

Transcript – Mary Manley Eaton, class of 1933

Narrator: Mary Manley
Interviewer: Jenny Hok
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Track 1

Jenny Hok: [00:00] My name is Jenny Hok, and I'm doing an interview with Mary Eaton. The date is November 30, 1982, and we're in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. This is for an oral history class at Brown University. Did any family members, like your parents or anything, go to Brown?

Mary Eaton: No. In fact, neither of my parents went to college at all. My oldest sister went to Smith, and that was the first person in my family that had ever been to college. And she was nine years older than I. At the time she went as a freshman, my parents registered me at Smith. Now I don't know what that term really means anymore, but they expected that I would go. And so I grew up thinking I would go too. Well, when the time came for me to go, it was not really a question of money, even though it was Depression. My family thought, well, it'd be nice if I stayed at [01:00] home, closer by, and so forth. So I went along to Pembroke, because all my friends were going to Brown, and I didn't mind not going away at the time.

JH: Did you find it easier there because you knew a lot of people?

ME: I think probably I found it a lot easier. I think it would have been good for me to have gone away, because many of the children that I went to kindergarten with continued right straight through four years of Brown also. It was very comfortable, but I think I would have expanded a little bit more if I had gone away.

JH: Did your parents decide for you that you guys were all going to go to college, or was that your decision?

ME: Oh no, I wanted to go, definitely wanted to go.

JH: So while you were growing up you –

ME: Yes, I always wanted to go. Let's see – my oldest sister went to college. There were three others in between us – well, one of them went to the Rhode Island School of Design, and another went to Katharine Gibbs, but not to college. So there was that [02:00] jump between the two of us. But I always wanted to go.

JH: And you did very well, as I can see.

ME: Yeah, I just loved it, that's all.

JH: I was going to ask what kind of reactions did you get to college attendance, but it seems like most of your friends went also.

ME: Yes. It was really – the other interesting thing, too, is that, at that time, when we went to a public school in Providence, if we had a B average we were certified into Brown. We didn't have to take college boards. Now, I would have had to take them had I gone to Smith, because my sister did. So it was almost like an extension of high school when you went. It being Depression, if you had the money to go, you could get in, because there was lots of room at that point.

JH: In some of [03:00] the things I've read about the times, the girls at Pembroke felt a little bit superior to the guys at Brown. They thought that it was harder to get into the girls' schools. Was that true at Pembroke?

ME: Not this, as far as I knew, because we all got certified. It didn't make any difference whether you're going to Brown or Pembroke. Now, there may have been a little bit less room at

Pembroke, and so they were probably a little more selective. I don't know. But I wasn't aware of feeling that way.

JH: Okay, well, that's good. It was hard to understand – that was all colleges or just certain ones?

ME: Yeah.

JH: The curriculum that was there, was it pretty limited?

ME: We took five courses every year, and I don't think you do now. I think it's only four. We took five. And there were certain required things that you had to take. I can't remember all of it. But I think my freshman year, I know I had to take math, which was a [04:00] dreadful chore for me. And we had to take a science, and somehow I'd gotten through high school without taking any science. I don't know how I managed to avoid it, but I did deliberately, because I wasn't interested. So I had to take biology, and I had to take math, and we had to take English, of course, and we had to take history. That's four courses. So apparently we had only one elective, and that was French, that I took. And I really think it's great that we had to do that, because I never would have taken any science. I would have, again, tried to avoid it. There's so much I didn't know. We had to take two years of science. It was regulated and forced on you. I know from my kids going years later, that when they got to the pass/fail thing, you know, take whatever you want to, I still was glad it happened to me that I had to take the things that I did, because it opens up all kinds of doors. And the biology – the math, [05:00] I managed to get through, that's all. I'm just terrible at math and always have been.

Now, history, I ended up majoring in history, only because of that History 1-2 class that I had to take, because I just got fascinated with it. The way that it was presented, I reacted to that particular professor, I think. You know, and his way of –

JH: What was his name?

ME: Professor George. Everybody had to take it. People groaned about it and didn't like it. So I thought that I just loved it. I changed my major from French to history because of that.

JH: How many courses did you take in history? Did you...?

ME: Let me see. Well, I must have taken at least two every year after that, I think. I also did continue with the French. That was the other thing. I wanted to spend my junior year abroad. I originally started out with that idea, because I liked French [06:00] very much in high school. I concentrated a lot on it. But by the time that came along, my family again said – I guess they just didn't trust me – they said, "You'll be so far away from home." And they were getting older, and supposing something happened to them while I was way over there in France. So I didn't go. And, again, I don't know what would have happened to me if I had gone.

