

Transcript – Arlene (Rome) Ten Eyck, '43

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Interviewer: Audrey Leland Fogels
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Track 1

Audrey Fogels: [00:00] Okay. Do you want us to start first with the family background, or maybe I should ask you first, for example, why Pembroke or Brown... Why did you choose to go to Brown? Or no, it was Pembroke, right?

Arlene Burnice Rome: It was Pembroke then. And it just seemed that it was always going to be. You know, I grew up thinking that that's where I was going to go, and there... At that time in my life, there was an enormous amount of money in the family, so that that's – that was the choice. I had taken some exams when I was in high school, and they indicated that I had business ability. [laughter] Yes! And this was how it was. You were brought up to think you were going to go to college, and I was here, and so was Pembroke, [01:00] so that's the only place I applied.

AF: And I know in those – I don't know if I should say in those days, or, you know –

ABR: No, you can say those days. They are those days.

AF: Okay, in those days, so none of the colleges were coed, right? There were women's college and men's colleges, so was this the only women's college around, or no? I am not familiar at all with –

ABR: Oh, no. Locally, what happened is if you had – it was sort of snobbish in a way, but if you had no money, you went to Rhode Island College of Education, because you could go almost practically for nothing. If you had a little bit more money, you went to URI. And then if you had

a little more money, you went to Brown or Pembroke. There's a state of mind in Rhode Island that you've probably noticed, that Rhode Islanders don't [02:00] go very far from home. I mean, in those days, they didn't. There wasn't a question. I would like to have gone to Radcliffe, but it was an idea in my head. I knew nothing. The parents, at least the people that I knew, they didn't take you around and say, "Here's Smith, and here's this one, and I like this, or here's this." You just picked where you'd like to go and hoped that you'd get in. So I did. [laughs]

AF: Do you think that was because you were a woman, and do you think men had the same opportunities, or different?

ABR: I think a lot of people – the fellows, I'm not so sure, but I think it was the tendency to go to school where your parents went. Your father, usually fathers, because not many women were going to college. There were some, but it wasn't common, as it is now. So I think you either went locally, [03:00] just found someplace that you could go, or you went, if you had a lot of money, where your parents had gone. If you went to Moses Brown, for example, you were likely to go on to Brown, although I think the men had a lot more freedom. When you look at early rosters, you see that the men had more choice. They could pick. "I want to go to Princeton. I want to go to Harvard." They had certain places. I don't know how mostly my classmates picked, but I think that it was a pretty good girls' school. Pembroke had a good reputation even then. Most of my class, or a good proportion of my class, I would say, were city girls. And some of them lived in the dorm, but many of them didn't. And it was a place [04:00] that you could go, get a good education at a good school, and still not cost you. You could live home, and not cost you an arm and a leg.

AF: Oh, so there wasn't like dormitories, and you didn't live in, or...

ABR: I didn't live in the dorms, no. There were some local girls that did, but...

AF: Mainly people commuted?

ABR: A lot of us were commuters, yes. A big proportion of us were commuters.

AF: Why do you think that was? That there were –

ABR: Money, I think.

AF: Oh, money?

ABR: I think it was just – I think it was that, and then the idea of living in a dorm when your parents lived five or six miles away didn't seem the greatest idea, either. In looking back, of all the city girls, very few of them lived in the dorm.

AF: I'm going to always ask, I think, "and what about men, for men," because one of my interests is to see [05:00] what were the differences between the opportunities for men and women.

ABR: I looked – my class is reunion-ing this year, and they send out a little book. And I looked through all the names of the men, and I didn't know very many at all. I mean, the ones that I knew, I knew in high school.

AF: Oh, okay. So there wasn't a lot of contact?

ABR: No, there was not a lot. You met them at a fraternity party, or you did meet some in class. They were, but we had Pembroke Hall, and that was our base. And what we would do – every time I'm over there, I laugh. We'd run over there as fast as we could in 10 minutes. But first of all, those were the war years. And you did get know [06:00] some people. You did get to date them, and some of my classmates did marry men from Brown. Oh, sure. There were five or six of them, maybe. But it wasn't coed.

And to show you the feeling, the last reunion that we had five years ago, on the Friday night cocktail hour, some of the gals decided they would go from our reception to the men's reception to see who was there, or whatever. And the wives of some of the men said to somebody, my classmates coming in, "What are you doing here?" As if to say, "You don't

belong.” So after all these years – I don’t even think she went to Pembroke, but, you know... And someone was very upset who had that said to them. But there were certain men in the Brown class that were – [07:00] Jay Fiddler, for example, that was very popular, very outgoing, has been very involved with Brown all these years. He’s been a trustee. And certain ones stand out as being friendly and whatever. And of course if you worked on anything like Brown Brokers, or Sock and Buskin, or any of the clubs, it did get some better. But the fact that they were war years, and that it was not considered coed...

I think the dorm girls probably had better relationships, because they were there for dating and everything, whereas the city girls tended to date people that they knew either before they went, or they were meeting locally, or whatever. So not only was there a big difference in my class between male and female, there was a huge difference between dorm [08:00] and city. And it existed – the city girls, years later, felt very left out, very alienated, and came away without a sense of having had the esprit de corps that the kids have now, whereas the dorm girls had each other and made that kind of friendship, and had a whole different experience. And nothing was done to help these two groups of city versus dorm girls. If you were very aggressive, if you were outgoing, if you had money, if you had a car – not too many people drove in those days, believe it or not. But if you had classes with someone, if you were a social climber, whatever, there were some girls that made friends with out-of-state girls, but it was not common. [09:00] When I have done a lot of calling to get city girls together or whatever, they do not look back on their Pembroke experience as this great, wonderful... A lot of them worked. A lot of them were on scholarship. The fact that you had to come by streetcar, do your work, and go home, meant that you missed out on practically everything that was going on at night. So there was a big difference. And many girls in my class that were city girls just look at that experience as an extension of high school.

