

Oral History of Penny Baskerville '68

The interview was conducted over the phone from Brown University by Derria Monique Byrd '96 on February 3, 1996.

Derria Byrd: Derria Byrd interviewing Penny Baskerville Class of '68. I'm just going to start with some background information. What sort of family history did you come from?

Penny Baskerville: I looked at that question and it was hard to figure out exactly what you meant. But, I guess I'm from a working class family. I grew up with both my parents and one brother. What, more specifically, did you...

DB: What area of the country did you come from and then what kind of base did you have that kind of geared you toward coming to Brown?

PB: Okay, I was born and have lived almost all my life in New Jersey. Both my parents had a relatively large extended family and we were all in the same town. So, I had a good, strong family structure that I was raised in. I guess there were a few other family members who had gone to college before I did. My father and uncle; a cousin. You know, that kind of thing. But the whole time I was growing up, I think it was just expected that I would go to college.

DB: Were the other members of your family who had gone to college all men?

PB: No, my father and my uncle obviously were men. (laughs) So for that generation, definitely, only the men would have ever gone to college. I think that my mother would have liked to have gone but there was never any thought then given to a daughter going off to college. By my generation, that was a little bit different. And the cousin, who was around my age, who had gone to college was a woman. And I think mostly for financial reasons, there probably weren't more (laughs) people in the family who went to college. At least in our family, there was definitely a feeling that both my brother and I would go to college. As I said, we were what could best be described as working class. I mean, we certainly did not have a lot of money. We had very little money but we were in a town that was relatively wealthy--had a very good school system. And even though the blacks in the town were in a very small minority, the whole school system was geared toward getting kids into college. So, while it was kind of unusual for us because there weren't very many of us in the family that went to college, it was still pretty much assumed... most of my friends went to college. As I said, you know, maybe 90% of kids who graduated from my high school went of college, so...

DB: That's better than in my [graduating] class. (PB & DB laugh)

PB: So, you know, in that sense it was really not that unusual but it certainly was a huge effort for the family to get us there.

DB: What was your high school like? And do you feel like your experiences there, both academically and socially, prepared you for what you encountered at Brown?

PB: Absolutely. Only because, I guess, the atmospheres in the schools were not really different. I grew up in a town that was predominately white, relatively well off, the school system was academically excellent, and as I said, geared towards getting kids [5:00] through high school and into college. So academically, it was very, very similar to Brown. You know, for the most part I felt very well-prepared going there. The social situation was pretty much the same. As you may or may not have gathered (laughs) in your research, we pretty much lived a very segregated life. The schools were integrated, but out of school, the town was pretty much segregated. So I was used to the idea of being in classes where I was usually the only black person in the class. And studying with white kids and perhaps working on a project after school with classmates and that kind of thing, but knowing really well that that was the extent of your social interaction. With some exceptions, obviously. The black kids just really did not socialize away from school with the white kids. And that's pretty much the way I expected it to be at Brown and, pretty much, the way it was. So, you know, nothing that I found at Brown was a big surprise. It was pretty much as I expected it to be.

DB: And even though you expected it, was it still disappointing or was it just something you accepted.

PB: I can't say that it was disappointing because I think to be disappointed you would have to have expected it to be otherwise. So, I think I pretty much accepted it. You know, it wasn't a real happy situation but it was sort of like, "Hey, this is life."

DB: Did you go to a private high school?

PH: No, it was a public school.

DB: As far as teaching styles and expectations, there wasn't any great diversity between what you experienced at high school and at Brown?

PB: I don't think so. You know, I really don't.

DB: So other than the academic and social expectations, what else were you anticipating that you would encounter at Brown?

PB: I probably didn't really know what I was going to encounter. (laughs) You know, to be perfectly truthful. I mean I don't think anybody really knew what college was going to be like. I had never been ... other than going to my--I had an older cousin who had gone to college and I remember going to her graduation, but that may have been the only time I had ever been on a college campus. So I *really* didn't know. I don't think I *really* knew what to expect of college. I didn't know what college was going to be like. It was going to be a whole new experience. So probably anything that came at me, you know would have been brand new and was brand new. So I can't say that I had a whole lot of, you know, preconceived expectations.

DB: So when you got here, everything just fell into place or was adjusting difficult.

PB: I don't think that adjusting was very difficult. I kind of remember it-- freshman year

we were all kind of in the same boat. (laughs) And I think some of it had to do with the difference in time. I mean, now my sense is that kids today are much more aware of what college is like than any of us were.