JH: Was there an established program?

ME: There was a program, that you could have gone.

JH: Did you know people who'd done it?

ME: No, I didn't. But the –

JH: Spirit of adventure?

ME: It was an adventure. The French teacher, who was a French woman from France – and she encouraged me very much about it. Naturally she thought it would be great. And so I was really quite keen about going, but anyway it just didn't work out. By that time I had become so much interested in history, not knowing what I would ever do with that either, but I just liked it.

JH: Yeah, a lot of people in my family majored in that, too. [07:00] Did you ever get to know the Professor George very well? Or did you –

ME: No, not really too well, no.

JH: Was that hard? Were professors available to go talk to? Did you feel –

ME: Well, they probably were, but I didn't – no, I really wasn't aware of talking to them too much. Because, in the first place, I think maybe if I had lived at school I would have had more time than to have been – you know, to go over at certain times or something. Then, when I really got – I did take an honors course in history in my senior year, which meant you just read and discussed with one professor. So I used to go and just see him, of course. We just talked about things and read on whatever happened to be interesting, you know. But, no, I don't think I ever got too close. You would see them after class a little bit, but I never went to see them at home or in their offices or anything like that. [08:00]

JH: Did you have any idea what you wanted to do with this (inaudible)?

ME: No. I really never knew what I wanted to do. I would like to just continue to go to school forever, and that's really what I wanted to do. I still don't know what I really would like to have done. I had no specific goal.

JH: It's hard to look back and change everything, too. You had classes with people from Brown?

ME: Some of them, yes. All the professors of course came from Brown. Some were mixed classes. Not too many. We had quite a few that were held in Pembroke Hall and places like that, with the professors from Brown. Then we had some that we'd walk over there for. But it seems to me that a great many of them were held at Pembroke.

JH: Was there much interaction between the students at Brown and the students at [09:00] Pembroke?

ME: Well, you see, because I was going with my husband right out of high school, this same one which you've just met. And he went to Brown, too. So we were together all the time, and it's interchangeable. I felt as if I was – belonged to his fraternity, and we went back and forth. So I

never felt any reaction against Pembroke or anything like that. I thoroughly enjoyed all the connection with Brown –

JH: Yeah, it must have been great.

ME: It was. And it was a comfortable relationship. We weren't strangers to one another. We had started going together senior year of high school. We just kept that ongoing, too. And it made it very nice.

JH: Did a lot of the girls have a steady boyfriend like that?

ME: Yes. I don't think they all lasted quite as long, but it was common to go steady at least for a while with people, rather than going out with lots of people. Again, of course, it might have been different the kids in the dormitory. [10:00] I think they may have had a different social life than I did.

JH: Did you ever go to the dorms at all, or that's just only to –

ME: Well, the only way that I had anything to do with the dorms – my very best girlfriend, who was also a Providence girl and we walked up to Pembroke together from where we lived. And then her family moved to New Jersey. That summer. So for the last three years she was a dormitory girl. So I got into her room, of course, all the time. So I saw, from the outside, I saw what it was like, and had more access to it than otherwise I would have had. They had two little houses between Pembroke Hall and Alumnae Hall. There were two little old-fashioned houses. One was called East Hall, which was a dormitory where my friend ended up. The other was called East House, and that was for the city kids. We could go in there and sit and smoke, or bring a Coke in. A lot of kids played cards [11:00] in there. It was just sort of a gathering place. Both those houses have been destroyed long since. But when Connie first moved into East Hall, I used to go visit her a lot. So, I did have some connection with the dormitory, but that was it. I think there was a big division. I think there was a lot of resentment. I think maybe more resentment on the part of the – I don't know, I shouldn't say that.

JH: Oh, but say it.

ME: I think the kids who lived in the dormitory looked down on the others. The rest of us, there were so many of us that I don't think we cared about that, because we thought we were just as good as they were anyway. But I think they had a tendency to look down on these poor kids that had to walk back and forth.

JH: They thought of themselves as the rich people?

ME: Yeah, I think so. I think there was that feeling. And, as I say, it didn't bother me any, because I didn't feel that they were better off than I was.

JH: A lot of the extracurriculars, were they harder to do? [12:00] A lot harder to do living at home?

ME: I think so. And I think that's one reason why I didn't go into it. In high school, I had been very much involved with sports. Never was that particularly good, but I managed to get on the teams, and a lot of extracurricular things. It was much more difficult to do it at college, because it was further away. It was a long walk back and forth from my house to school. I don't know. I think if I had been there, I would have participated a lot more, if I had lived there.

