

Transcript – Teresa Gagnon Mellone '39

Narrator: Teresa Gagnon Mellone

Interviewer: Karen Lamoree

Interview Date: November 29, 1988 (tracks 1-4); April 2, 1990 (tracks 5-6)

Location: John Hay Library (tracks 5-6)

Length: 6 audio tracks; 2:18:52

Track 1

Karen Lamoree: [00:00] This is Karen Lamoree interviewing Teresa Gagnon Mellone, class of 1939, November 29, 1988. Teresa, where were you from?

Teresa Gagnon Mellone: I came from Woonsocket, Rhode Island. At the time, I was a student here.

KL: And you went to public school in Woonsocket?

TGM: Right. I went through public school. I entered first grade at the age of four, because I was reading and writing. Nobody had taught me. And they felt that I belonged in school. And the superintendent of schools at the time thought I should be in school for a two-week trial period. And they unanimously decided school was the place for me, so I stayed, and enjoyed it immensely.

KL: Did you have any siblings?

TGM: My sister [Mary Madeline Gagnon] was four years younger than I. She is also an alumna of Brown [01:00] in the class of '44. And she too went to the same public schools that I went to as a child. [We all came into?] Pembroke.

KL: So when you were in high school, was it taken for granted that you were going to go to college?

TGM: I just loved every minute of school. I admired all my teachers, I enjoyed intellectual stimulation. And I really and truly always wanted to go to college. And that was my mother's hope for me, too, because she felt that I had some potential. And she tried very hard to see that I realized it.

KL: So was Brown the only school you applied to?

TGM: Yes, it was. As a matter of fact, there were no SATs in those days. It was your high school average that got you in. It wasn't an en- [02:00] you didn't have to take an entrance exam if you had a certain average. And I did not need to take an entrance exam. And after an interview with Miss Eva Mooar, who was the director of admission at the time, and a very pleasant, warm, bubbly lady, there was just no question about my coming to Brown, or Pembroke, as it was known then. And I had always, I think the day I was born, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. And I really wanted to be a high school teacher, French teacher. My teachers had made a great impression on me. They really did. I loved them all, and they liked me, because I was a good worker, good student, and I really showed that I took great pleasure in school. [03:00]

KL: OK. So Teresa, do you remember the first day you enrolled here as a student?

TGM: I'm not sure that [inaudible] first day that I enrolled here, but I do remember freshman week here. I remember particularly a session in the auditorium in Alumnae Hall when a brief history of the class was given. I believe it was Miss Mooar who gave that history. And there were two students in this class who were 15 years of age. And immediately, when we came out of that auditorium, I could hear buzz, buzz, "Wonder who the baby is here in this class." And I decided then they weren't going to know [laughter] I was one of the fifteens, because I was kind of big, you know? I said I was 16. So I lied about my age now, but I don't lie about it anymore. I don't advance it.

KL: So did you have what we would call orientation?

TGM: Oh, yes. There was orientation, right. And we also had what you'd call – I think this is something that everybody remembers because it was such an embarrassing experience, posture pictures. Oh my goodness, walking around in angel robes in those paper slippers they gave us. And it was just something entirely new to me, to all of us, I believe.

KL: Did you pass your posture picture?

TGM: Well, I guess I did, because they didn't tell me to leave. [laughter]

KL: Were you assigned a senior sister?

TGM: Yes. I had a senior sister whose name was [Mary] Estelle Freeman. And she came from [05:00] South Weymouth, Massachusetts. She was very nice, very helpful, very kind, and I think that was a good practice, because it kind of made you feel that you knew somebody already, and that you belonged here, and that you weren't, you know, one of the kids who was going to be snubbed by the big seniors. I enjoyed that system. And then when I had a freshman sister, I enjoyed just doing it the other way around.

KL: Did they make you do anything like scrub the stairs?

TGM: Oh yes, they made us do silly things, you know? I remember we had to wear beards made out of cotton, and mustaches, and silly hats, and we had to wear huge nametags. And one day, I was in such a hurry to get downtown because I was a commuter. And I had to [06:00] either get the train or the bus, I don't remember which it was then. But I was in such a rush, I forgot to take my nametag off. And I had to stop in Liggett's drugstore across from the City Hall. And I went in there to go to the lady's room, and I met a senior who knew my name immediately, of course, because she saw the tag. And I felt so embarrassed that I had rushed downtown that way. But that was kind of a nice meeting, strange way to meet people. [laughter]

KL: That's pretty funny. So did you sign up immediately for classes?

TGM: I guess I did, because I knew – I knew pretty well what I wanted to take. Of course, there was a core curriculum, and there were certain requirements that you needed to take and to get done in your freshman and sophomore years. But [07:00] languages were my love, and I couldn't wait to sign up for French. And in fact, I was put [and placed?] in an advanced French class immediately. And that reminds me; when I came back to work on my master's, which was in 1958, I started. I wanted to take a course in advanced French composition and conversation. And I was late signing up, and it was the first session of the class, and the professor, Dr. [Resheveria?], did not want to admit me to the class. And I said, "Oh, I'm here, could I please stay for just this session?" So he said, "OK." And I participated in the class. And he told me [08:00] that I could be a class member, because I really belonged in that kind of a class. In fact, he asked me if I taught foreign languages to singers, because he thought my pronunciation was so good, and understanding. Now, I really – I really enjoyed French. I didn't get this love of it from my father, because he died when I was five years old, and we were closer to my mother's family. So, you know, my father was French. I really never, you know, heard French spoken at home. And I learned it from my high school French teacher.

KL: That's how my husband learned his. His family is French, but they don't speak it at home, so he had to learn it at school.

TGM: In fact, the first day in French class there, it was really [09:00] embarrassing to me, because Marie Louise Laviolette was the teacher, was also a Brown alumna. And she was, oh, very much of a stickler. You couldn't think in anything but French. You couldn't breathe anything but French. Because if you did, you had to stay "un fois" after school, and that was 15 minutes. In fact, her classroom was fuller after school hours than it was during school hours for that reason. But she called on me first. She saw my French name and thought, "Here is a French girl who can speak French." And I was supposed to read "*Je suis francais*," and I said, "Jer sew-is fra—" and couldn't finish it. And she – I thought she was going to just drop on the floor. She was shocked. [10:00] So was I. [laughter] But that was one of the experiences. But I learned to love French. And I enjoy all languages anyway. I wish I could speak 52 different languages. I'd still like to study many other languages. But I do believe that the best way to learn a language is to eat it, sleep it, drink it, be in the country where it's spoken. And I think one year, anyway, of

traveling is important. And I think that should be part of everybody's college career. One year of travel. You learn so much. Everything is not done within the walls of the school. In fact, the walls sometimes are hindrances. And when I was teaching, I always felt that. I felt that the walls were in the way. [11:00]

KL: So your first semester, you took French?

TGM: I took French. I also took Italian. Because my mother's parents came from Genoa, Italy, and there again, my grandfather was a businessman, and we – there were not any Italians in Woonsocket. Then, they were mostly Irish, French, Polish. And we were in an area where there lots of Irish and Polish people. Consequently, the only time I ever heard Italian was when they didn't want the kids to understand what they were saying. And it's unfortunate. But you know, Americans in those days looked down their noses at people who spoke a foreign language or spoke with a foreign accent. And the result is, the Americans [12:00] have suffered tremendously because of that terrible attitude. They were turning away something that could have been very valuable to them.

KL: So the first time you took Italian was at Brown?

TGM: Yes. My freshman year. Italian 1-2. And it was taught by a man who originally came from Woonsocket. I know his sisters. He didn't stay at Brown very long, though. He went on to other things. He was still a college professor, as far as I know. But I don't really know where he went.

KL: Did you have to take Bio 1?

TGM: Oh, absolutely. Everybody had to take Biology 1-2 with Magel Wilder. We had this huge lecture room, the Hunter Laboratory. It's now a library, I believe. But we had to go in there [13:00] for the lectures. And one day, Professor Wilder was talking about the human skeleton. And she had one that was mounted on this frame hanging by a little hook. And she picked up one of the legs, and the kneecap fell out, bang, on the floor. Major Wilder jumped back to or three steps, and the whole class just roared their heads off. It was so funny. Then in lab work, I was

one of these finicky people who liked everything to be clean, and I hated the idea of touching these, you know – you don't call them samples. What do you call them?

KL: Specimens?

TGM: Specimens. Thank you, Karen. I hated the idea of touching them, so I used my tools. You know, the dissecting needles, and the scissors, and the clamps, as long as I could without [14:00] getting my fingers into these things, which was absurd, because when it came to dissecting the frog and the fetal pig, of course we had to touch these things. But one day – this was when we were working on the frogs – one of my classmates – somebody who had gone to high school with me, and we've been close friends all these years. She was a premed student, going to be a premed student. So in the lab, when we went in, she opened a crock, you know, to get her frog. And she opened the wrong crock. It was the crock with the live frogs in it, and one jumped right out at her, and was jumping all over the lab, and here we all were, jumping after the frog, trying to catch it. We looked very silly, I'm sure, but we had fun doing it.

