

Transcript – Grace Amelia McAuslan '28

Narrator: Grace McAuslan '28
Interviewer: Daniel Heckelman '82
Interview Date: April 20, 1982
Interview Time: 1:30 p.m.
Location: Grace McAuslan's living room
Length: 2 audio files; 1:05:41

Daniel Heckelman: O.K. Let's see if we can begin now. So, I'm going to ask you mostly about the Women's College years and we can talk a little about before and after it. Why did you pick the Women's College?

Grace McAuslan: I'd no money to go anywhere else. My family couldn't afford it and of course they thought naturally my father wanted me to go Brown.

D.H. : Right. Cause he was—

G.M. : He was happy that I—

D.H. : Was happy because he was a Brown graduate and he—

G.M. : Yes. And the tuition in those days was three hundred dollars a year.

D.H. : Wow!

G.M. : And on my senior year it was-um-before my senior year, it was announced that it would go up to four hundred the next year but for those who were still in college it would stay at three hundred. My family was terribly upset (laughter-G.M.) 'cause it would be four hundred but, it was alright.

D.H. : Did your brother graduate before you or after you?

G.M. : Twenty-two.

D.H. : Twenty two. Uh-huh. So it was like you were just continuing the family tradition then.

G.M. : That's right.

D.H. : I see. Did you work in college to pay for the three hundred dollars or your parents were able to afford that?

G.M. : No, they paid for that. I, I never worked.

D.H. : Mm-huh. What was your first impression (swallow-D.H.) when you arrived at the Women's College? I mean you'd lived in Providence your whole life as you've told me. Ah-but was there any kind of special feeling you had?

G.M. : Well-ah-it wasn't exactly what I expected. We went right on with the same s-s-studies that we had in high school. Latin and French and Math and (pause) and some other things, but-ah-it was just like a continuation of high school.¹

Really, English (inaudible)...I had Professor Hastings, he was wonderful.

D.H. : Really?

G.M. : Very meticulous about certain words—

D.H. : Like which ones?

G.M. : We didn't use—well, words that were provincial or something, you know, you just had to be correct.

D.H. : What year did you have Professor Hastings?

G.M. : My freshman year.

D.H. : Your freshman year.

G.M. : I was lucky to get him—I knew him anyway, I knew his family but I was glad to have him.

D.H. : Did you have the impression that—

G.M. : In those days we had to write four short themes a week or two short themes and one long there-on any subject.

D.H. : That was for his particular class?

G.M. : For English, yes.

D.H. : Uh-hum.

G.M. : So we had plenty of (laughter-G.M.) practice in writing which-uh-a lot of them don't get these days.

¹ The above page and one half was transcribed to capture, as closely as possible, Miss McAuslan's manner of speaking. In the remainder of the transcription I have edited some of her "uh's", "mm's", and false starts.

D.H. : That's true, that's true. We don't concentrate on writing as much.

G.M. : No, and I think it's very important.

D.H. : Mm-huh, definitely. U was fortunate that in high school I had a Professor, a person with a Ph.D. teaching English, so that I was able to carry that on into high school. Did you feel that the women were brighter than the men? Or you didn't have any views on something like that?

G.M. : (Pause) No, I don't think I felt they were. Of course, we had no classes with the men. In fact, previous to my going they had to wear hats, veils, and gloves—

D.H. : Really?

G.M. : When they went on the hill, as we called it.

D.H. : So there was a dress code before you went?

G.M. : Yes, but fortunately that had been dropped (laughter-G.M.) by the time I came along, so I didn't have to wear a hat and a veil-but, uh, we didn't go over to the men's college, to Brown, very often because we had the Professors come over, the Brown Professors, come to Pembroke. We had classes in Pembroke Hall and in a building next door which no longer exists, called East Building. Three story and it had a lot of classrooms in it, but I had some classes on the hill. I had Latin American History (laughter-G.M.) on the top floor of the John Hay Library.

D.H. : Wow!

G.M. : And it was a very interesting course, I was glad I had it.

D.H. : Wow, who taught that?

G.M. : Uh, Professor Verna Crane, who is no longer living, but he was a very [inaudible] professor and I took Colonial History with him. But-uh-naturally my major was Sociology.

D.H. : Uh-huh, and what kind of courses did you take for that major?

G.M. : Oh, well (pause) everybody had to take in their sophomore year, Sociology 1, 2 or whatever it was and then we-uh-went on if we wanted to, so I took a few courses but I didn't take too many, I liked to diversify (laughter-G.M.).

