

Transcript – Janice Vanderwater Brown,  
Professor of English and Director of Dramatics 1940 – 1966

Narrator: Janice Vanderwater Brown

Interviewer:

Interview Date: 1983

Interview Time:

Location:

Length: 8 audio files; 4:18:41

Q: – first woman in the English department, at least, weren't you?

Janice Vanderwater Brown: Right. Well, I was hired in the spring of 1940, and started the fall semester, September 1940. I came up to Brown for my interview. I was brought in by Henry Lee Smith, who had a Princeton PhD, was teaching at Columbia – Barnard College, really, where I'd gone as an undergraduate. I did graduate work across the street in Columbia, at Teachers College, and I was working in the field of drama and speech at that particular time, because I had become interested at Barnard in theater, which was to be my eventual interest at Brown. He was a linguist, and [00:01:00] was hired by Brown University as a member of the English department to deal with linguistics and speech as a result of that, which at Brown, in those days, they connected Linguistics and the English department with voice and diction courses at Pembroke. The girls were given courses in voice and diction, because they thought it would be, I think, rather in the line of a finishing school. Well, maybe I malign the administration a little bit. But, anyway, the dean of Pembroke, who was a charming woman by the name of Margaret Morriss, believed that all women should have training in speech. The men at Brown didn't get any training in speech, but the girls were required to have speech training, at Pembroke.

Q: So, was that kind of seen as a softer course?

JVB: It was required. I think eventually, what they gave was, say, maybe one credit, anyway, or non-credit course – I don't remember, which of course immediately put anybody teaching at a disadvantage, because no one wants to take a course which is thrown at them, and in those days, without credit, let me add. But, this was also put – it made it, put it on a footing with physical

education, which was also required without credit. And, physical education is required of girls, but not of boys.

Q: Why, was it assumed that they'd go into athletics?

JVB: No, don't ask me—this was, you'll have to go back, if you can – I don't suppose I know anyone who was really alive from that period, who was in charge of administration, but it must be somewhere – some [00:03:00] of the older alumni may remember the reasoning behind this. But, it did mean that both Pembroke and Brown were completely separate entities, much more so than they are now. Well, now they're one [as a matter of fact?]. But, Henry Lee Smith was hired to teach these girls, because he was a linguist, interested in linguistics, to teach them speech. Well, he needed an assistant, and I had training, you see, in theater, which was – and theater courses.

Q: How had he heard of you, do you know?

JVB: Well, he taught some courses at Barnard College, and I was doing graduate work, and visiting back, and I guess, I did volunteer teaching, because in those days – this was the Great Depression, and in the Great Depression, jobs were hard to come [00:04:00] by, which is something people are familiar with right now, in 1983. But, much more difficult even than now. And, since they were, I was trying to prepare myself, since I couldn't get a job anywhere, to teach on any level. So I was doing practice teaching, some of it, at Barnard College. In other words, they were getting free assistance. [laughter] I wasn't paid for this. Colleges were on very limited budgets in those days, something that they still are, but very much more so in that period. Well, he saw me and met me, though I had never been a student of his when I was at Barnard, and he decided, to my great surprise, I was called up by Barnard, and he requested me [00:05:00] as an assistant at Brown. And, they asked me if I was interested, and I said yes, I was indeed. At the time, I was merely working with the Greater New York Federation of Churches doing religious drama. And I was happy to get out of it. It's a rather limited field. And, the salary of an assistant at Brown in those days, in 1940, I got \$1,200 a year, which is \$100 a month. I thought that would be interesting. But that was exactly the same salary I was getting from the Greater

New York Federation of Churches in New York, so there's no change in salary, but it was doing what I wanted to do, I thought.

Q: What was it that you—what title did you come under?

JVB: I was an assistant in the English department.

Q: An assistant professor?

JVB: No, no, no. In the beginning, good heavens, I was [00:06:00] just out of my masters, so I was an assistant in the English department. I had to be, because they had no other way of, well you see, because I was also an assistant to Henry Lee Smith. I was assisting him, in other words, and he was in the English department. Well, this meant that Professor Hastings, who was then, Henry Hastings, was then chairman of the English department, and he came to New York and interviewed me. It must have been, what, oh, whenever Henry Lee was hired, I don't remember what time of the year. And I met him in New York. He had to see whether it was worth asking me to come up to Providence or not. So, he then wrote me later after the interview and invited me to come up for an interview. Well, I'm sure other people who were hired at Brown were not given the kind of interview I was given. [laughter]

Q: Why?

JVB: Why? [00:07:00] They had me to lunch, and I had to see the dean of Pembroke College, at lunch, chairman of the English department again, professor Ben Brown, who was the professor of Drama and head of the theater, a young woman that I was replacing – that's right, I was, because it wasn't my – I would have been teaching Speech. And we all had lunch together. And, at this luncheon, Ben Brown turned to me and said, "I notice from your credits, reading your resume, that you have done a great deal of theater," which I had. My training, in other words, was in theater, which is eventually, of course, what I did at Brown. And he said, "You do realize you're coming in," [00:08:00] and of course, I was being hired to work with someone in linguistics – well, who was interested in linguistics, but teaching speech. And he said, "You

seem to have most of your credits in theater, and you're prepared in theater. You do realize you'll never set foot in the theater." [laughter]

Q: So he was (overlapping conversation; inaudible)

JVB: So, I just looked sort of surprised, and said, "Yes, I had understood that I was to be an assistant to Henry Lee Smith." And, he then proceeded to have a fight right across the table in front of Dean Morriss and Professor Hastings. Professor Ben Brown fought with my predecessor, whose name I cannot remember, and they had quite a fight, right across the luncheon table in the faculty club, which sort of made me wonder about Brown University. Well, I then realized I wouldn't be working with him – [00:09:00] he had flatly announced I wouldn't be [laughter] –

Q: What was the nature of the fight?

JVB: Evidently, she was leaving because she hadn't gotten along with him.

Q: Oh, it was a personality – do you know what kind of credentials she came in with?

JVB: No, I have no idea. I know nothing about her, because it's the only time I set eyes on her, you see.

Q: But you didn't hear anything?

JVB: And it was a luncheon meeting, and I saw – with other people there asking me questions, and Dean Morriss was asking me a lot, because she was really interested in me. But, you see, it's rarely that you would have an interview with the dean when you're being hired, you'll agree. I mean, the chairman of the department would usually do it. He was the dean in on the act, and in addition, a professor for whom I was not going to be working, who announced that I was not going to be working for him, and therefore, I couldn't figure out why he was present, if he [would understand?]. Don't you think it's a little odd?

Q: Very.

JVB: [laughter] When he turns and announces, “You’ll never set foot in the theater,” and that was his province? [00:10:00] I mean, I was puzzled. Well, at any rate –

Q: Don’t you think he felt threatened having somebody come in with such a theatre background, possibly?

JVB: I don’t know. I don’t know. But he was, by then, a distinguished professor, Ben Brown. I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of him. Probably not. He was. Well, any rate, he had a very secure position at the time. Well, any rate, I then, was marched by Professor Hastings – I’ll never forget it, because I had come, left New York, when it wasn’t raining, and it was coming down in torrents outside, raining hard, and he marched me around the campus, partly because I had to, he showed me into the English department, and then he took me over to University Hall, and I was interviewed by the vice president [00:11:00] to be hired. It was very different, you see, from the way things, you’ll agree – you’re teaching, aren’t you?

Q: I’m a TA. I’m a graduate student teaching assistant.

JVB: Well, yes, you understand. You were certainly not hired this way. And here I was to be an assistant, too. That was my title. I was to be an assistant. This was an assistant job.

Q: Do you think that that was the same level that a teaching assistant would be today? We’re graduate students who are given (inaudible) –

JVB: Well, the vice president interviewed me – it was Vice President Adams, and I remember it very well. I’m not sure at that time – I don’t think I met President Wriston, who was then the president at the time. I’m not sure. That I don’t remember. I was just amazed that I had to see so many, and be seen, by so many people. Having been at Brown University for several years myself, I was kind of curious about [00:12:00] this process, which involved so many interviews. And then, Professor Hastings nicely took me around and showed me all around the campus in the

rain, because he was so proud of it, because he was an old Brown man and very proud of it. Of course, it is. I agree. [It was part of it?]. He was a charming gentleman. Well, any rate, I went back to New York, and of course, I didn't know – one, I was offered the job, so I came to Providence. Well, I arrived on the scene and discovered that instead of being – I was a member of the English department, but I had an office in a building next to Pembroke Hall, over at Pembroke. I was separated from the secretary in the department, who would do typing, take messages – I'd have a mailbox –

Q: Relay them to you?

JVB: I'd have a mailbox over there. And, at [00:13:00] the same time, my office was on the Pembroke campus, which made it very inconvenient, very inconvenient, even though I had, believe it or not, my own phone on my desk in my office. I had lots of – I was amazed, I had the prettiest assistant's office on the campus. I had a mahogany desk that was quite lovely, and a mahogany chair. I had two wicker armchairs with cushions. I had draperies, a rug, two bookcases, lamp, the works.

Q: Was this all outfitted for you before you came?

JVB: Yes, I had been decorated by somebody, because it was done, believe it or not, in lavender, because I was a woman.

Q: Who else was in this building, were they all women, or—?

JVB: No, no, it was an old building called East Building, which was right next door, and it had a [00:14:00] bookstore on the ground floor. I was on the second, and my office was off a classroom where I could teach.

Q: You were holed away, in other words. [laughter]

JVB: I had – well, my classroom, and I had a laboratory where I could have recording equipment – all of which, now, is over in the theater, you understand, if you know anything about it. I mean, this kind of thing now is all a part of the Theater department. So, it was, without a doubt, but –

Q: There were no other faculty members who had offices in this building?

JVB: As I recall, Henry Lee was allowed to be over on the other side of the campus, the man I worked for. But he was, after all, a man.

Q: So, he was given the recognition of being a part of (inaudible) –

JVB: Well, I didn't realize that I was the solitary female in this department. I had no idea, until along came – I got a notice that there were – well, first thing that happened, so [00:15:00] I was invited to join the University Club, which if you know anything about it, is sacred.

Q: I don't really.

JVB: It's sacred to males. And it was addressed "Mr. Janice Vanderwater," and I presented it to somebody, because I thought it would be nice to join the University Club. And at that point, I said – because it was addressed, "Dear Sir," and I –

Q: They assumed because you were on the faculty that you were a male, even though your name was Janice. [laughter]

JVB: So, I had this letter of invitation to join the University Club, and I said to them, "Do you want me to take them up on it?" And they said, "You're a woman? Oh, no, we apologize."

Q: How did the –

JVB: I was eating out, and I just thought that it would be a good place for me to eat meals, you see, too, and, you know a club, but – I was new in the town.

Q: How did the rest of the faculty in the English department react to you?

JVB: Well, I'm coming to that. So, I was so separated from them, I hadn't met them.

Q: You weren't introduced [00:16:00] to them when you first –

JVB: Oh, no, I was over at – I was invited to teas at Pembroke.

Q: By whom?

JVB: By the dean of Pembroke, and I was included in staff meetings, which included house mothers –

Q: At Pembroke?

JVB: Yes.

Q: Oh, my God.

JVB: Is this – are you [interested?]?

Q: Oh, yeah.

JVB: Is this what you wanted to know?

Q: Oh, yes. [laughter]

JVB: And, I was considered in that way.

Q: That's incredible.



JVB: So, any rate, the Ladies of the Faculty called on me, and in those days, the Ladies of the Faculty consisted really of faculty's wives. They now call themselves "Women of Brown." They changed the title entirely. I have it on my desk now. It's called "Women of Brown University," I think, but in those days it was called "Ladies of the Faculty," and the Ladies of the Faculty – I was boarding one room up [00:17:00] on Angell Street, and – Waterman Street, I guess it was – Angell, I don't remember now. But, anyway, I was living in a former professor's – retired professor's house, where I had a single room. [He did?] – lived on such small retirement pay, that they took in boarders. That says something about the salary range of Brown University. Well, at any rate, I got breakfast there, and a single room. And I came in one day, and she had a card tray on the table in the hall, and I always looked for my mail, but in the card tray were all these visiting cards. I had been called on by faculty wives who had left their cards, and I was told that I should return calls. And, in those days, [00:18:00] I – completely different. So, I passed the word – I went straight to Professor Hastings, who was the head of the English department, about that, and said that I had been called – but he passed the word to his wife that it was a little difficult for me to do that, since I was teaching a pretty full schedule.

Q: They obviously knew, though, that you were a professor, I mean, that was no –

JVB: No, I wasn't called a professor. I was an assistant.

Q: Or that you were teaching, though, that you were on faculty.

JVB: Yes, but they didn't know what to do with me. I was a woman, you see, connected with Brown.

Q: So the automatic assumption was that you belonged with the wives.

JVB: So they lumped me with the faculty wives, or staff of Pembroke.

Q: But the faculty themselves made no attempt to welcome you, or –

JVB: Well, (inaudible) – oh, no. Not that I – no.

Q: You weren't introduced to the individual members?

JVB: You're a dreamer. [I mean?], no, that didn't occur to them.

Q: What about the man that you worked for?

JVB: Well, I socialized with him, yes. He invited me to his home, and so on, yes, and I got to be very great friends with his wife. Well –

Q: But he didn't have a reception for you, or have other members of the faculty over –

JVB: Oh, no, because he was new, too, remember. But he got to meet the male colleagues, but I didn't, until finally – no, I didn't know them at all, in the beginning. Then we had a meeting of the English department, and I was invited, so I went, and I realized that having – so I showed up, and I did not realize at this point that I was the only woman. So, it was at the faculty club in those days – it was small enough. Nowadays, the English department is much bigger than it was, because Brown is bigger.

Q: Do you know about what the size of the faculty was, or the department?

JVB: [I would have to look it up] in 1940, I don't know. [00:20:00] I don't know. But it was much smaller. But, we could all eat in the faculty club dining room, which is, you know, a big table. Well, any rate, I appeared, and I sat on the sofa waiting in the faculty club, and bemused, I was told when I came that women, the dean had told me, had to, when we went downtown, which we did in those days, went by trolleys, and I was to wear a hat and gloves and stockings.

Q: You mean this was a rule of behavior, because it reflected on Brown?

JVB: Well, Pembrokers did it. All Pembrokers were told this. But, believe you me, I am sure they didn't do it. But they were told, and when I was – oh, that's right. I was invited to a tea, but with girls, for the [00:21:00] freshman class. Yes. All the girls, not any men. Just the Pembrokers – I was invited to a tea that the dean of Pembroke gave for Pembrokers, and I was told to wear a hat.

Q: Did you meet other women faculty at all?

JVB: Oh, no. I met the house mothers, and the staff of Pembroke. So, at this point, I went over – I was sitting in the faculty club. I'm back to – I told you, I wander.

Q: That's okay.

JVB: I'm sitting in the faculty club, and more and more of the department come in, and I'm sitting there, and I'm feeling very lost, but I have my hat on, because I figured, this – I didn't know how to go to be dressed for this occasion, I'll tell you that. I wore a wool dress, I remember it distinctly – you had to think of things like that in those days, [ - isn't this odd - ] instead of a sweater and [00:22:00] skirt, you see, I wore a dress, a wool dress, and I wore a hat, believe it or not. And this was accepted of me as the correct behavior. And over to me came the chairman of the department, and bowed in front of me, and offered his arm, and said, "Shall we go in to lunch?" [laughter] I was absolutely floored, because I looked around, and I was the humble assistant, and he was the chairman, and we paraded into the dining room first. So, that was – don't worry, protocol still held. He put me at the foot of the table, and he sat at the top. But I sat facing him, across a long stretch of my colleagues, and I was down at the foot. Well, they didn't any of the rest of them – they all sat wherever they wanted to, and, of course, they were charming, and at this point, I began to realize [00:23:00] then, I had a wonderful time at lunch, because they were a wonderful group of men.

Q: Did they finally introduce themselves?

JVB: Oh, by this time, everybody knew who I was. I didn't know who they were, you know. Well, any rate, after it, though, I began to get the feeling that there was a feeling in the department that I was there, you see, so I went – believe it or not, I went to Mr. Hastings, chairman of the department, and said, “Mr. Hastings, you've been nice to include me in the group, but would you prefer – would the department prefer that I not come, but find out later what occurred?” And I actually said this.

Q: Why?

JVB: Because I was, without a doubt, interrupting what had been an all-male preserve.

Q: Well, for example, at that meeting at the faculty club, what did they talk about with you? Did it seem like they talked about different issues? Were they academic, or intellectual issues, or [00:24:00] did they stick to social –

JVB: I don't even remember. Departmental matters, you see, and committee reports of things that they were doing, and usually, they were setting up courses, and so on.

Q: Did they feel that your presence there interrupted (inaudible)?

JVB: No, but I just realized that it was the way – it was the current, the–

Q: The tone?

JVB: The tone. So I wondered. There were obviously, I thought, some noses out of joint, I don't know, that a woman was present. They were used to being an all-male group. Evidently, my predecessor was – I don't think she could've been included, you see. I didn't feel that she had.

Q: She didn't take you aside at all when you arrived here?

JVB: No, no, she sort of ignored me. She disappeared completely. She couldn't wait to get rid of this place. She wanted out. Well, at any rate, I said this to Mr. Hastings, and he said, "No, no, no, we do want you present. You must come." He said, "I insist. You will improve the [00:25:00] moral tone."

Q: You're kidding.

JVB: No, that's exactly what he said – which doesn't make you feel any happier. [laughter] Is this what you wanted to know?

Q: Oh, it's wonderful. It's incredible, yeah.

JVB: You look so wide-eyed at all of this.

Q: Well, it's just, it's so stereotypical that they assume that a woman's presence is going to –

JVB: Improve the moral tone.

Q: Yeah, and makes you wonder what was going on in the [laughter] meetings, or what they did before.

JVB: Well, I can tell you. Then, I started to work at Brown. Now, the first thing that happened to me was that –

Q: What do you mean, when you started to work at Brown? Do you mean in Pembroke, though right?

JVB: No, I got to move until I – all this time, I felt hired by Pembroke, really, I'm sorry to say, rather than the English department. You can see why.

Q: Oh, yeah.

JVB: And, what also added to it was that partway through [00:26:00] the first semester – I guess it was at the conclusion of the first semester – yes, it was, it was around January or so – one of the house mothers got sick, and guess who they asked to take her place?

Q: Oh, no, you're kidding.

JVB: They asked me.

Q: In addition to your regular duties, or instead of?

JVB: No, no, in addition. Well, I'll be honest with you, it was a great help to me financially, since I was getting \$100 a month, and living on it, and it cost me \$7.50 a week for a room, if you can figure out – and I had to buy all my meals. When I moved in as a house mother, I got free room and board.

Q: This was on Pembroke campus, right?

JVB: Yes, I got free room and board, which meant it was a great saving, instead of having to eat at Liggett's Drugstore, a nickel for a cup of coffee and a nickel for a donut, that kind of thing. And, I [00:27:00] was able to move in and save for living expenses. They didn't pay me for it, but they gave me my living, but it did mean I had responsibilities.

Q: They paid you nothing else? They paid you nothing in addition?

JVB: No, no, no, no.

Q: You just got room and board.

JVB: I had a salary, but I got room and board. And it was a small house that I moved into. I couldn't have taken a larger one. There were only ten girls in it. And this was ideal, as far as I was concerned, because it helped me financially.

Q: Did any of the male staff that you know of in English or in any of the other departments have any similar kinds of living arrangements or duties?

JVB: I don't –

Q: I mean, was this regular to ask the staff, faculty person?

JVB: No, in those days – this was not, I don't – in those days – now, they do. They have the house masters over at Brown [00:28:00] now. In those days, I didn't know any of them, because you see, my contacts with the men on campus were very, very limited. And so I don't really know. But it did mean I became much more a part of the women's college than I did of the men's. I had no men students.

Q: How was it, though, living with people who were your students? I mean, wasn't that – did you find that that was awkward?

JVB: No, no. No. No, as a matter of fact. The house mother I was replacing recovered, and then I had to move out, but they said they would take care of me, which was good, for the rest of the semester, and I was put up in a guest room in one of the dormitories. But, in those days, it was very interesting – in the dining room of – it was a head table, and we had [00:29:00] waitresses, and the head table was always served their food – didn't have to do it family-style, or cafeteria-style, which is the way it's usually done now.

Q: Was the head table the house mother's and the faculty?

JVB: No, just for the house mother at that particular house, in those days, and then later, when it became a larger refectory, there was one, and it was in the basement of Alumnae Hall. Places where they now have a gate, or something –

Q: It's called The Gate, yeah.

JVB: It was a cafeteria then. I don't know what it is now. I haven't been in years, so I wouldn't know. But, I evidently did such a good job at this, they asked me to go on and do it for two and a half – for two more years I did it, as a house mother, because of my small salary. But, what happened also at this point was, a great change occurred at Brown University, because it [00:30:00] occurred all over the world. World War II started. Now, the thing that came about first was that men appeared on the campus, in uniform. Am I skipping any part? Now, let me think. I don't know.

