

Transcript – Rose Roberta Traurig '28

Narrator: Rose Roberta Traurig
Interviewer: Diann Gillmar
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Track 1

Diann Gillmar: [00:00] – Diann Gillmar, interviewing Rose Traurig, class of 1928. We are in Waterbury, Connecticut and it is May 20, 1986. Rose, can you tell me a little bit about your family background and why you went to Brown?

Rose Roberta Traurig: How much time am I going to get?

DG: [laughter] You have –

RRT: It will take me a long time. However, I'll condense it.

DG: If you don't mind, I'd like for you to start and then if it goes on too long, may I interrupt and move us forward?

RRT: OK. all right. My mother and father came to America in 1886. It's one hundred years ago and we're very proud of it. And we now have six generations in the States. They weren't married. They met in Newark, New Jersey. My mother came to Baltimore to her relatives but it was too quiet in Baltimore. There were no men there. So she moved to New Jersey and met dad and they got married. They moved to Waterbury [01:00]. They had seven children. I'm the youngest of the seven. Of the seven, my brother Sam, who was the oldest, went to Post College here in Waterbury. My brother Dave, who was the second, went to the University of Connecticut and graduated when it was called the Cow College. That's how far back that was. My brothers Max and Ed went to Yale and graduated from Yale academic and from law school. My brother

Lou, as I told you, went to University of Connecticut and then he went to NYU because my father, when he first came to Waterbury, met a Mr. Sanditz and they joined a partnership and they opened a private bank. And they did real estate and that's the way they got started. Lou went into the bank. Therefore he went to NYU School of Banking and came home and ran the bank. Let's see now. We all went to college, as I say. My sister Gert went to Connecticut College [02:00] in New London and she taught. She was a teacher.

DG: How did you happen to go to Brown?

RRT: Well, I can't tell you exactly why but I think one reason was I wanted to be near Waterbury but I didn't want to go to the same college that my sister went to or my brother went to. I wanted to be on my own. It wasn't Pembroke then either. It was the women's college in Brown University. And that seemed to be the nearest and yet I could be on my own and that's how I went.

DG: May I ask, you and your sister, were you encouraged to go to college?

RRT: Oh, yes.

DG: [inaudible] your brothers?

RRT: Oh, yes.

DG: Like your brothers?

RRT: Oh, yes. My father and mother believed that education was the most wonderful thing in the world. When they came to this country they both went to night school so that they could learn English immediately. They didn't want to be called foreigners. We never talked anything in that house but English from the time I can remember [03:00] because both mother and dad never had an accent. Not a bit of a one. And they were as modern as any two people could be. My father and mother both believed that you have to have an education. That was important. And as a

result of that we started a library in our synagogue. We started a library in our temple. We started a library in the Jewish Federation in Waterbury. We didn't start the library but we have a room in the Silas Bronson Library here in Waterbury and then we have actually our library at Post College. They believed that it was necessary. My brothers are both founders—Lou is a founder of Einstein College of Medicine and Max and Ed are founders of Cardozo Law School in New York.

DG: That's just amazing. Did you feel that your family had expectations of [04:00] you particularly in regard to your education? Did you get a sense that they wanted you to do something with it?

RRT: I started to say—I told that to Joan. My mother and father, we had a wonderful heritage. Both of them were the finest people you could ever meet anywhere. So as a result of that, they expected all of us to do all we could with what we had. They didn't push us.

DG: So you and Gert were not discriminated against because you were women?

RRT: Oh, never. Never.

DG: You were treated equally with your brothers?

RRT: No, no. Dad and mother, as far as our family was concerned – we are still one of the closest families that I know of.

DG: That's just –

RRT: And there were five of us that didn't marry. Only two married. We lived together, we worked together, we played together.

DG: Did you sense that that was unique? That you were being treated uniquely as a women?

RRT: Oh, no.

DG: No.

RRT: No.

DG: You were all just brought up to expect to have the best education?

RRT: [05:00] I will say this, of course. That my brothers were very protective of us. They wouldn't let us go out by ourselves. For instance, if we were invited to a dance and we hadn't gotten around to inviting anybody, the first thing they said was, "If you want me to go with you, I'll be very glad to." And this doesn't have to in [inaudible] but Ed was just saying today there's a picture of a young lady –

[break in audio]

DG: I'm test– Yeah. – to the women's college in Brown University. Where did you live as a freshman?

RRT: The Angell House on Angell Street.

DG: Angell House on Angell Street.

RRT: Yes. And Miss Vinton was our housemother. I don't know whether the house is in existence now or not but it was a three-story house with a firewall in between so that when you went into the dining room you had to come outside to go around because you couldn't get through this firewall. In case of any emergency, that was it. So if you're entertaining, when you had [06:00] a boyfriend, you entertained on the right-hand side of the house. Miss Vinton's room was right in back of that reception hall, I guess they called it, so that she knew everything that was going on. She might not have had a peephole, I wouldn't say that, but she knew what was going on.

DG: That's interesting.

RRT: And the dining room was on the other side.

