into the Greek army. My mother came over here as a bride in 1927. Their marriage was not really arranged, [01:00] and yet they had just communicated by mail. They met in Paris – it was pre-arranged that they would meet in Paris, and they were married in Paris, having known each other for about 24 hours, I guess. And when they came to the United States, had a very happy, happy marriage that lasted 35 years.

We were three children in the family. The oldest one was my sister Mary, who has passed away. The middle one is my brother Charles, who has become a Greek Orthodox priest, and now he's out in Sioux City, Iowa. And I was the youngest. My brother and sister could not speak English when they first got to school. I think, I believe by the time I went, I could, because they preceded me.

We were a very closely-knit family, very closely-knit ethnic group, and most of our activities did center around the [02:00] Greek church in Portland. And the most important things in our lives were home, school, and church. My father was a very hard-working, humble shoe repair man, who had not had an education, who did not ever want to go back to Greece, because

he remembered Greece as poverty, and who taught his children that education was the doorway to a good life. And it was important.

One thing I remember about my father was that he said to both my sister and myself that he would not give us our dowry, as was typical in those days, but he was going to give us an education, so that we could always take care of ourselves, even if we married a no-good. He said, “You can throw him out [03:00] and take care of yourselves. To me, that was a man with great vision, because most men of his generation educated the boy only and the girl was only meant – told her to (inaudible) with a man. Yes, I think he was an unusual man. I think if he had had the opportunity to be an educated man, he would have really gone places. I think he would have been a college professor. He was certainly not a businessman. He certainly never became rich. He was always very generous and kind to all those around him, and he helped out widows, and widows' children. And I guess a little bit of that rubbed off on the family.

I went to Portland High School, I was very active in everything that I could get my hands into, mostly into the musical activities – again, my father insisted that both my sister and myself take piano lessons, and that has proved to be something that has always [04:00] given me a lot of satisfaction, happiness, and helped me earn my living, at different – two periods of my life. How I got interested in Brown – there was no one from Portland High School, as far as I know, that had attended Brown, but I had two cousins in Haverhill, Massachusetts, and they both preceded me to Pembroke, and they're the ones that interested me in Brown University. So, the day I was accepted at Brown, I was like a hyperactive (inaudible) – I jumped up and down. I couldn't believe that I had been accepted at Brown.

JT: Do you remember, had you applied to any other schools?

SBD: Oh yes, I applied to (pause) – what did I apply to? I applied to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, (inaudible) because we had a cousin of our mother's who lived there, and she had suggested that. And, I think I also applied to [Jackson?].... [05:00] but I was accepted into Brown in February, which was early – now I can't remember if that was so-called Early Acceptance at that time or not. But, I don't know why they accepted me, but I was absolutely thrilled that they did. And, I did not receive any scholarship help from Brown my first year. AT

the end of my freshman year, yes, they did give me a scholarship, for my promise in the field of music, and from then on, I did receive scholarship aid from them.

JT: So coming back to, you were very happy that you had been accepted to Brown.

SBD: Oh, thrilled.

JT: How did your family respond?

SBD: Amazingly enough, a Greek-American family, they wanted to have their hands on you all the time, they want to be able to watch over you, but I guess because it was education, and my father was so proud that his children were doing so well in school, and as long as it was education, it was OK to go away. [06:00] And then, the two cousins had preceded me.

JT: Were they still at Brown?

SBD: One was still at Brown, and one had graduated. And my cousin that was still at Brown and I really became very close, and we hadn't had that much chance to become close over the years. And we did well. She was still there. She graduated, I think, in '51. And I graduated in '53. So, surprisingly enough, my father and my parents were very thrilled that I was going to Brown. In April of that year (pause) – it must have been April, but maybe it was before February, I can't remember – one day we had a knock on the door, and (laughter) I was helping my mother wash (inaudible) with the kitchen walls, and I was very dirty, and I had my hair up in pin curls, and I answered the door, and there was this little old lady there – a hunchback little old lady, who turned out to be [07:00] from Pembroke. She had gone to Pembroke many years before: Helen Hamilton. And she had a farm in Augusta, Maine, but she lived in Rumford, Rhode Island. And, I guess she was like what the [NSB?] workers are like today – she just came to see what I was like, and I guess to give me an interview.

And, I was appalled, because I was very dirty and I had my hair up in pin curls, but I think because of that, she was very impressed that I would be happy enough to help my mother clean up the house. And of course, my mother brought out all her Greek goodies, and

(inaudible)... and, she became sort of my keeper at Pembroke. She would always look in on me. She would make sure I was doing OK, and she invited me over to her home, and she invited me out to her farm in Augusta, Maine, so we had this relationship that continued all through Pembroke [08:00] and after that, until she passed away, 10 or 20 years ago.

JT: So maybe you can tell me a little about when you arrived at Brown, where you lived your first year?

SBD: When I arrived at Brown, with my trunk – and my parents did drive me down, my dormitory was Bates House, which no longer exists. There were 14 of us in there. We were really quite a mixture. I was very fearful, and when my parents left I felt as if I had been – what's the word – just dropped off, and that was it, and what was I going to do next? But, there was one girl in the dormitory – I just remember her coming down the stairs. She had a thin grey striped suit on, and she was a blonde, and I thought she was very snooty. I said, (laughter) “This one, [09:00] I know I'm not going to get along with.” Well, she was not my roommate, but she is the one girl from that dormitory who, we still have a very close relationship. In fact, she was up here a few weekends ago to go to the Renoir exhibit – Ann Peterson Zablocki, who lives on Long Island now. So, that was the closest friendship that came from that freshman dormitory.

My freshman roommate would have been my roommate for four years, but she had to leave for a year because her father was dying of cancer. Actually, I had a wonderful time in Bates House. (inaudible) As far as my subjects were concerned, I think I had a terrible inferiority complex, because I didn't do very well in physics. I didn't do very well in chemistry, and I didn't do very well in English composition. You had to pass English proficiency. Now, [10:00] that was my (inaudible), English proficiency. I don't know if it was because of my Greek-American background, that I could not write the way they wanted me to write, or because I had an inferiority complex, but I know my two cousins who had preceded me, and were also Greek-American, they also had trouble at the English proficiency. It took me three semesters to attain English proficiency. The turning point, about my feelings about myself, was at Pembroke, that first summer – I wasn't going to apply for a scholarship, and my mother said, “You should.” So, the very last day that they were supposed to be in, I sent an application, special delivery. And they did give me a small scholarship, because of my promise in the field of music. And that was

the turning point. After that, it was just A's and B's, straight through. My four years there were very happy. It was like a brand-new world to me. [11:00] I went in as a math major, but then I met the music department, I fell in love with the music department, and I think they felt that I was interested, and they just fed me. They gave me lots of experiences that even a music student in a music school would not get. I'm sure that my music background at Brown exceeds the music program my daughter was in at Ithaca.

JT: Did that already happen in your freshman year?

SBD: Yes, I started to go over there, and just see if I could take piano lessons. And from the piano lessons, I became a music major. And, when I took Music [T1?] – I don't know if they still have that course there – which was a course... it was a complete outline of the history of music, it was sort of one of the required courses in the arts, and I remember the football kids also took it, and three of them were flunking. [12:00] And, the music department asked me to tutor them. So, that was quite exciting. By tutoring them, I just learned my own material much better. So, I became a music major, and I was very happy. I was the official page-turner for all concerts, I traveled all over New England turning pages for the teachers and I'd go to the parties with them, and I'd be the only student there, and I would look at them with awe.