JH: I remember you were in the Elizabethans, was it?

ME: Yes. I frankly can't remember what it was all about.

JH: It seems like some kind of debate group.

ME: Yes, but it was a very ridiculous thing we dressed up as (inaudible), people of the court. I remember there was a professor that was in charge of it. I really don't know how I got involved in that thing. It was very silly, but I remember he took me downtown to the department [13:00]

store, and had me outfitted in a dress that was supposed to look like a queen for one of their – we didn't put it on as a presentation. It was just part of the meeting. You would go to it, and they had – well, Elizabethans. They had a queen and they had a court jester and that sort of thing. We didn't really do anything, it was just a silly sort of a thing.

JH: Just get dressed up and... [laughs]

ME: Yeah, and then we just met and talked a little bit. Really, I don't remember it even as amounting to anything as far as a logical debate was concerned. And, as I said, I really don't know how I got involved in that.

JH: Did your parents put many restrictions on you, living at home?

ME: No, not really. My parents were pretty liberal with me. They trusted me pretty much. No, I don't think they put – I mean, I had to come in at reasonable times at night, but no curfew sort of thing. [14:00] They were pretty good. There were so many of us anyway. You know, six of us at home.

JH: Six of us?

ME: Yeah.

JH: Did your husband, did he walk – well, he wasn't your husband then, obviously. Would he walk you home?

ME: No. Well, he lived on the other side of the city. So we did a lot of things – we studied together at the library. Of course you didn't have the Rock then. You had the John Hay library. After school we would do that, and then I would walk back. Later I had a car. About my junior year, I guess, I used to take a car to school. We ate lunch together and that sort of thing. Because he had to go downtown and take the trolley out the other way, and transfer and stuff. He had a long ways back home.

JH: So his fraternity was something you belonged to for social things? You didn't live there?

ME: Well, of course other boys lived in the fraternity, but he didn't. Fraternities were [15:00] quite lovely then. There were the big old houses up – a lot on the [street?] hill and college hill. I think probably more activity in the fraternity stuff than there is now. Because fraternities have gotten a very bad name in the years that my kids were going. They had many dances and all kind – that sort of thing. It was a lot of fun.

JH: Yeah, it sounded fun, reading over it. Did you ever have a job before school, or during summers?

ME: No, I didn't. Most people did, because of the times. My family was very successful, my father was very successful. I'm sure he was probably feeling the pinch of the Depression, but it never watered down to me at all. We went away for the summer every year. I had none of that. I tried once. I signed up once to get a job through the Pembroke employment thing. I wasn't very serious about it, just put my name in just [16:00] to see. And the only job I ever got was to pose for some lady artist. The only thing she wanted me to pose was that I had to hold a doll, because she wanted to see how the hands would work of a lady holding a baby. So I sat for a few days holding a doll. That was my only employment. Hardly worth mentioning.

JH: Can you describe any of the festivities, or whatever? Like Ivy Day, or during freshman week, or the Sophomore Masque?

ME: Well, I looked up in the yearbook about Sophomore Masque, discovered I was one of the peasant dancers. The only thing I really remember about that is that I was chosen to crown the May Queen. There used to be a May Queen every year, a senior. That was when I was a freshman. That was supposed to be a really big deal, and I had a special [17:00] dress and all that kind of stuff that belonged to the school, I think. And I did that, and then the Masque, I didn't have anything to do with the writing of it. I was obviously just one of the peasant dancers listed in a bunch of other – I'd forgotten all about it until I read it in the yearbook. And Ivy Day and all

those. They were nice traditional things. I think things like that are good to have. You saw it happen with the class ahead of you, and so when it was your chance it was kind of fun to do.

JH: Like walking through the gates?

ME: Yeah, things like that. And you see them walking down the hill for graduation and everything.

JH: Do you remember the things you liked to do best with your free time? Have you already told me all that with...?

ME: Well, I don't know. I just didn't seem to have too much free time, since everything just kept on going. I mean, if I wasn't in school, I was back studying [18:00] or going out on a date. I didn't have too terribly much free time. I've always liked to read, but with studying, you know.

JH: Yeah, when you get the chance.

ME: But summertime and things like that, there would be a lot of reading. But, you know, nothing in particular.

JH: Did you find Pembroke a lot harder than high school, or did high school have a pretty rigorous preparation?

