

Transcript – Lois Black, '53

Narrator: Lois Black

Interviewer: Juliet Smith

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Track 1

Juliet Smith: [00:00] – This is Julie Smith, Brown class of 1991, interviewing Lois Black, Pembroke class of 1953. The first question I wanted to ask you was how did you decide to come to Pembroke College?

Lois Black: That was a decision that came about because of my need really to go to college here. I could afford to go and I was actually more interested in going to Cornell. I was a runner-up for a scholarship there, which did not materialize, but I was offered a full tuition plus a small stipend scholarship [00:01:00] to attend Brown. It was the Mary Wooley scholarship at that time, it was, I guess, the best endowed of the undergraduate scholarships for Brown. So, Pembroke being my second choice, but the one that offered me the greatest opportunity, that was where I decided to go. It was largely a financial decision, but the reasons I was interested in Pembroke in the first place had to do with a high school English teacher (inaudible) who, it turned out was a graduate of Pembroke herself, fifteen years before me. (inaudible) so she encouraged my applying here (inaudible).

JS: How did your family see you're going to college?

LB: Well, they were all very supportive largely because I had – well, for two reasons. I had an older sister [00:02:00] some five years my senior who had, I think, fought or argued effectively that it was important for a girl to be educated beyond high school and had herself (inaudible) Jackson College, a women's college at Tufts University, and so it was easier for me being the second daughter to reach that point. I certainly had a lot of encouragement from my teachers (inaudible) reputation for excellent teaching and I think it was a combination of my teachers certainly encouraging me and my sister before me to attend college, but also it was the strong

wish of my mother whose own education had been severely limited just by accidents of birth. She grew up in a place where she couldn't even go to high school and she valued an education far more than my father did [00:03:00] who had a chance to go to college and after two years and two different schools decided that he'd be better off without going to college so he dropped out. I'm sure there were some family arguments that I'm just not aware of that took place around this issue, of whether or not it was a worthwhile investment, but at least what I experienced was very solid support for going to college. They were much less enthusiastic about my career ambitions, which included medical school, which they really did not understand at all.

JS: What (inaudible)?

LB: They just didn't think it was a proper career for a woman. (inaudible) quite clear that it was probably an impossible dream. They certainly did not encourage it. (inaudible) highly unlikely (inaudible) so I think their predictions proved accurate in some respects. (inaudible) choosing [00:04:00] something else. (inaudible).

JS: You said you had one sister? Was that (inaudible)?

LB: That's it, no brothers. I shudder to think what might have been lost if I had been raised in a family which had sons as well as daughters. (inaudible) didn't happen.

JS: What was your hometown (inaudible)?

LB: My hometown, it was a working class suburb of Boston, quite different from the way Watertown, Mass. is today, which is really a bedroom for Boston. In the World War II years, which I remember fairly well, when it became [00:05:00] a heavily built up suburb of Boston, it had a lot of industry of its own. It had a very large (inaudible) arsenal which is now a shopping mall and condominiums and the center of Harvard Health Community Health Center and things of that kind, but it was a very important arsenal during World War II and it also had the (inaudible) Company which manufactured tires and a lot of things that were essential to the war effort, and so it became a very heavily residential, but also industrial town during those years. At

the same time, it's an old town, being on the Charles River and having a history dating back to the 1630s and a good school system, a good library system and had [00:06:00] acquired various waves of immigrants over the years. It had a very large, and still does, a large population of Armenians outside of Armenia and that had all happened prior to my birth. I went to my school with a cohort of students that was probably 50 percent Armenian and Greek and heavily Irish at the time as well.

JS: What's your (inaudible)?

LB: Pretty WASP. English many, many generations back. Both of my parents came to Boston from other parts of the United States and Canada and met in Boston, that's how I happened to grow up there. Boston itself and the community I grew up in and many of the towns around Watertown were places where people came from [00:07:00] the country. In my father's case, he grew up in Maine and immigrated (inaudible) to the Boston area first to go to school and then to work. And my mother's family came from Nova Scotia, but originally that family had settled in the United States and had left at the time of the revolution. Rather than fight the King, they went to Nova Scotia perhaps a century in terms of (inaudible) resources because of that choice. Nova Scotia is a very poor country or province. So Boston was the place where you came on the boat if you had a desire to get on in the world and she and her brothers all had come to Boston and begun their adult lives [00:08:00] there. In fact, five of her five brothers began a construction company in Watertown, Mass. (inaudible) and is still operated by cousins of mine. A place where people came off the farm to become (inaudible) tended to rely on manual skills because that was what they had, in Mother's brothers case it was their carpentry skills and their [building?] skills. In my mother's case she was an excellent seamstress. She made a living working for a fancy dressmaker who (inaudible).

JS: What was your high school like in terms of gender and also if you were a woman who was going to college especially (inaudible)?

LB: No, the [00:09:00] high school is fairly tracked in terms of whether or not you were considered college material or whether you were going to go through a business curriculum or

general studies, and early on I could remember support from all of my teachers to pursue the college track because if you were a good student, and I was, you were advised that you could do that. So being in the Boston area, I think, made a tremendous difference. Any number of colleges were available for people who lived at home and commuted. That certainly was the more common thing for people who went to public schools to consider at least the living at home and commuting to college. A lot of my classmates also went away to school, and I was not particularly struck during my high school years with any particular difference in the way in which girls and boys were counseled about going to college. There were differences in the way people thought about careers and [00:10:00] life beyond college. But clearly, the students that were interested in college were, I would say, a pretty equal mix, girls and boys, and certainly in my class probably we had more outstanding girl students than we did [male?] students because the top six members of my high school graduating class were all females, and there was always sort of, I think if anything, competition between girls and boys to be – for who was going to be the best in our class. It was a female dominated class and most of us went on to college out of those who were college preparatory (inaudible).

JS: How many people were in your graduating class?

LB: I believe, it's easy to remember – I think because we had one graduate for every day of the year. I think there were 365 members in line high [00:11:00] school graduating class.

JS: And how many of those were college (inaudible)?

LB: That's harder for me to imagine. My guess is that's somewhere between 120 and perhaps 150; a pretty high percentage.

JS: (inaudible)

LB: I don't think there was a difference in the quality of the colleges that we went to or the kinds of recommendations that we got. There was a very good gender balance among our teachers, too. We had strong women teachers and strong men teachers, and they weren't necessarily gender

biased there. My chemistry teacher was (inaudible). I don't remember having any women mathematics teachers in high school, but I did in junior high school. So, [00:12:00] I don't think there was a lot of discrimination between sexes. In fact, I was a member of the math club...that is not my strong subject now, but it was not unusual to be a member of the math club and the biology club. I [plotted?] myself as a premed all the way through high school.

JS: What's this woman teacher that you had in high school (inaudible)?

LB: She was my English teacher and I had her actually for both junior and senior English. Probably one of the – I'd say my best [teacher?] was in mathematics (inaudible) she was around (inaudible).

JS: My other question was you said your (inaudible).

LB: (inaudible) interested in her name just for the record since she's a Pembroke graduate Ruth Appel and if I recall correctly, it's A-p-p-e-l, and [00:13:00] I don't know if she's still alive. I know where she retired and she remained there, but I've heard nothing about her for many years now.