JT: Had you already decided this your first year, or was that not until –

SBD: By the end of my freshman year, I decided I was going to be a music major. At first, I was going to be a math major, and I was going to be an engineer, and I was going to build bridges. By the end of my freshman year, I was going to be a music major, and I was going to become a teacher.

JT: That's a big change.

SBD: Well, math and music are very close, actually. I remember – most of the members of the Brown University orchestra were in the physics department and the chemistry department. The university's string quartet at that time [13:00], Professor [Coolidge?], who was the head of the

department, was in the string quarter, and the other three members, I think, were in physics and chemistry. So, the relationship has always been there, and just like this. Resnik, the astronaut, she was a concert pianist as well as an astronaut, so the two are very closely related. But, my years there, at Pembroke, were very happy. I loved it a lot.

JT: Do you have any particular other memories that are tied to your freshman year?

SBD: My freshman year, I put in 15 pounds. I must have liked the food. All the activities with the Pembroke glee club and the Pembroke chorus were all very exciting. I did not like having to take a course in health, in the phys ed department. I was [14:00] not too happy with the phys ed department. I think I chose field hockey my freshman year, and I had to wear goggles over my glasses. I'm very near-sighted, and at that time, no one had contacts. I had to put goggles over these glasses, and then I couldn't see where anything was. And I used to take them off, and then they'd make me put them back on again. My only unhappy experiences (laughter) were with the phys ed department. Of course, I wasn't too happy with my grades, but I don't have any truly unpleasant memories (overlapping conversation; inaudible) freshman year. For some strange reason, the school psychologist kept calling me again. To this day, I still don't know why she picked on me, but she also picked on my cousin. So again, I don't know if it was because of the cultural background, if she wanted to see if we had any problems [15:00] adjusting or not, but I was very close-mouthed to her, I remember that. And then she never bothered me after that. I haven't the slightest idea.

JT: They thought that you were an anomaly from a small town, and Greek-American?

SBD: I haven't the slightest idea. I don't know. I guess I'll never know. The dean was Nancy Duke Lewis, who passed away from cancer. And, I didn't get to know her well my freshman year, but after my sophomore year, she knew me. Now, why? I don't know if it was because of the music, or what, but we used to have long, long chats together. And, I expressed my unhappiness with the English proficiency requirement. I felt that they were trying to force us to be creative writers, [16:00] and to me, you cannot be a creative writer any more than you can be

a creative composer of music. The purpose, I thought, of English composition was to prepare you to write term papers and things like that, which I had no trouble doing.

That was my only complaint (inaudible) the English department. I did not like my first... well, the first English teacher – I think she must have been a frustrated actress. I won't mention her name, but she had a bulldog – at that time, I was afraid of dogs – and she used to bring this animal to class with her. And at times, he did eat some of the students' lunches. She just turned me off – she was very cruel in her comments and all. She didn't show any empathy or understanding. The second fellow showed much more understanding. I think he was also a frustrated actor. The third one, who finally [17:00] helped me... and I should remember his name, but this is the name I can't remember – the other two remember, and his I don't – he actually sat down, and, I was making small errors with very common words, like T-H-E-N and T-H-A-N. And, he asked me to relate them to the Greek language. And I did, and by doing that, I clarified them in my own mind. But he's the only one that sat down and cleared up a lot of the little things that were (inaudible). So to him I say thank you. These other two – I'm sure, maybe they're not even living now, but if I had any unhappy moments, I guess it was in my English composition classes, as a freshman.

JT: You touched on getting to know [18:00] Dean Lewis. Did you get to know her fairly well?

SBD: Yes. Oh, I thought she was a wonderful woman, very understanding, and easy to talk to, and a good listener. I don't remember if she gave advice as much as she listened. And I thought maybe that was smart. She was a very attractive woman. And, there was warmth when you were in her presence. I don't know if they had anyone else to replace her. The college was a lot smaller then. I think there were 277 in my class. So, approximately 1,000 women total.

It was... I loved the concept of Pembroke. I was very unhappy to see [19:00] it go. I don't know if that's been good or bad, because Pembroke was like a small women's college. It was like Wheatley is now. And yet, it was within a males' university. It had all the advantages of a large university, it had all the advantages of a small women's college. It gave women a chance to be outstanding, in putting out their own yearbook, putting out their own newspaper, having their own groups, and learning how to be presidents, and vice-presidents, and to run different organizations. And I think once it became part of Brown, you had to compete with the males,

and... you weren't always going to be on the top, as you were by being a small women's college. And, I really think that that's very important. And, I take my hat off to the women's colleges who have not become coed. And there aren't that many anymore, because everybody got on this bandwagon, becoming... Radcliffe, for instance, [20:00] it is a women's college, and yet it's still buried in Harvard.

JT: Were there particular extracurricular activities that you were really able to excel in?

SBD: Well, again, the music (inaudible)... I was the accompanist with the glee club, and one of the accompanists for the chorus, I was in the Chapel Choir, which I'm sure doesn't exist now—

JT: Were all of these Pembroke activities, or—

SBD: Well, the Pembroke glee club was Pembroke, the Chapel Choir was Pembroke, and the chorus was mixed – it was Brown and Pembroke. I guess those were basically my activities. I was (laughter) on the class bowling team. But, I guess that's where my strength fell, and grew. I gave a senior piano recital. I can't play those pieces anymore. So, I guess I did quite well in music. [21:00] All department, there was this professor Von Copenhagen – I did chamber music with him. All these things are without credit. I think, today, maybe you'd get credit for some of these things.

There was – the glee club, and the chorus, the page-turning... Bill Dineen, who just retired a couple of years ago, was the director of the Brown Pembroke Chorus, and he and his wife would invite me up to their home, way up in Bar Harbor. I went up there a couple of summers. And, he used to pass through Portland, stop over, and my mother would feed him... so, we had very close ties that way, personally. Bill Dineen had the chorus, and he also had the Brown Chapel Choir. His requirement for being in these groups was [22:00] that you would be interested in music, and be faithful to them – not so much that you had a fantastic voice. And, I think he influenced me the most when I went out and became a music teacher. I more or less followed his philosophy. If you were interested in music, there was a place for you somewhere on that campus. You would fill some slot.

When I did my graduate work, at the Harvard Graduate School of Education – it was a much larger campus, they had only one choral group for this entire campus, and it was cutthroat competition, and you had to excel, and then you had to brown-nose, and this and that. And, I got in there, too – again, because I could play the piano. But, it was such a difference of philosophy from what I had seen at Brown, where anybody that was interested – there was a place for you, where in Harvard... it was just for the select few.

Of course, the Harvard [23:00] Radcliffe Choral Society was fantastic, and they were chosen to sing with Boston Symphony during those years. Brown Pembroke used to sing with the Boston Pops, but, the philosophy was different. And, I think if you're going to teach, and expose children, then the philosophy I got at Brown with Bill Dineen was a much finer one. Sorry, Harvard, but, that's the way it is. (laughter) But that was my feeling. I think, also, at Brown, in many areas, the professors became very close to the students, while at Harvard, it was the assistants that became close to the students, and the professors were much too busy writing. It was a completely different feeling. If you were an undergraduate, Brown was the place to do that.

JT: I'd like to come back, again, to – you talked a little about your freshman year, and you talked, beyond that, about some of your feelings... [24:00] turning, next, to your sophomore year, are there any specific memories you have there? Where did you live, and – ?

SBD: Sophomore year, I went into Andrews Hall, which of course was unisex, at that time. And, Erna and I had a double on the first floor –

JT: Who's Erna?

SBD: That was my first roommate for two years, Erna [Geisinger?]. She did come back to graduate – her father was sick, so she left. She did come back to graduate. She and I had a double on the first floor, at the end of the first floor corridor, and it had a bathroom right next to it, and then a single – it was like a suite. It was very nice, because we had our own private bathroom.