ME: Well, it was harder, yeah. I think it was harder, but harder in a good sense. It was much more awakening to me.

JH: Like inspirational?

ME: Yeah. High school was regimented, and everybody did this, and that, and the other thing. College left you a little bit of leeway on your own, which was new to me. It was very intriguing. I liked it.

JH: It sounds like you jumped right into it with the history course and all that, and got all excited about everything.

ME: Yeah, I got very, very interested in it.

JH: That's good. [19:00] Did you have any desire to have a career after you graduated?

ME: Well, not really. After I graduated, I definitely wanted to go to work at something or other. But that was absolutely the bottom of the Depression. There was very little you could do with a history major and a Phi Beta Kappa key from Brown. So I went to a secretarial school, which is now Johnson & Wales, a huge burgeoning school. At that point it was two rooms up over a little place on Exchange Street. There were about 10 students in there, mostly dropouts out of grammar school, I think they were. You went along at your own pace. [20:00] I only went for three months, and I obviously was not a very good stenographer at that point. But then I got a job, part-time, at YWCA. Then I finally got a full-time job at the Progress Governmental Research Bureau, which was very uninteresting. But I got a job. I thought it was a really big deal. It was typing all kinds of statistics, figures, about government. Long lists of how much it costs to run a fire department and a police department. Totally uninteresting as far as I was concerned.

Then I heard about a job at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The lady that I had done part-time work for at the Y called and asked me if I knew of any other college graduates who could type, because this job was opening up. I said, "No, but I know of one personally that will go right up there and try and get it." So I went up and got that job, and I loved that. It was very interesting. I stayed there [21:00] until after I got married, until I had my first baby. I not only did the secretarial work, but then I became intake secretary, which meant I interviewed the clients who are coming in, and distributed where they should go for help, and everything. It was a nice place to work. And they wanted me then to go to Simmons to take graduate school social work. But at that point I wanted to get married. In those days, if you got married and wanted to have children, the idea of working – just, it wasn't done. I never thought about that. So I fell into that social work field, and I found it very interesting because it dealt with people, and stories, and history. Whereas the other one, the governmental thing, was just

boring. But I got very involved with that. I liked it very much. But I never thought about spending the rest of my life doing it.

JH: You mean the –

ME: The social work. [22:00]

JH: How old were you when you got married?

ME: I was 25. Because my husband never – he couldn't make enough money for us to get – we finally got married when he got to earning \$25 a week.

JH: Oh my gosh.

ME: That was finally enough to start. So it took us all that time.

JH: Did your parents help you out in marriage?

ME: Yes.

JH: Did you live at home while you were working?

ME: Yes, I lived at home all – until I got married I lived at home, yeah.

JH: Did girls ever go out and get their own apartment then?

ME: Not really, unless they went to another city. But I don't think anybody ever did – girls, particularly, in their own city. It was not done. It wasn't thought of, I think.

JH: Yeah. Just like getting married and (inaudible).

ME: Yeah.

JH: When you were in college, did people reminisce about the Roaring Twenties while you were in the midst of the Depression? [23:00] Did people have a sense that college might have been more fun then?

ME: Yes, I think possibly that. But of course, remember we were still in the age of Prohibition. And there was a lot of drinking, still, in the '30s. I know it started in the '20s, but there's still a lot of drinking of awful liquor that you got from terrible places. And we were just all lucky, I think, we didn't have serious illnesses, blindness and stuff, from some of the stuff that we probably drank. There was a lot of that.

JH: There was a lot of that?

ME: There was a lot. At fraternity parties, we were really pretty wild. You sort of kind of look back and think how lucky you were that you survived it.

JH: Could you describe a typical fraternity party? What you did, how it went?

ME: Well, [24:00] I remember mostly the dances. There was one time – I think probably it was in the spring, when they had what they called open house at the different fraternities. You went from one to another, but you had to be invited. You couldn't just go to an open, you had to have an invitation from the other fraternity to the one you belonged to, the one the man belonged to. They all had bands. You had a little combo band. And we lived in these beautiful houses, where there were big rooms to dance in and cellars then to drink in. Girls wore full evening clothes. You got really dressed up. And it was just an awful lot of fun. You walked right – going from house to house wasn't like just going in the quad. We would go up and down the different hills, and all the way down to the (inaudible). That was in street, Brook Street, some of the fraternities were way down on that street, too. It was just fun. You saw a lot of [25:00] people. There was a lot of dancing.

JH: Were there any other kinds of parties that you went to, or was it the fraternities who (inaudible).