AF: And you categorize yourself as the city girl?

ABR: Mm-hmm.

AF: So you would say you are one of the ones who don’t look back on it as something...

ABR: No, I don't look at it. I can barely – when I started thinking, oh, you know, what's good and what was bad [10:00], and so forth, and which professors you liked... First of all, in those days, the kids didn't go to Florida, you know. They were very, for the most part, proper behaved people. You had don't do this and don't do that. You couldn't drink, you couldn't do – you know, there were a lot of restrictions. And they didn't have drinking on the campus. But years later, I think at my twenty-fifth reunion, people were all excited, because we were going to be allowed to have some sherry at our reunion. They did at the fraternity parties. They were pretty wild. But on the campuses, on the general campus, people had a lot of restrictions.

And these people had gone from high school, and they didn't travel much in those days, and they didn't do a lot of things that make the kids now so worldly, and so at ease with each other. [11:00] I don't think we had a black – [I don't think anyone was?] black in our class. I'm pretty sure there wasn't. We didn't have... One Oriental. I know there was one at Brown. But we didn't have the wide experiences at any level that the kids had now. So we came in. It was like, go to college, and for many of them, you're going to find a guy, and you're going to get married and have children. And that's what a lot of them did. And then later on, when their children grew up, they went back for master's and did a lot of other things. But that was sort of the routine. And of course, because of the war, a lot of them accelerated, so they didn't graduate with their class. They didn't graduate at all. They left school to go off and get married with a soldier. So that was [12:00] very fragmented era. Very fragmented and very different from some of the freedoms the kids have today. [laughter] Your eyebrows curled. So I think that the dorm girls had a good time, and they met men, and so forth, and so on. Quite a few of them married Brown guys. But I think the city girls had a much harder time.

AF: And how was your family? How did they feel about you going off to college? Did they want – was this like, yeah, all the time they thought, “She's going to go.”

ABR: It was just accepted in my family that I...

AF: So both of your parents, did they go to school or college?

ABR: No, no. Well, I think my father went to high school, and my mother went to high school. And I think my father graduated. I'm not sure about my mother.

AF: [13:00] So you come from Providence, obviously, or around here.

ABR: Well, no. I came to Rhode Island when I was about three or four, actually. My mother was born in Brooklyn, New York, and my father was born in Boston.

AF: So you heard about Pembroke basically because it was here?

ABR: It was here. That's right. It was here.

AF: Okay, here they're asking you, did anyone influence you at Brown, or at Pembroke, I should say? Is there anyone you remember who had an influence on your choices there, or what you did? Or you just saw it as a place you go in, you take courses, you go out, and you really didn't have any involvement in all of the community?

ABR: Well, when I was very little, I wanted to be the head of a school for [14:00] delinquent children. For women. We used to go by a place called Oaklawn, where they kept the women delinquents, and that was very fascinating to me. I would say that Dr. [Buckland?], who was head of the Sociology Department, was very kind to me and very supportive. And I did my thesis on delinquency. I've forgotten the group. It's awful not to be able to remember all these things, but I've forgotten. There was some organization that did social work. So at one time of my life at Brown, I would go down to the courthouse and read records. You can't imagine. They had all these dusty records, and I would read all these case histories. And then I met a social worker. I think her name was Dunley or Dunleavy. [15:00] They assigned me to some social workers, and I would go out on cases with her. We went to Sophia Little Home, I remember. And she took me, various social organizations. She took me on her route. I think she came from Pawtucket. And so that was where my interests were going at that time, and you'll find out later that I kept going in that direction. So that was the thing. That, and the other thing that I got involved with, Sock and Buskin. I worked with publicity, and that was one of the things that I enjoyed doing at Brown.

I'm just checking my notes. I must say, [16:00] one of the things that disappointed me at Brown was that I took the French proficiency test and passed it, because I had had a couple of years of conversational French. And I always considered it was the worst thing that ever happened to me, [laughter] because I never learned the language. And I would say that every year, once a year, since graduation, I have said, I am going to go out and learn French, and I never do. And I still do it. I look at Learning Connection, and I see if they've got it. But they're always doing – their introductory French is always conversation and not the grammar, and that's what I missed. I'm, as you can tell, verbal enough to – imagine, I'll use that word – my way. I do crossword puzzles, and I'm sort of a literary person, although the grammar is probably going to come out terrible in this tape, but anyway. I always felt that was a terrible thing that had happened to me.

The good thing that happened to me is [17:00] there was a librarian called Miss Spofford, I think her name was. And we had to take a library course when we were freshmen. And she wrote me a note. It's around here somewhere. And she excused me from learning how to use the library, and I thought that was really pleasant. I thought that was really neat that I didn't have to take a library course, because she felt that I had enough knowledge about how libraries work. So those are two things that stuck in my mind when I was trying to reconstruct.

AF: Do you have a best memory at Brown, or a worst memory? Is there something...