DB: Yes, probably.

PB: So I think that for all my friends, when we got to campus, everything was like brand new. And, you know, you certainly just have to adjust to being in college and being away from home and you know, eating in dining halls and all those kinds of things, [10:00] but I don't really remember that there were any major adjustments.

DB: What are the things that you remember most fondly about your time at Brown?

PB: I guess mostly the people. The people that I got to know best at school were the people... I guess there were really kind of two distinct groups of people. One, was the people that I lived with in the dormitory. And I think most of us lived in the same dorm for at least a couple of years, but then certainly continued to be close friends all four years. So I definitely remember this core group of girls that were... we were all very good friends. And then, of course, the five other black women who were there. Just *because* we were the six black women we became good friends. I certainly was closer to a couple of them than others, but you know, we certainly were good friends with each other. And, you know, there were lots of other things that were sort of just rituals of college life in those days that sounds very quaint and unique looking back on them. You know things like Sherry Hours and convocation.

DB: Sherry hours?

PB: Oh yes. You never heard of Sherry Hour?

DB: Was it between students and faculty?

PB: Pretty much, yes. There was a-- I forget what they were called, but-- resident fellows or something like that. It was like a junior faculty member who lived in each dormitory. And they were like our parent figures. (laughs) And they would host a Sherry Hour in their apartment probably like every week or every other week. Seems to me I remember that it was on Wednesday. And usually, they would invite some other faculty member to come, you know, as guests. It was just a social hour--cocktail hour--before dinner and, you know, everybody in the dorm was welcome to come. And, I guess that we really liked the couple who were our resident fellows so we always went. (laughs) We always used to joke about all these young ladies standing around drinking sherry with such a high alcoholic content while we were always getting lectures about the dangers of alcohol. (DB laughs) But they were just really fun times. And then we'd have convocation--I can't remember how often we had convocations either--whether they were once a week or every month. And you were, you know, required to go. They were usually quite boring. And we would sit there and knit (laughs) and we thought that was fun. And it was.

DB: Now when you say convocation, what exactly is that? Because when we think of convocation, that is just what happens the first day we get to campus and what happens the day we leave.

PB: Yea, they were kind of mini versions of those. (laughs)

DB: Every week?! (laughs)

PB: No, I mean they were... and you know, I honestly have a hard time remembering exactly what happened at convocation because we really didn't pay a whole lot of attention. (laughs) But they were like, you know, sort of like a church service. Although, there was no religious context at all. But there would be like a speaker and they would make, I guess, whatever formal announcements needed to be made for the college as a whole. You know, those kinds of things. And there were... I mean there were a lot of things that we were required to do in those days. I think kids are pretty much not required to do anything anymore.

DB: Pretty much.

PD: But we were required to do a lot of things. Going to convocation was one of them... And probably because we were required to go, we never paid any attention to anything that happened. You know, it was just one of those common experiences. You all had to go so it was something that you all lived through together. So you sort of... I remember it fondly [15:00] because we sat there and knitted all the time. You know, meal times... meal times were much more formal than I'm sure they are now. We all had dinner together. And so then it became a memorable occasion.

DB: Where did you live during your years on campus?

PB: I lived in Champlain Hall all four years.

DB: Wow.

PB: I may have been the only person to have ever done that. And I am not sure why. (PB & DB laugh) I was happy there. In fact, I had the same roommate for the first three years.

DB: You're kidding.

PB: No.

DB: I think you are the only person to do that as well.

PB: Yep, I had the same roommate. And then senior year she wanted to move off campus. And so she lived with--I think--the woman who lived next door to us and (DB laughs) and then I had a single that year. And, as I said before, a lot of us kind of stayed together. It was kind of a core group of people from freshman year that stayed pretty close all four years.

DB: Did you join any clubs or organizations to spend your free time?

PB: I didn't; probably--well I shouldn't try to second guess why other people have told you, but--I think because there were so few blacks on campus at that time, I think for the most part we created our own little world within the larger Brown community and there certainly were a number of people who kind of moved into, you know, existing University organizations. You know like the government and a couple of guys even joined fraternities and those kinds of things. For whatever reason, maybe I just wasn't a joiner or something at that time. (laughs) I rarely did that. But one of the things we *did* do--I can't remember when it was; maybe my sophomore year or junior year--was to create an Afro-American society. That was like the primary organization that I remember. I know that I joined the Glee Club; I think that was for a couple of years and I did volunteer work through some organization; you know, some formal organization at Brown, the name of which I can no longer remember. But I can't say that I personally was very active in a lot of you know Brown or Pembroke organizations. And I don't really remember that the other black women were either. A couple of them were, I know but not most of us.