D.H. : Uh-huh, so there were a set group of courses you had to take?

G.M. : Yes, oh yes. Things were structured in those days (laughter-G.M.).

D.H. : Right. No longer, not at Brown now. What were those courses? Were they like you had to take three French, or-?

G.M. : You had to take History 1-2 in your sophomore year. That was in the old chapel, which I the top floor of Pembroke, now the Pembroke Library. In my junior year, uh, Alumnae Hall was finished in the Spring, we had our Junior Prom there—

D.H. : Wasn't that nice!

G.M. : And that was, oh, that was heaven after the old—and we had our chapel there. Of course the chapel was quiet in those days. Four days, the Dean or someone would (pause) and then, uh, one day would be given over to student government and then they started having a committee to get people in the community to speak in chapel and they put me on the committee, well, I knew more people in Providence (laughter-G.M.) than anyone on the committee, I guess—so we got some awfully good speakers (laughter-G.M.). We had, uh, Nancy Dyer twice, she was a famous artist—her father was an artist and, uh, she was a very vivacious sort of person and all the girls were crazy about her. I had to introduce her, which, uh, in Alumnae Hall seemed like quite something to me (laughter-G.M.) but, uh, we got her twice, probably our junior and senior years, I don't remember. But, uh, as I say, chapel was required. It had been required when it was on the top floor of Pembroke and, uh, came first thing in the morning and you had to fly up all those stairs (laughter-G.M.). It was very easy to be late (pause) but you were only allowed so many cuts a semester but, uh, I usually managed to squeeze by.

D.H. : Did you do any other extra-curricular activities, like the kind of thing—setting up a lecture or did the college do things like that?

G.M. : No, I was in the orchestra, the Pembroke orchestra, which was separate of course, its own orchestra and its own dramatic society. We had women taking men's parts which wasn't too bad, but, (laughter-G.M.) when the men in Sock and Buskin took women's parts, sometimes it was pretty awful. You'd see a beautiful blonde and then this deep bass voice (laughter-G.M. and D.H.).

D.H. : That's pretty funny.

G.M. : They met in Faunce House, uh, not—in the old Brown Union as they called it then before Faunce House was built, up on the second floor. I think it is an art gallery now, isn't it?

D.H. : Second floor of Faunce, I think has the Chaplain's offices and the Student Production Workshop, the Student Playhouse.

G.M. : Um, well there was a big room there that was the, uh, where they put up a platform at the end and that was their theatre. In 1937, I think it was, when they joined—that was a great step forward (laughter-G.M.).

D.H. : You mean when what joined? I missed—

G.M. : (inaudible)

D.H. : So it got a little normal then?

G.M. : Yes.

D.H. : I see. Were there any rules and regulations, like we talked about the dress code, how it was no longer, were there any other regulations that you recall?

G.M. : (long pause) No, outside of over-cutting classes, the student government once suspended a girl for two weeks because she had so many cuts but she had problems at home with her mother or something and some of us felt very sorry but (laughter-G.M.) the student government had been so strict about it, but I suppose they felt they had to set an example.

D.H. : Uh-huh, uh-huh. Were the Deans a large part of the college-I mean, did you really feel their presence or you just would go to them for advice?

G.M. : There was only one Dean, of course there was Dean Randall on the hill but we had him come over to speak once in a while but that was all. Uh, Dean Morris, who was the Dean then, was like, as she often said, she was like the President of Pembroke. She ran the College and it was limited to 500 girls. (laughter-G.M.) And she was very successful, she was a very attractive woman and very bright and, uh, she did very well. She was there a long time. There was a time earlier, I think it was 1923 when they had three deans in one year. It was very upsetting, but, uh, when Dean Morriss came, then things settled down, and that was when Alumnae Hall was built and (pause) I don't remember what else.

D.H. : What was this thing with three deans? This was before you came to the Women's College?