The only thing about that bathroom was, they had shutters in front of the bathroom door. So, if anybody took that shutter away, you would not have any privacy, which happened on a

few occasions – they were just being funny. So, you were in the bathroom [25:00] with just a towel around you, and in those days, you just didn't go running through the corridor with a towel around you. And, a few times, they pulled that shutter away – you'd have to scream and yell, “Please come (laughter),” (inaudible) bathroom (inaudible).

Those are the humorous aspects. It was convenient living there, because the dining room was right downstairs. We used to have – Wednesday night was faculty night, and Sunday noon was family night, where you had a very formal dinner. We used to have waitresses that waited on you. Now, I guess everything is cafeteria style.

JT: And, the waitresses waited on you, only at those two times?

SBD: No, no, no. Breakfast was cafeteria style, and lunch and dinner, the waitresses brought out the meal on big, big trays. It was family style – you know, large platters, and then you'd serve each other. Wednesday [26:00] night was a formal time – we had candlelight, and Sunday middle (inaudible). And, in a way, maybe that was nice.

JT: Did you have to dress up for that?

SBD: Wednesday night and Sunday noon, yeah, we had to dress properly.

JT: What was properly?

SBD: I can't remember what properly (laughter) – it was a skirt and a blouse. I'm sure it wasn't slacks, or shorts, or anything like that. In fact, you didn't wear shorts. I guess some girls, they would always wear their raincoat over it, but it was proper dress.

JT: It was just a formal dinner?

SBD: A formal dinner, and then afterwards they would have a coffee hour, in those very beautiful lounges. They were beautiful. I remember going through them when my daughter was looking for colleges – the one that went to Wheaton. So, let's go back to around 1974, or '75... I

walked through those lounges and I was just a little bit shocked, because there were soda pop cans all over the place, and all the furniture had rips in it, and the [27:00] coffee tables weren't there, and... I couldn't believe that this beautiful Georgian structure with its Georgian type furniture inside had been reduced to something that, to me, wasn't very nice, and it longer had – when we used to walk into Andrews Hall, there was someone sitting at the desk, and everybody had their private mailboxes, and they had taken their telephone calls, and things like that. Well, now, there's nothing like that. We didn't have keys. We didn't have to lock our dormitory doors. Later on, then had keys in the lavatories – in the bathrooms! So, things have changed a great deal.

JT: Wasn't there content about “gracious living”?

SBD: Gracious living.

JT: Was that Nancy Duke Lewis, the dean?

SBD: Yeah, that was gracious living. But that's what it is – having formal dinners, and having the tea and the coffee, and (inaudible).

JT: Was there any expectation, that you as a Pembroke student had [28:00] to –

SBD: Well, you could invite faculty members, and I did invite (inaudible), quite often. It was really nice, we got a chance to talk to faculty in that way –

JT: So it was social, but formal.

SBD: It was very social, and formal. But, a lot of the professors had their homes open to the students. I don't know if they still do. It was very nice. I did work in the kitchen, the last three years. I bussed trays in the morning, and my other girlfriend, Miss Ann Peterson Zablocki and I both – we didn't wait on tables, we dished out the food, in the kitchen. There were two cooks in there, and one is still there! It was Patrick, the Irish fellow, and – I don't know if you remember

Patrick, and he under-saw the dining room. He's still there – I saw him there last year. I was dumbfounded. And –

JT: Really? I used to [29:00] --

SBD: Tony, an Italian –

JT: – I worked in the kitchen at (inaudible).

SBD: I think they sort of used to vie for the attention of the girls. We played up to them, because we used to get better servings. We used to eat half an hour before everybody else, and – I enjoyed working in the kitchen, and at night... there were two desserts, though, I dreaded: lemon meringue pie – to cut pie for 500 girls is a terrible chore – lemon meringue pie, and strawberry shortcake: those two desserts were horrendous to serve. And one day – there was another woman, that worked in there, and her name was Betsy Ross? But she was from Newfoundland – she's Canadian. In those formal dinners, they used to take out the coffeepots, and fancy little cream jars, and the crystal [30:00] cream jars were on tray, an aluminum pushcart, I think. And we used to push this pushcart over to the counters, and then serve – give it to the waitresses.

Well, one night, Ann and I used to go – we took the tray off the top of the refrigerator, the cream, and we'd set it on this pushcart thing to push over, and we didn't know (inaudible) had prepared, and all of the sudden (laughter) 15 crystal creamers went on the floor – bang! Crash! And we're, “Oh, no” – crystal, broken glass all over the place, and poor Betsy Ross, she got so upset. So, we just had to put the milk in cups, you know – so it wasn't very gracious. That was the only accident I remember in the kitchen. But we had a lot of fun.

JT: Was it unusual at that time for students to work, in the kitchen (inaudible)?

SBD: I don't think so. There were quite a few of us. And we used to get 50 cents an hour. And we used to get a paycheck every two weeks. It didn't come out to very much – about \$15. But 15 dollars used to go a long way. And, we used to – [31:24]

## Part 2

SBD: So, it was never lost, but because my name was Stavroula, they couldn't tell the difference whether I was a male or a female, so I always found myself in line with all the Brown boys picking up my check. And they never got it straight! But, that was because of my name. I mean, that was... funny, and it was sort of fun, picking up my check with the Brown men who were (inaudible). It was because of the name. And we used to have this little (inaudible) ice cream place called The Gate. Is the Gate still there? Yeah – in those days, I didn't have to watch my weight too much, and I used to love hot fudge sundaes. And they cost 15 cents. That was my treat to myself, a daily hot fudge sundae at The Gate. Just about every day. They were very, very good. [01:00]

But that one check used to go a long way. Between the scholarship I'd get from Brown, and my wages, and my summer work, my father didn't have to pay too much for my education. And then when I graduated from Brown, I was fortunate enough to get a Ford Foundation scholarship for my year at Harvard, so my master's at Harvard cost me a total of \$300 – or cost my father \$300.

So, I was very lucky that I got the education I got, both at Brown, and then at Harvard, at really a very small cost to my parents. My father was so proud, of both degrees, because here was a man from very humble beginnings, and then he had a child [02:00] that went through the Ivy League. It was very, very important to him. Very, very proud. And, both places – with my parents, and with my education, I think, basically, I am a humble person. The (inaudible) teacher turned out to be a missionary.

JT: Was that ever a problem at Brown, being a humble person?

SBD: No, I found Brown the most democratic place I have ever lived at. The atmosphere there was wonderful. It didn't make any difference what your background was – or else I was so naïve that I didn't sense it. But I didn't feel that there was any difference, especially from the faculty and Nancy Duke... from the faculty, [03:00] all I got was respect from them, and they gave you as much as you wanted. It didn't make any difference if you were a Carnegie or a Rockefeller.

JT: And how about from your fellow students?

SBD: And from the fellow students. It was only one student – and she definitely had psychological problems – who was a very wealthy girl, and she would put on airs. But only one, in all those years. The only time you could see a difference, sometimes, was Sunday afternoon, when some of the girls would come back from church, and they had fur coats on. That was the only time you could sense a difference in wealth. I never felt it. Maybe I was too naïve, but I didn't. The feeling there was wonderful. Everybody accepted you for exactly what you were, not for anyone else.

JT: Is there anything else you'd like to add about any of your [04:00] specific years, and your second half of your time at Brown – your junior and senior years?

SBD: My junior and senior years? As far as academics, my father forced me to take education courses, which was a very good thing in the long run – but they were terrible. Education courses, whether at Harvard or Brown, or Salem State, or any other... you really don't get that much out of them. The history of education wasn't bad – that was a history course. Philosophy of education was terrible. We just got one definition of education after another definition. I got actually nothing out of this education course I took – it was a waste of money. I'm hoping that they've improved through the years.