Q: You (inaudible) came in '40, right?

JVB: So, oh, the first thing – I know what the first thing is that I really should mention next, is that Henry Lee Smith was let go, and I was kept on to do his work.

Q: Were you moved up then?

JVB: Yes, I became an instructor in two years. You see, I had been assistant for two years, so I became an instructor when he left. But, he was really let go. I wouldn't say he was fired – it was not exactly that. [00:31:00] But he was let go. And I was given – I'm sort of embarrassed, I was given the job.

Q: Was your salary increased at all?

JVB: Yes, when I became an instructor, yes. I don't remember what the raises were, no.



Q: No, but do you remember when you were receiving \$100 a month, do you remember what the ratio of that was to the men's salary, in a similar position?

JVB: In 1940? You'd have to look at the wage scale in 1940.

Q: Oh, I just wondered if you knew.

JVB: In those days, I don't think there was a wage scale the way there is now. You see, and people were – they didn't like it even if you discussed your salary.

Q: They don't like it now, I guess, but people do it. [laughter] You didn't do it, though? You didn't –

JVB: No. Well, you see, there were so few women. Who would I talk to about it?

Q: But you had no inkling about what the men were doing?

JVB: No, and they would always think that I was a special case anyway, you see, because [00:32:00] I was a woman.

Q: And because you were considered to be (inaudible) –

JVB: Apart – well, not because I – they just shoved me off on Pembroke. Well, what happened of course is I found that teaching the Speech course became absolutely amazing. It became very, very difficult. My boss that had been, Henry Lee Smith, as I said, was let go, and he said, "Don't worry about me," because I was very embarrassed. He knew I was being kept on, and he was being let go, and he was embarrassed. I was embarrassed – he wasn't. And he said, "Don't worry about me, because I'm a reserve officer, and I will have to go anyway soon," because there was a draft at that time, and there had been registration for a draft. And he said since he was in the reserve –

- End of Track 1 -

Track 2

Q: [00:00:00] Yes, exactly. It's wonderful.

JVB: Well, any rate, Henry Lee left, and I was then an instructor teaching Speech at Pembroke.

Q: Do you remember how you were told about this, that you were –

JVB: I got my letter hiring me, but he informed me that he was not.

Q: But how were you informed that you were going to be promoted, and giving you more responsibility.

JVB: Oh, a letter came. A letter came.

Q: Just by letter.

JVB: Oh, no, nobody ever discussed it with me. I could refuse it, or stay on. Well, any rate, I stayed, and then war broke out eventually. We, first of all – of course, with the draft, it was – the government knew, FDR wanted us in. I don't know how much you know about World War II.

Q: Some. [00:01:00]

JVB: Did you study it?

Q: Yeah, I'm in history.

JVB: He was very [riled up?], he was very – an Anglophile, he was very much for England, anyway. And – his background was such, (inaudible). And, he wanted, (inaudible) we sold them

used battleships, if you remember lend-lease, and (inaudible), and obviously, with the draft, you could sense that the country was moving more and more towards war. Well, the first thing that happened was this meant, with the draft, at Brown – I don't know how much you know about the war years at Brown.

Q: Nothing. [laughter]

JVB: You hadn't even been born yet, at that time.

Q: No.

JVB: And, what happened was that men disappeared from the campus, you see.

Q: Students, or faculty (inaudible) –

JVB: Well yes, they were faculty. Girls were not drafted. [00:02:00] They could volunteer, but they had to be set up later. Not at this time. That came later, when we got into the war, that the women's organizations really start. But, in the beginning, men disappeared from the campus, because they were the age to be drafted. And, since, you'll agree, college-aged youth is what fights our wars, and are dying now at the moment – and, at any rate, since they were disappearing from the campus, they had to be replaced in some way, and also, there could be deferments for people who were far enough along, early on. At this point, if you were going to college, you could be deferred until you graduated. What they did was, they took them the day after commencement, believe it or not. They graduated right and – later on, when we were in combat – right into the armed [service?]. I know someone [00:03:00] who got his degree –

Q: But they still allowed them to finish?

JVB: Yes. He got his degree on Monday, and he reported on Tuesday, and went into the, you know, basic training. It was a different kind of a campus entirely, as you can see. So, what they

did was speed up – they began for the first time to have three semesters a year, which Brown did not have.

Q: So they could get people along quickly?

JVB: Yes, so we had a summer session, so that people could get their degrees quickly. So, really speed it up, and at that point –

Q: Were girls in Pembroke on the same program?

JVB: Oh, I forgot – I have to go back a bit on this, because what happened – how did I get involved in the theater? This is fascinating, because Ben Brown had told me I would never set foot in the theater. [laughter]

Q: Did his attitude remain [00:04:00] the same once you came –

JVB: Well, wait a minute. So, the first year, I didn't ever appear in the theater. I went to the plays, and that was all. The following fall – because I had been told I would never set foot in the theater. The following fall, I was walking across the campus by Faunce house, and suddenly, Ben Brown stopped me abruptly and said, “Why haven't you been in the theater?” And I thought, well, shall I remind him? And I thought, no, I guess not. And I said, “Well, I've been going to all the plays, but I didn't know that you would want me.” And he said, “Yes, we need you.” And I said, “I'll be happy to. How can I help?” And he said, “Come to rehearsal tonight.” So, I went to rehearsal that night, and he started to give me scenes to direct, [00:05:00] of the play he was doing, and [it worked?], and I did, you know, the individual scenes within that, and that's how I began, and this was difficult, because at the time, since I was working for somebody in Linguistics, this was the second year, I was working on the Linguistic Atlas, and the previous summer, I had gone away to the Linguistic Institute meetings down in North Carolina, University of North Carolina, and I was working on the Linguistic Atlas of America. I was going to take my PhD in Linguistics.

Q: This was – you were going to take your PhD at Columbia, still?

JVB: No, no, I would be getting it at Brown. Because of the Linguistic Atlas of America, they were overjoyed to have me. And, Professor Kurath was very nice to me – who was the professor then in charge of the Linguistic Atlas of America. Do you know anything [00:06:00] about linguistics?

Q: No.

JVB: Well, it's a very famous linguistic atlas that was done, and is now – oh, heavens, I haven't kept up with it, because as you see, I didn't stay very long in linguistics. Well, anyway, things started, and at this point, Brown began with three sessions. I began – I tell you, the second year, I'm really – at the end of the second year, we had the summer session. We didn't up until then. But during the year, between doing research, you'll agree, going to the theater rehearsals and working on plays, and doing my full-time teaching, which was not connected with the theater, I was very busy, as well as being a house mother. I – it was a [00:07:00] rather full schedule. So I began to realize – and I finally, when I began to enjoy – which, theater was the thing I was trained for, so when I [laughter] began to drop by the wayside in linguistics, and particularly more so since, at one point, after the project I was working on – I was working at the time over on Saturday afternoon, which was the only time I really had free, because I was in rehearsals in the evening, classes during the day – Saturday was a good day to work on the atlas, Saturday afternoon. And, on this particular Saturday afternoon – it was beautiful, too, I'll never forget it, (inaudible) and all of a sudden, I realized that my conclusions – I had charts, and in front of me – I'd forgotten now, this was [00:08:00] so long ago – the sounds I was working on, and what Kurath had led me to believe would be my project – it was obviously not working out the way he had intended. So, I presented him with my conclusions, and went in, and he looked at them, and I had, at this point – I had worked at this point, so it must have been the next year that this happened – it's hard for me to remember these in consecutive order – and I remember, I worked on it for two years. And he looked at it, and he said, "Very interesting, indeed. We're on the wrong track, aren't we?" And I said, "What do I do now?" He said, "Well, you throw these away, and start over." Well, if you've ever been told this, if you're working for your PhD, you

know this is rather dismaying news. It's like having all your notes incorrect, and so on. I was working – it was the wrong premise.

Q: But you already knew then [00:09:00] what you thought.

JVB: Well, yes, but I was going to have to go back and rehash an awful lot of stuff. So I realized there was an awful lot of work more to do. This was a Germanic scholar I was working under, and he was extremely precise. It was going to mean going over – well, I sort of went haywire. And so I just left it, I'll be honest with you. He tried to comfort me.

Q: You abandoned it completely?

JVB: Oh, it was so – yes, I did. Because I had the theater, you see, at this time, so it substituted, and was what I wanted. So I went back to my first love. It was a retreat, I suppose, really, and also because it had ended for me. Well, I was walking across the campus one day with Ben Brown, whom I now was working with more and more closely, although I'd been told I'd [laughter] never set foot in the theater. I wasn't teaching any courses with him. And, [00:10:00] we came on Professor Block, who was the other professor associated with the Linguistic Atlas of America, and a member of the English Department. Kurath was in the German department. Linguistics crosses departments. So, Professor Hans Kurath was from the German department – Linguistics, really, and Block, Bernard Block was a member, a professor of English. So, we met him head-on, and said, "Where have you been?" He said, "I've been saving space in the Linguistic Quarterly for your article." He said, "The space is saved, when are you coming back and finishing that project? You're holding things up." And Ben Brown drew himself up to his full height, and said to his colleague – I was floored – he said, "She hasn't been to the Linguistic Atlas, because she's working for me, and she's not going [00:11:00] back to the Linguistic Atlas." [laughter] At which point, both men fought, and I just stood there meekly, and said not a word! Nobody consulted me on what I wanted.

Q: Oh, my God. Didn't that bother you?

JVB: Yes. But – I was floored! They didn't give me a chance.

Q: What happened afterward?

JVB: So, but I ended up doing what I wanted to do, which was the theater. But I dropped my PhD. Well, I'll tell you what happened on that. Then, I went to Dean Morriss on it, and said, "What do I do?" And she said, "My dear, you don't need it for the theater. You don't need a PhD. And anyway, it's in the field of Linguistics, which doesn't do you a bit of good." I wanted advice from a woman at this point, I'll be honest with you.

Q: Why? Why did you (inaudible) –

JVB: This was because in those days, I had a feeling that to get ahead was going to be tough at Brown, for a woman, and [00:12:00] so I went to her and inquired whether she thought, as a woman, what she thought about whether I should go ahead for this degree in Linguistics or not, and she said no.

Q: Did she advise you to switch and try to –

JVB: My advice was – she said to me, she said, "You know—" She, after all – she was well-qualified per se, she was head at that point of the American Association of University Women, and therefore, a person who could well advise you in the field, I thought, and she said that she thought that it would narrow me down for too many years, taking me away from the theater, and from what I wanted to do, and that I didn't need an advanced degree, because she pointed out that Ben Brown didn't have an advanced degree – he only had a masters – and that the chairman of the English department at that point didn't have a PhD. Hastings didn't.

Q: Oh, really? Were they full professors? [00:13:00]

JVB: Yes, but they did not have – and she said neither of them do, though she herself of course did. She said, "I don't think you need it in the theater, and if anything, it would narrow your

appeal down.” She thought it was excellent that I had a background in linguistics for speech, you see, and that it tied in very nicely, which it did, which is the reason that I could fit into it. Well – and I had by then some courses in Linguistics, you see.

Q: That hadn’t been part of the agreement when you came, then, that you would finish and have this job? I mean, the job wasn’t contingent on being a graduate student?

JVB: No, no. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Because they didn’t connect the two at all. That’s what she was trying to say. Well, I then – the next thing that happened was that Brown started to have men on campus, because they began to teach. Wriston realized that he had to get money. The only men were the men in the armed forces, so the Navy moved in, the Navy ROTC moved in, and men began going to classes in naval uniforms. But they took the regular program, except for courses in Navy regs., and navigation, and other such courses.

Q: But they did take the regular courses as well?

JVB: And they had those courses taught by officers, under a captain. But they also did take other courses in English. The next thing –

Q: Was this when first – ROTC had been on campus before that at all?

JVB: Oh, I don’t know. But, this was wartime, so of course, the thing was done everywhere.

Q: I just wondered if it was totally new.

JVB: I doubt it. I don’t remember any men floating around in uniform, up until the war. See, those are the things I don’t know, I’ll be honest with you – it [00:15:00] never bothered me one way or the other.

Q: I just wondered if you noticed.



JVB: No. Remember, I had no connection with Brown except as teaching, and I was carefully (inaudible). Well, any rate, at this point, they set up a program for meteorologists in the Army, under the Army. And the Army said meteorologists had to have speech training, because they were broadcasting or speaking, giving briefings – weather briefings, weather reports. In those days, not really broadcasting the weather reports, (inaudible) the enemy, I guess, but principally, I suppose, because they gave briefings on the weather. And, they had to have speech training, it was a part – the way it was set up for Meteorology programs, and Brown was training meteorologists. So, who did they call on but me? And suddenly, I [00:16:00] was transferred from teaching nothing but women [laughter] at Pembroke to teaching nothing but all men.

Q: They couldn't be taught at the same –

JVB: Oh, these were –

Q: They were totally segregated?

JVB: Let me tell you what happened my first thing. My first class of meteorologists, I arrived in the room, and they marched in, which I wasn't quite used to, and stood at attention at their seats. And I looked at the sea of men, and I didn't know what to do. I mean, I was rather floored. So I said, "Do sit down, gentlemen, and don't do that again," at which point the squad leader popped up and he said, "Ma'am, you tell me and I tell them." [laughter] So then, I started to read the roll. He said, "You don't have to, ma'am." He said, "I take the roll and tell you if anybody is absent." And he just called the names. So then, I started, as I usually [00:17:00] did, which you would expect me to do with men, to call them mister, and a hand went up, and he said, "Ma'am, we're not mister, you call us by our last names," at which point I looked at them and said, "I assume that all men in my presence are gentlemen. I shall refer to you as 'mister.'" And they all applauded, the whole squad of them, 25 of them started applauding vigorously. [laughter]

Q: Was that usual form, to – instead of calling them by their first names, even though they were

–

JVB: Well, all – I’ve never been in an Army, but they’re always addressed – the soldiers are –

Q: No, I meant in college, did you refer to all the women in your courses as miss, instead of calling them –

JVB: Oh, yes. No, no. This freedom of calling everybody by first names was not done in that day. So, and they never would have dreamt of calling [00:18:00] me my first name. I’ll tell you a little story about that in a minute. Well, any rate, as I got to be known in the theater that changed. So, but teaching the men – I could see this was a new experience, I assure you. That’s another story – teaching Army men is another experience. But, obviously, what was most amusing about it was these men occasionally had to come in for conferences with me. And where could I hold the conferences? The only office I had was over at Pembroke. So all these men in uniform paraded over into the Pembroke campus, and invaded it – you begin to see how things were breaking down – and went to see me in my office when they had to for any kind of conference meeting. And you know faculty have to see their students, and [suddenly?] – and, of course, the faculty, the younger faculty, [00:19:00] all went off to war, too, and even some of the more distinguished, little older professors went. It began to creep up to the unmarried men. So, the ones that had several children, or had disability, as the war progressed, more and more people were drafted, and eventually, Ben Brown, whom I was working in the theater with, was drafted, but that’s another story. What happened then in the theater? Ben just absorbed me – Ben Brown. And, it was rather difficult, because teaching – the Army didn’t recognize holidays. They don’t. So, they gave us Christmas, as I recall, and so on, but I was teaching three semesters a year, and finally my health began to break down, you can see, because I was doing theater, and Army classes –

Q: Were you given credit for doing theater?

JVB: No, it was entirely –

Q: Volunteer.

JVB: – voluntary. [00:20:00] And hours consumed – I mean –

Q: But the work that you did would normally have been done by someone who was on the theater faculty and who would have gotten credit (inaudible) –

JVB: There was no theater faculty in those days, you see. There was no department. It was Ben Brown, and then they hired a man, Leslie Alan Jones, to be the technical director, but he didn't teach any courses. Well, Ben Brown –

Q: Were you technically his assistant then?

JVB: What happened – oh, yes, he had a way of getting around it. What he did was, the first thing he wanted is that he was able to get through the – I don't know, I forget, the (inaudible) and curriculum course, [and?] play production is the first one, and when he got the course, then he wanted me to teach in it with him, and so then I was actually teaching play production and teaching men, but I was already, at the same time, [00:21:00] teaching Army men, you see, so it was –

Q: But this would have been regular Brown men.

JVB: The first year that I arrived on the scene, in 1940, for the first time, the dramatic society at Pembroke, and the dramatic society at Brown were made one. Up to then, they'd each had their own, and the women played men's parts on the women's campus, and –

Q: Oh, you're kidding! It's like Shakespearean times.

JVB: And originally, the men played women's parts on the men's campus, and then event– and then they moved that into inviting women of the faculty, or women of the community, but never Pembroke's to play with. And the Pembroke's, though, always played the men's parts.

Q: Until when? Until this time –

JVB: Until I arrived on the scene in 1940. Ben Brown was able to persuade [00:22:00] the administration, and Dean Morriss, of course, that the girls and the men could be in the dramatic society together, without there being – I don't know what – dreadful things might result. I forgot to [add?] (inaudible) – because that's very important, isn't it? I mean, it gives you a real picture what the campus was like, along with the hats, and the going downtown, and so on. Well –

Q: It's really incredible. [laughter]

JVB: Is this what you expected?

Q: It's just amazing to me, the difference. [laughter] I had no idea that they were such throwbacks, [laughter] I guess.

JVB: I lived through all this, I know it. Is this what you're interested in?

Q: Oh, yeah.

JVB: Well, any at any rate then – now, I've lost my tale along the way. Where are we? Oh. Well of course, eventually –

Q: The consolidation of the two [00:23:00] sides.

JVB: Oh, well, then, it began to be – no, but – no, what happened was faculty went off to war, too. It meant that they had fewer faculty trying to handle all of the courses. So classes became mixed of men and women. It was inevitable. How could you? Up to then, faculty at Brown had taught classes of Pembroke and classes of men. They were not mixed.

Q: So it really meant a duplication of effort on those classes (inaudible).

JVB: Oh, yes. Shakespeare was taught to women, and Shakespeare was taught to men. Well, but when it comes down to one man, who's now doing other courses out of his field, which did happen in wartime – for example, Professor [Ensem?] later, whose field was Middle English, Chaucer, and – [00:24:00] do you know any? You're not a member of the English department, are you?

Q: No, history.

JVB: (inaudible) Well, any rate, his field – he was teaching Math. So, you see, this was – because they needed so much math for the Navy men, and for the meteorologists, and so on. And he had Math, and had done well at it at Harvard, but many years before, and had to go back and really work on it hard himself in order to be able to teach it at the college level. He had to teach it for – the Navy obviously required it – you had to have it in the Navy, and obviously, the Army had to have it. So, at any rate, I'll never forget being inspected by a colonel at one point – I hadn't expected that. And, it happened – I worked long days. I remember that I had [00:25:00] worked from about nine in the morning 'til six at night, and I worked Saturdays too, because of course we had Saturday classes in those days, and particularly, you did when there was a war on. And, this went on, and we got Christmas off, Thanksgiving off, holidays like that, but that was all. This was for the Army classes. And when I finally – I broke by the wayside, Professor Hastings went to bat for me, and said I should have summers off. But I couldn't continue going. I pointed out to him that I taught continu– I don't know how many semesters in a row, at one point, (inaudible). He understood, and – the faculty expected –

Q: Do you think that that was because you were a woman?

JVB: It might have been, I don't know, but when I complained about the long hours, they said, "Don't you know there's a war on?" Which was the usual phrase at that time, that people are dying overseas, you see. So, people are dying overseas in combat – you should be able to – and if women were taking jobs in factories, as they were, and doing heavy labor, which [00:26:00] they were – and particularly, of course, the English women were, and taking the jobs, why, you've heard Rosie the Riveter started at that time. And so, they saw no reason that you couldn't keep it

up. I don't think it was because I was a woman, but I think it was because obviously, he realized that teaching was a little bit different from working in a factory, all those hours. I began to lose my voice. You know, it was too many hours of strain on my voice, vocal – nowadays, faculty don't keep so many hours, and in addition, I was doing theater. And, at one point – well, to go on, I then began to wonder. I came up for – I was an instructor at this point, when I finally decided, if I was going to get on as a woman, I'd better get out of a male university, which I felt Brown was, and you can see why – and a male [00:27:00] enclave, and tie myself to a women's college, where it would help me to be a woman, rather than hinder me. So, I went out by myself, and applied, and I got a job at Wellesley. And, they offered me a big boost in salary, and they said that I could be an assistant professor, and they said that certainly, there was no holds barred –

Q: Was the assumption that you'd be –

JVB: – and I could be a full professor (inaudible). So, I came back to Brown, and told the chairman of the English department that I wanted to leave, because I was going to Wellesley. And he said, "Why?" And I said, "Because they offered me more money, and they offered me an assistant professorship, and things for the future," and he said, "We can do that – you can get all that here." And I looked at him with astonishment.

Q: How long had you been here by this time?

JVB: I don't remember at what point this was. These are the dates – I'm not very good on dates. I don't remember. [00:28:00]

Q: But by this point, you were doing all the things that an assistant or a professor would do –

JVB: I was now an instructor, but I wanted to move up in rank, and I figured the only way to do it was to move out. So, at that point, he got busy, and he said they would match everything of Wellesley, at which point Dean Morriss –

Q: Including the promise of tenure?