DG: Could you entertain men at all?

RRT: Only in that one room.

DG: And at special times of the day or night?

RRT: Yes. Men couldn't come in during the day except on Saturdays and Sundays. Not during the week. But when you were invited out, if you were going out at night, our late hours where we could be out until nine o'clock every night of the week. When we went out on a date or a dance we could be out, I think it was 12:30. But if the dance was over on the hill we could be out, I think it was two o'clock. But we were given one half hour to get from [07:00] the men's campus to the women's campus. And we didn't dare go by the men's dormitories, even with our escorts. We had to go through campus because you weren't allowed to be anywhere near the men's dormitory.

DG: How was the social life? What was the relationship between Brown and the women at Brown socially and academically? Let's continue socially.

RRT: Well, we had no classes with the men.

DG: You had no –

RRT: We had our own classes and they had theirs. But when you took courses like economics, and we didn't have too many of those courses in the women's campus, we were allowed to go over to the men's campus. Now, socially there were a lot of fraternities at that time. Of course, I was Jewish, which made a little bit of difference because –

DG: How [inaudible]?

RRT: Although my family never distinguished between being Jewish and Christian. We never had that. All my roommates, except for my first roommate, was a Christian girl. But we didn't [08:00] go to the dances at the fraternity houses [inaudible]. I will say by junior year and senior year I was invited to a few of the fraternity houses. But up to that time no. But as time –

DG: None of the women were invited?

RRT: Oh, yes. Yes.

DG: Some?

RRT: But the Jewish girls were not.

DG: How many Jewish girls –

RRT: There weren't too many that lived in the dormitories but there were many, many that lived downtown. There were a lot of town girls that came into town and they did entertain a lot of the Jewish girls. They were very, very kind and very nice about inviting us to a beautiful club and I can't remember the name of it. But it was a Jewish country club. And when they had dances there they invited us. Now, turn it off or something. Did you know or do –

[break in audio]]

DG: There was some discrimination then?

RRT: No.

DG: Social discrimination?

RRT: No. No, no, no. No. There was never one bit of discrimination. Our friends were Jewish and Christian. We roomed with them, we went places with them. [09:00] One girl was invited to Dartmouth and she needed to bring a girl with her. She brought my roommate, Eleanor Post, and it was never a question of whether you were Jewish or you were Christian.

DG: But I was just curious. You were talking about the social life with the Brown men.

RRT: No.

DG: That the Jewish girls were not invited to the parties, whereas the Christian girls were. And I was wondering why that was.

RRT: I think the answer was that, at that time, it wasn't discrimination. It was, at that time, the Jewish girls went with Jewish boys.

DG: And there weren't that many Jewish boys?

RRT: No, no. There was a club that started later. I can't remember the year either. It was called the Menorah Group, Menorah Group. And they did have dances and Jewish girls were invited to those. I assume, I can't remember whether Christian girls were or not. I think they were.

DG: That was a campus group? The Menorah Club?

RRT: They didn't have a fraternity. So there wasn't a Jewish fraternity on the hill. But I think it was called the Menorah Group and they did invite us to that.

DG: Were there sororities at the women's club?

RRT: No. No sororities.

DG: [10:00] Where were your classes held?

RRT: Pembroke Hall. Cushing Street was here. You crossed Cushing Street and –

DG: Pembroke Hall is still standing. That's where your classes were held. Yes.

RRT: And they built a new building at that time. I can't remember the name of it. But I have to tell you this, too. The upperclassmen at that time were pretty smart. They knew that during the summer, very few people made telephone calls at Pembroke Hall, which was where our – so just as soon as they arrived they went over to place their calls and you had a machine there that you put your coins in. That machine broke and coins fell out and the upperclassmen knew that they could get coins. I won't say they cheated. But they never returned that money to the telephone company either. [laughs]

DG: That's amazing. Did you live in Angell [11:00] House for four years?

RRT: No. Lived there for a year and a half. My first roommate, she was only there for one semester. I've forgotten her name even. But she was a little girl from Massachusetts and she flunked out. And the roommate that I had the second semester turned out to be one of my dearest friends. Her name was Joan Aschier. She's married and has one daughter. As a matter of fact, her daughter was supposed to have been our class baby all through the years.

DG: Is that right?

RRT: She was the first one to get married and she had her little daughter and her daughter was our class baby. But Joan Aschier is one of the sweetest girls. Her name is Beale, B-E-A-L-E. [sic] She lived in Massachusetts, the Boston area, for many years, and now lives in New York. So that I roomed with her. Then the second half of my sophomore year I roomed with Eleanor Post. And we got along beautifully. Eleanor has since passed away but we remained friends all through the years.

DG: Where were you living?

RRT: [12:00] At that time? At Angell.

DG: Still at Angell.

RRT: At Angell Street. But then we both moved over. There were two rooms that were available in Miller and so we both went over to Miller.

DG: Was Metcalf built at that time?

RRT: Yes. Metcalf and Miller [inaudible].

