

Transcribed by Karen L. Schneider (Class of 2000) in September 1997.

Narrator: Ethel Nichols Thomas

Interviewer: Joan Wallach Scott

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Tape 1, Side 1

This is an interview with Ethel Nichols Thomas (Class of 1934) at her home in Princeton, NJ, conducted by Joan Wallach Scott on September 10, 1985.

Joan Wallach Scott: We are here in Princeton, New Jersey on September 10, 1985 and I am talking to Ethel Nichols Thomas the class of 1934. Mrs. Thomas, before we start talking about Pembroke and the 1930s, why don't you tell us now what you are about to do.

Ethel Nichols Thomas: The adventures of Ethel continue. Currently, I am in the process of selling my house at 154 Prospect Avenue. Sorting papers, donating books to various places, and doing the other mechanical things, which I shall not discuss because that is going to waste our time. But briefly, I am having a wonderful time seeing friends and planning to go to a new home. Where I can be as independent as I want to be and where I can concentrate on the things that are next to my heart. In addition to my family, which of course come first, my son, Glenn, my daughter-in-law, Jay- Jenna, and my six-year-old grandson, Justin. And then after the family, I am looking forward to reestablishing contacts with friends who have been long neglected, too long neglected. And deciding whether I am going to take a full time, a part time job or devote my energies to volunteer work. And there are so many things that interest that that is the problem.

JWS: (JWS laughs) Well, I figure that it's, it's really quite remarkable and you should remind anybody who listens to this that, uh, talking about a full-time job when you graduated in the class of 1934, is not exactly what people usually do. Tell us, tell us how you, you think about this, what is it that, that a woman of your age is doing thinking about work. (JWS and ENT both laugh)

ENT: That's, that's beautiful, that's beautiful. First of all, I'm not at all sensitive about the number of years which I have lived. In the Bursar records in Cranston, RI, on a certain page (both laugh), on July 31, 1913 there appears a record of my birth. I was born at 144 Phoenix Avenue and somewhere I have the receipt which was paid to Dr. Gordon who took care of the necessities at that time. I'm delighted that, uh, you Prof. Scott have this picture because, first of all, I'm very fortunate. And I owe my thanks to many, many people, beginning with my wonderful family, my grandparents, my parents, and, as I said in the preface of my doctorate dissertation, I owe my thanks to so many, many people. I'm reluctant to mention names because there are so many of them, but I mentioned my grandfather, Albertus Calvin, my grandmother, Julia Calvin, my father, Charles Russell Nichols, my mother, Mabel Mariah Calvin Nichols, and my paternal grandparents were Charles Nichols and Maira Nichols...

JWS: And are these all Rhode Islanders?

ENT: Yes, oh yes, yes, I haven't done very much with genealogy, but I guess my family had been in Rhode Island for a long, long time and I'm very proud of my family, very, very proud of the- they were hard-working industrious people- and I'm very proud of them and very grateful, I have good health, excellent health – I can still touch my toes. I weigh a little less than I did when I was sixteen. I'm so proud of these things. But with the fact that I realize I'm very, very fortunate and I have a soapbox speech. I believe that if a person is energetic and feels well and has the opportunities that I have had that there is no question that of course I want to do things constructively. I can't solve the problems of the world. Uh, I'm not a, should I say, a blind optimist in the figurative sense. Speaking, I realize the world's condition. I realize things that are happening. I do keep up to date with

my reading and newspapers and things of that kind. So, I'm well aware of it. I'm not sure, however, whether I am an optimistic realist or a realistic optimist. (JWS laughs) But I have had strong feelings- if we walked to work, outside the home, and make our contributions, then I think we should be able to do so without prejudice or discrimination because of the year in which we happen to be born. And, furthermore, since I was very privileged to have this fine education, I want to use it. I want to be useful and constructive, from the point of view of using constructively, if possible, any of the remains of the physical body when I leave this picture. (JWS: uh huh) I have very strong feelings about this.

JWS: Well, I think, that that is a really interesting way to, to maybe go back. You've worked almost all of your life (ENT: Yes, yes) either as a paid employee or as a, a volunteer. Why don't we go through some of the time. After you left Pembroke, well, well, when you were at Pembroke, what was your major? What did you do at Pembroke? (JWS laughs) Let's start there and then move (ENT: And, when) forward.

ENT: When I entered Pembroke, I was firmly convinced that I was the ugliest, most unattractive, most stupid human being in this world.

JWS: I find that really hard to imagine. (JWS and ENT both laugh)

ENT: I know you do! (Both laugh)

JWS: I really do! (Continue laughing) I do!

ENT: ... When I entered Pembroke, my mother made all of my clothes for me. And, being a thrifty person, she usually made them two sizes too large. Consequently, I was not exactly a fashion plate- I'm not interested in becoming a fashion plate, but (ENT laughs) I certainly wasn't then. That, in those days, we called an inferiority complex. Today, it's called a poor self-image. (JWS and ENT laugh)

JWS: That's the same thing. Right.

ENT: Yes, but, I remember in college we had a woman who came twice- her name was Miss Osborne. And, I was anxious to learn. And Miss Osborne was a person who told us how we could improve our self-image, but it was put much more tactfully, but I don't want to waste words and time here. And, she knew she couldn't tell me, she sensed she couldn't tell me that I wasn't quite so unattractive as I thought I was. But she paid me a great complement. She was so clever. She said my face had character and that satisfied me. (ENT laughs)

JWS: That's amazing - did she give, come and consult with all of the girls?

ENT: Well, (JWS: Was this unusual?) that was one of the, one of the special things. (JWS: uh huh) And those who, those who wanted to take advantage did, and, of course, I didn't want to miss any opportunities and I think that's another thing. I'd say, so many of us miss our opportunities.

JWS: Opportunities. And did she come, was it a kind of course that you had to sign up for?

ENT: No, it wasn't a course (JWS: Uh huh) She came as, today we would call it a consultant. (JWS: I see) And she came and we signed and she talked with us about posture (JWS: uh huh) and clothes and things of that kind. And I found it fun and helpful.

JWS: Oh, it's interesting.