G.M. : Yes, oh yes. As they say, I think it was 1923 because I've heard them talk about it. Well, they had people come in to act as dean, perhaps who had been Dean but were married and were no longer Dean and that was, uh, Mrs. Allinson, who was married to Professor Allinson of the Classics Department, and, uh, she was a very bright, sparkling woman. She had been one of the first Deans, of course, the first Dean was a man! Dean Snow. But, uh, very soon they got this Dean Allinson... (inaudible)-Mrs. Allinson who was a great success but then she married Professor Allinson and I don't remember-oh, they got, uh, Ida Shaw King and she was very strict and I guess very good. She was the one who put out the sororities, about 1912, I think. Uh, they had two or three sororities before that and she put them out. She thought they were too elite, I suppose. Anyway, she uh, she became mental and had to go to Butler and that's when, probably when they had the three deans, I can't remember who they all were, but, uh-you can see her picture of course, in the Crystal Room. She was very smart but not (pause) there was some difficulty there. I know one person who had been there when she was there said that she thought that her father was a Baptist minister and very, very strict and she would be trying at time to break away from some of the strictness and, she had such a conflict in her mind-something snapped.

D.H. : Ah, you never know how it's going to happen.

G.M. : Yes—

D.H. : DO you keep in contact with your classmates? You said they come over and look at your scrapbook. Is this, do they do this a lot? Or?

G.M. : Oh no, no, no. They don't come here, I take it to the luncheon, we always have a luncheon Alumnae Day, which will be June 5th this year.

D.H. : Ah, huh.

G.M. : At the Faculty Club this year, and I have to card that thing over (her scrapbook) (laughter-G.M.) so they can look through it.

D.H. : But they must love it. Right?

G.M. : Yes they do. They're always surprised when they find I've got them in and their children and their husbands, well-

D.H. : So, you kept track of your friends and you put their families in the scrapbook-

G.M. : Yes-

D.H. : That's marvelous, that's marvelous. What happens at those alumnae luncheons? Do people reminisce?

G.M. : They always, uh, send in a card or something saying they're coming, and we ask the news and very often they'll tell us that some child was married or they have a grandchild or whatever, and uh, then I collect all that together and send it out in a class letter in the fall. We have a class letter twice a year, it's been on the contract, CONTACT but CONTACT is no longer subsidized by the Officers Association which is very poor right now, apparently, so uh, it just goes out as a letter but the alumni office in Maddock takes care of the mailing and all.

D.H. : So, this is all as your job as the Secretary of the Class then?

G.M. : Yes.

D.H. : So, were you elected to that post when you graduated? Is that how-

G.M. : No. I haven't been since I was Secretary, President, Class Agent and finally settled as Secretary again (laughter-G.M.). But that was a long time ago, I don't remember how many years-

D.H. : In other words, at these luncheons they decide who is going to do what for the next year?

G.M. : Yes, they elect officers.

D.H. : I see.

G.M. : And next year, you see, will be our 55th, so we will probably have a change of officers and I don't know.

D.H. : Do you participate in the graduation ceremonies?

G.M. : No, I just go watch the commencement procession. No, but some of them do march down the hill, those who are still able to (laughter-G.M.). But quite a few did when we had our 50th. We have a banner that says (laughter-G.M.) "Pembroke '28" (pause) which is in my guest room-

D.H. : Oh! You get to keep it. Isn't that great? (laughter-D.H.).

G.M. : It's kind of moth eaten, that's the way it came to me.

D.H. : How did you feel about the Women's College being changed, the name being changed to Pembroke?

G.M. : Oh, it was high time. Everybody called it Pembroke-it was officially the Women's College, nobody paid attention to that, nobody every spoke of it as the Women's College-

D.H. : Oh, so I'll refer to it as Pembroke.

G.M. : It was always Pembroke. Sure, when my brother was there, he used to take Pembrokers out (pause). They all did.

D.H. : I heard that some people felt that the status of the College was changed a bit when it was, the name was officially changed to Pembroke, and that it was viewed more as an adjunct to Brown as opposed to an entity unto itself. Did you feel that at all?

G.M. : No. Of course now, now they've merged or submerged as one article put it (laughter-G.M.)

D.H. : How do you feel about that-Pembroke joining with Brown?

G.M. : Well, it's too bad, they took over our field house, of course they did it all over and it's beautiful, but it was ours before-it's no longer ours (laughter-G.M.), it's theirs, and you know, things like that (pause) it's not the same, but that's life I guess.

D.H. : What were the building breakdowns, we talked a bit about, you said Alumnae Hall was built, um, were there, I mean are the dorms in Pembroke that stand now, those dorms, was Metcalf there?

G.M. : Metcalf, Miller, and later, Andrews-named for the vice-president, the President Benjamin Andrews, and the-

D.H. : He was the President from when to when?

G.M. : (pause), I don't know-

D.H. : Was he President while you were there?

