

Transcript – Susan Graber Slusky '71

Narrator: Susan Graber Slusky

Interviewer:

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Track 1

Q: [00:00]—viewing Susan Graber Slusky, who graduated in 1971. Can you tell me a little about your family background, where you're from, and your family situation?

Susan Graber Slusky: A suburb of New York City, on Long Island. And went to a big high school there. And, that's—

Q: Did both your parents work?

SGS: My mother worked after I was in junior high, my mother worked. And, yeah, my father, of course, worked. And my mother was college-educated, my father was not. But it was always pretty much accepted that I was going to college.

Q: Did you have any (break in audio)—

SGS: Yes, I have a brother, an older brother.

Q: Who—did he go to college also?

SGS: He went to college as well, yes.

Q: How did you decide to come to Brown? [01:00]

SGS: Well, I wanted—I was interested in science, and I was also drawn to the idea of a women's college, and—but my impression was, and I have never really had a chance to find out if it was true or false, that if I wanted to go into the hard sciences (break in audio) I'm interested in chemistry, and eventually ended up in physics. I was also interested in computer science, and I wanted to do computers or physics or chemistry or that sort of thing. But I really had to go to a big university, and to a place where there were men. And so, I was very interested in the coordinate college business. And, in fact, I think all the schools that I considered were coordinate institutions at that time. There were a number of them. There was Radcliffe and Tufts, Jackson, and Brown. And [02:00] Rutgers/Douglass. I remember getting catalogs for all of those. And I guess I wanted to go to the best. And, at that time, that would certainly have been between Brown and Harvard, and (break in audio) early decision. (laughter) And I wanted to get it over with, so I—

Q: That's very understandable.

SGS: —applied early decision to Brown.

Q: What interested you about a women's college?

SGS: I guess I felt more secure with it. I wasn't such a secure kid. I don't know. I guess it—that's really what it had to do—with feeling somewhat frightened and immature and wanting the cuddling of a small women's college.

Q: Felt more secure in an atmosphere where there were more [03:00] women than more men, perhaps?

SGS: Well, I was never going to really be in an atmosphere with more women than men in a place like this.

Q: Oh, I see, because the classes were coed?

SGS: Well, the classes were all coed, and I was generally one of the only women in the classes. I wanted the smallness. I mean, Pembroke was a more—was intimate, although it was—it certainly was intimate compared to the high school I'd gone to, where we had 2,000, 2,500 kids. But I guess—could say, well, I could have (break in audio) in a small coed school like Swarthmore or something. I don't know, something appealed to me about the idea of a small women's college with the larger coed university around it.

Q: You had said that you felt like, in terms of the fields you [04:00] were interested in, it would be more to your advantage to go to a big university that was either coed or more—with more men. Is there anything—was your emphasis more on the big university or on the fact that there were a lot of males in those fields?

SGS: Both. I mean, it takes money—I mean, I guess I wouldn't have (break in audio) that way at the time, but it takes money to do physics research, and it takes money to do—to get big computers. And now everything is small computers. At the time, everything was big computers, and they were very expensive. And little colleges didn't have that kind of money. So, the top places to go are big. And, as far as having men around, well, not too many women have been interested in the sciences, and places like Wellesley and Vassar therefore haven't concentrated in building up departments in the sciences.

Q: Did you ever (break in audio) growing up or in high school—[05:00] was there any sort of conflict being a woman interested in the hard sciences (break in audio)

SGS: Not specifically. I mean, there was—there's always a conflict, I think, that all young women certainly faced at that time and probably now, too, of being smart, you know? It's always—there are lots of funny messages that are given to you by some women about, "The boys won't like you." And I suppose they especially didn't like it if I was smart in science, maybe. But I don't think it was all that much more intense than, the other girls who were [break in audio] in science?].

Q: Did your family put any pressure on you in terms of academic directions or studies?

SGS: Not intentionally I don't think, no. There was certainly pressure to do well, but not to go (break in audio) particularly, although [06:00] I lived at a time—I mean, I was in, I guess, first grade or something when Sputnik went up. And so, my whole grade school and high school (break in audio) at a time when people were really getting very, you know, hot on the idea of science and people should be scientists and that sort of thing.

Q: How about just about being female (break in audio) you got certain messages from your parents about what girls should do or shouldn't do?

SGS: Well, on the one hand, I don't think my parents envisioned that I would do what I'm doing, that I would be quite so committed to a career as I am. On the other hand, it was certainly explicitly said to me by my mother—the idea that I should never be in a position where I was staying with a man because of money, [07:00] because I couldn't make it on my own. And so, I guess that was a [strongness, to?] always have a skill, a saleable skill. Now, to my mother, that meant a teacher's license. And for many years, she was insistent that I should [get a license?] just in case this whole research thing didn't work out. And I never had any interest in teaching that kind of level, although I (break in audio) teaching at a college level, I think I'd enjoy that, but that's not what she meant when she said a teaching license. But anyway, but certainly there was always a strong message that I should be able [to support?] myself, that if I was in a bad situation with a man, I should be able to walk out on it and that I should be able to support any children I had.

Q: How about in school? Interested as you (break in audio) in chemistry and physics, which I think is uncommon for women, do you feel like there were any pressures or subtle pressures that you should steer in another [direction?]? [08:00]

SGS: Maybe I was just too dumb to see them. (laughter) I don't know. I suppose, (break in audio) certainly even—there was a professor here that I ended up liking very much who, when I first (break in audio) well, it wasn't a pressure to go someplace else, not—it wasn't that directed. But I guess there were people who had the attitude of “what are you doing here?”

Q: (break in audio) college?

SGS: At college. “Why are you in this course? Why are you in this major?” And they kind of didn’t know how to—what to make of it. But they figured it out. I mean, it wasn’t that strong (break in audio) to get out of—no, there wasn’t that kind of a message, although people were kind of doubtful at the idea that I was going to continue on. People always accepted me (break in audio)

Q: Did you always have a feeling like you would continue on?