DB: You mentioned the creation of the Afro American Society; was there a lot of opposition to that in the wider community?

PB: I can't say *opposition*; I think that the Brown community really didn't know what to make of us or what to do with us. We were the great experiment. Yea, we were the great experiment in some sense. And I think there was certainly a sincere effort to increase the number of black students at Brown for all of the right reasons, but once we started to get there, I don't think there was any *thought* given to, "Are there any special needs that this group of kids needs?" And I think we... when it became known that we wanted to create this organization, people just really didn't know that to make of it. So in the one sense, I don't think that there was opposition, but it was more a question of, "Why?" and "What are [20:00] you people going to do?" and "Are you going to be... I can remember all these discussions about whether or not we were going to discriminate against white people. (DB laughs) Maybe I just don't remember it, but I don't remember you know like a great deal of controversy or anything like that. People just had typical reactions like, "Oh Gee! (laughs) These black people are really here and now they are going to try to do something."

DB: And was it formed mainly for social reasons or was it more political/academic interest involved?

PB: Well, I think it was social in the broader sense of the word. I think we felt a need to establish an identity. And this was at the time--in what? 1966/'67 when the Civil Rights activity was really geared up--and you know there were just a lot of things going on in the country. And I think it was an expression of *our* need to try to establish some sort of identity. And you know we wanted to be a vehicle for reaching out into the Providence community. You know and doing things like tutoring and to try and bring some sort of black-oriented cultural activities to campus. And I guess really to kind of formalize our public existence on campus. I mean we did social things, too. We had parties and that

kind of stuff but that wasn't the *primary* focus or motivator behind the starting of that group.

DB: Now what other large issues besides the Civil Rights movement were discussed on campus or were participated in between the campus and the community?

PB: Well, the late 60s was such a tumultuous time. There were all kinds of social issues going on: civil rights issues, the Vietnam War, the military/ industrial complex, the elections--Presidential elections--, it was a wonder we got anything done with all the sorts of things that were going on. Unbelievable. There was just a lot of stuff going on in those days. A *lot* of stuff. (laughs) The women's revolution. It was just absolutely amazing the changes that occurred just in the span of the four years that we were there. So there was a lot of stuff going on.

DB: Our connection might be a little bad; if you could speak up a little bit.

PB: Yea, yea I should have realized because I could barely hear you either. (laughs)

DB: Yes, sounds really crackly. That's too bad. How were your strongest friendships developed and at what time in your college career?

PB: Well, I think the strongest friendships were the women that I lived with in the dormitories. And... there was a group of us that--I don't know if it was just a real lucky stroke of luck or luck of the draw or whatever, but we just--really got along together real well. So you know from freshman year on, we--almost to this day--became very good friends. And then, I also became friends with several of the black women on campus. We were each spread out among all the dormitories so there was like one of us in each dorm. So our common bond was the fact that [25:00] we were the six black women on campus. So probably three or four of us out of the six who did not have a traditional social life; we were together every weekend. (laughs)

DB: Were there parties?... What did you do on the weekends? Was it just socializing within the smaller group of friends?

PB: We did our hair. No. (laughs)

DB: Aha!

PB: Again, there was not a great deal of socializing between whites and blacks on campus. I mean, there certainly was some, very definitely. I don't want to make it sound like there was complete apartheid (laughs) But while all the other girls in the dorm were, you know, very much caught up in the dating scene and who was going to get invited to which party at Brown--Brown and Pembroke were of course completely separated--so the social life took place on the Brown campus and the women would have to get *invited* by someone you know, to a party at Brown. And *I* and certainly the other black women that I was close to were just not at all a part of that scene. You know there were a couple of the black women who were but for those of us who weren't, we just really spent most of our time together and just never really thought about that. And then, probably-probably my

junior or senior year, something like that, I guess men were starting to be allowed to live off campus. I seem to remember going to parties at someone's apartment and at this point, I can't even remember who or where but (laughs) one of the black men had an apartment off campus and we would start having parties there and that kind of thing. You know, my guess is that the party-scene or whatever you want to call it was not as big a factor in my life or in most of the other blacks' lives at it was for the larger Brown campus?

DB: So inside and outside of the campus, what level of interaction did Brown men and women in the African American community have? Did you just hang out with them or was it just parties and the classroom?