G.M. : He was the President when my father was in college in 1896-

D.H. : I see.

G.M. : And, uh, everybody knew him as Benny Andrews and they loved him, they adored him! He was so much one of them, uh, (laughter-G.M.), my father used to love to tell about when some football player was injured and, uh, the next thing, the President was out holding his head (laughter-G.M.).

D.H. : Boy, isn't that something? You'll never see that now. Yes, our President stays much more aloof. He's out fund-raising and doesn't really spend time with the student body. Did your President, who was President when you were there?

G.M. : President Faunce. Well he was a wonderful orator, a great speaker but that was about all. He would come over and make a speech once in a while but, he was, uh, well, he was a little aloof in manner and he was not one you could get close to. He was there for quite a while-he succeeded President Andrews. President Andrews was fired-

D.H. : Really? What for?

G.M. : Yes. Something about free silver coinage, something that William Jennings Bryant was in favor of-remember something about Bryant and his cross of-I would not be something-I don't know. Anyway, some silly thing and President Andrews went to some-Nebraska I think, but I'm not sure, as President, and, uh, later he said he was wrong but the trustees fired him (laughter-G.M.).

D.H. : Was it, I'm not really too clear on this, was it because he said something, or did something?

G.M. : Well, he went around advocating it.

D.H. : Uh, huh. And they didn't like it?

G.M. : No.

D.H. : I see. What were some of the other political issues of the time, besides free coinage of silver?

G.M. : Well, of course I graduated in '28. '29 was the crash on Wall Street and the depression-and of course, some of the classes were very small then, people just couldn't afford to go to College. It was awful! Really.

D.H. : And what were you doing at the time of the depression? Did you have a job?

G.M. : (Pause) For a few years I didn't until I went to the first Unitarian Church as a secretary. So I was very active in Girl Scouts as a Captain for a long time. Oh, home teaching among foreign born, I taught them English, I taught them to read and write English.

D.H. : What was the women's role in society at the time? Did that effect whether you'd become a secretary or a doctor or something like that?

G.M. : I'm sure it did. I don't know what it did to my classmates at the time-I can't seem to remember. We all had to struggle, I'll say that.

D.H. : Did you want to be a secretary? Was that something that, through your studies in Sociology in your academic career, that's what you wanted to do?

G.M. : Well, I had studied typing and it seemed like a –and I took shorthand at the Providence Evening High School over at Central and, uh, so when the secretary was going to be married, her husband did not want her to work (laughter-G.M.) sounds funny now, doesn't it?

D.H. : Uh-hum.

G.M. : Anyway, she left and I went in and that was that.

D.H. : Tell me a little bit more about your years at Pembroke. We talked a bit about some of the activities you did and some of the classes, can you tell me a bit more about your years there?

G.M. : Well, we always had a big May Day celebration, invariably, uh, we had May Queen (laughter-G.M.). In those days, she had to have long hair and there were only three in our class that had long hair, so we picked the prettiest of three and, uh, she had a court with people standing around in costumes and she sat on her throne, and, uh, we put on what was called "The Sophomore Masque"-and, uh, ours was all about knights and ladies and, uh, we revealed our class flower which was the lily-of-the-valley. When you went to college, you wore, believe it or not, you wore big serge bloomers to gym. We went to gym in Sayles gym on the campus, and you had a certain color with a strip of it up your leg, the leg of your bloomers, and ours was green so that was why we had to have a white flower for our Sophomore Masque (laughter-G.M.). I wish there were pictures in my book and, uh, it was very pretty. And later on they had May Day down in the Pembroke field, of course they didn't have Pembroke Field when I was down there, and uh, they had a May Queen with a beautiful gown. I suppose they used it every year-a beautiful long white gown and she didn't have to have long hair (laughter-G.M.). They picked just the prettiest one, I guess-the stateliest-she had attendants and great crowds would go. I guess they had bleachers so you could sit and watch. A lot of people would go down to Pembroke Field and watch, it was beautiful.

D.H. : That sounds great.

G.M. : Of course my Sophomore Masque was on our campus. The queen sat on a throne in Alumnae Hall steps and then the rest was done there on the Green.

D.H. : What was a typical day like? Could you run through one with me?

G.M. : Well I walked from Grotto Avenue which is almost two miles.

D.H. : Oh, you lived at home?