JS: Thank you. I was going to ask you, you said your parents weren't expecting (inaudible) medical school. Did they have any other expectations of how (inaudible) your education?

LB: I think it was easy for them to encourage my majoring in science which was pretty obvious if I was going to medical school and I was very interested in biology, so it was a natural, I decided in advance that I'd major in biology. But I think they saw that as practical because with a degree in biology obviously you can get a job as a technician. You could do something with it. Certainly at that time I had no idea (inaudible). So I think they were in support of my choice for education [00:14:00] because it seemed useful and I think that pleased my father and if majored in something like science, at least I could get a job after college. As far as my mother, I don't remember her having much to say about what it was I went to college to study. Some things are

far out of her own experience. I don't think she had any idea (inaudible) except that I think she hoped I would probably marry well and have an easier life than she had had.

JS: Speaking of college, what were your first impressions on being at Pembroke if you can remember your first day or first [00:15:00] roommate?

LB: I remember the first day except they took a picture of us sitting on the front steps of East House. I don't know if you knew where East House – East House is now a plot of grass on the...it would be...west? (inaudible) orientation in Providence, south side of Meeting Street – north side of Meeting Street. Well, as you come out of Doyle house and face Alumnae Hall, there's sort of a green area. There's some little steps that go up to the quad? East House used to be right there. It was –

JS: It used to be on the green area? So you didn't have a place to play frisbee?

LB: Not right there. No there was a green area behind it. There's always been an open area bounded by Sayles Hall--Sayles Gym--and no, I mean, the area [00:16:00] on Meeting Street. Which is Meeting Street, is that the street that goes through the center of campus or –

JS: Brown Street goes here, and Meeting Street goes here, and Pembroke College is here.

LB: Well, Doyle House is – which street is that on?

JS: I don't know where Doyle House is.

LB: Doyle is, well, the women's center.

JS: Sarah Doyle! Oh, yeah, that's on Meeting Street.

LB: Yes, well, Meeting Street. That's the address. East House faced – almost faced – where Doyle Center is in a little green area just on the other side of the street. In other words, down

from Pembroke Hall. There's nothing between Pembroke Hall and Alumnae Hall, is there, at this time? That green area had two houses on it. One of them was East House, a freshman dormitory, and the other was a building in which housed the bookstore and had some classroom space above it and both of those buildings were razed actually, I think, by [00:17:00] my senior year. There were lots of freshman – in fact, all freshmen were housed in former homes that had been converted into dormitories that were scattered around the area, and East House was the one that was really closest to the cafeteria, which was in Andrews Hall. Therefore a very pleasant... It was right opposite a post office substation, which may have moved, but...

JS: That's still there.

LB: That's still there? Yeah. And so we thought it was very conveniently located. It was probably one of the least attractive of the houses. It was an old duplex and it had essentially three rooms on each side of the duplex on each floor. I think it was three stories high so there were two girls living in each of the bedrooms on the top two floors and [00:18:00] four girls and a living room on one side on the ground floor, and there were two more girls and our house mother who was a math graduate student who lived on the other side on the ground floor and a second living room and – so it was a fairly small house of girls – counting up that must have been, 6...12...let's see – 24 girls. No, it must have been more than that. It would have been 30.

Anyhow, arriving at college, I remember it was a Sunday. I remember being dropped off and their taking a picture of us the very first day and then we had a week's orientation and my roommate was – I corresponded with her briefly. I didn't [00:19:00] quite know what to make of her because she didn't – her grammar was good, but her spelling was terrible. We couldn't have been more different and we're still the dearest of friends, but Marion Simons came from Charleston, South Carolina and she was about to be a debutante, had been to an Episcopal girls' school, was the daughter of an admiral, rather different! And here I was from a New England working-class, upward mobile family who had never fought the Civil War intellectually or any other way and we liked each other immediately, but our habits proved to be very, very different. I was sort of compulsively neat and Marion seemed to me to be pretty disorderly, but she was a comfortable, warm, and a lovely person [00:20:00] and we became very good friends.

JS: Can you spell her name?

LB: Yes, her maiden name was Simons, one m, S-i-m-o-n-s. Marion, and she lives in Murphy, California. And is married to a Roger Thompson. (inaudible) we were cast by a lot together. She had a very upbeat attitude towards college and I think she had come north specifically because she wanted to see – live in a different part of the world which she was aware that it would be difficult to be uprooted from the south, but she had lived (inaudible) junior. But she, having lived away at school for a number [00:21:00] of years, really was much more familiar with dormitory life than I who had lived at home, and been away summers to camp, had never lived anywhere except my own home. I think she and the other girls who had lived at prep schools, boarding schools really had the edge in terms of social adjustment, so they sort of took us public school girls in hand. I think were very helpful to us. They understood parties and what it's like to live in co-ed institution or a girls' institution near a boys' institution and I think they collectively made life a little bit easier for us.

In other ways, I had a distinct advantage, I think, which I think proved in the long run proved to be very helpful. Having [00:22:00] grown up in a suburban environment with a wide ethnic mix, I really think I was better prepared for dealing with the mixture of people I met in college than girls who had been in private schools which were much more selective. I was used to studying with all kinds of people. My high school had a very good academic reputation. I was mostly with college-bound kids in my classes in our homerooms. We were in mixed classes outside of many activities that we took part in in high school. It gave me exposure of people from all walks of life. My homeroom I remember specifically because I was surrounded by four boys, all of whom I think I hated because they'd all got arrested at one time or another for armed robbery or something else and frankly used to torment me. One of them who was jealous of the fact that I was [00:23:00] art editor of our yearbook instead of he, I believe engineered the hiding of my trombone the Friday before a football game and it ended up by being locked in the art teacher's closet and was found in the nick of time, but it was that sort of thing that I had to confront. I think it was something that really proved useful in college because while we lived in a kind of protective setting as a function of dormitory life, Pembroke and Brown in the '50s were located in an area that was really quite unsafe in many ways. That part of Providence had not

been gentrified. It was on the edge of a rather run down black neighborhood. It was a borderline bad area to be living. And I think lots [00:24:00] of students had uncomfortable experiences in shops and around city streets.

JS: Can you think of (inaudible)?

LB: Well, people got chased and there were muggings, the occasional – very occasional—rape, peeping-toms. Some town-gown unpleasantness. Nothing of an organized kind, in other words, townies were not prevalent in every greasy spoon along...what is it, Cushing Street? – Thayer Street. It was a fairly rough neighborhood. I don't know how it is today. My impression is that it's softened quite a bit.

JS: Yeah, we're gentrified.

LB: At that time it was a substandard housing on three sides of the campus. The only [00:25:00] exception was towards East Providence.

JS: Is that where you were thinking of when you were saying you were better prepared to deal with lots of people? Were you of thinking of people (inaudible)?

LB: And people on campus, too. Now as I think, Brown and Pembroke, they're a mix of people in the '50s. Probably more diverse than it had been prior to World War II, but there are lot of veterans coming back, there are a lot of older students. The campus was changing in terms of its appeal to – also, it wasn't nearly the popular school. It was not the “in” school it became 10, 15 years later after the Magaziner report and the changes in the curriculum. Suddenly Brown became a very popular Ivy League school. When I was there it was, I think, still struggling to redefine itself. Its graduate programs were far less prestigious than they are now. It was not top-heavy with graduate students [00:26:00] – had no professional school, in fact that was to my sorrow, if they had had a medical school, I'm sure my life would be very different. But they did not at that time so there was no easy path into medical school from Brown.