DG: But not that connecting building, Andrews. You mentioned Dean Morriss.

RRT: Oh, she was the darling of the darlings. Margaret Morriss. And she was as kind as any person I have ever met. Her brother – now, I didn't mention this in talking about my family. But my father always believed in charity. He never wanted too much for himself but he was in every organization, including the Immaculate Conception. He helped them build that. I don't want to [inaudible].

DG: That's fine. Just –

[break in audio]

DG: [inaudible] who came in.

RRT: So we knew her brother all through the years.

DG: Before you went to –

RRT: Before I went to Brown.

DG: To Brown.

RRT: But I didn't know that he was Margaret Morriss's brother.

DG: [13:00] I see.

RRT: I knew who he was. We were all very, very close together.

DG: That's most interesting. What was the undergraduate's relationship with Dean Morriss?

RRT: I don't know about any of the others but I know I was very, very fond of her and very close to her. I won't say we were buddy friends. I don't mean that. But any time we were anywhere and I went over to talk with her and visit with her, she was charming. And I must tell you that I have one awful singing voice and for Christmas carols we would go to serenade Margaret Morriss and I was one of the [inaudible] selected with the little lamp that we carried. [laughs] I had to sign to Mar- and she was so gracious. We were all invited in for hot chocolate and she was just - I loved her. Now, again, I don't know whether I ought to tell this. You can tell me. Turn it off for the moment.

DG: Sure.

RRT: Because I don't know whether I should say it on -

[break in audio]

RRT: But Eleanor was my roommate and she flunked [14:00] math and, of course, she hated to think she'd be put out of Brown. As a matter of fact, she had a sister, Sylvia Post, who was a junior, and she never even told her sister what happened. But she cried and cried and cried, and so I called Miss Morriss and I wanted to know if we could go over just to visit with her. And we

did. And she was charming. She was always charming. She was the most gracious lady I ever met. And we explained the situation and she said to Eleanor, “All right. I’m going to give you a trial run on this now. Don’t take math your second semester. You can take any other course. If you don’t flunk after this semester you will be allowed to stay on.” And Eleanor graduated in our class.

DG: That’s wonderful. That’s wonderful. So she was encouraged?

RRT: Margaret Morriss, she was a matriarch. She never sat slouched. Never. She had a beautiful figure. She was built beautifully. I can’t remember her nickname [15:00] and it will drive me crazy.

DG: Was she a role model for you?

RRT: Hmm?

DG: [inaudible] that she –

RRT: Yes, I would say so. I would say so. She was. She was so kind to everyone. I adored her.

DG: She was really a part of your lives if you wanted to make her a part of your lives.

RRT: And then when I returned and found out that she was Dr. Morriss’s sister then, of course, it meant even more.

DG: You had a wonderful connection. Yes.

RRT: Oh, she was great. I did meet her. As a matter of fact, we all belonged to Gaylord. We all contributed to Gaylord. Max’s main picture is in Gaylord, because he was president for many, many years. When you talk about families, I don’t think there’s a family in the city of Waterbury

who has given more to the city of Waterbury by way of charity than our family has. Not only in money but giving of themselves.

DG: It certainly seems that way.

RRT: Because that was my father's life and we all followed along.

DG: What sort of extracurricular activities did you have at Brown? [16:00] Were there any?

RRT: No, there were.

DG: Were there athletics at all?

RRT: Oh, please, turn that off. [laughs]

DG: Well, now, hold on a minute. Some of these good things you don't want us to listen to... You really want us to turn it off or can you share?

RRT: No, turn it off.

DG: I'll tell you what I'd like to do. If we have time, play it back and we can take out some of the stuff.

RRT: Well, this is real – my freshman year we had to take gym. Eleanor and I took gym together. Eleanor was tall. Not particularly graceful. And of all the things we decided to take was ballet. I wasn't very graceful but when I saw Eleanor doing ballet I quit gym and I didn't go to gym for three years. My fourth year I was called in and I was told if I didn't make up all of the four [17:00] years of gym I could not graduate.

DG: You did you stop gym?

RRT: Because I didn't really care for gymnastics. And one look at Eleanor as a ballet dancer and that cleared all of gym. I just didn't want to go anymore. So my senior year, and in those days the girls wore bloomers and midi. I had to make up all of that gym. So I had a bulletin board almost as big as that window and I had the days. Every time a class needed an extra person for any sport at all I was the one they called. So I played basketball, I played volleyball, I went skating, I went horseback riding because the –

DG: You had a crash course.

RRT: I had every single day. By this time I was a senior. Some of my classes were over on the men's hill. You couldn't go over there in bloomers and in a midi [18:00] blouse. You just couldn't. So I'd have to rush back to Miller, get into a skirt, rush over to class, rush back again, and by that time I was in gym again. But I did graduate.

DG: You did graduate?

RRT: I did graduate.

DG: Was there swimming? Did you have to pass a swimming test at that time?

RRT: No, but we had swimming.

DG: Did you have a pool?

RRT: I don't think so. I don't remember.

DG: That's right.