ENT: Yes, yes (JWS: really is interesting). Yes, it was one of the extra dividends, such as speech, Mrs. Jenks Hall's speech- Margaret Jenks Hall's class in speech. I enjoyed that class so much (JWS: It's interesting.) Oh yes!

JWS: You know, now, at Brown there is a speech course- Barbara Tannenbaum's course (ENT: Great!) Which is over enrolled. They can't have enough people to teach it.

ENT: Yes, I think it's so important to be able to speak well. I remember Mrs. Jenks did so much for me and I enjoyed the acting classes and things of that kind. We did a little of it. But that's great, just great.

JWS: Oh that's wonderful. Well, let's go on then: At Pembroke you, you majored in...?

ENT: Biology. JWS:

Biology. ENT: Yes.

JWS: Now how are we going to get from biology (ENT and JWS laughs) to a Ph.D. in history, or history of education.

ENT: Well, you see, Brown- Pembroke and Brown- brings out all kinds of things in people, so you, when you go to - you never know what's going to happen.

JWS: So you majored in Biology. Did you have any contact with Dean Morriss?

ENT: Oh, yes, indeed!

JWS: Tell us something about Dean Morriss.

ENT: Oh, Dean Morriss was my mentor. She was really wonderful and I have in my possession some letters which she wrote to me. She encouraged me, she talked with me, and our relationship grew over the years and, she wrote, I went to see her.

JWS: And when you graduated.

ENT: Oh yes, oh yes, I went to see her. And I'm very proud of the letters which she wrote for me and to me. And one of the things that came later that she recommended me for a course which I took that led to some of the things I have done.

JWS: What was the course?

ENT: This course, for which she recommended me, was a course which I took in Harvard summer school during the summer of 1938, taught by Miss Edith G. Steadman, another person to whom I owe many thanks. Miss Steadman gave a six credit course. It was a full summer course which met all day. We had many speakers- I have an excellent memory. Among our speakers were Mildred MacAffie, who later became Mildred MacAffie Henton, she was then the recently

appointed President of Wellesley. We went to the Women's Prison, where a very well-known person, a Dr. VanWaters, was the head person at the prison- I have forgotten her title, now. But she spoke to us and she was very much in the forefront as far as this kind of thing happened to be concerned. Fritz Raegal has recently come from Vienna and he spoke to us. A few years ago, I went to one of the many conferences I attended and there he was, and I said, "There's no reason why you should remember me, but I was..."

JWS: But I was in...

ENT: In a summer course.

JWS: And the course was designed to teach (ENT: It was called...) women- what was it called?

ENT: The course was called "Problems and Personnel with Girls in Schools and Colleges" and as a result of that course, I heard of Dean Lucy Jenkins Franklin's course. Dean Franklin was the Dean of Women at Boston University. She was one of the speakers, also, that summer. And she had a full year course at Boston University. But, needless to say, Dean Morriss recommended me for Dean Franklin's course, as well as for Miss Steadman's summer course.

JWS: Do you think Dean Morriss was grooming you to be a dean?

ENT: No, no, I don't think so. No, I think that Dean Morriss was an educator who was outstanding in her own scholarship. Also, as I look back and think about it, we- let me say this, when I see a student come into my office, you see, I'm still thinking in terms of students in my office, I can tell immediately, a great deal about that student and if the student comes in in a certain way, I think, "That was I a few years ago." And, obviously, Dean Morriss realized that I was, I needed to develop my self-confidence. She, I probably sensed I was a very hard-working person. I wanted to learn. I wanted to, well, we said in that day, quote "Be somebody and do things and go places." End quote. And I think that she sensed this, just as anyone who loves young people and works with young people, thinks of the potential and I think that this is what happened. And I'm sure that I was, I was only just one student- she had many, many students- and I'm sure that this was not unique. I was another student at the college. Just one of many, many students.

JWS: Except that she clearly had a sense of what you were capable of and directed, pointed you in that direction. Do you think that was?

ENT: Ah...

JWS: Because she was somebody I'm so curious about. She seems to me to have picked out students and launched them along paths that were appropriate to them. And they were ultimately were very happy about moving on. In other of these interviews, we heard about how she had got somebody into medical school who wasn't sure she wanted to do it. Or got somebody to teach.

ENT: But, I think that she was- it's the essence of the teacher, the educator. There is something very special about the opportunity to work with young people. I love my people. I still should be going to work everyday and working with them. It's nonsense to not to. And I think I, I. When I was...

[Tape recorder turned on and off]

ENT: When I was counseling, I had a sign, a poster in my office. And the poster had the photograph of what we might have considered, quote, "Peck's Bad Boy," unquote. This curly headed youngster with a smile on his face. He had just painted a sign and the sign said, "You're special." So when anyone came into my office, the first thing he or she saw was that sign with "You're, you're special." And I considered everybody who came into my office a VIP. One day I asked a student, "You know what VIP means." And the person said, "Yes, Visitor in Princeton." (JWS and ENT laugh). However, we got that straightened out. I also know that there are several Princetons, including in a neighboring state. (Continue laughing)

JWS: Oh that's won - Visitor in Princeton is wonderful!

ENT: Go ahead.

JWS: Now, oh, I guess that, that my question about

[Tape recorder turned on and off]

JWS: Okay, let's keep going. So, Dean Morriss, then, you took this summer course and then, after the summer course, what happened?

ENT: After the summer course- well the summer course came in 1938- that was after I graduated from college, so chronologically we are a little ahead of ourselves here.

JWS: Right, you graduated in '34 (ENT: '34), then what did you do between '34 and '38?

ENT: Alright, between '34 and '38. When I graduated, I had a state scholarship from the state of Rhode Island for one hundred-eighty dollars, which I never saw, because one hundred-eighty dollars went to Brown University for courses. I was fortunate to get a student-teaching position at the Cranston High School, the school from which I had graduated. But not in Biology because the position in Biology had already been filled by another Pembroke alumni. I got a position in the English Department and that is how (ENT laughs) I got into (JWS: English) teaching of English.

JWS: Had you taken the English courses at Brown?

