

Transcript – Josephine (Russo) Carson, Class of 1938

Narrator: Josephine (Russo) Carson
Interviewer: Lori Wirth
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Track 1

Lori Wirth: This is Lori Wirth interviewing Mrs. Josephine Russo Carson, a 1938 graduate of Pembroke College in her home in Newport, Rhode Island, on Tuesday, November 30th, 1982. Mrs. Carson, why did you decide to go to college? Did you have parental encouragement? Had your siblings gone to college?

Josephine Russo Carson: Well, I was the oldest of three children, and I have decided when I was 10 that I wanted to go to college, and my parents thought this was all right, provided I stay within the state of Rhode Island. I had wanted to go to a school in Boston but they said, no, as long as there were schools in Rhode Island, I'd have to go to a Rhode Island school, so I ended up at Pembroke.

LW: I see. Well, what made you decide when you were 10 years old?

JEC: I loved school. I was one of the odd children who just loved school, and I liked to read about anything and everything, [01:00] and, as a matter of fact, I used to wake up at five o'clock in the morning with a book hidden underneath the covers, and I'd start to read then. By the time I was 14, I had read most of the classics. I just loved school.

LW: I see, so why did you decide on Pembroke?

JEC: Well, I wanted a Liberal Arts education, and that was the best school there was. The only other schools were University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College. At that time, it was called Rhode Island College of Education. I did not want a business education.

LW: Upon entrance to college, what were your aspirations?

JEC: I thought that I wanted to teach. I wasn't sure in what subject I wanted to major, but I ended up majoring in history [02:00] and minoring in languages, and I also took many science courses because I had had a very good education in high school, but I wanted to teach.

LW: I see. Well, did you have any other personal goals in mind when you went to college?

JEC: Well, I thought that if I married, I did want to have six daughters, but I thought that I wanted to pursue a career, too. However, in those days, we were told that children were so very important that we should devote a good deal of our time to them, and the idea was that if you did work and you had children, you'd work part time, and some of us even thought that if we raised our children until we were 40, we would still have 25 years in the business world, and so, even in those days, [03:00] we thought of combining marriage and a career. I had done a great deal of library work as an undergraduate, so I knew that I could work, say, part time in a library – evenings and weekends – and still have a family. So I thought of career and marriage and children.

LW: But did you feel that you had to make a choice between a career and having children?

JEC: I think my parent's generation did, but not mine. Not mine.

LW: That's good.

JEC: No, because I remember an argument I had with my father – as I said, his generation you should choose either one or the other, and my argument was, “Well, somebody must have to marry the doctors and the lawyers and the teachers, so why not an educated woman?”

LW: Well, what were your parent's reactions towards your [04:00] attending college? Were they enthusiastic?

JEC: They approved. They approved. They thought that this is what I wanted, so therefore I should do it. I had to work my way through. It wasn't really necessary financially, but from the way they looked at life and bringing up children, it was necessary for me to earn a good deal of my education. So I did.

LW: Did you feel like that was beneficial?

JEC: Oh, yes, because when I did get through as an undergraduate, I was one of the very few singles with working experience, and, since it was Depression, and jobs were hard to get, it's just invaluable. As a matter of fact, of our class – and I don't know what the number of graduates in that class – the number would be – a few of us had jobs that September, and I was one of them.

LW: Oh, right after you graduated.

JEC: Mm-hmm. Yeah, [05:00] I did.

LW: That's great. Well, what was your work while you were in school?

JEC: Well, when I did graduate, I accepted a job to work for the library because after investigating the teaching jobs, I could have had a job providing I had worked free for a year, and I couldn't afford that because I had also turned down a scholarship to go to library school – full scholarship that Dean Mooar had offered me, and I thought I had to go to work, so I went into library work, you see, instead of teaching. There weren't many jobs, and I would gladly have taught a year free if there had been any guarantee that there would've been a job for me at the end of that year, but that I could not guarantee – not in those days.

LW: Was that the normal way of hiring teachers – they had to work a year free?

JEC: No, but it was [06:00] deep Depression, and jobs were so scarce that, really, they made their own rules. There was another class – no, she didn't go to Pembroke, but she was a classmate in high school, who, upon graduation from college, took a teaching job at Prudence for 600 dollars, whereas the rest of us went into teaching received 900. She's now a judge. [laughs] Oh, dear. No, jobs were very scarce then, so I went into library work, and I stayed in library work until I taught two years with Leslie when he was an assistant principal here at Middletown. So all my career, then, was in library work, except for two years as a teacher, but I really wanted to teach.

LW: Leslie is your husband?

JEC: Yes, Leslie is my husband.

LW: I see. Now did you work with him [07:00] before you met him, or had you already been married to him?