RRT: I would have gone swimming, I think, because I was a fairly good swimmer. I don't think we had that. We might have had tennis but I can't remember tennis courts either.

DG: I know swimming was required and you had to pass a swimming test when I was there, at the time.

RRT: No, I wouldn't have had any trouble with that.

DG: But we also had a required –

RRT: We went to the beach every single summer of my life. We never missed a summer. So I was a good swimmer but I was never much for athletics.

DG: No. I gather the professors were Brown professors who came over to teach the women.

RRT: Yes, yes.

DG: Were there any women faculty members [inaudible]?

RRT: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. But I can't really remember anyone that stood out. [19:00] I remember that the one professor that I adored over on the men's campus was Professor [Walter] Snell. Was that Snell?

DG: What department?

RRT: Botany? Botany.

DG: I don't know botany.

RRT: He died about three years ago. He was charming and he was such a nice pleasant guy. I will tell you this, too. When you took your classes over on the hill with the men, if anything off-color came up – and when I mean off-color I don't mean what we have today with four-letter words. I don't mean that kind of thing. But I'll tell you a story about this Professor Snell. The men would stamp their feet this way and that meant that that was not quite – well, anyway, we

were back in my botany course and he was explaining that apples that came from Oregon are absolutely perfect in size and in color. Everything was perfect about them. But they didn't have the taste. Now, I knew England apples weren't quite that firm, weren't quite that beautiful, but he said they were wonderful. [20:00] He says, "As a matter of fact, I kind of like my apples a little bit rotten." And that was when the stamping – [laughs]

DG: Oh, that's delightful. What did you major in?

RRT: Sociology.

DG: That's a really new science at that point, sociology.

RRT: Well, I did go into a lot of the sciences my junior and senior years. But I took up sociology mainly because my family had always been so social minded in activities. And when I graduated from college my first job was in New York and I went to Lord & Taylor's and I was in this training squad. Then I came home for the summer. When I came home for the summer my family decided that they thought I ought to do something other than be in the retail end of this thing. So I went to a secretarial school called Miller School on 42nd Street in New York and I went to that for just maybe one month or two months when I went to an agency to see if I could get a job in sociology. I mean in social services. [21:00] And there was an opening at the Brooklyn Charities on Schermerhorn Street in Brooklyn. And I think it's still there. And I got the position. And I stayed with the Brooklyn Charities and I did like it. But the Depression set in. The job that I had was getting jobs for handicapped people. Well, when the Depression came in, able-bodied people couldn't get jobs, so, of course, that particular part closed up. When that closed up my family asked to have me come home and that's when I came home.

DG: And how did you happen to go into Lord & Taylor, into the retail business after Brown? What sort of preparation did you -

RRT: I liked clothes. I didn't have any preparation for it. But I liked selling things. Since I was very young I worked in a [Carly?] shop here in Waterbury. That was a novelty type of shop. It

was a boutique more than anything. And I loved it. And so I thought, “Well, maybe I’d like that retail end of it.” I did enjoy it.

DG: Did you?

RRT: I [inaudible] [22:00] I wouldn’t enjoy it. And they were very fine, too, to all these young girls. You had one day, remember Thursday or Friday, when you went to classes.

DG: Oh, really?

RRT: Yes. And then you were trained in all the different departments and then they put you in the thing that they thought you were best at. At that point in the game I was in women’s dresses, in misses dresses.

DG: Your family, I gather, wanted you to be in something less commercial? Was that the reason they discouraged you from going back to Lord & Taylor?

RRT: I think they felt I had gone to school to do social service work and that’s what I should be doing. And so when I went back to get the actual typing and shorthand they knew that I was going to try to get into the social-service field.

DG: This is jumping ahead a little bit but your brothers went on to graduate school. Did you have any idea of going –

RRT: Very few girls in that generation went back to graduate school. So many of them, of course, did get married. But those that didn’t, most of them, most of them went into teaching.

DG: [23:00] When you came back home after the social-service work fell through because of the Depression, what did you do?

RRT: Well, it was Depression. I don't think this ought to go in there either because it was – did you want to turn it off?

DG: OK, let's hear. Maybe not.

RRT: [inaudible] have it off now.

DG: Want me to turn it off?

RRT: I don't want to...

DG: Sure, sure.

[break in audio]

RRT: This was Depression. I was going – when I came home and the Depression came on... I did come home. I worked at the bank for a little while. Then I went on. The boys bought the Waterbury Title Company. Waterbury Title Company at that time was really the only title company in the city, and when we were in the other building we had a vault bigger than this, with all of the records of the City of Waterbury. As a matter of fact, many, many times the engineers from Waterbury had to call Waterbury Title Company to find out the history of the towns, because in those days you had to title search at least a hundred years back.

DG: Fascinating.

RRT: Now they don't. Now they just take our old Waterbury Title Company [24:00] records and bring those up to date. But we couldn't do that. And so I started with Waterbury Title Company and from that Homeowners Loan came along and we handled most of Homeowners Loan work in those days, so that I helped with the typing and the shorthand. We had two girls working and I was the third. But we were able to keep up doing that. And then I just gradually stayed on and on and on and I'm still with them.