ENT: The normal courses. And I also had the possession of a letter which was written by my critique teacher, Lawrence Bliss (ENT's voice fades off into background) to a Prof. Case who was head of the, who was head of the teaching. (ENT's voice returns louder) And since you've asked that question, I have that right here. And, this is a letter which he wrote to me on January 20, signed by Lawrence Bliss. Quote, "Discussing student-teachers, past and present today, Dr. Case..." me with how you were doing. I was pleased to be able to report to him that, not only were you still with us, but that we considered you a valuable addition to the department. Dr. Case mentioned you, especially, because we were reflecting him on the circumstances that, up to and including my present student-teacher, only one out of the four had been an English major in college. I told him that I knew you had accomplished wonders in filling in your background in English literature and language, proving that with will and interest and ability the feat can be done. It has been very satisfying to me to watch your development as a teacher of English. Larry Bliss." Isn't that wonderful!

JWS: That is a wonderful letter.

ENT: I am interested today in talking about the M.A. in teaching. It wasn't called the M.A. in teaching at Brown, but it was. And my masters from Brown, '38, the masters in English and Education.

JWS: Amazing. That's really interesting because, so then, you got the masters in-

ENT: 1938.

JWS: '38. I see.

ENT: And as I got my, in the mean time I had a full-time position at the Cranston High School.

JWS: So you were both taking courses and teaching at the school.

ENT: Oh yes, oh yes, absolutely. I have never had, never- well, going back- I had a sabbatical when I was working on my doctorate, but I didn't do a semester. But I couldn't do much on it. Or I didn't want to under the circumstances because my mother was so ill this was much later and I was commuting from Princeton to Rhode Island.

JWS: Providence.

ENT: Yes, and also carrying a full-time job at the Princeton High School. And working on the doctorate and then trying to commute back and forth with mother.

JWS: The students are always curious about where you lived, uh, when you- did you commute to Pembroke?

ENT: Yes.

JWS: You were a commuter?

ENT: Yes, I was a commuter.

JWS: How did you get there? (JWS laughs)

ENT: I was a city girl.

JWS: A city girl that's-

ENT: Yes, I was a city girl.

JWS: That's something [Both talking at once "...", I see] as today as so surprising!

ENT: And how did I get there? There was, I lived at that time at 28 Lawrence Street in Arlington. It was at the top of Laurel Hill. It was at the corner of Laurel Avenue and Lawrence Street. The Union Avenue Car line stopped at my back door. Consequently, I took the, we called it streetcar then, trolley car. And I took the trolley car to Providence and often I would walk up the hill. And that's such good practice because it was a great help when I went to Turkey and conquered bills. (ENT and JWS laughs)

JWS: Well, we have to get to Turkey. So then, after you graduated from Brown, or from you continued to live - while you were doing your masters and teaching - you continued to live at home.

ENT: Oh, I lived at home. I lived at home until 1939, 1940 when I went to Boston University. But we're getting a little ahead of the chronological sequence.

JWS: No, no, I think we're okay because you got your masters in 1938 and then taught for another year - was that?

ENT: Uh, yes, until 19- wait a minute- 1939. 1939, 1940. But I had long- I was ambitious- and I wanted to be a Dean of Women. Ever since I can remember I wanted to be a Dean of Women because I believe- well, the role models I had, my own Dean at the Cranston High School, Vera Miliken, who is still with us. And also, Dean Morriss. And it seemed to me that the work of the Dean was comprehensive in that she had, in many ways she had touched the whole person. It wasn't a segment, it was a whole thing. And the things she stood for and that was what I wanted to do, there was no question. Consequently, when I finished my masters, which I began in '34, that was a student-teaching position at the Cranston High School, I stayed all day- not that I had to, but I wanted to, I wanted to learn as much as I could- then, after in the afternoons on Saturdays, I went to Brown. And, to, not every afternoon, to work on (JWS: Courses?) my masters. And I have my masters dissertation and it has to do with a suggested cost for manual arts, English course, manual arts people. For a long time, I have been interested in all people, not only the academics. But in all people, and I have thoughts about that- also, you may want to ask me about what I mean by that.

JWS: Yeah, why don't you- well, you could do that, you could tell us now, about that.

ENT: I have a feeling- people are people, irrespective of artificial barriers. And I could not exist without my wonderful friends at the gasoline station. And my friend's who take care of my roof and my plumbing and things of this kind, wonderful people. And I think it is unfortunate that sometimes we do not give the attention or respect to all people. I don't care what I person looked like or smelled like, excuse me, but everybody, I repeat, everybody who came into my office was a VIP.

JWS: And I think that is a tremendously important kind of thing. So the idea was to teach English writing and to develop a love of reading among people who would not ordinarily have done that.

ENT: Yes, yes. And, we began with where I am at this moment and, of course, with a student one has to try to sense where he or she is in his own development, in his own feelings about life. At this point in my life, I, anybody may ask me anything he or she wants. I told you my birth date. I believe that, if we- are we at that stage or do we still have hurdles? I've had many hurdles to get over, many sensitivities, but that's all a part of normal development. And I'm still looking forward to the next step (both say "step" at the same time).

JWS: Which is just such a wonderful way of thinking about this thing.

ENT: Yes, and I am beginning to understand- I'm not trying to be, shall I say, coy or anything of this kind- but I'm beginning to understand, or at least my interpretation, of why Robert Browning said, quote: "Grow old along with me. The best of life is yet to be. The last of life of which the first is made." Living things don't last in a certain funk forever. And when we reach the stage of where

we really realize that not only from, shall we say, our intellectual level, but from our emotional level and accept that. And going back to the first question, I want to be useful and I can be useful if when I get to a certain stage and I still have control over my mental processes. But I can still get to the stage where I can go to a nursing home and hold someone's hand and, from my experience with my mother, that is helpful too.

JWS: Well, it's a human contact.

ENT: Yes, yes. And there are so many opportunities, so many things we can do. I have such fun. If I go on a bus trip or if I sit down beside someone. You see, I have gray hair and I don't dye it and I don't intend to. Or bleach it or color it. But it gives me all kinds of privileges. And I have more fun and I enjoy it. On the other hand, if I sense that sensitive person wants to be left alone, I very quietly sit down and behave myself. "..."

JWS: Well now, let's go back to Boston - so you went to Boston University and you took courses and then became a dean?

ENT: No, no.

JWS: Is that the next step?

