

Transcript – Eleanor (Sarle) Briggs, class of 1928

Narrator: Eleanor (Sarle) Briggs  
Interviewer: Julia Hyun  
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Interview Time: 2:50 p.m.  
Location: East Greenwich, Rhode Island  
Length: 2 audio files; 50:53

Track 1

Julia Hyun: Okay, this is Julia Hyun, about to interview Eleanor Sarle Briggs in her home in East Greenwich, Rhode Island. It is 2:50 on March 11, 1988.

(break in audio)

JH: Okay, I guess first we should start with just family background, and what it was that influenced you to go to Brown.

Eleanor (Sarle) Briggs: Well, my family was what you might call a Brown family. My father and his three brothers all went to Brown University, and numerous cousins in the second generation have also been to Brown. I knew that I was going to Brown from the time I could talk, almost. [laughter] I was told I was going to Brown University. And so I came. [laughs]

JH: What about your – you said [01:00] you were a city girl who commuted to Brown.

ESB: Yes.

JH: And that –

ESB: My family lived in Warwick, Rhode Island, and I took a bus from Warwick to the center of Providence every day, and then walked up the hill to the university. It was quite a climb.

JH: How many other girls in your class were commuter students?

ESB: I would have said 25 or 30 out of a class of about 112 came from Providence or the suburbs nearby. And we remained a distinct unit in the class. [laughter]

JH: What about your high school? What was that like?

ESB: I went to Providence High School and it was the Providence Technical High School where I had taken a great many courses in sewing and weaving [02:00] and things of that nature as well as college preparatory courses. And when I graduated, only one other girl from my class went to Brown. And that made me feel very badly, because I had to make all new friends.

JH: Yeah. And you said most of the people from your high school had gone to URI instead?

ESB: Yes, a good many of them that went to college at all went to URI. And I really – if I hadn't been from a Brown family, I think I would have gone there too. [laughter]

JH: You said you were an only child?

ESB: Yes. Yes, I was the only child. My mother was a teacher, and my father – well, my grandfather owned and ran a large farm in Warwick for all of his life. Between being a politician and a teacher himself, of Latin, [03:00] in Warwick schools. [laughter]

JH: And you said he was self-taught? That's incredible.

ESB: Yes.

JH: What about family expectations of your college career?

ESB: [laughs] Well, I was told that I was to be a schoolteacher, also from the time I could walk, as my aunts had been. And so, when I got to Brown, I realized that I was preparing to be a

schoolteacher. And, of course, all of the required courses, they seemed very far afield from what I really wanted. [laughs]

JH: Okay. And so, can you tell me about just your first experiences there? Your freshman year, what that was like, just the first day, even?

ESB: Well, the funny part of it is that I had to have a new vaccination before I could get into the college, and [04:00] I became very ill. [laughter] And I missed the whole of freshman orientation week. And I don't think I ever really caught up. I came in a week late, and everybody looked very strange to me. And I sort of found my way with difficulty here and there, and it took me practically a whole year, I think, to adjust to college. It was a very difficult adjustment for me. Because I was quite young – I was just 16 – and I had been an only child and quite sheltered. And it was a whole new, different world that I had to learn. [laughs]

JH: What did your classmates seem like to you?

ESB: I made some very good friends, but I was naturally quite quiet and rather bashful. [laughter] And it took me a while to sort of sort them out. The city [05:00] girls had a group of their own, and the dormitory girls were an entirely different group. And I got acquainted primarily with the city girls. We were quite a close-knit group eventually.

JH: So what were some of the things that interested you during your college years? Like, you were telling me a little bit about the extracurriculars and some of the problems with that.