DG: You were paid [inaudible]?

RRT: Oh, yes.

DG: And treated as a professional person?

RRT: When we started Waterbury Title Company we started very, very little because we had to pay Waterbury Title Company. And, as I said, it was Depression. So we paid them monthly to get the business so that we could own it. Now, I started to work for them and I started at five dollars a week. And out of that five dollars a week I was – of course, I lived at home.

DG: You lived at home. OK.

RRT: And living at home, it didn't cost anything. But out of that five dollars a week I was able to open up a Waterbury Building and Loan [25:00], a dollar a week that I put away. And in those days I smoked and I had to pay for my own cigarettes. My family would not pay for them. And that's how I worked into Waterbury – then we sold Waterbury Title Company recently because we have a nephew who was with us and he actually said he wasn't going to work as hard as we were working. So he went to Washington, a beautiful job in Washington. Wasn't there long when he died. And when he died we sold Waterbury Title and now we just have the [inaudible].

DG: That's interesting. Was there a pressure on you to marry? A social or –

RRT: No. No, no, no. No.

DG: Your family was very liberal where that was concerned?

RRT: No, there was never any pressure. One reason being, of course, that my father died in 1937 and my mother – as I started to tell you, we were a wonderful – my mother and father were marvelous and we all catered to my mother. It was never a question of our house, it was my

mother's house. If my mother wanted to go riding, we went riding. [26:00] It was just that we were close to my mother. And after dad died we just all continued to stay.

DG: You rallied around?

RRT: And she died when she was – 1960 she passed away. No, there was never any pressure on any of us to –

DG: I gather you didn't feel the social pressure. Was there a social pressure on your classmates to marry at Brown? Did peo–

RRT: I don't know. I wouldn't know. I know that –

DG: But you didn't feel it anyhow among your contemporaries?

RRT: No. No, no. But some of the girls got married. Peg Hall got married I think a year after we graduated. Dorothy was married for a long time afterwards. I don't think there were too many that married right outside of college. Joan Aschier got married before we graduated because she only went to school one year.

DG: It was a more liberal time than the '50s era, for instance, when –

RRT: What do you mean by liberal?

DG: Well, I think you had more freedom, that marriage was not something that was automatically required.

RRT: [27:00] Oh, no. No. No, of course –

DG: Which was part of what happened in the '50s where you bought into a packaged deal.

RRT: There weren't that many jobs open for girls.

DG: So it's puzzling to me that marriage was not a solution to that problem. What did these young women do when they didn't marry right away?

RRT: I would say most of them became schoolteachers.

DG: They just went into teaching?

RRT: A few of them. Like Sylvia Post was marvelous at retailing and she went into one of the big stores and then from there she went into Neiman Marcus's and was their resident buyer in New York. But there were very few openings of that kind for women.

DG: Is that right?

RRT: Very, very few. And that social-service work was another field that a lot of women went into.

DG: I'm going to stop this for a –

[break in audio]

RRT: – Depression. And I'll wager that 9 out of 10 men would rather sell apples on the street than take what we call charity.

DG: Isn't that amazing?

RRT: They wouldn't. They'd do any kind of washing windows, any kind of work. [28:00] And the girls went into the factories if they could get it.

DG: How had it changed with the New Deal? How much difference –

[break in audio]

RRT: Is this on now?

DG: Yes, mm-hmm. Rose, what was the most important influence from Brown? What is the most important thing you came away with from your undergraduate education? How did you change in the four years that you were there?

RRT: Well, again, I always liked people. At Brown there was no discrimination among the girls. With the boys, I don't think we would say it was discrimination. I think it was that the Jewish girls just did not go with Christian boys. They went with the Christian boys. Never had an experience of any kind where I could say there was discrimination. I came away from Brown with that and I've had it all my life. I had some of it before I went away, of course, because in a town like Waterbury you grew up with everybody [29:00] and so it was just one of those things. But I do think that one of the things that I learned at Brown was to get along with the people. As I say, Margaret Morriss to me was just about the finest lady that I ever met anywhere. We'd go to the teas. In those days we had teas. And she greeted everyone at that tea.

DG: How large was your class? How many of you graduated [inaudible]?

RRT: I really don't remember because so many of our girls and boys, too, were town people, so that they made up a big part of a college. So that the way –

DG: More than half, would you say, of the women were town people?

RRT: Oh, I think so. I think so. You see, we had Sharpe House and we had...

DG: Did you have [East?] House?

RRT: There was another dormitory next to Pembroke Hall and I can't remember the name of that one. And Miller and Metcalf. Now, in those days, Joan [30:00] and Elise, when they came to Brown, had to live on Olive Street. There were two rooms, I think, where the girls could stay and those were the only two off-campus girls that I knew of, only for one semester and then they came into the dormitories.

DG: And then they came in. What was your worst time at Brown? Were you ever unhappy there?