SGS: No. No, I [think?] gradually—I didn’t understand that I would really need the Ph. D. [09:00] And, in fact, as a junior high school kid, I wanted to be an M.D., and I eventually changed my mind about that because it was going to take so long, and I’d be so old before I could actually practice medicine. And I decided to—you know, and I thought, well, maybe science would be better. And certainly, I was as old before I got, you know, my Ph. D. as I would have been when I got—M.D. But I was able to take it in stages with science. I knew I’d go to (break in audio) [graduate college?] and then I always thought I’d get a job. In fact, I did get a job, although even at that time, when I’d got the job, I knew it was temporary. I knew I was (break in audio) time I graduated from Brown, I knew that the job I was taking was really not going to be forever, that I couldn’t go on and do the kind of work I wanted to do without a Ph. D. But when I started, I don’t think I really knew that, I think? I thought I would? get a bachelor’s degree and go from there.

Q: Were there any people at Brown who were particularly [influential?] for you? [10:00]

SGS: No. There should have been, but I wasn’t—I didn’t make contact with the people I should’ve, [probably?] (inaudible)

Q: Is there anyone you have in mind now that you’re thinking of?

SGS: No, I just didn't—I tended to go to classes—I had a little contact with my professors afterward, but I really didn't make contact with (break in audio) I was very shy about that.

Q: How about any of the women deans, the deans at Pembroke?

SGS: I liked them, although I certainly engaged in making fun of them like everybody else did. But, no, they weren't very strong influences on me. Maybe the other women were. You know, the other women in my class. I mean, they come from diverse backgrounds. And, I mean, everybody was very smart and ambitious, That was an influence on me in the sense of, you know, teaching me about—some people who knew about (break in audio) [11:00] [know that?] and had parents who had done things that my parents had never done. And every (break in audio) to expect that we would all do very well in the world. And so that was an influence on me, to expect that I would.

Q: In terms of (break in audio)

SGS: Mm-hmm.

Q: So, there was an expectation that women would graduate from Pembroke and go on to work?

SGS: [Yeah?], I mean—or go onto more school. (laughter) (break in audio) [this whole?] work and family thing wasn't all that well developed. But I think most of us (break in audio) intentions of careers even at that time, even as (break in audio) when we started and in the middle,—maybe we didn't have strong ideas about children. I guess I really didn't (break in audio) very much at that time.

Q: How about marriage?

SGS: Yeah, marriage—yes, everybody was going to get married, I guess, eventually. Long periods of time living together was—it was kind of—part of the—a lot of people's scenarios, [12:00] as well. Yeah.

Q: You spoke about wanting to go to a women's school in terms of an atmosphere that you expected. Do you feel like [your expectations?] were met at Pembroke?

SGS: Yes, yes. I think I got what I wanted there. It was my last—I didn't realize it at the time, but it was really my last period of time when I had extended contact with other women. And that's very precious to me when I (break in audio) still hold onto my relationships with the women I knew there (break in audio)

Q: Did a lot of that happen in the dorms?

SGS: Yes.

Q: In terms of, like, people on your hall or roommates or (break in audio)

SGS: Yes (break in audio) my closest friends are people that I was on the same hall with or roommates.

Q: Do you have a best memory of your time (break in audio) of an event that really stands out for you as being important—

SGS: No

Q: —wonderful in some way?

SGS: No, just the general (break in audio) [When I think of] Brown and think of all the good things about it, I think of dorm life. Think of living in the dorms and being silly and (laughter) eating a lot and stuff like that.

Q: How about when you think of your classes? Is there anything in particular that stands out, or—impression that you hold with you?

SGS: I mean, I remember my classes. I mean, I can remember liking some of them and finding some of them very boring. I remember a class I had to take on a Saturday morning. They still had?—they, [well?], they had that and then they abolished it. I don't know if they've ever gone back to Saturday morning classes, but they had Saturday morning classes that I (break in audio) but I usually slept through. Everybody did. It was really—(laughter) it was a music class [that just?] put on music for the first half hour, so—[no, I don't?]

Q: People could straggle in. (laughs) [14:00]

SGS: [People were?] (break in audio) [useless?] (inaudible) Saturday morning classes. No, I don't have—strong memory of something (break in audio) happened anywhere.

Q: How about a worst memory?

SGS: A worst memory. I just—my memories of Brown are much more just sort of [water coolers?].

Q: Generalized?

SGS: I remember—I mean, I (break in audio) you know, that were very big happenings [of the—1970?]. The best and worst times probably had more to do with what was going on in my social life. That was very (break in audio) more than my academic life.

Q: Now, you had mentioned that you were (break in audio) there weren't as many women in some of your science courses. Was that—how was that for you? Was that difficult or strange in any way?

SGS: Well, there were, in the beginning—you know, in the early (break in audio) by the end there weren't. But by the end, I had already formed [15:00] friendships. It would have been nice—a lot of the guys lived in [Hope?] (break in audio) especially, like, sophomore and junior

years, that were in physics with me—would do problem sets as a group, and I was up here at Pembroke. And if I was really in a jam, I would (break in audio) down there and I could go down and (break in audio) together, but in general I did my problem sets by myself. (break in audio) there was another physics major. For a while, my roommate (break in audio) dabbling in physics, but she ended up in math in the end. So, I guess (break in audio) then I guess in sophomore year, we were together. But in junior year, we weren't anymore. She was really—she took one or two physics courses junior [year, but?] then I took two at a time junior year. So, [yeah?], she was, I think, the last to drop out. There were a bunch [16:00] (break in audio) year.

Q: Women who dropped out of the major?

SGS: Yeah, there were a bunch of women—actually, then I was a chemist, and there were lots of (break in audio) chemistry and the physics class that I took. But most of them were [gone by?] senior year—

Q: [Do you?] know why that was?

SGS: —by junior year and senior, also. Why? It was hard, I guess. Was hard. It's—maybe being a woman made it easier for them to say, "I can't do it." I don't think (break in audio) less smart than some of the men who stuck it out to the end and really weren't all that gifted. But (break in audio) society support in being scientists, and when it started getting hard, they just dropped out.

Q: Do you feel like when you were at Pembroke, you had a notion of an appropriate role as a woman? What women should do or shouldn't do?