ME: Well, the traditional stuff of (inaudible). Prom and different things like that at Pembroke as well as at Brown. I got into both of them because of that, because I was so connected with the Brown. And then the football games, because we always went. We still go. We still have season tickets to all the Brown games.

JH: Did you feel like people you knew had – or people in general is a better way to put it, I think – had expectations of you, having gone to college and being Phi Beta Kappa and such? Did they expect you to go do something impressive?

ME: Yes, I think they did. And, of course, I didn't do [26:00] anything impressive. I think that probably I should have done more, but I really don't know. Like I said, the only thing I really wanted to do was just keep on going to school, which also doesn't have any point, any goal in it either. Just because I thoroughly enjoyed it. I didn't think I ever wanted to teach.

JH: Is that the kind of profession you felt that was available with your history background, was teaching?

ME: I probably would have been teaching, yeah. In my wildest dreams I used to think that perhaps I could get a job with movie-making, so that there would be no anachronisms. If they were doing a historical picture, I could be the one that'd be sure that they had everything in the right era, and all that. But that was only just dreaming. I never did anything about it. I was just trying to think of what you could use history for.

JH: That happened to be a romantic kind of –

ME: Yeah. That was not – I did nothing about it. [27:00]

JH: Seeing as it was the Depression still, while you were at college, did you have a realistic expectation of getting a thrilling type of job like that? Or did you –

ME: No, I don't think so.

JH: – see it pretty –

ME: I don't think anybody did, really. Actually, you see the big crash that started the Depression was in 1929, which was the year we graduated from high school. So all four years of college were getting more and more depressed for most people, and certainly for the job situation. My husband, the first job he got was a gasoline station attendant, and he was lucky, because most kids didn't even get that. And it was really – you had no expectations of anything good. Just getting a job was the thing. With most people that was terribly important to get one. I was fortunate enough that I wasn't going to starve without a job. But [28:00] most of them were.

JH: Literally starving?

ME: Well, they would if they hadn't been able to work, I think. Some of the families went through (inaudible) to send them to college.

JH: Did you get a feeling that religion might have become more important during the Depression for people?

ME: No, I didn't ever connect the two things really.

JH: Did you go to church at college?

ME: Yes. Well, first place, the college – I'm Catholic. So I was brought up to go to church very strictly. I went to church at home. In college, because we had chapel every day, compulsory chapel – that's another thing that you don't have anymore. We had to go to chapel every morning from – I think it was only 15 minutes, but it [29:00] was – and it was marked. You couldn't cut.

You had a certain number of cuts, but you couldn't just not show up. That was not really religious. It was many different things that they talked about, but you did have to go. But as I say, my religion was regulated at home. I think a lot of kids who were living there probably didn't go to church.

JH: I can't tell if this tape is about to run out. I think I'll turn it just to be safe. [29:38]

- End of Track 1 -

Track 2

JH: [00:00] Did you hear much about the formation of unions at this time?

ME: Not in my experience. I didn't do that. I doubt many of them did. It was interesting to me, reading this little diary in both the Pembroke yearbook and the Brown yearbook for that year of 1932, '33. In the Pembroke diary, no mention was made of political elections whatsoever, other than the fact that Roosevelt was elected, which really made a turning point in all of our lives. But in the Brown yearbook, it did mention that. The only thing political that the Pembroke one mentioned at all was that Roosevelt closed the banks, had the bank holiday in March. And that was mentioned only because the girls couldn't cash their checks who had money from home. Whereas the men seemed to have a little bit more relationship to it. Then the other thing I remember too, [01:00] not from school, but when my son did this paper with the class of '33, he asked them all about the Depression. And most of them said that they didn't remember it being so bad at the time. One boy used to have to come from Fall River by himself, which is a long way to Brown every day. And he had no car fare. He had to bum all the way. His family was very poor, and they had to go without food sometimes. He said he didn't really – when you live through something, you don't think about it as being Depression with a capital D. Everybody around him was like that. It's when you look back and you realize – I mean, looking back on this diary thing, that it wasn't important apparently to kids isolated in college who became president.

JH: Did you feel like living at home gave you a better perspective on all that?

ME: That's probably true. Yeah, I think that's probably true, because you heard the rest of your family talking about it, [02:00] and being involved in one way or another. My father being very anti-Roosevelt at the time, it really made an impression on me.

JH: What were his reasons for being anti-Roosevelt?