ENT: Well no, no, no. I realize- it's interesting. I spent five summers at Harvard Service School at various times. And how did that come about? Sometimes appendicitis was good. When I was a sophomore at Pembroke College, I had appendicitis. And I went to the Hope Hospital. And the Hope Hospital is now the building, or one of the many buildings, at which is owned, a building which is owned by Brown University and it is the building which, the last time I was in it, was the Music Building now, I believe. And that use to be the Hope Hospital. I tried to find the room where I was. That was a landmark in my history because, at that, in that hospital, Dr. Jones performed the operation - I do not think he was related to Helen Jones, who is also an alumnae of Pembroke. But, when I had that appendectomy, that was the time when I suddenly realized that life did not have to be the way I had always known it. And I can put my finger on it. And from that time on, my life was going to be different, and it has been different, and it still is different.

JWS: And what do you think brought about that realization? Why in that text? That's very interesting.

ENT: Yes, I've often thought about that. Yes, I had a very good nurse. And, I had a wonderful family. However, like many families, my family was very protective. I was an, I am an only child- I was spoiled, I know it. I had a doting grandfather, who was responsible for my attending Brown University. He wanted his granddaughter to have the BEST! No question about it.

JWS: And the best meant education. There was no (ENT: Exactly, exactly.) question that education was suitable.

ENT: Exactly. It is so important. When my husband died, I felt, I had such strong feelings about education; I didn't have to, but if I had had to mortgage the house, I would have done it, so that my son could have finished education at the school, the college where he began his education. It was the school, in which, he wanted to attend.

JWS: Yeah, and that was true for a girl, as well as a boy, in terms of your grandparents and parents. Of course, you were the only one, so they didn't have to make a choice.

ENT: Well, I was the first grandchild, there were other, oh by that time, I was the first of eight, but since I had been the only child of an oldest daughter- my grandfather and grandmother had four children, my mother was the only girl and the oldest. And I was spoiled. And I don't think it ever occurred to my grandfather. I don't know why, but from the very first, I loved school, I loved paper and pencil, and I loved to read.

JWS: And they encouraged it all the way.

ENT: There's no question about it. And my mother spoiled me. At first I had to do, help her with the house, but then, when I started to study more, she didn't have me do anything around the house. I could devote my whole time to studying (JWS: School.) And when she was ill, she was so ill, if I had a meeting. If I had a meeting at Pembroke, that was perfectly alright, there was no question about it. If there was some social thing, that was a little different, needless to say, I mean"...". Oh, there was no question and it meant so much. And the family was extremely proud that I had gone to Pembroke. Education was different for many people then. I was the first people in my family to graduate from high school.

JWS: From high school!

ENT: Yes!

JWS: Isn't that interesting. And then, of course, to go onto college must have been ...

ENT: This was why education means so much to me and why I am so proud of that doctorate. It's interesting the things people have pride in.

JWS: It is and interesting the way they build up over the course of somebody's lifetime. Well, now, let's get to the dean ship, how you get from 1940 to Middlebury College.

ENT: Yes, 1940. The five summers at Harvard Summer School were very enlightening and, incidentally, I met a woman there who, at one time, was married to Prof. Aiken who was one of the early developers of the computer. Now, many interesting people. The, and, at that time, a dean named Sherman- I think it was Mildred Sherman at Radcliffe and I helped with very social activities and had a wonderful time at Harvard Summer School - and she knew that I wanted to be a dean and she looked at me and she said, "You're too young to be a dean. You haven't lived long enough yet." (JWS and ENT laugh) Well, by now, people acquire, shall we say, acquire the age factor, but it's perfectly obvious now.

JWS: That's wonderful.

ENT: Isn't it? We've come full circle.

JWS: Yeah. It's true, absolutely full circle.

ENT: Yes, and also, when I entered teaching, teaching jobs were very difficult. My salary that first year of teaching after the year of student teaching. My salary was \$990 a year. Interesting!

JWS: Yeah, very interesting.

ENT: Yes, so the years at summer school and, then, what I wanted to do and I had a full, I had a position, as I said a few minutes ago, at the Cranston High School teaching, in which I enjoyed it very much. But it was time for me to move on, after I got my doctorate. Consequently, the summer course with Miss Steadman of '38- that whole year '38, '39 in addition to my teaching, I wrote to colleges over the country to find what opportunities there were for additional study and training for Dean's work. And, I was fortunate enough that, again, with the help of Dean Morriss and others who wrote recommendations, to be a member of the Alice Friedman Palmer course for Deans at Boston University.

JWS: Who had set that- do you know who set that up?

ENT: Oh, it's a very fascinating story and it was Dean Lucy Jenkins Franklin. It was a very well-known course at it's, in it's day. And I had a fellowship and it included full tuition, room and board, and any course. Also, Dean Franklin required an academic field, in addition to the dean part, in addition to the personal. So I was enrolled as a candidate for the Ph.D. at Boston University. That was the first time I began...

JWS: It was the beginning. This was in English?

ENT: In English. Oh, in English, yes. Oh, and all that time I had taken courses at Harvard Summer School, I had, for my masters, I had continued to take courses and read and it reminds me of today what is happening in the state of New Jersey. College graduates, now, are going to, some of them, are going to have the opportunity to teach without the certification, but having special arrangements. That's what happened with me and English. I have here my certificate for student teaching. But, so many of these things are unused because people think this is new or that is new. Brown University had that a long time ago. Just as, when I went to the Princeton High School, people said, "Isn't difficult to teach in this high school." "No," said I, "Not where I came from." (JWS and ENT both laugh) Not with the training which I had in the Cranston school system. Mr. Bozarus was the superintendent. Before him, Mr. Fenna had been the superintendent. A long time before that. But, and Bozarus was principal, then he became superintendent. And, then, Mr. Taylor was principal of the high school. Well, in 19-, the Dean's course, this Dean's course, I received, I went to see the superintendent who, of course, was Mr. Bozarus - he had called me Ethel because I had been a student there and wanted to resign. He said, "Ethel," he said, "We're in a Depression. I think you're foolish to resign. I'll give you leave of absence." And I said, "Oh, thank you very much, but," I said, "If I have a leave of absence, I would have to come back, and I might not want to." Consequently, I resigned.