JEC: We had been married, and Leslie finished his education after we had married. In those days, more girls went to college than boys.

LW: Oh, really? Was that because they had to work?

JEC: Well, I mean, those of us who wanted to go on to school had to have some backing. Well, the boys had to go out to work, and you can talk to people of this era, and so many of our bright boys did not go to college, but, instead apprenticed themselves. Well, Leslie wanted to go to school – to college – but Leslie was 12 when his father died, and so he and his brother supported the family, and they went on doing that. Then when his younger sister graduated from college, then he started. So he finished after we were married – just after we were married.

LW: Oh, I see. Where did he go to school?

JEC: He went to Brown. [08:00] He majored in math, minored in the classics. He was quite a brain. [laughter] He was. You know, we had come to think in the fifties and sixties and seventies that you'll have to go to college in order to be well-educated. Well, it isn't necessarily so. Of course, it does help because you have a structured kind of education, whereas the other is up to you, but a disciplined person who knows how to study and knows how to read can learn a great deal. If you think you're learning anything in college now, just you wait. If you continue to learn the rest of your life, I think you'll learn about 100 times more than you did in college, but that's the beginning. It's the opening wedge. [09:00]

LW: Well, okay, I was going to ask you about the admittance procedures at Pembroke. How did you apply to Pembroke, and were there exams or...

JEC: Yes. I remember very well because I was carsick on the way up, and I spent the whole day taking my exams with my head on my desk, but we had to take college boards or we couldn't go. I know that I applied and that I had to go to Pembroke, and I spent a whole day taking exams.

LW: Was there a preparatory high school class series that was needed to get into Pembroke or...

JEC: I went to Rogers High School, and, at that time, Rogers High School was considered one of the best schools – public schools – in New England. For instance, I had Latin, [10:00] Greek, and French. I could've gone to college after three years if I had had my fourth year of English, and they (inaudible) how many courses I had taken and then the quality of it. Now, most of us who went on to college from Rogers usually had advanced placement in English and some of us in math and some in chemistry. I mean, the quality of education, at that time in that school, was excellent.

LW: Where is Rogers High School?

JEC: Right now, it's around the Drive somewhere. It used to be right on Broadway, not very far from where you descended from your bus, and now it's Thompson Junior High, but that was our high school right there on Broadway when we were growing up. So, I mean, you took a college

preparatory course and this and that – the usual – you know, English and foreign languages, math, science, history, so...

LW: Do you remember if most of the [11:00] girls that went to Pembroke were as well prepared as you were?

JEC: I would say yes. Yes. Many of them had come from private schools. I think I had a better language background –

LW: You took three languages.

JEC: – because I had the three languages. I had also had more science without having been, say, particularly bent in that direction. For example, I was able to present three years of math and three years of science, which was excellent.

LW: And that was unusual for a girl?

JEC: Yes, it was. It was, but not the three years of math, but the three years of science, especially having had physics and chemistry.

LW: And you also took biology?

JEC: No, I didn't have biology. I had a general science.

LW: Oh, I see. [Introductions?].

JEC: But they did offer biology.

LW: Well, what sciences did you [12:00] pursue when you were at Pembroke?

JEC: Well, I went on to take the full-year biology course and three semester courses in psychology and one in botany, and then, of course, being the biological sciences librarian, I did enroll for a lot of reading then, and I also worked in the fiscal sciences, and so I did a great deal of reading there. When I say that, what I did was to read, say, a history of math, a history of physics, a history of geology, so that I would know all the landmarks and all the important advances that had been made. Also, I did my master's degree in the history of science.

LW: Oh, I see. Where did you do your master's degree?

JEC: At Brown under Professor [Fleming?]. He's now at – I don't know whether he's at Harvard or Yale, but, anyway, it was under Professor Fleming, so...

LW: I see. Well, were the [13:00] sciences very popular on Pembroke campus or did most girls concentrate on other areas?

JEC: Oh, I think girls majored in biology, psychology, or botany, but if they majored in math, this was odd, and we did have one or two girls who majored in math, but, of course, it wasn't [even a matter?] amount of, what, four or five years, and it wasn't odd, but, yes, it was considered a little bit odd if the girls majored in the physical sciences, but there were girls who majored in chemistry and that, but they were definitely in the minority, yeah. Biology, yes. Psychology and botany, yes, but not the physical sciences.

LW: Were those classes offered at Pembroke or did you have to go to Brown to take them?

JEC: Most of the classes, once you had taken the introductory lectures, were at Brown. [14:00] I was – you know where most of my classes were held? I was a history major – at University Hall, and most of my classes were coed. I had very, very few classes in which we were all girls. My biology class was, for one. Let's see. I can't think of anything else.

LW: What about the English courses?