RRT: No, I couldn't say I ever had a [inaudible] ever. My worst time was making up gym. [laughs] Because I never, never got over making up gym. But no, I think for me, I think that Brown was really a wonderful experience. I loved every minute I was there and I will say sometimes I had difficulties. Like certain courses that I took that were harder than others. And I had to really work hard at those rather than the others. But professors I never had a problem with. They were always very fine. I did take music but I was a lousy music student. [31:00] But that was a good course.

DG: Did you have a close relationship with any of the faculty? Could you go in and talk to them as you did Dean Morriss?

RRT: Yes, yes, yes. Professor [Albert] Johnson. Professor Johnson. When I get back to Brown as a freshman, I had taken one class of Spanish in high school. Just one course. And we really didn't learn too much, we knew the –

- End of Track 1 -

Track 2

RRT: [00:00] – senior class of Spanish. Rosemary, Janet Pearl, Dorothy Swanson and I can't remember the other girls name. We knew nothing because we all had just that one little class. And Janet, I don't think she had any Spanish. And this Professor Johnson was a darling. He was short. He looked like foxy grandpa. He had little sideburns there. He went out of his way to be

kind to us and to help us and he was just a doll. So that when I needed him at one time – I don't want this in here either because it's nobody's business.

[break in audio]

RRT: My sister went to Connecticut College in New London and so she came to visit me for a weekend. And I had class – I'd say it was on Friday morning, I don't know. But anyway, she came to my Spanish class. And as I explained, we four were not Spanish students. Really we weren't. [01:00] But we did pass because he was the kind that gave the kind of examination that we would really get along with. But anyway, she sat there and she was amused to think that Professor Johnson was so sweet and kind to us.

DG: That's lovely.

RRT: He was a doll. He was a very nice person. He was the only professor really that I... There's a Professor [Robert] George. I think he was a historian.

DG: He was there when [inaudible]. Could that – yes. Professor George was there a very –

RRT: Tall, distinguished looking?

DG: – old man when I was there. Yes.

RRT: Well, he was there.

DG: A wonderful man.

RRT: He was a wonderful, wonderful professor [inaudible]. I can't really remember too many of my professors but Johnson I remember.

DG: Your memory is just incredible though. For names and events.

RRT: Yeah. So far.

DG: I'm impressed with it. That's why we're here.

RRT: Really, we've had so much fun over the years, [02:00] our family has. We've enjoyed everything. But unfortunately, as I say, when Max and Lou passed away within one year of each other – Max took sick at a quarter of 6:00 at night and six o'clock in the morning he was gone. And we couldn't believe it. It just wasn't possible. He used to like to walk in the corridor. He walked the corridor. He went into his office. I said, "Are you all right, Max?" He said, "I'm a little bit tired," and he's got his work finished, he got everything ready. He said, "Put these files on the ladder." That meant get them ready for Joyce for the next morning. We were going out to lunch and he said, "No, I think I better go home." So we took him home. The nurse that was on the floor then took his blood pressure, took his pulse, examined him as much as she could and she said, "Everything's normal." So he decided he wouldn't come down to work, he'd go to sleep. So he went up to his room. And we got home about 20 after 3:00 and the nurse had just taken his blood pressure again and she said he was fine except that his temperature had gone up one degree. So we were with Max until six o'clock, abouts. [03:00] Oh, yes, she said to him, "Mr. Max, you haven't had anything to eat. Would you like lunch?" And he said, "Well, there's a new beautiful baked pumpkin pie down there and I'd like that with some tea." So he had that at three o'clock and quarter of 6:00 she came up again and did the same thing, rushed him at the hospital. Heart arrest and there was nothing [inaudible].

DG: How old was he?

F: Eighty-five.

DG: Eighty-five.

RRT: But you ask anyone around here, he's the most energetic eighty-five-year old you ever saw in your life.

DG: Well, you all are just amazing. Where were your parents from? What country?

RRT: Austria.

DG: Austria.

RRT: My mother's part Hungarian and Austrian and we teased my mother all of her life because she was a very meek lady and she never really lost her temper. But when she got mad we'd say, "Uh-uh, that's the Hungarian coming out. The Gypsies from Hungary."

DG: Now, neither one of them had had – what kind of an education did they have?

RRT: Well, my father had a good Hebrew education because Jewish boys, no matter where they were from, [04:00] had to go to Hebrew school until they were thirteen years of age and that's when they had their bar mitzvahs and then they were out in the world. But my father, again, was one of the most intelligent men I have ever met in my life. He had a photographic mind. If he heard something once that was in his mind and he could always – I don't know what it is, it's part of that. It doesn't matter. But this is part of history anyway. When my brother Max became a lawyer, our dinner table was always the most interesting time of the day because everybody had stories and everybody talked. It wasn't one of those things where you sat there and you just ate. We always had conversation. And dad would say to Max, "Max, I have a friend and this friend has such and such a case." Now, if that was your case, what would you do?" So Max would tell him. Max [inaudible] said, "You know, I don't have any clients. My father's the lawyer."