JT: He forced you to take education courses?

SBD: My father insisted, because he figured that I'd become a teacher and I'd need them. I did need them, for certification, but that's another ball game – I feel the [05:00] education requirements throughout all the states are ridiculous anyway. But, I enjoyed all the courses I took – I audited some art courses, I didn't have room to take them and I was afraid of taking them, so I did audit these courses and I got a lot out of them.

Because of my experience with English composition, I never took an English course, because I felt sure I would fail it, so I just stayed right out of the English department. I'm sorry,

because I would have loved to take some English lit courses, but I was afraid to take them because of that experience. If it were today, I guess with pass/fail, I would have been braver.

JT: How about your initial interest in math? Did you pursue any of that?

SBD: In math? No, no – just the first year. Of course, now, I pursue it – I have to take care of the taxes and the check. (laughter) My husband was an accountant, but [06:00] since he's legally blind, I have to do all that now. But, no, it's funny – I guess I passed it along to my younger daughter, because she was a music major in Ithaca who was a math minor. She was sorry she went in as a music major – she would have preferred to become a math major. Sort of reversed. We haven't mentioned social life.

JT: Right, I was going to ask you about that.

SBD: Well, I was all excited about – trying to date (inaudible), because having grown up in a very narrow Greek environment, we just weren't allowed to date. Through high school, my social life centered around all the music groups in high school – the band would take trips. Surprisingly enough, my parents said OK, because if we had to do something educational, music was OK. So, I got very excited, and [07:00] I started dating a Brown guy, and I started going to (inaudible) –

JT: Was this your freshman year?

SBD: My freshman year. And, maybe because of the way I'd been brought up, I didn't like a lot of the things I saw with the Brown guys. I guess they were too wild for me. I guess I was still very simple.

JT: I tend to think that wild (inaudible) parties, with drinking –

SBD: Yeah, drinking, and a lot of necking... mattresses on the floor, and dark lights, and... that was completely out of my background, and it was sort of a shock. I did meet one fellow from the Rhode Island School of Design. I met him in church. Everyone I really dated I met in church.

JT: Was this a Greek Orthodox church?

SBD: This was a Greek Orthodox church in Providence. It's not in the same place now. At that time, it was in [08:00] the so-called “red light district” in Providence. At that time, I didn't know what a red light district was. And, I met this young man there – he wasn't Greek, he was Syrian. My parents called him a Turk: “What are you doing with that Turk?” So, if you want to call it a relationship, that was my first true love – this was a Syrian-American boy.

JT: What year were you at Brown?

SBD: I was a freshman. In fact, I think I met him the third Sunday I was in Providence. And, so we did date... but he graduated, I guess the end of my sophomore year, from Rhode Island School of Design. And, we didn't see each other – he went into the Armed Forces after that. And, actually, he was the reason, when I graduated from – when I got my MAT, in teaching, I decided to teach in New Jersey, because he lived in Brooklyn, [09:00] New York. But after that, the year after college, the relationship broke up.

JT: So you really stayed together (overlapping conversation; inaudible)

SBD: Yeah, in a sense. There was one Brown fellow that I did date, or he dated me, and we became very close friends, eventually. His nickname was Spider. Again, he visited the Greek Church. He's now an Anglican priest in New York City. He visited the church, and he knew me – he knew my name, knew everything about me, and I didn't have the foggiest idea who he was. I think he was very interested in the Greek Orthodox faith, and therefore became interested in me.

And, we became very close friends, and he visited me in Maine, and my father threw a fit, (inaudible) he wasn't Greek. And I finally convinced my father [10:00] he's going to be a priest, an Anglican priest, he's like a brother to me – I'm not interested in him in any other way. So then, my father was really nice to him, “Spider this, Spider that, let me take you here, let me do this,” and this and that. Once he realized there was no romantic...

JT: You said he dated you – was he interested in you?

SBD: Yes, he really, really was. He really was. One time, when he realized I was (inaudible), he had gone to a [Sigma Pi?] party, and (inaudible), poor guy. And, he was going to (inaudible) party (inaudible). It was terrible (laughter).

JT: Women in Pembroke were able to go to the frat parties... except, I guess you had to be in by a certain time?

SBD: Oh yes, oh yes. As a freshman, you had limits – you could only stay out until [11:00] 10:00 o'clock on weekdays, and on the weekends, I think – gee, I've forgotten – 11:00 or 12:00, 1:00? I can't remember. And then, if you didn't get good marks, you also couldn't go out on the weekends. If you wanted privileges, you would have to get a written letter from your parents – privileges to stay out all night, or go away on the weekend – which I think I did get by the time I was a senior, I had my parents sign the letter. So, we had to sign in and sign out, and then, if you came in late, you'd come before like a court, or something, and then you'd have to stay in for some nights, (inaudible). I remember once, I had to go in front of the court – but I had been babysitting for one of the music department's children. So I was late. I still got [12:00] punished.

JT: Do you remember how you felt about those rules at the time?

SBD: Well, I guess I accepted them. That was what was going on everywhere. It was just an accepted fact. So it didn't really bother me that much. I remember racing back to get in on time, and, you know that steep hill from downtown Providence and up? I raced up that hill many a time, to make sure I got in on time. I didn't like that, but I guess we accepted it. It's just the way things were done. And you just didn't question – (inaudible) I was of the generation of the '50s. We didn't question things. We really lived in an ivory tower. I mean, we didn't watch television. We rarely bought a magazine, (inaudible) Time Magazine. I don't think we ever read a newspaper. So we lived in a nice, nice ivory tower. [13:00]

JT: Do you have any other memories of your friends at Pembroke?

SBD: We were very close. Ann Peterson and I, Erna – a (inaudible) girl, she had to leave and came back... I think they were my closest friends. Plus, my cousin Livvie, who graduated in '51. And, they were the ones that I would do things with. And we did some crazy things. We dated some of the officers down at the Newport naval station. We had fun times.

I'm trying to think what other crazy things we did. I think we were going to go... I think it was our freshman year. I think we were going to go sing under the windows of the Sigma Nu fraternity. They had come and serenaded us – I think we were going to do that. But, the [14:00] house mother found out about it, so, it leaked, and she warned us it would not be a very good idea, that there might be repercussions – like being kicked out of school, and things like that. So we didn't do it. That's about how wild I got. I'm sure... I decided I wasn't going to become a drinker, because I wanted to be in control of myself. But I could act very drunk on a glass of wine – you know, very silly, very foolish. Some of them did become very drunk. They were not in control.

JT: The girls?

SBD: Yeah, the girls. I didn't like that, so I decided I would always be in control. Same advice I gave my daughters: always be in control. We went to all the [15:00] dances. If I invited anyone, it was always the fellow from Rhode Island School of Design. So, I did a lot of things with Rhode Island School of Design people, because of [Dick?]. And, I guess I'm not very exciting.

JT: You didn't get drunk at a frat party and jump out a window?

SBD: No, I didn't do any of those things. I guess I was an observer. I learned a lot about the world by being at Brown. I came from a very small environment, and went to a great big one. In fact, when I graduated, I didn't want to go home, to live in Portland, because I knew that I wanted to be more independent, and I would hurt my parents if I lived with them, [16:00] so that was one reason for moving away.

JT: I wanted to ask you about your senior year, because that seems [to always be the?] time to decide what to do next?