ESB: Well, yes, I really – I have always felt that I missed a good deal of college life because I couldn't enter into extracurricular activities to any degree, because I was busing from the suburb and the buses [laughs] only went at certain times of the day. And you had to get a bus to get home, you know, before a certain time. It [06:00] was difficult. I did enter the orchestra for a short time, but unfortunately, I played the cornet, which most girls didn't do when I went to college [laughter] and there wasn't another brass instrument in the orchestra, and they had a terrible time finding music that would please everybody and have a part in it for a cornet. So

eventually I retired. And I never entered into any other extracurricular activities in college at all.  
[laughs]

JH: What were some of the traditions and things at school that you were involved in? You were telling me about Ivy Day a little bit, and some of the other –

ESB: (inaudible)

JH: Ivy Day? Or –

ESB: Oh, yes! I enjoyed things like – oh, I remember the Sophomore Masque very well indeed. [07:00] I was a guard in that performance. And we were all given the material to make our own costumes. The bottom of the costume was sort of a bloomer-like trunk, for a guard, and when I got mine home and I began sewing it, I thought they looked awfully droopy drawers. So I just shortened them about three inches, I guess, or so, almost up to my hips. And I went back feeling very pleased with myself. The advisor to the masque took one look at me, and said, “Miss Sarle, you’re not trying out for a Broadway burlesque show. Go home and lengthen those trunks again.” Which I did. [laughter] But I really didn’t feel very happy about the appearance I made. I also helped in the Ivy Day – the daisy chain, you know, we had. [08:00] And I remember carrying that, and enjoying it very much. That was fun. And the, you know, different things of that sort, I enjoyed some very much. All the different activities. But they were very restricted. Very restricted.

JH: How did you feel – Do you feel that girls had much less extracurricular opportunities than the men on campus?

ESB: I always felt that the women were second to the men at Brown. And of course, in that day and age, you know, a Brown man wouldn’t have been caught dead dating a Pembroke girl. They just didn’t do that. It wasn’t done. So that there wasn’t too much sociability between the men and the women. The only men I ever had in any classes were very few in the biology classes that I

took. They were very sober, [09:00] determined young men. [laughter] Concentrating on their careers in medicine to be.

JH: What did you study when you were in school?

ESB: Well, for the first two years, it seemed to me I took required courses that I didn't care for at all. I could see no purpose to them, in terms of what I was to do in life. [laughs] And I struggled through them because I knew I had to take them to graduate. When I got to about my junior year, I began to be able to choose more. And I thought at first that I would like to be a doctor. So I began to take biology courses. But part of the biology training was to go to Rhode Island Hospital to observe operations. So I went over with two of my classmates, and I fainted dead away. [laughter] When the blood began to gush in a gallbladder [10:00] operation. And then I got into a course called Lab Technique, where we worked on live animals, and unfortunately I injected my rabbit with air instead of whatever it was I was supposed to put into him, and he died. And that was just too much for me. I ceased being interested in biology. [laughs]

Then I had to take something in order to graduate with a major. So I began taking some education courses, knowing I was going to be a teacher. And finally, I got into some sociology courses. And I really found what I was interested in. I think Professor Bucklin influenced my whole experience at Brown a great deal. He taught a course called Child Welfare. The only course [11:00] I ever got A in in my whole college career. And I did a great deal of reading at his direction, and discussing with him. And also Professor [Phelps?], who was a sociology professor at that time. Then I began to realize what I wanted out of life. Until then I'd been very confused. [laughs]

JH: What were the relationships like between student and teacher at the time?

ESB: Between who?

JH: Between student and faculty. Between the professors –

ESB: Well, not what they are today, I'm sure. Those were the only two professors that I ever had that I felt close to at all. It was, oh, Professor George and his history courses, there would be 100 or more people in a large lecture hall, and no opportunity to know the professor as a person. I think that perhaps in a smaller college [12:00] you get more of the personal contact that means so very much to you when you're in college. I always felt I'd missed out on a good deal of that.