G.M. : Oh yes. Couldn't afford anything else. A lot of girls lived at home. They were known as "city girls" and years afterwards they had a particular house on the corner of Meeting and Brown Streets, the "City Girls House" and they could stay one night per semester, I think, over night by that was long after my time. We had nothing like that. We used to eat in the cafeteria in the basement of Pembroke Hall and it was so crowded, we practically sat in each other's laps. That was awful, but then, of course Alumnae Hall was built and the whole basement there was given over to tables where people could have lunch. You could buy your lunch or you could carry it, which I did because I wanted to save money for a trip abroad.

D.H. : Did you do that after Brown?

G.M. : Yes, in '29. My father, mother, sister and I went to-well we went to England, Scotland, Holland, Belgium, Paris for a week.

D.H. : That must have been great.

G.M. : It was a wonderful trip. Then, of course, came the crash and that was the end of that (laughter-G.M.) No travelling for a while. Until '37, I went over with a group and spend a week at Oxford and rented a bicycle and rode all over Oxford and then we had a trip through the West Country. We started at Bath and then we went down to (inaudible) on the South Coast, stopping every-it was a five day bus trip, stopping off at interesting places along the way.

D.H. : Sounds like you really enjoyed it.

G.M. : Oh yes!

D.H. : I've heard some rumors that spread around Brown now about the past and about Pembroke. I have two of them that I'll throw out to you and see what you remember of them, if they are true or not. The girls used to go down to the Vernon-Woolley dining hall in their pajamas and were served by waitresses. Is that true?

G.M. : I don't know. Some of them came to classes in pajamas-

D.H. : (Hearty laughter-D.H.). Really?

G.M. : With long coats over their-and the pajamas legs rolled up, of course.

D.H. : Wow!

G.M. : Well, if they had an 8 o'clock class and they lived in the dorm, it was very handy.

D.H. : That's great. Did maids do their laundry? That's another rumor we heard. I live in Metcalf and there are, they just made it into a co-ed dorm this year and there are hooks down where the washer and dryers are and someone told me that that's where the maids used to hang up their clothes and the kids would come and take them.

G.M. : Well, I'm afraid that I don't know, not having lived in the dorm. Occasionally I ate there with a friend in the orchestra who lived in Metcalf and used to invite me to dinner sometimes, but that's all I know of dorm life.

D.H. : Were the "city girls," as you call them, ostracized because they didn't live on campus or was there no real distinction between, you know, who lived where?

G.M. : No, I don't think there was any distinction but they didn't get to know each other as well unless they took part in some social activities of some kinds. There were girls who didn't. Of course there were some girls, not many, perhaps three or four, I don't know, who lived with families to earn their way. They couldn't afford, you know, people from away, but they couldn't afford the dorm so they worked, raising, helping to raise the children and do housework and so forth. It must have been a little difficult with classes and all.

D.H. : Why don't we take a break now and I can flip this side and we can look at the scrapbook and then do a little more? Is that okay?

G.M. : Sure.

D.H. : Alright. [tape switch] Could you tell us a bit about what your classmates did for fun and the recreation besides maybe those two special things, like the May Day or the Sophomore Masque?

G.M. : Oh, the Junior Prom.

D.H. : The Junior Prom, tell me about that.

G.M. : Oh, we thought that was marvelous. We had it in Alumnae Hall and they had people line up for and march up and then separate, it was thrilling. Oh, we did have another foreign student. Rosina Canomis, from Puerto Rico.

D.H. : And the other lady you mentioned was-

G.M. : Nermine Woolverfac, she was from Turkey, and very bright. Rosina came to the Junior Prom with a very special Spanish shawl and all, you know, a Spanish costume and she looked like Carmen.

D.H. : Did you go---you mean Brown men took you? Is that how it worked?

G.M. : Oh yes. Well you could invite anyone you wanted. The one I invited was not Brown, he was Harvard, but-

D.H. : Wow!! A Harvard man.

G.M. : I didn't know too many Brown men really-but of course, I did. I knew quite a few in the Class of '28 but not because of any contacts at Brown but because I've known them in outside contacts, in other words.

D.H. : Did you date many of them? Or were you dating this man from Harvard?

G.M. : Well, no. He was somebody I had known for years so he was delighted to go. It seems to me we ate downtown first, a great many of us. I can't think where. That's the way they did, you know. They all gathered somewhere downtown, some restaurant. Of course, Childs Restaurant was the place where everybody went in those days, after a dance or before a dance or something.