ABR: Not really. I wasn't too thrilled with gym. We had a gal by the name of Bessie Rudd. She was [18:00] tough. Gym was not a good thing for us. But when I was thinking back, I did sign up one year for a course on horseback riding, and I remember going out and getting the whole outfit, you know, from top to bottom. I don't like horses particularly. [laughter] I never have. And we went out somewhere, in the Rehoboth, probably, and rode around. And that seemed to stick in my mind. And then once I took archery, and I thought that would be something that was fun, but I never did it again. I finally sold my tennis racket last year or a couple years ago at a flea market. I thought, well, maybe I'll do that, and I never did. So really, sports has never been my thing, and gym was – and swimming. You had to pass a swimming test. I don't know. Do you guys have to pass a swimming test now?

AF: I don't know. My mother told me, you know, probably before you graduate you have to swim to show you know.

ABR: Swim and dive in the pool. You couldn't graduate [19:00] if you didn't swim.

AF: I think maybe you still have to do that. I'm not sure. [laughter] My mother has told me that, and she went to college a long time ago, as well, so I don't know if still works.

ABR: That was a pain in the neck to have to go and swim, and that part of gym. Gym was really not the greatest.

AF: How did the course work? Did you have requirements? Did you have to do this, this, and this, or could you choose? You know how now it works, you just open the book and you take whatever you want.

ABR: Oh, no, we had requirements. You had to take certain – and I have those papers somewhere, but they're not... And you had to take something in the sci– biology, and you had to take Freshman English. Freshman English. You know, I had won, when I was in high school, I came in second place in the Anthony Medal of writing. In Sunday school, I had won prizes for essay and everything. I was helping male friends [20:00] when they went to Brown to help with the English. And I got there, and you had to write, I think it was two themes of 250 words. Then you had to write thousand-word themes. I didn't have enough experience. I did well on the 250. I could get through that. I didn't have enough in my life to tell you anything that was a thousand words. [laughter] I had to repeat. Me. Nobody could get over it. I had to repeat Freshman English. That was a bad scene. [laughter] And the funny thing is, in all my life after that, the kinds of things that I did, I did a lot of psychological reporting type material, and my writing always pulled me through. When everything that I did was the themes afterwards, but that Freshman English. That was something you had to have. And the French requirement, well, that was a disaster, because I [21:00] – I'm just so disappointed that they didn't make me take it.

Somewhere along the line – I don't remember about the math requirement. The math requirement, I think, was linked up with something else. It was either math or biology, or... I had

to take something so I took biology, classics. I took a course in comparative religion. I liked that. And political science. All we did was we read. It was European History, and the book was that thick. And all we did was read. You know, it was so unimaginative. Just committed it to memory. And we had a lot of, commit it to memory, without really talking about things, or discussing things, or whatever. And the choice was narrow. And the other thing is that, again, the young men were going off to war, so [22:00] the professors were limited. And then I took sociology, which I liked, and psychology, which turned out to be experimental psychology, which was disappointing.

As I look back, my own nature was practical. I have to do something with it. If I want to learn something, it's because I want to do something with it. When I went to get my master's degree, I was much happier, got much better marks, and graduated with honors. And I got my jobs.

AF: And did you go back to Pembroke?

ABR: No, no. I went to BU. But that's another story that comes later. I went back to BU. I went to BU.

AF: And Pembroke and Brown, were there the same teachers, or no? [23:00] Professors? Was it like two completely different schools or colleges, or did they have something – do you know what I mean?

ABR: Yeah, I'm just trying to think. I think the Brown professors, for the most part, taught female classes. The classics, I remember, was a mixed group, but you just went in and sat and went out. But a lot of the – the biology was all female.

AF: Okay, which means that some courses were only for Pembroke, and some courses were only for Brown, and some courses were for both?

ABR: Yes, and some courses you took at Pembroke, like the Freshman English, a fellow came over to Pembroke Hall. Whereas other classes, we went over to Brown, but we were female classes, or we could be mixed. So, you know, it was different. Things varied.

AF: Did you have to wear something special, or were you allowed to wear pants?

ABR: No, no. [24:00] Well, nobody wore pants. Nobody was. No, no, no. But we didn't have uniforms or anything. You know, we just wore whatever we wanted to wear.

AF: Was there like a whole etiquette you had to follow? For example, my mother was telling me, for example her. She went to Carleton. And she said before sitting down, everybody had to – there was this headmistress who came in, and everybody had to go up, and then wait until she sat down, and it was served and everything.

ABR: No, it was more or less informal. We had to get dressed for chapel. We had chapel – I can't remember if it was once or twice a week, but you had to go to chapel. Often chapel wasn't that bad. I don't have any really negative memories of chapel. Each class had their own color. Like when you got your gym – I think we had [25:00] maybe sweaters with a yellow trim or whatever. Our class color was yellow. It came through the gym department, you know? Whatever. I think we had these (inaudible) and college sweaters with yellow trim. Also, maybe we had yellow socks. We were assigned the color yellow, and that stayed with my class right through till now. That was their color. I donated my – five years ago, I guess it was – I finally donated my gym suit, which is a little brown top and bottom, and my tank suit. We were issued tank suits for swimming. I don't know about the sneakers, but we had the socks, and the sweater, and the gym suit – two-piece gym suit, [26:00] shorts, you know, and a sweater. And that was issued from the gym department, and that's where we got this color yellow.

AF: Your class, which means men, as well, had that...

ABR: I don't know. No, this was just for girls, everything about that.