JVB: Yes. Oh yes, oh yes. I said tenure, too – I'm sorry – along the way. Well, that was implied with the professorship. So, any rate – but I did question that. I said I wanted security, as a woman, unmarried. And Dean Morriss, at that point, called me in, and said, “You don't want to go up there and work with all those women.”

Q: Why? [laughter]

JVB: “Stay here with the men!” She wanted me. She thought I was really – what [00:29:00] the phrase nowadays they would use, I guess, is a role model. I was to be an example for the girls. She said, “We have few women on campus that the girls can look up to,” and she wanted me on the campus. So, she really went to bat for me, too.

Q: What do you think she meant by that, saying that (inaudible), you don't want to go up there with all the women?

JVB: Oh, it's more fun.

Q: Oh, I see.

JVB: And so, once they matched, I was perfectly willing to stay, because I enjoyed what I was doing, and I enjoyed Providence, and Brown, and so on, and Wellesley is really very kind of out from Harvard – I mean, it's out in the sticks, really, a bit.

Q: (inaudible) right. [laughter]

JVB: Do you know the campus at all? Beautiful–

Q: I've just been there (inaudible).

JVB: – beautiful, when I went up there. They were furious at me, when I turned [00:30:00] the job down, because they thought I'd take it. And, up there, they'd offered me quarters to live in, and so on, on campus.

Q: Did Brown match that?

JVB: No. But they had houses for professors, which some more remote colleges do. I think they do at Amherst – they have houses, too, faculty houses.

Q: Oh, I didn't know.

JVB: Some of them. Well, of course, it's kind of prep school, in a way, to have houses for – any rate, I stayed, and I wasn't sorry, because they came through on, you know, and as the war progressed, of course, I was teaching more and more men. But, I can remember when – and I started to tell you – the colonel came to inspect, I didn't know that the Army would be inspecting, but it seems that – my husband, when later I married a man who had been in the Army, said [00:31:00] that it was a regular thing for them to come and inspect. You see, Brown had a program for Army men, therefore a colonel would be sent around to inspect, to see how things were. And the first thing he demanded, which I had never done before, was that we eat with the troops. So I was required to appear, to meet this character, and go in, and eat with the troops, and my husband said, later, this is always done, because he has to see how they're fed, and what the conditions are of the food, and so on – this is a part of his inspection, and since he was on a limited schedule, it was easier to see the staff and the people teaching his men, and he had to also as faculty –

Q: Oh, he didn't come and sit in class, then?

JVB: I think I – oh, I was observed, which was a little bit nerve-wracking, but by my colleagues, I'll have you know, who were turned around to teaching the same thing I was, so a very distinguished professor, Kapstein, who was a very distinguished professor at Brown, I don't



know if you're familiar with the name – [00:32:00] very distinguished, sat in and watched, and Professor Bradner came in, who was a full professor. I was floored, I was still an instructor.

Q: They were doing this to learn from you, though, not to check on you?

JVB: Yes, yes, to learn how I did it, because word had gotten around that I did it well, and they had to come – the English course, you see, the way the English course was taught, I set up, and therefore they had to teach it. And these were professors, because of the –

- End of Track 2 -

Track 3

JVB: [00:00:00] –would be interested in all these things.

Q: But it's fascinating – and because, in a sense, you are a role model to the people who are looking at women of that time, you know, because –

JVB: Yes. Yes, because I lived through so much. I really did. And, what happened about this inspection by the colonel is that we had to go through a line where we had tin trays, where they take scoops up of food, the cooks, and throw it into the holes on your tray. I'd never been through anything like it in my life – I'd never seen the Army. Remember, this was before we had *M\*A\*S\*H* programs on TV, or anything. So one wasn't familiar with it, and I went down this line – and unfortunately, that day, I had a date after I finished work that day, and I had worn – because I didn't have time to go home and change, because of my heavy schedule – I had on a red suit, so I stood out, all right – and high heels, which one [00:01:00] doesn't usually teach in, I admit. So in my high heels, I trotted on the stone floor with this tin tray along that they threw the food in. Of course, all the cooks were very amazed – here came a woman in a red suit. I was the only woman with a sea of khaki, where few of my colleagues in business suits, just only a handful, and the rest of them were just a sea of men in privates' uniforms, and a few officers, but all in khaki. And I went through, and as they began to throw these things – and one of them said,

“Do you care for soup?” And I went like this [laughter] over my tray, at which point he laughed – he said, “No, no, I’ll give you a cup,” you know? Because after all, he could see – oh, I have visions of it, the way they were throwing the things, and they all roared – all the cooks (inaudible) laughed at – well, I picked up the tray, and the last thing they put on was gravy – I remember it on the mashed potatoes, which I didn’t particularly want, but that was thrown on. [00:02:00] And evidently, other people had spilled gravy on the floor. So, I’m trotting out with my tray, with these things, in my high heels, on the – of course, these men were trained to wash the floor carefully, you know. [laughter] So it shone, and waxed, and I went – skidded down, the tray went up, a whole sea – and right in front of the colonel and all, down I go with my skirts up like this – short skirts in those days, and showed a lot of nylon legs. At wish – there was loud cheers from the assembled privates, which only made matters worse. And I got up to go back, and one of them said, “No, no, I’ll get you another tray.” You know, somebody – they rushed to help me. Oh, that was one thing they were eager to do – all the privates jumped up, all ran over and mopped me off, and mopped the floor up, but [00:03:00] I had to sit there – you can imagine this put me at a disadvantage at lunch with this colonel who looked at me like this. Oh, that’s right, and so then that happened and he asked what classes I had, because he quizzed me. He didn’t quiz any of the other of my colleagues. All the questions were directed at me. And that afternoon, he did – I’m right, he did come and inspect me to see what was going on in the class.

Q: He came and sat in your class?

JVB: Yeah.

Q: Didn’t that bother you, the kind of thing that you were always under inspection, that you –

JVB: But he approved. He approved at the end, because I went right on doing it.

Q: But you were aware of the fact that he was quizzing you because you were the woman.

JVB: Much more than the men.

Q: Didn't that bother you that you were always the one who was –

JVB: Well, since I could measure up to it, I guess as women we expected it.

Q: But you didn't think that in some way that was unfair?

JVB: No, we didn't, in those days – you see, [00:04:00] that's what I have to say. Our mentality was different. Our whole thinking on this was different in those days.

Q: But – can you explain what your thinking was? I guess I don't understand how you could – I would –

JVB: What would you do?

Q: – be hard-pressed to – I would protest, I guess.

JVB: Well, then, you'd be out of a job. It never occurred to me to protest.

Q: Did it rankle you inside, though?

JVB: Well, it amused me more than anything.

Q: Really?

JVB: Oh, well, annoyed me, too, at times, or made me – most of the time that I was under such close inspection, which I did feel, I often felt that, that I was being observed very closely. It made me a little nervous.

Q: And they (inaudible)?

JVB: It made me a little nervous. It would you, too, to be checked up on. But – [00:05:00] oh, and I was very conscious, also, of morals. I bet, if anything, if I'd slept around in those days, there would have been criticism. This was in the early days, not the later days.

Q: When you said that you were going out the evening of this inspection for a date, did you have a feeling that that was check –

JVB: I never dated students.

Q: Oh, no, but I mean that that was checked up on, or it was –

JVB: Oh, no, no, no, they would assume that I wouldn't, you see, go out with a student –

Q: Oh, no, no, no, I don't mean that, but I mean, just, like, who you would date, or –

JVB: I think if I'd openly been immoral, in their views, in the eyes of – if it had gotten – if I hadn't been discre– I think what they – later, my colleagues did credit me with was being discreet. They didn't know whether I did or not. They [00:06:00] assumed I did, but they thought, wasn't it nice that I was discreet about it?

Q: They assumed that you did what?

JVB: Slept with people, since I didn't marry right away. And –

Q: How do you know that they assumed this?

JVB: I think they – it wasn't until many years later, you know, that I was aware of that.

Q: I mean, what made you aware of it?

JVB: Oh, well at the beginning, it never crossed my mind, I must admit, because things were quite different then. They knew that I went out a lot. I mean, it was obvious that I dated. I moved out of the first place I lived, which was – I had written Professor Hastings, because I knew nothing about Providence, and didn't know where I could live, and I asked him if there were any quarters that I could rent on campus – I didn't know that either – that some campuses provided [00:07:00] quarters that you could rent on campus for graduate students – you see, I was an assistant. And Columbia had a whole two places you could live, and that's what I was familiar with. They had a whole graduate dormitory where graduate students could live, which I think they have now at Brown, that they didn't have in those days, and I didn't know it. And, isn't that what the graduate center is now? But they didn't have that in those days, you see. And so, I thought – and in addition, there was a thing called Butler Hall, connected with Columbia, which was a residence hotel of sorts – resident apartments, I guess you would call it – in which faculty had apartments, and that was owned by Columbia. You see, so I was used to this, coming from Columbia University. So, I wrote and asked Professor Hastings when I was hired if there was something comparable to that that I could live in at Brown, since I didn't know Providence. [00:08:00] And he responded no, but he said usually, he said people lived – all of the faculty lived off campus, but he did know of a retired professor that took in boarders, and they would be glad to give my name and recommend me, and they would take me – they would be happy to have another member of the English department, as a professor of English. Well, I moved in, and I stayed there until Thanksgiving, I think it was, and I moved out, because I would work with Henry Lee Smith, and he came to me one day, and said – I started to date, naturally – I was young. And [laughter] he came to me and he said, “The professor's wife, that Mrs. Weir that you're living with –” He had met him, see – he was invited to things I wasn't, in the English department – and I was living with a [00:09:00] retired professor.

Q: You were living with somebody who was a retired professor in the English department, and he wouldn't even –

JVB: No, I was never invited to anything in those days. But, Henry Lee Smith was. And, he said – he met Mrs. Weir at one of these English department affairs, somebody of the English

department, and she said, “I don’t see how that young woman who works for you gets any work done – she has so many young men, and she goes out so much.”

Q: You’re kidding!

JVB: So, he came back to me and he said, “Janice, move. That woman’s an old cat.” And I said, “She’s–” I said, “What did you say when she said that?” He said, “Don’t worry, I told her off. I said, ‘She is exactly what I want. She’s very good at her job. She’s very bright, and she’s quick, and she gets her job done, and then she has fun too,’” [00:10:00] which is, of course, a very good defense, but he said, “Move! I have one word for you: move!” So I went right out, and found other quarters, and moved, and she was furious. But –

Q: Did you ever have any other inklings that (inaudible) –

JVB: But, obviously, he said he thought that what she said – he was very understanding, you see, he didn’t give a darn about my social life. But he didn’t want any criticism to get around the English department of this nature. He thought it would stand against me, which I’m sure it would have, that I couldn’t do my job because I was socializing too much. So, at any rate – I wasn’t, as a matter of fact, but to her, it was, because she was an older –

Q: One would have been too much. [laughter]

JVB: He wasn’t. He called her an old cat. That’s why I say I’m putting things on this tape that I hope you’ll – most of these people are all [00:11:00] dead, though, so I guess it’s fine.

Q: I don’t think it will [laughter] –

JVB: I don’t think they’ll mind. Well, any rate, where am I now? Oh, well I taught Army men. Well, of course, the war ended eventually, but before it did, Ben Brown, who was a much older man, felt that he might be drafted too, because some of the older men were being taken who were unmarried, and he was. So, he volunteered for the Red Cross, and went off and worked for the

Red Cross, and this left me in charge of the theater program completely. And the first thing that happened was that, believe it or not, that some of the students objected strenuously to this.

Q: Because you were a woman?

JVB: No, they didn't think I could handle it. I was young, you see.

Q: But you'd already been (inaudible) –

JVB: I'd already been – but I hadn't been in charge of the whole program, all [00:12:00] of the theater program. But I went right to work, and we did some, I think, some darn good work. And then eventually, he came back, and of course he wanted me to stay on, because I was then his liaison with what he'd done before, while he'd been away, you know –

Q: Oh, when he came back after the war, he stepped in and –

JVB: He came back – well, he came back about – not right away, because the Red Cross went on, you see – there were still so many men overseas, army of occupation and so on. So, he didn't come back in '45 when the war ended, no. He came back, what, oh, '47, '48 – because we still had men overseas – army of occupation in both places, Japan and Europe. Well, remember, we occupied Germany for quite a while – and Japan, too. So, the Red Cross was needed, very definitely. And, of [00:13:00] course, it took a long time to bring them back. You don't demobilize an army in a minute. And then it took a long time to bring them back from overseas. Well, any rate, when he came back, he resented the fact that people turned to me much more than (inaudible) they did to him, and he – I think this was –

Q: But when he came back, he stepped in to his old position, and you were –

JVB: Yes, under him.

Q: – assumed (inaudible) –

JVB: But by then, I was into professor. I had tenure by this point – I must have had it by then. I liked my job. Well, then we began to get men back, and then what happened was, I'd been teaching all men, and I moved in to teaching classes of GIs who were coming back under the GI bill, but who had left, say, college, and needed – well, no, I guess those fitted right [00:14:00] back in, but there also were many who couldn't meet the requirements, who hadn't finished high school, or who were deficient in – didn't have the credits, anyway, for admittance. So they had a special program set up, which I think they now do for disadvantaged people, don't they really – doesn't Brown still? It did for a while –

Q: I'm not sure.

JVB: – have a program summers in which they invited Black students to come in and get used to the campus ahead of time. Do they still do that?

Q: They have something like that for high school students, I don't know if it's for students who are behind.

JVB: These were people who were admitted – I know what it was. You were admitted – the university needed the money, remember, too, and it needed men – there were no men on campus, remember, other than the Army men, and now, suddenly, the Army men were no longer here. So what did they have? The Navy – [00:15:00] so they had to bring people back, that build up the men's college. And so, what they did was, they set up these courses – and they were all male – in which – they were courses in English, and so now, I was not only – which resulted, I should have started it earlier, sometime during the war – I was really teaching English now, rather than Speech. I was teaching English Literature, English Composition, which I could do, I had the background. But –

Q: But you continued doing theater?



JVB: Yes, yes. But, I was teaching more English now, you see. I still had my office over on the campus, but I was teaching men again, men's sections, very definitely, and I was [laughter] – and it drove me crazy, I think, my mail and the secretary being over at the other [00:16:00] department. The messages over there was the worst of all.

Q: Which meant you had to travel over there every day?

JVB: Yes, to check my mail and my messages, and so on. And, it made it very difficult being apart from my colleagues, very hard.

Q: Was the idea never broached that maybe it would be more logical and also more comfortable?

JVB: What I wanted to do was get rid of the Speech course. Now I was teaching English courses, which was fine by me. I didn't want to teach anymore this non-credit course, so how I managed that was I hired assistants to work for me, and I brought them in – and I had some marvelous gals who came in from places like Smith, and Wellesley, again, who had had courses in Speech.

Q: So they were BAs?

JVB: And, so that they could be assistants and work – and some of them had their Master's, but most of them were just nice gals, and I could make them [00:17:00] assistants doing most of the terrible Speech work, and I could teach, say, one section of it, you know, and so on, or maybe two, but not as many, because I was beginning to teach English Composition, English Literature. I must admit, I didn't mind the English courses when they dealt with drama, which I was more involved in, but I found teaching Beowulf, and some other things, a little tricky – in the basic Literature courses it was set up – that happened at one point, I remember, and I always felt when I did that – but, I believe I did all right, because I got through, and my colleagues never objected. And the chairman of the English department never objected.

Q: Were the classes still segregated at this point?

JVB: Well this is what I'm trying to – war ends. What happens? The faculty rebelled. The faculty comes back, see, [00:18:00] from places, and they're hired, they get more men back, because they're back from the war, and they can teach – young men can come back to the campus and teach. But young men – but the faculty had the – finally taught mixed classes. Remember I said because of the war? They had to. They didn't want to go back to the old system of teaching two sections of Shakespeare, and two – and so on. Well, it was funny, because I report at this point that dear Professor Hastings, whom I adore, after all – he was a charming gentleman, and quite a scholar, very learned – had a way. He was floored with his first mixed sections – because Shakespeare's a rather bawdy poet, as you probably know, and whenever he came to a line in class, and he'd look at his class, and he'd hesitate, and he'd say, "Obvious [00:19:00] obscenity," and never say what it meant, and skip over it. But it was a mixed section, whereas before, he had definitely gone into it with the men. So nobody had the nerve to raise their hand and say, "What obvious obscenity?" Which, of course, is true, because unless you know Shakespeare's bawdy – you can tell it from the notes, of course, pretty much. Have you studied Shakespeare?

Q: I took the Shakespearean course in college. [laughter]

JVB: You didn't have obvious obscenity, right?

Q: No.

JVB: Well, I think it must have been – I don't know what they did in courses in religion. Some of the same things must happen because of biblical passages.

Q: Well, didn't you say before that you knew, when you came, there was one tenured woman, at least, that you knew of?

JVB: Oh, no, then I moved to the point. We came to – Dean Morriss retired, and then [00:20:00] Nancy Duke Lewis became the dean of Pembroke. At the same time, Barnaby Keeney, while she was – about the same period, Barnaby Keeney became president of Brown, and he quite

respected Nancy Duke Lewis. As a matter of fact, there's a fellowship named for Nancy Duke Lewis now, who died of cancer. Dean Morriss is dead too – she was pretty recently. Nancy Duke had a luncheon over at Pembroke, and she did this because they used to have chapels. They called – convocations is what they call them now – I think they referred to as – I always thought of them as chapel. I think they originally were called chapel – they were a chapel originally, because this was a Baptist institution. But, every Tuesday, the girls were required to go from one to two – it was required attendance. They took attendance, [00:21:00] because in those days, you couldn't cut classes more than three times. Teachers were required – you had cut sheets, which you made out at the end of each class, putting down the names of the people not present.

Q: Was this for the men as well as for the women?

JVB: All over the campus. You were only allowed a certain number of cuts in the course, and if you cut more than half the number, you flunked automatically. Well, any rate, attendance was taken in chapel, but afterwards, she gave luncheons, in which she invited some of the girls to be speaker of this convocation. So, any rate, this particular day, we were invited to a luncheon with her, and we went expecting that there would be some speaker, and I don't remember that there was one. But anyway, we sat in the dining room, and there were four women, and the dean at the end. And we looked [00:22:00] at all where there used to be – you know, this space, the long table, with space for all the students, and there weren't any, and we all kind of wondered – there were four of us, and I don't know which year this was, but you'd have to look it up and find out what year there were only four women of professorial rank of any kind on the campus. So she told us – she said, “You're probably wondering why you're here.” She said, “You are the only four women of any professorial rank of any kind at Brown University.” And we said, “What?” And we looked at each other. And now, I'm trying to remember what there was. I was from English, naturally. There was – I think, and I'm not quite sure, I think one was from Biology, and I think one from a language, who was a native speaker of the language – that [00:23:00] was understandable, or at least very fluent, spoke good language, whatever it was – French, I think. I'm not sure. And, there was –

Q: Somehow I had a feeling it was going to be French.

JVB: I'm not sure. But, a little bit later than that, I had a friend who was in the economics department, was beginning to be, and the faculty rebelled at teaching more than one section. That's what had come about after the war. The faculty didn't like, as I said, teaching separate sections, so that began to break down. Except, they said, when a class was large and had to be sectioned, it was sectioned according to sex. So, they wanted a class – if it had to be, say, a class in Composition, it was very likely to [00:24:00] be, because English 1 Composition was necessary – required in those days, I'm not sure, I don't remember. But anyway, everybody took it. And, that was naturally sectioned, because there were so many taking it, so there were women sections and men's sections. If you had a class of 50, say – this was in the beginning (inaudible), in Shakespeare, and 25 could be put in one section of women and 25 men – it didn't always work out that way, then you were safe. Eventually, the faculty objected, and this fell by the (inaudible).

Q: So, when Nancy Duke Lewis called this group together –

JVB: She said she thought it was shameful, yes, and she wanted more women. [00:25:00] And, she began to fight for that. So, they asked me to speak, oh, I don't know, things went along. Finally, the man I was working with dropped dead during Christmas vacation, and of course I was carrying on. He'd been not very well in recent years, and I carried on a large part of the work anyway, most of it.

Q: This is in Theater?

JVB: Mmm-hmm. So it came up that I was to – whether I should be appointed or not, and they met, and the dean of men at the time, who was Dean Durgin – I've never forgotten Dean Durgin – met – see, Nancy Duke Lewis was all for (inaudible), so this was – she was the dean [00:26:00] of women, but Dean Durgin said he did not think I should be appointed to the job as the director of the theater, because the alumni would object.

Q: Why, because of the fact that you were a woman?