JEC: Well, I think outside of the introductory course, all the others were at Brown and Pembroke.

LW: Oh, I see. Did men come over to the Pembroke campus to take classes, too?

JEC: Oh, yes. Well, see, most of us went to the Brown campus because all we had for a building was – oh, the building on Meeting Street.

LW: Alumnae Hall

JEC: No, the one next to it.

LW: Oh, gosh.

JEC: Oh, dear. Where the administration is.

LW: Pembroke Hall? [15:00]

JEC: It's on Meeting Street now. For a while, administration was housed there. I doubt that administration is housed there now.

LW: I can't remember the name of the building. Oh, well.

JEC: We used to call it Pembroke Hall.

LW: Oh, is that where the chapel was?

JEC: No, because the chapel was in Alumnae Hall.

LW: Oh, there was a coed chapel?

JEC: No, no, no. The boys had their chapel at Sayles. We went to chapel every morning at Alumnae.

LW: I see. Well, why don't you tell me a little bit about chapel?

JEC: Well, we used to go to chapel every day. You were not supposed to cut, and we just came together as a congregation and I guess announcements were made, we might have a speaker occasionally, we would sing, it didn't last very long, and then we would go on our way to classes, so... It was compulsory. [16:00]

LW: Weren't you allowed a certain amount of cuts?

JEC: Yes, we were allowed three cuts –

LW: For the whole year?

JEC: – unless you were – three cuts in each course. In each –

LW: Semester.

JEC: Yeah, and if you were not a student, you had unlimited cuts. However, you were not supposed to cut the last day of school before a holiday or the first day when we commenced again. That was it; just three cuts. There were very stringent rules. When you lived in the dormitory, you had to be in at ten o'clock, and if you didn't get in at ten o'clock, you had so many demerits. I worked in the music room one year, for example, and I was on duty from 7:00 to 10:00, and I failed to say that I would be in by 10:15. Well, they wanted to give me a demerit, and I protested [17:00] because all I was doing was working right next door. I lived at Sharpe House, which was on Angell Street, and I was working on – and there was a building between, at that time, Alumnae Hall and Pembroke Hall, and the music – the girls used to come and listen to the records, and all I did was, you know, put them on and take them off and so on. Well, naturally, we closed up at 10:00, and I had to put the records away. I wouldn't get back to the

dormitory until 10:15. We went to a concert – we always had to leave halfway through because we had to be back by ten o'clock.

LW: They didn't make any allowances for special circumstances?

JEC: Very seldom. Very seldom. Life was supposed to be right there on the campus. They did encourage us to go to plays. I decided senior year I was going to go to every play that came to town and every concert that came to town, [18:00] and I did, but I still left in time to get back on time.

LW: Was the theater very big at –

JEC: Well, we used to in those days have on-Broadway theater come to the Providence and concert that would come in from Boston and so on, and so it was great. I think that we had a great deal going on, though, at campus that would keep us busy, but I just loved the theater and I loved music, so...

LW: Can you recall some of the concerts or plays that you saw?

JEC: Well, I remember seeing George M. Cohan, for one.

LW: Okay, I'm not familiar with him.

JEC: But I think it was the Boston Symphony that used to come down I think. I'm not sure, but I think there were just a handful of us who would be interested, and we would go on down together and come back together. Plus, we walked in those days, most of time. We would run from [19:00] the theater, up the hill –

LW: Back home. [laughs]

JEC: – and back home.

LW: Before ten o'clock.

JEC: Yeah.

LW: Well, did you have dorm mothers? Is that what they were called here?

JEC: Yes, we did. We had a dorm mother.

LW: I see. What were some of the other rules of living in the dorm? Did you have compulsory meals or –

JEC: Well –

LW: – or did you have to get dressed when you eat the meals or anything like that?

JEC: We didn't have to eat there if we didn't want to, but most of us didn't have the money to eat out. However, you did have to come dressed in a certain way. We had to dress formally – that is, the stocking and dressed in a dress and so on – for Wednesday and Sunday meals – for dinner – but most of us in those days wore ankle socks, you know, and the brown and white saddle shoes or black and white saddle shoes, skirts, blouses, and sweaters, and, of course, we'd come in from classes at noon time, and it was perfectly all right to come into lunch that way and to [20:00] come to breakfast, and most of the chil– most of the girls – I almost said children – most of the girls didn't like the meals. I came from a tradition of excellent cooking, and I didn't mind it at all because the breakfast, for instance, gave you such a choice, and there were 30 girls there, so it was like, you know, being catered to. You could have hot cereal, cold cereal, eggs any way you wanted them, toast, French toast, and yet the girls complained, and I couldn't see it. Lunches left much to be desired, but they were nutritious, and I would eat things there that I would never have eaten in my own home, like cream chipped beef on toast. I don't know whether you've ever had it. I couldn't stand it, but I would eat it because I was so hungry, and you had your choice of milk and coffee and had ice cream once a week. That was on Sunday. It's a different world

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible). [21:00] [It's quite a?] different world, and during the week, two of us would serve at the table. I used to like to do that. On Sunday, the house mother would serve, and on Wednesday night, the house mother would serve at the main table, and one or two girls would assist, and it usually was the same sort of meal – you know, some kind of meat, a potato, and a vegetable.