SGS: [17:00] That reminds me of a (break in audio) there was a speech always at the beginning of every year that Dean [Perrell?] would [give?] and everybody—I don't know whether—they have this somewhere. It was called the ROLEWITS speech. This was an acronym for "the role of liberally-educated women in today's society," and I have no idea what those speeches ever said. I just remember that she (break in audio) that was basically—that was what it was at the beginning of the year (break in audio) I didn't have that strong a sense of—what was the

question? The role of what? You—basically, you were asking (break in audio) the speech about (inaudible)

Q: Gender roles, if there was—

SGS: Oh, gender roles.

Q: —appropriate roles for women in today's society (inaudible)

SGS: Sure, I mean, there are gender roles that are built in that I'm sure I take for granted in the sense of—[18:00] in a certain amount of nurturing and that sort of—I guess nurturing, either in nurturing towards your mate, nurturing toward children. Cleaning, maybe. I don't know. [I suppose] (break in audio) that I came—you know, have always had somewhere imprinted on me of what—of gender roles, yes.

Q: Do you feel like you're—those were partly brought across to you (break in audio) or maybe I could say what sorts of roles—role models do you think you got from your parents in terms of gender?

SGS: It's hard to say, because I've never had any other parents. I (break in audio) [mean?], my mother was the primary caretaker of me. And so, I guess that's an expectation (break in audio) in fact, in my life, [19:00] I wouldn't say that I am the primary caretaker in that same way, except (break in audio) (inaudible) [infants] because nursing sort of forced (break in audio) relationship. As far as—I guess I'd heard from other people that different (break in audio) making—sharing things in marriages, but certainly in my parents' (break in audio) I had a strong sense that both my parents were involved in making the decisions for the family. And (break in audio) I would have questioned, that was just the way things were. It's only now that I guess I can see that (break in audio) kinds of families.

Q: Did you feel that there was ever any sort of differential treatment with you and your brother or sort of differential goals that your parents had (break in audio)

SGS: Yeah, I guess I [20:00] kind of tagged on to the kinds of things they expected for my brother. They probably didn't (break in audio) expect things that they got from me for me, but they expected them all for my brother. And I was listening to the goals for my brother. I think my parents expected that I would be more like my mother, which was that she took an extended period of time when she was not employed outside the house. On the other hand, they expected excellence from both of us, and (break in audio) the other kinds of differences were probably in social kinds of things, you know, that they just didn't—they didn't worry about the girls my brother went out with like they worried about the boys I (break in audio) that sort of thing.

Q: Maybe we could get back to Pembroke (break in audio) can you talk a little bit about the relationships between students while you were going to school here? [21:00]

SGS: Well, there was a lot of resentment (break in audio) that was expressed—well, there were two—there were the two stereotypes of the Pembroke woman that you'd sort of hear. And I—since my husband went to Columbia, which had as a coordinate school, Barnard, I guess it was very similar to what I hear from him. Well, there was the idea that you could never get a date with a Pembroke woman, because they're all booked three weeks in advance and—now, this was accentuated, of course, because there were [two and—the rate?] (break in audio) to one. There were two and a half men at Brown for every woman at Pembroke. So, they'd say, well, you never can get a date with a Pembroke [woman?] because they're all booked up and da-da-da-da-da-da-da-da. So, that was the—they were (break in audio) the—that, of course, had the underlying supposition that you'd want to get a date with a Pembroke. But the other (break in audio) aspect that they'd say, [well?], you wouldn't want to get a date with a Pembroke. They all had their faces stepped on by a horse and—or they looked like they had their faces stepped on by a horse, and they're—[22:00] you know, you wouldn't—they're all grinds.

And certainly, Pembroke—my impression that Pembroke was more exclusive than Brown, that it was harder to get into Pembroke, that we were smarter (break in audio) more of us at Pembroke who had been first in our graduating classes than there were at Brown. And I think that was accentuated because a lot (break in audio) available to women at that time. Princeton was all men, Yale was all men, Amherst was all [men] (break in audio) there were a lot of

schools that you couldn't go to if you were a smart woman. And I think it tended to channel the smart women into a smaller (break in audio) and also they were only picking 300 in [a class?] (break in audio) thousand in a class at Brown, so they would tend to be more (break in audio) maybe the top 300 at Brown were the same as the top 300 at Pembroke. There was a lot of that kind of resentment back and forth. On the other—and on a class basis, I mean, if you (break in audio) man [23:00] about Pembroke, that that—those would be the stock answers. A, that you couldn't get a date with them, and B, that you wouldn't want to. [One?—you know, either that they were so—they were terribly unavailable. Desirable, but unavailable or [undesirable?]. And, on the other hand, everybody was dating Brown men, and a lot of women married Brown men. Very large number—at that time, I remember being told that 50% of Pembroke women who married, married Brown men.

Q: Wow.

SGS: Or some incredible—maybe it was even higher than that. I forget the number. Large, large number (break in audio) they were certainly considerable—I mean, it really wasn't very separate. All it was was dorm (break in audio) at that time, at the time that I went to Pembroke. Pembroke was dorms—

Q: The dorms were separate?

SGS: Yeah, that—Pembroke college consisted of dormitories and cafeterias. That was really what Pembroke College was, to me.

Q: Were the administrative functions still split up until '71?

SGS: Yes, the administrative functions were split up [24:00] so that I was admitted to—yeah, they had an admissions office. Financial aid was separate. And we had our own deans. So, if you were in trouble, you? spoke to a Pembroke dean. But there wasn't a Pembroke faculty and there weren't Pembroke classes.

Q: So, besides that, everything was coed?

SGS: Everything was coed. So, you know, certainly I knew Brown men, although I would say I knew, one way or another, every woman in my class at Pembroke, somehow.

Q: In your graduating class, you mean?

SGS: Yeah, I knew everybody at that time, at least to know their names, whereas I only knew (break in audio) Brown men.

Q: Did Pembroke women have an image of Brown men?

SGS: Yeah, and that was also sort of based on—not a—that wasn't the people you knew. That was just all that horde of Brown men, and they were—yeah, they were [25:00] sort of the vast unwashed. I don't know, they were (laughter) grubby and not (break in audio) as you might want and whatever, stuff like that.