JVB: (inaudible) all about – alumni to him were men, you see, not women, because in those days they were two separate institutions. And, you have to remember, the organization that had been – when I came in 1940, there had been two Dramatic Societies. Now, it was in the position of a woman being the head of both men and women. And this, to Dean Durgin, seemed, I suppose, very – and he, moreover, had been a Captain in the Navy, (inaudible) and was now a dean in civilian clothes in the college of Brown, and a strict disciplinarian. He was the one who worried about cuts probably more than anyone else, because the deans were in charge of checking the cutting sheets. [00:27:00] He was known for discipline. Women in the room, which you would be thrown out of school for. The girls were thrown out for having men in their room, etcetera. Signing out all night – you had to sign out of the dormitories, where you were going, and if you stayed out all night, you could be thrown out of school. What girls did was those nights, they didn't sign out. They were [bright enough?]. Except they found one girl whose family made the mistake of calling for her when she was sleeping with somebody down on Benefit Street that I know of, and they tried to alert her when her family came, but they investigated why she wasn't around – some crisis [00:28:00] at home, illness of some kind, and they wanted her, and so the administration found out that she was missing, and not signed out.

Q: Did they expel her?

JVB: Yeah, sure. There were a lot of [tricky things?]. Well, any rate, I've lost track now of where I was.

Q: Nancy Duke Lewis.

JVB: Oh, about the job – getting the job. So, Dean Durgin said he did not approve. He didn't think that a woman, one, could have men working for her, and there were now other men working for me – there were about two assistant men in the theater who were instructors, (inaudible) – they were at that time. And there was the technical director. So you had about three men, and me. And, he didn't think men would work well for a woman. [00:29:00] And, he thought – I heard all this, because I had enough friends on the committee.

Q: Was he the person who had the final say?

JVB: No, but he made enough of a protest that Wriston, who was retiring at that time – it was right at the time that Barnaby Keeney was coming in, and Barnaby Keeney was arriving, and Wriston was leaving, and he said, let my predecessor handle this issue, I want no part of it.” [laughter] The hassle with Dean Durgin. So, he said, appoint her an acting director, and let Barnaby take it over (inaudible). So I was made – a whole year, I was appointed an acting director of the theater, which burned me, but –

Q: Didn't you – you didn't say anything? Nancy Duke Lewis didn't say anything?

JVB: I knew I'd get it. I did.

Q: Oh, you did? [00:30:00]

JVB: I had a feeling. What were they going to do? And so – and of course I did. And eventually, when I developed – which was unfortunate. So, I never did really get my full professorship. I was up – I was associate professor, but I never got (inaudible), and that was because I got sick, (inaudible). I would have, because my –

Q: When were you – you were made associate professor, right?

JVB: Yeah, yeah, I was an associate. But I never did make the full professor. Maybe they just didn't think I was worth it, I don't know. I never fought that. I would have, if I'd stayed, but I didn't, at the time. I married, you see, too. And, I'm sure salary – I was never – I've never checked my salary scale, but I'm sure I was very low. And then I got sick. I got (inaudible) –

Q: But you were there how many years – you came in '40?

JVB: I formally retired in 1970, but the last [00:31:00] years I was sick, so I really feel that I didn't give my (inaudible) – I developed MS probably, the doctors think – it was diagnosed in '65, you see, so that for five years I really had it, but I probably had it before then, because it wasn't correctly diagnosed. It's very difficult to diagnose. So, I based the fact that I didn't give my all into it to partly – it's my fault. I could not –

Q: But you'd given your all for [laughter] at least 25 years!

JVB: Yes, yes. But I couldn't possibly – I wasn't able to at that particular time, and (inaudible) was not worth fighting about.

Q: But you didn't expect – like, before 1965, you didn't expect to be –

JVB: Oh, I was so busy with my marriage –

Q: – to come up for professorship?

JVB: – with – I was doing what I loved, and more Theater courses were added. I taught playwriting. I taught the things I liked, you [00:32:00] see, so I didn't object. I taught playwriting, play production, and then English literature. I never enjoyed teaching Composition, I must admit.

Q: There aren't too many people who seem to like [laughter] – nobody who does it really –

JVB: Literature was fine, and then –

- End of Track 3 -

Track 4

JVB: [00:00:00] I taught – we had an advanced section in playwriting, which became mostly teaching direction, (inaudible), and we had – I was doing the things I liked, so – and, of course, then, directing plays, which was what I adored, so I never worried much about the rank, I'll be honest with you. I had the title of director, at least. So, I didn't really – now, the director would be, really, in the Theater department, but obviously, (inaudible). The thing I wanted was to be named director of the theater, and I was, and when I finally had to retire – oh, I did it gradually, because of my health – I took a year's leave of absence, and [00:01:00] –

Q: This was after '65?

JVB: It was about – I've forgotten now. I took a year off, and that – I couldn't come back to work because I was sick. I took the year off because I'd been sick before. You see – so, really, I wasn't doing a very good job, and I gave up the theater first, which broke my heart. The last play that I directed – I didn't tell them until the last night, and I called them all together, and I told them that – there wasn't a dry eye in the cast. [laughter] I told them that they were going to be the last Sock and Buskin play that I would direct.

Q: What was the play?

JVB: Now, so help me, I can't remember the name of it. Isn't that awful? I think it was Shakespeare (inaudible). Which one? [00:02:00] *Richard II*? *Richard III*? I don't remember. See, I've done them all, so I don't remember. So, but all I remember is the reaction from the group was buckets of tears, and they all were terribly, terribly upset, and they didn't believe it. They kept protesting. They didn't want me to leave.

Q: Did you feel that you had to?

JVB: Oh, yes. I said it wasn't fair to them. I didn't really tell them that night, but that's what it was. And, it was too exhausting. I couldn't do it. I fell in the theater before I knew I had MS in '64 – that's how I know I had it then, broke a leg. I wanted to do *Hamlet*, and open it on Shakespeare's birthday, which I did, and it also [00:03:00] was my husband's birthday, so he



was all excited about having it done – he said, for him – and Shakespeare. And his favorite play of Shakespeare is *Hamlet*, so it worked out very well. And I thought Hamlet – we had John Pleshette, who plays now in a lot of TV things.

Q: Oh yes, I've seen – he was here?

JVB: Yeah, he was Hamlet at the time, and Roger Carmel, who was in a lot of those shows of Star Trek, as a villain, was around in those days. And there was Ed [Edwin] Sherin, who is now a director, and he's directed a lot of Broadway shows, and is married to Jane Alexander, and he was one of my students (inaudible). There have been quite a number of them. But, any rate, this takes me off the subject of rank. But, no, I think it would have meant more to me if I hadn't been [00:04:00] sick from about, shall we say, what year? I'm not sure what year. I know it by – I guess about '61 –

Q: Oh, really, that early?

JVB: – that I had MS. And, therefore, I couldn't, I felt, do as good a job, but I didn't realize why. I had to push, so – because, of course, it doesn't affect you mentally, but physically, and so – you don't have the drive in the theater you need, so I had to give up the theater, which was so strenuous work. And then I did – I know what I loved teaching. I loved teaching 187, Contemporary Drama, and for a while, that was a large section (inaudible), oh, 125 to 150 students, which was really almost a lecture, and is too big [00:05:00] for anybody who has MS, because you have to stand. You can't teach that number of people and sit. You can in a seminar, but you can't –

Q: You can't do it with 125 people.

JVB: No, no, so it was too much for me, so that was finally divided up, and we had sections of 25, and then it went down. And I loved teaching that. Schevill was doing it at the time, too, do you know the name? He's the playwright.

Q: Yeah, he's still here.

JVB: Well, he was there. He was quite upset when I left. Well, any rate, when it came time to leave – of course, I hadn't told – by then, Brown and Pembroke had become one, but Posey Pierrel – I'm not sure which year that happened. See, I get vague on when these things happen, but I do know that I was with my husband on Thayer Street when Posey Pierrel – Rosemary Pierrel, who had been the dean of Pembroke, and [00:06:00] who's now a professor of Psychology – she uses her husband's name now, Sorrentino, Lou Sorrentino. I think she might go still by Pierrel, I suppose. She was for so many years. Anyway, Rosemary Pierrel met me on Thayer Street with my husband, and said, "What's this you're doing, you're leaving? You can't do this to us. We need women – you're one of the few women professors here, we don't want to lose you! We have you in a key job in the theater!" You know – and she must have been still –

Q: And this was 1970?

JVB: And she must have been the dean of Pembroke at the time. And she was terribly upset.

Q: So they still were not –

JVB: So she was terribly upset that I was leaving, and there was, there was consternation. I left at the time when they didn't want to lose women professors – they were beginning to have to go out and search and look for them and hire them, and [00:07:00] I was already here and head of the theater, and they knew that once – she as a woman knew that they don't now have to have a man a head of the theater now, and there were two – Jim Barnhill, who was working under me, became the acting chairman of the Theater department, and then of course it was Wilmeth became the chairman, because Jim Barnhill is not very good – I could have told them many tales. There are a lot of people that they're better professors than they are chairmen of departments, I think you'll recognize that – a lot of professors hate being chairmen. You know (inaudible).

Q: Not good administrators, yeah.

JVB: They detest it. I've known some lulus in the English department.

Q: But, so you left in '70, right at the time that they were merging?

JVB: They really wanted women, and they didn't [00:08:00] want me to go. So, I think they would have done anything to keep me in those days. So, when you say, would I have been – in other words, it was my choice. I was urged not to – they did everything they could to keep me, frankly.

Q: Did you have a sense, even though you said that you were there off and on during the last five years, how did the students and how did the women faculty react to the merger of the two schools?

JVB: Oh, the students wanted it. After all –

Q: The Pembroke students did? Why, did they –

JVB: There was no – because they'd had so many classes together anyway, it didn't make much of a difference, you see.

Q: Did they think that getting a degree from Brown would be more –

JVB: As a matter of fact, a lot of the alumnae didn't like losing their own name of Pembroke. A lot of the Pembroke alumnae – if [00:09:00] you want to be Latin about it – objected strenuously to leaving Pembroke, you know, out of the picture, completely cutting it off and making it Brown. I can see why. As long as the things were joined, it made no difference to me, but it did to women, for some reason.

Q: You don't –

JVB: It never would have made any difference to me. I went to Barnard, you see, in Columbia, which was the women's college of Columbia, and it's still a women's college, even though Columbia College has gone coed. You figure that one out. They wanted Barnard to go into Columbia College –

Q: And Barnard didn't want to.

JVB: – and make one college, and call it the college, Columbia University, and Barnard absolutely turned them down cold, and it's because their endowment is for Barnard, and Columbia would swallow it up, and they are wealthier by themselves than [00:10:00] they would be if they joined with Columbia. It's financial. See, a lot of people – because Barnard was one of the early women's colleges – financially, so much money was given Barnard through the years by some very wealthy people, and it's well-endowed – better endowed than Columbia College is. Columbia University is not exactly poor. I don't know how it stands financially, but it used to own large sections of New York City. As a matter of fact, it's built on some of the Vanderwater farmland (inaudible)

Q: Oh, is it really? I was going to ask; how did you decide to go to Barnard?

JVB: Oh, I got a scholarship, and I could live at home. It was Depression.

Q: So you were from New York City? What kind of family did you come from?

JVB: My family, on my father's side, are old New York, which is Vanderwater, old Dutch, and not old German, which a lot of people think [00:11:00] when you say Dutch. My family settled New York in 1658, and they were connected with Columbia University through the years, and when Columbia was established on Morningside Heights, I never knew it when I went to Barnard – our history professor turned to me in class and said, “You ever been over and seen the old deed of your family's farmland at Columbia University?” And I said, “No.” I thought to myself, “What fools, they probably gave them the land,” which is true, but they didn't buy it in those days, you know, they gave it. But, they were an old Dutch family, and of course then about

100 years later, when they could learn to speak English, they married English people. My mother was of Swedish descent.

Q: Did your mother have a career?

JVB: No. Well, she was remarkable in many ways. She came from a poor family, but she took the first course – the first kind, not the first course, but the first shorthand technique that was taught, which was Pitman, in those days. And she learned shorthand, and it was the only one taught, and it was a new thing. She learned to type with the new shorthand, and she became a secretary, which was remarkable.

Q: Was this when you were –

JVB: Before she married my father. She gave it up when she married him. But she did have a job, which was amazing in her day.

Q: And what did your father do?

JVB: He was in tea. He imported tea. [00:13:00]

Q: Were you the only girl in the family?

JVB: No, no, there were three girls, but my older sister is still alive, but my middle sister, now, died.

Q: Did they go into academic careers? Did they have careers?

JVB: My sister went to art school, but then she took her undergraduate degree in NYU, and finished off afterwards, because in those days, the art schools were three years, just like school of design was originally – you didn't get a degree. And she took her degree at NYU, and got her masters at Columbia – all in art though, which was her field. And she taught art to begin with,

because it was Depression, and art got nowhere. She was brave to go to art school in the Depression, really brave. My family encouraged things like that. They believed in doing what you [00:14:00] wanted to do. When I came to my mother and said, “What would I major in in college?” I shall never forget – my mother turned to me and said – I said, “You know, I have to think of a career.” She said, “Do training for what you would like to do. Do not be influenced by the world conditions – they can change.” Very wise woman. Very good advice, because you can’t tell from day to day – really, you can’t. You can’t tell at your age what 20 years from now will be the situation, in what you choose as your career.

Q: Actually, you can’t tell what it’s going to be tomorrow, the way things have been going.  
[laughter]

JVB: Yes. Exactly. So, she was right.

Q: What did your father do? Well, you’re the youngest?

JVB: Yes.

Q: So, he already had the experience of having daughters?

JVB: What he did was lose an awful lot of money. My family started off [00:15:00] well, my mother had a house when she married, you know, that kind of thing – in those days, you did. And she had a laundress, and, you know, and was able to get a nursemaid when she wanted one, and things like that, but this all went when the Depression came, because my father invested poorly, and he lost his shirt in failures of the companies – one company really would have been – I think he was the vice president, I don’t remember. I was so young. But, any rate, it meant that financially, there was no money for my college. So, I wrote everywhere, and I also applied to Brooklyn College, which was free, and hoped I wouldn’t have to go there, because I wanted to go somewhere else, and [00:16:00] I remember –

Q: Did you want Barnard?

JVB: My father wanted me to go to Vassar, because he knew – he had friends who were Vassar girls, had been Vassar girls, so he wanted me to go to Vassar.

Q: Did he himself go to college?

JVB: No, but he wanted me to go to Vassar. I applied to Wellesley, Vassar, Barnard – all the women’s colleges, you see.

Q: Was Brooklyn coed?

JVB: Brooklyn was coed.

Q: Did you really want to go to a women’s college for any particular reason?

JVB: No, but I thought I stood a better chance of getting a scholarship. And so, I was offered a scholarship to Barnard, and I could live at home, which made a difference, you see, for my family, so that I could swing it.

Q: Did you know then at that point when you entered college that you wanted to go into English, or into Linguistics? [00:17:00]

JVB: Or Theater. What I started to do –

Q: I mean, did you have an academic career in mind?

JVB: My mother turned to me – I was in my junior year, and said, “What do you want to do?” And I said, “I’d love someday to teach in a college,” and she said, “Then do it,” and that’s where I ended up. I never thought I would. I didn’t right away. But, isn’t it funny? And, I remember –

Q: It’s kind of nice that it works out that way, it doesn’t always happen –

JVB: Columbia had a bureau in those days, a psychological testing bureau, (inaudible) and probably do it now – they certainly do at Brown – in the Psychology department, and I was allowed, for a fee, to take a test in my junior year to decide my aptitudes, what they were. And the first one was [00:18:00] dismaying – I came out awful. Overwhelmingly awful. But, you see, it has something to do with English (inaudible). The second one came out lawyer. And the third one came out English teacher. Very interesting. And one of the courses that I taught over at Brown for a while, believe it or not, was the course that all the debaters take, in argumentation, which is the lawyers' course. So, you see, it falls in, doesn't it? And I had taken a terrific course in argumentation at – the reason I got involved with argumentation, which was taught in the English department. This was in the early days, when I was first here, under a professor called Huntington, who taught it. [00:19:00] Professor Huntington was a distinguished professor of English – really a remarkable man, and he taught argumentation. Well, they search in the department when a course gets big, and so many would-be lawyers wanted to take argumentation at Brown, that it was very popular. Of course, you've never heard of it, probably. Well, I had taken one at Columbia, not at Barnard, and I suffered – because this is really true, it is a basis in which women usually take it – not women, men take it – in those days, they did. Now, it's mixed (inaudible). Men took it, because it was good preparation in logic and in speaking to a premise, [00:20:00] using proof, establishing – it's rigorous training. I, like a darned fool, elected it, because I thought I needed to get that rigorous training in logic myself, and in organization.

Q: Instead of taking logic courses, in philosophy?

JVB: That's right. It's because it was on my feet, see again it was oral, and I thought, thinking on my feet –

Q: Good preparation for teaching.

JVB: It wasn't why I took it, for teaching, at all. I arrived in the section, and I was one of two women, and all men (inaudible). It was devastating.



Q: So the courses there were already mixed?

JVB: Only in the junior / senior group. You could elect, but not at Barnard, no, you couldn't do it your freshman or sophomore years. Now, I think you probably can, but [00:21:00] in those days, you couldn't. Junior and senior years, you could elect to, which was wonderful (inaudible), but I elected this damn class. Well, I suffered, and I was determined that I would carry it through, just because it was so hard. It was tough, and I had the toughest (inaudible). You used to go in. Pros sat on one side of the room, and contra sat on the other side. You divided off every section. You came in –

Q: The issue was decided beforehand, and you had to –

JVB: The issue was decided, and you came in and seated yourself on which side of the room you were, for or against, and then you were called on to speak. You could challenge, and you could interrupt at any point in the audience, on your feet – this is why it was good for lawyers, you see. [00:22:00]

Q: It sounds like *The Paper Chase*, the movie about Harvard Law School. [laughter]

JVB: I tell you, when I watched that program, oh my God, I shall never forget, [fear and?] trembling in that course. I used to go (inaudible) tremble, because of course – one time, I made the mistake of going in to speak on a proposition, and I knew I had to be good – two people would speak on each side, and I knew I'd get it, because there were only two of us that were for something. So you knew darn well you'd be the two. And I sat there thinking "Pray God, not again, I spoke (inaudible) last time," you know? [laughter] Oh, God, you had to be prepared, you know. Well, I got up, and it was devastating. I wasn't the first speaker, but fortunately, the person didn't steal all my points, you know, which can happen. And the reason I was called so soon was because the first one [00:23:00] was demolished. You couldn't finish – once you could not prove your point, you had to sit down. Some people never got beyond the first sentence, by being challenged.

Q: By the professor, or from the floor?

JVB: And the floor, both. Some people just never got beyond the first or second sentence. You know that. Because they'd state it, and boom, they'd get a question thrown at them, and they couldn't – they would try to answer it, and the professor would come back, and he could be devastating on all these. After all, he picked the topics. Well, this particular day, he interrupted me, and I answered him, and I went along, and he interrupted me again, and I thought, "Oh, my God, I can – I'm going on, I'm going on." And I finished, you know. I shall never forget it. I really felt jubilant – I got an A that day, you know? I mean – ah. [00:24:00] He turned at one point to the class and said, "Well, she said this, what do you say to it?" There was dead silence. "Do you let that pass?" he said. "Do you challenge her?" He turned to me and he said, "Go on."

Q: Do you remember what the issue was?

JVB: No. Well, I still remember some of my – I hunted for it, for proof. Oh, God, I hunted for proof. But then, I never expected to be teaching this! That's what I go onto next, is I ended up teaching it at Brown, because they found it in my record that I had it.

Q: (inaudible) Did you teach it the same way?

JVB: Well, I hope I was gentler. I don't think I could be as cruel, but I taught it for (inaudible), and then, when Professor Huntington retired, he had – oh, [00:25:00] I forgot to tell you, this was in the early days when I was first here, and he had a retirement dinner, as they always did – and they still do, but now, they're so big, and there are so many people at Brown, they're not as intimate as they were in those days.

Q: Did they have one for you?

JVB: No, because I retired gradually, you see, (inaudible). I never got a retirement dinner. I was sick. They painted my portrait instead, so there's this picture of me hung up looking aghast.

Q: Where?

JVB: In the lower regions, under the basement of the theater. [laughter] No, down in front of the speech – the former students gave some rooms in my name, so of course, it hangs there. They paid for the rooms, and there's a plaque on the door. I feel dead – and my portrait hanging inside, you know? I feel already as if I've expired. Well, I have as far as Brown is concerned. But – (inaudible). Oh, this retirement dinner – I will never forget it, because I was invited, and I knew they were all male, and had been always up to that point. So I went to – I guess to Professor Huntington's – no, I went to the professor in charge. The invitations came out, and I said, "It probably would be more tactful if I refused to go as the only woman" –

Q: Why?

JVB: No, I had a feeling that I was right, and he said, "Yes," that Professor Huntington – he said, "We had wondered, but Professor Huntington insists that you be there." And I said, "What?" He said, "Yes, Professor Huntington insists, and he says that you have worked closely with him in argumentation, and he has great respect for you, and he wants you [00:27:00] at his retirement dinner."

Q: What year was this?

JVB: I don't know, but he wanted me there. I was impressed. I know why, too. I was not of sufficient rank to be invited in those days.