KL: Did Ms. Wilder [15:00] – at that point, were you given lectures on sex and hygiene on her?

TGM: Gee, I really don't remember any. I do remember she had several jars with specimens of embryos in them. And the human brain, and all that kind of thing. But the embryos were a revelation to me. But I don't ever remember learning anything much from her, really. It was pretty textbook-y. I think the thing I enjoyed about biology most was drawing in the lab, all the specimens, and the different things we had to do. I liked doing that. And I [always got a good?] mark in that, but when it came to biology itself, I have to say science is not one of my strengths. And [16:00] I think if it had been a different professor, it might appeal to [inaudible]. That was Biology 1-2.

KL: Your freshman year, did you have any classes with the boys?

TGM: Oh no. And I can tell you that in my sophomore year, I wanted to take Spanish, and that would have been beginning Spanish for me. But the only time I could have fit it into my

schedule would have been to go to the Brown campus and be in the class with men. And Dean Margaret Morriss, who was the dean at the time, a very dignified lady, I suppose. But I thought she was quite cold as a dean. And she just would not permit me to take Spanish my sophomore year. I really wanted to make romance languages my major. [17:00] She refused. And I thought, “Well, does she think I’m wild?” Because she said to me, “Why, you’d be the only woman in a class of men!” And I said, “Well, I wouldn’t mind that.” I really wanted to take Spanish. But she wouldn’t permit it. I have grown since then because in those days, you didn’t dare ask questions, and ask why or why not. Today, I would have said to her, “Lady, who’s paying my tuition? And lady, who pays your salary?” Because I think she really deprived me of something. I have never taken Spanish. And I really missed out. And that’s for a silly reason. Golly, they’ve come a long way, baby, because today, students live together. [18:00] Let alone, you know, being in the same classroom, under the watchful eye of the professor, and all the other, you know, classmates.

KL: When was the first time you had boys in a classroom?

TGM: When I was a junior. When you got into your major field, by that time, the classes were combined.

KL: So you would go over to the main campus?

TGM: Most of mine were in Marston Hall, which was the foreign language building in those days. And that’s where the French and Italian classes were. And they were sort of seminar-type classes, small class.

KL: Now, prior to that, when they were sex segregated, would you have classes in Alumni Hall? Or...

TGM: They were in Pembroke Hall, and there was a building called East House, which was [19:00] a wooden building adjacent to Pembroke Hall. And that’s where most of them were. I do remember, however, coming over to Waterman Street, going into a – it was a Greek revival house for psychology. Then I also remember going to George Street for a freshman art course

that I took. You see, I wanted to take advantage of being able to take courses at RSDI, because there was a reciprocal arrangement between the two schools. But in order to do that, I had to take this freshman art appreciation course as a prerequisite. And I am glad I had to take that, because I had this little man named Professor Will[iam Samuel] Taylor, who was a colorful character. [20:00] And certainly did a great job in what he was teaching. And the art classroom, that was in the backyard on George Street. There were several 18th century houses along George Street. And in the backyard of one of those houses was this other little house where the art studio and the art class was happening. And Professor Taylor would be out on George Street frequently to see who would be passing by, and to see who he could nab to come in to be a model for us. He would. [laughter] But I learned a lot. I think the main thing I learned from him was my deep appreciation of American architecture. Eighteenth century houses, [21:00] and others, but they, the 18th century houses, were my favorites. And we had so many fine examples [of that?] here in Providence in Newport. In fact, Rhode Island has very interesting and very wonderful samples of great architecture. [inaudible] And I'm happy that we've awakened to preservation, thanks to Antoinette Downing.

KL: What other classes do you remember taking outside of your major?

TGM: Outside of my major was American history, also European history, psychology, sociology. English, of course. There was a required English composition course freshmen could take. [22:00] That and some literature. [inaudible] literature. There was math, of course, which I took because I had to. But math and sciences, I say, were never attractive to me. I really liked the humanities. Although I have to say, I really think there was a nice division, Western civilization, which we all had to take. A nice assortment of things that really all dovetailed. And in the years when I taught school, that's how I taught. I believe that everything should be interrelated. I believe in interdisciplinary education.

KL: Do you think that having the requirements for the core curriculum was helpful?

TGM: Well, I believe it was helpful. [23:00] I'm not sure that it's the thing that would be right today. Maybe they didn't know any different then. [laughter] I think being able to choose many

things today is an advantage to students, but I do suppose some students are not able to handle that as well as others are. However, I do think I would have become interested in other things. Many other things, although it's difficult for me not to be interested in everything. But I might have wet my feet on a few other things if I had been able to choose more.

KL: What about the gym requirement?

TGM: Oh, the gym requirement. Yeah, there was a gym requirement.

KL: And that started your freshman year, right?

TGM: Oh yes, yes. Very strict requirements. I liked basketball very much, and I loved field hockey. [24:00] I hated to take the time to put on eyeglass guards, and shin guards. And Ms. Bessie Rudd, who was the gym professor, really used to get after me. But the funniest thing was, in my senior year, when I took swimming – of course, we were expected to pass the swimming test, or we were threatened with not graduating if we didn't pass the swimming test. Well, I liked to swim. I enjoyed it very much, because I spent summers at the beach right on the waterfront, for years. But I just could not get up on a diving board, because I got dizzy when I was up at any great height. And I couldn't get up on that diving board and dive into the water. So Bessie Rudd said, "I'll give you 50 cents if you stay at the bottom," [25:00] because she thought I was afraid I would stay at the bottom, which wasn't the case at all. Then I said, "But Miss Rudd, what good would your 50 cents do me if I stayed at the bottom?" She said, "Oh, Teresa, for that, I'd love to let you jump off the edge of the pool." So I passed my swimming test. But I tell you, our swimsuits were really spectacular. Talk about designer clothes. [laughter] They were made of cotton, and they were called tank suits. They had sleeves in them, halfway down the arm. They had – well, I supposed you'd call it [about to neckline?], but when the suit was wet, it just cot pulled down so far that the legs – and there were legs in it – came down to mid-calf, and the neckline came down, mm, quite low. [laughter] So we all had a good time laughing at one another at the pool, [26:00] because we looked a mess. We really did. But we had fun.

KL: So did you join any teams? Or...

TGM: Well, I played basketball, and I played hockey. And then we had two bowling alleys in Sayles Gym. And in spare time, I loved to bowl. Of course, we had to set up our own pins, you know? And the gym would be open on Saturday nights if you requested it, if you wanted to take friends in bowling.

KL: Oh, I didn't know that.

TGM: So once in a while, you know, you take your date in. There were a couple of other couples, and you get together, and have an evening of bowling. And that was kind of nice.

KL: I didn't know that. And in that period of time, what did you have to wear to go bowling? Was it a bloomer outfit, still? Or...

TGM: Well, to go bowling on Saturday nights, [27:00] no. But oh, our gym outfits. They were smashing. They really were. The bloomers, and the midi-blouse. And the bloomers had – you know, who needed bloomers? Gosh. [laughter] They had a stripe down each side of your class color. So the bloomers were brown, and the stripe for mine was yellow, because, you know, that was my class color. And my class flower was the yellow rose. And for bowling, you know, they gave you letters. So for bowling, they gave you BO for bowling, [laughter] to sew on the stripe on your gym bloomers.

KL: BW would have been better.

TGM: Oh, I know. Isn't that terrible? But the BU was for basketball, you see? So they had to make a distinction. [laughter]

KL: [What a scream?]. [28:00] Let's see. Did you join any of the other clubs while you were at Brown? Komians, or –

TGM: No, I wasn't a member of Komians. You see, I commuted from Woonsocket, and that took some time.

KL: Was there a trolley, or a bus, or...

TGM: Well, my freshman year, there was a train that left Woonsocket at 7:32 in the morning, came into Providence, and then we would walk because there were some other girls who traveled with me from Woonsocket. We would walk from the train station, downtown Providence, up the hill. And one day, I have to tell you, one of my friends, Olga Louis Zagraniski, was walking with me. We were walking up Angell Street, and Olga was going to have an [29:00] exam that day, in chemistry, I believe. A black cat ran across the street, across the sidewalk, right in front of us, and Alca turned around, went down the hill, and up Waterman Street. But I kept on going on Angell. [laughter] She was so superstitious, but she said she couldn't take a chance since she was having the exam that day.

KL: So commuting took a lot of time, so you weren't able to join as many things as you would have?