AF: Were you restricted to some classes as a woman, or are there some classes you could not take?

ABR: I don't remember. It just seems to me that it was set up that if you took, like biology, and it was up – because the labs were on the Brown campus, it was an all-female class with a Brown professor. Psychology over there. Sort of where Leeds is now, there were these old houses. Brown had the equipment, so you went over there to take your class, but there were no men in the class. It was a Brown man, you know, Brown professor, with females.

AF: [27:00] So you were never mixed in classes?

ABR: Classics we were. We were mixed in classics. I don't remember sociology at all, but I know that we were mixed in classics. You didn't take that many courses, either. I think it was four – was it four a semester?

AF: That's what we have, yeah.

ABR: Four, four, four, four. Something like that. But really aside from the social. And then there were – I think the Brown men had their own fraternities, so if you were dating a guy at a fraternity, that's what your social life was more or less like. And my experience is probably different from someone that lived in a dorm and took economics, or whatever. Math. Some of the subjects that I took, maybe those weren't popular with men. [28:00] I don't know.

AF: I read this. And apparently, when you were doing commencement, and apparently it's implied in this question that men and women had different seats or different places during commencement. Was that so?

ABR: I think the men went first, and I think we went afterwards. I don't remember. I don't remember, but I don't think we went down with them. I don't remember that much about being involved with men. And the other thing that surprised me was that part of my class accelerated and left in February. And I didn't know that till years later, that a lot of them went to work, or

got married, or did whatever they were going to do. So some of my classmates never walked down the hill at all [29:00] till years later, in fact. Five years ago, somebody walked down. They hadn't done it. They'd either left, or whatever. So that whole period was fragmented. For me – I don't know how it was for anybody else, but I think the girls went down together. As a matter of fact, they must have, because we still do, you know. The last time we went down, we form as Pembroke. See, my class is not merged yet. It probably will. Not this time, but there will be some getting together of activities, but it's one of the few classes that has not officially merged. So no, we thought of ourselves as Pembrokers, and that was it.

AF: What did you feel about this merger, since 1971?

ABR: I have very mixed feelings. I miss [30:00] – just being a part of one big college, there are a lot of advantages, not only in classes, or activities, or friendships, or getting to know people better, or whatever. I think not having that was a loss, to be a part of the whole. And especially where we went through. The biggest proportion of our class in those days was male, and most of us didn't know any of them. So you went through not knowing your classmates. You went through four years. As I say, I look through the list. And other people have told me that, the city girls. I'm not talking about the dorm girls. But city girls that I am in contact with... This reunion, they're going to have some activities with the men, and several of them said to me, "I've looked through the list." You get this little booklet that tells you your class members, and they don't know anybody. Now, they might have known a few in the class, [31:00] girls dating guys a little bit older, so they might have dated some men one or two years older. So they just don't know these people, so I think that was a loss.

On the other hand, I don't believe in total unisex. I think men should have their places to go, and be with each other, and communicate with each other, and I think females should, too. And I think what has happened in life is the females have said, no, no, we're going to have this for us, and this for us, and this for us. And you stay away, but then they say to the men, we want to be in your place, too. And they have taken away...

- End of Track 1 -

Track 2

ABR: [00:00] (inaudible) I'm talking about whatever it is, Kiwanis or the University Club. And to take and say, no male can ever have a club that's his own because it's discrimination, and yet women have all these sewing things, whatever they are, women's groups, and support groups, and everything, that men can't get into. And it's gotten very lopsided. So it's a mix. I think if you go to a women's school, you have a certain kind of bonding with women that's very nice, but you do give up something else. I never really – I looked at that, and I really have never been certain of how that should... We started out that way, and it was that experience, but we missed a lot. And maybe things are good at one age and not at another. But [01:00] if you're going to go to a girls' school and go all the way through, I think that's fine, but this business of being a part of Brown, you have a Brown diploma, but not being part of Brown, is probably not a good idea. If you're going to be there, you might as well be a part of the whole.

AF: Are you saying that you didn't have a Pembroke diploma but a Brown diploma?

ABR: Yes, yeah.

AF: Oh, okay.

ABR: So we were really like a little section of Brown. Sort of you're there, but you're not that important. We were not that important in numbers, we were not that important in female teachers, we were not... There were just a lot of...

AF: And did you feel that towards the faculty, the way they treated you, or not at all? Or did you feel some by men, or...

ABR: Oh, no. I think the men just didn't want to – they were there at Brown, it was their college, and they wanted you [02:00] there for dates, but other than that, I don't think they thought much about you. And then they were busy with their lives. As I say, a lot of them went off to service, and so that was a very tough time. But I think if they're going to be, either you go to a place that

– like Wheaton is just changing, but Wheaton has been a girls' school. It's been fine. They've loved it. They've had wonderful experiences. If it's that kind of a school, fine. But if it's going to be like Jackson and Tufts, or Radcliffe and Harvard, where you're either a part of it or you're not. And I think that probably in the long run, looking when I go over to the campus, and seeing the kind of joy that's over there, I'm very envious. I look and say, oh wow, would I like to go. Now I'd like to go. [laughter] I'd like to turn back the clock. Now I'd like to be there. I think it's a very exciting place.

AF: It is a really [03:00] exciting place, yeah. So I think we've been through all the questions for Brown and Pembroke. Is there anything you want to add, or do you want to go... I don't know.

ABR: I'm just going through.