Q: Oh, this was in the very early –

JVB: That's right. I didn't have enough rank for this, too, because these were all full professors that were going. You know, really the crème de la crème. Well, anyway, we met in the basement, in the dining room of Alumnae Hall, and I shall never forget it, it was a marvelous – if you've never known old [stuffy?] wool-tie professors, they were a wonderful group. Professor Huntington would meet me on campus – the man who taught argumentation, and he would doff

his hat and hold it across his chest when he talked to me. I felt like he was saluting the flag. [laughter] And I remember one time he did it in the snow, and I said, “Please, Professor Huntington, don’t [00:28:00] uncover in this weather.” Well, I went to this dinner, and I said, “Oh, I’ll dress to the nines.” I wore my heels, and my silk dress, and I put my hair up, and I wore my earrings, and my best perfume –

Q: Did they bring their wives?

JVB: Oh, no.

Q: So you were the only woman.

JVB: And so – but then, when it came time for the speech, they cleared the board, very British in those days – old-school (inaudible) always is based on the English system of the high table, remember that? So they cleared the board, and brought out the cart of port, to pass the port around, exactly the way –

Q: Cigars too?

JVB: – exactly the way it was done in the English universities, you know – and still is, I presume. And the way the Navy did it, too – you know, pass the port from one to the other and pour. So, at that point when I rose, and I said, “Gentlemen, I retire with the port.” Well, fortunately, my colleagues did laugh – not the older ones, but the younger ones – and next to me, Professor [Cherengrad?] said “Don’t be silly, Janice, sit down.”

Q: Did you feel that you really wanted to, or did you feel that that was their expectations –

JVB: No, I felt – I was amused at the whole occasion. Wouldn’t you be kind of amused? I enjoyed it.

Q: I guess so.

JVB: But, you always feel, as the only woman present, sort of odd. You really do. So, then – so I sat down. The next day, on campus, Professor Benedict, who was a dear retired professor who had been in charge of the dinner – I think it was he, or someone else. Different professors spoke about him, and I enjoyed it thoroughly, because the jokes were so academic, you know. They have a delicious wit, but it's very intellectual. And old-school ties – so gracious and so courtly, is the word, but [00:30:00] I enjoy it. These were all very courtly gentlemen, with whom you always felt much more feminine. Would you understand? Maybe that kind of thing doesn't make you feel more feminine, but it does – it has a tendency to make women –

Q: It depends, I guess.

JVB: Well, you probably – see, you immediately get a belligerent look on your face when I even mention it, because you don't see the world in those terms, but it does mean –

Q: It would bother me that they wanted to put me in a position where I felt more feminine.

JVB: Yes, I can see that. That's nowadays. I didn't, I kind of enjoyed it. I've always enjoyed – I think it's part of my theater things, that I rise to it – my theater training. So much of drama is that.

Q: Well, I feel – I think it depends on what you define by feminine, but I enjoy feeling that way, I think, in certain situations, but I wouldn't feel that that was –

JVB: I find that [00:31:00] I tend – I'm not being flirtatious, don't misunderstand me – that's a different interpretation of it.

Q: Oh, I didn't mean that.

JVB: No. I find that I would want – in the occasion, I did the right thing. I dressed in a dress with a full skirt – would you understand? I didn't go in a tweed suit, and I certainly wouldn't wear slacks. Would you –

Q: Oh, no, no, I understand that.

JVB: You understand what I'm talking about. And I would put my hair up, and I'd curl it, and I'd wear earrings. You begin to see?

Q: Yeah, it's just I guess what I feel is that they were trying to reinforce the differences between –

JVB: Oh, yes, oh, I'm sure, because –

Q: – and in that way, that would bother me, because in that kind of situation, I wouldn't want the fact of my being a woman to interfere with the perception of me as a –

JVB: You can't divorce your sex, though. [00:32:00]

Q: No, but I wouldn't want that to be the overriding factor –

JVB: Oh, I don't think it is. This is a social situation, so it's a different thing. But, academically, it would be different, but this is a social situation. It was [their?] time (inaudible), and when I rose, and said, "I retire the port," it did please the older ones, and the others were amused –

Q: That you were properly deferential? [laughter]

JVB: The others, I knew, would be amused. So the next –

- End of Track 4 -

Track 5

JVB: [00:00:00] I presume it was because he was a friend of my husband, first of all. But it was sort of odd that he wouldn't even—

Q: (overlapping conversation; inaudible)?

JVB: Yes, but I do think that he also – it's sort of odd, when I was right at university, that he would call the journal and (inaudible), but amused me, because my husband reassured him. And, but he did say at the time – not then, I guess it was a little bit later – and he wanted to know, and this amused me greatly, Barnaby and a group of his male friends in town – business people and academicians both – used to go away for a male weekend, believe it or not, in which they consulted and discussed the affairs of the university, and Providence, [00:01:00] and the world in general, for a weekend.

Q: Kind of like the University Club community?

JVB: No, they went down in the country, to a place they (inaudible), and they used to – and so shortly after we were married – I'm skipping around now, just because I happened to think of it in connection with Barnaby Keeney – and at the time, he stopped me on the campus one day and asked me if I minded if my husband went away for a weekend, which struck me as rather odd – which is the reverse – and I just laughed, and I said no. But he might, at that point – I'm not sure exactly which way it was, but he also called my husband and said, "Do you think your wife will let you go away for a weekend?" [laughter] My husband assured him, yes, she would. But, what amused me about this weekend was it was purely male. They didn't include any of the – well, the better minds of the women in this – this was [00:02:00] a purely male weekend, it was just for men. And they were rather sort of distinguished people in the community, you know – shall we say the better minds of the university, of the community – the community of Brown, and community of Rhode Island.

Q: Were there a lot of Brown professors included?

JVB: There were some, but mostly I would say probably distinguished business people in the community, or foremost citizens in the community – in which they mulled over the conditions of the world, and the state of Rhode Island, and so on, in the course of a weekend. But I was amused, it was purely male. So I thought I'd throw that in along by the wayside.

Q: The last time when we talked, you mentioned the fact that when you were talking about being greeted or not greeted by the rest of the Brown community and the department, you said at the first meeting, you were really conscious of the [00:03:00] fact that you were the only woman, and you hadn't realized that before, and you went and asked if they would prefer that you not attend this meeting. What was your thinking in doing that?

JVB: Because I felt – I had a feeling in the room – well, it was a very odd feeling. You see, they weren't used to my presence. And, I did think – since I was a humble assistant in the department, and these were rather – most, a good many full professors, and distinguished men, that perhaps they would prefer my not being there. I don't know, I was sort of feeling that they were rather astounded.

Q: But didn't you think you had a right to be there?

JVB: Yes, but I suppose because it was a – well, it was a [00:04:00] – I, somehow or other, I got the feeling that I was putting a constraint upon them, and all of them – remember what Professor Hastings added, though, when I went to him, he said, “No, that I had improved the moral tone [laughter] of the occasion,” which is rather amazing (inaudible) –

Q: But there was no thought that maybe by asking you would make them realize –

JVB: No.

Q: I mean, you were really doing it out of a sense of –



JVB: Oh, I was just being courteous, really trying to be polite, and so on. I also had a feeling at the time, very definitely, that to get along – and Brown was very much of a male preserve in those days, I think you’ve heard this from other people, and Pembroke was a thing apart. Remember, it was the first year that I arrived that Sock and Buskin was joined – I think I mentioned that. And before that, the girls [00:05:00] had played the men’s parts, rather than invite men across the street to play the male roles. It seemed a little odd, because they were right here on the campus. It seems very odd to girls today. It’s rather ridiculous, to see women dressed up as aping men, when obviously there are men right on the campus. Who’d be glad to play any part – overjoyed. Well, at any rate, what I wanted to talk about today was the fact that I thought, when I married, having been at Brown for a number of years, that being known as Janice Vanderwater, I wanted – and I was in the catalog as Janice Vanderwater, and I was known and had been known for some years, and I had been directing plays. And since, as a director, my name was in the program as Janice Vanderwater, I was known [00:06:00] also in the community of Providence as Janice Vanderwater, and as someone connected with Sock and Buskin, and I didn’t want to change my name. I wanted to keep it. I think I also – probably something about losing your identity when you take your husband’s name, and I’d had it for so many years, I wanted to hang on to it. So my husband was thoroughly agreeable, so he said it didn’t matter to him. And, I then went to the university, and they said of course I could keep it – it made no difference to them. And as a matter of fact –

Q: You felt you had to ask (inaudible)?

JVB: Well, yes, in those days, yes. Well, I haven’t gone into the fact that my driver’s license, at that point – I understand that recently, that has changed, but in the state of Rhode Island, you had to change your driver’s license to your husband’s name, up until very recently that that has changed. I think it’s changed, I don’t know whether [00:07:00] – some people said they’re still having difficulty, or did. But, the big thing about it was that I then was – we were faced with the thing of a joint income tax, so, my husband said, yes, we file jointly, and so I went to the university, and told them, and (inaudible) withholding my income tax, that I was to be a joint – eventually file as a joint tax. And they said if I did this, that I had to be – I could not use my own name, that I had to use my husband’s name. That was the first thing for the income. The next was

that the Blue Cross demanded that I have a family rate, instead of an individual rate, since I was married, and to my great surprise, because my husband also had Blue Cross, my rate was higher than his, and when [00:08:00] I questioned this –

Q: Why, because you were –

JVB: – they said it was because I could get pregnant. And I thought that was vastly unfair. I saw no reason why I supposed – I wonder if they, now – I suppose what they do is they only have one rate per family, but he had his own Blue Cross, and I expected to go on with mine, and I saw no reason why we couldn't have each two individual rates. But what really astonished me is mine suddenly shot up, and my husband laughed about it, because it was a considerable difference every month taken out of my pay, because I could have gotten pregnant.

Q: You had no intention at the time –

JVB: I had no intention at the time of having children, no. As a matter of fact, [laughter] it rather amazed me. And since I had a family rate, they also demanded that it be in my husband's name, since I was married. So, the Blue Cross [00:09:00] wanted me in my husband's name.

Q: Legally – this was after your marriage, or before?

JVB: This was after.

Q: But at the time of your marriage, when you signed the marriage certificate, you signed with your maiden name?

JVB: Oh, yes. Oh, you do.

Q: But, I mean, and it was clear that you were going to keep this.

JVB: Well, when you sign it – well, the marriage certificate is always in your own maiden name, anyway. As a matter of fact, the first thing that was really funny was our honeymoon – we forgot my passport was in my own name, and my husband had made all the reservations in the hotel, and also in the plane, and everywhere, [laughter] in a joint name – it was most amusing, because I'm sure nobody – we've always joked about it, we thought nobody in the hotel where we had to present our passports would ever believe that we were married, but that didn't matter. It amused us. And, [00:10:00] it hadn't occurred to us up until that point that I had to do anything about changing my passport. It just never entered my head. Well, in any event, after – so the first thing was the income tax – I had to go in with a married name to set up a joint return. I'm sure that's not the case anymore. I don't know –

Q: I don't think so.

JVB: The next was the Blue Cross, and then, they came to me and said my bank account had to be changed, since my salary was credited to the Rhode Island Hospital Trust, automatically, which is done at Brown. As you know, every month, faculty salaries – most faculty salaries – are credited with the bank, and it had to go into the federal government for income tax deductions, and Blue Cross deductions. They also said it had [00:11:00] to be – I had to change my bank account to my married name. So then, I decided on all of this, I wanted to be known then, if I had to, as Janice Vanderwater Brown. Well, the next, final thing that really put the finishing touch – because the university had said that I could go ahead and be known with the university as Vanderwater in the catalog, and the next thing that happened was that my name, Janice Vanderwater Brown, would not fit in the window of the envelope that they sent out.

Q: Oh, no. It would be easier to switch it to Janice Brown.

JVB: And so Janice Brown would fit – and now, I presume, with computers, it would never go at all – they would just chop it off. You know how the computer reaches a certain point? And so, they said that Janice Vanderwater Brown was too long, I couldn't be known as Janice Vanderwater Brown. So I threw up my hands, and became [00:12:00] Janice V. Brown.

Q: You didn't challenge this at any point?

JVB: Well, first I thought – well, yes, every step of the way, but I got nowhere, and I finally just gave up the fight. It was too complicated. But when I finally went to the bank finally to change my account on it, first, I thought, well, just Janice Brown. To my horror, I discovered there was another Janice Brown at the bank, and I couldn't be known as Janice Brown, because they already had a Janice Brown.

Q: Did you think of switching banks, or threatening to switch banks? [laughter]

JVB: No, because they were the creditor. Another bank, I don't think – the university always dealt with Rhode Island Hospital Trust.

Q: You couldn't have your bank account in another bank?

JVB: I don't know, but I doubt that they would credit – maybe they would now, because with computers it might be possible, but in those days, very definitely, if you wanted a credit it went through the bank where the university did their accounting. [00:13:00] Remember, in those days, there were no computers in the beginning. In my lifetime, they were a new invention, particularly as far as banking is concerned. But, I just gave up the struggle, so I became known as Janice Brown. I continued in the program [laughter] of the – I would be Janice Vanderwater Brown when I directed a play.

Q: Did your colleagues refer to you as Professor Brown, or Professor Vanderwater?

JVB: Brown. And the students did – what's amusing is that the ones around the theater who called me Vandie, which they had given me the name – I said that – continued to call me Vandie, although I was now Mrs. Brown.

Q: Was there a reaction on the part of your female students at all when you got married, or on the part of any of the students? [00:14:00]

JVB: Oh, I'd say they were rather delighted. The students were quite excited about it all – the ones in Sock and Buskin a group of them banded together and gave me a wedding handkerchief – a lovely old lace wedding handkerchief, which was about all they could afford, and wrapped it up – it looked like they were quite excited.

Q: Did the girls at the time talk to you about whether or not you were going to continue with – I mean, did they see that as an option, or not an option for you?

JVB: No, they accepted it. Nobody seemed to really question, not that I can think – the only people who did were the chairman of the department, and – oh, and I must admit that in Players – there was an organization in town, a dramatic – little theater group, called Players, I don't know if you've ever heard of it, here on the East Side, and in those days, Sally Barker, who had been a head of the Komians, which used to be the women's dramatic society– [00:15:00]

Q: Is that where Parker Playhouse is nowadays?

JVB: Yes. Her husband gave it for her, since she was in the theater when he married her. She gave up a career in the theater to marry him, so what he did was he established a little playhouse here in town, a little theater group, so she could continue with the theater after she was married. And, she had given up, you see, her career for her husband. Well, Sally had worked with Komians, which was the dramatic society at Pembroke, before they were joined with Sock and Buskin. And as a matter of fact, she was one of the prime, shall we say, people, who thought that Komians – was a good idea to have it separate from Brown, which was silly, but because girls [00:16:00] had many more roles to play, and they did much more – and as a matter of fact, Dean Morriss objected at the time – she thought the girls would never stand a chance backstage, in doing a lot of the technical work. She assumed that the men would take over, and the girls would never be able to be sawing wood, or (inaudible) –

Q: Did they?

JVB: Of course!

Q: The men did take over?

JVB: No, no, no. The girls. No, the girls were glad to work side by side with the men, which was (inaudible).

Q: But did they have as great a role putting on the plays with Sock and Buskin, as they were when they were separate?

JVB: Well, of course, there aren't as many women's roles in the theater as there are – you see, this is where you have (inaudible). You think of the Shakespearean production that's done every year, and so many times, there are only one or two or three good roles for women in a Shakespearean play. And there would be a big cast of men, with very few women. [00:17:00] So it is true that there aren't as many opportunities for women in the theater.

Q: In the production end of it, did you feel it would restrict –

JVB: No. They talk a lot about how heavy the scenery is, and the very heavy things, if there were men around they did, which is typical today too in the Army, I understand – they say the women can't carry quite the same number of heavy loads as men do, and they can't – you know, they're beginning to find out in the Army, now – they're beginning to change – in the beginning, they were sure that women could do everything that men could do in the Army, and they're finding it's not true. I think you yourself, if you were out somewhere, and there was a heavy job to be done, and there was a man standing right there, you would try to do it, but you would like the assistance (inaudible).

Q: But if there were a woman there, I'd like [00:18:00] her assistance too, I think. I mean, I would just –

JVB: Anybody, yes.

Q: I mean, if it were too heavy for a single person, I would –

JVB: No, but I think – I don't fight myself, as a person, the fact that I'm not able – I suppose maybe it's because I'm handicapped, and can't, anyway, but I turn to men for heavier work, when it came, for example, to lifting lumber around the theater, or pulling heavy rope – we had women stage managers, they were some of the best, but I will admit when it came to – and women ran the curtains, because they were counter-weighted anyway. You know, timing – dropping a curtain on a scene, and so on.

Q: When the women at Pembroke had their own company, were there men there to do the heavy lifting? [00:19:00] So they did have to do all that on their own, or together –

JVB: This is what Dean Morriss meant. She thought that they would be out of a good many positions, and there wouldn't be as many opportunities, and as a matter of fact, her successor, Nancy Duke Lewis, thought much the same thing. And the next thing – well, we're a little bit off the subject of my marriage, but obviously, I never felt in any way – my husband liked my work, and as a matter of fact, one day, to my great surprise, we had – I was preparing – I was reading over, preparing notes – I presume you, do you teach? Well, then you know – I always, no matter how many times I've taught something, I redo my notes before any time I ever went in, and I was doing a session on Shaw, Bernard Shaw, we were on Shaw [00:20:00] for a couple – one, two sessions. And, he happens to be a favorite playwright of my husband, and he saw that I was reading Shaw, re-reading, and going over my notes and working on it, and we started to discuss Shaw. And I never thought much about it. The next day, walking across the campus, the class 187 met in Manning, Lower Manning below the chapel. Is it still used as a classroom?

Q: Yes.

JVB: It's a nice room – a little big, but it was a large section, about 100 – overall, (inaudible). And so, I came through the gates, and lo and behold, I bumped, coming through the (inaudible) gate, was my husband. And I [00:21:00] said to him, "What on earth are you doing there?" It was

one o'clock Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and I said, "Are you coming for lunch with Barnaby?" (inaudible) And he said, "No." And I said, "Why are you here?" And he said, "I'm coming to hear you!" And I said, "Oh, no you're not. I don't want you there." And I really was thrown – it's funny – the students, other people observing me – you asked me about being observed by Barnaby, or my colleagues, when I was teaching the Army. That didn't throw me the way my husband coming to hear me absolutely threw me.

Q: Did he come in and listen?

JVB: And so he came right along, and he said, "Yes," and I said, "Why didn't you tell me? I would have told you not to come." I said, "You want to listen to me?" And he said, "Yes I do." We hadn't been married very long, you see. So, as we [00:22:00] approached the steps of Manning, one of the students – it was a lovely day – was standing out on the steps. The group – [the men?] – I had in the class at the time about four couples who were married. It was very odd – husbands and wives taking it together, undergraduates. Isn't that interesting? And very, very interesting situation –

Q: I don't know of any undergraduates who are married now.

JVB: Well, these were, and they were close, (inaudible) been because it was right after the war, it must have been near the – I'm not sure.

Q: So it was an older group of undergraduates?

JVB: It was in the '50s. No, because (inaudible) marriage, in those days – this was '58, '59, but they were couples, and it was very interesting, because the young people used to talk to each other after class [and before too?], because they felt a difference in themselves [00:23:00] from the rest of the group. What interested me was their grades –

Q: Better?



JVB: – and their papers. And, the women, in three cases, did better. And in the fourth case, the man did better, which was different. You know, comparing their papers and their exams, because of course they studied together – you knew that, that would happen, and they obviously discussed the plays together, and they enjoyed very much taking the course together. I asked (inaudible).

Q: In general, did they do better than the unmarried undergraduates, or the younger –

JVB: No, I remember they were (inaudible) the students. I don't remember, if there was an A, B+, maybe a C or B+, B-, you know, that kind of thing. There might have been a few A's. I don't remember. It was too long ago. [laughter] One thing you don't remember are [00:24:00] the grades of the students. That phase – don't you agree?

Q: Yes.

JVB: You remember the very, very, very outstanding ones, for being outstandingly bad or outstandingly good, but the ones that I would say were just averagely good, it's a little hard to remember. But at any rate, they were standing on the steps, and up came my husband, and they looked at him curiously, and they started to talk to me, and I (inaudible) introduced him, (inaudible) the circumstances, but my husband said that he was coming to class. And they said, "Oh, how wonderful, because we're married," you see. And they wanted it immediately, and I said, "Oh, no, I don't want him to come," "Oh, yes you do," and they said, "We'll take care of him," and they just escorted him into the room. So he sat in the rear, and grinned at me the whole time, which, I could've kill him. And, when I came to points about Shaw – Shaw, [00:25:00] (inaudible) knew it – because he did a lot of reviewing, music reviews, particularly –

Q: No, I didn't.

JVB: No, so I mentioned it (inaudible) along the way, and grinned at him, and he grinned back at me, and he finally, when I said something about it, he took exception, which I could have killed him, because it was –

Q: During your lecture?

JVB: Yeah, he did say something. He came in on something, because I made some jibe about Shaw's journalism, or he did, I've forgotten. But, at any rate, this amused the group, because every head turned, you see.

