Transcript – Ethel Mary Humphrey Anderson, class of 1929

Interviewer: Oona Patchin
Interview Date: April 29, 1982
Interview Location: Providence, RI
Transcribed by: Rebecca Forman

[Audio Note: The last 6 minutes of Part 2 are inaudible]

[Part 1]

Oona Patchin: This is Ethel Anderson. Maiden name Humphrey. By Oona Patchin. The interview is being done at the home of Mrs. Anderson in Providence on April 29, 1982. Okay, I wanted to start out asking you just a little bit about background. Um, are your parents both from Rhode Island?

Ethel Anderson: No. Oh, well yes, before—I'm trying to think if he was born here, or if he was born there. No he was born in New York State, and my mother was born in Canada.

OP: And what did they do?

EA: My father was in real estate insurance broker, and my mother was as we said a homemaker.

OP: Were either of them college graduates?

EA: No, neither of them was.

OP: How did they feel about your going to college?

EA: Oh, they, they encouraged it, they supported it financially, and in every way. I told you that I was an only child. And I liked school, and did well in it. And they took it for granted that I would go on to college.

OP: Did many women go to college at that time? Did your friends go to college?

EA: Yes, yes. That is, my friends were, my high school friends. You see I went to Classical High School. And most of us went to Brown—to the Women's College. Remember it was called the Women's College. It became Pembroke while I was in college. And, oh, I was trying to think if anyone in my class—a few went away to college.

OP: How far away?

EA: I really don't, I don't remember. But certainly not in terms of young people think about going to college now. We just, most of us took it for granted that we would go to Brown. Here it was, and that's what we did.

OP: You went to Classical High School you said?

EA: Mm, which is in Providence.

OP: And where did you go for elementary school, was that in Providence?

EA: Oh, in Providence. Yes, you see I always lived in Providence [2:40]

OP: Oh, did you go to schools that still exist now?

EA: I really don't know. Truly don't know. You know there have been so many changes. I live then on the West side of the city and went to schools, which were there. And in those days it was a primary school—four years, grammar school—four, and it was some years later that the junior high system was established. And I—Classical is a highly selective high school, and it's definitely college preparing, with a strong emphasis on Greek and Latin…ancient history. The…I'm talking about my town. Although I think it still, it, it, it's still is an excellent academic school. And many faculty children who go to public school go to Classical.

OP: So you took studying pretty seriously?

EA: Yes, oh we had to. We were expected to.

OP: Were women as much as the boys?

EA: Yes, I think so. I do—I don't know, I don't, as I think back, I don't think there was any difference.

OP: Um, to go to Pembroke, or the Women's College when you went, did you have to apply, or…

EA: We applied, but it was very simple. We, in those days, people from Classical did not have to take the entrance examinations. It was assumed that if you graduated from Classical you were prepared for college. And that indeed was true. Uhh, I think that not too many years later, entrance examinations were required, but they were not when I went.

OP: Were they required for students coming from other schools [4:51]?

EA: I think that may have been. Or at least they, they went through perhaps a different kind of admissions process then, but I'm not sure about. I know for example, Kay Nolan, who here spoke, went to Hope High School, which now is not a strong high school. But in those days it was excellent. And whether the Hope High people were, were accepted automatically as the Classical High School people, I don't know. But I know some strong students, who came from Hope High School.

OP: What kind of a reputation did the Women's College have in Providence?

EA: I think a very good reputation. The relationship for the Women's College to Brown was an appendage in a way, you know it was very difficult for women to be accepted in the last century. You know, you know that Pembroke was, what was it 18—I think the first class was 1894—well

the first graduating class was 1897. Yes. Uh, but it was, um very difficult, and there was a great pride—remember it was much more, my class was approximately, approximately one hundred, there were a few more I think. We were 120. But we were the largest class I think ever [6:51].

OP: Yeah, I noticed in the yearbook.

EA: Yes, did, did, most of that. But there was a great pride in women having been accepted and doing well. And, we felt, I think it did make it stronger.

OP: So you looked forward to going to the Women's College when you finished high school?

EA: Yes, yes.

OP: Did you go immediately afterwards, after high school?

EA: Yes, in the sense you mean that you graduated in June, and went in the fall?

OP: Mm hmm.

EA: Yes, you mean without an interval in between.

OP: Yes.

EA: Oh yes, it wasn't thought of then. You just, if you went to college, you went and you stayed three or four years. You didn't take a year off as so many people do now.

OP: What kinds of um things did you study?