And all this is a bit of digression from what was freshman – in my freshman life, but getting back to your original question... Some of the vignettes of my freshman week really do involve my roommate and the differences between her experiences and mine in approaching college. Pembroke's orientation is almost exclusively Pembroke. It had little to do with Brown. It wasn't until after freshman week was over that we discovered there was another half to the college except for the fact that we were expected to be a support wing for the Brown football team. The difference between Brown and Pembroke was fairly acute, but the one bridge was that we were expected of course to be [00:27:00] supporters for Brown's elite football team and one of the things that happened freshman week was their head cheerleader came over to teach us Brown songs and Brown cheers and this sort of coffee-colored, vivacious young man strode into our freshman dormitory through the front door and installed himself in the living room and all of us were brought down to learn cheers, and I think my friend Marion almost died on the spot because she'd never seen a Negro in her living room before. That was shock number one freshman week. I mean, somebody came in through the front door and sat in her living room and was in charge of something was just something she had no experience with and she behaved herself. She was in a state of shock just at that realization that she'd come to school where she was going to have to be in classes with, associate with and treat as equals Negroes, and intellectually she [00:28:00] was prepared for that but she had no – viscerally, she was not. And the second shock came...

JS: Had you (inaudible)?

LB: Yes. There actually were almost none in my hometown, but in the next town to us there certainly were and we were very conscious – or at least the church I attended was very conscious of the need to have good race relations and we had revisited churches in Somerville which were black and had debates. I remember a debate that we had between two youth organizations in which we debated whether or not pacifism was an acceptable point of view and I was used to going to youth conferences from my church and meeting black Congregationalists – I was from a Congregationalist (inaudible) and thinking that quite natural. There were perhaps two black families in my town. There [00:29:00] were also about two Jewish families, but we also lived about four miles from Brookline Massachusetts which was and still is a heavily Jewish suburb of

Boston, so while there were neither Jews nor blacks in my hometown, to any significant degree, although I perhaps knew two or three examples of each. Ethnic problems we were very, very conscious of because there's an enormous group of Armenians and Greeks (inaudible) equally strong, but smaller and older groups of Italians and Irish. I guess we were all very aware of our ethnic origins and what that meant in terms of pride and also what it meant in terms of need to assimilate and understand and to accommodate. So I felt I had a very liberal background, which translated (inaudible) to the college experience. I was very glad of that. I felt comfortable.

Also, I think as a woman [00:30:00] student, having been to a co-ed high school, and lived at home gave me an advantage socially and I think in classes over students who had been protected by being in girls' school. From what I understand, there remains, and to some extent I agree with the notion, that women's institutions have the advantage of allowing women to compete with each other and end up on top and I was not ultimately feeling second place in a situation where men may dominate. My own experience part of going to college had not led me to think that there was anything inferior intellectually about being female. I'd always argued effectively in my own family and in school and continued to do so through college, but had also chosen [00:31:00] a musical instrument which placed me among males. Always I chose a (inaudible) instrument in a marching band and probably as many of my friends were male as female. So college came easily in that respect for me. I was used to studying beside men, eating with men. So in a way, Brown in the '50s was a bit of an unpleasant shock. I discovered male domination and the difference between male expectations and female expectations.

JS: How so? Are you speaking of (inaudible) situations?

LB: Well, things for example, and I found this out freshman week to my sorrow, I found out that I could not be in the marching band. I could learn the cheers and the songs and I could play in the orchestra, but I had an instrument that was a natural for a marching band, and had also been the lead trombone in my high school marching band and to not be able to play the instrument that I was rather skilled at, it never occurred [00:32:00] to me when picking to go to Pembroke that I was now forgoing an opportunity to continue an instrument that I really had expected to. So, reluctantly I joined the orchestra, but then I counted rests through all the...and sat out all the

music that was not composed or orchestrated for trombone and finally gave it up; it just seemed pointless. So I lost interest in that.

And the other thing that irritated me no end was that in high school part of the way I spent my summers was to go to a Girl Scouts sailing camp in Martha's Vineyard and I (inaudible) sailing boats and I heard that Brown had a little sailing fleet, and when I was a freshman and still for quite a number of years afterwards, women were not allowed to join the Brown Sailing Association. We were not allowed to be members or to be anywhere near boats and I was furious. There was nothing I could do about it at that [00:33:00] point. These were not issues that could be challenged directly at that point, or at least I didn't think so.

JS: How did you find out about not being allowed to (inaudible), did you approach anyone or just accept it?

LB: We talked about it but didn't do anything. We did not start a political campaign. There was only – I think there was only one – remember this was just about the '50s, 1949 to 1953, we were described at that time and I think earned the label of being the silent generation. We were not activists. The most activist people who were on campus were a group that was challenging racial segregation. They conspicuously dated members of other races, appeared at dances with them. I wish I could remember the name of the organization, but [00:34:00] it was a liberal political organization. The [Marion?] Club comes to mind, but I could be wrong.

JS: I think I saw that name in the (inaudible).

LB: I'm not sure if it's accurate, but there certainly was a lively political organization that was concerned with social problems. I did not join it at that time. I was much too busy with my own pursuits and I think instead of tackling the issues that irritated me initially, like the band and the sailboats, both of which seemed to gain their power from the fact that Brown was an entity, in other words, they owned those things. Pembroke didn't have them. Now the issue was if there's a Brown Sailing Association, how come there isn't a Pembroke one? It didn't occur to me that Pembroke as such [00:35:00] could get something from Brown that they already had.

JS: So you saw Brown as your [focus?] separate (inaudible)?

LB: Yeah, so I think my response to them as an individual was to say, let's make Pembroke a better place. Let's take advantage of the separateness and then do what we can here. So I spent my energies as a budding activist, perhaps, on trying to see that some changes took place in the governance of the college and to... I probably put more energy into thinking about the regulations that were irritating at that time, defined things like the dress code and gracious living and all of the expectations that surrounded what it meant to be a female and to try to diminish the control that the college exerted over women because there was this notion that if you regulated women's lives [00:36:00] and men's lives by indirection, results would be regulated. We had very stiff regulation on the hours we had to be in and out of the dormitories. I'm sure you must have heard all these wonderful things about –

JS: I saw you on (inaudible).

LB: That's right. That's right. And helped to define the honor code because that seemed some way a more responsible way of taking charge than to have people standing over one another and keeping track of their comings and goings. It still was something short of not having any rules to bind us in the first place, but the move was in terms of making ourselves responsible for having good judgment. Certainly, I objected to the dress code. The idea that you couldn't walk across Thayer Street on your way to play field hockey unless you had a coat over your gym uniform because ladies didn't do [00:37:00] that. It seemed to me to be pretty ridiculous. I may have obeyed the regulation some of the time, but not all of the time. I don't think I ever flaunted the regulations, but I certainly didn't worry about the letter of the law. I smoked when I was in college. I thought the regulation—or the expectation that said you cannot walk down Thayer Street with a cigarette in your hand was ridiculous. And so much of this was defined in terms of *ladies* don't do this.

JS: Was this written somewhere?