JWS: You did resign?! That was, it really was daring because...

ENT: Oh, I know. Oh, I take risks. "... If I can sell my house in Princeton, New Jersey and I'm moving across the country.

JWS: Risks are also one of the themes, it seems to me, of your life.

ENT: The spirit of adventure. I like to say, I have an open mind and an open suitcase. I'll dare anybody to joust me. (ENT laughs)

JWS: That's wonderful. It really is. So you resigned your job at Cranston...

ENT: Yes...

JWS: And, then ...

ENT: Went to Boston University for a full year course- I had loved it- and then, after I had been accepted by Dean Franklin, I had a letter from Miss Steadman and Miss Steadman, when I took that summer course in '38, we filled out blanks about position. And of course, I filled out a blank and it said that "are you limited geographically?" No, said I. However, my travels, at that time in my life, had taken me twice to New York City, I believe; once to Gurr Reserve Conference, sponsored by the YWCA; and once to the World's Fair. But, no, I wasn't (JWS: That was it.- ENT "..."). But Miss Steadman wrote me a letter, asking me if I would be interested in a potential teaching position in Kobe, Japan. Well, of course I would have been interested. But I wrote back to her, thanked her profusely and profoundly, but told her, thanks to her, I was taking this marvelous Dean's course. I had the Dean's course the first year. I could have continued for second year, however, before I could have committed myself to the second year, another letter from Miss Steadman: would I be interested in a potential teaching position at the American College for Girls at Istanbul in Turkey. Of course, I would. And I made up my mind, if I was offered that job, I was going to take it.

JWS: So, it was Miss Steadman who was the person who kept turning these opportunities?

ENT: Yes, and I have a letter from her there also. She was wonderful.

JWS: And where was she at the time?

ENT: Miss Steadman is well-known among, by many, many people. She was mag - she was wonderful. A very outgoing and very much with it, as we say today. Up to date, she knew all of these people in her field from working with children to the adults. And she, she just knew so much, and I was so fond of her.

JWS: She was where? What at?

ENT: She was the Director of the Appointment Bureau at Radcliffe College.

JWS: I see. And you had met her during the summer school courses and worked with her then.

ENT: Well, no, no, no. She was the one who gave this wonderful course during yes, the summer of '38 with the whole big course. It was THE course that summer. It was wonderful.

JWS: But, wasn't that interesting that she kept track of you.

ENT: Oh yes, Oh yes. And, then, of course, I went to see her and later on I'll read you- I have a letter right here- a letter that she wrote me. I have my documentary of it.

JWS: So, you took the job. You got the job and you got on the boat for Turkey.

ENT: That was a long story- I don't know how much you want me to go into detail - I remember as if it were yesterday. The, I was at Boston University and the President at that time was Dr. Walter L. Wright Jr. We called him Libby when I got to know him better. He interviewed me and I had known- I knew nothing about Turkey. But, when I received a letter, I got what few things I could and I had a little black notebook and I wrote all my questions in the notebook. And he

happened- Libby Wright- happened to be in Boston and he spoke- I think it was the 20th Century Club, I'd have to check that fact- but he was speaking. And, fortunately, at Fox Hall dormitory where I had some duties in connection with this dean's course and lived, there was a woman there who happened to note that Dr. Wright was speaking. Consequently, I went to the lecture that night, spoke to Dr. Wright after. I didn't have to go to New York for an interview- he interviewed me in a hotel in Boston.

JWS: Huh!

ENT: And I had took him the little notebook and I said, "Dr. Wright, do you mind if I use this to save your time?" I had all my questions because I didn't want to miss anything. And so we talked and I told a white lie. (ENT laughs) He said, did I like lamb? And I didn't care very much about lamb, but I wasn't going to let lamb keep me from going to Turkey. (ENT and JWS laugh)

JWS: So you said you loved it.

ENT: I think I was a little more tempered than that. I did learn to like it, however, it's still not my favorite meat. (ENT laughs) But I can remember the questions that he asked me. And, he didn't give me any answer, but, then a few days later, I got a letter and somewhere in my papers, I believe, I have that letter. But remember, this was the summer of 1940. And, after I was appointed to this, of course, there was no question in my mind if I could possibly go to Turkey- I was going to Turkey.

JWS: Did your family object at all?

ENT: You can imagine, you can imagine. (ENT laughs)

JWS: Did they try to dissuade you?

ENT: (laughs) I guess by that time they knew how determined I was. And I was home. But this was- now, of course, I have a very, a much more different outlook on this. And it must have been very difficult for my family. I had been an, well, an (JWS and ENT: Only child.) Very protected. I had, of course, going to Boston was a big deal - you got on the train in Providence and so forth. I had been to Harvard Summer School and stayed there. But, here was this spoiled person. And, suddenly, she says, she said, "I'm going to Turkey." You can imagine, you can imagine. But I made up my mind that if the ship went down, the ship went down. (JWS and ENT laugh)

JWS: Well, that was probably only one of the worries that they had.

ENT: Yes, and it was really very hard on them, I'm sure. And I had a three year contract, but I stayed for four years. In the meantime, that summer, the New York office would write and say, because of the international situation, we're not sure we're going to sign you up for another job. But, of course, state the facts, as I always did. And I was about to, I was investigating other positions. And, finally, they said they were going to send me. It was the most exciting adventure. (ENT laughs)

JWS: Did you go all by yourself?

ENT: I left Providence on the midnight sleeper for New York City. (JWS gasps) And I can see my family now. I had a dog, Pal; my mother, father, Aunt Miriam, Uncle Clarence, my grandmother and my grandfather, all of them came down to the

train station. And the train station was very different in those days. There was a restaurant where one sat down at the tables. And there were other snack bars. And it was really very...

JWS: Really a nice place.

ENT: Oh my, the first time I saw that station in disrepute, I almost cried because it was a beautiful station. And, so I took this sleeper- I got on the midnight train - and I had never taken the sleeper before, but, oh, I was on my way to adventure and never stopped since, I guess. But it was marvelous. So then I got to New York.

JWS: And got on the boat?

ENT: Well, I got to the New York office. And I still keep my contacts with the New York office.