Q: Did you ask him if you could come and do a piece of editorial work in the journal?

JVB: No, but that wasn't the only other time. I had a class on public speaking, and we had a discussion, he and I, one night at dinner, and we really had a family argument, really. [00:26:00] Well, a heated one, but not a disagreement. You understand, I mean, it was no fight, no family fight, but an intellectual disagreement, which we enjoyed always with each other, [we just?] wouldn't mind playing one another. And, he disagreed with me on several points. I had said that to be an effective public speaker, one, it had to have – in my view, you had to appeal to the best in people, and not the worst, otherwise – for emotional appeals – otherwise, and I said – and he disagreed completely, because he had had the experience of going to a Nuremberg rally – he, well, (inaudible) old people, and before World War II, he (inaudible). Before World War II – he graduated from the school of journalism – [00:27:00] I've [forgotten?], this is his degree, now, so it's a little hard for me to remember. It must have been '39. He was over, anyway, in Germany – '38, 1938 – I guess, the year before. Anyway, he was there during the Crystal Night, when they went out in Berlin, and he was also – I know, it was the year, whatever the year was of the Berlin Olympics.

Q: '36.

JVB: That's when it was. So it wasn't – he won a fellowship, and he was abroad for the year, for a whole year, marvelously traveling – Pulitzer fellowship, but he had been to a Nuremberg rally and heard Hitler, and he said he feels the absolute worst, and he'd also been present when they went out from there and smashed all the windows of the shops, and [00:28:00] dragged the Jews in the streets, and beat them up. And he said this was effective public speaking. And I said, no, I

didn't regard it as that. He said yes it was, because it got a result. It may not be the result we wanted, but –

Q: It was the result Hitler wanted.

JVB: Yes, it certainly, he said, was effective, in what he intended it to do – which you can argue about, but which infuriated me, because (inaudible) – emotionally, I simply refused to admit that this was what I would consider good public speaking. And he said I was confusing morality with effectiveness in public speaking. So, finally, he said, “You can't mislead your class this way, because I've known so many public speakers,” he said he'd heard in the past, that were wrong, and he kept enumerating people like Huey Long, Bill Bowen, and – [00:29:00] do you know these names at all? These are –

Q: Huey Long I know. I don't know –

JVB: Ah, well, Bill Bowen was – he came from Mississippi, which gives you a clue – a racist, out and out, horrible racist, who absolutely is – I told him, I couldn't imagine (inaudible) being effective, or considered a good speaker. And yet, he was elected, (inaudible) or, I better put in past tense, since he's dead. His point was that these people were good speakers. I just refused to admit that they can be. [laughter] I believed, you know, that (inaudible). And so, well, he said that he would – anyway, the upshot of it was that he announced that he wanted to come to my class, and I said all right. He said, “Only, unfortunately, I can't go except on a Saturday,” and [00:30:00] my class met Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Have I told you this before?

Q: Yeah, I'm not sure it was on the tape, though.

JVB: And he decided that he would come on a Saturday morning. And so he spoke – I don't think I told you about the time that he spoke about –

Q: No, no. Did it bother you that he felt that he could just (inaudible) and speak – I mean, take over your class?

JVB: No, he asked permission of it, but the students enjoyed it immensely, because of course – and I realized that as far as their opportunity is concerned, here was a man who had heard FDR personally – Franklin Delano Roosevelt – because he had been a correspondent in Washington when he was president, and had gone to press conferences at the White House. In those days, they gathered around the president’s desk. Just think how that changed [00:31:00] along the way. And, they used to leave their hats and coats on the table, in the hall of the White House.

- End of Track 5 -

#### Track 6

JVB: [00:00:00] –he heard Eisenhower, he heard him give the speech after World War II when he addressed, in the Guildhall, with the Mayor of London, and he said it was one of the finest speeches, which is –

Q: Eisenhower?

JVB: Yes, absolutely. The British loved him, and the world (inaudible) Eisenhower.

Q: He probably knew [Morrison?] because of his role –

JVB: Yes, but also because this particular speech was very effective, and very well received.

Q: Did he hear [Kidd?].

JVB: Oh, yes, but not – let’s see. No, but I meant he’d actually been present for Churchill, Roosevelt, Hitler, you see, and could mention [00:01:00] others too, and this fascinated the class, because these are all people whom they had only heard on records, or in recordings, and [stuff like that?], and he actually could talk about them, and how effective they were – when you were actually in the room, that interested the group. They were. So I was glad to have him – once, for

an hour. But the other times, he just was – no, my husband was the kind of person, though, shall we say, he was used to taking charge, I suppose, because he was an editor. He'd been in a position of responsibility, and so – and I think reporters, anyway, have a way of getting what they want, [laughter] particularly (inaudible) they're following something that they want to [00:02:00] do.

Q: That's true, I have a sister who's a reporter. [laughter]

JVB: You know that. They worm their way into places – and so he wanted to be present when I was speaking – he would be there. He'd heard me speak in other contexts, in fact, because I was invited to speak in the community, and so those I didn't mind (inaudible), general public, he was there, so I was (inaudible).

Q: Did it occur to you at all to object (inaudible) speak to your class?

JVB: Oh, sure. But he persuaded me. I (inaudible) mind. I was so determined that I was right, and lo and behold, he put his case so well that I think they agreed with him. They came up, though, later, but they understood my point. (inaudible) You do, don't you?

Q: Yeah, we just had that discussion, in fact, in my section, [laughter] a week ago Friday. [00:03:00] I had both my sections discuss (inaudible), and there was one very articulate person, a senior, Poli. Sci., who was talking about how effective the speech that Reagan gave the night before.

JVB: It was.

Q: Yeah, it got 86% approval rating, you know, and [80?] seniors had a – and I just said, “And what do you mean ‘effective?’” [laughter] Because it is – you know, it was the same point.

JVB: Exactly, exactly. And I am not so sure – if my husband ever threw it up to me that mine was feminine reasoning, (inaudible) I never –

Q: Well, I can see – I understand that because of the way he speaks –

JVB: He said I was being emotional.

Q: Well, I can understand that people say Reagan is effective, because he obviously does get results. I don't understand that, though, why that is effective. I guess I don't understand –

JVB: Yes, but undoubtedly – well, you have to realize, also, that Kennedy – President Kennedy, not Ted [00:04:00] Kennedy – made a – do you remember the terrible interview that he had on TV?

Q: Wasn't it with Roger Wood, out on the Cape?

JVB: Right. Oh, it was awful. It was a dreadful interview, and it just killed his chances, if you remember.

Q: That was in '80, the summer.

JVB: It just killed him, politically. People just said, "This man is ineffective." You see the difference?

Q: I do, but I don't understand why what I took to be, in Reagan's speech, that (inaudible), was so maudlin, it was just [emotional?], kind of – and it just, it was an insult to people's intelligence –

JVB: Oh yes, oh yes.

Q: And I can't understand why that's effective, why people succumb to that.

JVB: Yes, but you see, there again, you're an intellectual. Most people aren't.

Q: But that was just – he was like – do you remember that character, what was his name, on *The Life of Brian*, that old TV show?

JVB: He was an undertaker.

Q: That's what he was, you know, for me.

JVB: [laughter] I know – sort of unctuous.

Q: Yeah, just slimy – slimy and appealing to all the worst – just what your husband had (inaudible) – appealing to all the worst things [in?] people, kind of morbid and –

JVB: But he got a result.

Q: But I don't understand how that works.

JVB: Well, it's interesting that you just had the experience, because this was my disagreement with my husband. I can see which side you'd have been on. Well, any rate, I found – now, if you want any comments about – you want this only to be about connections at Brown, and what it was to be a woman. Well, the thing that really bothered me most, I think – did I go into my appointment as the director of the theater? [00:06:00]

Q: A little bit – the fact that you were an acting, you were given the acting directorship for a year, and then –

JVB: A year, because the dean – I think we were at the end of the tape when they came about. I resented that bitterly, because the dean of men just said that men would not work for a woman, and first of all, his primary – I think – concern, was the fact that the alumni of Brown would object, and therefore might not give as much money to the university if a woman was in charge of the theater. I do know –

Q: It also meant that he considered the only alums the male alums of Brown, not the female alums of Pembroke.

JVB: Exactly, but also that men would not work for a woman, and I had male colleagues. There were no women, in (inaudible). And he just simply (inaudible) – however, that [00:07:00] was not true. Barnaby Keeney then became president the next year, when I was an acting director, and I got (inaudible), I mean, at the end of the year. There was absolutely no reason –

Q: Was there any fuss then?

JVB: No. I just had the year as acting head. Everybody then was quite used to my doing it, so I was in – I was doing the work. I had been doing the work, the semester after Ben Brown died. I mean, I was handling it all right. [laughter] It was before I did the whole year as acting head, yes.

Q: Did you have a sense in theater, or in your classes, as a professor, that you were acting as a role model for the girls in your courses? [00:08:00]

JVB: Well, I'll tell you, an interesting thing happened to me just last – not this past Sunday, a week ago Sunday. One of my former students came to see me, who's now in her fifties, and as she kissed me – she had lunch with me here, and when she left, she said, "I want you to know –"

Q: Have you kept in touch with her all the time?

JVB: She writes me, oh, maybe once in a while. So – she did when her children went to Brown. And, she said, as she kissed me goodbye, "I'd like you to know that there's been only two great influences in my life." And, I expected her to say her family, and I was rather astounded when she said, "My brother, and you. And I owe you a lot."

Q: Did she say in what sense?



JVB: I imagine what [00:09:00] you were just talking about, (inaudible).

Q: Did she go into a career?

JVB: No, because she married well, you see, and didn't continue, because her husband wouldn't let her.

Q: What career would she –

JVB: And yet she was a straight-A student. She was 5'8", and she was the first woman commencement speaker at Brown University, and I trained her for it. We worked on her speech.

Q: Do you remember what –

JVB: I don't remember what year it was, but you can look it up, because that's certainly known. Up to that point, commencement speakers had always been speakers who speak in – have you been to a Brown commencement?

Q: No.

JVB: Well, they're held in the Meeting House for undergraduates, and up to that point, the two speakers had always been Brown men.

Q: Yet the Pembroke women graduated [00:10:00] with them and got a Brown degree?

JVB: But they never spoke in the Meeting House. She was the first one to speak in the Meeting House.

Q: How was she chosen?

JVB: The time had come, you see. This was after the war, and the time had come, and – the way they always picked commencement speakers.

Q: Did you have any input?

JVB: Yes. For a long time – yes, because I had my – because of my theater background, I had been training commencement speakers, and what used to drive me absolutely wild was when they were, shall we say, forgive me, scientists, and couldn't write. You know, they were (inaudible), and though they might have been brilliant, as far as that they could use formulae, or [laughter] – it was certainly not effective as far as speaking was concerned, but [00:11:00] – and people always assumed that I could work wonders with them, no matter whether they were good or bad. So, but this particular time, finally, they sent a woman, and I said to her, very (inaudible), “You are the first. You have got to work on this speech twice as hard as any man. I hate to put it to you that way, but it's true, because if you make a flop of it, they're going to say it's because you're a woman.” So we really worked on it. She wrote it, and rewrote it, and rewrote it, and we rehearsed it, and re-rehearsed it, and re-rehearsed it, to make sure – and I think she did a wonderful job.

Q: Did she make any points about being –

JVB: No.

Q: – a woman at Brown, or –

JVB: No, I don't even remember what it was about, now.

Q: – or a woman's place?

JVB: The topic, I have nothing to do with. I mean, I can make suggestions, but that's up to her. It wouldn't be fair if I put words [00:12:00] in her mouth.

Q: I just wondered if you remember what she –

JVB: You wouldn't approve of that, of my putting words in her mouth.

Q: No, I just wondered whether you remember whether she said anything specifically about women.

JVB: No. No. But that's the first. But you might look it up, because heavens, she felt a responsibility. She was terribly nervous.

Q: Was a lot made of the fact that a woman was going to speak?

JVB: By the time it happened, it was accepted. I tell you, when I first walked down to commencement, though, I could see alumni, because there were so few women in the faculty, you see – when I walked down the hill to commencement – I thought Brown commencements were wonderful. I'd seen other places, and I'd been in them, but I had never seen anything like a Brown commencement, and in those days, it was the sanitation band – I don't know who plays now – played as you marched down the hill, and I just enjoyed the fact [00:13:00] that the garbage collectors – I always think of the sanitation department were playing the Brown commencement. I loved the sheriff and his sword and his top hat, and –

Q: The sheriff?

JVB: Yes, for keeping order.

Q: The Providence sheriff?

JVB: Yes. Didn't you know that?

Q: No. [laughter] I don't know what that's –

JVB: You have never been to a Brown commencement?

Q: No.

JVB: Oh, well I'm sure, he sits there in his top hat and his sword, he always had. It's for keeping order among the disorderly undergraduates, with a sword, ribbon across his chest – a sword, and a top hat.

Q: [laughter] I've never seen that.

JVB: And he sits in a high chair in the church – it's for keeping order. Undergraduates are – since the early days, pretty unruly – all universities have been, through the centuries, if you know anything about the history of universities. They still are.

Q: Not (inaudible), though. [laughter]

JVB: Well, you know, [00:14:00] they still are, in many places, you realize. But, goodness, think of places in the world with (inaudible) students rebelling – Philippine islands, at the moment. So – but I loved the Brown commencement, but the thing that amused me was, as I walked, I could see some startled looks on the faces of some of the alumni – the old alumni, that a woman was there. And I don't think I might have realized that I was enjoying the procession so much, if one of my colleagues hadn't called my attention to it, that I was startled. Now, (inaudible).

Q: Did your women students come to you for advice in terms of career, or –

JVB: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. [00:15:00] It's amazing, I was used probably because I had been a house mother, too, but then male undergraduates came to me, too, many times with personal problems, because personal problems have a way, as you know, of interfering with your work, and when you are criticizing someone, as a teacher, who is not (inaudible) they've not done (inaudible) doing what he should – was expected that he should, not living up to expectations, and capable

of much more – that always bothers me, (inaudible) our students. And, many times, if you start probing as to why, you come upon personal problems. There are many. [00:16:00]

Q: Did you find a difference between the kinds of problems that men students and women students (inaudible)?

JVB: Yes, I think the women confided more in me, [and the men?] probably turned to other (inaudible) rather than to a woman. But, I did – I counseled an awful lot of men, but you know, I suppose because of the theater, too – see, when you're working intimately in the theater, (inaudible)

Q: It feels like it (inaudible) took on more of a personal (inaudible)

JVB: Right, and you're dealing with emotions, which of course, bring out emotional problems. Sometimes that (inaudible). I had one undergraduate that I was trying to – we were doing a group play, *Electra* – do you know it?

Q: No. [00:17:00]

JVB: Well, *Electra* gets her brother to murder their mother, because she is, they think, (inaudible) she's [murdered their father?] (inaudible), and they get together, and it's taken, in modern terms, the *Electra* complex, that, as I was explaining, the girl playing *Electra*, that she was probably in love with her brother, *Orestes*. Well, it's called, in modern terms, just as – you've heard of –

Q: The Oedipus complex.

JVB: The Oedipus complex, so the *Electra* complex is a woman who has a fixation with (inaudible), and [00:18:00] she works with him – she gets him to do the – and, I was explaining, and talking to her about this, and little did I realize that the girl had a tremendous emotional problem. She was having trouble playing it. Well, came the day of the performance, she played it

beautifully. And, when she left the theater – [I?] knew she'd been (inaudible), never thought anything about it – we found out that she'd – where she'd been going every night to a women's infirmary, they had in those days – Pembroke didn't have an infirmary, men had their own – [laughter] you could go to the hospital with men and women, but not at Brown. [laughter]

Q: Did they have all women doctors?

JVB: Yes, they had women doctors too, but not all women, because there [wasn't many?] doctors. Well, she went to the [00:19:00] infirmary, women's infirmary, and picked up her sleeping tablets – they were doling them out to her. The nurse turned to answer the phone, and she had a great big bottle of sleeping pills, and she left it on the desk, and she turned to the phone, turned away from the student, who grabbed the entire bottle of sleeping tablets (inaudible), and ran out of the infirmary. Well, they looked for her everywhere. This was after a performance – the performance she played well. Everybody else in the cast was partying, on Saturday night. She is out with her sleeping tablets. We didn't know it at that point. We knew it the next day, because she (inaudible) – she was not around. She went back to the dorms, and she went into the john, and got herself into a cubicle, locked the door, and swallowed the sleeping tablets. Somebody [00:20:00] came in, and the first thing – she wasn't discovered right away. They hunted all over this campus – so the nurse knew the bottle was gone, and she was gone. So they had the campus police out searching for her – it was kind of big. Where would she have gone? So, she (inaudible) back to the dorms, they searched the dorms, they looked everywhere for her, and finally – they knew what she'd taken, of course, which is a help if they ever could find her. But, the word went out, and so everybody was aware of it, to look for her. Well, one girl went to the john, and noticed on the floor she had fallen, you see, in the cubicle, and her feet were on the floor. She couldn't open the door. So, but she called for help, and they got her out to the hospital. She'd tried to commit suicide. She was in love with her own brother. It's the kind of thing as a teacher that you don't ever realize, and [00:21:00] she would never (inaudible). She landed in (inaudible).

Q: Did she come back to school?

JVB: She tried to, and then (inaudible). She – I don't know whether she graduated [or not?] – she was so sick (inaudible), and then later, she married, later, and finally did commit suicide, after she had a baby – postpartum (inaudible). But, obviously, it was a deep-seated thing. But, at that particular time, it was brought on by the play she was in.

Q: Did she ever come and talk to you about it after?

JVB: She (inaudible). I never dealt with it when it reached that point. That's what I think (inaudible).

Q: Oh, yeah, I just wonder if she ever [tried to?] explain [00:22:00] to you –

JVB: I had another student who started behaving very ugly at rehearsal. I shall never forget it. She was rehearsing in [drawing room?] comedy, which I'd asked the girls if they would wear long – put on long petticoats over their jeans and dresses just so (inaudible) dressing just so they [could move?] in a skirt. Pants are very different from the way – and you're probably wear of it – women move differently. I know, I wear them myself. And, for a period piece – and that they wear heels, which [is difficult?], and not wear sneakers, or moccasins on stage, that they actually wear heels, or at least shoes with a slight heel so that they could walk (inaudible), and not sprawl on the furniture, not [00:23:00] lounge back, since it was the eighteenth century in the play. And, it was a play in which fans were used, and handkerchiefs, and, you know, (inaudible) and teacups – typical [drawing room?], [comedy?] (inaudible). And, [laughter] the girl began to behave very oddly. First of all, she would take off her shoes and go in her bare feet, and I would call her attention to the fact that we never in a drawing room (inaudible) go in bare feet, that this would certainly (inaudible) sitting in a satin sofa, as I explained to her, and [laughter] we're pouring tea. It was a little out of place, and I said, “(inaudible) your bare feet and your (inaudible), it doesn't work.” So, and she couldn't remember her lines, she couldn't (inaudible) memorization [00:24:00] had begun, and she was constantly interrupting, and running off stage, and behaving very weirdly. So I went to the psychiatrist at Brown, and I said, (inaudible), and she (inaudible), because they always think (inaudible) report (inaudible), she started going into my background, and why I thought she – because –

Q: It's not their problem, it's yours. [laughter]

JVB: Yes, in other words, it was I – was this all something that I was bringing up, or was it because of my way of handling this (inaudible). Well, I said, would she please see the girl? She did, and finally the girl came back to me and she said – I then had to get her to go to the psychiatrist, so I call her and I said, would she [00:25:00] do so. “Can't you help instead?” This is when [I?] was a teacher, and all I said back was, “This calls for someone who knows more about it than I do – [I'm not?] qualified, I have no training, I'm willing to be your friend, I will help you in any way I can as a friend, as a teacher, but this is out of my (inaudible). You must have someone.” And I said, “And furthermore, since I have been working with you, (inaudible). I can't be subjective about your problems. You should go to someone who's thoroughly objective.”

Q: Did she go?

JVB: And she went. Well, and the next thing happened – to my horror, she was back in rehearsal. So I went – I wanted to replace her.

Q: Oh, you didn't want her to be in the play.

JVB: The cast came to me and said they couldn't play with her. So I went back to the psychiatrist and I said, [00:26:00] “She wants to be in the play.” The psychiatrist says, “Yes, and she ought to.” I quarreled with that, I said, “Well, she's not (inaudible).” And she said, “Oh, yes, this means so much to her. She doesn't want it taken away from her.” I said, “well, I understand that.” But, I had to think of the rest of the cast, and I said it wasn't fair to them to have to work with her. She said (inaudible) theatrical positions were often used – I knew this – in therapy.

Q: Like role-playing, you mean?