LB: Yeah, I wish I could find it. Somewhere I believe it is written. I think there is a whole list of protocol for being – appropriate student behavior. What you're seen in public wearing, what you wear to classes. You were not expected to wear jeans to classes. There [00:38:00] were just – I don't recall if sanctions were – and I know it was made very clear and this was part of what freshman orientation was about was to take a bunch of girls or young women out of prep schools and public schools and teach us what – indoctrinate us, really, in what was expected. What the norm was. My roommate's part of that (inaudible) in my class when we became junior counselors in the freshman dorm. A couple years later it was to teach young women who had never consumed alcohol before how not to end up drunk in a public place or worse than that, end up drunk in some young man's room. And my roommate knew a lot about alcohol and how to drink and she made sure that everybody that she knew was well informed on the subject of how to drink like a lady.

JS: Including you?

LB: Oh, yes. She took me under her wing. Explained those facts of life to me at least because I grew up in a non-alcohol consuming family and we all ended up occasionally going to a fraternity party and certainly being offered lots to drink and had to find out what we were going to do about all of that.

Track 2

JS: [00:00] This is Juliet Smith, Brown class of 1991, interviewing Lois Black, Brown class of 1953. Side two.

LB: I guess when we finished the other tape I was talking about Nancy Duke Lewis and the kind of model that she offered to me and the kind of models that Pembroke offered. To me – the message that was getting through to me while I was an undergraduate – and I think I caught this as early as my freshman year certainly – was that to be a successful woman in the world as I was coming to know it, really was to tailor ambitions to be to the practical realities of the time. I think [00:01:00] we were challenged – or I was challenged – to want to take risks up to the point

of trying to press the system to give me everything that it could, but to not expect to be able to change the institutions that I was a part of directly, because I think what I was seeing were models of adaptation, skilled adaptation, intelligence, applied to business while trying to make the best you can out of a very imperfect world and to try to acquire power within that world so that one could change institutions from within. We were not revolutionaries and the models that they said I warmed to and were provided by people like Nancy Duke Lewis, and then another woman who was director of student activities during that time, Emily [Lacy?], beautiful woman [00:02:00] who stayed in higher education administration. I liked her because she was over six feet tall, dressed splendidly. I thought a model of what it's like to be a tall woman, which I needed. Where do you buy your shoes? Where do you buy your clothes? How do you look like that? I think I was drawn to women whom I saw being very successful in administration since there weren't any in teaching. My hopes certainly were that I could acquire the political savvy and the social grace that was required to achieve my own personal ambitions and to bring about some organized political change within the institutions that I was part of. Pembroke was, I think, an example of that kind of survival. It [00:03:00] offered liberal ideas but a fairly conservative environment.

JS: I'd be interested to know what your experience was on the Honor Council and how you worked to change things within the institution (inaudible).

LB: Well, I think that was a matter of trying to develop – perhaps an extension of experiences that I had growing up in Watertown, but also in college was that I like to be part of an organization and I always found leadership roles more rewarding than following ones, so I always liked to be chairman of something or president of it because I like to try to advance a new idea and gain political support for it. It just seemed to me at the time that there was [00:04:00] a sort of oppressive kind of Big Sister kind of environment.

JS: (inaudible)

LB: There was a lot of regulation of our daily lives – signing in, signing out, (inaudible) dorms—you couldn't have alcohol in the dorms, there were all kinds of rules and regulations. Men

couldn't be in, things that – there were rules which were accepted, but then they were enforced by a kind of top-heavy administration that had very senior resident heads living in dormitories who had the responsibility of making sure their girls behaved, ours was a maternalistic system with a lot of power and sort of filtering down to resident staff, and I thought that was not very good preparation for taking responsibility for your own life. I wanted to see the rules lessened and the expectations [00:05:00] of good judgment there and people assuming responsibility for making good choices on their own. I just felt that we were over-regulated and that we ought to therefore try to reverse the system of controls to be one of which there was an assumed self-responsibility. The idea of an honor code as a developing –

JS: Can you just explain how the Big Sister program worked in you dormitory?

LB: Let's see, Big Sister's perhaps the wrong term because they were officially big sisters that were assigned to freshmen before they came to help you get adjusted to college, that's not what I'm implying. But the way the dormitories or organizations were organized, the large dormitories had a residence head who was a mature woman that lived in that residence. Then there would be the equivalent of RAs, it would be people who would be upper-classmen who would have responsibility of [00:06:00] being assistants to these residence heads and there were elected positions among all – there would be a dormitory council within each dormitory. There would be people who would be put on duty to check people in and check them out. There was no self-reporting. We did not fight the notion that we had to be in at certain hours, but we had people signing in and signing out under the watchful eye of one another instead of just having a system where we could sign a card that indicated that we were safe in beds or if we left for a weekend, we didn't have to get written permissions and file all this. We would simply leave a notice of intent and go and we would be responsible for informing people who we weren't going to be there. The bad thing about college honor systems, though, were that inherent in was the notion that if you were aware [00:07:00] that someone else was breaking the rules, you were also honor-bound to report that person, and that part of the honor code I think was distasteful to most of us, but we saw it as a necessary control.

JS: You were one of the people that instituted that?

LB: We developed what was called the first Pembroke honor code, which was accepted by the student body and approved by the administration. So it took the place of some of the older more regulated signing in, signing out procedures.

JS: Was that difficult?

LB: No, I don't think so. I think it was something that we developed consensus for without too much difficulty. Certainly the student body seemed to feel that was a better way to go at that time than what we had. It was something of an accomplishment to see that through. But it came through a process of student government and referendum. As [00:08:00] I recall, there was enough vote on campus to support that and once it had the full support of student government, I think the administration decided to give it a chance. I don't know how long it lasted. I never did find out.

JS: You'd be interested to know that Karen Lamoree, the woman historian who explained this program to me was giving me background on your years at Brown and she described the honor code (inaudible). So, it lasted long enough for her to remember the way women signed in and signed out of dorms to be on the honor system.

LB: I'm sure it went through many changes subsequently in terms of how – because the rules changed so much that there was probably far less to self report and take responsibility for, but I thought the idea was an important one in terms of putting the responsibility on the individual. Taking it away from sort of a police state, which [00:09:00] I think it was. The notion at colleges at that time, not that (inaudible) powerfully than it is now, was the notion colleges had the responsibility in loco parentis; standing in the place of your parents. Certainly the notion of parent from my generation was the authoritarian figure by in large, and colleges took on that role, that responsibility, not just for the physical health and well being in education, the individual and actually for their safety. Their moral standards and everything else. The kind of thing that was understood and accepted, but accepted by administration but not by students was that if, for example, a woman married, she would not be able to live in the dormitory. Can you

imagine that? In fact, there were a couple of students in my class who did marry and one who married and did not choose to make a home outside in the community. I guess [00:10:00] her husband was in the service or away in a different school, and she wanted to live in the dormitory and that was a big issue. They're not supposed to have married women with their knowledge of the world living among the virgins. Isn't that incredible? No, the reason that married women were not supposed to live in dormitories was that they weren't virgins. I mean, nobody said that, but it was perfectly obvious is that their sexual knowledge would somehow infect the rest of us. Very strange. Very conservative. Morally, sexually, just terribly conservative and (inaudible) personally on an intellectual basis, I don't know why or where it came from, but it was well known among my friends although probably not the press, as being an advocate of free love, but I didn't practice it. I mean, with whom? Where? When? I could hardly get a date on a Saturday night. But [00:11:00] intellectually, certainly I was far from liberal but never had the opportunity to act I certainly questioned and always argued against what I thought were stupid regulations like why not married women in the dormitory? That's ridiculous. Of course, if she wants to live in a dormitory (inaudible). Of course she should be allowed to. Those regulations. (inaudible) And many of them may never have been written down, but they were policy. (inaudible).