PB: Well, I mean we were very close. You know, I sort of... I don't really remember being with other black men or women in my classes. And you know parties were not a major factor in our lives. But we really did spend just a lot of time being together. I think we were all very close. I think there were so few of us to begin with--I think there were like what: six women and six or seven men in our class? And just a sprinkling of upperclassmen when we got there, so we certainly all knew each other. And I am sure... certainly the women spent a great deal of time together but the men and the women spent a fair amount of time together. Doing *what*, I probably can't really tell you. I don't know what we did. (DB laughs) I don't know: sitting around in each other's rooms and gabbing or . . . if we weren't at parties, and we weren't going out to restaurants, which I think kids in general just tended not to do as much as they do now. I'm not quite sure what there was left to do. (laughs) Sitting around in the dorm lounge or something like that. But yea, we were all pretty close friends and we did spend a good amount of time together. [30:00]

DB: I'm just going to tum over the tape.

[End Tape 1, Side 1]

DB: Did you work while you were on campus and what type of [activities] got you off campus and interacting with the community?

PB: Well one thing that I was just remembering in terms of the social life... we really socialized a fair amount with black communities on other campuses. Primarily other Ivy League campuses and I think it was--I don't know, some guys from either... it must have been Yale--started these things we used to call Spook weekends. (DB & PB laugh) And all the kids from the east coast would go to Yale for the weekend and we'd have a big party and we probably did that a couple of times a year. I know at one point, after we'd started our African American society, we hosted it a couple of times at Brown and they had it at Harvard once or twice. That was an important factor for us to commiserate with kids who were going through the same things on other campuses and again, I think it sort of gave us a larger social basis well. Because since there were so few of us at Brown and we were all such good friends--you know, we were more like brothers and sisters and--we never really dated among ourselves probably just because there were so few of us. So just being able to you know get to other campuses and meet a larger group of kids who were kind of in the same boat that we were was really important and a lot of fun.

DB: And did you get the sense that the "black experience" at other Ivy League schools was just about the same as at Brown?

PB: Oh yea! Oh yea, definitely. I mean there were obvious differences. Obviously, Yale at that point was all men.

DB: That's a little different.

PB: And they dated women from Connecticut College or whatever and they were--I think--a larger school and they probably had more... I think Yale and Harvard started recruiting blacks before Brown did so I think they had more blacks there. But, for the most part, yea it was absolutely the same.

DB: So, did you work while you were on campus?

PB: I did. (pause) What did I do? You know, every semester I had a job for nearly ten hours a week. I worked in a photo lab; I worked at a reception desk. Those kinds of things. But yes, I definitely had a job.

DB: Since you said that finances were a large part of your coming to Brown, did you worry about where the tuition money was coming from?

PB: Yea, I mean clearly I had to have a scholarship. My whole college career was financed by scholarships. And so that clearly was an important factor but I don't think that having the scholarship was ever really in doubt. The scope was certainly very different. While it was certainly much more than my parents could have ever you know hoped to afford, when I was at college, it was not as astronomical as it is today. I think a year in college cost like \$2000 when I was there. And now, then it was certainly a lot of money but it's nothing compared to \$25,000 compared today. Money certainly was an important consideration but I had a scholarship and I pretty much knew I was going to have it and, [5:00] you know, I certainly didn't have a lot of extras. There was not money for clothes and going out to restaurants and all that kind of stuff. But, again, the world was very different then; and I don't think we were as great consumers then as kids or even adults are today. (DB & PB laugh) So, you know, not being able to go out to dinner every weekend was really no big deal. We just never really thought about. I knew that if I wanted to go out for an ice cream soda, I had to go out and earn that money. My parents weren't in a position to send me checks every week or that kind of thing. They sent me boxes of cookies and presents like such. (laughs)

DB: That's nice.

PB: So, you know, yes--money certainly was a factor but it was not you know a major, major worry. But I am sure that if my scholarships had been threatened or something like that, we would have really had a problem. But I think we just pretty much assumed that the security of the scholarships would be there every year. It worked out.

DB: What were your academic interests while you were here?