LW: But were the servers always freshman or –

JEC: No.

LW: – were they just other –

JEC: At Sharpe House, we used to get \$150 taken off room and board because we each had a 20-minute job to do a day, and I elected to do the glass there in the morning, which was very easy.

LW: You washed it?

JEC: You know, and other girls would decide to take the dishes away or whatever. We used to have jobs we used to sign up for.

LW: [22:00] Was that unique to Sharpe House?

JEC: Well, there were two places in which the girls could have a reduced room and board. Sharpe House was one, and I cannot remember the name of the other house, but in that house the girls did their own cooking.

LW: That's [nice?].

JEC: Yeah.

LW: I bet they had good food.

JEC: I don't know how many girls there were there – 10 or 12. It was a small house, and they just chipped in, and they allowed that.

LW: Were all the dorms fairly small – like 30 or so?

JEC: No, because – do you know anything about [Noah?] and Metcalf?

LW: Yes.

JEC: Okay. (claps) Both those dorms were there.

LW: And those are fairly large.

JEC: And they're large. As a matter of fact, in Metcalf, I think it was, the girls' infirmary was on the first floor. As you entered, you turn left. As you go through past [23:00] Sayles Hall on the left and Alumnae Hall on the right, the building I'm thinking of was on the left. Is that Metcalf?

LW: Yes, I think so.

JEC: Yeah. Because now you have other new dorms –

LW: Mm-hmm, that's on the right.

JEC: – but those two dorms were there, and they were large because I think each class was at least 150, plus there were many day students; many local students went home.

LW: Were the majority of students day students?

JEC: No, no, no.

LW: No, the majority lived in dorms?

JEC: Most of the students lived in the dormitory.

LW: Was that because they were from out of state or out of town [in those days?]?

JEC: Oh, yes. Yes. I knew they had a quota, and definitely they would take just a certain number of people from the Providence area – from the Providence.

LW: So where were most of the other students from?

JEC: I would say mostly from [24:00] New England. We would get one or two people from, well, maybe from the South and the Midwest, but most of the people were from New England – Connecticut, New York, like right there, Massachusetts.

LW: There was one girl in your class – I found her when I was paging through your old yearbook – that was from Kentucky. Do you remember her? I wish I could remember her name. I don't know.

JEC: [It wasn't Theodore Hess?]. Was her last name Hess?

LW: No, no, her last name was Moxley – Paulina Moxley.

JEC: Oh, sure. Yes, I do, because when we were having our fortieth reunion, she was one of the people I contacted, and, at the time, she had a home on Cape Cod and one in Florida, and, yes, she had a southern accent. She was very funny. When it would get very hot in the Providence, we wouldn't know what to do, and she'd say, "Oh, the trouble of you [laughter] people up north is you don't know what to do in hot weather. [25:00] What you're supposed to do is to be in your satin slip and lie on your bed with the shades drawn, drinking a mint julep." [laughter] And the other thing I remember is that somebody said one day, "We're not supposed to have hot biscuits. They're not good for us," and in her southern drawl, she said, "We eat them all the time."

[laughs] So, yeah, I know Paulina. She was very talented – a very talented girl, yeah. I didn't think she was from Kentucky, but she's lived mostly in the North.

LW: Right now, I think she's living in the Virgin Islands right now.

JEC: Oh, really?

LW: (inaudible). I looked her up in the alumni directory.

JEC: She's very interesting.

LW: Well, what were some of the other girls interested in? You had a theater program or a dance group?

JEC: Well, now, Paulina, for instance, was very much interested in Sock and Buskin.

LW: Was that a group on Brown campus?

JEC: [26:00] No, that was a combined group – a combined group. Many Pembroke students like to think that Pembroke was isolated. It wasn't. There were so many things that were done together; as I said, most of my classes were with the men and on the Brown campus. Sock and Buskin was together. Oh, yes, we did have our own Glee Club and we spent swimming just all girls. Now, I don't know whether that's changed or not today.

LW: Yes, it has.

JEC: It has.

LW: Mm-hmm, and you had your own sports program.

JEC: We had our own sports program. Well, in those days, gym was compulsory.