AF: So maybe should we see what you did after Brown, and how that (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

ABR: Then life gets a little more interesting. [laughter] Do you mind if I smoke?

AF: No, not at all.

ABR: You want one?

AF: No, thank you. After Brown...

ABR: And I left.

AF: Like the job history, and basically what I want to know, especially what you did after [04:00] Pembroke or Brown, if Brown or Pembroke had any influence on that, or if you think you did it on your own. If you had been to another college...

ABR: Well, all right, let's see. Are we ready?

AF: Mm-hmm, yeah. We're ready.

ABR: All right. When I graduated, I took some civil service exams and became a social worker. I started probably in July or August of 1943, and didn't like it at all. They assigned me to old people [05:00] out in Conimicut, and these people had – they were living terrible lives. They were given little tiny bits of money. You had to find out if someone gave them a gift. If a son gave them money, it would be subtracted from their allotment. It was terrible. It was just – I hated it.

And I saw an ad in the paper from a place called the Emma Pendleton Bradley Hospital. And they were looking for somebody they called guides, teaching guides. And you taught in the morning. You had a few little – I think the enrollment at Bradley at that time was something like maybe 50 kids, so you might have had four or five kids in the morning, two or three, whatever it was, and then the rest of the day – you were like a camp counselor. You could get there. [06:00] The shifts were 7:00 to 3:00. You'd be there by seven o'clock in the morning, see that they get up, get dressed, go to the john. You waited the – they ate in this – they had this big dining room. You served them. You made copious reports on every little thing that they did. Every Wednesday you had to report.

And Dr. Bradley would sit there. Now these are still war years, so there weren't many men around at that time. Dr. Bradley was, I think, the only male there, and the couple of athletic directors. So I went from this very sheltered life into the world of disturbed children. And you had to go out and do sports with them, you know, just like being a teaching camp counselor. Playground and recreational activities, weekly and monthly [07:00] reports, observation, reports on drug therapy. Our observations helped Smith, Kline, and French get their patents on Benzedrine and Dexedrine. We were doing the research for Benzedrine and Dexedrine in those days. I became a den mother for Cub Scouts.

Oh, here it says. I stayed in social work for 16 weeks in public assistance. That's as long as I lasted. Now I stayed at Bradley until I got sick. I got pneumonia. I'm trying to see. I left Bradley, and when I recuperated, [08:00] I went to Moses Brown Lower School, and I stayed there a semester.

AF: As a teacher?

ABR: As a teacher. Oh, before that, I stayed at Bradley a couple of years, and then I decided I had to do something else. So I went up to New England Home for Little Wanderers. That was a disaster. [laughter] Oh, it was terrible! I had the little tiny room as big as a bathroom, and it was, you know, it was just awful. So I came back to Bradley, and I came back as a group leader, you know. In a certain age group, it was my responsibility to be – I think they were the 8- to 10-year-olds. They had their own separate little room, and they had their own separate little furniture that we designed, and that was fun.

Then I got pneumonia, and I went back to Moses Brown. I went to Moses Brown. I stayed there a semester. And then they called me from Bradley and asked me if I'd like to be director of education. Yes. So I ended up being the director of education at the psychiatric hospital for [09:00] children at Bradley Home. And Bradley is now part of the Brown medical facility, if you don't – I don't know how much you know about Bradley.

AF: No, I know very little.

ABR: It was the first – it was the only residential psychiatric hospital for children in the country. So this was pioneering.

AF: This was really big.

ABR: Some of the first studies in electroencephalograms were done there. Drug therapy studies were done there. I was fascinated. It was hard work. You could work the 7:00 to 3:00 shift, or you worked 3:00 to 11:00. The 3:00 to 11:00 shift meant that – I think my first night on duty, there would be one person downstairs with all these rooms where they played and everything. Upstairs would be all these rooms, the big dorm room, and then all these little rooms. And that first night on duty, one 12-year-old kid. Now when she was 12, I was about [10:00] the same size, you know, as she was. They'd all gone to bed, and she threw marbles down the whole corridor. Well, they'd had a history of somebody that worked there before me where they'd broken the beds apart. Now you're alone with [laughs] 40 kids. One. [laughs] So that was a

whole growing-up period. I learned to swear there. I started to smoke. I hadn't smoked before. I fought. I lived with these children. And I loved it, but it was very, very hard.

Then I decided – there were a bunch of us that... Skip up to '52 here. This is really terribly done, I must say. [11:00] Oh, somewhere along the line, I went out and got a certificate to do Stanford-Binet testing, and I got a certificate to do Wexler testing. So I thought I'd be a school psychologist. But in the meantime, I had very sick parents, so I got very sidetracked.

AF: When you say sick, mentally or physically?

ABR: No, no, no, just physically, a lot of... My father was a war veteran, and he had been wounded, and gassed twice. My father was, again, was a minstrel singer. And he went to service, and he was gassed twice, and so forth. So he had lung damage, and he had a lot of problems with that. And my mother – between them, they were in the hospital 17 times. So from the time I got out of college till the time they died, I was busy [12:00] with sick people. And that sort of slowed me down a little bit.

But my experience at Bradley Home. I became director of education. I set up individually tailored programs for about 50 children. I supervised five teachers. I supervised the testing programs. I ordered the supplies. I did clinical reports on the behavior and progress of all youngsters in school. I participated in clinical conferences. I taught. I lectured in the community. I had contacts with other schools in placing these children out, and finding the right school, and so forth, and so on, when the children were discharged. And that went on until 1951. [13:00] In 1947, I was at Moses Brown Preparatory. I was there as a teaching assistant in the fourth and fifth grades.