TGM: Not as many things. And then in the evening, you see, there was only one train going back to Woonsocket, and that was at 4:20. In fact, one day, after classes, I was bowling a bit, and I liked it so much I really left kind of late to go get the train. I dashed down Meeting Street, and there's a flight of stone steps in the middle of the hill. And I went tumbling down the stone steps because I was in such a rush, and a lady [30:00] who was walking up the hill screamed, and she said – Olga was with me – and she said, "Is she dead?" [laughter] But I survived, and I made the train. And if you had to stay later, you could use your train tickets for certain buses. There was a New England bus line that went from Providence to Worcester, and it stopped in Woonsocket. And we could do that. Or there was also a UER, United Electric Railways, bus that would go from Providence – the last one was at 11:25 at night. And if I had to stay in for a club meeting, that was the bus I had to take. But it was perfectly safe. You could walk down, wait at that corner near the First Baptist Church until the bus came along on Main Street, and nobody [31:00] bothered you. But today, you couldn't possibly think of doing that.

- End of Track 1 -

Track 2

KL: What was it like to be in a class with the boys? Did they ever give the women any trouble?

TGM: No, they were really very gentlemanly. I was sort of on the quiet, shy side. I was not what you'd call an aggressive person. I had been brought up to be, you know, polite, well mannered. But that was my nature. However, you know, boys would walk me back from class to the Pembroke campus, and that kind of thing. Or offer me a ride. There was this one – I believe this was in our junior year – one boy in particular who would drive me back to the Pembroke campus. And somebody else in the class [01:00] had her eye on him. I was really, you know, fairly popular. And this particular girl got a little group together to waylay me one day as we came out of class, so that she could nab him to invite him to a dance. And she thought that I was going to go to the Pembroke dance with him. And I wasn't, I was going to go to that particular dance with somebody else. And it was all that kind of thing. Maybe the girls gave you more trouble than the boys did, because it was a competitive kind of situation, I guess. And I was not boy crazy. I just enjoyed, you know, socializing with both boys and girls. And I didn't take anything too seriously.

KL: So is that how you'd maybe meet the boys, [02:00] was in the classroom?

TGM: In the classroom, I would say.

KL: So prior to your junior year, how would you meet the Brown men? Would they have mixers, or –

TGM: Well, we had some nice dances. And of course, they had teas in the days when I was here. Which were very nice affairs. And there were opportunities to meet them other than class. But I would say that was the main way. But of course, you didn't – [I wasn't in mixed?] classes until my junior year.

KL: Were there any dress rules for the women students, do you recall?

TGM: Well, yes. Our attire was entirely different from today's, certainly. You were expected to be dressed up. I can remember I had a very nice [03:00] brown suit. You see, my mother believed in buying things of very good quality. And she felt that quality was the greatest economy, and it would be better to have one or two very nice things than to have five or six that weren't as nice. And I had a very good looking brown suit with some blouse changes. And I can remember wearing high heels, pumps to class. I mean, we were dressed up. Right.

KL: And the boys were wearing ties?

TGM: Now, maybe the dorm girls were a little different. Yeah, the boys wore ties and jackets or sweaters and things. There was no sloppy Joe kind of stuff at all.

KL: So you started to say maybe the dorm girls were different?

TGM: Maybe the dorm girls dressed more casually, although I too had, you know, [bock?] saddle shoes and stuff like that. [04:00] But we had to travel through the city. And you know, when people went downtown, [inaudible] you'd have to be [inaudible] [tired too?]. And when the Pembroke girls came over to the Brown campus, they were expected to be dressed well, and nicely. In fact, some have even talked about having to wear white gloves and a hat if they came over to the campus. I can't say that I really remember that. Although we did wear gloves as part of our outfit, always.

KL: It's hard to imagine now. You've seen the way the kids dress. It's so funny.

TGM: Oh yeah. Oh, I know. Yeah. It is.

KL: It's so funny. Did they have any rules about smoking on campus? Or...

TGM: I don't know what the smoking rules were because I was never a smoker. I guess I could say I smoked about six [05:00] cigarettes in my life, because I hated the taste it left in my mouth. And I thought, why should I get my teeth all browned up when I don't even like smoking? However, you know, most of the girls smoked, and in the cafeteria, there would be a group there at any time you went in who would be playing bridge, smoking cigarettes, drinking Coke. And, you know, I tried smoking, but really did not enjoy it. So I did not feel strange, because I was not a smoker. I didn't feel I had to follow the crowd.

KL: So was bridge very popular while you were in school?

TGM: It wasn't with me, because I really have never liked bridge. I have played it, and I even belonged at one time to a bridge group. But I just enjoyed people too much to spend my time concentrating on what you played, [06:00] and Suzie played, and Maggie played, and I played. I'd rather just enjoy the companionship. I'm not a serious card player.

KL: Did commuting students ever stay overnight in a dorm with a friend? Was West House around then?

TGM: West House was around then. I think some students did. I can't recall that I ever stayed overnight. I remember when my sister came here, that she lived in West House for a while until she got a dorm room in either Metcalf or Miller. As a matter of fact, she had to live in a RSDI dorm on Angell Street, one of those nice colonial houses for just a few weeks when she first started living here, until a dorm room right on the campus became [07:00] available.

KL: Now, why did she live on campus and you didn't?

TGM: Well, there was never any thought that I would live at college. And I never – I wish, you know, that I had, because I think it's a very important part of college life. And I think it's an important part of your education, the mingling with classmates, and college mates, and the discussions, and the bull sessions and everything, I think are important. But I never really thought of living here. I felt – my mother, who was a widow, was sacrificing to give me the best

possible education available at the time. And I felt that was sufficient. I'm also happy now that I did not live here, because my mother died in March of my [08:00] senior year, and it meant I had that much more time with her. However, when my sister came here, I felt as a kind of – sort of her mother, as well as her sister, that she should live here, and she wanted to. So she lived here.

TGM: Do you recall if there was any kind of line or demarcation between the city girls and the dorm girls?

KL: Well, I think you didn't, you know, make all your friendships among the dorm girls if you were a city girl. You were inclined to have lunch together in the cafeteria, whereas the dorm girls would go to their dormitory dining homes for their meals. And I also think, you know, after class hours, you just weren't around to mingle with the dorm girls. And I think it was kind of a natural separation [09:00] at the time, though I knew some dorm girls from, you know, being in class with them.

KL: What kind of requirement was there for attending chapel?

TGM: Oh, chapel was every Tuesday. And you were allowed three cuts a semester. It was really not a religious – it was called “chapel,” but it was not a religious kind of program. It was more of a convocation thing, where there would be good speakers that were very stimulating and interesting. And sometimes, the dean would hold fort. And for Dean Morriss, I think the most important thing she contributed to me was she would say over and over again, “But first things first,” and I do think she was right in that. Other than that, I don't believe she had all that much to say. She really did not [10:00] impress me all that much. I thought she was too aloof, and not really concerned about all students. I think she had a little group of favorites whom she protected and watched over, and didn't care much about the others. And I do remember my senior year, when my mother died, she called me into the office and she was sitting at her desk, as if she had a steel rod down her back, because that was her posture all the time. And she said to me, in a very cold kind of way, “I'm sorry you have to grow up overnight.” And I will never forget that, because I think that was, like, just stabbing me in the heart. I knew better than she did that I had to grow up. [11:00] And I was quite grown up anyway. And I was terrified. And I think if she

had been warmer and had extended some sympathy to me, that that would have been much more appropriate and helpful to me.

KL: Was that time, or the time in the Spanish class, was that the only two times you ever met with her?

TGM: No, there was one other time. After my mother died, in those years, people were accustomed to, you know, wearing black and white, and dark stockings during a mourning period. And I had black and white dresses, and the shade of stocking at the time was called “gun metal.” It was kind of a charcoal gray [inaudible]. And as it was getting close to commencement time, Dean Morriss called me into her office again, and she told me I could not wear those stockings [12:00] in the commencement procession. And I said that would not be a problem. You see, we were required to buy the same shade of stocking, all the same girls, in the bookstore. And that’s what she was informing me of. But that was no problem to me. But she had a strange way, I thought, of approaching me, at least.

KL: She wasn’t a people person, in other words.

TGM: I don’t feel that she was, no. I think she was very impressed, self-impressed. And I think that was kind of too bad, because I do believe a dean ought to be a friend as well as a mentor.

KL: Did you ever meet with any of the other deans to talk about careers? Or, you know, just general counseling?

TGM: [13:00]1No, I don’t remember that I ever did. I didn’t know of any counseling that was available to me anyway. As a matter of fact, I know one classmate who was sent by, I don’t know who, to a psychiatrist who did some counseling here. But I didn’t know of any other counseling other than that particular incident. One of my classmates.

KL: When it came to preparing for a career, you went through and you were still determined to become a teacher?

TGM: Oh, that? I really had my heart set on that. Then when my mother died, that kind of changed things for just a short time, because my mother was in a family business that had been started by her father. It was a very large business, very good business. [14:00] And she was in it with four brothers. One by the time I graduated had sold out, and I felt my mother had worked so hard that it was my duty to try to take her place.

KL: What kind of business was this?