Q: Did Pembroke women date men from the area?

SGS: Yeah. Well, I mean, I was dating—my husband was at Columbia (break in audio) not—wasn't that common. I mean, yes (break in audio) met people generally—I would say that people might have one (break in audio) from someplace else, and then another couple of people they were dating at Brown. There—I guess, you know, the fact that there were two and a half men to every one woman at Brown (break in audio) people were dating Brown men. And the Brown men were dating us, and we're also (break in audio) the area, RISD and Wheaton and URI. But I didn't know any women who were dating people from [26:00] the immediate area. Other schools in Rhode Island, for example (break in audio) that were dating people. One fellow from MIT or—those tended to be serious relationships, though.

Q: Because they were longer distance?

SGS: They—you had to really (break in audio) on a serious relationship. Those more often, I think, were marriage relationships. You know, ended up as marriage relationships.

Q: (break in audio) Was there pressure to have an active social life, in terms of dating?

SGS: Yeah, I guess. I think (break in audio) [more?] pressure on an adolescent [or a?] late adolescent, more (inaudible) pressure on early (break in audio) pressure. You know, you wanted to be able to—I mean, [was?] (break in audio) considered the thing to be home every Saturday night. (laughter)

Q: (break in audio) I suppose.

SGS: No.

Q: How about pressure to marry?

SGS: I would have said it was—it changed while I was there. I was aware, when I was a freshman, of [27:00]—that these (break in audio) seemed to be very tense about getting married. But when I was a senior (break in audio) married a few months after senior year (break in audio) was in the minority, well in the minority. Most of the people I knew were not getting married. [They were?] breaking up. They either had not ever formed a serious relationship here, or if they did, they were breaking it up, or else they were continuing to live together. Not that many people got married right after senior [year?].

Q: How come you decided to get married at that point? (break in audio) (laughter)

SGS: How come I decided to get married at that point? I guess because I was choosing my graduate school on the basis of where my husband (break in audio) and I would have gone somewhere else. And if I was going to choose my graduate school on the basis of where he was going to be (break in audio) to be official, I—otherwise, I would have gone elsewhere.

Q: Getting back to the male/female relations at Brown and Pembroke, were—was there a [28:00] difference in how (break in audio) each other inside—at class and socially?

SGS: I don't think so. I mean, it was all social, sort of. Classes were social.

Q: What about in terms of, like, studying together or class [discussions?], things like that?

SGS: No, it was just classes. It wasn't—you didn't—you know, those stereotypes about what Pembroke students were like and what Brown men were like were really not taken into individual kinds of situations. And, no, everybody was—classes—I wouldn't have—in a class, I don't think (break in audio) [in terms of?] Brown and Pembroke or men and women. It was just a coed school [that?]

Q: So, do you feel like men and women were treated equally in terms of academics?

SGS: Yeah, absolutely. There [was?]

Q: Do you feel (break in audio) any sexism during your time at Pembroke? [29:00]

SGS: If it was, it was very (break in audio) might have been some professors, physics professors, particularly, or math professors (break in audio) who were a little uneasy with me in the beginning, and I had to [pass?] (break in audio) exams before they'd take me seriously. That's very mild compared to—yeah, I mean, other kinds of things (break in audio) would be the only instance of (break in audio)

Q: Did you receive any career advice while you were at Pembroke?

SGS: Yeah, most of it sort of (break in audio)

Q: Was it—was there a career office at Pembroke that was [geared towards?] the women students?

SGS: Was there? I don't think so. I think it was—that was a university-wide (inaudible)

Q: Do you feel like men and women (break in audio) advice?

SGS: Probably not, although then when you went—I mean, when I went on interviews, there, sometimes, the sexism was quite blatant. [30:00]

Q: (break in audio) jobs?

SGS: Yeah, the job interviews, you know, from the—

Q: Career services?

SGS: No, from the, you know, (break in audio) people. These were from other, you know, companies that would come. Yes, there, there was sometimes (break in audio) very strong and sexist questions and all kinds of stupidity.

Q: What sorts of things were those? Or what sorts of questions did you get?

SGS: Well, they just sort of—was, you know, (break in audio) a lot of science people, and I'd come in and they'd say, "What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?" kind of questions. And, "Are you engaged? And are you married?" (break in audio) [like that?] and lots of questions that were none of their business.

Q: How did you feel when confronted with those situations?

SGS: I know (break in audio) but I wasn't—but meek, you know?

Q: So you wouldn't necessarily—

SGS: (inaudible) wanted them to hire me.

Q: So, you wouldn't necessarily say to them, "This is an inappropriate question for an interview"?

SGS: I don't think I had poise at that stage, no.

Q: Yeah. Can you tell me a little about the student strike?

SGS: [31:00] [It?] (break in audio) important at the time. Really, people were very—the Vietnam War was very important [to us?], because people were getting drafted, [and so?] it was very much in everybody's mind. And there was a strong sense that we shouldn't be there anyway, but I think the importance of it was made (break in audio) [because?] anybody who—people who left Brown were then going into the Army if they weren't (break in audio) and people really didn't like Nixon.

Q: (break in audio) Students?

SGS: Students. They—the whole university, I think—there was a strong anti-Nixon (break in audio) and things had been getting very political in general, all through the late ['60s?]. There was a—just high degree [of awareness?] (break in audio) on campus, and worrying about political issues and worrying about national [issues?]. And [32:00] then, when there [was Cambodia?], people were very angry. And (break in audio) but they wanted to do something. And then, shortly after that, when the—there were the Kent State [killings?], that—I don't know, it just seemed (break in audio) pushed to strike. People wanted to do something, because they were so [angry?]. When you look at it rationally, (break in audio) the fact that we weren't going to classes make anybody care one way or another. But it seemed, at the time, [to be a very?] strong statement. And it was—I can (break in audio) it was very strange, a very strange time. Very different (break in audio) the rest of the college period. [33:00] I remember they unfurled a (break in audio) Sayles Hall. Sayles Hall, right? Middle of campus, [the?] Brown green?

Q: Oh, Faunce House, maybe?

SGS: No, Sayles Hall (inaudible)

Q: Sayles is on the (break in audio)

SGS: (inaudible) auditorium—

Q: Yeah.