DG: Now what did your father do again?

RRT: He was a banker.

DG: He was a–

F: Before that. Before that.

RRT: It wasn't easy for him. I don't know whether this part is interesting.

DG: Well, if you don't mind, it is. [05:00] It's your background.

RRT: Right. When he came to this country, he came here during the storm – was it 18– he came here in 1886. So it was 1888 or something like that when they had that terrible blizzard and he was the youngest of all the young men and so they let him down on a rope and he [inaudible] that took him in and out. He started in this country and he worked in a leather factory and he said that was really grueling.

DG: Where was he?

RRT: In Norton, New Jersey. And he'd have to wear the boots and that kind of stuff because they were in water. It was a tannery type of thing. And then he bought a wagon and he was going to go pedaling. By this time he met my mother. And the Depression was on at that time so he didn't make out – I must tell you about this, too. Again, that thrift was instilled in us from the very beginning. When my mother had two dollars she would put one dollar away, which meant that when they were first married they had a house of their own in Norton, New Jersey, and mother used to tease about it. [06:00] She said, "You know, it was a two-story house. One room on the first floor and one room... [laughs] But they owned that house.

DG: But they owned it.

RRT: And dad would tease and say when he was young mother gave him whatever it was. He bought property on Long Island. And he said, "Once they went to see the property. You know, it was gorgeous land when the tide was out."

DG: There was no land.

RRT: But that's the way he started. And then, as I say, he came to Waterbury and he met Mr. Sanditz and the two of them together worked beautifully. Matter of fact, Mr. Sanditz – right now for my brother Max we have given a new wing to a cerebral palsy home that they have, a school that they have up on the hill and that is going to be the Max R. Traurig part of it because we donated that. Because our family always have been in charity. There's never been a time when we weren't because my mother and father both believed in it.

DG: That's wonderful.

RRT: And then, of course, from the banking they branched out into [07:00] into real estate and that's the way it started.

DG: This has been wonderful. Do you have anything else that you'd like to –

RRT: No.

DG: – say something about?

RRT: We just loved living. We loved to live and my brothers went to Yale, they never had a problem.

DG: How did they happen to go to Yale? Just –

RRT: I think because it was near home. And they were both brilliant students. There was no question about it. And, of course, my brother Dave went to the Cow College – Connecticut College, at that time. He grew very, very tall, very fast. That's how we got to meet Dr. Lyman originally. Dave had TB and he went to Gaylord. And Dr. Lyman suggested that he go to a country college and that's how he ended up going to [overlapping dialogue; inaudible].

DG: [overlapping dialogue; inaudible].

RRT: And Lou went. Lou went because most of his friends were going to the University of Connecticut. He was one of their best basketball players when he was a freshman and he was one of their outstanding athletes. Where I had none of that, he had all of it. And he was a freshman when he was on variety teams.

DG: Now, where did Gert [08:00] go again? Your sister?

RRT: Gert went to Connecticut College in New London.

DG: Now, she's younger or older?

RRT: No, I'm the youngest, Ed's next, Gert's next, then there was little Max, Dave, and Sam. But my brother, Sam, now you talk about life. That fellow, I don't like all this as history but he is a fascinating person. I think I told you, I'm not sure, last year he had Legionnaires' disease. Now, that is almost fatal. I mean, most people die from Legionnaires' disease. He was running a temperature of 104 for over a month. He was in intensive care. They finally did a burr hole through his skull to release the pressure and he had pneumonia. He had everything when he was there. And he came out of it and he came out of it beautifully.

DG: Absolutely.

RRT: The day he got out of the hospital he went to his office. Now, he's been retired for many, many, many years but he wanted to know what was going on. He was in the insurance business. His doctor caught him there and sent him home. And he said to him, "When I get ready to send you back, you'll go back one morning [09:00] for an hour for a week," or something of that kind.

DG: All right.

RRT: We've been calling every single day and this night we call and Sam was home. And Ed said, "Well, he told us about the doctor catching him." And Ed said, "Well, your doctor's right. You shouldn't have gone to the office. Why did you go?" Oh, he said, "But aside from that my

doctor isn't very smart." So Ed said, "He isn't? Well, what do you mean, Sam?" "You know what he had the nerve to tell me?" And Ed said, "What?" "I have to give up dancing." For 90 years of age. Ninety.

F: You told me a story about him dancing. They went to a party. I remember. And he was dancing.

RRT: He danced? Oh, sure.

DG: Yes.

RRT: After this he went to this party and Bob was at the table. Bob's his younger son. By the way, Bob is the outstanding lawyer in Florida. He is the outstanding – I'll show you that, their booklet. They've done fantastically. They were here for this weekend. But anyway, he went to this party and Bob could see my brother doing this.

DG: Just wanted to dance.

RRT: And he said, "Dad, you can't dance."

DG: Oh, that's wonderful.

RRT: And dad said, "Why not?" And he said, "Because your doctor said you can't." [10:00] And he said, "Oh, what does he know?" So Bob said to him, "What if you get dizzy?" He said, "I'm not getting dizzy." Got up, picked the prettiest girl, the youngest girl in the place, and he danced.