SBD: Well, I decided I would go on the graduate school for a masters in teaching. And that decision was made, I think, by January or February of that year. I don't remember when I was accepted. I also had applied for a Fulbright scholarship – I wanted to go to Greece, and I wanted to study Byzantine music. One of the places, of course, that you can really study Byzantine music, is (inaudible), but they don't allow women on this peninsula. And they don't even have female animals on that peninsula.

And, I did apply for the Fulbright, and I was not rejected. In fact, I didn't get a rejection until about August 15<sup>th</sup>, and I had to go off to [17:00] Harvard in two weeks. And, I started nagging them at the beginning of the summer – I have to know. They didn't make it. And, my life may have been much different if I had gotten a Fulbright. And, Ann Peterson also had applied to go to Harvard, but she didn't get in. But, another thing we did, the two of us – we applied for... I don't think it was for the CIA, but it was for some federal place. I was just curious to see if they would have sent me.

JT: The State Department, or something?

SBD: Maybe the State Department, but, the questions at that time – see, that wasn't too long after the Second World War. And, there had been a civil war in Greece. There were Communists in Greece. And, I was very truthful about my [18:00] background, and I did have cousins over there... and, some had died in the war. And, I was not accepted. But my roommate was.

JT: And she was of American –

SBD: Well, actually, Swedish-American – American-American, and Swedish-American...

JT: But farther back?

SBD: Oh yeah, oh yeah. So, I'm sure that that was the difference. They weren't going to take any chances. I'm trying to think if I did anything else interesting my senior year. I gave that senior recital, which was very exciting.

JT: Had you felt very strongly that you wanted to go into teaching?

SBD: At that time, I don't think a woman had much of a choice. You were either going to be a teacher, or a secretary, or a nurse. What else was there? I don't think... the opportunities that exist today just did not exist at that time.

JT: It's funny, because you said when you came in, you had [19:00] thought, "I'll be a math major and build bridges." (laughter)

SBD: I was going to be one of the first woman engineers, I was going to be a little bit different. But, by the time I finished, I guess I was more of a realist.

JT: Because you had considered becoming just a performer? Not just—

SBD: I never felt that I was that good. And to become a performer, you have to be extremely talented; you have to spend six or eight hours a day practicing; you have to be lucky – you have to meet the right people to back you, and I just didn't think I had all that. Although when I came to Boston, I studied with [Heine?] Gebhard, who was a very famous piano teacher. But, I was a realist in that. I wasn't a (inaudible) –

JT: You said you had to become a realist. Did you get any career advice?

SBD: Probably – only to go towards teaching. I can't really remember. [20:00] If it had been today, I probably would have tried to become maybe a conductor, or a choral conductor.

JT: But you don't remember anything – someone saying that was or wasn't an opportunity for you, or that you should go into teaching?

SBD: I must have gone into it – I think I had more or less decided on teaching, too, because at that point, I was very in love with my Syrian friend, and I figured as a teacher, I could go anywhere in the world, and use that profession. And after I went to Harvard, I figured that, well, maybe I'll teach a few years in the states, and then go to Europe and teach for the U.S. government for five years. That never happened, because I met my husband (laughter).

JT: I would imagine in your senior year, many people are talking about marriage.

SBD: Well, quite a few girls were engaged. And, I guess that's – let's face it, when you're a woman, I guess that always [21:00] enters your mind.

JT: Were you thinking of it yourself?

SBD: Oh, I'm sure – I was in love with Dick, and I was hoping that someday we would get married. But it didn't work out that way.

JT: That wasn't your plan for right after school?

SBD: No, no. I was going to work, and then hopefully, I would get married.

JT: I'd like to ask you a little about after Brown, but did you have any other – you know, your best or worst memory? (inaudible) your worst memory was your English (laughter) –

SBD: You know what I think that my worst memory was? English composition, in the academic area! I don't remember that many things about it – that means everything was good. It was a pleasant, exciting, thrilling, expanding adventure for a young Greek-American [22:00] girl, first-generation American. And that's why when I worked for NASB, and have written recommendations for students, I think my strongest recommendations are always the ones for the first-generation Americans. Maybe I feel empathy for them, and I understand where they're coming from, and I know what a place like Brown can do for them.

JT: Any best memory?

SBD: Best memory? I guess everything having to do with the music department, and maybe my senior piano recital. It was a very exciting event. My history professor came. I don't remember if the dean was there or not, but a lot of – you know, those faculty worked a lot, to put that on. Oh yes, yes. But it was exciting. And that was my one opportunity, at the (inaudible) reception, with goodies and all, I went and kissed [23:00] the entire music faculty. I waited 20 years to be able to kiss them!

JT: Did your parents come to that?

SBD: Oh, yes, yes. I get very proud. And my friends gave me a dinner, before. We went to the (inaudible)'s [Mill?]. I don't know if it's still there. Of course, I couldn't even think, because I was so nervous (laughter). They all ate very well, but I was too nervous. It was just a very exciting night, to have a program put out by the music department. (inaudible) recital, Alumnae Hall.

JT: At Alumnae Hall?

SBD: Oh yeah, Alumnae Hall, sure. But that doesn't look as nice inside anymore as it did.

JT: It's huge, though.

SBD: Oh, yeah, it's huge. I didn't fill it. But we had a good crowd. I was there last spring for a conference, but I was more interested in the building than I was in the conference. The velvet curtains were falling apart, and the floor didn't look as nice anymore [24:00], the chandeliers... I don't know. It just didn't have that beautiful polish that it had – of course, this was 30 years later... the stones, the brick falling apart outside, the terrace needed resurfacing. So, the recital was in the hall, and the reception was in the Crystal Room. It was nice.

JT: So then you graduated?

SBD: I graduated, and I went to Harvard for a year, and got my Master of Arts in Teaching in one year. That following summer, I was a camp counselor in Camp [Aloha?], Vermont. I had never been in a camp situation before, so I was the music counselor – worked in a lodge that housed thousands of bats. And, then the following September, I went to New Jersey, and taught there. [25:00]

I met my husband the following summer – again, in church, in Portland, Maine, my hometown. My mother had had a heart attack, so I went home for the summer and I was taking care of her, and my husband's family always had a summer home on Peak's Island in Casco Bay. And he was there, vacationing – and the 15<sup>th</sup> of August is a big church holiday, so everybody goes to church on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August. And that year, they didn't have a cantor in the church, so I was the cantor for the summer, and my husband was there. Our parents had met, previously, but on the way out of church – I don't know if we introduced ourselves, or we were introduced. My husband says we introduced ourselves, because our parents were talking. And at that time, he was working in New York City, and I was teaching in New Jersey. So, then the following year, we started to date, and a year later, we were married. And, we lived in New Jersey for–

JT: I assume your Syrian friend was out of the picture? [26:00]

SBD: Yeah, he was out of the picture. That just disintegrated, once I was there. He was working in New York and I was teaching... it just didn't work out. It was one of those things. Then I met my husband, and dated, became engaged, married a year later, again at the church in Portland... lived in New Jersey, had one daughter, and then moved to Montreal. And I had no trouble getting a teaching job in Montreal.

JT: You moved because of his job, (inaudible)?

SBD: He decided he wanted to go home, to Montreal, because he was a Montrealer, and we were going to establish ourselves there. It was very easy for me to get a teaching job there – again, because of the degrees, both from Brown and from Harvard.

JT: Was that a hard year for you, to leave your country?

SBD: Well, it was sort of [27:00] an adventure. Montreal was a beautiful city, it was a live city, it was an exciting city, and it was an adventure. And, I really loved teaching in Montreal. I taught in a high school there, Montreal West High School.

JT: Though your daughter was very little.