SGS: —like a church-y kind of a place. And it (break in audio) [yeah?], austere looking and all that. Anyway, they unfurled [a banner?] of—which was of the strike symbol, which I guess was a fist (break in audio) [somebody's?] striking outside.

Q: [Oh, there's a?] (break in audio) today.

SGS: For—

Q: Apartheid.

SGS: —apartheid. Well, that has the same—probably has (break in audio) I would guess that has less immediate impact than the Vietnam War did. But anyhow, a strike symbol was a fist and, I don't know, circle. I forget what the symbol exactly was. And this huge (break in audio) [scrolled down?] Sayles Hall, and it was just (break in audio) see it there, because—although political awareness and all those things have been building the whole time (break in audio) that was really the blossoming of it. And until then, it had just never [come actually?] (break in audio) was. And, [34:00] I don't know, it was very hard—just—all exams were canceled and I (break in audio) you—there was a lot of flexibility going on of whether you would get a pass/no credit or a grade/no credit in (break in audio) exam, and—in a course. And there was one course [where?] (break in audio) grade, and the professor of that (break in audio) very active in the strike, and (break in audio) and he was the person to whom it had been assigned (break in audio)

go (break in audio) [problem?] about getting a grade or—if you wanted a grade or getting a non-grade if you didn't want a grade (break in audio) really wanted a grade, and he was giving out non-grades. He was just giving out satisfactorys and so, you know, he just gave me a lot of political business and told me how I, you know, (break in audio) wanted a grade. But since he was the fellow who was giving me the grade and was the professor of the course, it was useless.

Q: So, he gave you an S?

SGS: So, he gave me (break in audio) I wanted to have grades, because these are my physics courses and I knew I'd need them for graduate school (break in audio) I have an S. [35:00] Somewhere on my record, there's an S for a physics course that I did not want.

Q: How (break in audio)

SGS: Well, it started in May, and then we came back to school in September. (break in audio) [Started?]

Q: [I see?].

SGS: It started right around reading period, I guess. [Do?] (break in audio)

Q: Yeah.

SGS: I don't know. It started in reading period. That was when—or just before reading period. And so what it really disrupted was just the very ends of exams. I mean, just the very ends of (break in audio) science courses didn't observe reading period. And (break in audio) and exams. And then everybody went home.

Q: So, people didn't take their (break in audio) take finals.

SGS: They weren't offered, usually, [because the?] instructors were busy running around demonstrating or—I don't know. (break in audio) It was very disorganized, [I think?].

Q: Were you involved in the protesting?

SGS: Yeah, mildly. I wasn't—I don't remember exactly. [36:00] It just—I just have a memory of—just things getting very disorganized all of a sudden. You know, there was protesting and people were, I don't know, (break in audio) and putting up flyers, and nobody was holding classes. I mean, what really made it a strike, I guess, was the faculty voted to strike. So, they weren't holding [classes?]. So, you sort of were striking like it or not, because—

Q: Oh, I see.

SGS: —the faculty was striking (break in audio)

Q: —the option of attending classes.

SGS: Mostly, there—I mean, there were a few professors who were giving [classes?], but most of the professors weren't giving classes, as I remember. It is an oral history, I guess (break in audio) that's the way I remember it—

Q: Right. (laughs)

SGS: —that's the way it is, you know? But I don't—I remember—I guess I went to a couple [of classes?] (break in audio) [mostly?] my professors weren't giving classes. Everything just—and they weren't giving exams. They were just giving grades based on whatever they felt like. If they wanted to give [satisfactorys?], that's what they were doing. And they were giving pretty much everybody a satisfactory. If they—I suppose. I mean, I suppose if you (break in audio) that was your—you never got a chance to show what you could do, but—and if [37:00] they [were?] giving out grades, [they were?] (break in audio) [based?] on whatever they'd done already. And I took—I guess I was taking five [courses?] (break in audio) semester instead of the usual four. And I think I mostly got satisfactorys. And just—things kind of petered out. It was very peculiar.

Q: In terms of the strike?

SGS: No, in terms of the school year. It just sort of—and then the strike, well, there was no question anybody (break in audio) September came, everybody's ready to go back to school again, although one of the outcomes was that there was a—for the first time—and I think [that's become?] (break in audio) places, there was a week we had—we got a week off in the middle of [October?] that was supposed to be to do political campaigning, because that was—

Q: Oh, really?

SGS: That was a—I guess it was a congressional election year. And, yeah, we got a week off in the middle of October. They rearranged the schedule somehow. (break in audio) I don't know who demanded that, faculty or students or a combination or whatever, [38:00] but we all got a week off in the middle of October (break in audio) go do campaigning. I did not, as I remember. Maybe I did, go home and do some campaigning on Long Island. And there were other times, certainly, that I was doing campaigning on Long Island. [So, I?] don't remember specifically (break in audio) [yes?], we got—that was one of the outcomes of the strike, that we got a week off in October.

Q: Do you feel that the strike had popular support among the students?

SGS: Yes. (break in audio) Strong support. Might have been stupid, but we all believed that it was the right thing to do. (laughter)

Q: Sounds like your ideas about the strike have changed.

SGS: Well, it just—I don't—I can't put it into the context—it's hard to—I mean, there are other things—you know, I mean, there are [things?] (break in audio) being a toddler, too, where, you know, I can remember doing something and thinking why did I do that? Well, you know, you have to—have to be thinking that way and be in the context. Well, I'm not all wrapped up in the Vietnam War issue anymore. My brother's not in [danger?] (break in audio) in danger, the

people I know aren't in danger. I don't have this—I'm not watching [39:00] the images of people being (break in audio) all the time on TV. It was a very strong experience, and it just—at the time, it was engulfing the whole country, it seemed so terribly stupid and wrong, and (break in audio) and it just seemed very [important?].

Q: What about the (break in audio) walkout in 1968? What sort of support or reaction did that receive?