D.H. : And that was downtown?

G.M. : That was on Westminster Street across from the Industrial Trust Building. It's gone long since but of course Childs was a famous chain, there were lots of Childs in New York, but that was one place. But my cousin used to always go to Havens Diner (laughter-G.M.), my cousin now lives in California. He said that after fraternity dances they all went up there.

D.H. : That was also downtown?

G.M. : Yes, by the City Hall!

D.H. : Sorry, am I missing something amazing?

G.M. : Well, of course it's not the season right now but when it gets a little warmer it will be parked by the City Hall every night.

D.H. : Oh, maybe I have seen it. To the left of City Hall?

G.M. : Yes, and they had very good food. You must have read about the people that had that coming-out party there, it was in the paper.

D.H. : No, that I missed. But it is coming back to me now that some students told me that I should go to Havens Diner. Was that like the hot spot where all the kinds would go?

G.M. : Yes, everyone went there. Last winter, this girl didn't want a debut at the Biltmore or anything so they had it at Havens Diner (laughter-D.H. and G.M.). I saw pictures of it in the paper.

D.H. : So would you go from classes to a place like Havens Diner and meet your friends or did you go home, have dinner and meet them afterwards?

G.M. : There was a place on Thayer Street just about where the Brown Bookstore is now, I guess-there was a great big house there and down in the basement they had this restaurant and everybody used to go there. They used to-if you were going to take a bus or anything, you'd be sure to stop in Abbott's, I think it was. It was very popular. You'd always see friends there.

D.H. : What kind of things did you talk about?

G.M. : Things that people usually do, I suppose.

D.H. : The reason why I asked was, like in the 60's people talked a great deal about political issues, now we're talking a lot about the economy.

G.M. : No, we talked about professors and courses and things like that. I don't think we were much interested in politics.

D.H. : Was there any discussion about the women's movement?

G.M. : No. There was no women's movement.

D.H. : Not yet, huh?

G.M. : No. Most girls figured they'd work a few years and then get married and that would be it. They'd raise a family.

D.H. : That was the majority of the people that felt that? So someone like Dr. Saklad was an exception to the rule in that she went to Johns Hopkins for medical school?

G.M. : Yes, of course there were some who went on to graduate school. Eleanor Briggs went to Columbia School of Social Work and Alice Humaleski [Chumelski?] must have gone somewhere to do social work, Simmons perhaps. My classmate, Elizabeth Sanderson, one of my closest friends, won the Ann Crosby Allinson Prize which was a wonderful prize for graduate work. That was the top honor in our class and she went to Radcliff and then she taught in various schools for girls and she ended up in Northfield and was there for many, many years. My mother went to live there in Northfield after her husband.

D.H. : Northfield is where?

G.M. : In Massachusetts, more or less western Massachusetts. It's a famous school for girls-Mt. Herman is the school for boys, but they may have merged by now, I have a feeling they have...(inaudible). There were others who did graduate work, I can't think of them right now.

D.H. : How many students were there in your particular class, in the Class of '28?

G.M. : There were about a hundred, now it's down to about 80.

D.H. : So you could say then that out of those 100 maybe 20 went on to professional positions and the rest because housewives, or?

G.M. : No, I wouldn't say 20. I don't know how many, it's a little hard to—unless I went through my Bryn Mael. But not too many of them went on to graduate work. They got jobs of some kind and most of them married after a few years and had families and that was it. And of course in Saklad's case, she and her husband both kept going although they had three children. He was, as I say, an anesthetist at Rhode Island Hospital, which is no longer in existence, it was an infectious disease—when you'd have an epidemic of scarlet fever or diphtheria, these things that you don't hear about now and there was a psychiatric ward for people who were picked up off the streets. It was rough going sometimes for Sarah but she managed it; she was very capable.

D.H. : What were your vacations like? Did you have like a Christmas break? And a Spring break, like we have?

G.M. : I think we had a week off at Christmas. We had a mid-year break between, sometime in February, I think, before exams. Those were considered awful.

D.H. : In what way? Because you had to study during vacation?

G.M. : Because you had to cover so much territory.

D.H. : You said you played in the orchestra. What instrument did you play?