JWS: Well, why don't we talk about that for a minute now.

ENT: Sure.

JWS: The most recent job you've had has been working at the New York office helping" ..."

ENT: That was last summer. A year ago this summer, I was absolutely delighted because I was asked to work there in the archives of Robert College- in the girl's college - I taught at the American College for Girls at Istanbul. And, before I was married for four years. And then, after I was married, I taught at Robert College. And, so I enjoy it, I just enjoy it so much and enjoy the people there. Of course, this is, is a non-profit organization interested in education. And the people are wonderful, it's a wonderful "ésprit de corps" in the office and I just feel that I belong there and have such a nice time when I go in.

JWS: That's wonderful. Well, so you taught English at the American School for Girls...

ENT: American COLLEGE for Girls.

JWS: Excuse me, American College for Girls, but were most of the students American or Turkish?

ENT: Turkish. Yes, and that is an interesting story. When I was there, nearly all the girls were Turkish, Turkish citizens. And, not, then, of course, it's an interesting city. The whole history...

End of Tape 1, Side 1.

Tape 1, Side 2.

JWS: There we go.

ENT: And did interesting things. And one summer, I was a governess; I was a governess for a Turkish girl who's father was a leading dermatologist. Wonderful man. And, he and his wife were divorced and he wanted someone to be a companion, responsible. And it was extremely important for a Turkish girl to have a constant companion. Turkish girls could not do the kinds of things that I could do. And...

JWS: Were you at all limited by the Turkish rules?

ENT: No.

JWS: So, Americans could do what they wanted to do.

ENT: Oh yes, oh yes. No, I didn't feel constrained at all. On the other hand, I think it's very important when a person goes to a foreign country to respect the people of the country. And, one, some of the best advice I ever had was a letter from the people - well, a signature of Dr. Wright, the President of both Robert College and the Girl's college at that time, quote: "During his first year at Robert College, the tutor should remember to listen much and talk little." End quote. And that was good advice because customs are different and I think it's extremely important for a person to be sensitive to the customs of others. And, while you go to a foreign country, you go to learn and listen, and not because we know it all.

JWS: Exactly.

ENT: We have much to learn from other people. And I liked the Turkish people. I love Turkey.

JWS: Well, now, tell us about the ferry ride "..."

ENT: This summer, the summer of 1942, I was working, as I have said just a minute ago, as a governess to a Turkish girl. And the Turkish girl, the father had rented an apartment on the island of Heybelli, which is an island in the Sea of Marmaran. I had the day off and on my day off I had been invited to a picnic. And this picnic was being given by a Swedish woman who's pet was a monkey! (ENT laughs) She was somewhat exotic. Of course, I enjoyed that very much. And I got on the ferry boat at a place called Hissa, I believe. And it, this ferry boat stops places, and on the ferry boat already were two special people. And one was Uncle Frank and Uncle Frank was Prof. Frank Huit who was everybody's friend and he taught English at Robert College- everybody loved Uncle Frank. And with Uncle Frank was a gentleman named Louis Victor Thomas of whom I had heard because Louis Victor Thomas had taught at Robert College from '37 to '39 but had returned to the States to teach at the University of Chicago. He had been excused a year early from his contract because John Wilson - I mentioned John Wilson to you yesterday- had wanted Tommy to go back there and teach Arabic. Then, when the war came along, then the, Tommy had gone, Tommy who became my husband, had gone to Washington for the war effort and he had been sent back to Turkey.

JWS: Because of his language, because of his knowledge of the...

ENT: Because he, he was an excellent linguist, although professionally he considered himself a historian. Well, of course, he was well-known, this young man who knew languages - he was a very bright, charming young man - and he was well-known - of course, there were few Americans. We were all well-known among the American colony there. And so I had heard of him LONG before he ever heard of me and I knew who he was before I was introduced to him (ENT laughs) But when I got, we had both been invited to the same party. And when I got on the ship, of course, it wasn't a pick-up, Uncle Frank introduced us. (ENT laughs) And, it was very interesting. I think Prof. Thomas said hello and good- bye and that was it. I think so. (ENT laughs) But that was in the summer. Then, later on, why we became better acquainted. (ENT laughs)

JWS: And you eventually married. Did you marry there or did in the States?

ENT: No, we were married, we were married in the chapel at Middlebury College in Jul- on the 26th of July in 1945.

JWS: And you had come back to Middlebury College before you got married?

ENT: Oh yes.

JWS: Is that the...

ENT: I was at the Girl's college from 1940 to '44 teaching. I had a three-year contract but because of the war situation, I stayed a fourth year.

JWS: And the war- you didn't find the war dangerous or frightening? You weren't, at that point, tempted to come back?

ENT: Oh, I was young. (ENT and JWS laugh) I was young. I felt guilty- I'm still young in spirit, we have to remember that, no pessimism. I just loved the college. And, of course, I had just met Tommy and I was very much in love with him, at that point. But I stayed four years. And, then, I came home and that, in itself is a fascinating story to come home - it took me three months to get home. (JWS: Hmm.) But we'll skip that part later. That's a fascinating story. Three months to get home. And, then, it was very easy to get a position and I got this position teaching, as Dean of Freshmen and Director of Admissions at Middlebury. I just loved it. And that's another fascinating story about my interview with President Stratton. It was very interesting. The trip home was interesting in my being interviewed by the FBI when I got home. That was interesting also.

JWS: Was that because you had been in Turkey?

ENT: Oh yes! Of course, you see. Here I was still young and here was a person traveling along and she had been to that part of the world, you see. And that's...

JWS: And, so, you were really suspect. They, they- what was the point of the interview?

ENT: But, but they wanted to know where I had been (JWS: Where you'd been.) and that kind of thing, yes. They were very nice. Very, very nice. And they asked me for any information. So, I told them, I said, "Well," I said, "I can't really add very much information," I said, "You know, you had people collecting newspapers for Yale and writing articles for the Saturday Evening Post." (ENT laughs) I hope, I think they probably got the message.

JWS: The message, yes.