JS: Do you have a best or worst memory of being at Pembroke?

LB: I'm looked at that question. I'm not sure I... Lots of best. It was a wonderful place in many ways. My memories are being in Providence, I think. Just a lovely place to do things. It was a pretty community. The streets where the flowering dogwood [00:12:00] and flowering magnolias were, for some reason Providence, I think, had a gentler feel for me than Watertown, Massachusetts or the Boston that I knew. I really liked East Providence [East Side of Providence]. I liked being able to walk around the streets, I liked just walking by the fences of people with mansions looking in. I just liked the sense that Brown had a history and was a part of it. That's very New England, I think, to like old things, but Providence seemed to beginning to be kind of proud in that way. I liked the physical aspects of (inaudible).

Worst were I think (inaudible) the things that were disappointments and that sense of not being able to pursue what I had originally set out to do in college. It [00:13:00] was

disappointing to feel that for all that Brown offered to me intellectually, I didn't have that sense of companionship with or equal opportunity with the students I was in class with. It really was painful to see people applying to medical school being accepted, being able to afford to go, and to realize that I probably would be doing something else with my life.

JS: What was your position as a woman in the biology classroom (inaudible)?

LB: Well, a lot of encouragement, but not specifically to go to medical school, and I finally concluded that my best bet was probably going to be to teach biology, and in a sense what I didn't like is I began to realize that I was probably not going to be able to afford to go to medical school, probably couldn't get in. In fact I was discouraged by people that knew I was a good student who said, you know it's just enormously difficult for women to get into medical school, they have very difficult careers –

JS: What kind of people (inaudible)?

LB: These [00:14:00] were my professors. Matt Gibbs was one of them. He was my advisor actually. He said, "Isn't there something else you would rather do with it?" and I said, "Well, I don't know." The thought of graduate school at that point had not occurred to me, and also I began to realize, I was sort of semi-engaged for a couple of years that I was in college, and I began to realize that dual career families were very difficult at that stage and I didn't want to have to opt for a career that meant I could not also marry and have a family. So I began to look at careers in terms of "Can I do it all?" I insisted on a career, but I also insisted on marriage and a family, and to try and find a way to do both I realized was becoming increasingly difficult. So between the social messages I think I was getting from the nature of the institution I was a part of, but also my own raging hormones, I guess, that led [00:15:00] me to think that I wanted, and always have said that I wanted to have it all. I never for a moment ever thought of myself as being a single-minded, career-devoted spinster. I just always assumed you can do it all, but I was discovering some realities when it came to trying to stage an education and a career that I could afford and that would leave these routes open to me.

So I became discouraged about medicine and began to think more in terms of going for a degree that would allow me to teach, but I did not want to take education courses at Brown. I'd heard they were second rate and I didn't want to spend my valuable education on education courses anyhow, and that was the time when Master of Arts teaching programs were being developed in the Ivy League schools as a response for a need for better teaching in high schools, and I thought that's the route I'll go. So for the first time I began to think in terms of a career in teaching [00:16:00] biology in the secondary level. So that was what I applied to do.

The other thing was there was just plain outright discrimination against women in some classes. There was a physics class that I needed to take in order to complete my pre-med course, which I opted not to take because that course was notorious for the way in which women were treated. They were passed...I wish I could remember the name of the faculty person. I had heard—this was Physics 12. It was a continuing physics course and the professor was noted for calling the roll and always skipping any woman who sat in that class, not call a woman's name. He would never call on a woman to recite and he refused to acknowledge – he did turn in grades for women, but he absolutely refused to acknowledge their presence in his class, and that was well-reported and I'm sure it happened. So, why [00:17:00] go to a class where you're going to be humiliated? I didn't like physics that well anyhow and if I was going to go to graduate school instead of medical school, I didn't need it so I never took it so I never had that experience. That was his reputation. That was pretty devastating.

There weren't any classes I recall not being allowed to take unless they were ROTC classes, which by virtue of the fact that there were no women ROTC members. We were (inaudible) as far as I know, all classes were open to women except men's physics and ROTC, but they certainly were – women were treated differently. They were always a certain number of professors who liked to put women students in the front because (inaudible) so they could enjoy looking at them, and these things were talked about, but certainly this was a pre-feminist environment going on. (inaudible) might be talked [00:18:00] about but did not lead to any overt efforts to change that or no outrage. I think if anybody has been outright seduced by a professor, it would have been talked about in the privacy of a counseling situation and those were available, but I do not specifically know a woman who had unpleasant experiences of that kind.

JS: I've been told a little bit about the career planning parts of – the way Pembroke and Brown (inaudible).

LB: Because I decided on graduate school, I didn't go through the business of being interviewed by employers as they came to campus. There was a separate Brown office for employment recruiting. Brown and Pembroke were separate in that respect. I just don't know what came through their recruiting office. What kinds of jobs. I'm sure that the aspirations of women in my class were demonstrably different from those of men. The [00:19:00] typical thing for a graduate of Pembroke from my generation to do was to go to New York, share an apartment, and get a job in the publishing industry reading copy or something. Or worse than that, go to Katy Gibbs and get a secretarial certificate so you could be a high level secretary, now what they call administrative assistant, so the career aspirations of my class were notoriously low. I probably could count on the fingers of one hand the number of women in my class who planned to go to graduate school in anything. There was only one other woman in my class, as far as I know, who was pre-med and she never finished medical school until she was probably 40. In fact I met her when I went to my thirty-fifth reunion [two?] years ago. I met her and she did ultimately go to medical school, but not until she had done a lot of other things in between times.

So, we [00:20:00] were rarities. I never gave up on the notion that I was going to go beyond college and have a career, but certainly I got very muddled at Pembroke about just what the nature of that was going to be, and I learned to live adaptively and take advantage of things as they came along. Be that a scholarship to Pembroke, or, as it turned out, by indirection, I ended up by doing graduate work in biology that I could not have predicted, and that was because I took money that I had been sort of saving for medical school – it was less than a thousand dollars I had in the bank at that point – and decided to blow it on a summer with an experiment in international living and went to France. And because I was in France for summer I became competent enough in French to think that I could really apply to study abroad after [00:21:00] college, so simultaneously I applied to several masters programs for teaching in high school as an ultimate goal and simultaneously applied for a Fulbright to France, and I got great encouragement from my professors for doing that. It was interesting because I think if I had

listened carefully I would have realized that I could have gotten their support to go into graduate school very easily. It was medicine that they saw as an unlikely, an impossible career track for a woman, and I worked – I was a bottle washer for Wilson who was chair of the Biology department and he lined up for me names of people I could correspond with in Paris to do genetics and it turned out to be one of the premier geneticists in [00:22:00] the world, and Matt Gibbs, who was my biology advisor, put me on the track of [Étienne Wolff who was embryologist in Strasbourg and I ended up writing to both and being accepted for a Fulbright in Strasbourg and pursued that with great delight for a year, and came back and did my masters at Yale and taught biology for a couple of years.