JH: What did you think was the most important influence on you during your years at Brown and Pembroke? Was it a person, or class, or –

ESB: Well, I remember Dean Morriss, of course. She was a very gracious Southern lady, and I remember her presiding over the chapel every day, and the –

JH: [laughs] Which was compulsory, right?

ESB: The compulsory, five days a week on time, and if you didn't get there on time you heard about it. [laughs] But her most famous saying was, "Get the degree, girls! Never mind your marks. Nobody will know after ten years whether you got A or D, [13:00] but get the degree! Without the degree your life will be different." And, you know, it was very good advice. It was very, very true as the years went by. She was a lovely, gracious role model, I think, for many of the girls in Pembroke at the time. I don't know, there weren't too many outstanding professors that I encountered. They didn't make a very lasting impression upon me.

JH: So, you were talking a little bit earlier that Brown men and women didn't really socialize at all.

ESB: No. No, the Brown men and Brown women were on different planets [laughter] as far as I was concerned. And my social life came from my private life, not from my college [14:00] life.

JH: What about – do you think that was true for the women who actually stayed there in dorms? Did they pretty much stick to themselves?

ESB: I would imagine that they saw more of the Brown men than the so-called city girls did. They were there, and I think that they got chances to meet them and socialize more than we did. I would really advise any girl going to college to live in a college dorm, and not to try to live at home while she goes through college. [laughter]

JH: It adds to the experience?

ESB: Yes. You miss a great deal, I think.

JH: What about some of the rules and regulations and things? You said a little –

ESB: [laughs]

JH: [laughs] Were there many?

ESB: Well, it seemed to me that it was just one mass of rules and regulations. [laughs] And whenever you broke them, you heard about them. [15:00] For instance, [Brennan's?] was a favorite eating place down by the tunnel. And when we felt very daring, we went down there, and we'd sneak a cigarette. But if anybody was caught smoking in Brennan's, they were expelled. And I also recall an examination room where a girl arrived without stockings on. And she was put right out of the room and not permitted to come back until she had stockings. There were all kinds of rules of that kind, that certainly the girls going to college today would laugh at. They're so ridiculous. But in those days, it was a very serious matter. Your behavior was very well monitored. [laughs]

JH: Oh, gosh. So there were heavy dress codes and behavioral rules?

ESB: Very much. I think if a man [16:00] had ever been seen in a Pembroke dormitory, the whole police department at Providence would have been called right out to come to the scene. [laughter] You just didn't do things like that.

JH: Uh-huh. Oh, my gosh. I also – I was reading somewhere about, in the 1920s – I don't know if this was when you were still going to school or not, but – the whole issue of female students smoking, I guess, was being debated, and they weren't sure whether to allow it or not. And finally, I guess, they designated a room in Alumnae Hall or something where they could smoke?

ESB: Not in '28! No, no, no. You didn't smoke in Alumnae Hall in '28.

JH: [laughs] I guess that was later, or something.

ESB: That must have been quite a bit later, I would think. Cigarette smoking was certainly a no-no. [laughs]

JH: What about [17:00] contact with Pembroke deans and faculty? I remember you were saying to me during lunch about, that there weren't a lot of guidance available, as far as –

ESB: No. No. This, to me, was a great lack in the university program. There was very little guidance, very little contact between any faculty person and a student. And when I had finally decided that I would like to go into social work, and I went to try to find information about where to go and who might hiring social workers locally, nobody knew. And finally Professor Phelps circulated around somewhere and got the information. He referred me to Western Reserve, a graduate school. But he also told me about the Family Society of Providence, which was [18:00] starting an internship program. And after two years of teaching, to fulfill my family's expectations [laughter] I changed from teaching into social work. And I have never regretted it. Although I did teach social work at URI at one point, which I enjoyed very much. That was the only teaching I have ever enjoyed. [laughs]

JH: Was there any opposition at all when you decided to switch over, from your career?

ESB: Yes. There was great [laughs] discussion, shall we say. And of course it involved a loss of salary, which wasn't very pleasant. But I decided that if I was ever going to get into something I liked, I had to do it quickly.