ME: Well, he, of course, had always been a Republican anyway. But he thought that Roosevelt's idea of just giving away money was going to be the ruination of America. And in some ways, he was right. I mean, here we are with this deficit, and all this – I don't know what else could have been done myself. But his theory was that you just don't cure things by just spending money and giving it to people. He was a completely self-made man, and had grown up in awful hard times himself and lived through it. Therefore in his mind, that's the way it should be done. And, you know, the whole New Deal [03:00] he thought was wrong. I remember him saying that America will never be the same again, and of course it isn't the same again. Reagan now is trying to go back to those days, but you can't go back.

JH: How much did the Depression affect your parents and your family at home?

ME: Well, it didn't really affect my family at all, as far as I knew. We continued to live just as we always had. My father was very successful and felt it didn't – whereas other people's fathers were losing their jobs, and losing their fortunes, and all kinds of things, it didn't hurt us in any way.

JH: How did that affect [04:00] your friends and things like that? Did they ever have to drop out of school?

ME: Some of them did, I think, but no one that was very close to me. I know my husband almost did, because they raised the tuition \$50 at one point, or from one year to the other. And that \$50 made a difference to his family. They finally did manage to scrape – and because my – he

worked every summer, and he also had a scholarship. But the scholarships were small, like \$200, because the tuition was small. Everything was relative and so much smaller then.

JH: What was tuition then, for –

ME: I can't remember. It was something like \$400 or something like that. And, of course, all we paid was tuition. We didn't have any board and room.

JH: Right after you'd gotten married, did you keep on working?

ME: Yeah, I kept on working until I had my first baby. [05:00] Then it just never occurred to me that you would continue to work after you had a child. I had actually four living children. I had five children over a space of a long time.

JH: Five children?

ME: By the time I was 38, when I had my youngest child – all those years that I was at home taking care of one baby or another, one child or another, and I would have welcomed the opportunity to get out and away and work. It would have been a lot easier than doing housework and staying home. But you just didn't do it. Babysitting and daycare and all that stuff wasn't around the same way it is now. And I don't know which is the better way, really. My daughter, now, has one child, and she's adopted. She's a psychiatrist. She has worked ever since Peter [06:00] was born. Peter has a babysitter. He comes home from school to somebody else's house, waits until his mother and father can come and get him. Sometimes I think it's terrible, and yet, it's certainly not hurting Peter. He's fine. He's very well adjusted. He's perfectly happy. He loves the babysitter. He's very outgoing. So it's probably better, but there are times it bothers me that he doesn't have a mother to come home to, you know? But that sort of living was just not heard of, unless of course you had to work. You know, widows and people like that had to work. That's about it.

JH: Did Pembroke or Brown ever have a [07:00] vocational course at all to their curriculum? Did they ever try to get their students –

ME: No, nothing like that then. Absolutely nothing. In fact, my husband's often spoken that he majored in economics, which sounds like the right thing to do if you want to go out and try to make a living. But it was all theoretical. He's often said nothing as basic as how to balance a checkbook. It was all just this theory of money, and banking, and history of economics. So there was really nothing except the engineering course. Of course it would have to be more specific, I suppose. I didn't know anybody that was taking engineering. But nothing at Pembroke that was geared to vocational stuff at all.

JH: Did any of your friends not get married? Did any of them pursue a career that you know of?

ME: Well, of course, Ruth Hussey who became a [08:00] movie star, was in my class. Not really. I don't know of anybody that – most of them probably worked more than I do. Well, not if they had children, I don't suppose they did. But one girl didn't ever get married, and she has a very good job with a brokerage house. She's one of the ones that's on your list there. She's an officer in the company, so that would be a career. But I don't know whether that was by choice that she didn't get married.

JH: So what you did was the general pattern.

ME: Yeah, I think so. And it was what you wanted to do. You were still back in those days when this was what you expected to do, was to get married and have children. It was all part of your, live happy ever after.

JH: Did you find yourself – after your kids grew up and were out of the house, did you [09:00] find yourself wishing that you'd had a career?

ME: Yes, in a way. I did work for a while after. I just worked as a receptionist in a doctor's office, mostly for something to do. And at that point, I figured it was too late for me to try to pick

up any particular career. But yes, I wish I had had something that you could – looking back on it, it would have been nice if I'd had something even while I had the – that you could have worked school hours or something, as people do now. But I still don't know what the career would have been. I still don't know what.

JH: Did you ever do any volunteer things?