I guess in the early days I did the same things that I've mentioned, including playground and recreational activities. That was awful. We had to go out in the coldest of weather. They put those kids out, and we'd have to be out for a couple of hours, rain or shine, and freezing to death.

So in 1951, quite a few of us decided to go to Boston University and get master's degrees. And I was accepted into the reading clinic. I thought, well, this sounds pretty good, so I went into their reading clinic, with Dr. Durrell and Helen B. Sullivan, who were the top people in those days. They wrote books, and wrote tests, and did everything.

[14:00] And I got my master's degree, and then I got a job in Winchester, Mass., at the junior high school. And there I was teaching a mentally retarded group – so-called mentally retarded. They were not that bad – and a remedial reading in the afternoon. And I stayed there a couple of years. And then because of the home situation, and what it was, I came back here. This was my parents' house. And my neighbor was the assistant superintendent of schools in East Providence, so he wanted me to work for him. So I started work for the city of East Providence, teaching the brain-injured and the emotionally disturbed children from ages 7 to 14.

[15:00] Let's see. My interest in libraries surfaced again, and I was invited to be on the board of trustees in one of these Providence libraries, which I did. In the meantime, I'm always taking courses. I'm taking courses at RIC, and throughout this whole period. No, we're up to what, '52, when I'm in Winchester, and then '54, where I'm back here. And I would go up and take courses at Boston [16:00] University. Before I – no, why is that there? I guess that's a typical course. But I was taking courses at RIC. I continued my education on my own. So I got my M.Ed. in 1952, and I was elected to Pi Lambda Theta, the National Honorary Teacher's Society.

And I'm glad to see this. In the summers between 1939 and 1943, I worked summers, and one job that I had – I just finished reading the major invasions of Russia. And one of the jobs I took between [17:00] '39 and '43 was in a place called Franklin Machine and Foundry, and I went in as a mail clerk. But I discovered – it was very hush hush, but they were making either bullets, or bullet machines, or both for Russia. Now then, you did not have the television, so that you really didn't know what was going on. You would hear about things. It's very different. It's so different now, where you're really there. You didn't get as involved in the world, but I knew that they were making these bullets or bullet machines. I saw them. I remember. They may have just been making the machines that make the bullets. I'm not sure. But anyway, this is what was going on. They were sending these bullet-making machines to Russia when Hitler was invading Russia.

AF: And you went as a mail clerk?

ABR: Yes. I would take the mail around. I would take the mail [18:00] around to the various departments. And I think I got fingerprinted, you know. It was all very hush-hush. And I was

trying to tell my husband the other night. I said, you know, I have to look it up and see, because in those days you didn't always get Social Security. It was just coming. And I don't know whether I got paid Social Security or not. And we were talking about, in this report, in the invasions of Russia, how much help they were getting from the United States. And I have to see if I can find some paper that tells me exactly which of those years that the United States was helping Russia. I'm not sure that they were helping them before they declared war?

AF: I think it was they started saying that they would give help a little before they declared war, and I think it was in 1942 that they really started.

ABR: And it may have been. As I say, I've got '39 to '43.

AF: Yeah, I think it's '42.

ABR: And [19:00] that says yes, we were doing that. But you never told anybody. I mean, you had badges, and you were not to say a word. And you know, if you tell me don't say a word, I wouldn't say a word, so... But when I was reading the book, they didn't mention that the Russians were getting as much help, or whatever that they were getting. It was very secret.

AF: And they were getting a lot of help, yeah.

ABR: Right. People just didn't know what was going on. But anyway, well, that's up to '52. I can't believe that I just had terrible resumes, now that I'm looking at this stuff. I went to Winchester. That's right. In '54, I came here... [20:00] In '54, I came to East Providence, and I stayed until 1963. And in this period, my mother had died, and my father had been hospitalized with cancer of the colon. And he seemed to get better. He did get better for 10 years. He died 10 years later.

And when he got on his feet, I said this is it. It's finally time for me to have my own life. So I took off. I took a year's leave of absence, and I walked the streets of Boston, every employment agency, and they were telling me – by this time, I'm making fairly good pay [21:00] for females. When I started at Bradley Home, I was making \$80 a month. By now, I'm up to

about maybe \$6,000 a year, which was not bad for women. I could not get a job. Nobody wanted anybody with a master's degree, they said, for the kind of money I wanted. Because I think my cousin at that time was working for Stone and Webster. He had started with Stone and Webster Engineering in Boston, and I don't think he was making as much as an engineer as I was making in teaching at that time. So to get that kind of money and get a decent job was very hard.

And I finally – I really wasn't equipped for anything except this very specialized stuff, so I finally ended up in Sylvania as a technical librarian. [22:00] And I was there a short time, and working in industry it was a whole new world. It was so disorganized. It was so petty. We would go out for lunch. Now, here, teaching, every little thing you did, you couldn't – when I started out, you couldn't wear nail polish. They weren't too happy with lipstick. And God forbid you smoked. You know, there were all these restrictions, still. And I got up to Sylvania, and they take an hour and a half at lunch with a cocktail. It was a whole different world. But I realized that I'd have to get a degree in library science, which I thought was deadly. And so I was there a very short time, and they started to dismiss people. They had their first firing of people, and it was the first time they'd done it. And I thought, well, I'm the newest one in this library. I'm going to go. Well, no. [23:00] I didn't. They kept me, and they fired the young girl, the cutest, most popular girl, that had been there first, and let her go instead of me. Well, that made me very popular. Oh, that was not good. I think I started in July, or June – I wasn't there long – but by August, I said to myself, you've got to get yourself back in teaching, where you have – you're a single female, and you need some kind of security, and certainly tenure. When you have tenure, they can't fire you.