JH: Oh, okay. Let's see. Any other thoughts on how Brown affected your career decisions?  
[19:00] It just seems like you didn't really know until your last year what you really wanted to do.

ESB: No, I think I went through a very difficult period of adjustment while I was in college. Nowadays, I think people would say, "He's finding himself." And I guess that I was finding myself in those undergraduate years, just as young people still are today. Of course, the whole structure of Brown, the respect with which it was held in the community, the prestige of it, helped a great deal, I think. Particularly, it helped my family. [laughs] And that had quite an effect I think upon my life.

JH: What did you feel about the name change in [20:00] 1928?

ESB: Well, of course we were the last class to get a degree from the women's college at Brown University. And I don't remember any discussion among my friends of that change at all. They didn't seem to think, I guess, that it would make much difference.

JH: So there weren't that much discussion with students? As far – it was just something that –

ESB: I never remember any discussion with students about the name change, or why it was, or how it would be better. This is quite a difference from today, when certainly they wouldn't dare to undertake a change like that without considerable discussion.

JH: Did you have any feelings when you found out that the two colleges were actually going to merge together, in 1971?

ESB: No, I [21:00] guess I thought it was long overdue. I think that I said to myself, "There, at last they've done it. And women will be on an equal par with the men." Because I'd always felt that really we were kind of second-class citizens, you know?

JH: When you were going to Brown, were there any classes that were restricted to women, or, you know, anything of that sort?

ESB: Well, I don't know that they were restricted, but I will say there were no men in them. [laughs] Now, whether they could have come into them, or whether they didn't want to come into them, I don't know. Just a very few men in the biology courses. But of course, the women in general had classes on their own campus, you know. It was rare that you had a class on the men's campus. And I suppose in a way that is a real restriction. [22:00] The curriculum was pretty much restricted.

JH: Separate?

ESB: Yes. Yeah.

JH: And, so then, just the split in social life naturally seemed to follow, just because if the academics were that separate, then, like, clubs and things –

ESB: Oh, clubs. I don't remember any clubs with men in them. In fact, I don't remember any women's clubs. We had, you know, things like the Komian or the music club, or the mandolin club [laughter] or something along that line, but as far as a mixed club went – The only thing I remember mixed at all were the discussion groups at Professor Phelps's house, where he had a few men from sociology in at the same discussion group with the women. This was my, almost my total experience with mixed groups of any sort.

JH: [23:00] So, what was your social life at all? Like, I mean, you told me a little bit about Brennan's, and how that was a place where the city girls hung out, and stuff.

ESB: Oh, yes. And that was really about all. It seemed to me that I struggled so hard to get in 21 hours of lab work a week plus my courses, plus catching the bus back to Warwick before the last bus at night went home, [laughs] that that was about all that I could accomplish. Of course, the

big events like the junior prom, you know, and things of that sort, I certainly participated in. And I –

JH: Were there very many of those big formal events?

ESB: Oh, maybe a couple a year. A couple a year, not many more.

JH: For the dances and stuff, now, was that something where, you know, the Brown men and women came together?

ESB: Well, yeah, everybody brought their own date, you know. And mine were never [24:00] Brown people. They were people from my private life. But you'd get together with your friends, and have a supper before or a supper afterwards, or something of that sort. Yes, it was sociability. But it was scattered. There wasn't a continuous thing, no. I do remember a couple of the frat houses, where a frat brother would call you on the telephone, and apparently when he got tired of talking, he would say, "I have a brother here who plays the trombone. He's going to play you a solo over the telephone." [laughter] And this was the height of the evening. To see whether you struck a trombone or cornet or some sort of a bass instrument. [laughs] And the football games, of course. They were fun.

JH: Oh, what were those like?