ME: Yes. In the little town in Amherst that we moved to, there was nothing there to begin with. It was a sleepy little town, and then all these young people were moving in. So there was – for instance, there were no Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. There was no hot lunch program. All of this, we did as people. You can call it [10:00] volunteer work, but there would have been nothing there if we hadn't all gotten involved, and things like that. The PTA, and the Cub Scouts, and the Girl Scouts. Starting it from scratch, I mean, not just picking it up as a den mother. That sort of thing. Other than that – of course Red Cross, and campaigns, and things like that, volunteer work.

JH: You worked in political campaigns?

ME: No, I mean fundraising campaigns for the Red Cross and things like that.

JH: My mentality's a little –

ME: No, not in political – no, I never did get into that.

JH: Was there a feeling at Pembroke when you were there of – I realize the president – didn't find it important enough to mention the presidential election. But was there a feeling of – beyond the economic change, was there a feeling of anything, a personal concern about the political scene? Was there an [11:00] activist person?

ME: Not that I was aware of, no. I don't remember anyone getting really involved in anything like that. I don't know how it is today, but it seems to me it was sort of an oasis of just itself. It was school, you know? Not really related to the real world.

JH: What happens to people who've gone to Pembroke, you and your friends? How did that relate to people who just tried to find work right after they got out of high school instead of going to college?

ME: Well, of course a lot of the kids did have to go do that. And you sort of lost track of them, because you did go in two different directions. If they were working, you were in school. We did sort of lose track of those, even though they were still your friends. But you did lose contact, [12:00] because they had totally different interests. Let's see, I just think about Pembroke and college in general as being in a separate state by itself. In my life it was, and at the time it seemed to me it was. It wasn't shared with the rest of the outside world.

JH: Do you have any particularly fond or funny memories of the time, specific instances or something?

ME: I don't know. It seems so long ago, it's hard to remember any particular incidents. Just crazy things, like in order to graduate I had to go back and work off about 10 hours of gym that I had cut. We had to take gym. I don't know whether you still do. [13:00] We had to take gym, whether we wanted to or not. I used to cut it and not do it. And then it got to the end, and I had graduated, but they wouldn't give me a diploma. I went back and did – not push-ups, just this kind of stuff. I was going into make up the time, and that just seemed so ridiculous to me. There's crazy things like that. And the usual rushing around, and trying to get papers in on time. I think we had a lot more required things than probably you do now. In freshman English, we had to write a theme every week. I don't know if you still do that.

JH: Well, we don't do required course, so –

ME: Oh, that's right, yeah. You don't have any required classes. Well, we all had to take this [writer?] English. I think the first semester was called English Comp. You had to write a paper, a theme, of some sort, every week, which was a chore to do. And usually you did it the night before. That sort [14:00] of thing, I remember always being in a terrible rush of staying up all night, and I have to get this done and that done.

JH: This is kind of a trivial question, I'm just curious – a lot of people smoked then, didn't they?

ME: Yes, oh yeah. I did, too. I wasn't allowed to smoke at home. That's one of the reasons I started, I'm sure. [laughter] And everybody did smoke, which I started. I became a very heavy smoker. I no longer smoke.

JH: When did you give that up?

ME: Almost 10 years ago we both gave it up.

JH: Why did your parents refuse to let you smoke?

ME: Well, because we were girls. My father smoked cigars constantly. I don't think I ever saw him without a cigar. But when women began to smoke, I can remember that my father used to travel back and forth to New York a lot on the train, and he used to talk about, [15:00] "There's a woman on the train that was smoking." Almost as if she had been nude. It was terrible. The connection was, not because it was going to do anything to your health, it's just that because you were a girl, no girl would ever smoke. He finally realized that we all did, you know, but it took a while. We used to smoke up in the attic, and a lot of crazy stuff. But I did certainly smoke at Pembroke, and a lot of people did. How are they now? Do they still smoke?

JH: Now it's practically socially unacceptable.

ME: Yeah, good, good.

JH: There's a definite anti-smoking feeling. Hardly anyone smokes in the dining room and stuff, now. There's a shift from me being even in junior high and things.

ME: I have a son-in-law who's a cancer specialist. He is so virulent about the people that [16:00] he sees die from it. And yet, so many young people still do it. But we finally did. And fortunately all the kids stopped smoking, too, which is good.

JH: Did you and your husband particularly want your kids to go to Brown?