DG: Yes. At 90 years old.

RRT: The following Monday they called us and said, "Dad is in the hospital." So everybody assumed it was a heart attack. So that was on a Monday, I guess. And on Wednesday or

Thursday we called him and he said to Ed, “I’m going home tomorrow.” And Ed said, “Well, how do you feel, Sam?” He said, “It wasn’t a heart attack. I just ate too much.” [laughs]

DG: Oh, Rose, thank you so much.

RRT: Well, we’ve enjoyed life and, as I say, Brown –

DG: This was just wonderful.

RRT: – was a big influence as far as I was concerned. I loved every minute that I was there. I never had a problem. My only problem, as I say, I had to make up the gym and they wouldn’t let me – it was the sweetest girl. I can’t remember her name either. She went from there to Wellesley as the gym instructor. [11:00] I forget her name. But anyway, she made me make up every single day and I think at the end she wanted me to make up two more days and I tore up that paper and –

DG: You refused. No.

RRT: If I don’t graduate, I’m not going to make up any more work.

DG: Well, it’s delightful.

RRT: We’re on our way, and we have to go to lunch early because that’s [inaudible]. We had a station wagon and Al, who helps us with our gardening, did some marketing. He went marketing. And he said he noticed the thing standing up. Fortunately he didn’t go near the motor. The whole motor blew right out of this –

F: Oh, dear.

RRT: – [inaudible].

DG: Oh, my heavens.

RRT: The whole thing was gone. So we're in the market now for a new station wagon. So we're supposed to pick him up and he's taking us to [inaudible].

DG: Do you have any feelings that you would like this not put into the archives for –

RRT: I'd rather it wouldn't. I don't like publicity too much. But if there are certain stories, you can put them in without telling them that they're mine.

DG: OK. Well, we can hold this, you know, [12:00] for an indefinite period of time and not have it... What I'm wondering, do you want it available for researchers? I don't think we have anything on there that you – when you asked us to cut it off we did. Do you want it not released for researchers use?

RRT: Oh, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter.

DG: OK. Do you want to – would you mind doing that for me, Rose?

RRT: I do. I do.

DG: I think that gives you –

RRT: You want me just put my signature down and then you could look?

DG: If you could let me just see here. I'll read this.

RRT: We do love living, we still do. Unfortunately we don't do the things we used to do. But I will tell you this before we go, because we did a little reliving of our youth about a month ago. As I said, we always went to the beach in the summer. We were never in Waterbury. And one Friday afternoon, we took the afternoon off and we started from here and we went to West

Haven. We went to Savin Rock which, when we were children, was an amusement park and today it's all built up with high rises. There's no amusement park there at all. And then we went from there to [13:00] Prospect Beach. We were at Prospect Beach one year. That we would never know because one beach goes right into the other and it didn't when we were children. Then we went on to [Wind mob?] and that's where we spent many days and many summers. And I know where we lived and all that. But it had changed so over the years. See, we've been gone from there now 26 years and we were in Woodbury during the summer now instead of at the beach. And then we went down where Walnut Beach, which was, again, an amusement park. And my mother and her dearest friend, Mrs. Green, who used to walk one mile from where we were to Walnut Beach so they could play the slot machines [inaudible] those days. They were elderly ladies but they loved [inaudible].

DG: That's wonderful.

RRT: So we went all through that and it was really quite nice.

DG: If you would just sign right there, Rose, and I'll take care of the rest of it.

RRT: But as far as school was concerned, I loved it. I had no regrets ever. I made very good friendships. We remained friends over [14:00] the years.

F: Have you ever wanted to go back and visit?

RRT: Well, you know, I have found that when I do that I'm a little disappointed because I don't like change and everything changes so.

DG: What were your parents' names, Rose?

RRT: Parents?

DG: Your parents' names?

RRT: Dad's William. William Tobias. And mother was Nettie, N-E-T-T-I-E, and they always called her Raydner. That was her maiden name. R-A-Y-D-N-E-R. R-A-Y-D-N-E-R. Raydner. And everybody always called her Nettie Raydner.

DG: And your father's employment? Would you say banker?

RRT: I would say it. But that's about it. Banker or real estate because that was what he's –

DG: Your date of birth?

RRT: May 3, 1905. I was 81 years.

DG: You just had a birthday.

F: Congratulations.

DG: Eighty-one. Congratulations.

RRT: Thank you. But I never –

DG: You are amazing.

RRT: [15:00] Eighty-one.

DG: You are an amazing 81-year-old.

RRT: Oh, that really [inaudible].

DG: Oh, yes, you are.

RRT: It's surprising that the years went by so fast.

F: I'll turn it off.

RRT: I can't believe it.

DG: This has been wonderful.

RRT: Ed laughs and he keeps saying all the time, "Gee, I want to be 80 again. I could do everything when I was 80. He's 83 now.

DG: Is there a place you can suggest for us to have lu-

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