ENT: But I couldn't tell him very much. I had a- now, I felt guilty- it's a very good question. But I felt guilty because, here my country was at war, and, of course, if I had been in the States, I probably would have been a WAVE or a lacquer as it was, I'm sure I would have because I'm adventurous. But here I was, you see, in Istanbul, Turkey, having a wonderful time. I felt guilty because I wasn't homesick. But I was having the time of my life. There were very few single American women there. And, I had a ball. And, but I did feel guilty, with all of this suffering and so forth, I would have been inhuman if I...

JWS: If you didn't, oh, of course...

ENT: Yes, sometimes, but you know fools rush in and I- no, we had blackouts, we had, but I cannot say that I suffered one bit.

JWS: Or felt terribly endangered or anything else.

ENT: No, no. I didn't. And, then, I did some volunteer work for Miss Clary, who was head of the service center as I told you. And we worked with refugees and we went out to the ships, sometimes. And, yes, I was very much aware of it, but here again it was- and when a person is young, it has a different point of view.

JWS: That's right. Absolutely. Now, so then, you came back. You were the Dean at Middlebury for a year.

ENT: I was Dean of Freshmen.

JWS: Dean of Freshman at Middlebury for a year.

ENT: Head of Admissions and enjoyed it very much.

JWS: But you didn't continue?

ENT: No. (ENT laughs) And I left Middlebury College for the only reason, which a woman would have left at that period of history. But, this will interest people. Somewhere in our correspondence, we conducted a correspondence more by cable from Turkey.

JWS: This was you and Mr. Thomas.

ENT: Thomas, yes, Thomas.

JWS: Who became your husband.

ENT: Tommy, we called him Tommy. More by cable because it was difficult. Letters did go through, but it was difficult for letters to go through, as far as I was concerned. It was, it was- there are so many things that, that- do you want to turn it off for just one second.

[Tape recorder turned off and on.]

JWS: Okay.

ENT: The only reason that a, most people, women, would have left a position at that time was to be married. When I married Tommy, there was no question, I said there would be one career in the Thomas family and it wouldn't be Ethel's.

JWS: And, that was because you thought it would just present terrible conflicts or difficulty.

ENT: Well, no, that wasn't, it wasn't a part of it; no, it just wasn't. But, the thing that I wanted to mention, and that was somewhere, as I started to say a minute ago, in my correspondence- this was 1944, '45. We were married in '45 -this was the year '44, '45 - the man who became my husband wrote to me and said that he would give up his job in Turkey and I could keep my job at Middlebury.

JWS: Really extraordinary. Not in fact what you would have expected (ENT: No) at that period.

ENT: No, no.

JWS: But he was somebody who all of his life lived in that...

ENT: He was very special. He had a, when he was well, he had lung cancer and all of that to entail and that was a very- we have our sorrows.

JWS: A very painful time.

ENT: We all do. And, that was a very sad period. But when he was well, he had a tremendous sense of humor. He was witty, he was, oh he was so intelligent. And so bright. He knew so many foreign languages and speak them. And we had fun. He also played the piano and the organ- he had musical talent. His father sang. In the Thomas family, there is a strain of musical talent. And, he danced beautifully - we loved to dance. We danced nicely together (JWS: nicely together). And we had that light touch. It was almost as, I think of him, he always seemed young to me and I think, the Peter Pan, almost a Peter Pan touch. Almost the eternal youth kind of thing. He was slight of build and he looked very young when he was- until, of course, when he became ill, that was different. But we had good fun. He was an extremely talented, gifted person. And a very positive connotation -sensitive human being. Those were the most- I know I would be prejudiced but I have seen and worked with so many people, he had one of the most outstanding minds of anybody I ever, ever knew.

JWS: And somebody who was, from what you said before, very supportive of women (ENT: Oh yes, oh yes.) Absolutely emancipated.

ENT: And as far as women students. There was no question you see about that. And we, for example, he came down here to speak with Dean Brown and so forth. He said to me, "You buy the car." (ENT and JWS laugh)

JWS: Which is really an unusual thing now.

ENT: This kind of thing; it really was. Now, no marriage is perfect, we all have our ups and downs, but it was a very good marriage. And, I find, found that as time passed, it got better. It got better. And, a year after we married- we went back to Turkey - and a year after we were married, the day after our wedding anniversary, had we been in the States it would have been the day of our first wedding anniversary- there came into the world a young man who is named Glenn Nichols Thomas.

JWS: That's wonderful. That is just wonderful. Now, I am afraid that we're- I don't want to run out of time on this tape, so let's skip over some of these years, which I know you were doing all kinds of things, all sorts of volunteer work and- but let's skip to, then, the period when you finally resumed your Ph.D. because that brings us to the Ph.D. itself and to the subject of the Ph.D. which was...

ENT: When, I finally, finally resumed the Ph.D. - well, the Ph.D. is like those things that are always with us and have always been with us, so to speak- '39 at B.U., at Boston University.

JWS: You began it in '39 and you finished it in...

ENT: I'm sorry, yes, no, yes, '39. And, then, of course, that was outdated. Then, I started it again at Rutgers because Princeton was - well, Rutgers had my field, teaching of English Education /Counseling /Guidance. And, I wouldn't have studied at Princeton anyway -Princeton wasn't taking women. So I started

somewhere back in the '50s, 1950s. And, then, I was the A.B.D. stage- all but the dissertation, although I had done a great deal of research on the dissertation. Then, when my husband was ill and, after his death, I had, as one can imagine, a very difficult period of adjustment. And, it was, it's not easy. Then, I let the time period lapse. At that point in my life, I didn't care about the dissertation. I couldn't speak about Turkey because we had met there, we had our, we called it, courtship there. And, had visited places, like something called Ellie's Bar where, we think, might have been working for the Gestapo or something of that kind. But, of course, Tommy was working for the war effort then, so it was very convenient, you see. Here were two Americans and he was obvious...

JWS: He could speak the language.

ENT: Oh, yes!

JWS: Did you speak the language too?

ENT: I'm not a good linguist. I can keep house in Turkish. (ENT and JWS laugh)

JWS: Which was crucial. And probably you knew enough to teach the, or did the girls who come to the school know English already?

ENT: No, no. They learned from scratch. But I taught in the College. I taught English Composition, English Literature, and I taught Introductory students where (JWS: you were) I was at that point.