ESB: Well, they were really pretty fun, you know. We all – you went [25:00] with your friends, and their dates, and you had some sociability afterwards, here and there. But, I mean, the social life at the Brown I knew can no more be compared with the social life at Brown now they're night and day. [laughter] It's so different.

JH: Yeah, wow. I think maybe it's about time to turn this tape over.

- End of Track 1-

## Track 2

JH: Okay, this is side two of the first tape. March 11, 1988, Julia Hyun interviewing Eleanor Sarle Briggs. Okay, so we've been talking basically about your time actually at college. But I'd like to ask you a little bit about the time after college, and, you know, what you did. You said you taught for a couple years, and then did go into the social field, so –

ESB: Well, the year after I graduated, I really had a full year of graduate study in education at Brown. And it was a combination at that time of classes and practice teaching, where I taught at Cranston High School and also went to Brown and took classes. I completed all requirements for a master's degree, [01:00] except the thesis. And I did not continue it because by that time, I had decided very firmly that somehow, I was going to leave the teaching field. I taught a second year at the Barrington High School.

And during that year, as I say, I was in touch with Professor Phelps, and I got this information about the Providence agency. And went there, and went into their trainee program for two years, and then stayed for five years afterwards as a case worker, and began to go to graduate school at Columbia University School of Social Work. I had to go piecemeal. I couldn't afford to go all at once. So I would go until my money ran out, and then I'd work some more, and then go back some more. And I finally finished up with my master's [02:00] degree in social work in 1944, taking my mother and my daughter with me to New York to live in an apartment during the year that I was in residence down there. It was a very worthwhile experience that I enjoyed very much.

JH: So, that's really interesting, that you kept in touch with your professor –

ESB: Yes.

JH: – and he did – so he was very instrumental in helping you get started.

ESB: Yes. Yes, he was. He was very, very interested and very thoughtful. Yes.

JH: Did a lot of professors take that interest in their students? Or was this something special?

ESB: I have no idea. I think I was just fortunate in finding someone who was willing to put himself out to help a student find what she wanted. Yes, yes. And then, of course, after I got into social work, I [03:00] married, of course, and had a daughter and then went to work part-time and then full-time again. And I had a variety of experiences in social work. It was a very rewarding career that I've never regretted.

JH: What were some of the things that you've done? You've held so many positions, I know it's going to be really hard to – [laughs]

ESB: Yeah. The years go by. Well, I think one of the most interesting experiences I had was when the first old age assistance law was passed in Rhode Island, and the Social Security Act – I was one of the four original state supervisors hired by the state of Rhode Island to implement that program. When I got to the state, we all worked in the state house behind bars, in the cellar. [04:00] [laughter] And there were long benches in the corridors. We had 5,000 pending applications for four people to process. And as we were in the state house, the legislators brought their constituents down with them by the day, and they would sit patiently and wait for us, until we could interview as many as we possibly could in one day. It was a very different experience. Then we had what we called the Flying Squadron. There would be five of us in a car, driving to different parts of the state. And when we got to Woonsocket, the leading undertaker met us at the door, in his top hat and tailcoat, and he had with him a long line of applicants. We went inside this building. They had no chairs for people. [05:00] We finally got a table and a chair, and another chair where we could sit in and interview people. But the conditions were primitive. And it was a very interesting grassroots experience such as I'd never had before or since. [laughs]

And going to Block Island, to process applications there, for people who would not have had an eye examination in 20 or 25 years, and being able to work out an agreement with the Department of Health to send a doctor and a nurse over there, and to have people have examinations and get eyeglasses. And false teeth, was another thing, they'd never had them on Block Island, till the passage of that act. We sat in the room with the whole town council, all of us very seasick from going on a [06:00] rough sea, the men smoking cigars and spitting across

the room into big spittoons. And I'm trying to get them to agree to false teeth and for the town to pay a share, and this councilman turned to me and he said, "Haven't you ever seen a cow chewing its cud? You know, after a while, they don't need teeth. Their jaws get hard. And it's the same way with the older people on Block Island. They chew their cuds." [laughs]

JH: Oh, no! Oh, gosh.