ME: No, not necessarily. They all applied to Brown. Well, it was very important that they get scholarship help, too. We had four kids. That was one of the deciding factors, was whether they could get through on scholarship. But they all applied to different places. My oldest daughter, she was accepted at Radcliffe and at Pembroke, and she was offered a scholarship for both places. But we went down for the interview from a little New Hampshire town, and tried to cross Harvard Square to get to Radcliffe, and met a lady at the admissions office who gave us a map, and said, "Well, [17:00] here's this. You can look around." Well, here we are standing in the midst of Boston traffic with a map, and she said, "Oh, I'd die down here, Mom." We went to Pembroke for the interview, and the most adorable gal, sophomore I think she was, was that day on duty to show you around. And she was so enthusiastic, and she took Judy by the hand. She made you feel so at home. And there was just no question in Judy's mind about the two places. She just couldn't imagine herself in this confusing spot of – all they did was just hand you a map and say, "Here." And then, my son, that was the next one. He wanted to go to Harvard, but he was not accepted at Harvard. But he was accepted at Brown, so that made that decision. And then the next daughter, she was accepted at Brandeis, and Pembroke, and Colby – it was Colby in Maine – and UNH. Brown gave her the best scholarship, so she went to Brown.

My last child, my youngest one, said [18:00] after seeing all the others go through everything, he applied for early admission. And said, "I'm not going to wait through this April business to find out." The interesting thing, he's the one that went to St. Paul. One year at St. Paul summer school, you have the big push from Dartmouth. They come down and say, "If you're a New Hampshire kid," and all this kind of stuff. So after he applied for the early admission at Brown, all of a sudden he was called to the office at high school, and they said,

“Congratulations, Jerry, you just got accepted by Dartmouth.” And Jerry said, “I never applied to Dartmouth.” So there was obviously some sort of a computer mistake, but he can at least say he was accepted by Dartmouth, even though he didn’t apply. But he made it into Brown in the early admission. So it wasn’t that we – actually it was the best deal for them at the time, for one reason or another, particularly the scholarship deal. I think they were all glad they went.

JH: Was Pembroke changing [19:00] in ways that you could see from your kids going?

ME: Oh, yes. Definitely from the way the kids – and I also got a little bit better picture of it from the point of view of a dormitory student than before. Oh yes, especially by the time the last one went. With the, as I say, with no required courses, and just pass/fail, no marks. Which I think was going a little too far the other way myself. But it didn’t seem to hurt him any. And absolutely no rules and regulations. I mean, boys in the girls’ rooms, and all that stuff that was unheard of, even when my oldest daughter was there. That’s the other thing I do remember thinking about the differences. The way people dressed. There were no slacks when I went. We always wore dresses, and shoes, and stockings. And boys wore shirts, and ties, and coats, and hats. Looking back at these pictures [20:00] and seeing that, suddenly – no jeans, and t-shirts, and comfortable clothes, which was a big difference.

JH: Can you pinpoint any of the changes that you – especially the intermediate period, like when your oldest daughter was there – can you pinpoint any of the changes?

ME: You mean the changes in the curriculum and...?

JH: Or how she experienced it.

ME: Well, she ran into some problems, because she was premed and they were discouraging her, Pembroke was – Brown was discouraging her very much, that she was never going to make it because she was a girl. She ran into feminine prejudice. That was back – let’s see, she graduated in 1960, so it was quite a while ago. [21:00] But it seemed very strong to me at the time. Things were more open as far as possibilities of courses to take, because things weren’t as – she did

have some required subjects, then. She wasn't completely free like you are now. And it got progressively more so, as I say, until the one who graduated in '72. He was almost completely far out.

JH: Did World War II affect you at all?

ME: Well, only that we missed it, in that I already had a child and was pregnant with a second child at the time the draft [22:00] began. That put us in a category with a pre-Pearl Harbor baby, being exempt. Then, when Pearl Harbor came, my husband tried to enlist in the Navy, and the Navy officers candidate. Army officers candidate, too. But his eyesight wasn't good enough, so he was rejected. Then he was in war work after that. And so we just weren't involved in that, as far as any drastic fighting or anything was concerned. Thank goodness.

JH: Well, is there anything that you'd like to add about Pembroke and how it affected you and your life?

ME: I'm just awfully thankful that I went. I really think it was great. I can't compare it to any other college, because I didn't have much to do with any other college, but it certainly was good for me. And as I say, I just wish I could [23:00] have stayed more than the four years. I really enjoyed it.

JH: Did it affect your way of thinking?

ME: Yes, I think it definitely affected my way of thinking. It helped me grow up a little bit. It's always been something there behind me that I've been proud of and glad for.

JH: Good. Well, thank you very much.

ME: No, thank you. I've enjoyed it.

JH: I have to – [23:26]

- END -