G.M. : I played the violin. The orchestra used to give concerts around. They gave one at what was then the Rhode Island Auditorium. I don't know what they call it now. The arena? Something like that. It was on North Main Street. It was like the Civic Center. They had everything; hockey games and everything else. In fact, the famous Gracie Fields, and English singer and comic who was very popular came and gave a concert there and the Highland Band would come, the sort of thing that comes to the Civic Center now. The orchestra was asked to play—we played outside the—we were in the vestibule, but outside the main building. We all had to wear (laughter-G.M.) our winter coats. It was freezing. And then we gave one in Middletown. I forget just where or when but anyway we did. And, uh, several at college, of course. It was a lot of fun and I enjoyed being with some of the... (inaudible) people because we became very good friends that I wouldn't have known otherwise.

D.H. : What kind of things did you play? Very strictly classical pieces?

G.M. : Yes, mostly classical. Well, some light stuff like Percy Grainger and that sort of thing. And, we had a very good conductor or director really, he usually had some student conduct but he was in charge—Robert Gray and he was in the band also and every year led the band down the hill and commencement time. He wore a very handsome uniform, a blue top and jacket with a lot of braid and white trousers and a fancy hat (laughter-G.M.). He'd always stop and wink at me, of course (laughter-G.M.)

D.H. : The American band-was that the school band? So, in other words, he conducted the orchestra and the school band?

G.M. : No. The American Band was a very famous band in the last century. The director of it, what was his name, he was a Wallace-Wally Reed, Reed's American Band. He wrote a lot of music, band music, marching music and some of it was very good! The public library has a great collection of it which I was familiar with when I worked in the Public Library before I worked here. Wally Reed's American Bands was really almost a rival to Souza's but of course, he died and the Historical Society has been trying to revive it, they call it the American Band now and they give concerts on the John Brown terrace but it's not the same. But they still called it the American Band in the old days during commencement processions. They didn't play much in the commencement march, I suppose. Not Pomp and Circumstance like they do now.

D.H. : That's really great.

G.M. : We had a glee club too.

D.H. : Were you in that?

G.M. : For a while but I found it was too much to be in both the orchestra and the glee club.

D.H. : Did you study a lot?

G.M. : Yes.

D.H. : You did that at night?

G.M. : Yes, had to. Had to do a lot of reading for History.

D.H. : Guess it's the same as it always was, you have to do a lot of reading and a lot of work.

G.M. : Right.

D.H. : Could you tell me a bit more about your friends? I noticed when we went through your scrapbook that by using the scrapbook you seem able to keep track of all sorts of people in your class.

G.M. : That's true. But, of course as Class Secretary I do and they write to me because we ask them for news and all that. Now this year I won't get that because somebody else is taking over and she'll turn over the news to me. We have what is called a "Doris Hopkins Stapleton Scholarship." She was an army officer for many years and that's for, I think it's resumed education. Are you familiar with that? There was quite an article in the last B.A.M.

D.H. : Right. A friend of mine is a Resumed Education student.

G.M. : Yes. Well we had the scholar for several years named Grace Barry from Newport. She graduated last June. Our president is one Barbara Riter. Do you know her?

D.H. : I think I've heard the name.

G.M. : She has a hard time because of grandparents that she has to care for and she's busy in a lot of things besides college-I don't know how she does it. We're hoping she'll come to speak at our luncheon.

D.H. : That would be lovely.

G.M. : But I don't know, it's probably too much to ask of her.

D.H. : Where else did people come from? There were only two foreign students. Did most people come from just around Providence and neighboring areas?

G.M. : Yes. We had people from well we had three from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. They went to some prep school, some girls school that apparently recommended Pembroke (laughter-G.M.) and three of them came and, uh, one of them was the President of the class when we graduated, a very nice girl and she's been very faithful about coming back. Well, we had, of course, a lot from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York-not too many, probably nothing like California which you might get now. Of course anybody from California-it was too expensive to travel, besides the tuition and the rest of it.

D.H. : Can you tell me more about your professors? You spoke of Professor Hastings for your freshman year. Who were some of your other favorite or popular professors?

G.M. : Well, Professor Sharon Brown was a very popular one, he loved to read; he loved to read poetry. He loved to read all kinds of things. I took a course with him in Victorian Literature: George Sand, I mean George Elliot, Higgins,...(inaudible). We did a lot of reading for that which was interesting. He loved to get up and talk, he was very popular. His grandson lives in Providence, he teaches the guitar. Both he and his wife play the guitar although she's mostly the banjo, no not the banjo, the classical mandolin and he's the classical guitar. They all themselves (long pause) he name's Marilyn, hmm, Ma Davis, I think that's who. They've been on WGBH. And now they have a little daughter.