JVB: They have often used it, for example with children. I knew of a place where psychiatrists, if a child had problems at home, they'd give them a dollhouse to play with, and have them play with dolls – you've heard of this, haven't you? Where one is the mother, and one is the father, and one's the baby, and one's the baby sister, and so on, and they learn by watching the child play. And they also – they take [00:27:00] part in skits, and things. It's supposed to be a release, I guess, for emotions. Well, I'm not a psychiatrist, but I certainly didn't want this child in this production, and furthermore, I didn't see how she could run through a performance in public. She was sick! So, I said to her – I said, “Well, you tell her that she shouldn't be in this play.” “No,” she said, “I won't. If anybody's to tell her, you have to tell her.” And I said to her, “And what would happen?” She said, “Well, she will either – probably,” she said, “She's suicidal. She might commit suicide if you tell her, ‘You can't be (inaudible),’” and I just looked at her – I'd been through one case of suicide –

Q: This was afterward?

JVB: And so, I thought, “Not again, and I don't know what do I do?” So I went home and thought about it, and I thought, “All right,” and I called the girl in, and I [told her?], “You can't go on, it isn't fair to the others.” I have to think of the other students. I have to think of [00:28:00] the audience, and I have to think about (inaudible) long run, it would be good for her, too, as a student. And I didn't think playing it was going to help her. The psychiatrist might have, but I didn't think so. So, I called her in, and I told her that I thought she had a great many problems, and she said, well yes, she did. (inaudible) she did. And I said, I thought that at the moment, she seemed so tired, and she said, “Yes.” And I said, “I think you're doing too much, and I think this particular time is a bad time for you to play in a play. Another time might be better. This is not the time, until you get your own problems straightened out – I think that's more important. (inaudible)” And she kissed me on both cheeks, and threw her arms around me –

Q: She was relieved.

JVB: – and said, “Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you.” [00:29:00] So I went back to the psychiatrist very proudly, and she deflated me immediately by saying, “Well, she could have

taken it either way – she could have gone right out and killed herself, or you, or she could have been glad to be out of it.” She said, (inaudible).

Q: I guess psychiatry is an inexact science. [laughter]

JVB: I shouldn’t get off on this, this is just a side (inaudible).

Q: No, it’s interesting. I was wondering, though, if you’ve seen students change, especially the women students, like their notions about – when you were talking about the woman who came back a couple weeks ago (inaudible), she gave up her career.

JVB: After she married. Oh, what bothers me a little bit is that the undergraduates, at the present, I only see them in [the pool?]. And, in talking to them, I am rather absolutely startled at what they think they can accomplish, because I believe that youth should be [00:30:00] ambitious. I do. And, a lot of it fades fast, as you know, as you get older – I don’t know how old you are – begins to diminish –

Q: (inaudible) hasn’t faded [yet?], but [laughter] –

JVB: No, but you begin to run down in energy a little bit as time goes on. But, they seem to want, one, career; two, marriage; three, children; and all together. And I don’t think that the ones I’ve talked to are realistic about it. They don’t face the problems that are entailed until later. I mean, in the stage they’re in, now they – now, I admit that this can be a goal, but, first of all, you’ve got to recognize, as a working woman who’s married – I didn’t have children, [00:31:00] but, that you are faced with a time problem. As I said to you at one point – I don’t know whether you recorded it or not, but I often wish that I’d had a [wife?], because my husband had an important job, (inaudible). No matter what you do, you get around, someone has to take charge of the household, who lives (inaudible). You eat. The laundry has to be done. The place has to be cleaned, right?

Q: Did you feel that you were responsible for all of this? It never was an issue that was questioned, that possibly you could share them?

JVB: No, (inaudible) [00:32:00] things I demanded in my marriage. First of all, I demanded that (inaudible) that I have help with the cooking. My husband said, "Hire somebody." I was fortunate that I could.

Q: Really? He didn't think (inaudible) he'd like to –

JVB: No way. No way. No way. And so I –

- End of Track 6 -

Track 7

JVB: [00:00:00] –happened was that my husband said he would pay for – it was a matter of finances, of course, always is – that he would pay for the things in the household, I would pay for my own clothes, I would pay for my own car, and I would pay for anyone I hired to clean the place, I would pay for anybody who cooked any meals.

Q: Really, why? Why wasn't that a joint responsibility?

JVB: Well, he would pay the rent and the telephone – we were dividing things up. He had a much larger salary than mine, of course, so that he paid for all of the other expenses.

Q: So you kept your incomes separate?

JVB: So we had entirely – oh [00:01:00] I do not recommend that people have joint checking accounts. I [laughter] – have your own, and let him have his. I think the first place, that's dreadful, because you never know who's paid off what, and what the balance is.

Q: He was still saying, though, that it was your responsibility, whether you paid –

JVB: The household became mine. However –

Q: Was this an issue? I mean, was it a problem early on, that it became ironed out this way, or it was just set up this way?

JVB: No, it was set up this way – he assumed that – it's what his mother had always done.

Q: Did he live with his mother until he was [married?]?

JVB: No. No. Well, he married right out of school, to his first wife.

Q: Oh, I see, he'd been married before.

JVB: But, no. Well, I was [00:02:00] fortunate, so Monday through Friday, somebody did meals, but weekends, planning the meals – somebody has to plan it, even when there are two of you –

Q: Oh, that was still your –

JVB: No, but even if there are two of you, somebody's got to plan it. Somebody has to order the food, somebody has to buy the food.

Q: But it's different – you share, and say one week I'll do it, or we'll do it together, then if you –

JVB: Oh, heavens, I don't think it works that way. I don't think you can do it that way. I don't see how. This is one of the things I disagree with people on. I think you have to learn which one can do it best, and let them do it. Someone has to – what we did was we sent the laundry out, his laundry particularly. [laughter] He'd done that, because he hadn't been married for a while, you see, anyway, so that, he just continued. Even his socks went out – I didn't care if they [00:03:00] came back and ironed [it?], (inaudible) but I got called down – they put starch, too much, in his

shirts, and that kind of thing, because that was it. But I'd thoroughly learned on this, that at the beginning, I thought this was awful, because obviously, I hadn't been expected – I don't think anybody does when they're getting married – I hadn't realized that what it really comes down to – for example, if you're having a party, suppose you invite people (inaudible), who plans the menu, do you think?

Q: Traditionally, the women.

JVB: Always. And even nowadays.

Q: But if a bachelor has a party –

JVB: I tell you what he – well –

Q: I mean, there's no reason that a man in a marriage cannot help plan that kind of thing.

JVB: They don't know – they make suggestions, but they leave it up to [00:04:00] you. Who calls and invites the people? The woman. Who makes sure the house is clean and the beds are made when the people come? The woman. Who makes sure that all the food is there? My husband would provide the liquor [laughter] – the wine, the liquor, and so on, and served it – never would dream of letting me pour wine.

Q: So you're saying he was a real traditional –

JVB: And I think you'll find that if you are a couple, the man will reach for the wine bottle. I bet he will, and I'll bet he'll have ideas about what you should get, too, as far as liquor is concerned.

Q: But you're saying that you don't think it can change (inaudible)?

JVB: Oh, I think it has in some [00:05:00] instances, but I don't think that – that's what I meant by wanting a wife, because what I did and the way I planned my week was I had people, and he

always thought the responsibility of whoever was hired for our household was the woman's – interviewing them – the staff of the house, in his eyes, was something his mother had always done, and that I would do.

Q: You didn't question that at all?

JVB: No, no, I suppose because my mother had always been managing it.

Q: But when you got married, did you assume that this was going to entail a lot more in terms of your time, and –

JVB: Oh, I knew it would.

Q: – that you (inaudible) those kinds of [responsibilities?].

JVB: I knew it would, yes. The only thing was was planning it, so I insisted on certain things. One, that I have a dishwasher, in our house in the country, which was an extravagance, I admit, because (inaudible) –

Q: Did you have two different residences?

JVB: Yes. One [00:06:00] – we still have a house in South County. It's the same dishwasher, too – it no longer works. But, there again, I paid for the dishwasher, because I demanded a dishwasher, and I paid for it. And, I hired the people who worked for us, and most of them, he liked.

Q: If he hadn't, would you have changed them?

JVB: No. (inaudible) But he liked them. We (inaudible) animals, that was one of the (inaudible), however, I did hear (inaudible) the shirts had the wrong amount of starch, and so on, and I did hear if – well, if supplies weren't there, in the refrigerator, when he wanted them. [00:07:00]

Q: Did you feel – I mean, didn't that chafe at all?

JVB: No, I realized – I wanted to eat myself. If I did, I had to [laughter] do it.

Q: No, but I mean the fact that you had a full-time job as well, a career job, and it was –

JVB: Well, I didn't summers, which was a – so down in the summers, I cooked in the summers. I rebelled on doing it seven days a week, so we went out, and we did in town. He agreed that when I was working, that I simply couldn't cook dinner and wash dishes. In the first place, I couldn't because rehearsals started at 7:30, and I couldn't get dinner and have dinner and get out.

Q: But did it seem to you that he was putting his work as being more important, that why should you, with a full-time job, which really might have entailed more in terms of hours (inaudible) –

JVB: I really believe he thought his job was more important, and undoubtedly it was, as far as the talent [00:08:00] was concerned.

Q: Did you think it was?

JVB: Yes, I think so – he had a job with more responsibility.

Q: You really think so?

JVB: Well, he was editor of the newspaper – morning, evenings –

Q: Look at how many students you had responsibility for.

JVB: He certainly was paid much more than I was. [laughter]

Q: You think that made you think it was a more important job?

JVB: No, but I really – in the eyes of the community, for exactly – he was invited back to speak at convocations at Brown, and I certainly – I was invited to speak at convocation at Pembroke, I had [been at?] honors convocation, but he was – I don't know, he was treated in the community as being more important than I. I suppose because he was more better known. [00:09:00] See, the editor is. And, he was on so many darn committees for (inaudible). No, we were very compatible, I must admit. But, as far as the household was concerned, it became a woman's province, and I don't see how you're going to get around it, that somebody has to take charge. And, it is – it seems – and most of my married friends now, of my age, who also work, would agree with me, that their husbands do not take charge – just what I meant by, the women at Brown were in for a lot of disillusionment.

Q: What about your students, though? Did you notice, like, in terms of whether they chose marriage over career, career over marriage, or [00:10:00] did they begin to see the two were not mutually exclusive, through your time at Brown – did you see it change?

JVB: No. I think all that's been added to it is that there's still – there always was – I was, after all, I came here in 1940, and the war years meant a great deal to us. After, you see – so, the women had so much to do here in the war, they were always doing (inaudible), and women were in jobs that they hadn't been in before, because of the war. So, and the changes at Brown came about because of the war too. [I don't know what?] other people have told you, but it was really World War II that [did that?], that affected the change at Brown. [00:11:00] It had begun, they would say, before, because Komians, you see, had been disbanded, and the undergraduate society had become one, but the real difference in classes, of segregated classes, hadn't broken down until after (inaudible) – change became [with the war?]. I would say the big change in the campus (inaudible) was World War II, and then the large influx of veterans, who were all male, came back after the war, but were older men who lived off-campus, who laughed at fraternities, because they were ridiculous. These men had been in combat, life-and-death situations, and they thought that fraternity hazings was one of the most absurd things, and ridiculous and childish [00:12:00] things they could imagine, they'd guffaw about it. (inaudible) child [games?]. And so, they [begot?] a different view, but those men, of course, again, looked at women from a different



point of view. They lived in a very masculine world, in the Army, and this meant that women, if anything, were on pedestals, in their attitude towards them. I think men that have been in combat

–

Q: That's what they fought for? [laughter]

JVB: No, no, I didn't mean it that way, I meant that they were in a – they still are, women are not supposed to be in combat because (inaudible) – and most of them, in the Army, don't want women in combat next to them, because they don't think, frankly, they can rely on them [00:13:00] in a tight situation. Whether they (inaudible), I think some of the women get plenty bloodthirsty, frankly, knowing what's happened in history, [about?] women – there are plenty of murders committed by women. But, I still think that when they came back, they had an attitude towards women, but that doesn't mean that the women's attitude was the same. I don't think it was. And obviously, things began to change. Now, at the moment, there are many things accepted, but there are still things (inaudible) – the ERA hasn't passed yet. Think of how the attitude (inaudible) is still – I mean, throughout the country, against it. And, [00:14:00] I don't, myself – the women I have known who started off, younger women, with everything was to be shared I've found that it does not work. They're all grinning at themselves, now, saying "It doesn't work, does it?"

Q: These are students that you know?

JVB: No, they're older women. Well, they were students. And, it just doesn't work. That's all I can tell you, it just didn't – now, what it means is that the woman has to give more time to things than men do, as a result. They get to (inaudible) – well, I will give you an example. One (inaudible) summertime, so I suppose it doesn't really get to count as far as the job was concerned, but in the summers, we lived down in the country, and I didn't teach summers – that's the plumbing, it's an old building. [00:15:00] My husband commuted back and forth, still – the journal – commuted to South County, went by train. And he left at 7:20 in the morning, and he got back late, about 6:30, [quarter of seven?] like that. [I know?] that he was tired, after (inaudible) day, and I had (inaudible), done some reading, or – but, I used to do some work

summers, but it was right around the house. So, I did meals and things. But what got me was that even with the dishwasher, there were dishes left over, you know, that don't fit in the dishwasher, the damn pots and pans. [laughter] And I found that in the evening, my husband would go in to the living room, and sit down with – [00:16:00] he read the paper on the train, so it was usually a book, and sit down, and I would be in the kitchen cleaning up after I prepared the meal, and somehow this seemed vastly unfair, even though I hadn't worked (inaudible). So, the first time it happened after we were married, I went out and I dangled a dishtowel right in front of him, and I said, "If I wanted a Continental husband, I would have married one. You're an American – I married an American. Get in the kitchen!" [laughter]

Q: Did he do it?

JVB: Sure.

Q: Did this become routine, or was it a one-shot deal?

JVB: No, no, (inaudible) sometimes. And, I will admit, he made Sunday morning breakfast after I persuaded him, and I did not, except in the summer, provide breakfast. We ate some breakfast separately. I [00:17:00] got rid of that one right away quick. I said we could have a – over the weekend, I had Saturday classes, usually, so I was busy on Saturday. But Sunday mornings – and, I'll be honest, I didn't want to get up early [laughter] on Sunday morning. And so usually, I could persuade him – usually, by telling him the scrambled eggs were marvelous.

Q: But it was a continual thing you had to tell him – he didn't assume that it was going to be –

JVB: No, no, no, (inaudible) no. Oh, he didn't always, no. Sometimes we did (inaudible), but that was (inaudible). But then we went out on Saturday night – I insisted. We never stayed in. (inaudible) and Sunday night, [we'd buy dinner?], [00:18:00] because rehearsals were usually on Sunday afternoon, (inaudible) so I could (inaudible), and [Saturday?]. You see, that was another thing – five nights a week, I was out and I was rehearsing. I had an interesting marriage. It's a good thing he was a busy man too.

Q: Do you think if you had married earlier, it would have been a question of whether you would give up your –

JVB: (inaudible).

Q: Would you have ever considered it?

JVB: No. No, I think what you have to do, though, is find – what I never was faced with, and that I don't know, except the one time that a man wanted me to live on the GI bill (inaudible).

Q: One in the theater?

JVB: And I wouldn't do it, because I had gone to (inaudible) –

Q: I don't think you told us (inaudible) that.

JVB: Well, I can just [tell you?] that [00:19:00] I had a good job, and I didn't want to give it up to go [live?] at (inaudible) [university?], while he got his PhD. And, I'm glad that I didn't. But it meant never having him, which I had to face. But, when my husband and I – we both had jobs that we liked in Providence when we married each other, and didn't want to go somewhere else, and neither one of us – at one point, I was a little concerned, my husband did apply for a newspaper in New York. He was being considered (inaudible) New Yorker, (inaudible) and he was one of the top people [who could?] do so. And, I think he was relieved when it, [00:20:00] obviously, it was not going to be, you know.

Q: Do you know what you would have done?

JVB: But, I was a little concerned as to whether – but I couldn't have stood in the way, because it would have been a tremendous promotion, from Providence to a bigger city.

Q: Would you have gone along, or would you have commuted?

JVB: And I thought I'd face that when it came up. I knew of – I've known a lot of marriages have broken (inaudible). Do you?

Q: No.

JVB: Oh, I've known lots of them. It's a very hard thing. I know one that's just broken, very recently – a man – she put him through for his PhD at Yale, as a matter of fact, and then he turned around, and worked in Boston while she went to Boston University law school. [00:21:00] And then she got a job – he got a job at Haverford College, teaching Greek and Latin, and she was a lawyer. Well, obviously, his salary wasn't commensurate with hers. She got a job as a lawyer right away, and I guess she was in Boston – well, I don't know. I've forgotten where it was exactly, but then she went to Washington, DC, and the marriage survived that, but they were a great distance apart, but he lost his job at Haverford, (inaudible) while someone was on sabbatical, and he's had trouble finding another, you know, academic (inaudible). [Surprisingly?], where he is now, he's back in Boston. She was in Pennsylvania, and had a marvelous job in Philadelphia. Her marriage (inaudible), split. She's [00:22:00] really reached the breaking point. They were just never together. They were always in separate towns.

Q: So they made a choice not to (inaudible)?

JVB: Neither one gave up. They didn't in the beginning, while they were both studying, and then when – but it's careers that did it. And, I know of another case, [same kind of thing?]. It's very hard, when one or the other is offered a much better job. Obviously –

Q: If you were offered a job somewhere else, and it seemed better to you to take it, after you married –

JVB: No, I liked what I was doing. This (inaudible), and even for advancement – I was head of the theater here, and it wasn't a separate department thing, but it would have been – it was

[00:23:00] eventually, and the head would have been the head of the department. I had my own little bailiwick, and I liked – would you (inaudible) – and I was doing what I liked, so no. And my husband loved his job. We both [agreed?], we both always loved our jobs. We were fortunate, I guess, because a lot of people don't. And my husband, I think, liked Providence better than I did, but I (inaudible) was in love with the place.

Q: Where was he from?

JVB: He was here most of his life, (inaudible). His grandfather had been an editor of the paper, and his father.

Q: Oh, really? That's unusual – usually it's the publishers that [laughter] –

JVB: Well, (overlapping conversation; inaudible)

Q: – carry it [out?], not the editors.

JVB: No, (inaudible) the publishers [00:24:00] – but, I don't know, and, we never had to really face, except that one time, and that wasn't really faced, because it didn't work out. What would have happened? I know he would never have let my job stand in his way.

Q: He would have expected you to come?

JVB: I think – and I think it's worse for women when they have children, because the children are in schools, you have a house, perhaps, children like their friends, and they don't want to be uprooted from their school and their friends, you have an established place in the community by then, and [00:25:00] – it's a little tough for a woman. Say I moved the whole family. Just try facing it with your kids. Tears, buckets of them, undoubtedly. New school? New friends? “I won't know anybody. I don't want to go to a class where I don't know anybody.” Have you ever heard – ever seen a child, do you know any children, or did you ever yourself have to do it, go to a strange school? You know the feeling?

Q: Yes. Yes. [laughter] But I've also seen friends have to do it with their children.

JVB: Yes. It's traumatic. Children (inaudible) – they really take it hard.

Q: Sometimes they adapt better once they get there, (inaudible). [laughter]

JVB: Oh, sure. Yes. Oh, because they can, but it's hard persuading them to. No, I've met – it's a little hard thing to do, [00:26:00] once you become established in the community, and I mean by that by being settled in a community, where you have ties to friends, and perhaps relatives nearby. And they're an important part of life, too. But, as far as – I think women have to face up to several things in their careers. One, if they're going to be married, they have the responsibility to the marriage; they have the responsibility to their – certainly – children; and –

Q: You think they have a greater responsibility to that relationship than the (inaudible) father?

JVB: No, the husband – no, no, I do not. But, I think, myself, that a good many marriages – and it's who they [00:27:00] are, will break up, on the very thing, which is that many times, one job or the other moves to another community. And I think this is something that people don't think and consider beforehand, because usually when they do get married, they are in the same community. They're starting out in it together. And, they haven't thought over what might happen [in the future?]. I think it is also why so many women are in minor positions, is because they start over in another community.

Q: That's interesting, yeah, I hadn't thought of that. (inaudible)

JVB: They have to give up jobs for the children, if they're child-rearing, or think they should for the first [00:28:00] year –

Q: Yeah. I never thought of the moving (inaudible) before.

JVB: And, many times, when – if a husband is offered a better job, they need the extra money, they have children, therefore, they better accept it for his future, and she goes in and starts over in whatever she’s doing in that community. Now, sometimes, it’s impossible for her to even do what she’d been doing before, or at the same level as what she’d been doing before.

Q: Yeah, I do know [instances where that happened?]. [laughter]

JVB: So, I think women have got to be realistic about marriage and career. They really have to want it, and they have to want to make their marriage work, when they go into it. Would you agree?

Q: I’m not sure. [00:29:00]

JVB: Well, I mean, you’ve got to make – you’ve got to get your priorities straight, don’t you?

Q: I think you have to know what your priorities are, but by the same token I think so does the man. And I guess I think that they should be in agreement, but I don’t think that necessarily means that his career should mean more than hers.