TGM: Well, it was a big wholesale fruit and produce business. Very big business. There were something like eight, nine trucks. And so I did that, and I managed the office end of things for three years. But the call to teach was always there, beckoning me. And not only that, I was the kid, you see, in the business. I was the little girl in the business with these uncles. And [15:00] I began to feel that it wasn't the place for me to stay. And my mother would not have wanted it to be the place for me to stay. She had invested too much in the way of hopes and aspirations and opportunities for me to just remain there. So after three years, I made break, and went into teaching. And I taught at the high school, five years at Woonsocket High, from which I had graduated in 1935. And it was funny, while I was teaching there, I was really not much older than most of the students I had, because I did have seniors, too. And there were, you know, a few little boys who were growing up, [16:00] and would spend their time flirting, or admiring the clothes I wore, and things like that. But I really loved teaching, and never had any problem with discipline. We had interesting classes. In fact, any time my principle came into, you know, evaluate me – of course, this was unannounced, always – and he would come in frequently – he was always impressed by the socialized recitations I would have, because I felt that the students ought to be involved. I wasn't the only one who should be talking, and asking questions, but they should ask the questions of one another, and they should do some talking with one another, too, as well as with me. And he always liked that kind of thing. Maybe that's why he came in frequently. He said he found it stimulating. [17:00]

KL: How did you find out about the job in the high school? Did you just call them up? Or...

TGM: No. I had kind of – well, as I say, that call to teach always beckoned me. And I just applied for a job. And in those days, there were openings. And in those days, one who taught at the high school level had to have had a major in a discipline, and had to have gone to a liberal arts college. You could not get a job at the high school level then if you had gone to a teacher's college. So I mean, they all knew me. They had known me as a student. And I was always a good student in high school, and well, there seemed to be no problem getting a job. [18:00] And I taught foreign languages and history for a while. I enjoyed it very much.

KL: To digress a bit, when you were at Pembroke, did they ever have any, say, convocation speakers on various careers? Or was just the whole career notion basically ignored, as you recall?

TGM: As I recall – or maybe it was because I was so set in my own mind about the career I would pursue – I don't recall any sessions like that. Maybe there were some, but maybe it didn't affect me, or I thought it wouldn't affect me. And maybe I was just not [so attended to?]. I don't know. But there really wasn't a lot of career counseling and so forth. I mean, guidance, per se, too, had not – at the high school level, there was a dean of girls and a dean of boys, but there were no guidance counselors or anything like that. It was the dean of girls. You know, I always had to do with, and she was my algebra teacher anyway, a couple of years.

KL: Oh, I forgot what I was going to say. Was there, as you recall, any – how did the students interact with the faculty? Was it the same kind of level of rapport that goes on now? Or was it different?

TGM: Well, I imagine now there's a great deal more of [core faculty?] than there used to be. I think maybe the professors who taught the courses which I enrolled in didn't extend themselves. It was really [20:00] a lecture type situation always until a couple of seminar classes my junior and senior year. But I think there wasn't a great opportunity to mingle too much with the professors, actually. And maybe because I was a commuter, that had a lot to do with it too, you know? And as I say, I was a little on the quiet, shy side. And I was not one to go, you know, barging up to a professor readily. [inaudible]

KL: Why don't you talk about the Italian club story?

TGM: Well I was a member of the Italian club. I was also a member of the French club too, and the Alliance Francais at the time. [21:00] But one particular incident in the Italian club kind of floored me and surprised me very much. I was a junior at the time, and I was in an Italian class, which was a seminar type class, a professor [Alfonso] DiSalvio was the professor. He told me one day at the end of class that he wanted to see me that afternoon in his office. And I couldn't imagine. I frightened easily, I guess. And I was scared. And I thought, "What does he want to see me about?" Well, I reported, as he asked me to that afternoon, to his office, and he told me that he understood that a group of Brown boys planned to nominate me to be president of the Italian club, and that I was to decline [22:00] the nomination. And I thought immediately, "My goodness, what is he talking about?" Because I had no knowledge of this plan on the part of the boys. And I was terrified, because, I thought to myself, "My goodness, this professor will flunk me if I don't do what he's telling me to do now." So I didn't say a word about it to anybody, and sure enough, at the next Italian club meeting, nominations were in order, and one of the Brown boys nominated me for the office of the president. And I declined, and I didn't explain why because I was afraid to. But Professor DiSalvio told me that afternoon in his office that he wanted Miss so-and-so who was another female student in the class [23:00] to be the president. He was very friendly with her family. Practically lived at her house. He was there for dinner all the time and everything. And so I declined the nomination, because he frightened me, and I thought he certainly would flunk me. And what recourse would I have? And this was one of my majors. And, you know, major classes. So that was a very disappointing experience for me, because I think it was certainly dirty politics, and just nothing that I would ever think of doing. And I wouldn't want to be involved in anything [after that?].

KL: Were the only female professors you had Miss Rudd and Miss Wilder?

TGM: Let me think. Yes. Well, there was one who taught public speaking. [24:00] I have difficulty recalling her name.

KL: Was that Janice Vanderwater?

TGM: Janice Vanderwater. Right.

KL: And the women were required to take that, right?

TGM: Yes, the women were required to take that, and I remember we had to, each one of us had to cut a record.

KL: Really?

TGM: Yes. We did. Mm-hmm.

KL: So you could listen to yourself?

TGM: So we could listen to ourselves. Right. And that was good. We had had public speaking as students in high school. And while I said I was on the quiet, shy side, it was something we had to do, and so I did it and did as well as I could.

KL: In Janice's class, was it more emphasis on diction? Or was it on making speeches?

TGM: It probably was on the delivery and the diction, and your presentation more than the essence of the speech itself, really.

KL: Was there any problems with [25:00] say, women from Cranston trying to get rid of their Cranston accent?

TGM: Well, I don't recall that. But there were several people from Cranston. And of course, there were others who came from outside Rhode Island, and we're always laughed for our Rhode Island-ese. But I was always very conscious of speech, anyway. Being interested in languages made me that way. And in my teaching, I always felt that I tried to teach good speech to all my

pupils, my students, because it's part of everything. I think it was good to have that course. If you call it a course. I don't remember that.

KL: Was it anything you got credit for? Or was it just something extra?

TGM: I think it was something extra. It was a required thing, but it was an extra thing, I believe.
[26:00]

KL: So do you think that – was there anyone here, a faculty or whoever, whom you would call a role model?

TGM: No, I can't say really that there was any particular faculty member that I felt I wanted to pattern myself after. I would say that Eva Mooar struck me as the warmest, most approachable, most exemplary person, perhaps, because she always appeared to take an interest in every student.

KL: So even after you were admitted, you would meet her?

TGM: Yes. You know, on just passing basis, but she always took the time to be pleasant and to talk.

KL: When [27:00] – who would you say – at that period of life, who was the biggest influence on you? Was it your mother?

TGM: Well, my mother was a great influence on me. She was my mother, but she was my friend, too. She was not a domineering kind of person. She was not authoritarian. She was warm, but she was a very bright woman. In fact, my grandfather wanted her in his business after my father died because he said she was his right-hand man.

KL: An Italian man said that? That's amazing.

TGM: As a matter of fact, my mother, of course, had me, and my sister, who was one and a half when my father died – [28:00] my grandfather wanted her in his business so badly, he said that he would build a nursery off the office so that she would go there to work for him.

KL: That's amazing.

TGM: That's how forward-looking that man was, too.

KL: I guess so.

TGM: Right.

KL: And you said he was from Genoa?

TGM: Yes, he was.

KL: That's amazing. Because you always –

TGM: He had almost no formal education, but he was an avid reader, and he was one of these people who did not speak with an accent, a foreign accent. He settled in Boston when he first came here, and that's where he met my grandmother. They did not know each other in Genoa. They both came.

KL: So they had to come to America to meet each other. [laughter]

TGM: They met in Boston. They met in Boston. But my grandfather was a very progressive [29:00] person, excellent business mind. And yes, my mother was a great influence. She was somebody that everybody admired. You couldn't help but admire her. But she was not restrictive in that she controlled me or my sister. She wanted us to be what we were meant to be. And she helped us in that direction.

KL: Do you remember [all your classes?] sophomore [mass?]?

TGM: Yes, I remember it over there on the Pembroke Field, which is no longer the Pembroke Field. It was the Pembroke Fieldhouse, and then when the merger took place, the Brown Club immediately snapped up the Pembroke Fieldhouse for their [30:00] headquarters.

KL: It's still called the Pembroke Fieldhouse, though.

TGM: Is it? Oh, I didn't know.

KL: Yeah. That's what everybody –

TGM: – didn't know what to call it.

KL: Yeah. That's one of the few things, when I'm talking to the kids, I say [the sophomore mass took place?] at the Pembroke Fieldhouse. And they immediately – OK. You know, they get that right away, so –

TGM: And I do remember Otto, the director of [the hall?]. I was not particularly inclined to rhythmic dancing. But I did my part, and I really can't remember what my role in it was. It was just one of those things you had to do.