PB: I hadn't really thought about this until I was going through this material and just reading, but my academic performance was absolutely dismal. If not atrocious. (DB laughs) And I think it was because of the way I reacted to where I was in sort of the history of my family and blacks and whatever because I think I just kind of internalized the idea that my primary goal was to go to college. And once I got to college, it sort of ... after that, nothing really mattered. (laughs) And at that particular ... you know, in the early '60s, women were supposed to go to college to get a husband and no one really made any bones about that. And you were supposed to go to Pembroke and marry a Brown man. And you know, you had this great education that was just wonderful to have, but like for what; who cares?! So I was really not at all motivated academically. And I certainly don't want to blame Brown or society (laughs), but nobody ever said to me, "Look, girl, get your act together. You know, there is going to be a life after college and you need to be prepared for it." And I just sort of ... I *really* think that my achievement was in having gone to Brown and what I did there didn't *really* matter. And I took courses because I thought that they would be good to take and I think I took like a lot of upper-level classes for which I had not the proper preparation so I did pretty miserably, but they were great courses.

DB: You challenged yourself!

PB: (pause) But I don't think I rose to the challenge. (laughs) And I remember when I got to Brown I was going to major in French because I had studied a lot of French and German in high school. And I had an advisor who was just this sweet middle-aged--or, I don't know, past middle-aged Frenchman. A very dapper, continental and I really don't remember getting a lot of great advice or guidance from him and I certainly also don't remember trying to get it either. Whether I knew what to look for, what to ask for, what help I needed. The only thing I remember him doing was you know when I was starting to do miserably in French, was encouraging me to major in German instead. (DB & PB laugh) So I majored in German and did even worse.

DI3: Yikes.

PB: I know I was academically well prepared [10:00] and I know the kind of guidance Brown gives the student today. I certainly didn't get it while I was there. And I don't really remember whether it was because it just didn't exist mostly--the infrastructures didn't exist--or whether I just didn't take advantage of it. But I just really kind of floundered my way through. It's a wonder I graduated. I think they just decided it would be too embarrassing not to (laughing) graduate one of the six black girls; they wanted to graduate all of us. But looking back, it was absolutely horrible and I don't remember being worried about it at all because it just was not important. And nobody ever said to me, "Young lady, this is important. You have to study."

DB: Now do you feel you suffered in the long run after graduation for not thinking that it was important and [ignoring] that you needed to do more than just get into Brown?

PB: Yes. Because, again, when I was there from '64 to '68, the women's movement was just really exploding and there were a lot of us who just thought that women were

supposed to be educated but, you know, you just had to get a liberal arts education and it didn't matter in what and you didn't have to prepare yourself for anything because you were going to get married and be taken care of. And there certainly were a lot of women who thought differently (laughing) who were preparing themselves for particular careers and had ambitions for doing things after graduation but I was not one of them. And I probably really didn't become a feminist until after I got out of college. And certainly all of the experiences I had at Brown--you know, all of the things that women were going through as part of Pembroke and a part of Brown--certainly prepared me for where my mind went afterwards, but I did not spend that time at Brown preparing myself for a career. Or even thinking about having a career. I mean, I literally graduated and happened into a job and said, "You know, okay, great. I've got a job." And then I got married two weeks after graduation (DB: Wow!) because I thought that was what we were supposed to do. And knowing what I know now (laughs) about how I would think about life, certainly I would do things a lot differently. But I didn't then. I was just very, very naive, I think.

DB: So, your parents didn't give you a hard time about your grades?

PB: No.

DB: Did they have the same beliefs that you did?

PB: They felt that way, too. My father just was not a very talkative person and definitely the sense that I had from my mother that was, yes, the most important thing was just going to college and getting married. And no one ever thought about what was going to happen afterward. It was like you are going to die and go to heaven. (PB & DB laugh) It was a fairy tale.

DB: Twenty-one years; that's all you get.

PB: After that, your life becomes your husband's and your children's. And that's about all you have to worry about. (laughs)

DB: A little different message these days.

PB: I know; I know. I mean, yea. They were just ... I don't remember them ever talking to me about my grades. They certainly got all my grade reports because everything got sent home and that's it. But, I went from being an A student in high school to being a C and B student in college. But I guess they figured that as long as I was still there (DB laughs) there was nothing much they could do about it. I don't know. They're no longer alive so I have never been able to kind of talk to them about it like this; ask them, you know, "What were you thinking?" (laughs)

DB: Why did you let me do that?!

PB: So, but I don't know. The message I was getting was that all you have to do is graduate and get married and everything will be okay.

DB: Was that the same message that Brown [15:00] was sending out to the women on campus?

PB: Oh yea! Very definitely. Very definitely. You know, if you didn't get married right away, it was okay to--let's see--you could go to New York and get a job in publishing or you could teach at private school because prep schools didn't require the same kinds of formal certification that public schools did, so you could teach or you could be a secretary and that would hold you (laughing) over until you got married.