JWS: But it was certainly understandable at that point, that you didn't want anything to do with Turkey for a while, after that.

ENT: I didn't, I didn't, I couldn't. And then, then - oh no, I couldn't, I couldn't even face the thought of it because it was so very special to us. And I have not been back since my husband and I went together, and *Glenn*, in the summer of '62. Glenn was there for his 16th birthday. And on his 16th birthday, we took him down to the American Council and he got his own passport. Up until then, he had been appended to mine. We kept separate passports because Tommy traveled when I didn't. And that was his 16th birthday present. But I haven't been back since '62. Now, I can go back and I want to go back.

JWS: But until then, you didn't.

ENT: I couldn't. And I just didn't. So, then, after about six or seven years, I realized, after Tommy's death, I realized I wasn't getting enough intellectual stimulation with, all do respect to my colleagues. You see when Tommy was living we had all kinds of people here and, oh the Tombys and the Cannons and people like that, you see, who had excellent conversation and this kind of fun.

JWS: So you (ENT: I like all kinds of people) were really a part of this intellectual world.

ENT: Very much so and I missed it. And, I thought, "Oh, I just got to use this more." And, so then, I went back and made an appointment with a man who, at that time, was my major professor.

JWS: This was what, 197-?

ENT: In the '70s, I guess. I forgot the dates I went back - and I said, "Professor Wheeler, I have unfinished business." He had been my advisor. Well, at Rutgers, I had three or four advisors, but it was Wheeler at that point. And, I said, "I have unfinished business." Consequently- and I had been an A.B.D, I had gotten outlines and done research and everything - and I was requested, and rightly so, I had to go back as a non-matriculating student and prove myself and earn some more good grades. And I did. And, they accepted me!

JWS: That's wonderful.

ENT: Accepted me and required me to do things -and was right. And I had to - sociology, philosophy, and history. For the third time, I took a course on the History of American Education- first at Brown University as an undergraduate, the second at Harvard Summer School, the third, again, here at Rutgers. And the third course was a combination of the methods from the two - it was fascinating.

JWS: It gave you a historical perspective on the spiel.

ENT: And sociology- I hadn't had any sociology, to speak of. The first sociology class I went into, I didn't know one book from another. I didn't know *White Collar* from *Urban Villages*, you know the *Urban Villages*. (ENT laughs) But, believe me, when I took my comprehensive masters, for that doctorate, I did, and I was proud of it, I knew a lot about sociology at that point. And they, as I say, they, then - oh, I wanted to change the topic, I got books about Matthew Arnold, and then the inevitable happened - I had to go back to my first idea and that was my interest in and dedication to Mary Mills Patrick.

JWS: And, Mary Mills Patrick was?

ENT: Mary Mills Patrick was the person who, more than any other individual, was responsible for a small high school for girls sponsored by the mission. For that school's becoming an internationally known college for women - the American College for Girls at Istanbul in Turkey.

JWS: So you really went back to your own experience. You went back to the history the college you taught at.

ENT: Yes, yes.

JWS: And Mary Mills Patrick was somebody very special, as far as you were concerned?

ENT: Oh, very special! My regret is I hadn't known, I hadn't met her. But, as I say in the introduction to my dissertation, it was love at first hearing. It couldn't be love at first sight.

JWS: But tell us why? Tell us, tell us what it was about her that was so special.

ENT: Oh, I, I could identify with Mary Mills Patrick so easily. People say I was a pioneer. No, I wasn't a pioneer, but Mary Mills Patrick was. Her interest in learning, her interest in people, her talents, her abilities. She got things done. She was a good leader. She liked good conversation. She had so many things about her. Her writings. And, it's been such an important part of my life for, well, practically, since I heard of, since I heard about her.

JWS: I wonder if you would just read from the preface of your, of your dissertation because I just love this first- just maybe some of this first part up through the end of that quote.

ENT: Sure, alright, fine:

"This study had its genesis in the first seriously remembered thoughts of the investigator. When one delves into one's memory, one recalls many early thoughts, fears, and experiences. Experiences which illicit both cries of sadness and cries of ecstasy. However, this delving into memory also reveals other thoughts, thoughts which lead to queries, queries that come from the growth of the developing mind of the person. In grades one, two, and three, there were the pilgrims and the Indians. In grade six, there were knights in the Middle Ages. The question- how do these fit together?

As one develops physically, mentally, and spiritually, experiences continue inquiries multiply. Consequently later, there were other questions - why aren't women at the head of things? Why do men get paid more than women for the same kind of work? Why do women have to resign from teaching when they marry? Long before, other women had asked similar questions. There were liberated women long before women's liberation. One of these women, about whom too little has been written, is Mary Mills Patrick. About Mary Mills Patrick and feminism, the following statement has been made: quote, 'If to be a feminist means to believe in the potentialities of the human mind in which other sex these potentialities may reside. If it means a burning ambition to elevate and to widen the opportunities, lives and destinies of men and women alike. If it means the unswerving devotion to promote honesty, dignity, self-respect, and graciousness among the relations of human beings, then, certainly, Mary Mills Patrick was a feminist. She was proud to claim kinship with those so-called.'

JWS: I think that is just wonderful. And, I think, I think you belong in there too. That is your sense of identification with her, seems to me, comes from the same motive and the same...

ENT: I just feel comfortable with her, her ecumenicalism. I, I like to think I'm an - the two things Dean Morriss said that I always remember- high-mindedness and open-mindedness. And, I like to think I'm open, but I love all people, it's important. And in the spirit of adventure, I want to say a word about my dad. My dad had the spirit of adventure. I regret that it took me sixty years to appreciate my dad fully.

JWS: Well, I think maybe this is the point at which to stop. We are almost at the end of the tape and I would just like to say that it's been very inspiring for me to talk to you. And, that, I hope people will consult the papers and read the dissertation, all of which are in the collection of papers in the archives at Pembroke.

ENT: But, thank you and I'm delighted. I congratulate you and the thing with your wonderful appointment. This is, this is just absolutely superb and I am so happy about it and it's just a pleasure to meet you. I wanted to talk with you for years. But next time, I'm going to interview you.

JWS: Okay. (JWS and ENT laugh) Thanks very much.

Tape recorder shut off.