EA: Uh, I majored in English, and minored, I guess that's the term they used, in Latin. I uh, really didn't intend it, 'cause I'd had four years of Latin in high school, three years of Greek, and I took Latin as a freshman and enjoyed my Professor who was Benjamin Clough so very much

that I decided to go on. And it's—and then of course I had other courses too …I had I remember freshmen biology, which I slept right through 'cause I just don't have the mind designed [inaudible]. But I got through, respectably. And you'll be interested that a woman taught that class. And I think it was considered not fitting for a man to teach young ladies. I mean this is hard for you to imagine, but I suppose that was the reasoning. After all, a young man wouldn't teach young ladies about the reproductive system [Laughter] with a frog or whatever. But, you know that we then had Brown faculty. And we were very proud of the fact that we had Brown faculty, we used Brown libraries, laboratories, and a Brown degree.

OP: Did you take classes on Brown's campus actually?

EA: No. I remember at one point, I had a class on the Brown campus, but I think that was when I was a graduate student. I remember one other graduate and I were in a very large class of – it was one of Lindsay Damon's class in 17th century literature and I think I was a graduate, and not as a undergraduate student.

OP: You were a graduate student at Brown also?

EA: Yes.

OP: And that was then at the Women's College [10:20], or at Brown?

EA: No, no at Brown. Then, and then our classes were taught on campus. In fact, the English department was then housed at what is now University Hall. And a seminar, for example, would be held in University Hall.

OP: What did most of the women study? Was there any particular preference? Looking at the yearbook it seemed like mostly English or Biology was the concentration.

EA: Well there must've been a few History right?

OP: Mm hmm.

EA: Hmm… I'd have to—I'm just trying to think of some of my classmates. The friends, not too many people I knew went on with English. Well here for example, is someone in Political and Social Science. Well [?] Languages, Mathematics…and Biology, French.

OP: But, so you wouldn't say that there was a decided preference or anything?

EA: I would—I would say not. Here was someone who majored in German.

OP: Did you have any career goals in mind when you majored in English, or you just like English best?

EA: Well, I started it and liked it. I knew I didn't want to go on in any branch of the sciences or in mathematics, I was quite sure. Incidentally, there were some women who majored in art, which was rather unusual.

OP: That was unusual?

EA: Well, yeah. The art department consisted of two or three people, and you know book art and music were very small departments. As you compare them with other departments. And—oh you asked about any career goals. Oh, I think I thought in terms of being a teacher. You see, remember that was one of the things women did then. And I enjoyed my English classes very much, and thought I, in turn, would enjoy teaching to others. And then I thought since I had had a lot of Latin, I could offer even…I took a little French in college—I'd had a couple of years in high school, and another year in college. But had no particular interest in going…I didn't ever teach in the end, and I'll tell you why later, but uh.

OP: [Inaudible] You were a pretty serious student though. I noticed you won several honors.

EA: I was—yes, I was, I think, I don't—I, I never had pressure from my parents to do well. I think I just wanted to, and I enjoyed doing work. I enjoyed doing the work for the most part. Oh, I don't mean every course, every semester, but I—yes, I was a good student.

OP: Did the women compete with each other at all?

EA: I was never conscious of that, ever, at all.

OP: What did Phi Beta Kappa mean? I noticed you were in the Phi Beta Kappa.

EA: Oh yes.

OP: Also on the Dean's list?

EA: Yes, and graduated with, you know, with a Magna—in fact, I took honors in English [14:28].

OP: Honors, wow.

EA: We were—if we were doing well we were asked if we would like to take honors courses…You asked what Phi Beta Kappa is?

OP: Yeah.

EA: You don't know?

OP: Well, I know it's an honorary…

EA: It's an honorary society.

OP: Yeah, well what did that mean at the time?

EA: Oh well, you had to have a strong academic record. And I was elected as a senior. Now there were some people elected as juniors—smaller group, which means they were even better. But, I—I don't think I was ever on grind, I did my grinding during my Classical High School days. But, I did work hard, but I enjoyed work.

OP: And your parents were I imagine pretty proud of you.

EA: Oh, extremely. Extremely.

OP: Were there many women faculty at all?

EA: No, remember I said that—Now let me see how many women faculty there were. Magel Wilder taught biology. And she probably—I'm sure she had one or two assistants. Lab assistants. Now, I was trying to think if the assistant director of Dramatics was a woman. Oh, I know, another woman, I mentioned the organization [inaudible]: The Women's Dramatic Society. And we had a—a director who was a woman. Uh, on a part time basis 'cause we did several productions a year. I'm—I can not remember if that time there was a woman in the Theatre Department, or not. I know eventually, there was, but whether that was after I was a faculty wife, I don't remember.