SBD: My daughter was a baby. And, we found a full-time housekeeper – she want home at night – and she was a Greek, who didn't speak a word of English. And this woman must have worked in big homes in Athens, Greece, because she would not sit in my presence. She was very formal with me at all times, and was a perfect housekeeper – took wonderful care of the child. But, I guess she took such good care of her, Tina didn't have the chance to play and really be a little kid. When I used to come home, she used to get dirty, and used to play hard, and things like that.

But [28:00] Montreal West High School... the education in Montreal, in Quebec at that time, was called confessional. It still is. They have a Protestant school board, and a Catholic school commission. It's called a commission if the majority is that faith. So the Catholic school commission was larger than the Protestant school board. I taught in the Protestant school board, even though as a Greek Orthodox, I had a choice of either (inaudible). But, Protestant meant English, and Catholic meant French, at that time.

So, my job – I got it very easily, because of my background, and I taught at Montreal West High School, and education there, at that time, was on a much higher level than anything that I had seen in the States. They had these very difficult matriculation exams – in order to graduate from high school, you had to have practically a college education at that time. That's how good it was. The school-age leaving was fifteen or [29:00] sixteen. So, they dropped out.

But the education was very, very high-level. And, those years I taught at Montreal West were my best years in teaching. I had three choral groups: I had a group of 15 girls, I had a mixed chorus of 30, and I had a very large chorus of 150. The very large chorus included faculty, as well as students, so it was very big. A very nice feeling. I have two girls – they're not girls anymore, they're 37 – who still correspond with me. One is now a dentist in Toronto, and the

other one is an English professor at Marianopolis College in Montreal. And those two girls still (inaudible).

SBD: Was it unusual for you to be teaching while your daughter was so young?

SBD: Yes, and – the rule there, at that time, was that if you got pregnant, you had to leave in your [30:00] fourth month of pregnancy. So finally, I did get pregnant again, with the second daughter, and, I lied a little bit. She was born in February, and I told them I would leave in December. And so obviously, I lied. And I did leave in December, but they didn't have anybody to replace me, and they called me back in January. And I was very large. I left January 17<sup>th</sup>, and she was born February 17<sup>th</sup>. So the rule was beginning to break down, at the time. And my successor at Montreal West suffered. She was a young woman. I begged these girls, “Please, don't be cruel,” (laughter) but they were. But the following September, they hired two people. I'm sure they did a lot of work, but –

JT: So you didn't go back?

SBD: I went back, but I did not go back to Montreal West. Teaching music is a very difficult job if you do it well. [31:00] I went back as a regular classroom teacher, and it turned out to be kindergarten in the morning in a lovely little school that only had six classrooms, and they were (inaudible) office build (inaudible) – it was a private little school. And the afternoon was on an experimental basis – [31:21]

Part 3

JT: --continue interview, and my name is Joyce Tavon, class of '84. I'm interviewing Stavroula Balomenos Demitre, class of '53. Today's date is February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1986. So you're talking about –

SBD: I was talking about teaching English as a Second Language at this school called Bedford School in Montreal, where a good (inaudible) percent of the students, who were newcomers. New Canadians, from many, many countries. At the end of that school year, when I did both

jobs, the school board asked me if I wanted to go back to music, continue teaching as a kindergarten teacher, or continue as an ESL. Well, the ESL was so exciting, and it was so new, and I had no boss, and no supervisor, and no one to tell me what to do, I decided that's what I wanted to do.

So for the next three years, I was in English as a Second Language. And no one had done it before, and I established my own program. It grew out [01:00] to be English as a Second Language through music, since I knew music so well. And when I left Montreal, again, they asked me – and I made a mistake here – they said, “May we use your methods for the program?” And I left them all my records, and all my methods, and all my pictures, and all my things, and I said, “Yes, go ahead,” and I should have put it in a book, and published it, which I didn't do.

JT: The generosity of your father (laughter) –

SBD: Well anyway... so, in this school, they had many, many children from many, many countries. The majority of them were from North Africa. They were Jewish children who had been booted out of North Africa, and booted out of Egypt. They spoke French, they spoke Arabic, they spoke Hebrew, and now, they [02:00] had to learn English. It was very difficult for them. I had a lot of Greek children who were booted out of Egypt. And I had a lot of Jewish children from Israel who had lived in kibbutzes. I had a lot of Greek children from Greece proper, and a few Hungarians, Romanians, some Brazilian children, and a few from South America. But in that area, which became like a ghetto, predominantly Jews and Greeks.

The children that came from Israel learned to speak the English language the fastest, but they had the most difficulty in writing the English language, because the alphabet was so different, and they were going in the opposite direction, and Hebrew doesn't have vowels – they have dots instead. So the writing was [03:00] very difficult for them. The Greek children from Egypt learned to speak English very rapidly, because they came from a cosmopolitan background, and their parents spoke four, five, six different languages. So, they learned the English language quite rapidly. They had difficulty with the writing. The children from Greece proper, who came from more of a peasant stock, had much more trouble, learning the language and the written language, and the same with a lot of the French-speaking Arabic Jewish children, intelligence-wise. So, you had different levels of intelligence as well.

But, I loved these children, because they would come to me in the morning, and go tell me all their problems, in their own language, and I would just nod my head, “Yes, yes,” and then we'd sit down and do our work. And one child, when he brought his parents [04:00] to meet me, he said, “This is the kind teacher.” So, I guess maybe I was becoming more a missionary. But I just loved them, and I guess I was warm, and I got a lot out of it. They learned a lot of English through children's songs that we would repeat, and children's dances. And I used an awful lot of photographs. I had subscribed to a lot of magazines at that time. I was just cutting out pictures, and categorizing them – food, and furniture, and people, and smiles, and crying, and activities, and... so, I really loved those children.

JT: It sounds like you really enjoyed your work.

SBD: I really enjoyed my work. And that school was very close to where we lived – it was within walking distance. I'm trying to think what else I did with these kids. Of course, I never had any lasting relationship with these children. They didn't come from families that would continue correspondence, or anything, so I really don't know what's happened to them. [06:00] I'm sure some of them have grown up to be very fine, and some of them have become the laborers, and the factory workers, and the seamstresses in Montreal.

JT: This was, what, in the late '50s?

SBD: This was 1964 to 1967. Nasser had come into power, and all the other foreigners were just booted out of Egypt, and a lot of the Jewish people were tired of working in the kibbutzes. Our first question was always, “Why did you come to Canada?” And their answer was, “Because we couldn't go to the United States.” So, that was their dream. I had two girls from Turkey, and they were blondes. Their Dad was in China, but they had to leave China. I didn't want them to know I was Greek, (laughter) for obvious reason, and I don't know if they ever learned [06:00] that I was a Greek (inaudible). But I didn't want them to lose their culture. I had them always writing about their culture, or giving me background about their culture, and I remember reading what they had given me, and (laughter) boy, those Greeks were nasty. (laughter) And I had to chuckle – you're seeing history, two different viewpoints.

JT: So if this was the '60s already, I guess there were other women teachers who were married, too.

SBD: Oh yes, there were married teachers, and a lot of them did have children. So it was becoming more and more common. There was something I wanted to mention about these children. At that time, elementary school teachers in the province of Quebec only needed one year of teacher training, and then it became two, and now it's four. High school – you would graduate high school in grade 11, rather than grade 12 [07:00]. So, a lot of these teachers were kids themselves. They were still teenagers. At the high school level, you had to have a college degree to teach. Elementary school, you didn't. You just needed one year.