So I started again. On my lunch hour, I would run out to Belmont. I went out to the wealthy communities. I went out to Belmont, and by now, I've got all these ideas, and all this excitement, and you know, I've got some background, and I've got some experience, and I'm really ready to roll. [24:00] And everyone was suspicious. I'll never forget that principal at Belmont. He said to me, "Do you think your work in industry has done you any good?" In other words, anybody that had left teaching and now wanted to come back was suspect. And, you know, they're beginning to look, what's wrong with this one? I can remember saying to him, well, you know, I don't want to work for a place, a school department, that doesn't think that my having had the courage to leave teaching, go out and see a little bit of the rest of the world, and decide, well, fine, but it's not for me, and come back – I don't think that's a minus, you know, if

you don't. And I learned. I had quite a few ideas about putting people, emotionally disturbed or mentally retarded people, into industry, and how you would do it. And I was really popping with ideas.

And I didn't have any luck at all until I went to Newton. And [25:00] they had a special education department that was segregated. They were all at one school at the top of this big hill [in Oak Hill Flat?]. And they had the mentally retarded there, and then they had these classes for emotionally disturbed kids. And I interviewed, and I got the job. So here I am back in special ed. again. And it was hard. Some of these kids were really tough, but I met wonderful people.

In fact, Sunday we're getting together. One of the women is going to be 80. And one of the guys that I worked with, who I keep saying to, "George, are you 20? Are you 25 yet? Are you 30?" You know, right through the years. We've been friends all these years, and we're going up to Newton Sunday. We get together two or three times a year. [26:00] I mean we're still – they were major. They were family. It was wonderful from that point of view. We've just had wonderful, wonderful times with these people.

So I'm up there, and things are changing in the education field. And I moved into a new apartment building and made some new friends there. And somebody invited me to a party. By now it's '66. Someone said, why don't you go to this Mensa party. So, that's a good organization. You might like it. So I did, and that's where I met my husband.

Now, let's see. To go back... In the meantime, I had spent a summer at the University of Vermont, [27:00] taking courses, including play directing. And the reason that I mention this is that I – now I'm going to do the things I like. I took golf, piano lessons, and play directing, at their Champlain summer theater. And years later, I was cleaning up some of this junk that I have around, and I found the playbill. And the Pembroke club had been invited over to Leeds to see a production, and the guy that was doing the directing was a fellow by the name Don Wilmeth. And I had seen him when I was at the University of Vermont. He was one of the actors. He was one of the equity actors. So I brought the playbill with me. And they had a dinner, I guess, and I managed to sit next to Don [28:00] and his wife. And I managed to sit next to Don and his wife, and I showed him this, and I said, "Were you there?" And he was. And I think his picture was in this little playbill. I said, "Would you like to have this?" And he said sure. So Don is down here. And then I wrote to the head of the department up there, and I said, I found one of your people down here. He's now done very well at Brown. He's one of the top people. I don't know whether

he's taken – he's the top one in Brown theater, Don Wilmeth, or not. But anyway, he's made quite a name for himself in theater. That was one summer.

One summer, I went to the University of New Hampshire and took therapy courses and that sort of psychological courses, whatever. One summer I went to Harvard, to their extension school. Then I went to Boston University and RIC and all these other places. So I [29:00] kept my education going. I joined the American Association of University Women at one time. I belonged to the Citizens' League in East Providence to try to get a city manager. And I was a library trustee. In later years, I tried to get a parents' group going in East Providence, became vice president. I don't like to be president of anything, but vice president of a Friends of Library group. I tried for a year, but the community wasn't that receptive. So those are some of the things that I see myself doing.

AF: And so what you did after was (inaudible). Did Pembroke encourage you to go out afterwards when you finished and get a job, or did they show you what kind of jobs you could have? Did they have an orientation program [30:00] for after college, or nothing?

ABR: No, no. They weren't helpful for me. I think that they gave me the background. They gave me four years of my life to be studying, to be learning. And I think that they gave me a facet of my life that continues along with everything else, because I got – well, let's put it this way. I stayed in – I retired [31:00] in 1973 and moved back here again. And at that time, I got myself very involved with class activities. So if you want to go on to my class activities... So I established the first – let me go back to class activities. Now I'm all on my activities. In the fifties, in 1955, in that period, I was class secretary of my class. In 1959 – oh, we've got to stop.

- End of Track 2 -

Track 3

ABR: [00:00] Moved back to Rhode Island in 1974. And the first thing that I did was start the first off-year luncheon for my class. I felt that we were getting to be of the age where every five years was too long to wait. And so I got in touch with some of the local girls, and we had our

first off-year luncheon. That was 1974, and there has been one ever since. And I had been, in the fifties, secretary of my class, but I then became treasurer of my class. And I had been on the reunion committees and so forth. As [01:00] part of my interest in my class, I was co-chairperson of the next big reunion, and then chairperson of the reunion after that, so I got very involved with all the reunions. I became very involved with all the reunions, and getting in touch with people, and trying to get the city girls to feel some sort of togetherness. So I would call them, and bring them back into the fold, and let them have their own group. And it was very successful.