SGS: Well, I think it had support. Not [such?] (break in audio) I think there was doubt in people's—I mean, there was a very small number of [black?] (break in audio) [around?] then. And I think there was doubt in people's minds that you could actually [40:00] get as [many?] (break in audio) people to make it 10% black as they wanted and still not compromise admissions standards. I think that was—I think that there was strong doubt about that. Certainly the blacks we knew, [when?] they were—which is (break in audio) [what?] they were having, you know, two or three percent blacks in the class, they were top quality. But nobody had a sense of what would happen if there was a (break in audio) impelled that they should get 10% in a class or 11% or whatever the demand was.

Q: Do you feel like race (break in audio) was an issue at Brown while you were here?

SGS: Yes, yeah (break in audio) then, because then as I was here, then immediately, you know, after the walk-out, they started accepting so many more [blacks?], and that was very new. And everybody was watching them, I guess, to see what would happen. And then, [41:00] there was the—[an expectation?] that they would be very strongly integrated into the white community, and that didn't (break in audio) there were black tables, and so [that?] (break in audio) yeah, people—everybody was—it was an issue. I know—I can remember—I was a Chattertock (break in audio) still have Chattertocks?

Q: Yeah.

SGS: OK, I was a Chattertock, and during the time (break in audio) [Chattertock?], there were two black women who were members of the [Chattertocks?] at different times, but they both dropped out. And they dropped out, I think, because there was such a pull on them from the other black students that this was a disloyal thing to be doing, to belong to Chattertocks. And so, they were not in at the same time, even, that they—if they [were to?] sing, they should be in the black chorus. [I forget?] the name of it, the official name. [I know?] there was a black chorus—and that they should not be in a white [42:00] [organization?] (break in audio) being there was no longer a white organization, it was only, Chattertocks was never a very big group. I mean, there were only 10 of us. So, just—or whatever, so by being there, they'd already (break in audio) the percentage of blacks to the level that was being demanded for the whole university. But [that?] (break in audio) would be very disloyal, and they were under intense pressure, I think, to get out, and both of them did.

Q: So, there was a real feeling that there was a lot of separatism going on?

SGS: Yeah. There was—the blacks who came here had a strong (break in audio) to form contacts within the black community, here.

Q: How about the white students? Was there any feeling in terms [of?] whites reaching out to blacks or, you know, the other side of the coin in the separatism issue?

SGS: I mean, reaching out, I guess, [you know?], I didn't have—certainly, I mean, in a situation like Chattertocks, [43:00] where you're trying out and you're accepted, (break in audio) [reaching?] out, there was not, say, a recruiting—going around recruiting among black women to come try out for Chattertocks. But I think there was that reaching out (break in audio) I think that there was, initially (break in audio) that these were just dark-skinned whites, and that if you just behaved (break in audio) everything would be the same. For many of the people here, it was their first close contact with blacks (inaudible) [43:37]

- END -

Track 2

Q: [00:00] This is side two of the interview with Susan Graber-Slusky, November? (break in audio), Class of 1971. Maybe we could talk a little about (break in audio) that was established while you were here.

SGS: Yeah.

Q: What were, I guess—were there real distinct changes that (break in audio) [how did that?] affect you?

SGS: It didn't affect me so much. I guess it came in in my junior year, and by the—and it was really—a lot of the (break in audio) was oriented toward freshmen. So, I was very excited about it, and I thought it was a, you know, a great [idea?]. And I wished I had been able to take Modes of Thought courses. But they were really for freshmen. And by that time, I was already specialized (break in audio) I liked the no credit idea. And, indeed, I took courses that I (break in audio) taken, because I could take them no credit. [01:00] Because grades meant a lot to me, and I wanted to go to [graduate school?]. But this was my last chance to be taking liberal arts [courses?], and I was—I took, you know, oddball (break in audio) because I knew that I—because I wanted to. And I knew I probably wouldn't do very well in them, and I didn't. (break in audio) But I wanted to be able to be in those courses. So, that was an aspect of the new curriculum that did [affect?] me. Then, there was the relaxation of the [requirements?] for the bachelor of arts degree. I'd already taken all my distribution courses, pretty much, so that didn't affect me so much, although I guess I never did finish—I would have had to take—it's funny how I can remember—I would have had to take (break in audio) semester of either biology or psychology, and I never did. Other than that, I had finished.

Q: How about the merger?

SGS: I wasn't here after the merger. I was [02:00] here during (break in audio) I was never—I never attended a merged Brown University. I never liked the idea. Still don't like the idea. All

my friends thought it was a wonderful idea, and they thought I was stupid. (laughter) You know? And it didn't (break in audio) I was going to get all that excited about, because I was a senior and I was leaving, and it didn't seem to be any of my business, really. I mean, I voted against it. I had come to Brown because of the coordinate nature, because I [wanted?] a little bit of that feeling of going to a women's college.

Q: Did you get that in the dorm [situation?] (break in audio)

SGS: I got that in the dorm situation. And, of course, that was changing very fast. By the time my senior year occurred, there were men (break in audio) where were there men? I guess there were men in Miller-Metcalf, or maybe just (inaudible) I never did (break in audio) did know which one was which and [03:00] maybe men in [Morris-Chaplain?], too. And certainly there were women—but I was [at?]—I wasn't—well, first semester (break in audio) year, I was off-campus. And second semester of senior year, I moved back into Andrews, and that was all (break in audio) and certainly there were women, by then—even by my junior year, there were women in—somewhere (break in audio) I forget where. So junior year, there'd been women down in the Wriston Quad. And senior year, there were (break in audio) Wriston Quad, and there were men up here. And so, that distinction was fading. But on the other hand, it was still—this [campus?] (break in audio) oriented toward women.

Q: Pembroke campus?

SGS: Pembroke campus was more women. I suppose that that has—is that at all the case? Is there more of a (break in audio) (inaudible)

Q: Not that I'm aware of. I don't—

SGS: Yeah, [the more I remember?]—

Q: I think that there are some—

SGS: (inaudible) all over.

Q: Yeah, I mean, I think it's mostly coed dorms. I think there might (break in audio) [sex?] dorms.

SGS: [Anywhere where?]-are there (inaudible) [04:00]

Q: I'm not really sure. I know that, at least when I was a freshman, you could check off if you wanted to be in a—on a single-sex floor, maybe.

SGS: Yeah.