So in this particular school, there were a lot of young girls teaching, and they had absolutely no understanding of where these kids came from. They had no empathy for them. They were very cruel to them. For instance, they would give them a spelling test, and they would give them a list of 15, 20 words to learn to spell. These kids knew another alphabet. They expected them to get 100 on the spelling test, and they just had no understanding at all. So the principal told me – he said, “Can you speak to them at the beginning of the year?” Give them a (inaudible). So, I would invite them into my room, and I would speak to them in only in Greek, and I would give them a list of words only in Greek. [08:00] And then after 20 minutes, I'd take that list away from them and I'd give them a spelling test. And of course they couldn't do it. And I'd say, “Well, that's how these kids feel. How do you expect them –?”

JT: Did you think it was just the age of the teachers, or were they themselves... they weren't first-generation Canadians, or –

SBD: Some of them were first-generation Canadians. I think they were just too young to understand. They were too interested in their own social lives, and they were too interested in finding a guy to marry. They were competing to see who was going to get the biggest rock on their fingers. They were just a little cruel, and... I guess – the French specialist and I were the two oldest teachers in the building, and at that time, I was in my thirties. I wasn't that old. So, they

just didn't have feeling. [09:00] So, I really loved working with those children. But, I came back to the States, so I couldn't teach ESL because I wasn't certified.

JT: So, then, from Montreal, you came –

SBD: I came here.

JT: Here as in Massachusetts?

SBD: In Massachusetts. My older daughter, when we came here, she was a fifth-grader. The first three years in Canada, we put her in a French school, because at that point, we figured we were going to live in Canada for the rest of our lives. She went to a private French school – it was sponsored by the French government, Marie de France. She got a fantastic education there. At the end of the first grade, she was trilingual – Greek, English, French. No confusion with the languages. She had such good study habits, in that first grade, and second grade, and third grade – she had to keep a notebook. She had to have headings – underline the headings. [10:00]

Everything was so well-organized, that that training that she got there has carried her through her entire life, while my younger daughter, who started school here – and she's had a typical middle-class public school education, and she never – maybe it's her own personality – she never developed those good organizational skills. She has developed them through the years, but she didn't get them at the beginning, like Tina did. My older daughter's the one who went to Wheaton, and she married an Irishman who was a French major, so the two of them have the French language in common. They're yuppies. They are yuppies. His goal was to be a millionaire, and I guess he will – he started his own software company.

JT: I want to ask if you mean that in a positive or negative –

SBD: Oh, positive. They're leading a wonderful life. They're very generous with their families, too, but – [11:00] we've jumped now. But, they know the good life, and they like the good life, but they both work hard. He's working very hard with his software company – it's called Poppyseed Development. If it makes it, it makes it. If it doesn't make it, he'll do something else.

And, Tina is now a real estate agent. She started off – when she graduated, she worked for Kelly Services as – sending people out, and then she started her own business. She was a dog walker, in the Back Bay. She was in Boston Magazine as the best dog walker (laughter). Anyway... (inaudible) and now she's a real estate agent. [Thea?], the younger one – she's only 21, we'll see what happens to her and her management training.

JT: So you had – you may have told me before we started the interview – you had left Canada really because of changes for your husband's job?

SBD: There were [12:00] severe changes – in Canada, the French wanted their independence. If you look at it, they had been under the yoke of the English for so many centuries, but also, they had been under the yoke of the Roman Catholic Church. I don't know which yoke was worse. And, they just wanted their independence – in education, everything. The English were really running everything at that point. So, what happened was a little bit of terrorism, if you want to call it that, and, I was told that in order to continue teaching there, I would have to become a Canadian citizen. My husband's company was being moved to Ontario –

JT: Can I ask you what kind of company it was?

SBD: I can't remember what it was, but... I don't know if it was a financial, or an insurance company, but all the head offices – he was an accountant, so they were all moving into [13:00] Ontario. So, if he wanted to have a good job... and then we figured as our daughters grew up, if they wanted a good job, they had to be French-speaking, and with a French name... then, we had to leave. We didn't (inaudible) to go to Ontario, but we decided to come back to the states. We decided to come to the Boston area, for two reasons: we had our summer home off the coast of Portland, Maine, and we figured north of Boston was a fast drive to the summer home; also, Boston had all these wonderful educational institutions that our daughters would take advantage of. So, of course, they didn't. (laughter)

JT: Was that hard for you, to leave – I mean you talked so much about how you liked your work?

SBD: I did miss that job, because it was something new [14:00] and exciting. But, we had to make a change. So, I took a flying trip down here, and had three job interviews – one here in Malden, one in Cambridge – where I could have taught English as a Second Language – and one in Brookline. And, the interview in Cambridge was the first one. And they hired me on the spot. And I told them I had to think about it. Then I came to Malden, and he also hired me on the spot, but I didn't know what I was going to teach.

And in Brookline, I had to wait to find out, so at that point, Malden had the higher salary, because I was put on a higher step on the salary scale, while in Cambridge, I was going down. Since we were making a change, my husband would be coming without a job, I had to find the job that paid the best, [15:00] so Malden became the place. And we decided we would go wherever I taught, so the girls and I would have the same hours and the same vacations. So that's how we ended up in Malden.

JT: So, this move was really based on your job.

SBD: Yeah, this move was based on my job. That's why we came here. My Malden teaching years have been good years, but, Malden is a politically ridden city. You don't get anything here unless you know the right people, or you come from the right family, or – I don't know if you have to polish the batons or not, but you probably do. So, education speaking, there's no way you can advance unless you're on the right... [16:00]

JT: Political (inaudible).

SBD: Yeah, right. I came here and I became a remedial reading teacher. While we were in Montreal, I did take some linguistic courses at Marianopolis once I got into ESL, and some reading courses at McGill – Macdonald College was the teacher's college at McGill. So, I had those all under my belt, and I became a remedial reading teacher, and from that, it became reading disabilities, and then Law 766 came along, and I became a special needs teacher. And I'm picking up all these little certifications as I want along. In 1976, the post of Reading Supervisor was open again, and I applied for the job, and I got it – at the dismay, the surprise, of everybody. And it was a surprise, because I was not meant to get it. [17:00] The man that was

supposed to get it, Bobby [Wheelance?], against my appointment. I don't know how he found out. At that point, I was not certified to be a reading specialist. They did not accept the linguistics courses, they did not accept the McDonald courses at face value, they didn't accept some other courses I had taken here at Northeastern, as in-service I had enough credits there, that if my name was the right thing, I would have gotten certification. But my name wasn't the correct one. At that time, a lot of administrators in Malden did not have certification in their particular area. Some very quickly got it, and they got it easily. But in my case, it wasn't granted.

JT: So you (inaudible) say it was political?

SBD: Oh yeah, yeah. So, by the end of the school year, they eliminated the position, and it has never been reposted. [18:00] It has never been reposted. Oh yes, and this year, it was rumored, in the fall, that they were reposting the job, and the office already knew who it was going to be that was getting it – he's the head of the English department now, but he worked for the past mayor on his campaign. That's how he got his job. All the jobs are like that. Anyway, the rumor got around that they were reposting it. It was a very, very strong rumor. But they have not reposted the job. Now, whether they found out that I found out and I was making waves, I don't know. So I don't know if it's ever going to be reposted now.

So, I've been a special needs teacher. I worked with children with problems – basically, the parents have problems, therefore the kids have problems. Education begins in the home, and if the kid does not have the background by the time he's six, [19:00] then that kid is going to have problems all the way through school. If the family's not interested in education, the kid's not going to be interested in education. Once in a blue moon, some child will rise above his background, but generally speaking, they won't. So, if the family has problems, the kid's going to have problems.