KL: Did you practice for it outside of gym class? Or was it part of gym class? In other words –

TGM: I don't recall. I really don't recall whether it was part of gym class, or whether it was an extra thing.

KL: Did you have to make your own costumes? Or did they provide those?

TGM: I don't remember that either. Most of them [31:00] were kind of – I really don't even remember what I wore. It was pro–

- End of Track 2 -

Track 3

KL: What else do we have? Oh, Ivy Day. Was there an Ivy Day?

TGM: Well, there was an Ivy Day. I was never chosen to be, you know, an Ivy Chain bearer.

KL: How was one chosen?

TGM: – participant. I really don't know how one was chosen. That may have been a political kind of thing, I imagine. So then I was never, you know, that closely involved. Watched it a lot. It was all very pretty and very nice, and all these traditional things were – well, they were just the thing in those days. And we all took it, you know, as a matter of course, and enjoyed those things. I think it's too bad that some of the traditions have gone out of vogue. On the other [01:00] hand, they can be restrictive and stultifying, I think, too. And they're not the most important things, anyway. They may have boosted the egos of some of those who were chosen to participate, so maybe they did some good that way.

KL: So did all the seniors get caps and gowns at the beginning of the year?

TGM: Oh yes. Every senior had to buy a cap and gown. And they were really beautiful gowns. They were made of wool [shally?]. There was a great deal of fullness to them. And the caps were very nice caps, with a hard shell that fit over your head. And there was a cap and gown room in lower Alumni Hall, where all the caps and gowns were stored. Everybody had a place [for hers?]. And the seniors had to [02:00] wear them to chapel every Tuesday. And the seniors would march in as a body in their caps and gowns, while the rest of the student body, freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, stood while the seniors marched into their assigned places in the auditorium. That, I think, was a very nice thing. I really do. I think it was nice to watch the seniors come in that way. And I thought it was nice when I was a senior to be doing that. It

added a special touch, I thought, to chapel, which was really, you know, a convocation type thing.

KL: Did your senior year, for May Day, did your freshman sister make you a basket?

TGM: Oh yes. [Very?]. My freshman sister was [03:00] very nice. She transferred from Pembroke, though, to Radcliffe, after – I can't recall [inaudible] – no, it must have been [inaudible]. Oh, but she did. She was always giving me little presents and things. We had a very nice relationship. And my relationship with my senior sister was very pleasant and very nice.

[gap in audio from 03:26 to 14:54]

TGM: Oh, my daughters were mortified. They said, “Oh, we're so ashamed of you wearing it.” But it's [15:00] in perfect condition, and everybody was admiring it.

KL: Well, you go to all of those antique clothing stores on Thayer Street, and that's the kind of stuff they sell.

TGM: Well, this is a beautiful, beautiful [inaudible]. It really is. And, you know, it's been very serviceable. Not only to me, but lots of people on the campus. [laughter]

KL: Well, I'll keep that in mind if I never need it. [laughter]

TGM: When you need one, you know where to get it, right, yeah.

KL: Well, yeah, let's move back forward, and we'll talk about... So you got married, and you quit your job. And you said you moved. Where did you move to?

TGM: We moved to East Providence, to the Riverside section. I quit my job in June, my wedding was June 28th. But my husband to be decided that he was not going to live in an apartment and pay somebody else rent. He was going to own his own home. [16:00] So in April

of that year, he bought a very nice colonial house. Very pretty house. I always used to say that house really could [sing?]. It was so pleasant and so nice. And we lived in that, and went there as a bride and groom. And [Mary Beth?]. Let's see, we were married in June of 1947, and Mary Beth was born on July 23rd, 1948. Our first little child. And then, he had been called back into the army, and he was in the army [of occupation?]. Off to Germany he had to go. And I thought, "Ooh, we have our own home, our own little child, and we're going to a part of the world that I don't even know." And we went to [17:00] Germany. I was terrified. Oh, these people were killing us off right and left, and we were coming here to live with them. But after about six months, I decided that my own attitude was really very bad. And I had a talk with myself about that. [laughter] And I had to say that it was a very valuable experience. We lived there for five years, and our other two daughters, Christine and Kathy. They were born while living there. [inaudible] Their birth certificates are in German. And the experience of living there and making friends among the German people was a very valuable one. And the greatest lesson I learned from living abroad is that people are the same the world over. They have the same hopes [18:00] and aspirations. They want to be healthy and happy, and friendly, and live in peace. And it's unfortunate that some of these deranged leaders just ruin lives for so many people.

KL: Did you German when you went over there?

TGM: No, I didn't. But because I love languages so much, I really picked it up. Now, it isn't high German, but I could converse well, and I could understand everything. That all came about – maybe it started in our freshman year, traveling on the train, because my friend Olga and another classmate who was in the sciences had to take German. And I would hear the German lessons, even though I didn't know German. But maybe I started to pick it up then. However, [19:00] at one point in Germany, we were living in Germany, we had housemates, you know? And one of the housemates that worked for us at one time was a middle-aged woman. She used to bleach her hair every [morning?]. She was not pretty, but she had a wonderful smile. She could not speak a word of English, and I did not know German at the time. But I knew that with [Maria's?] smile and my attitude, we could get along very well. And we did. And it was then that I started to learn to speak German, because she couldn't understand me. Yet somehow, I began to talk German, and Maria used to – I told her when she worked for us that if she wanted to

smoke, I would like her to just sit down and enjoy her cigarette, because the housemate we had before that almost burned us out of [20:00] house and home. She would smoke and work, and leave her cigarettes here and there, and we had burn marks all over the place. And so Maria wanted only one cigarette a day after lunch, and she would pick Mary Beth up. Now, Mary Beth was just a year and a half at the time. She would sit Mary Beth on her lap, and Maria had the prettiest, pink wooden matches. She would light her cigarette, and give Mary Beth [burnt match?]. Mary Beth began to smoke the match, with [Maria?]. And Mary Beth thought smoking was the greatest thing. [laughter] She loved to smoke and to see people smoking. And she used to tease me because she would say, “Mommy, all the ladies smoke. Why don’t you smoke?” And one day, I said, “Do you really want Mommy to smoke?” Got a cigarette, lit it, sat down [21:00] in the living room chair, and Mary Beth was standing in front of me, glaring at me. And after about two puff, she said, “It’s OK, Mommy. You don’t have to smoke anymore.” I guess I didn’t look like her mother to her then, but she was satisfied. However, she continued her habit of smoking. [laughter] And today, none of my daughters smoke. They don’t like it. And it’s strange, because she was really hung up on smoking. Anybody who came to visit, light up a cigarette, Mary Beth would join them with the match, smoking.

KL: [laughter] That’s funny.

TGM: Oh yes. One day, too, we used to go to this [lovely?] gift shop [inaudible] in Nuremberg frequently. It was a place that’s all china, and Hummel figurines, and giftware, and all that kind of thing. And the salesladies in there just adored Mary Beth. They thought she was a little doll. [22:00] And the minute we’d get to the door, somebody would grab Mary Beth and carry her around the store. And one day, when we went in, they had a little round, large round table full of [inaudible] gift items. And they told Mary Beth to choose anything she wanted from that table. And I kept hoping to myself that she would choose a Hummel figurine or something like that, or a piece of crystal. [inaudible] Mary Beth saw this brass cigarette holder. It was a flat, compact type thing that you could carry in your purse, and it was opened out, and it was filled with artificial cigarettes. And Mary Beth picked an artificial cigarette, and that was her choice. [laughter] She would never live it down.

KL: [laughter] [23:00] That's so funny.

TGM: [inaudible] I know. So it was a wonderful experience living there, and that's where I learned to speak German.

KL: So did you make friends with other Americans who were there, or German people, or both?

TGM: Oh yes, because the Americans all lived together in apartment houses. And we, you know, made a lot of friends among the Americans. But we also made a lot of friends among the Germans. And it was very pleasant and nice, and we continued corresponding with them a long, long time after we came home. And then at one point, I believe the pressure was on them. If they began to get [an un-American?] feeling over there.

KL: Oh really?