Certainly intellectually, I had wonderful opportunities did open up and I took advantage of them. But somehow I think I allowed, for reasons I think are maybe peculiar to my generation, to make a number of compromises with my own long-held ambitions that were difficult to shed. There's always [00:23:00] – not that I think having those ambitions was inappropriate, but it's very difficult when you start out wanting – thinking of yourself as an MD. You never sort of give up that aspiration. In fact, I was in my 40s and had four children before I finally decided it really is too late to go to medical school because every time it looked like the door might open, I was then required to see if I could do that. But along the way I had some pretty incredible put-downs from people that held the keys to those doors. If Pembroke was an exercise in awareness to the limitations that society offered, Yale was far, far worse. I went to Yale on a terminal masters program where there are far fewer women and no women undergraduates except for the school of music. If Brown was a difficult place to be, Yale was impossible. If [00:24:00] you were a graduate student there, it meant you were in a rare, rare minority. There was a sprinkling of women through the graduate professional schools, but when I decided upon completion of a masters at Yale, and after my first year of teaching in the New Haven area at the end of which, by the way, I married a Yale graduate student, I decided I was still interested in going to medical school. In fact even more so because I'd solved one problem – I'd found a husband. I was on the right track and one that was perfectly willing to see me go to graduate school and medical school and wherever I could afford to get myself so, with great relief I said, now I can go to medical school. Now I can go to graduate school. I don't have to teach high school for the rest of my life.

So I went to Yale and I was told by Frank Beach who authored *Hormones and Behavior*, a book in psychology who I much admired. He looked at me – I must have been 24 - [00:25:00] 25 at the time. He said, “The last time someone like you came to me and said they were interested in going – this was about going to graduate school in psychology at Yale, one of my options – and he said, “Last time someone like you came to me and said they were interested in graduate school, I said, I think it’s time you let your ovaries go to work.” Thanks a lot, Frank Beach. This is the man that I’m asking to consider whether I could be a graduate student in psychology and study animal behavior? And his notion was I ought to engage in some animal behavior and contribute to the gene pool instead of going to graduate school. That was horrible to be told that in cold blood by someone who had the power to decide whether or not I had the credentials to be accepted into a graduate program. And in a much more subtle and kinder way, I went to the admissions officer of [00:26:00] Yale medical school because I was also simultaneously looking into medical school. Very lovely man who was an anatomist and also an MD, and he discussed my interest in medicine and he said, “Well, you know, what I really think you ought to do is I think you ought to get a graduate degree in physiology or anatomy. What we really need is not women doctors, we need people to teach in medical schools.” So he instead of helping me, or encouraging me to apply to medical school, he took me to the chairman of the neurology department and to his anatomy lab to look at the wonderful opportunities for there. Would you like to do that with your background in research and embryology, why aren’t you considering that?

So those were the way – messages. It was not through people saying, no, I refuse to accept you. It was like saying, your direction is wrong. What you really ought to be doing is this and this is what people say, you begin to think about those things. Actually, I was [00:27:00] strong enough at that point in my interest in pursuing psychology that I applied to several, a whole bunch of graduate schools in psychology and was accepted to a significant number of them, so I had some substantial choice. But, my choice had to be ultimately determined by where I and my husband, who was a graduate student at Yale and is obviously going to have to move, since I couldn’t get into a graduate program or medical school at Yale that we would have to move. So we went to (inaudible). He changed his graduate department and I was (inaudible).

But those were very difficult times to get the support you needed. It was flukey. You'd hit one place and say, oh, that's wonderful. You're just the kind of credentials we're looking for. It's okay that you're a woman. Come right ahead. In Cornell's case I'm quite convinced it's because they had a woman on the faculty at the time, and they also had a very significant [00:28:00] woman affected my nepotism regulations who worked side by side with her husband as a researcher, but they had a couple of very significant women (inaudible). And I think they looked at women graduate students or married women graduate students very differently. than an institution that did not have at that time – anyone there. So there were role models [at that time?]. (inaudible) So how many women professors have you had? Quite a few, I would think.

JS: Yeah, (inaudible) especially (inaudible). How did your marriage affect your career? You said that you both planned on living (inaudible) and you had to choose your graduate career (inaudible).

LB: Yes, I would [00:29:00] say marriage affected my career, at least at the beginning, very positively because it was important to me to be married and to have the option of being a family person securely in line. So as soon as I married I noticed that instead of turning my head to jelly, just the reverse happened. It quickened my resolve that I could get on with my life as an academic (laughter). But it seemed to work that way. And also I married a person who really was quite interested in his own academic career at that point and certainly didn't want somebody hovering over him insisting upon buying a better house, or having a nice house and starting a family. Neither of us had any intention of that at the outset. We lived in a quonset hut [00:30:00] on the outskirts of New Haven in married student housing and I continued to teach high school for one more year during which time adapted to the business of being married and also filed all the applications all over again as I had been in the process of doing the year before, because the previous year I tried to see what I could do in New Haven and discovered I couldn't do anything. So we got married and he continued to do graduate school and we both went through the process of trying to find out where there might be an institution where we could both go to. As it turned out we ended up with two choices. It was either Syracuse University or Cornell. The only two places we were both offered assistantships, which we needed because we had no money from either family and no savings. So what settled it for Cornell was we actually got – not only would

we have preferred to go to Cornell, but [00:31:00] we got a better deal there. He got a better assistantship and I got a full tuition and a fellowship – I got full fellowship right at the outset. So Cornell treated me so well, we would go with Cornell, which was for me very interesting since I had a chance to see what it would have been like had my first hope of going to Cornell as an undergraduate ever materialized. I concluded I was very glad I had gone to a much smaller institution. A much less top heavy institution. I thought my educational experience at Brown was really superior to anything I could have gotten at Cornell as an undergraduate, although I loved it as a graduate institution.

JS: Because of the size?

LB: Because of the size. I did not get a sense that there was the kind of support for undergraduates developing their own intellectual ideas or personalities [00:32:00] that I experienced at Pembroke. I thought Pembroke's smallness, the fact that it was a women's college in a more dominant male institution was not a disadvantage. It was a period of growth and personal development for me when I felt free to pursue my intellectual interests however truncated my social life might have been by not being able to sail boats or play in the band, still it had been very nurturing environment in terms of giving me a sense of the possibilities of being a strong person in a complex society. I felt – I don't know, Cornell just seemed very anonymous to me from what I could see as a graduate student looking at their undergraduates. It seemed to be that one struggled a lot (inaudible) education was on a much-- [00:33:00] I guess I don't want to pursue that. My impression – that's an impression (inaudible).

JS: Are there any other ways you can think of that Brown (inaudible)?

LB: Well, I think its major effect was that it allowed me the opportunity to look at what I was studying and what I got out of it. It was a wonderful training in biology. I really began to become passionately interested in studying certain things in science and behavior were among them, and I pursued that while I was doing my masters program. I began to read extensively in psychology and that's when I became interested in animal behavior and psychology, so I decided to pursue that. So I just think that Brown was a wonderful place to develop an intellectual life. It was a

superb liberal arts institution in a fully integrated way. I mean, it stimulated my interest in travel and in [00:34:00] languages. All of which I was able to do as a function of good education.