JVB: Masculine pride, I’ve discovered, is a very, very strange thing. Now, you’ll think that I’m a throwback to another century, but I do think it’s more easily hurt than feminine pride.

Q: In what way do you mean? I’m not sure.

JVB: Well, if the woman says – comes to the man, and says, “Look, I’ve been offered this [00:30:00] magnificent job at this tremendous salary – look what an advance!” And he says, “Oh, wonderful, we can certainly use the money,” and then, suddenly, you see a strange look come over his face, because obviously, his salary isn’t commensurate, I think you’ll discover he’ll feel much more deeply than the woman feels that if her husband makes more than she does.

Q: But don't you think that's open to change? It may not actually change, but I think that's conditioned by the culture.

JVB: I don't think it – I think it's pride.

Q: But that is conditioned by the way they're brought up. Because it's always been that way, it's assumed that they'll –

JVB: I think you'll discover there'll always be resentment, slight jealousy.

Q: (inaudible). [00:31:00]

JVB: Well, then, probably – and, again, I don't know about men on the other side, but we'd accept it without – in some way feeling a little inadequate. There is a rivalry there. There is. I'm saying, I don't think you can –

Q: Yeah, but I think the person who automatically puts themselves before the other is not (inaudible) necessarily good to be in a marriage relationship with, where you're supposed to always think – I mean, ideally, the ideal of marriage is supposed to – that you think of the other person first, or it being the same as yourself, and –

JVB: Yes, but – oh, but I don't know. He'd be happy that you got it, but he'd also be jealous.

Q: [laughter] [00:32:00] I guess it's the real versus the ideal really, you know.

JVB: I think – and I also do think it's – thank God I married a man who was in a totally different world than mine. I never had to worry about academic rivalry. I've always worried about people in the same department. I know I have friends, a couple – they work, or they did up to now – they're retired – they taught at Rhode Island Junior College together in the English department there, and I don't know how they managed to –



Track 8

JVB: [00:00:00] It works out differently in every single marriage that I've known, in some particulars, I think you'll agree. However, I do think – ahead of time, you're not being realistic if you don't sit down and think about some of these things ahead of time, but they're so trivial, nobody does. And I'm sure – or in the beginning they are, and then they begin to mount, emotionally, particularly when you're tired.

Q: Did you feel that?

JVB: I found – No, because I loved my husband, and I was fortunate that I also loved my job, and I knew he loved his, so – and we got along so well together, (inaudible), we were so compatible, which was extremely important. So we had a good marriage (inaudible), [00:01:00] and therefore – and, of course, he was intelligent, and I think that that helps a great deal, and (inaudible) understanding, I guess. However, there was no doubt about it that there was a division in our responsibilities towards what I would call the home, and that's where the real difficulty lies in marriage, is because when you're working hard, and it's looking very nice – as I said, if I'd had a wife who could have worried over many details such as entertaining – I found our social life, in that respect, sometimes, because I was so busy so many evenings, [a failure?]. [00:02:00] I had to do a lot of traveling [with him?].

Q: For his work?

JVB: Well, because he traveled in his work – I wanted to, and he went fascinating places, but, he also, because he was on so darn many committees, and had so many responsibilities and so many international – particularly the international press associations, there were a great many receiving lines, and dinner parties. Interestingly, I never – I enjoyed them, usually, except when I sat next to somebody like the Mayor of Helsinki, who didn't speak any English, [laughter] and things of that kind. I'll never forget him, because (inaudible) a word, I tried – I tried them in French, no,

knew German, and my German was very bad, so we didn't get along. Finnish is not a language that I [00:03:00] would ever dream of learning. So, anyway, but there were a lot of things like that that we did together that were a lot of fun, but which – they could be boring, too. Endless dinners, speeches being translated into several different languages, you see. But, I think where the rub comes is that when you're tired – and I say this, I suppose, because fatigue is a great part of MS, and I got sick, you see? – when you're tired, and things would seem trivial, such as collecting the laundry, getting the laundry done, [00:04:00] making sure there's enough food for breakfast – what I've learned to do is, I think any woman who tries to have a job, and a successful marriage, has to do a tremendous job of organization, and (inaudible), and I found what I did was – for example, like plan the menus for the week ahead of time – write them down, and then, I'd also have another list, which was the things that had to be ordered for breakfasts, and then we had special things when there were meals, when we entertained, or supplies that had to be on order. Oh, there were things like getting your furniture recovered, the draperies cleaned, [00:05:00] the curtains washed, the windows washed, and you'd be amazed how men can help on some of these things, but usually – for example, well, you would like to be consulted if you buy a new sofa, wouldn't you?

Q: Yes.

JVB: You wouldn't send him out and let him do it by himself, certainly. There are some things you have to do together. You wouldn't buy a house one or the other without (inaudible), but there are a great many things where, on the other hand, when you know his preferences of food, well you can certainly go ahead and (inaudible) [meal?]. But somebody has to make sure that the role – the household runs, is what I'm saying. Now, it's even added to – I mean, my children would make demands of me – you have to select schools for them, somebody has to take them to school, if they can't go by bus, somebody [00:06:00] has to be around to babysit – that's a terrible problem, babysitting.

Q: Well, what you're really saying is the woman has to (inaudible).

JVB: Very definitely, and if she doesn't think that – that's why I smile, and all my older friends do, at the young girls who think they can do everything, and then the first thing they begin to have is they begin to have nervous breakdowns, which they do, or, their marriages break up. I have two stepdaughters. One is just getting her third divorce, the other is getting – is living with a third man but hasn't divorced the second.

Q: You didn't mention (inaudible).

JVB: I just had lunch yesterday with the one who's getting the third divorce. She's so glad to get rid of her husband, and she talked about nothing but her career the whole time. [00:07:00] And she has two children. The other one has three.

Q: About how old are they?

JVB: Her children – the oldest one is 18, the next one is 16 going on 17. The girl is about to be will be 19 next year, and so they're older now, but she left them alone (inaudible) younger, for her career. [She did?].

Q: What does she do?

JVB: She works as – (inaudible) the production and planning for A.T. Cross, which is, believe it or not, a pencil – a great big –

Q: Very famous.

JVB: Very famous. And she's very successful at it. I predict she'll be on the board of directors [soon enough?]. I mean, she's really going up. She's been promoted (inaudible) – she got in when they needed women executives, and she's good at it, [00:08:00] and she does it well. Her sister, on the other hand, is a musician, completely unbusinesslike, has a (inaudible) of business strategy, [laughter] (inaudible), and she plays with her companion, and plays and sings and composes on the guitar. And, she travels around the world, she goes abroad all the time, and she

has three children. Her second husband got a little bit tired of staying home and taking care of her three children, when she was off singing with another man, and cooking their meals, and taking care of them, while she was off, and she and he had broken – they haven't bothered to get a divorce, but the reason their marriage failed was he absolutely protested – and loudly – [00:09:00] about, he said, taking care of the children, because they weren't his, anyway. They were by her first husband, who had also – their marriage had broken up because of [her career?]. And, well, she has a career where she travels, you see, and goes out, from one – she goes abroad. She goes to California. She loves it, she composes, and she's a fine musician – as a matter of fact, she can play a lot of instruments, but she really enjoys performing, because she's playing songs she's written, and (inaudible). And they introduce the ballads by an introduction in which they trace the history of (inaudible). It's extremely [00:10:00] popular, they've had a lot of time in France, and a lot of time in England, where they're interested in American ballads, and the relationship to theirs, and they also like her composing – she's a composer. But, in her case, what she did was that after the first marriage broke up, she married the second man, and just went off again, but he took care of the children that weren't his, and cooked their meals, and I can tell you right now, he resented every minute of it. I knew he'd rebel.

Q: Don't you think that's an extreme case? Most women don't travel to the other end of the world to pursue a career. I mean, they're usually (inaudible). [laughter]

JVB: Well, you see, this is it. This is what I said. In her case, she didn't care that much about the marriage, [obviously?] and he also said she was using him, [00:11:00] and he resented it. So of course he – the first one was because there, again, I think he wanted a wife that was always around, and she wanted a career. Both women, their careers have been (inaudible) marriage. That's what I meant. (inaudible) in a lot of cases, here too. And firsthand, I know, and I listened to it yesterday – so glad she said to get (inaudible). He was – there, again, because she traveled on her job, you know –

Q: This is the one working with the [pencils?] –

JVB: Right. She (inaudible) – she told me yesterday she was (inaudible) going to (inaudible) ocean in (inaudible) in Long Island [00:12:00] tomorrow, because they're doing a study there, and she is set up with one of these marketing –

Q: Research (inaudible)?

JVB: – and research place. One of the names – what are the famous ones? It's the most famous one. Jack (inaudible)? She's going – [she has to?] – to see how the study's working out, and then from there she goes to another place they're using it down in Atlanta – she goes off to Atlanta. She's never home with her children. And she wasn't before. She goes out to Salt Lake City, or (inaudible) – when your jobs get big, in the business world, that's the way [they are?]. You're more used to, (inaudible) in the university, where you usually are there – university (inaudible). Business jobs, particularly, can – the bigger they get, the more traveling.

Q: But I can also see the same situation if I were married to a man in business who did that [00:13:00] and (inaudible).

JVB: I also know cases where –

Q: – and I would think that would be very detrimental for (inaudible).

JVB: Ah, yes, but there again, if the women have children, they don't feel it as much, sometimes, staying home with them.

Q: Well, I would think you'd feel very [controlled?].

JVB: They've done it through the years.

Q: Yeah, but I don't think a lot of them [liked?] it. [laughter] I think that a lot of them then feel – that's why I think a lot of women feel once they reach middle age, and their children have left

home, that they have no lives. Their husbands are out working, and may have a job that takes them away. They're left without a life, and they're (inaudible).

JVB: I think, as far as academicians are concerned, in many ways, they are easier. They have—  
[00:14:00]

Q: I think that's an ideal situation for sharing responsibilities.

JVB: And also, until the break comes, the jobs are in different universities. Where you're fortunate is also if you still have a summer vacation – a lot of them don't, they teach summer sessions. But, that – it does help a lot, because at least you're together, provided you both work teaching (inaudible) session (inaudible), and you have Christmas vacations where usually you're attending meetings, though I can remember some times, but that meant something, because (inaudible). Sometimes I'd (inaudible) three or four days.

Q: Last time when we talked, we talked a little bit about [families?], we talked about the fact that [both your parents] were encouraging you [in your academic?] (inaudible) [00:15:00] Did you feel any pressure at all (inaudible)?

JVB: Oh, yes. My mother was horrified that I never married until [it was so late?]. She told me when I turned 30, she said, “You do realize that you're about to be 30, and that after that – your chances diminish up to the age of 30, and they disappear after the age of 30.” She said, “I don't like to see you alone.” And, it is true. And I think – I'm a great believer in marriage. I think it's normal, and the couples that just live together begin to find out [00:16:00] (inaudible) they want to either be married or break up. You've discovered that with your friends, I'm sure. I have with mine. I know it's happened to my daughters. Eventually, I think the one that's just [living with?] (inaudible) decide to do something about it, and I think having children is rather (inaudible). If I could, [but I couldn't?]. And, my mother definitely wanted me to be married. She didn't worry about it when I was younger.

Q: I was going to ask, did she – I mean, was that –

JVB: She really thought mostly about it that it was so lonely living alone as you got older. She's quite right. What she didn't – she hadn't, didn't realize [about?] those years was that most women, if they live long enough, are alone again, as [laughter] I am [00:17:00] now – my husband's dead, and that what you start out – even if you do marry, you're going to be left in your old age. This is what she was thinking of. But she did think children, too, were important.

Q: Did she try to dissuade you when you told her you wanted to go to graduate school –

JVB: Oh, no.

Q: – that you were making a career choice versus marriage?

JVB: No, no, no, no, no, no. Oh, heavens no. Oh, no, that was perfectly alright. No, as a matter of fact, she was the one – I think, I don't – had I recorded that or not – but when I was a junior in college, and I didn't know what to major in, really – at Barnard, you selected – I don't know if they still do – major in junior year – and I said to her, "I don't know what I want to do." I said, "There's a tremendous Depression, Great Depression on, and I have to think of the fact that I need a job. And, there are no jobs [00:18:00] in this world." And she said, "Train for what you would like. Don't be influenced by the conditions in the world. They will change. They won't stay the same." She was quite right. They aren't right now, as a matter of fact, they're in a state of flux. And she said, "Whatever you decide, pick something and work towards it – even if you can't get it right away, eventually, you may." She was quite right. It was excellent advice. So, and she said, "And what would you like to do?" And I said, "Well, it sounds silly to say – here I am about to be a junior in college, and I'd like to teach in the university." She said, "Well, then do it!" By golly, I didn't realize it, but here I was!

Q: Do you think she assumed though that if you did that, that you'd give it up if you were once married?

JVB: Oh no.

Q: She thought you could (inaudible) –

JVB: By that point, she did, yes. [00:19:00] She always regretted the fact that she [had to give hers up?] but in her day, women did. There was no other way. What she was – she was – did I tell you that she was one of the first women to bob her hair, one of the first women to chop off her skirts? She said that long hair was ridiculous – it was heavy, it was difficult – she could sit on hers. And she said it was difficult in the morning, it took her so long to brush it, and to put it up, it was so awful when she washed it, because it took so long to dry, and she said it was impractical, so when bobbed hair came in, she was one of the first who went out and bobbed her hair. Her mother promptly burst into tears – her crowning glory was gone. And my father – she said he looked at her and said, “Oh,” [00:20:00] [laughter] because he loved her [blonde hair?]. And, here she was with short, bobbed hair. The next thing was that she had always thought that long skirts were ridiculous – they swept the pavements, she (inaudible), and she said they used to catch in subway car trains, because they were long, and came way down, and – it was really trolley cars to begin with, but eventually, when subways came in, that they caught in subway cars, which they found out later and women went back to wearing (inaudible) [they found it a hazard?]. So, she said, but mainly she objected to the dirt, because they had petticoats in those days, (inaudible) and she said the petticoats would just be black at the bottom when you took them off. Which meant – look, she said, you can’t (inaudible) the dirt. So she chopped off her dresses – and this was the most shocking of all, because this was indecent. Bobbed hair was dreadful, because [00:21:00] only flappers did it, but in addition – and she chopped hers off to what they called the boot tops – they had laced shoes that came up and she chopped them off there, or in the summer, it meant they saw her ankles – and this (inaudible) indecently. She belonged to that generation. Her dresses, in the old days, with bones in here, that came up – that hold up the neck – bones were inserted around her neck, and it’s why the women always had that marvelous posture. It was also – they had bone completely around their waists, so that couldn’t collapse the way you’re collapsed in the chair at the moment. And they sat in furniture upright – well, they couldn’t – no matter what they did, they were supported by bones, and [stays?], and – corsets (inaudible). And she belonged in (inaudible). She wore (inaudible) when they wore the hair on top of the head with combs, and a hat on top of that [00:22:00] with hatpins, and she,



being a very beautiful woman, when she [commuted?] to a job, she got a job, and she was one of the – she took the first course that – well, she wasn't the first person to take it, but she took the only course that was taught at that time – it was a new thing, this shorthand, and she took Pitman shorthand, (inaudible) shorthand, and she learned to type, and she went out and got a job as a secretary, and she was very proud of it, because you see, most women didn't – or if they did, they did domestic work – sewing, taking care of children, housework, cooking. But, here she was in the business world.

Q: Was that a shock to her?

JVB: No, I think [she might be a little puzzled?] by it, [00:23:00] but the same woman was the one, for all this, that – I've always (inaudible), she belonged to the generation – she'd went, in New York, she rode in an open Victorian, believe it or not, with a parasol over her head, and she went to the races, which they had horse races down in a place called Brighton Beach – in Brooklyn. You know it?

Q: I've heard of it, yeah, but I (inaudible)

JVB: – and they had – the Whitneys had an estate there, and a stable, and there was a racetrack, and she rode to the races in an open Victoria, with a parasol with ruffles over her head, and a hat with flowers and things, sitting on top of her head – a great big. [laughter] There are pictures of her (inaudible). But she belonged to that. She was also said – she was most amazing [00:24:00] – she could hammer in nails straighter than any man, and she adored dealing with wires, and electricity, and I can remember one time, my father – we had a (inaudible) clock, if you've ever heard of (inaudible). And it struck, in half hours, and hours, and so on – a beautiful clock. My sister still has it – a beauty. And it stopped. And my father, knowing my mother, said, as he left the house – I was a child, I heard him say, “Please do not try to take the clock apart while I'm gone to the office – I will take it in to be repaired, but please, leave it alone.” The door – as soon as it shut, my mother said to me, “Quick, Janice, get some newspaper and spread it on the dining room table,” and she lifted the clock up. And I said, “Daddy told you not to do it,” like a good

little girl. [00:25:00] “He said not to do it.” She said, “Yes, I know he did,” but, she said, “I’ll have it all fixed by the time he comes back.”

Q: Did she?

JVB: And, she opened the clock, and she took the clock apart, and it went spung! And all the little parts went all over the dining room rug, which was a pattern, and we couldn’t find all the little parts of the clock – they were lying in the rug. I don’t know if you’ve ever tried to do that kind of thing. So we got down, the two of us, with our hands, and we felt for all the parts. We thought she collected them all, but she had to face up that she couldn’t fit them all back – first of all, because they weren’t all there. There was one missing. And, I don’t know how successful she would have been with it anyway, but she was determined that she would do it. So, she put as much back as she could, and my father came home, and he was furious. So, he took it in to (inaudible), and of course, they said, “There’s a part missing,” [00:26:00] which we never found. And it had to be replaced. But I always remember, because another time – she loved electricity. Wiring fascinated her. Lamps (inaudible) – she used to wire all the lamps (inaudible), change all the wiring in them, and never worried about fire, or hazards, or shocks. Right. So, one day, she was playing with the lamp – I call it playing, because she really did it because she loved it, and she said, “I wonder what will happen if I put this wire together with this one?” Of course, sss, they (inaudible) like that (inaudible). So, she said, “Oh, well that’s wrong. Well, I know that’s wrong. Well, I’ll try it the other way around.” And she said, “Go down and put a fuse in the fuse box.” So I went downstairs – in those days, you had a [00:27:00] fuse box – put a fuse in, came back up, and said, “Well, that was the last fuse.” She said, “That’s all right, it’ll work this time,” and she did it the second time, and every light went out, and it was getting on to dark, and I said, “Oh, it’s dark!” It was December, and it was dark, about 4:30 or so, getting on to five o’clock. She said, “Quick, before your father gets home – go to the store, buy some more fuses!” [laughter] She was terribly afraid he’d come home to a dark house, and explode again, about the fact that she had been unable to leave the wires alone. But that’s what I meant. She truly had the kind of mind that was experimental, and absolutely fearless [for?] things like that. (inaudible) [A lot of people?] would call it reckless, I guess. She never [00:28:00] – I always had a feeling my mother – first of all, my mother was an atheist, which is extraordinary, in that day and age, for

having been brought up with a mother who (inaudible). My father went to church every Sunday, and my mother was an atheist. My father became a deacon.

Q: Were you closer to your mother or your father?

JVB: I don't know. I adored my father, but I certainly loved my mother, and respected her tremendously. [Very?] strong, very, very – she had tremendous strength. Too bad, in a way, I thought, that she had never been able to (inaudible) to the day when women, now, could. She wouldn't have, and would have amounted to something, [because?] she was (inaudible) intelligent, read [00:29:00] – very well read, always read. She and my father, in their last years, (inaudible) were reading, read aloud – they would take turns reading a chapter a night, which people don't do. It's kind of a nice thing to share together. I remember the time they were reading *Don Quixote*. I remember, because it was late in life, and they were enjoying themselves. They loved it.

Q: How long did they live?

JVB: My father died at 68. My mother got to be 90, and she said that she –

Q: He died in 1968?

JVB: He was 68. My mother said, in her lifetime, she had seen – this is [00:30:00] interesting – she had seen – well, I'm not getting it in the right order, but she had seen gas light change to the first electric light. As a matter of fact, our house, she got when she got married, was fitted with gas jets as well as (inaudible). We had – my father liked inventions – of course, he was married to a woman who certainly loved every gadget that there was. And so they had an early telephone, which she thought was a very useful – the kind you crank on the wall, and most people didn't want to – you had to get up to the thing, which as a child, I remember it, because you had to be talking – me, I had to be lifted up, you see, if you talked into the piece, because it was fastened to the wall. She saw the first telephone – (inaudible) first electric light, first telephone, first car, first radio – my father got a little [00:31:00] radio, the first ones were crystal sets – the first TV, the

first movies – she went to the early ones, the first talking pictures – my father took me to (inaudible) – [because?] (inaudible), the first color pictures – moving pictures – the first color TV, as well as TV. Have I left out anything? First airplane.

Q: How about the first spaceship? Were they (inaudible)?

JVB: Well, wait, wait. So, the first airplane, the first jet plane – do you realize what she lived through? Trains – well, yes, they had been in, you see, in her day, but then you turned to electric trains, diesel trains, but jet planes were (inaudible), and my mother said finally, as she got on them at 89, she said, “I’m not going to die ‘til a man lands–”

- END -