OP: But most of the faculty was male?

EA: Oh, indeed. Oh, yes.

OP: Were there any women teaching Brown students? Brown men?

EA: Oh, no.

OP: That was…

EA: Oh no it was definitely a male faculty.

OP: The Dean at that time was Dean Morriss?

EA: Dean Morriss. Did you see Dean Morriss' picture in the book. She was a handsome woman, yes.

OP: What was she like?

EA: Oh she was—she was an excellent scholar—she was a combination of Goucher [College] Graduate—do you know Goucher?

OP: No.

EA: It was in Baltimore. I mean it's known in the East but… and then a Bryn Mawr Ph.D. Her field was history. She was a good example of—of a woman scholar. A charming woman. And as you can see a handsome, a handsome distinctly… I liked her. I was particularly fond of Eva Mooar, who was her, who was the Director of Admissions, and …she—I worked for her later, and I'll tell you about that, because that was in my graduate student years. If—if you want to hear about it.

OP: Yeah, yeah I do.

EA: But she was…she was a particularly warm person. 'Course I think the Dean has to be a little aloof.

OP: Was she aloof?

EA: Ms. Morriss?

OP: Uh huh.

EA: I would say somewhat. I got to know her better because when I was doing graduate work, I worked part-time in Personnel Office, and got to know Ms. Morriss better. And she really wasn't. But, after all, a student tends to feel that her dean is—at least we did then at least we did then—I think other people thought so to, but it wasn't that it was an innate characteristic that was Ms. Morriss'. We called her—she was Margaret Shove Morriss, and, do you know what we called her?

OP: No.

EA: Peggy Push.

OP: Oh dear.

EA: Yes, Peggy Push. And I'm sure she would've—she would've been very much amused.

OP: How did that nickname come about?

EA: I don't know. I supposed it happened before I went to college. Although, she hadn't been Dean very long. I think the Shove, you see, became, shove became push. I don't know.

OP: But it doesn't mean like she was a pushy person.

EA: Oh no. Oh, no, no, no. I think it was just a variation of her middle name. And I suppose some smart person thought that Peggy Push sounded cute, and so for several, I don't know how many years it went on—probably as long as she was there, she was known as Peggy Push.

OP: Did you ever know her personally? I mean she had teas for the students.

EA: Yes, and they were very nice. You know everything was quite formal then, much more so. When we went to Brown campus, for example, we were expected to wear hat and gloves [20:24]. If you can imagine that.

OP: Was that an official regulation or that was…

EA: It was understood. It was understood. Whether it was ever spelled out, I don't know. But it was—it was considered a rule.

OP: Was there ever any resentment of that rule, or it was just accepted?

EA: I don't know, I was never a rebel. I just went along with what was being done. I'm sure there must've been people who rebelled against it. Because you know in every class—in every group of people there are rebels.

OP: There were also a lot of rules for freshmen—for the first-years?

EA: I suppose there were—but I don't remember them. Evidently I didn't worry very much about them, because I truly don't remember them.

OP: Okay. What was the relationship like between the women that lived on campus, and those that lived off-campus.

EA: When we first went to college, of course, we didn't know each other. Uh, I think that we, those of us who were, I guess you'd call commuting students, well or of course City Girls, never felt inferior because we far outnumbered the dormitory groups. The only dorms then were Miller and Metcalf, and then Sharpe House on Angell St., which has become…some department building, I don't know what is it, but it was a dormitory. Then I think there was another small dormitory on uh, on Meeting St. near Pembroke Hall, but that was all. We got to know them—and this was good—through organizations. You know when you first go you're with friends,

and you…see more of them, but as your college experience widens, then you meet people in the organizations you're working in, social situations, or in classes.

OP: But you never felt left out?

EA: I don't think we ever did. Now, maybe some people did. I didn't…

OP: What about some of the organizations you were involved in?

EA: Um, in my—the end of my freshman year, I applied for membership in the Press Club. And I remember we had to submit a, I suppose a piece, I suppose we were told [inaudible] and send a report. You see, there was no public relations then. Look at the size of the News Bureau now, there was nothing of that. So individuals were the correspondence of certain—of the local paper, and then about ten newspapers. So, for example, we had a girl from a town in New Hampshire. We would send her a local paper, uh, an account of an athletic event in which she took part. With her name carefully spelled [24:03]—or if she was in a play, or whatever. And uh, that was what Press Club did. I was told I'd have to type, so I taught myself how to type between my freshman and sophomore year, during the summer. I don't type well, but it's been the most useful tool all the rest of my life. And I was—I got to be president of the club my senior year. And in that group, you see I met people from other classes, and uh, some dormitory girls and city girls. Uh, I did some acting, not a lot, but some, I enjoyed that, so I met another group. So you see, that's how people tended to…

OP: I had a couple more questions about the Press Club. Did the newspapers that you would send articles to wind up printing them?