LW: Was that very popular amongst the students?

JEC: We accepted it.

LW: I bet it was fun.

JEC: I thought it was very good for us, and I was not a very good sportswoman, but I always enjoyed it. We [27:00] had to choose a single sport and a contact sport – [clears throat] single, contact, and I forget what the other one was. So you might do something like take the modern dance, take basketball or volleyball, take tennis or archery or swimming, and so you went three times a week, and you were supposed to pass a swimming test, or Miss Rudd would threaten that you wouldn't graduate.

LW: But did that ever happen?

JEC: No. I'm saying no; I doubt it.

LW: Probably not.

JEC: But they wanted us all to be able to swim.

LW: Well, was there sports competitions between other colleges or was it intramural?

JEC: I think so. Yes. I don't believe that it – on my recollection – that it was something that – it was – it could've seemed [28:00] that important. I think that the girls were who were on teams would play Mount Holyoke or Smith or some of the local teams. I do believe that there was some competition, but it isn't the way it is today, I don't believe.

LW: Well, let's flip the tape. I think it's about over.

JEC: Sure. I'm sorry.

LW: Oh, no.

JEC: I talk too much.

LW: No, no, no.

-End of track 1-

Track 2

LW: So now what do you feel was most important about your being at Brown or Pembroke?

JEC: I think what I consider most important, and I realized it while I was there, were two contacts. The contacts with the students because of their varied economic, social, and religious background, and then the contact with the professors. I valued this because I went [both years?] (inaudible).

LW: Was there a lot of personal contact between the professors and the students? Were they very accessible?

JEC: Yes, they were. For example, I did honors in history, and let's not forget the two of us who went to the professor's house once a week for two hours, and, of course, since there were two of us, each one of us had to report, and, in history, this meant reading anywhere from 300 to 1,000 pages a week just for this one course, and there was no faking [01:00] it because there you were

—

LW: Because it was two.

JEC: And so one of my favorite professors, and a man who had a profound influence on me, was Professor Armstrong. He's dead now, but he was really marvelous. He was interested in people. I think that most of us had drilled into us several things. One was that college was merely a beginning, that we were mainly examining various areas of our knowledge, but that we should continue and that what we learned after college, we could do about 100 times more than we were getting right there, but that was the beginning, and the other thing we were told is that we had to use what we learned for service to people. We were also advised to make the distinction as to whether we were interested in dealing with people directly or with things, [02:00] but we were told, "Remember, if you're dealing with things, you're still doing it for people," so, therefore, this philosophy of service and for people was something that was very strongly instilled within us.

LW: Was that done by the professors and the deans and –

JEC: Well, I think in my case it started right with my own family, but it certainly was continued in school. For example, this problem of women wanting a career and marriage. We were told that as educated women, we could have both, but we were told that if we had children, we should make sure that we did the best by the children, so the advice was, "Either work part-time while the children are growing up, or not at all, and as soon as the children, say, were of 12 – 15 – years of age, [could?] get back into the [03:00] business world. In the meantime, get a master's degree, get a tool, go to business school, go back for a master's degree so you can go into teaching, go to law school on a part-time basis," and even if you entered the work force at 40, we were told, "You've got 25 years to work," and that's a good long time to work, so our generation felt that we could do both.

LW: What was your personal decision on that?

JEC: I thought I could do both, but I knew that if I had children, I'd only work part-time.

LW: So is that what you did?

JEC: I didn't have any children. While I wanted six, I ended up having none, but – so I had worked full time, but I think that if I had children, I would want to be sure that the children were getting what they would want. Now, children vary, and some children need a parent at home, and some do not need a parent at [04:00] home all of the time, so it's got to be the best for each family. I will not take a stance that it must be one way or the other. I have nieces who are career people, and their children are suffering; I have others who are career women, and their children aren't, and I don't know that this is partly because of the character of mother and child – I don't know, but the smart person looks at his own family and has to decide what is best. My mother, who was in the old school, said to me, "The women have worked since time immemorial." She says, "They have worked in the past in the home and the field." She said, "Now, they go out to work, but," she said, "make no mistake about it. Women have to do both," and she was – I would say – I like to call people who are not modern "nineteenth-century people," and she felt this way [05:00] that women in a sense had always done more than just bring up children.

LW: Well, that must have made you very enthusiastic about –

JEC: Oh, yeah. My mother said to me, "Now you know how to do everything from scrub the floor on up."

LW: So what was your father's profession?

JEC: My father did many, many things. He was a gardener at the end of his life. He was a mason. My parents were born in Europe, so I had a European-type upbringing, and, in those days, people who came from Europe, regardless of all their skills, were merely men and girls but they did very well. They worked real hard, and, as I said, they made me work for part of my education, but at the time they owned four houses. They were very resourceful people, [06:00] and they thought that if you did go on to a higher education, you still had to know the basic skills. Now, today they call them survival skills; they call them basic skills. They said, "We don't care how much education anybody has, if he can't take care of the basics of life, he isn't taking care of much," so...