ESB: But things like that are very rewarding. And, you know, as you continued and – well, I was with the Red Cross during World War II. And I found that I was in charge of the Red Cross Home Service to servicemen and veterans. And I found that, again, a very – almost a pioneer [effort?] [07:00] in a way, it was new, and it's different. And, again, I've always liked challenges.

JH: When you were first starting out in your career, was social service something that was widely open to women? Or was it – or did you have difficulty with that?

ESB: Well, of course. In those days, every administrator or executive was a man. It was very rare to find a woman executive in a social agency. And you had to really fight your way up to the top to get advancement. Because if there were a man and a woman in line for a job, and they were equally qualified, the man got it. Every time. And of course this has all changed now. But I think that's why we've all been so active, probably, in women's rights. [laughs] We've seen the need [08:00] for this advocacy.

JH: Did you find that your Brown education helped you, in any of these situations? Or just the fact that you had graduated from Brown, or –

ESB: The fact that I graduated from Brown, and had a degree, opened the doors. And it helped, because so many people in Rhode Island also had graduated from Brown. And when you said you were a Brown graduate, that meant something. It goes right back to Dean Morriss, "It's the degree that counts." [laughter] I don't think that what I learned as an undergraduate of Brown helped me at all. Today it would, because you're able to do more research, you have a wider

choice of courses, and perhaps you take subjects that are more directly related to what you want to do after graduation. But with all of [09:00] those required courses, [laughs] which I will never forget –

JH: So when was it that you married? During the twenties, do you –

ESB: Oh, I married about eight years, I guess, after I graduated from college. It was quite a time before I married. And then I had my daughter within a year and a half after that, and I took just about six months off, for her birth. And when she was about three months old, I went to work for the state for the first time. And –

JH: So you don't really feel that your marriage, or your – it doesn't seem like it, that they really affected your –

ESB: No, I was lucky, because, you see, I had my mother. And she took care of my daughter while I worked. And, no, my husband was a young attorney, also [10:00] fighting his way to the top, and no, I don't think that my marriage interfered with my career too much. I was very fortunate. We both had our own interests, and we were free to pursue them. Yes.

JH: Did you feel that that was different from other marriage situations of the generation?

ESB: Yes. It was different. There were very few women working at that time. Especially working mothers with children (inaudible). I think that is why I went to work in a daycare center. In fact, I know it was. Because I thought that my daughter, being an only child, needed companionship of children around that age, and she went with me to the daycare center. And two years, I worked there. I enjoyed that very much, at the [11:00] Nickerson House in Providence. Of course it was sort of an eye-opener to me, too, because I think I really hadn't realized how much working might affect a marriage until I saw some of the women who had children there, and how it had affected their marriages.

JH: So, then, you just had one child?

ESB: Just had one daughter. Yeah.

JH: And you worked throughout that whole time. When did you stop working? Or, if – it doesn't even –

ESB: I didn't stop working. [laughter]

JH: Yeah, I didn't think – [laughs] You just kept –

ESB: No, I continued working. I retired in December of 1971.

JH: And you told me you still did volunteer work, and things – or –

ESB: Oh, yes.

JH: – Or, were still involved in many of these organizations.

ESB: Yes. I had been [12:00] involved as a board member in organizations before I retired. And then after I retired, I simply went on more boards [laughter] and more committees, and sort of continued on with what I knew so well and what I was really very interested in. And enjoyed it very much. I was on the budget panel of the United Way for years, and committees for the council there, and of course in the mental health field, and on the board of Children's Friend, and on the Board for Retarded Citizens. I was feeding back into what I had known so well as a paid worker. One reason I wanted to do that was, I had known most of this as a professional worker, and I wanted to be active on a volunteer basis, to see the differences in relationships [13:00] between people and staff and programs. And this was very interesting.