Then we got involved in these competitions. So I began to make these big scrapbooks. [02:00] This is duplicate stuff, but the big scrapbooks, if you want to look at them, are over at John Hay, there. And if you want to look at – it gives you – you had to do it in sections of different categories of what your class did throughout the year. So we did win two prizes for class participation. And if you're going to [Maddock you'll?] say women of '43, because these scrapbooks... I have number four here, and number five will get done eventually, I hope.

So then, one of my classmates kept pushing for me to join the Pembroke Club. And the Pembroke Club started out as a club for Pembroke women, but it's now more open. So they wanted me to be on the board of trust– the [03:00] board. It's not trustees, but the board of that. So I got involved with that, and I've been involved with that for quite a few years now. I took Hospitality Committee. So I've been working on Hospitality Committee, and I went to a meeting a week ago, and discovered that they have nominated me for co-program chairperson next year, so I'll be doing programming. So I've made the circle.

AF: And it interests you?

ABR: I've made the circle of sort of being the kind of person that I wasn't when I was a kid. And in the meantime, I left out one interesting part of my life. It's not on my resume. When we got back here, we found a Unitarian fellowship. It was an intellectual type of thing. It met in a storefront. [04:00] And every Sunday morning, they had a different speaker. A lot of speakers from Brown. Just super. And so, we got involved with that, and I became treasurer [laughter] of that. And then I became vice president and program chairperson. And in the year that I was, I programmed a Sunday event every Sunday for a whole year, and practically every Friday for a whole year, which was a little much. And I had all kinds of people. People from Brown, and I

can't think of his name now, the fellow that wrote *The Harrad Experiment* came up. His name slipped me.

But anyway, we had a wonderful year of doing all these programs and meeting all these people, and the thing that thrilled me most about [05:00] this group is – I never liked Rhode Island. I always wanted to get out of it. When I came back with a husband, first of all, it was a whole different thing. But a lot of new people had come in. In this mediator fellowship, there were people from all over the country. You know, when I taught in East Providence, you'd go to school, and everybody came from Rhode Island. It was just, that's the way it was. And when I went up to Massachusetts, I began to see all these different license plates, and it felt so much more sophisticated to me. And now, of course, when I'm at Brown, and I still look at license plates now. You know, they're from here and there, and here and there.

And I noticed – I was reading something. I guess it's the new Rhode Island magazine about housing or something, and they're talking about an influx of people from Boston and wherever [06:00] coming into Rhode Island, because it's cheaper to live here than it is in Boston. It's still not cheap, but a lot of people coming in and making the state quite an interesting place. It's small, but there's a lot to do, and it's very compact. And the whole thing changed, from wanting to get out of it all my life, getting out, and then finding myself back. And I thought, oh my god, I'm back here. And then finding what a gem, and doing all the things that didn't get done in my growing-up period. So it seems to me I've made this circle.

AF: And are the people in your class receptive to all your organizing?

ABR: Oh, yes. I mean, new people took over, and I haven't been as active. Turn that off, please.

AF: Okay. It's just about this period of women, period of time was...

ABR: All right. It seems to me that [07:00] the women who graduated from Pembroke when I did have had to make more adjustments that probably any other group of women in history, because they were brought up in very restrictive ways. The war came, which changed their lifestyles in many ways. Children came along, and they had to face and deal with all the ways that – children have always behaved differently, but it's really such a difference now with birth

control, abortions, drugs, living together. And so in a brief lifespan, there have been enormous sociological changes for this particular age group. And I think, probably, having gone to [08:00] a girls' school gave them a good foundation for being able to weather all these things that have happened. And to my knowledge – I haven't figured out numbers – we've had very little divorce. We've had some, but on the whole, the lifestyle of most of my classmates has been quite stable. And even the places where they live has been fairly stable compared to younger people that are moving here, there, and everywhere. So I think that having gone to a school like Pembroke gave women a lot of dignity, and gave them a lot of pride. And especially in later years, wherever you go, people say, [09:00], oh, you went to Brown, because it does have a certain cachet and status. And it's okay to feel good about something like that. I can remember when I was taking courses at Harvard summer school. Now that's back many, many years ago. And people always say, where did you go to school? And I said I went to Brown. And this woman from the University of Chicago said, you must be brilliant. Well, you know, I'm not brilliant. But it was fun. It's a nice investment to be able to have had that experience, and I only wish I could... You know, I wish I were going now, because it looks – there are so many –

AF: It's amazing.

ABR: – more opportunities, and so many more understandings and ways of developing young people, or whatever. But I think we did what we did, and we got what we could. And it certainly... You have [10:00] a little capsule of one little girl, which I was when I started, you know, naïve and whatever, going through her life.

AF: That's great. [laughter]

ABR: And I might as well add it on the tape, that this little girl did marry a count, and got something from her education that could find someone extremely bright. Apparently I needed to be. You know, I didn't get married for a long time. I got married – we celebrated our eighteenth anniversary in April, so I was a very late bloomer. And I live in a world of constant education.

AF: That's so great.

ABR: If I could remember everything that my husband tells me every day about everything, you know, I would be quite smart. [laughs] [11:00]

AF: And that you tell him, as well. [laughter]

ABR: But it did give me those good backgrounds, and it allowed me to be myself. And I turned out to be a case history, not a case.

AF: That's great. Okay, well thank you very much. I appreciate it.

- END -