JS: How did it stimulate your interest (inaudible)?

LB: Well, I think because I found that the people in the language departments were fascinating. It was a culturally rich place to be. It was being around people who were thinking in terms of Rhodes Scholarships even though they weren't available to women. The fact that there were people who would go abroad for a year and study. That was something I had no experience of. Even though I grew up in Greater Boston, I didn't grow up in a social class that took trips to Europe or went on a grand tour. I mean, I had never seen a cathedral, or had no hopes really of travel. I had thought in terms of career and family, but never thought in terms of a worldwide community. Brown had the seeds of that – offered that to people who studied there. So people would come in and give talks and [00:35:00] I think one of your questions is about chapel lectures and things of that kind. You met interesting people.

JS: Do you remember any?

LB: Yes, the most memorable is to have met Eleanor Roosevelt. Talk about citizen of the world! I mean, she was just (inaudible) or Lillian Gilbreth. I don't know if you ever heard of – *Cheaper by the Dozen*? She came and talked at chapel. And we had to go to chapel and people would say, isn't this a drag? But the talks were wonderful, and Brown could afford to bring in significant people from all walks of life, men and women, diplomats –

JS: Was it co-ed chapel?

LB: No, actually the chapels were split but we also could visit if there was a speaker in one or the other that we wanted to hear. We could go to men's chapel or men could come to our chapels. They were advertised in the bulletins – who was speaking in what. But attendance [00:36:00] was required for both women and men (inaudible).

JS: Was that every week?

LB: Yes. Twice a week, noontime, Tuesdays and Thursdays. One was so-called religious chapel and the other was secular chapel. Grand people – artists, poets, William Carlos Williams came. I wish I had a list of people that marched through that campus. Really a spectacular group of people.

JS: (inaudible)

(break in audio)

LB: So, which topic should we start with?

JS: Why don't we start with social relations between men and (inaudible).

LB: Well, I remember [00:37:00] them positively. Actually, I had very little to do with Brown students except for the classroom. Since the organizations that I was a part of tended to be Pembroke organizations rather than co-ed organizations. So, my contact with the Brown men was largely through the fact that I was studying subjects which were probably more men than women, and I had male lab partners occasionally although we were more inclined to pair up girls with girls and boys with boys. That was not always the case. Certainly, I remember having lab partners of both sexes.

Where the rivalry was acute, and this bothered me when I decided not to go into medicine, was in [00:38:00] pursuit of good grades for medicine. There was a fierce competition within the advanced biology classes among those who were pre-med and by the time I stopped being pre-med or had decided that's not the route I'm going in, I resented that because it seemed like there were people, for example, who would steal the histology slides before the exam so they could have the extra nut because they wanted to do so well. I don't think they really thought especially they were preventing somebody else from doing this, but you were supposed to study there in the laboratory and if you had access to a microscope somewhere else then you could

somehow leave with a box of standard slides that the exam was going to be on, then you could do better. So the notion was you had to be at the top of the pack if you were going to get into the best medical school, and I just thought that preoccupation with getting the best possible [00:39:00] grade without any particular interest in the subject matter, was really pretty sad. In fact, as soon as I stopped thinking in terms of medical school, I decided how interesting biology was. That it was not as much a function of acing the exam, as it was a matter of digging into something until you understood it or to really enjoy it. In that sense I (inaudible) come to be with many of my peers in biology (inaudible) study of science but for the practice of medicine.

JS: How did the men treat you (inaudible)?

LB: Generally very well. Certainly there were some sexist harassment or derision, but I perhaps experienced that less in the sciences. We were serious [00:40:00] students. We wore lab coats that weren't terribly sexy, I guess. And if we were treated differently by our peers, I wasn't really aware of that in the classroom. I think where it played itself out tended to be more socially and I didn't socialize much with Brown students. The end of my freshman year I sang in the Glee Club and we traveled to other schools and got blind dates there and I met somebody that I thought I was going to marry that I hung around with for two years – the middle two years of college, so I was busy dating somebody from Wesleyan. I went to Wesleyan when I could and he came to Providence, so I did a lot socially with this one person for a couple of years, but I had almost no interest in or familiarity with the Brown [00:41:00] fraternity social scene. I just didn't go to parties. I was pretty busy just being a student.

My sense was that Brown men were very comfortable with you as a fellow student, but they tended not to see you as sex objects. It was notorious that Brown men always imported women from women's colleges for big weekends and neglected Pembroke anyhow. That we were seen as something sort of as a necessity and perhaps a good study date or somebody would help you get through something difficult and some women and men certainly studied together in the library a lot. I liked to study in my room. I did not go to the library. I did not have library dates. I guess I was pretty focused on my own life and really just ignored Brown men except as

people I went to classes with. I had a certain amount of fun with [00:42:00] around our studies. Shared coffee with. I perhaps knew more Brown men who were the study dates of my friends.

JS: I'm thinking about – I guess there were a lot of older men then because they came back from the war and how did that...

LB: They tended to be invisible socially. In other words, they were in your classes to some extent, but I think the big wave had actually finished by the time I got to college. My sister went to college with that group, the returning veterans. She graduated from high school in 1944 and graduated from college in 1948 and there were lots and lots of veterans there. The numbers were considerably fewer. The big concern in my class it was the beginning of Korea and men students were getting worried about whether they would be drafted and began [00:43:00] to scurry around looking for reasons to escape the draft in terms of their career plans. Some of them got serious about studying who had not been previously. They saw that as a way to postpone – to do military service. But the older students who were there tended to be in graduate school and they also tended to be married. In other words, that was a lot of our graduate assistants were actually older than they would have been. They didn't seem like contemporaries, often they were four or five years older than we were – or more like 10 years older – because they'd done military service.

JS: What about the Commencement March (inaudible)?

LB: Yes, we did but darned if I can remember where in the order of March we were. That [00:44:00] might have something to do with the fact that I was the alternate speaker for my class. So I was in a group that marched – that actually got special seating in the Meeting House and I guess I marched to the sort of separately from the class as part of this sort of group of speakers and the like. I know that we all marched through the Van Wickle gates. Traditions of commencement were something that we shared, I thought fully, until I read your question.

JS: Do you remember where you sat in the chapel?

LB: Well, again, because I had this potential position – believe me, Laura (inaudible) was fine, she gave the talk and I'm not even sure I had one prepared at the time (inaudible) but it was sort of an alternate in case something devastating happened, to have a runner-up. But [00:45:00] sat somewhere) right down on the main floor of the chapel, right in the front, I really don't know where the rest of the class was during commencement or Baccalaureate. Do you know? Have some facts on that?

JS: No, no.

LB: Was there a time that Pembroke didn't? I mean, we always got Brown degrees. Pembroke was not – was separate administratively, residentially, and in terms of organizations that affected student life. We had our own yearbook, we had our own newspaper, we had our own student government, our own dorm council, our own Glee Club. But academically I never felt I was attending a women's institution. And all my classes were co-ed except for gym, and I graduated with, got a degree from Brown. I never felt like a second-class citizen. I always felt more [00:46:00] – I think it was impressed upon us...in fact, one of the yearbooks we put out in the course of the time that I was there sort of researched the history of the naming of the college, and connected us by the [true?] Pembroke College in Oxford University. In fact, one of the things I did when I was in England last was to go locate Pembroke College in Oxford because I was always sort of fascinated that in fact we were named after an English college.