D.H. : Any other professors stick out in your mind?

G.M. : Professor George, he taught History 1-2 in the old chapel up the top of Pembroke and, uh, he loved to roll out these great resounding phrases about history, medieval, Renaissance, whatever. That was quite a course because you not only had to know who all the-say all the Kinds of England were, but who was ruling in Germany at the same time and who was ruling in France at the same time and who was ruling in all the Italian states and, uh, they called it the....(inaudible), they called it Mystery 1-2 (hearty laughter-D.H.).

D.H. : That's great!

G.M. : We all took it whether we wanted to or not. But of course it was a very good course and, uh, one time I was going by Alumnae Hall, where the classes were held then, and here was Professor George rolling out these phrases about feudalism, or some such thing, and I thought: “Gee, he hasn’t changed a word” (more hearty laughter-D.H.).

D.H. : That’s great!

G.M. : We all took it whether we wanted to or not. But of course it was a very good course and uh, one time I was going by Alumnae Hall, where the classes were held then, and here was Professor George rolling out these phrases about feudalism, or some such thing, and I thought: “Gee, he hasn’t changed a word” (more hearty laughter-D.H.).

D.H. : Somehow these professors don’t change in that regard. What were your, let’s sort of chronicle your activities in the alumni area since your graduation. Because you told me you were President, secretary for a time, tell me a bit about what you did in those different posts.

G.M. : Well, of course, as class agent, I was writing letters all the time, urging them. I sometimes felt like a grandmother (laughter-G.M. and D.H.) to get them to give money and kind of schooling them a bit, and during the war most of the students had gone and the ones that were there were part of some training group, you’d see them marching around. They’d be marching up George Street. Hup, one, two, three and singing some George Cohan songs.

D.H. : This is World War II, you’re talking about.

G.M. : World War II. And the girls lived in Horace Mann House, I don’t know why. I suppose the boys lived in Pembroke Dorms and I remember hearing a couple of professors that I knew talking about the situation and one of them said (laughter-G.M.) “Thank God for Pembroke,” because those were about the only students left. But I would describe all this in my letters to the class when I was trying to get them to give money. I would tell them what it was like on the campus now with this marching around and all these raincoats exactly alike, and all the rest of it. I rather liked being class agent but I’d rather be class secretary, I think.

D.H. : So the class agent was just in terms of fund-raising then, and class secretary is preparing for the alumni luncheon?

G.M. : Well, keeping records and keeping in touch with people.

D.H. : Anyway you were class president too?

G.M. : Yes, way back for our 25th reunion. We held it at the field house and we were supposed to come in costumes of the period of, you know, the twenties and some people did and we had some old records, ’28-of that era, which we played. Some of them did the Charleston (laughter-G.M. and D.H.). It was a lot of fun and of course I was class president so I was in charge. But I wasn’t class president very long. They wanted me back as secretary.

D.H. : That's where you really shined, I guess.

G.M. : Yes, I guess so.

D.H. : Well, from that scrapbook, it seems like you're the perfect class secretary. I couldn't think of a better person. We talked a little bit about the prom and a little bit about May Day and the Sophomore Masque. Could you tell me in more detail about May Day and the Sophomore Masque? Like what went on and all that kind of thing. You told me a bit about how the girls had to have long hair, who were picked and-

G.M. : Well the Sophomore Masque was always something sort of mythical-like the ones we had knights and ladies and I don't think it lasted much longer than...(inaudible) when I was finished because it was so much work for all those costumes and rehearsing and everything. It had to be well planned. I don't think they had-when they had the May Day down at the field house, Pembroke Field House.

D.H. : So in other words, the Sophomore Masque was really a performance, it wasn't a dance? Or it was both?

G.M. : There may have been some dancing but I don't remember it.

D.H. : And May Day was more a dance then. Like the final summer dance.

G.M. : No it wasn't a dance at all. It was in the afternoon. Maybe somebody did some dancing but I don't remember any dancing.

D.H. : So it consisted primarily of, of what?

G.M. : Of the May Queen and her court. Maybe somebody sang, some group. I don't know. I've forgotten now. I know it was always busy on May Day.

D.H. : Well, I think your memory is marvelous for the things you have remembered. Well, I guess we could call it quits. We covered quite a bit of ground and I feel happy with it. How do you feel about it?

G.M. : Well, if you're happy-alright.

D.H. : Alright then.