LW: So they instilled those values in you – the values of higher education.

JEC: Well, I think we got that in college, too. We didn't have time, you know, to take off a year or two to find ourselves, and, yet, every generation has had to find itself. We had to do it while we were working because if you didn't work, you couldn't eat.

LW: Was that because of the – you were going to school during the Depression, especially?

JEC: Yes, but you must remember that if a man in those days didn't work, he wasn't compensated. There was no such thing as social security, and there was no such thing as –

LW: [07:00] Unemployment.

JEC: – benefits. When Leslie's father died as a retired Navy man, the pension died with him. There was no such thing as survivor's benefits – anything for the widow and children. Entirely different. You worked. So it influenced a lot.

LW: Well, that must have really motivated the students at Pembroke and Brown –

JEC: Yeah.

LW: – (inaudible) be practical.

JEC: Well, I don't know. Some of us were quite idealistic. I majored in history. Now, if I had wanted to be very practical, I would not have done that, but you knew that when you did get out, you would either have to go to graduate school or apprentice yourself to somebody for 5 to 10 years, and that's the other thing we were taught. [08:00] You get out, don't think you know it all; if you're going to work in the business world, give yourself 5 to 10 years to learn that business. Go to business school for a year, go to business school for three months or six months. You've got programs for women – college women – that ran three months or six months or a year.

LW: After graduation?

JEC: After graduation for – not at Pembroke, but I mean at Bryant and Stratton, which is now Bryant, at – oh, that girls' school that's still in Providence – and then you get into the business world. You see, as an educated person with skills and of typing and of shorthand and [so on?]. So we were always told that after we did graduate, we should go out and obtain a skill, either through apprenticeship or through further education.

LW: So what did most of the graduates [kind of sort of lend to?]? What kind of professions?

JEC: Well, the women, [09:00] for the most part, into teaching – into teaching or lab work in hospitals. They did go on to business school and went into offices, but they had the best positions in the office usually. The men, of course – or many of the men – went into their father's businesses, but at Brown, the tradition was that most Brown men went into medicine, law, teaching, business, after graduation. I think Brown is always considered very conservative. I think it still is. I do.

LW: Well, was there a lot of rivalry between Brown and Pembroke? Academic rivalry or social rivalry, or was there a lot of cooperation and –

JEC: I can't [10:00] remember that very much except that the girls were better students, and I think it was because they applied themselves by and large –

LW: Were the men students a little bit rowdier and had a little bit more fun maybe than (inaudible)?

JEC: I don't know. A lot of us married Brown men, but I don't know. Maybe because at the time I was at Pembroke, I already knew Leslie, so I didn't get to know a large circle of young men, but most of the girls paired off or if they didn't pair off with a Brown man they already knew somebody at some other college.

LW: But there was a lot of courtship between Brown and Pembroke?

JEC: Oh, yes. That had to be in those days. One, they didn't have cars, they went around walking and talking, [11:00] going to the movies, [laughs] and going to a concert. You couldn't – you know, you didn't get away very far from authority, so – and, of course, you couldn't get married early either because there wasn't a job, and, in those days, even though a woman might be capable of earning a living, I think the idea was that the man had to have a job – something to offer – because if the woman had a job, and she did get pregnant, immediately, you know, she was cut off. As a matter of fact, if a woman got married, she didn't have her job, or, if she did have her job, she came back and it would be (inaudible).

LW: That was what normally happened?

JEC: You know, I was one of the first married women to be allowed to go on working [12:00] at the Brown University Library. My sister-in-law – my brother's – or, I mean, my husband's sister – was the first married woman to be allowed to teach on this island because the jobs were scarce.

LW: I see. So, if a woman was married –

JEC: If a woman got married –

LW: She was supported by her husband, so if she didn't need the job, it (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) somebody else.

JEC: That's right. Yeah, and what else happened? And even when married women were allowed to come back to teach, my husband can tell you this, they came back at substitute's pay. So let us say they were earning 1,200 on Friday and married on Saturday, if she came back Monday or whenever, she would get much less.

LW: That doesn't seem to be (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

JEC: Well, this is 19– this is the late thirties, when they – and the early forties.

LW: [13:00] Well, how else do you feel that the Depression affected Pembroke College and your own education? Was there a lot of compensation?