JH: What did you find?



ESB: Well, I found [laughs] for one thing, you know, you always hear about public employment. It's very hard to work for public agencies. You get all kinds of interferences and so on. You find the same thing very true in private non-profit agencies. The same principles apply. There are the same interrelationships and interferences and restrictions that you find in the public field, and this was an eye-opener to me. [laughs] Yes. I very much enjoyed teaching social work, though, on an undergraduate level at URI. I did that three years. And then it got to be too much, and I had to give it up. [14:00] But that to me was one of the most interesting experiences I ever had. It was interesting because, as I recall, they paid \$600 for a course, to teach, and a full-time assistantship at URI was \$1,800 a year. This is what they were paid. And I couldn't afford to go into that field because I couldn't afford it financially. I had to earn some money. [laughs] Yeah. My first salary in social work was \$1,200 a year. And that was considered very good pay. [laughs]

JH: Oh, was it?

ESB: (laughing) Yeah. You'll never get rich in social work. [laughter]

JH: But it seems you've definitely gained from it in other ways.

ESB: Indeed. [15:00] Satisfaction.

JH: Yeah. So, did you ever think that you were going to be doing all of these things? You know, when you first entered Brown, and there you were as a freshman? [laughs]

ESB: No. When I entered Brown, I had no idea. I had this fixation. I had to be a schoolteacher. [laughter] And –

JH: How many other women entered school with that idea, you think?

ESB: I would give a lot to know. I don't know.

JH: It seems like –

ESB: I haven't discussed this with them.

JH: Just from reading, or going through that scrapbook, it seemed like there were so many different things that women did. A lot of them seemed to center on some sort of a service-type job. Social work, or, you know, something like that, but –

ESB: Well, you know why, though. Come, what was it, 1931, the Great Depression. And the only place you could get a job was in social work. [16:00] Everybody else – you know, there wasn't any money to pay for any of these fancy jobs, quote-quote. But a service job, there was money. And there were jobs. So it was almost a process of survival, for a lot of people in college.

JH: Wow.

ESB: Yeah.

JH: What were some of the most popular classes and things, among students at Brown at that time?

ESB: Well, a class I liked very much was paleontology. [laughter] You see, when I finally got loose from these required courses, I branched out. And I began to see things that I thought would be different, and challenging, and something I knew nothing about. And I started taking them. Then I began to enjoy life a little more! [laughs]

JH: It seems like you would've really enjoyed our new curriculum back then. [laughs]

ESB: I'm sure I would have. [laughter] Yes indeed. [17:00] Yes indeed, I would have. But I made some very good friends at Brown, and they've stayed with me all my life. Our group in 1928 has had a class luncheon every year since we graduated, as well as our reunion times. And

it's a very loyal group of women, and a group that have had a great deal to do with Brown, and made great contributions to Brown. Much more than I have.

JH: But, and yet, it still seems with all that you've done, you serve as such a good role model for my generation, and for – how do you feel about that? [laughs]

ESB: I give up. [laughs] I don't know. I think that people today in college are very, very [18:00] fortunate. I think so many of them take what they are able to do and experience for granted. I don't know that they know what it means to struggle to get equality of women, to get these different, stimulating experiences that they have every day. I get impatient with today's students sometimes. I don't think that they are aware of the wonderful opportunities that they have.

JH: What would be your advice to an entering young freshman? You know, a female student? Like, if you had somebody sitting in front of you, and you could give her any advice, what would you say to her?

ESB: Try every new experience you can find, and see what you get out of it. Yeah. Don't stick to any preconceived [19:00] ideas. Experience it all, and decide. Yeah.