TGM: Mm. And anyway, a couple of them got married [inaudible]. But I used to go to a beauty shop that was run by this woman [24:00] whose mother had been in New York, and then when her husband died, she took all her children back to Germany with her. And they stayed there after [inaudible]. But this lady who owned the beauty shop that I used to go to, you know, spoke very good English. But they lived in Germany, and they had their German ways. And we became very good friends with one of the daughters who was there. A couple of times, we went on trips in Germany. We took her with us. Because our children came with us, we didn't dare leave our children behind [inaudible] tell you why. My husband and I, every now and then, had to engage in these evacuation drills, [25:00] all Americans had to engage in. And we just felt we didn't want to leave our children [any time?]. So they always [came with us?]. They were fortunate, though, because, you know, Nuremberg was known as the toy capital of the world. And we were able to buy some very nice toys for them, which they still have after all these years. And I mean, they're heirlooms. They really are. When it came time to divide up all these things, they did it. I said, "I don't want to have anything to do with it. The three of you fit together," and just split them up. Very nice, peaceable kind of way. Everything has to be amicable [inaudible]. And they did. And they had, [26:00] oh, a collection. One of the nicest things, I think, is a collection of

handmade storybook character dolls. The three bears, Snow White and the seven dwarfs, they are just beautiful things. They really are. And I used to bring all this stuff to school when I was teaching, so that the children I was working with could have the advantage of these, too. And we had lots of world affairs when I was teaching so that I could bring in many of the things that I had collected. And the children had had fathers who had been involved [in the war, World War II?], and had sibling [inaudible]. So that was a nice experience. And when we came home, our oldest daughter, our three daughters, Mary Beth, [27:00] who was the oldest, was ready to go to first grade. She had gone to kindergarten [inaudible]. And Christine was three, and Kathy was six months old when we came back to America. Mary Beth had, and Christine did too, some nice little dirndl dresses that were so popular in Bavaria. In fact, the first time Mary Beth put one on, she was real little, Mary Beth was all we had, she refused to take it off. [laughter] She loved it so much. Once we got back to America, she wouldn't be seen in a dirndl. And she had learned to speak German well, and I tried to keep it up, and she didn't want to be different from the other kids. And she lost all that. Christine, on the other hand, would wear the dirndls all the time, because everybody noticed her when she had the dirndls on. So that's the difference. [28:00] You know, in children.

KL: I think sometimes younger children are more comfortable being noticed than oldest children.

TGM: They are.

KL: My sister and I are that way. She's the actor in the family, and I'm much more – I'd rather stay in the background and work on the stage set, you know? So I think it may be a function of birth order.

TGM: And then Kathy, who was a little bit of a tomboy when she was little, she's the only one who ever wore out clothes, because Mary Beth and Christine never did, loved to wear the lederhosen [they had bought?].

- End of Track 3 -

Track 4

TGM: But the first student teacher I had, I prevailed upon them to take some time to teach in the American schools. She went to – well, it was – let me see, where was she? She couldn't get Germany because [inaudible]. Was it Greenland? Yeah. But then every weekend, they would transport them to the mainland. So that worked out kind of nice. But she thoroughly enjoyed it, too. And then I think she went to Japan.

KL: So you were going to say how you got drafted to teach in Germany?

TGM: Oh yes. While we were living in Germany, I never told anybody that I was a teacher. And they just about drafted me to teach in the American [Independent?] Schools there. At first, we were living [01:00] in a little village called Obereichenbach. And that was about nine miles out of the town [bonds spot, with the school bonds?]. And I thought my excuse can be I don't have transportation. And I said to them initially, "You know, I'm a secondary [level?] teacher. And this would be teaching at the elementary level." They wanted me to do it, and I said, "I just think children are too precious, and reading is too important, and I'm not going to damage any child." So I kept refusing to go. But they would not take no for an answer. And one morning, when they called me to come in to sub, I said, "I have no transportation." Well, before you know it, the MP Jeep was at the door. And I hadn't even gotten dressed, but I had to dress in a hurry, and I felt, [well, I can't?]. [02:00] Probably put me in the clinker if I don't go. So I got in the Jeep, the driver picked up the phone and said, "I just picked up Mrs. Mellone," and I thought, "That sounded terrible to me. And what am I picked up for?" [laughter] But anyway, they finally tricked me. It got to be the week before Christmas that year, and they said the teacher was on leave with her husband. Well, I didn't know it. I said only for that week. Because I wanted to be home with my own little family. I felt my place was there, and that's where I wanted to be. I didn't know, but they had fired that teacher. And so I was kind of stuck, and I'm not the kind of person who would, you know, not be loyal, and never show up, and desert these children. And they kept telling me [03:00] they were, you know, looking for a replacement. Well, they weren't looking for a replacement. And one time, I had a strange experience. I had grades four, five, six, seven, and eight all in one class. And the two girls in grade six, the father of one of the girls was the school officer. And his office was right in that building [with the?] classrooms. And of

course, I had to give some independent work to these children in order to give some individual attention to others. And one day, this school officer's daughter was simply copying everything from the other girl, sixth grade. And I objected to it. And, you know, [04:00] reprimanded her for it. Well, she was the school officer's daughter, so she slammed her desk cover down, slammed the French door to our classroom until I thought the glass would be on the floor, and marched down to Daddy's office to tell him. Well, the next morning, that was the end of Patty for the day. I didn't see her anymore. The next morning, when I arrived at the school, Patty's mother was there waiting for me, and she laid me out in lavender. And I just listened very politely, very – I was completely undisturbed and unshaken. And I simply said when she finished, I said, "You know, I feel very sorry. I really feel sad that you've missed the whole point [5:00] of what I was trying to do with Patty, and that Patty is the one who's lost out. And I feel very sad about that." Well, after that, there was not enough that they could do for me. I had to be an officer in the PTA, and I had to be this, and I had to be that. Meanwhile, I was hoping they were getting a replacement for me, which they never did.

Then the following year, would I please take third grade, just mornings until 11:30, until they got a teacher? Well, I could never say no, I'm afraid, and so I did. Well, after three weeks, would I take the second and third, fourth with it until they found a replacement? Well, this went on and on and on. And I used to say, "Look, I'm not going to show up tomorrow morning. [06:00] You tell me you're looking for a replacement." Well, they never did get one. And by that time, the principal – I had taught under three different principals there. One was a man, and there were two women. One of the women had come from a private school in Dallas, Texas. Mr. Hicks had come from someplace in Massachusetts. But this third one, this Mildred [Purdon?] had been a critic in the school of education at the University of Michigan. And she was an absolutely fantastic organizer. She was the kind who wouldn't warn you. I can remember Christmas assembly, going into that auditorium, sitting with my class, and all of the sudden, she says, "Teresa, would you play the piano for us [07:00] and lead us in some Christmas songs?" Totally unrehearsed, unprepared, but I did. Anyway, in the middle of the year, she was transferred to Kaiserslautern, where they had built a huge new school. And she was so outstanding that I could see why they wanted her there to set it all up. Well, she recommended me as her replacement as principal of the Ansbach School, unknown to me. And then, when they approached me, I turned it down because I had just become pregnant with our third daughter. And in those days, you

didn't do things like that. Today, it would have been different. So I turned down that opportunity to be principal of the school. And but I have to say, I enjoyed every minute of it. And it was [08:00] interesting too, to work with children who had traveled all over the world, to, you know, hear what they had to say, and they were thinking. And even to listen in on some of the things that they had been taught, too. It was fascinating. And if there was ever any, you know, non-graded teaching, that was it. It was challenging to say the least. But it was a very valuable experience. And I worked like a dog. I always do, anyway. But I learned a lot, and enjoyed it tremendously.

Then after we were home, back in the United States, after five years over there, they wanted to keep my husband longer. But I thought, if we needed to be repatriated after that length of time, and our children did not know America, really. But after three girls [09:00] were all in school, I went back to teaching. And taught for 24 years in Barrington. And then retired. But I was fortune-

-End of Track 4 -

Track 5

KL: – to Teresa Mellone, April 2nd, 1990, in the John Hay Library. Let's start where we ended off, and talk about when you came back to the States, and what you were doing then.

TGM: Well, when we came back to the United States from Germany, my children were – the youngest one was too young for me to go back to teaching. So I waited until all three were in school. And when they were all in school, full day, there was a shortage of teachers at the time, but that call to teach lived with me from the day I was born, I believe. And so I went back to teaching. And my thinking as that if I spent day in and day out teaching in high school, that I wouldn't be fair [01:00] to my own children, because they were young, little. And furthermore, the hours would not work out too well. So I taught at the elementary level, second grade level. It was an opening at the second grade level, and I supposedly was handpicked by one particular principal, so I didn't really have a lot of choice, because that was the only opening in his school. I taught there at Primrose Hill School in Barrington. And just loved it. I really and truly enjoyed being, what I hope was a people-maker, and not a people-breaker. And children to me were very

precious, very important. The whole future of America. And I was on a mission, I guess, being a teacher. I thoroughly [02:00] enjoyed that, went along, raising my family, and I decided that I wanted to continue studying, too, because I'd always done that. In fact, when I came back from Germany, the first thing I wanted to do was see that my certificate was up to date. So I went to the state department of education and asked if I could take a course in international relations after just returning from living abroad. And the answer was no, I couldn't get any credit for that toward keeping up my teaching certificate. So I had to take something in reading. And of course, with my linguistic background, that was totally unnecessary. And the whole content of the course I did take was absolutely [03:00] worthless, I thought, to me. In fact, at the end of the course I took, I felt if you had a balloon and you stick a pin in it, what do you have left? And that's how I felt about that entire course. And this was a course that was taught by a woman on the faculty at Rhode Island College. She herself had gone to Rhode Island College, but then got her doctorate at the Harvard School of Education. And she thought she knew everything. But there was something about anybody who had taken undergraduate work in a liberal arts college that she just couldn't seem to tolerate. Anyway, I also had to take a math course that was taught by an elementary school principal, who objected if, at the [04:00] mid break in the class, people were allowed to go to the, you know, lavatory, which was three flights down. And if anybody came back late, he embarrassed them when they came in the door and told them they were late and everything, and it was just horrendous. I thought after the courses I had had at Brown, I couldn't imagine that this is what they were dishing out at this so-called teacher's college, where you had to take courses in order to keep up your certificate.