Q: So, I'm not sure, at this point, what the distribution (break in audio) but was that—your concern was mostly the dorm situation (break in audio) certain feeling to being at Pembroke?

SGS: Yeah, there was [the?]-just the name, having the name, I don't—I liked it. (laughter) I just liked it, and I wanted it. But [I don't know?], I guess I was puzzled, and still I'm puzzled, that there were so many people who had come here knowing what it was, [they?] got here, decided they wanted to have a whole different thing. They want—you know, they come here and it was a coordinate university (break in audio) here and they wanted it to be a coed university, you know, and abolish Pembroke—well, why didn't they go to Cornell? I just have never really underst—you know, why—everybody knew what the situation was, and people applied here and it was selective and there was no dearth of people wanting to come here, [so—kind?] of—it was a confusing [05:00] thing to me that they—why didn't they like it that way? That was what they had picked. Yeah, it was the feeling—I don't know, it was the feeling of smallness that I liked, also. The deans knew who I was. I would guess they don't really know who you are anymore. It's too big. (break in audio)

Q: —much bigger.

SGS: It's gotten bigger also with the addition of Bryant College, you know, the east campus, when they bought that (break in audio) bigger all around, but just the fact that these were deans, and there were 1,000 women in the college, altogether, 300 in the class. And, you know, then there was attrition or whatever. Maybe there were less than 300 in a class. Around 300. And they knew who you were to some extent. I mean, not—they might not have really—but they knew your name, certainly, when you walked in. And the financial officer had, certainly—you know, I was on financial aid, and there weren't so many women on financial aid. You know, maybe—I mean, it's [06:00] (break in audio) not everybody. And certainly she knew my finances, my financial situation. I had some sense of (break in audio) a personal involvement that I think was probably lost by the merger. (break in audio) I don't know, the dorms—it was (break in audio) being women's dorms. We were a college, and just [the—just?] having that name, knowing that we were not just a women's dorm, we (break in audio) [were?] a college meant something different, I think, than it means to be a [women's?] (break in audio) university.

Q: Yeah. When you think about where you graduated from, do you think of Pembroke or do you think of Brown?

SGS: Little of both, I guess (break in audio) I say Brown—nobody ever knew what Pembroke was. Nobody—even when there was a Pembroke, nobody ever knew what Pembroke was. So, people asked where I went to school, I'd say [Brown?] (break in audio) [knowledgeable?], they might say, “I thought Brown was a men's college.” And you'd say, “Oh, I go to Pembroke, actually, not at Brown.” Maybe it was nice to have a [07:00] merger to eliminate that whole ambiguity. But my diploma says Brown (break in audio) nobody was ever graduated from Pembroke.

Q: Oh, I see. I didn't realize that.

SGS: So, it was just a way of having a second—I guess, from the administrative point of view, I can see why they would want it. It was—because, really, all it was was a (break in audio) and a second housing office, and a second office to manage the [cafeteria] (break in audio) like the—but it was nice having that second lunch for us, because (break in audio) smaller. And yet, people

didn't seem to appreciate that at all. They felt that somehow they were getting gypped. And the food was different here, for example. [We went?]-and we could eat at the Ratty and everything. But the food was—more potatoes, and [the starch?] (break in audio)

Q: Really?

SGS: Yeah, it was different food. And [08:00] here, the food was oriented toward the fact that everyone was always on a diet. And there, they were still growing (break in audio) [everybody stayed on?]-you go to the Ratty—oh, I guess it's still true, I'm sure, [that?] guys were taking enormous things. Potatoes, and three containers of milk (laughter) and enormous amounts of food. And women were never eating like that. They would finish (inaudible) we're always dieting or whatever, and here they had extra salads and different kinds of salads. And you could always get some (break in audio) you couldn't always get a salad at the refectory-- at the Ratty, and that old—the old structure allowed for that kind of difference, whereas now, I guess everybody gets the same food no matter where (break in audio)

Q: Did you ever feel like you were being gypped in any way?

SGS: No.

Q: You talked about that in terms of maybe that was why some people (break in audio) merger?.

SGS: Yeah, I think there were—yeah, I suspect—I don't know why they—I just?—I [09:00] suppose they must have felt gypped (break in audio) they felt gypped out of, exactly.

Q: But that feeling never occurred to you?

SGS: No, I thought it was better. I—yeah (break in audio) I thought it was better.

Q: Did you have any role models while you were in college?

SGS: No, I suppose that's why I came here to speak. [I never?] (break in audio) role models, and I would have liked to.

Q: How about after college? Do you feel like there have been people who have been mentors to you, or particularly [important?] (break in audio) [here?] for your development?

SGS: There have been some people. Not many. Mostly, I talk things over with my husband, I guess, and (break in audio) yeah, I mean I've had some good relationships with some people, at work—have given me good advice.

Q: You were saying before that (break in audio) you haven't been in a predominantly female atmosphere since school?

SGS: Right, since undergraduate school.

Q: So [10:00] graduate school and work have been mostly male?

SGS: Absolutely.

Q: Was that a difficult adjustment?

SGS: Yeah, I guess. I guess it took some—I (break in audio) [expected?]-even undergraduate had become gradually all-male in the [classes?]. So, it wasn't something unexpected. It was something I knew would happen. But it wasn't, you know—and then—and (break in audio) [I've?] adjusted to it in various ways, [yes?].

Q: Do you think that there's a difference, sort of a general difference if there are (break in audio) or more men in a group?

SGS: Sure.

Q: What (break in audio) do you think exist?

SGS: The way people talk (break in audio) the level of aggressiveness and [11:00] (break in audio) level of interruptions, things like that.

Q: Can you tell [me about?] your—the graduate degrees that you’ve gotten and the job you’re doing now?

SGS: Well, I have a graduate [degree?] from the University of Pennsylvania. I went there for one year. And I have a Ph.D. from Princeton.

Q: In physics?

SGS: In physics. [Both?] (break in audio) degrees physics. And directly out (break in audio) got a job at Bell Laboratories, and I’ve done work there in superconducting electronics. I’ve done [work?] (break in audio) after that, I did a lot of work in magnetic bubble devices, and[that kind of veered [break in audio] materials. And I’m just now finishing up that work. I guess it eventually just ended up into various kinds of iron garnets, materials work in that. [12:00] And I’ve also been doing some work (break in audio) electro-optic devices.