I have very few children who I would call true dyslexic children, and they're going to make it. The rest of them basically come from broken homes, one-parent homes, mixed-up homes, and that's why the children are in my program. I call myself a Band-Aid. I cover too many children. I'm a mother, I'm a grandmother, I'm a counselor, I'm an ad-hoc social worker – yeah, an ad-hoc social worker. Really. I've been called in a few times to translate for the Greek-speaking families. I was called in once for – they had filed... what's that number? – Case 93

physical abuse, but I knew it was wrong. And, [20:00] it was just because they couldn't understand, so I was called in, and I worked for about four hours for the Department of something-or-other (laughter) –

JT: Department of Social Services, probably? (laughter)

SBD: Yeah, and I straightened that out. And, since I've been here... well, OK, now, I was not going to get involved in church work, but I'm the organist at my church. I wasn't going to give piano lessons. I have 17 piano pupils.

JT: I did want to touch on – you have kept up your music, to some degree.

SBD: When we left Montreal, I was completely out of music. And after two or three years here, I did join this choral group in Melrose, (inaudible) Polymnia Choral Society of Melrose, sang with them for 14 years, and became the director of a little group within the group called the Polyettes – nine women [21:00] who would sing pop tunes at the spring concert. I became the assistant conductor of that group. I haven't been with them now for two or three years, but I have the Starrlighters, who are basically the Polyettes. Right now, there are seven women – seven gals in the prime of their lives, as I've said. And they rehearse here in my home on Monday nights, and we put on programs for the Rubin Rehabilitation, the Salvation Army, university women sororities, for hospital workers, at the Malden Public Library – they come up to my summer place in Maine, where we have Peak's Island Music Association, of which I'm a charter member. And every year, I say I'm not going to work for them, and every year I have to do the same thing, throw a (inaudible) together, and... so, I'm very busy, musically speaking.

JT: Well, it sounds like you've let music be the [22:00] secondary part to teaching.

SBD: That's right. Teaching is first, music is secondary. Giving lessons at home, and having the Starrlighters come here, is very good, because now my husband's retired, and unfortunately, he's legally blind. So, this way, I'm doing things at home while he's at home, so he's got the companionship, too, that he doesn't have anymore, because he can't go into work.

JT: I'm sort of struck that you said that teaching was a realistic choice, but when you talk about it, it sounds like you really do enjoy the profession.

SBD: Oh yes, 99% of the time I enjoy it, and I keep saying I want to take early retirement, but then I say, "But what else am I going to do that I really like to do?" I probably won't be happy, actually, doing anything else, so I'll probably remain a teacher until I do retire at 58, or 62, or [23:00] 65, or 70. So it looks as if I'll always be involved with teaching.

JT: I'd like to sort of draw this to a close, but I thought you might like to comment on – you have two daughters.

SBD: I have two daughters that I love dearly.

JT: Anything you have to say on – did you encourage them to apply to Brown?

SBD: I encouraged Tina... I encouraged both of them to apply to Brown, but Tina, I don't know if she – again, inferiority complex, Ivy League... I think she was afraid to apply to Brown, and she didn't. She applied to Wheaton, and Boston College, and BU, and... she applied to five schools and was accepted at all five. She is very good at languages. She was going to be a French major, and became a sociology major, because the head of the French department was a person who [24:00] everyone had to (inaudible) with at Wheaton. I'm (inaudible) going to remember what her name is. But, she did love Wheaton. We love Wheaton. We used to go down there every Sunday and have dinner with her.

JT: And your other daughter did apply.

SBD: My other daughter did apply, had an interview with Dave Laurent of (inaudible) department – I don't know if you remember Dave. Well, he retired last year. He was the singing teacher – the vocal teacher. He probably gave recitals while you were there. He also has sung for

us at Peak's Island Music Association. So, I still have that relationship going with David. He interviewed her, and he gave a very good report on her, and I got a letter from – Dean Rogers?

JT: Probably.

SBD: And, you know, “We're sorry, we can't accept your daughter, blah blah blah blah blah.” So I was very angry for about a year and a half, but anyway, she went to Ithaca. She enjoyed Ithaca, [25:00] but was very sorry she did not go to a liberal arts college, either Wheaton or some other...

JT: Ithaca's not – I've never heard of it.

SBD: Ithaca is more a professional school. It has a very good reputation as a professional school, for music or whatever else. The smart thing that she did, though – she got a bachelor's BA degree. She did not get a bachelor's of music degree, so she has a good liberal arts background. She majored in music with a minor in math. And, also, I have not encouraged her to become a professional musician, because, again, there are so many out there that are so talented, and how many make it? If she's willing to starve until she's 28 to try it, fine, but she would have to starve – she would have to be a waitress, or she would have to drive a taxi, or something like that, and chances are that she wouldn't make it, anyway. She'd have to live in (inaudible) apartment (inaudible), in Manhattan, or something like that. [26:00]

She's got a very fine voice – she's just as good as the ones that make it in the pop field, or the classics, but... she's just going to use it as a hobby, as her mother does. She doesn't want to be a teacher, doesn't want anything to do with teaching. Neither one of my daughters. I don't know why. But, with both daughters, I've given them the same philosophy (laughter) that my father gave me: “I want you to be educated, and I want you to be independent, so you can always take care of yourselves. No matter what happens, you will be able to take care of yourself, whether you're married, or single, or divorced,” because that happens in today's world. And I guess they've heeded that advice. I love them both dearly. The younger one is now living at home. I'm trying to stay out of her way. She moved back Thanksgiving time – she was living in our summer place, in Maine, [27:00] until Thanksgiving. In the meantime, we were having her old

room done over, and it was just last week, really, that she was able to move back upstairs, so as a matter of fact, today, I was moving her things out of this room, which is the dining room/office, up on the ceiling for her to take upstairs: “You've got shelves now, you've got a desk – take it upstairs.” So, I don't know how long she'll live upstairs, but I really don't want to get in her way. I really want her to be independent.

JT: Well, to wrap things up, do you want to add anything about the influence going to Pembroke has had? You talked a fair amount about your time after school.

SBD: I think everything that has happened to me in my life was influenced by Pembroke. If I hadn't gone to Pembroke, I wouldn't have gone to Harvard. If I hadn't gone to Pembroke, I wouldn't have become a teacher. If I hadn't gone to [28:00] Pembroke, I wouldn't have lived in New Jersey, or Montreal, or come back here. If I had gone to a small college in Maine, I probably would have lived my entire life in Portland, and I don't know what would have happened to me. I think I can get along with people, I can manage people, I can advise people, I can listen to people. I really think I got that all at Pembroke. I think my education there was the foundation for whatever I got at Harvard. I think the way I teach has been influenced by what I got at Pembroke, the people I had there as teachers.

JT: You also talked pretty strongly about what a good experience it was to be in this women's college – do you really feel that personally, it made a difference for you?

SBD: It probably gave me much more strength, in being able to be my own person, [29:00] than if I had been in a truly coed school. Probably, knowing that if I have to exist just in a woman's world, I can do that – I don't need the male world.

JT: Well, on that note, shall we (laughter) end the interview, or did you want to add anything?

SBD: Well, I hope that this is valuable. I don't think I'm such an exciting person, I don't have a million dollars – I'm just a plain ordinary person. I'm a very strong American citizen, because of my background, and I think if my parents had been born here, I may not feel as strongly

American as I do. I think that Brown University [30:00] is still a wonderful school, even though all these letters are written to the alumni (inaudible). I hope it will always continue to be a strong influence. I am very happy to see that they're having a section just devoted to women, and the women of Pembroke, so women can (inaudible). That's very, very important. I think Pembroke women have become, probably, leaders within their own families, and have been the strong person in families. And it was a wonderful experience for me.

JT: Well, thank you very much, for –

SBD: You're welcome.

JT: – taping this interview. [30:46]

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