However, I obliged. And then I thought, well, now, look, I have taken courses here, there, and everywhere. What's left for me? I really should enroll in a master's program. And I really wanted to do it at Brown, because I felt I would get more out of it. [05:00] I did take one master's course at Rhode Island College. And the instructor was a man from Boston who was an assistant superintendent in charge of several elementary schools there. And I spoke to him about it, and he said, "If you're going to be around in Rhode Island for ten more years, go to Rhode Island college. You know, politically speaking, this is how it works." He said, "But I'm with you. I'm a liberal arts man myself. Get it at Brown." That's all I needed, and I pursued that, and was fortunate enough to be enrolled in the master's program here, and it was a straight master's degree. And I had to write a thesis for which there was no credit, and I had to take an

examination in a foreign language to prove that I could do research in a [06:00] foreign language before I was admitted to the master's program.

I thoroughly enjoyed that. It was hard work, because I was teaching full time, I was raising my family, and I was keeping up with coursework. And then at one point, my husband had to go off to Korea for – it was 14 months that he was there. So it was difficult, but we managed beautifully. And I don't believe anybody was the worse for it. Anyway, I continued to teach at the elementary level, and then a new school was built in Barrington called the [Sowam?] School, and I was named head teacher there. I always enjoyed working, and always worked hard, always worked honestly [07:00] and conscientiously, thinking always of the benefit to the children for whom schools do exist. But I didn't enjoy working under the strain that the principal of that school put on me. He was really kind of a phony. He was one of these political appointees. I was doing all the work, and I was getting an awful lot of abuse because all the people on that faculty respected me, and they would come to me for help, and for my opinion, for my assistance. And of course, that did not set well with him. So little by little, he would try to drive a wedge between every member of that faculty and me. And I asked Thanksgiving time [08:00] to please get me out of there. Several of his practices were totally unethical, in my estimation. One was that he insisted I be in the office every morning at nine o'clock to collect hot lunch money, to count it, but not to fill out any of the forms that had to go to the state in reporting this lunch money. I did it for one week, and I realized something was not quite right. And I said to him at the end of the week, "I do believe my professional duty is with those children in my classroom, and with the student teacher who has been assigned to me. I believe you could have the office clerk count this money." And I refused to do it any longer, and I found out that, yes, he was stealing money, [09:00] and of course, I would have been held responsible for it, because he was filling out the forms, even though I had counted the money. So I just didn't do that anymore, and I guess maybe I was bold in standing up for what I believed was right, and for refusing to do anything that I felt was ethically not correct.

Well, I got out of there after a year. They would not allow me to move out until the end of that year, because it would have been, you know, a black mark on the administration. And their faces would have been red for having made the wrong appointment to the principalship. But at the end of the year, I said, "Please keep this title of head teacher, assistant principal. And the measly [10:00] \$400 that goes with it, I don't want any part of it because I refuse to be party to

some things that are going on here that I believe are not aboveboard.” So I went back to Primrose Hill School, and then shortly after I went back there, I was offered a position at Rhode Island College with the rank of associate professor teaching at the Henry Barnard School, which was their demonstration school for teachers. It was a very tempting offer, and it would have been nice to go. But I had a family. I would have had to leave home before 7:30 in the morning, and my little children would not have been off to school. In the meantime, my husband would have [11:00] gone to work, and I would have had to go to meetings every day at Henry Barnard after school, and wouldn’t have been home until 5:30 or 6:00. And I felt I just would not consider doing that to my family. So I did not accept that offer. I stayed at Primrose and kept on teaching. And the longer I taught, the more I realized I wanted to give my all to those children, and many administrative things that came about that were, well, not exactly orders, but we were supposed to do them, I just refused to do. For example, one year, the school department purchased a new set of what they called Basal readers. I object [12:00] to calling a book a “reading book,” because even a piece of paper with words on it is a reader. And I felt that children should be exposed to lots of different kinds of reading, and not just the style of one Basal reader. Not the content of one Basal reader either. You know, the best libraries in the world are full of old books, and they are of great value. And even though we had some older books in the classroom, I wanted children to be able to use all kinds of books, and to get something out of everything they read. We were told to clear all books out of our classrooms, and have only that new set of so-called Basal readers [13:00] in the classroom. I refused. My room did not have enough shelf space, counter space, cupboard space for all the books that I had in there, and I refused to move any of them out of the classroom. Because I felt my approach to reading was different. I capitalized on the interest of the students. For example, if a child came in and told something funny about, well, say, seeing a squirrel on the way to school, and what the squirrel is doing, I’d say, “You know, I know where there are some good squirrel stories.” And I’d lead them to a book where they could follow up on that. And we could do all kinds of things. I always believed in the interdisciplinary approach, and I felt everything we did in reading had to be hooked up with spelling, [14:00] and writing, and artwork, even science work. And we made the connection. And I taught children how to make the connection between all of these things. And we included everything in everything we did, and related it all to their own lives. And we tried to make things very interesting that way.

I also believed in a lot of writing. I used to tell children they knew how to talk with their mouths, but I wanted them to pick up a pencil and talk through the pencil on paper. And I devised this special thing that I called a “date paper.” Everybody uses a calendar. And everybody needs to know how to spell the names of the days of the week. Everybody needs to know something about capitalization, and punctuation [15:00] marks. And we related the calendar to math, because a calendar is simply counting. And all these things went into it. And we started with writing out the date on this paper, then following up with a weather report. We built up a huge weather vocabulary, because it was important to know the difference between cold and cool, or hot and warm. And everybody talks about the weather, you hear about it on television and radio, and it was an easy thing to get going. Certainly, there are different ways of saying, you know, the sun is shining, it’s a fair day. Shining, for instance, you know, you drop the “e” off the word “shine” and you put “-ing,” so many, many linguistic things went into this. [16:00] And I pointed them all out to the children, and they were learning a lot of things all together at one time. Then after the weather, they could write anything they wanted to write about. It could be something that was true, it could be a story they made up. But they had to take those two dictionaries out of their desks, and use them. If they were stuck on a word and could prove to me they had used their dictionary, I would help them, because they would keep a spelling slip in their dictionary.

This proved to be a wonderful tool. It really taught them how to write a great deal, how to put their thoughts down on paper, and how to express their inner thoughts. It was a good writing tool, but it was a wonderful [17:00] guidance tool, because I learned a lot about these children through what they wrote. For instance, one little girl in class for a while had just clammed up so, and she was very sad. I was concerned about her, because she had been very happy, smiley little child. But on one of these date papers, she wrote that her baby sister was in the hospital, and was dying. And so that made me aware of something she couldn’t tell me orally. So that proved to be a wonderful thing.

One of the student teachers I had taught in another school in town, and her principal forbid her to use that so-called date paper with her class. He was only interested in knowing what page in the workbook [18:00] the kids were on. And I think it’s so unfortunate that sometimes, teachers are not able to carry out some of the things they know work well with the

children they're responsible for. Be that as it may, I went my merry way, but had learned to kind of, well, I guess, shut my eyes and ears to some things, and just do my best with the children.

One thing I really and truly fought for a great deal was to include parents in the education of their children. I kept being rebuffed. I couldn't have the parents come in when I wanted to. We used to have a Wednesday afternoon free for conferences, and I begged and begged for such a long time to have what I called a group conference, [19:00] where I could invite the parents to come in, and I could talk to them about well, the achievement tests their children had just taken. Let them know what's involved in these things, and how I would use them not to label their children. I also wanted to talk to them about our daily work, and to invite their questions, and to demonstrate to them the progress we were making, and what I hoped to achieve with their children. Well, after much begging and begging, I finally got permission to have the parents come on one Wednesday afternoon, and it was the most productive thing. And they really enjoyed it, and asked for more of it. But of course, the administration [20:00] didn't look kindly on it as a regular thing. And some of the other teachers, who felt very insecure, thought they didn't want to go through this kind of thing. So that was the end of that. I also – I went back to teaching in 1958, and I used to go into the principal I was working for at the time and say, “When will we ever smarten u–”

- End of Track 5 -

Track 6

KL: This is Karen Lamoree interviewing Teresa Mellone, class of 1930, on April 2nd, 1990, a continuation of tape two. You were talking about 15 kids in a class?