DB: Right back to that.

PB: It's true. It's true. Thinking about it now it was just absolutely awful. I remember when we were there, people complaining about the career services office at Pembroke because that was the way they were steering women. There have been women that I have talked to afterwards--more recently-- those women who really did have a career path in mind while they were at Brown and they were just really discouraged by the powers-that-be at Pembroke from thinking about going to law school, or medical school, or anything like that. Not what you were supposed to do. Things changed rapidly, I'm glad to say. Just not rapidly enough for us, not for all of us anyway... I think even before we graduated because I don't know, to just sort of give an example, when we arrived on campus as freshman, we were instructed that you had to bring hats and white gloves. You had to wear a skirt to the Brown campus. You had to wear skirts to dinner. And very *clearly* you had to wear a skirt into town – you know, into Providence or to New Haven. You had to be properly dressed. In gym class we had classes on posture, and one of the things that we were taught was the proper way to carry a suitcase when you are getting on and off a train.

DB: Oh my goodness.

PB: So, I mean that was just the accepted way of life when we got to campus and then by the time we left in 1968, we were all flower children and burning bras (DB laughs) and trying to have men sleep in our dorms overnight. (laughs) So, I mean that was a radical, radical, radical change in just four years... I really think that it all started during that time that we were there. It was the beginning of all the stuff that happened in the '70s, but it took a lot, a lot of changes.

DB: So you think the catalyst for [this change was] the greater society outside of the campus?

PB: Oh yea! Oh yea, definitely! But, you know, we were certainly a part of it. It certainly wasn't just the women at Pembroke who were saying, "When we go to career services, we want (laughing) to find out about more than just secretarial positions." So we were certainly part of a much larger movement but I mean, it's was going on here. And then there was the big birth control pill scandal. But now, you know, my daughter has birth control pills and nobody ever told me, but someone at Brown, you know, in our class wanted birth control pills and it caused a huge scandal and ended up on the front-page of the New York Times. (DB: Oh no!) It really did. So, it as just a very different world.

DB: Who or what [20:00] were your support networks at this time?

PB: I guess really informally, just the other students. Now certainly the women that I lived with who were my friends were very definitely a strong support network. And then the other blacks on campus were, again, another support network. There... I think the relationships in general between students and administrators was very, very different. I think administrators then didn't pretend on being (laughs) friends to the students. So I really think that most of us looked at the administration at Pembroke as being very distant, if not antagonistic. And, yes you were encouraged to get to know your faculty members and so forth, but I don't recall anyone ever--I guess with one exception--ever getting that close to a faculty member to think of them as a peer. And there were certainly no *black* administrators at Brown or at Pembroke so that... what may have been or what may exist today as sort of a natural means of communication just didn't exist for us. The only blacks *we* ever saw *were* in the dining halls or cleaning our rooms. So, as I said before, in terms of academics, I don't remember in any way a formalized support network for students.

DB: And what do you think you came away with from Brown in terms of a positive self-development and what, if anything, do you think was damaging?

PB: Well, I mean, all-in-all, I think it was a great experience in many, many ways. I got an excellent education--despite having terrible grades--(PB & DB laugh) and not having taken advantage of it to the extent that I wish I had. I guess we all have those sort of regrets, looking back on it. It was a *great* education. Just being able to go to college was a great experience. You know, I was very glad that I had a chance to go live in a different state. Go to a place where they call milkshakes "cabinets," instead of milkshakes. (DB laughs) You know, meet people from different parts of the world and have all kinds of different kinds of experiences I probably would not have had in New Jersey. Absolutely, it was a great growth experience. I feel very fortunate in being able to have done that. I think that the college years are the time when a young person necessarily needs to do a lot of growing and I think I did that. I think Brown was a good place to do it. Were there any negatives? (pause) No, I don't think so. There are certainly things that I probably would do different if I could do it all over again with hindsight. (laughs) But was there anything that I wish was different? Considering the time and the place, probably not. Considering [25:00] where I came from and the different alternatives... or the other kinds of schools I could have gone to, there probably wasn't a better place than Pembroke.

DB: What do you feel, if anything, was missing from your education? Your experience at Brown--or Pembroke?