JEC: Well, to me, it was very important to have a rich intellect and educational (inaudible), and you do have a richer inner life when you do open your mind, say, to various areas of knowledge. You know that you know very little, but it's very exciting and very intriguing, and I think it helps you to understand yourself, understand others, find the connections between you and others, and that was very meaningful – [14:00] very meaningful to my husband.

LW: Did your friends feel the same way? Were they very stimulated by the studies?

JEC: By the fact that there should be a quality to life. We're not McDonald's type people; we're not Colonel Sanders chicken type people. In other words, there is a quality to whatever you're doing. I know you have to determine how you will spend your energy – therefore, your energy is your money – but even just sitting down to have a little something to eat with somebody can have a quality to it if you want it to have quality, and this doesn't mean you go out to get caviar and lobster and all of that, but it's just an attitude towards what you're serving, how you prepared it, and all the rest of it. Yeah, I think we all thought in terms of quality to life, [15:00] and we wanted it very, very much.

LW: Please explain.

JEC: Well, it was much better than a lot of the quantity and plastic stuff that is available today. Not completely, but I wonder how many young people ever go walking and recite poetry to each other today, or how many young people will really be thrilled at listening to a concert or an opera, and all they have to do is look at each other, and they know what they're thinking – or friends or you come together to eat, and the food has been beautifully prepared – and I don't mean it's taken days – but beautifully prepared, and there is a loving, sharing quality about everything. Well, I think that a lot of us had that, you know. We didn't have a lot of other things,

[16:00] but we had that. Now, I don't know whether other Pembrokeers had it, but I do know my own circle of friends did.

LW: So they (inaudible).

JEC: Yeah, yeah. So – and the friends that I have made – that I made at Pembroke, and the friends that I made while working at the library are still my friends. I don't know. I loved going to college; I enjoyed it, and it was a beginning. It was a beginning. Well, I was – I'm preaching. Well, I guess I am.

LW: Sure.

JEC: I think it goes together with teaching – [where is?] my brain. Student assistants and regular assistants, and so many of them are still my friends, but I think I did more than just [17:00] teach about library science because I became involved in a human being, and so some of them are my dearest friends still. I see them when I come here.

LW: Was this feeling of quality and importance emphasized very much at Pembroke by the professors and by the dean?

JEC: Well, I can remember that the deans in particular did. I think what I did get from the professors was this idea of a community of people. Professor Armstrong used to say, "We're more alike than we're different, and where we differ, it's a matter of degree." Now, some people could argue against that, but he used to say this whenever [18:00] we would have a discussion, say, about a certain part of the world, and we would become very critical about them, and he would say, "Now, wait. Wait. Think about it," but...

LW: So he taught you a lot more than about the politics of a [certain?] (inaudible).

JEC: Oh, well, I think the reason that I liked Professor Armstrong so much was that when we did history under him, we had to examine art, read the literature, and in the original, if you could

handle French or Italian, the science, the whole thing because that is the whole picture. So many people think of history as just the political part of it, and that – the political part was only one part of all the other (inaudible). What was going on economically – socially – is the – [19:00] and scientifically, religiously, and so on. So when you look at history in that way, what you're looking at is the human condition.

LW: Is that why you've got such an interest in history?

JEC: I think so. I think so, and I don't know. I've had history with – where it has been taught, "This was a landmark decision, and that was a landmark decision," and people feeling you have to remember on April 12, so and so – this happened and that ha—" that's not the way to do history at all, so... When I took Renaissance History, for example, I read (inaudible) from the original and read a poem to the class, and I read some of Dante in the original. Somebody else would read in French, so it was very exciting. I'm glad they have the new curriculum, but to those – [20:00] some of us – we thought it was just the same old thing handed out in a new package. You know what I mean? Packaged differently, but there was really nothing new under the sun.

LW: Were there required courses?

JEC: Yes, yes, and, frankly, I don't mind that there were. I didn't like some of them, but we had to take either a year of biology or a year of math our freshman year. That was mandatory. We had to take a course in – oh, what would I call it – English – not English grammar, but –

LW: Literature?

JEC: And then we had to take one in American literature. We had to take a writing course. I know that freshman writing course a half a year, and then we had to take a half a year of American Lit. Let's see, what else did we take? A language mandatory.

LW: You had your choice at any language (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

JEC: Oh, yes. [21:00] We could. Most of us would elect to take a year or two of a language we already knew, and then take another. For instance, I took Latin for another year. I had had four years in high school, but I took Latin, and then instead of pursuing French, I took Italian because I knew enough Italian so that I could get into the literature, and – which I did. I had a survey course in – it wasn't in English. It was in Italian.

LW: You read a lot of Italian literature? The original?

JEC: That's right. In the original. I didn't take German and Russian until after I had gotten out of college, but languages somehow were stressed then. You had to have at least one other language [22:00] besides English. So those were the things that were mandatory, and I guess we had to have one course in the physical sciences because I had my one year of math.