TGM: Yes. I said when will we smarten up and have 15 children in a class, at least in kindergarten and first grade level, to give each child the opportunity that the child is definitely entitled to? And to get them off to a good start, and to avoid all this remedial work that really doesn't do any good? Well, now, after all these years, the governor who was supposedly so interested in the state of affairs in education, was talking about 15 children in a class at the [01:00] primary level. But it's still talk, and it's unfortunate that this hasn't happened, because it

needs to. I feel that after starting my career at the high school level, and working my way down, I really understand the process very well, and I see what happens to children. And if they don't get that good start, it's like repairing the roof on a house when the foundation is crumbling. And that is a waste. The biggest waste of all is the talent. The future of America. And after that kind of waste comes the waste in tax dollars. More and more money is poured into education, and the results become worse and worse. So something isn't working right, and something isn't making sense. [02:00] And that concerns me very, very much, because I care about the future of America, and I see this as one area where so much needs to be done, and just doesn't seem to be addressed properly.

I also feel, though, that the school cannot be better until the home is better. And we need to help strengthen the American home. Until there's peace in the home, there cannot be peace anywhere. And I wish we could do something about it. I know I would like to. But it's very frustrating to try, because many things about our system are not what I call honest. And I do think that we need to be honest, and we need to [03:00] care more about our children. Personally, I feel American children are the most deprived children in the world. They may have some material things, but they're not getting the right thing. They're not getting what they really need for their own self-esteem, and their own wellbeing.

I could continue for ever-so long and tell about more experiences that I had as a teacher. But I do have to say, I loved teaching. Every minute of it. And I do miss it. But I should go on to some of the volunteer work that I have done, particularly at Brown, because there isn't time to carry on and tell everything. [04:00] Maybe because my mother died in my senior year at Brown, and my father had died when I was five, Brown kind of became my family. And I have been devoted all these years to my alma mater, because I believe in the good education that Brown has given me, and continues to give to other students.

I have, oh, involved myself in just about everything. I've been very active in the associated alumni, was on the board of directors, I was house chairman of the Maddock Alumni Center. I have been head class agent for as long as I can remember, which means I did a lot of fundraising. [05:00] But it wasn't only fundraising among my classmates. I've been involved in major gifts, I've done so much work on phone-a-thons that I think there's a phone attached to my ear permanently. But I've enjoyed doing that, because I believe in the product. And I had a good product to sell, and I felt successful at it, and I think I've helped a great deal. I've also been club

president of the Pembroke Club of Providence more than once, and that is an active, viable organization which contributes to Brown every year. What else have I been involved in? Oh yes, I've been on the council, the Pembroke Center Council. Well, [06:00] I was on from its inception, so that must be about 10 years. Nine or ten years.

KL: Yeah, just about

TGM: I helped them with membership, raising funds. And I think it's a wonderful, wonderful part of Brown, and I think more women should become active in it because women's place in history, and particularly women's history at Brown, needs to be well documented, and women deserve credit for what they have done. I'm on the board of the Faculty Club, the board of managers there. I am president of my class. I chaired our forty-fifth reunion, I chaired our fiftieth reunion. And we broke [07:00] all records of women's giving at our fiftieth reunion. And that was difficult because people in my class grew up during the depression, and the depression mentality took a strong hold on all of us. But we broke it for the fiftieth reunion, and we broke all records of women's giving, which made our class feel good.

I also have been involved in – well, I was involved in the Brown Community for Learning in Retirement, and did a great deal of committee work, and that, and also coordinated seminars. I know I did a few seminars in ethics. I chaired their committee for distinguished lecturers and arranged [08:00] to have several outstanding Brown professors lecture to the group. And I spent a lot of time on that. I was also involved in, let me think now. Oh, the Brown Street Series. I was on that committee for a number of years.

KL: What's that?

TGM: That program no longer exists, but when Maddock was first opened as the Alumni Center at Brown, they wanted to draw alumni to Maddock. And they devised this Brown Street Series which consisted of four or five programs involving, well, outstanding professors, outstanding community groups, entertainment. And I was on that committee for many years, and my husband and I chaired it [09:00] for a couple of years. Then, when there seemed to be repetition of things, you know, from different areas in the university, and when Maddock seemed to be well

established, the program was discontinued, and something else was instituted in its place. After ten years, and drawing more or less on the same crowd, they needed to change and to try other things.

I should have mentioned one time, when I was club president of the Pembroke Club, we pledged \$15,000 within five years to name a room in Maddock, the Maddock Alumni Center, and to call it the Pembroke Room. I sent out a letter, and after that, letter, [10:00] in came the \$15,000 right away. So we could go on to donating to other things without concentrating on five years for that pledge. Did I mention the Pembroke Club seminars?

KL: Just briefly.

TGM: Which we've had, too. I've been involved in that, and we've had spring and fall seminars for a number of years. But when I was president of the Pembroke Club, oh, for three consecutive terms a few years back, I thought the working woman could not attend these morning seminars because they were always held on Tuesday morning. And I was teaching then, and couldn't go, and wanted to go. So I thought we should institute twilight seminars [11:00] so that women could come from their jobs, come at 5:30, enjoy a light supper in the president's dining room or the chancellor's dining room, and a stimulating lecture, and then go home and relax and think about the good program they had just heard. That went for quite a while, and then somebody interrupted it with eliminating the light supper and having wine and cheese. And the group seemed to dwindle because they still had to go home and prepare their dinner. So they didn't want to stop off here on the way. As of this spring, we have resumed the light supper seminar, and the turnout is very good.

KL: [12:00] What would you consider the highlight of your volunteer work at Brown?

TGM: The highlight of my volunteer work at Brown? Well, do you mean in what I accomplished, or what I got out of it?

KL: Both.

TGM: Both. Well, I loved doing it, because I love Brown, and I believe in Brown. And I hope I have helped a great deal. I certainly have been in contact with many alumni and alumnae, and that has been enjoyable, and I hope has produced good results. That has made me feel that I have achieved something for my alma mater. And people ask me what my position is at Brown. I say I do a lot, but I don't get paid. But I feel rewarded. [13:00] My own personal satisfaction has been immeasurable. And...

KL: What you've accomplished [is the second half?].

TGM: What I've accomplished? Well, I've done so much fundraising, but I feel that's good. And I feel I've had an influence on many people, and have helped keep them close to Brown. And I think that's important, because the alumni body is a very, very important part of an institution. And I think, you know, Brown is certainly a part of us. We can't deny that. And we are a part of Brown, and we must show it and give back something from what we have received.

I've also done a lot of volunteer work [14:00] for the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra. I'm on the board of the Orchestra, on the board of the Friends of the Orchestra. When I had a little more time, I was very much involved in the Association of University Women. I have belonged to educational groups, and I do help with church groups too, particularly with charity drives, because I believe that we all need to help one another, and I feel, while I'm living, I want to live and do some good. In fact, my husband and I both felt that way. We only wanted to be good and to do good. And I know he did, and I hope I have. And I hope my family follows that example. [15:00] They have so far. And I think their lives are richer for it.

KL: I want to add in terms of the volunteer work, what I saw you do, for example, with the Pembroke Center Membership [tape skip] which was your idea to get the old members, the old associates who [hadn't?] been back, to do that phone-a-thon, which has been such a success for the [tape skip] even more students. And so it was [tape skip] a lot of money.

TGM: Good. Glad to hear that.

KL: And that was your idea. And I wanted to make sure that that was down.

TGM: Well, it was. I had a strong feeling that that's what they needed to do. And they said, "Well, will you do it?" [laughter] And I said, "Well, of course." I've done it for the Brown Fund, I've done it for the Philharmonic, and why not? And I'm glad it has proven to be a successful thing.

KL: Yeah. Very [16:00] successful. So that's something important, that's an example of the kind of expertise you can bring.

TGM: [tape skip] need to say anything about my family as it is today?

KL: If you want. You've got some time.

TGM: Oh. Well, I have three daughters: Mary Beth, Christine, and Kathy. And there are three grandchildren: Justin, Megan, and Todd. And they provide me with a great deal of joy, always have, because they have always wanted too to do good things, and they feel that, as my mother told me, and as I told my children, the greatest reward comes from helping others. [17:00] And that's what we all try to do in our lives. [tape skip] Mary Beth right now works in development at Brown. Her son is Justin. He's on scholarship at the Wheeler School in grade seven. Christine Phillips, and her husband Woody, and their children Megan and Todd live in McLean, Virginia. The children go to the Langley School, and Christine is immersed in all she can do on a volunteer basis for Langley. Kathy is the youngest of our three daughters, and she lives in Manhattan, and devised a program for this big law firm that she is associated with, whereby she recruits [18:00] and trains legal assistants for the firm. That about says it for now, I think.

KL: Well, thanks, Teresa.

TGM: You're welcome, Karen.

- END -