PB: (pause) That's a hard question to answer. Given that it was 1964 to '68, it's probably unrealistic to expect a lot of things that, you know kids have now that we didn't have then. Black studies hadn't been invented then. Would I have *loved* to have studied black history when I was in college? *Yes*, absolutely! But considering that it didn't exist then, I can't say that I *missed* it, in that sense. Yea, I would have *loved* to have had it. You know, I would have loved to have been in an environment where there were more than just *six* black girls. (laughs) But that really didn't exist then. The only alternative I think I *had* at

the point was to go to an all-black school and I think that--for *me*--coming from the environment I grew up in in northern New Jersey where I was used to being a black person who was in the minority, I think going to an all-black school would have been a real culture shock. (laughs) I mean, it may have been great. I am not trying to say that it would have been terrible for me, but that would have been a much more radical change. (PB & DB laugh)... So, in one sense, yes--I wish the whole world were a different place in 1968, but given the state of the world in 1968, I really think Brown/Pembroke was the best place to be. And I think it was exciting to live through all of those changes And I think it was really exciting to live through that period of time when the way women thought about themselves was very, very different. And the way blacks thought about themselves was changing. [28:00] That was an exciting time. It was a wild ride. (PB & DB laugh)

DB: I just need to change the tape.

[End Tape 1, Side 2]

DB: [So, since graduation your] Brown years have been a benefit to you?

PB: Again, I think of any... I can't put my finger on any specific thing, but certainly getting an excellent education--a *really* solid foundation--certainly has been a benefit to me as an adult. Being in a school like Brown during the sixties when all of these things were going on in society, I think was definitely beneficial. I think I *grew* up at Pembroke and I think grew up very well. (laughs)

DB: Are you still active with the University?

PB: Yea. I do interviewing for the Alumni Schools Program. And I've gone back to a few reunions.

DB: Now do you stay in contact because of a sort of commitment to the University or maybe a sense of paying back or is it just something you want to do?

PB: Probably all three. (laughs) I do *a lot* of volunteer work, so I guess I have this philosophy that people who get a lot out of life have an obligation to at least put some of it back. And many years ago somebody asked me to participate in the Alumni Schools Program and I did and it's just been fun so I have ended up doing it for--God--over 20 years now. It's just kind of a fun way to keep in touch with the school.

DB: How essential were your classroom experiences on what you decided to do after graduation, or what you ended up doing after graduation, more specifically? (laughs)

PB: Now that I am thinking about it, probably more so than I realized. Because you know I think that coming of age at the time that I did when there was so much chaos going on in the world, I really felt it was important to... to do something that was going to benefit society as a whole. And I think most of my career choices --for good or bad (laughs)-- have been kind of driven by that motivation. And, yea, so Pembroke probably had a lot to do with shaping that.

DB: Do you want to tell me a little bit about your life since Brown?

PB: (laughs) How little? (laughing) We're talking 30 years here.

DB: (laughs) Well, it's up to your discretion; however much you want to share.

PB: (laughs heartily) Goodness! I got married... two weeks after graduation. Stayed married for 11, 12 years--something like that. Had two kids in the mean time. Have always worked. I don't think I ever *really* accepted the notion that I was going to get married and be taken care of. Even though (laughing) I didn't prepare myself for doing anything in particular. Having come from a long line of women who have always worked and always helped support their family, it was just something that came naturally. [5:00] So I have always worked. I (pause)--what did I do?--when I first came out of school, I started working for IBM. And that was the job that I just literally fell into. I didn't look for it; (laughs) didn't try to get it--it was just like handed to me on a silver platter, so I took it. (DB laughs) It really... it probably would have been the perfect job, but it really just was not the right fit for me. I mean, I just was never cut out to be in business, so I left there and went to law school with the idea of going into public interest law. But I ended up leaving law school before I graduated for a lot of reasons having *nothing* to do with law school. I mean my mother got sick, I ran out of money, had a baby--you know--had a husband in graduate school; it was not the right time to be in school. So, I started working for the state of New Jersey investigating cases of employment discrimination. And I felt like I had found my true niche. The problem was that that didn't last too long. And then I decided to go into personnel work with the idea that the best way to fight discrimination was from the other side of the table by trying to prevent it, rather than trying to fight it after the fact. And I have been in personnel administration ever since. I changed jobs a lot of different times, but basically, doing the same *kinds* of things.

DB: What sort of volunteer work have you been involved in?

P13: Oh goodness. I guess a lot of it has been involved with kids because when I ended up with two kids of my own in the school system, you sort of get to see all of the work that needs to be done. (laughs) And I have lived in Princeton, New Jersey for twenty-some-odd years and we have an excellent school system, but it's not perfect. So I've served on the school board; I've served on a nursery school board; I served on the board of a youth/drug counseling center. I've worked on... a number of different projects associated with the school system. I'm fairly active in my church. I sing in the choir and work on a number in different committees. I'm on the board of our local NAACP Legal Defense Fund, where we essentially do fund-raising. Oh goodness. Worked on a scholarship committee that gave scholarships to local blacks in town. Church scholarship committee. Twenty-five years, you do a lot of stuff.