JH: Are there any other thoughts you have on Brown, on your life, your career, or anything? I don't know, I don't know if I've covered everything. It seems like we've gotten pretty much everything, but I'm just wondering if there are any other memories or something you have, like –

ESB: Well, very pleasant memories of friendships and times that I've had with classmates and of that kind of thing. And always Brown has been there as the focal point in back of it all. And if there is a very large alumnae club in Kent County, and for people coming into Rhode Island from without the state, who have been to Brown, I know they find this alumnae club a wonderful way to get acquainted with their community and with other people who have had [20:00] similar experiences. I'm sure that that must be very true in the larger cities too, with so many transfers today of junior executives every year or two. It would be a continuing factor in their lives that would be extremely important.

JH: How did you feel upon graduation? Just, that day? You know, Commencement Day. What was that like?

ESB: A great sense of relief. [laughter] “I have finally graduated!” And a real looking forward to the future, and to what lay ahead. I think that it was a very inspirational moment that touched me greatly. The whole commencement process itself. And –

JH: Well, what was that like for women? As far as, like, the whole [21:00] program itself.

ESB: Well, we were there, you see. With the men. And we went down to the First Baptist Meeting House, and of course we all went inside in those days, and went up on the platform one by one, to get our degrees and have our names read out. It was a much smaller thing than it is today. But beautifully organized, and a great inspirational moment.

JH: What was – we were told to ask you this. What was the women’s place in the commencement march and seating?

ESB: Oh, I think we were always in back of the men. [laughter] I can’t remember ever being ahead of the men! But I remember marching down as a body of women. Down the hill, you know, from the men’s campus, and it was something that you remember all your life. It was a [22:00] great inspiration. And as I have gone back, year after year – I’ve been class president of 1928 women for a number of years now, and as we’ve gone back every year, and gone through the process again, it continues to be a great inspirational thing. I think one of the finest things about the reunion activities are the forums that they have, from the different departments of the college, of leading professors. They are wonderful. Very fine. That I remember.

JH: Great. Well, I think that about does it. If there’s anything else that, you know, you remember, that you’d like to tell me about, I’d really like you to give me a call.

ESB: I’ll be very glad to.

JH: And if I have any questions, I might be calling you back. [laughs]

ESB: Fine. And I'm delighted to have been included in this. Well, whatever [23:00] use it is to you. As I say, I think that the memories that a girl has, was a so-called dorm girl, would be very different from the memories of the so-called city girl. And that you really ought to interview someone from both aspects –

JH: Right, I've got to –

ESB: – and see what the differences are.

JH: It's really interesting, because Brown, when it first opened to women almost – wasn't it, if not all, almost all were commuter students from the area?

ESB: Yes. Yes.

JH: And then later, it broadened into where the majority were people who were housing at the school.

ESB: That's right. Yeah. That's true. There's been a big shift, you see, in the student population that we – these later years. Quite a shift. And of course I think that the college did [24:00] that very purposely, because they wanted to broaden the perspective of all the students coming to the university. And it's very true that half of the experience of going to college is getting to know people of different kinds from different parts of the country, and experiencing life in the different part of the country. It's all of great value. Yeah. Stimulating.

JH: Okay. Well, thank you so much for spending this afternoon with me. It's been wonderful.  
[laughs]

ESB: Oh, I've enjoyed this very much. You know, it's not very often that you get a chance to talk about all of these memories. Today's people aren't really too interested in them. [laughs] But (multiple conversations; inaudible) worthwhile.

JH: But I think they are, more than – yeah.

ESB: Yeah. I think there's a great need of advocacy on the part of women. And they – even in recent years, where they've had difficulties with women who have been on the [25:00] staff of Brown feeling that they were not treated on an equal –

JH: Equal level.

ESB: – keel with men. So there's a great need for advocacy on the part of women at Brown.

JH: And it still isn't, and it's going on, and should continue.

ESB: Oh, very much so. Yeah. Yeah. It's been lots of fun.

JH: Okay. Well, thank you very much. This is the end of the interview.

ESB: All right. [laughs]

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