Q: Doing research?

SGS: Yeah. Well, research-development-y kind of—it’s not (break in audio) [and?] somewhere at the crossroads. It’s research, but it’s applied research.

Q: Does your husband work at Bell Labs?

SGS: (break in audio) [husband?]-part of the—as part of all the breakup of the Bell system, he’s now working for AT&T Information Services. He’s an attorney.

Q: How many children do you have?

SGS: (break in audio) The youngest is two months old.

Q: Oh, wow.

SGS: That's why I'm not spending—last year, I—was saying last year if I had come, I would have spent [the night?] or something, spent a while. But with a baby at home, I feel like I want to get back.

Q: (break in audio) work out being a mother and a career woman?

SGS: It's just hard. (laughter)

Q: Tired a lot?

SGS: I'm tired a lot, yes, some (break in audio) it's expensive and it's just hard. But it's (break in audio)

Q: Are your kids in daycare?

SGS: Well, my two older ones are in first grade now. They were never really in a daycare [13:00] situation. They were in nursery schools, and then we also had people who'd come into the [house?]. The younger one—I'm still at home now. I'm not going back for another two weeks. And (break in audio) there will be somebody in the house with her. I guess I've never used—[what I think?] (break in audio) [center?], which is a place where there are very young children. Large numbers of very young children.

Q: (break in audio) come?

SGS: I'm a rich lady, you know? (laughter) [And now?] I can afford to have somebody in my house. I'm very (break in audio) research, and my husband is well paid for being an attorney.

And it's (break in audio) I think it's better and more convenient—you know, there's—I think it's better for the children to be at home. Certainly in the previous case, where I had twins, it was (break in audio) [need?] anybody—now, I—with this one, I don't know what I'll do. [I?] (break in audio) in a situation with other kids, just because—otherwise, she'll be the only one home. But with the twins (break in audio) together anyway. They don't need anybody else to play with. And it's much more convenient to have somebody come to your house and take care of your children than to have to bundle them up in the morning and take them somewhere. And so, since I can afford having somebody come in, I do. [And besides?] (break in audio) [laundry?] and stuff like that, and I don't have to worry about it, and why wouldn't I want to have somebody in the house?

Q: Makes (break in audio) (laughter)

SGS: No, daycare, I think, is—well, it probably provides good socialization [in a?] (break in audio) I don't know what things will be like with this baby. And it's cheaper, but, no, I guess I was never attracted to it.

Q: Do you feel—well, maybe I can phrase it this way. How do you feel being married and having children has affected your career?

SGS: Oh, I guess it slowed it down, I—you don't direct all your energies to your career the way you would otherwise. But I guess I'm directing my energies where I want. I mean, I'm directing my energies around [15:00] the way I want to (break in audio) important to me to have a career. It's very important for me to be doing lab work and succeeding[in (break in audio) it's also important to me to have my marriage and my children. I mean, I presume that there—a person only has so much energy, and I presume that there would be more energy for work [not?] putting energy into children and marriage. But I really can't imagine having made a decision not—to not do that, on that basis. Although I suppose if I'd never met anybody I wanted to marry, then I would never have gotten (break in audio) I never envisioned getting married as early as I did. Sort of had a vision of myself going to—you know, going on and having—working for a while and getting married (break in audio) but I didn't do that.

Q: How old were you when you had your first children?

SGS: Twenty-nine.

Q: (break in audio) [like?] you waited because of career?

SGS: I suppose [16:00] I waited, yeah. I mean, I waited until I was ready, until we were ready. I just wasn't—I wouldn't have articulated it that way (break in audio) [wasn't?] ready for children.

Q: Do you feel like you encountered any obstacles in your career path?

SGS: Sure, sure. There are always obstacles. You know, everybody has obstacles, and some of them are—have to do with being a woman. There have been some people that—maybe it would have been an easier go if I had been able to collaborate with them, but [they?] couldn't—they were just not capable of collaborating with a woman, so—

Q: Do you feel like you're still breaking into a male world?

SGS: Oh, yes. [17:00] At my lunch table, there are no other women, for example. Lunch table, I mean. The people that I sit and usually eat lunch with, I'm the only woman. You know, my department, I'm the only professional woman. There's another [non-professional?]. There are very few women in supervisory positions at Bell Laboratories. Some, but not a lot. It's very much a male world.

Q: Have you ever sort of—I don't know if this is a strange question. Have you ever wished that you (break in audio) in a different field or, you know, with more women?

SGS: No. My sense always is it's better to be in a field with men, that when women enter—with all the fields where women are in large numbers—are poorly paid, are low status, and those are things that are important to me. I like (break in audio) and I like having the status. And if I'm

[18:00] going to be doing work that's hard, I might as well be getting that kind of psychological and financial remuneration. And people do hard jobs that take a lot of talent, and women—in fields that are heavily populated with women, and they just aren't getting those forms of remuneration, I think. (break in audio) I think it's better to be in a field where there are a lot of men, if you can make it.

Q: But I suppose there are also some drawbacks to that, just in terms of some of the things that you've mentioned? That it's a two-sided coin?

SGS: I guess. I—well, [I?] suppose—I mean, if I was a nurse or something, I could have lots of buddies who were also nurses, who were women.

Q: Yeah.

SGS: [I don't know?]

Q: I don't know—

SGS: I mean, it's different for [women?]

Q: And—

SGS: I suppose in fields where there are a lot of women, it's easy to take off a lot of time and stay home with the kids. Maybe that [19:00] (break in audio) or do that if I had the option. But I certainly didn't even have the option (inaudible) just—

Q: Oh, I see.

SGS: —[I could never?]

—I would never have another career—if I stayed home. Time for me to go?

F: [Just about. Guys? Is this a good time to stop or not?]?

Q: Yeah. Are there any—is there anything else that you would—just quick, anything—any other memories or comments you’d like to make?

SGS: No.

Q: [OK?]. Stop.

F: [Anyway?]

- END -