DB: Do you think you would have still had an interest in education if you didn't have children? Is that something you would have been committed to anyway?

PB: I don't know. It's hard to say. I mean, it's hard to visualize life without children when you've had them for twenty-five years. (laughs)

DB: (laughing) Right.

PB: Well, I don't know. If I did *not* have children in the school system, I don't know that I would have be aware of what goes *on* in the school system.

DB: Right.

PE: So that's a really hard question to answer. [10:00] I know that there are people who--I have encountered and worked with--who have become involved with the school system primarily for other reasons, like they want to fight rising taxes (laughs). So that is just a question that's real hard to answer.

DB: Now, did you encourage any of your children to come to Brown?

PH: Yea, but neither of them would. (PB & DB laugh) I think it's mostly because--and I respect them for it--they kind of wanted their own place. Both their father and I went to Brown and they just didn't want to try... they didn't want to have to be in the position of following in our footsteps. So in some sense I was really disappointed (laughs) they didn't go, but I am very happy for them and (laughing) I can absolutely understand the reluctance. After having heard about it for a long, long time, it's like ... My son almost did. He was sort of... I don't know whether he was just being very lazy or what but when he first started going to college he thought, "Okay, this is an easy out. I'll just apply to Brown, I don't have to think about it. (laughs) Forget about it, I'll just go. What the heck?!" But eventually he did start to think about it and decided no, he did not want to go there. (PB & DB laugh)

DB: Moment of clarity. (PH & DB laugh)

PB: My daughter just said at the outset, "Forget it! I'm not going. (laughs) Don't even think about it."

DB: There is just one last question: When you think about your Brown years, how do you feel about them? Or your Pembroke years, rather.

PB: I am tempted to say, "The best years of my life." (laughs) And it probably comes close. It was absolutely a positive experience. You know, when you are 50, your youth starts to look better and better. (DB laughs) I have really fond memories of those years and my twenties. And I certainly remember college more positively than high school. Not that high school was terrible or anything like that, but college was just a real *exciting* time. Just a really, really exciting time. And I have made lasting friendships. My roommate and I--I mean she lives in Wisconsin now so we don't see each other often, but we are still close. We--see each other at least once year. I get together for dinner three or four times a year with a group of women from my class. And we kind of renewed our friendship through reunions. I can't say that we have kept in touch--you know close touch--for 25 years but we're a pretty close group now. (laughs) We have a lot of fun together. So, it was a really good experience and I remember it fondly. Absolutely.

DB: Is there anything that you wanted to share?

PB: Oh goodness, I have probably talked your ear off at this point. (DB laughs) I don't think so. I think we've talked about everything. It was a great place and I guess I am sorry to hear--and it necessarily could not have stayed that way--but I guess I am sorry to hear that kids are not having as positive an experience as we had. Hopefully, I hope that you are having as good of an experience in other ways. (PB & DB laugh) I *guess*... there were some down sides to being such a small group on campus. There were a lot of plusses to it, too. Yea. But I hope you guys have fun.

DB: Well we do sometimes. (PB & DB laugh) I think the trend might be heading in the other direction again. The new class that just came in--they seem to get along really well. [15:00] But also, I am a senior who only sees them like (laughs) three times a year.

PB: Yea. Yea. Well, that's encouraging.

DB: But they seem to be having a good time, so...

PB: Good. Very good, yea.

DB: Well, thank you so much for participating.

PB: Oh no! I feel flattered. I absolutely do. I was telling my son this morning that (pause) it's a real shocker to formally become a part of history as you are turning 50. Like, do you really need a more blatant... (DB & PB laugh)

DB: Sorry I didn't get to you sooner. (PB & DB laugh)

PB: But, you know, it's flattering. (laughs) What can I tell ya?! (laughs) No, it's been fun.

DB: I'm glad.

PB: And I certainly wish you luck.

DB: Oh, thank you very much.

PB: And I can't wait to *see* the finished product... If you need anything, just give me a call and let me know.

DB: Okay.

PB: Okay!

DB: Well, take care.

PB: Okay, thanks a lot.

DB: You're welcome.

PB: Bye-bye.

DB: Bye-bye.