LW: But those courses weren't unpopular?

JEC: No, and you were encouraged to get these out of the way the first two years so that – because your major – and in those days – when I first started out, we had five courses, and so we had to have 10 in our major, and that was quite a bit.

LW: You did have quite a heavy workload?

JEC: I think so. We went to school on Saturday. I don't know whether they do now.

LW: Oh, no. No, we don't.

JEC: You don't? Well, we went on Saturday.

LW: Did you go all day on Saturday?

JEC: No, no. Saturday classes ended at 12:00.

LW: At Pembroke.

JEC: Your classes were Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, [23:00] and you took the Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, so you didn't go through classes until 12:00 on Saturday, and lunch was on campus. You know I lived in Newport I didn't come home but once a month, and then during junior and senior year, I didn't come home but every eight weeks. You know, except at the holidays. You had plenty of work to do and plenty going on there.

LW: What other things went on on campus besides studying?

JEC: Well, we had a lot of speakers. For instance, Gertrude Stein came to speak to us.

LW: Oh, do you remember what year that was?

JEC: No, I don't remember, but I remember the night that she was there because most of the girls didn't appreciate her, and I sat next to a girl who was furious because they weren't appreciating her.

LW: Why didn't they appreciate her?

JEC: Well, you know, not everybody likes a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose, you know, [laughs] and she [24:00] read her poetry. I know we had a lot of speakers who came and a lot of music ensembles, and plus we used to have our formal dances. There was the junior prom and the senior prom, and then there'd be a dance after this or a dance after that, and we used to invite our boyfriends to tea on Sunday afternoon.

LW: But teas were awfully big, weren't they?

JEC: Yes, they were. Yes, they were.

LW: Did the different societies have their teas, and then did a freshman tea and things like that?

JEC: Yes, we did, and we had to learn how to pour and not – [laughs] I can remember, you know, these great big urns that tip over, and my fear was always that one of them will really tip over, and we [25:00] were called upon, too, to help serve when a visiting dignitary came. The idea is we have to take our place, [laughs] and [meters?] – in other words, social meters – and I don't know, but some of the older Pembroke were very upset when the merger came because they wondered what was going to happen to all the tea sets that these various classes had given to Pembroke, and they just wondered what was going to happen to them? I've never found what the answer is. I just looked at them and smiled at the time.

LW: What did you feel about the merger?

JEC: Oh, I thought it was long overdue. There were so many things that were being done together that it [really need-?].

LW: There wasn't that much of a division?

JEC: No, it really needed a final coordination, but, you know, when they began to do things (inaudible) and with the computer, what else could you expect, [26:00] and it just didn't seem feasible anyway to carry on, anyway, separately. They didn't have any laboratories for girls that were separated from the boys. For instance, if you took chemistry, you still went to Metcalf – or Metcalf Research. When you took advanced math, you went with the boys, so it was a not official kind of addition, I think. I had nothing against the merger. I used to chuckle. I was in the library at the time, and I could see that it was long overdue, but I had to hold my tongue because some of these older women, and, come to think of it, some of the girls younger than myself really objected because they thought that Pembroke had a special kind of education to offer to women, but my answer to that is, "Well, they've been doing it, and so much of it has been with Brown."

LW: Did they also feel that they were losing the [27:00] tradition of Pembroke?

JEC: They felt that there was a tradition that was peculiar to women, but they have never been that isolated, you see. This was my point. There was not complete isolation, and I would give my own example. I'd say, "What are you talking about? I was on the Brown campus all the time for my classes from sophomore year on, so what are you talking about?" I used to go to the John Hay – everybody went to the John Hay to study, and if I had taken an advanced course in psychology or botany I was with men. Oh – so what are you saying? And, I mean, when I took my Italian class, we were men and women, so, I mean, you know, I could never see that [with other women?] being completely isolated. I don't believe they ever really were.

LW: Okay, well, maybe at the first few years at Pembroke, they –

JEC: Maybe in the very early, early days, [28:00] but how costly it would be to (inaudible). It would be so artificial. I don't know how I feel – and now I'm going off to something here – but I don't know how I feel about the coed dorm. I've talked to many of the younger people, and it seems to me that just as many dislike it as like it, but then in Europe you see where – except in England – where, when you attend a university, there are no dormitories, and you live in boarding houses, so from time immemorial, girls and boys that lived in the same dormitory. So it's just a matter of the way you look at it.

LW: Coed dorms were never even heard of when you went to college, were they?

JEC: No, no. We knew that in Europe – we knew that, because there weren't [29:00] no dormitories, whoever attended the university lived in boarding houses where you had boys and girl in the same boarding house...

- END -