JS: So you got some prestige from Oxford (inaudible)?

LB: Well, I think the idea of being a college in a university. I mean, that is a system of university organizations. There was Brown College. There was a men's college. So the way I rationalized this was so there's Brown College for men, there's Pembroke College for women, and then there was "the" University, and that the idea of colleges within the university is something foreign to me especially by the time I got to Yale, it's organized with undergraduate colleges and that is the British model for its historic institutions anyhow. So, I think [00:47:00] there was some value to that sense as long as there was some reason for wanting to live separately, it made sense. Once you had co-ed dormitories, the administrative fiction or the reason for it, sort of disappeared. So I

don't have any strong negative feelings about the loss of the name. I thought the college disappeared along with—or the concept of the college had disappeared because Brown didn't choose to develop any more colleges. They could have moved in that direction. They could have kept Pembroke College and Brown College and perhaps another college.

Track 3

JS: [00:00:00] This is Juliet Smith, Brown class of 1991, interviewing Lois Black, Pembroke class of 1953, tape 3 side 1.

LB: OK, what would you like me to talk about on this one?

JS: OK, we were just concluding our discussion about (inaudible) and talking about the merger and your feelings about the merger.

LB: I think the merger was realistic in terms of what I understand is going on in institutions including my own alma mater at that point. I think they recognized that Pembroke had become an administrative fiction. I'm sure there were losses.

JS: What did you mean by administrative fiction?

LB: Well, that it existed as an administrative unit in the absence of it having any real purpose, any real *raison d'être*. If you were to do a mission [00:01:00] statement which is popular in organizations now from Pembroke College at the time of the merger, I think you'd be hard put to define a mission that would require a separate administrative unit in order to fulfill it. Brown collectively had the mission of educating people of both sexes, all races and conditions, it had ceased to be an elitist institution. It had in place financial aid that made it possible for people to attend college regardless of financial circumstances and had stopped having quotas on the number of Jewish students it would accept which I know existed...if not in writing at least in the practices of the admissions office. It had ceased to consider that only a smaller percentage of the student body ought to be female. It was [00:02:00] committed to open admissions, which meant

that the number of people that could attend could vary. It could be 50 percent women if that was that (inaudible) for the 50 percent. I think on rare occasions it might have been (inaudible). Just on the basis of admitting people according to ability and interest rather than capacity to pay. So with an open admissions policy, it didn't really make sense to have a college that was confined in size and would restrict the number of women who could be enrolled and there was no interest by the time all of the happened, I'm sure, in keeping women's organizations and men's organizations separate. So I think the groundwork – I think it, I believe that the history on that merger, it followed – in fact the merger [00:03:00] of most of the organizations (that affected student life. And also it followed a time when there were co-ed dormitories, didn't it?

JS: I'm not sure.

LB: I think so. By the time you had co-ed dormitories of course you had no more differences in the rules – the parietal rules, I think they're called, for women and men. When I was in college women had one set of rules and the men had another, and you didn't notice that as painfully if you lived in separate parts of the campus with residential property between you instead one solid mass of college buildings. It did not (inaudible) campus, in fact all of the pre-conditions for the merger existed and Brown did not have the situation that Radcliffe at Harvard that (inaudible). Brown (inaudible) had it (inaudible). So [00:04:00] academically it was merged anyhow, unlike the college systems of Europe where colleges were above the (inaudible).

JS: (inaudible)

LB: It was – what had been lost was lost piecemeal anyhow. The fact that the name had to go and the administrative titles – the organizational chart changed to accommodate the fact that there really wasn't a separate residential unit to be administrated.

JS: Has that feeling been consistent since the merger? (inaudible)?

LB: Not for Brown. Certainly during [00:05:00] the period in my own life when I was in fact invested in college administration by virtue of ten years of affirmative action, I was thinking

seriously of, and would have had the opportunity presented itself, I would (inaudible) college administration and it might interest you to know that the kinds of positions that I was applying for and being seriously considered for, were presidencies of women's colleges. An odd thing perhaps for someone whose life has been spent in coeducation, but in fact I do feel that it's women's colleges that have maintained their identity as women's colleges have a special place and a special potential mission in the education of women because I think not all women of any given generation, we're in the same place in terms of their social outlooks for opportunities. This is not a uniform phenomenon, and I think there is a role to be played by separatist institutions in the education [00:06:00] of both sexes. I think there is a role for men's schools (inaudible) the reason I think that is that I can see how women's institutions, for example, or black institutions, have at the right time in history been what the monasteries were in the Middle Ages, places where certain skills and attitudes and aspirations are cultivated during a time of social hostility to those very ideals. I'm very glad for my generation that I did not go to Wellesley. Or Smith. Because I think at that time Pembroke was still a healthier place to be as a woman in sciences, in [00:07:00] other words, I felt that by being a part of a co-ed institution in the sciences, my interest in science was cultivated in a way and to a degree could not have been if I had been in women's institutions. I could be wrong.

JS: It seems like you did have a lot of mentors.

LB: I had wonderful intellectual mentors to be sure. Very much so. I never felt the need for a woman mentor. I had male mentors that filled that role. But I think those very women's colleges of which I speak have continued to be largely female and have done a very fine job for their student bodies. I also think they've served a very valuable function, particularly valuable by offering academic employment to women at times when women academics weren't there. In other words, there was a place to find women role models during the '50s. You would have to go to a women's college for that. In fact [00:08:00] Wellesley College faculty were largely female, and it was the place where all the bright women could not get employment at Harvard or MIT, were using their degrees to enhance their academic careers. I think that's important (inaudible). Once you get the degree, there has to be someplace or some institution that will make it valuable. That's where certainly I experience the biggest lack of opportunity in my own life (inaudible) a

place where nepotism regulations didn't exist, where two members of the same family could be employed. We're glad to educate you, but don't ask for a job. (inaudible) Well, you don't need to know about that. That's another chapter of my life and a chapter, which if you were look at Brown's history, I don't think Brown did any better on than the institutions [00:09:00] I was involved in. Brown was certainly terribly behind the times in terms of (inaudible) women on its faculty (inaudible) opportunities, and I don't think that was because Pembroke as an entity went away. The women that Rosemary Pierrel, who was Dean at the time of the merger and who was herself an academic in psychology, I think was a rarity on the Brown campus. She was a strong woman as an academic and I think she saw in the possible merger possible enhancement of career opportunities for women as academics, but that took a long time to be fulfilled. I'm sure the merger was in the direction of opening up all tracts, administrative and academic to qualified women. The [00:10:00] hope was there. (inaudible) how far (inaudible) the question then becomes if the top women's position was Dean of Pembroke College, what is it now? Is the highest ranking woman in Brown administration somebody who enjoys the position that's higher than a dean of college? How often has a woman risen above that level since the merger. I'd be interested to know. I think you'd have to look at the administrative charts to try and figure out what's comparable to a dean of college these days. There is no such position anymore.

JS: (inaudible) dean of college (inaudible).

LB: Dean of which college?

JS: Dean of the College Brown.

LB: Yeah, OK. (inaudible)

JS: I'm [00:11:00] confused as to how (inaudible)

LB: (inaudible)

JS: But I feel I belong in (inaudible). Thank you very much.

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