EA: Oh indeed yes. Oh indeed yes. When I was a senior I was—I was a correspondent. We worked up to [inaudible] but the *Journal*…

OP: *The Providence Journal*?

EA: *The Providence Journal*. And since there were so many local girls at the college, uh, the Journal printed a lot. And uh, I spent a lot of time, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. In fact, I thought at one point, that I would like to do newspaper work, and I remember talking with one of the English Department Faculty at a tea, I told him that I was interested in doing this, and he said, "You're not hard boiled enough." And I think he's accurate. I know that I could never have gone to somebody in the midst of family tragedy and ask for details, or ask them how they felt, which I still think is outrageous. And, but, he did discourage me, and I realized after how wise he was. You have to have a certain some kind of temperament to do newspaper work successfully. But I thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and uh, we did something very exciting that year—I mean my senior year—we had a conference of the Press Club's. And, uh, I found this note—I'd forgotten all about it—but we, there were about fifteen colleges represented, each sent in a few delegates, and Alumnae Hall was quite new then. That was dedicated, in I think, 1927. And, this was the following year, 1928, so of course we were very proud to have this event in our fine new building. And that was a very interesting experience—meeting people from other colleges, too. The Press Club was really a very enriching experience for me.

OP: What kinds of things did you do at that conference?

EA: Talked about how we covered news, our experiences with, and how, you know, city newspapers—that kind of things.

OP: And that was the first time something like that had ever been made?

EA: No, it had, no it had been done—I remember it was held at Radcliffe the year before because I was told, I guess, somebody in the administration said, 'Now we want to go to the conference at Radcliffe representing, by then Pembroke, because we're going to host the conference next year.' So I know it was not the first. I have no idea [inaudible].

OP: Mm hmm. Did any of the women that were in the Press Club go on to be reporters [28:16]?

EA: I don't know. I think it was a kind of romantic idea on part. I just—as young women now want to go into television—I think I can see myself as a reporter. Uh, it was—well it was, something that a young person thinks she wants to do until my common sense took over, and I knew that I wasn't temperamentally suited to do this frankly. I didn't—I don't really know, I'm trying to think of the people in that group if I know what any of them are doing. Uh, I don't want to take too much time. Oh here we are. Well, now that's interesting because Dorothy Roth, who was a classmate…

OP: Roth?

EA: R-O-T-H. She and I were the only then—seniors that were representatives for various classes, and as you can see Dorothy Roth has become a very successful, I think it's radio commentator in, I believe it's Buffalo. So she did go on, but she was a more aggressive personality than I am. I think she was very successful at that. I know that she became a teacher of Latin at Classical High.

OP: Who's that?

EA: Dorothy Slothan [?]. So she didn't—Pat Hogan became a, she's Helena Hogan, but we always knew her as Pat, but she became a very successful social worker, which was interested in the field of alcoholism. Some of the others—oh—she was a brilliant honorable [unclear]. A brilliant classicist. And went abroad—I…did—I'm sorry I can't tell you what she did, whether she was with the state department, or whatever?

OP: Oh, really.

EA: Mm. So I would say the only person I know of, who went on…in a related field, was Dorothy Roth. And of course, there were several, in other classes who might've.

OP: How about the Komians? You were in one play, at least? I saw you were in "Twelfth Night?"

EA: Yes, I was in "Twelfth Night," and then a one act by John Durang. That was a Christmas play. What question did you want to ask?

OP: Was that a big interest of yours, acting, or?

EA: I was interested, yes, but not passionately. You know some people were interested in theater, are, can think of nothing else. But, it was just something I was interested in doing, and occasionally tried out for something and enjoyed it.

OP: It seemed like they were very prominent on campus.

EA: Oh they were, they were. And I think it was only a few years later, but after I was out of college, that we began to import the men from the Brown campus for men's roles. But when we were in college, the women the did the men's roles.

OP: And how successful was that?

EA: I really don't know, uh, I can't be objective about it. There were one or two women who were, who were superb. I remember there was someone, well I can't remember her name. She was tall and lean, and lanky—very handsome, and she made a fine young man. But, uh, for most women it's not very successful, but as I say very soon after the men and women were there. I have forgotten when Komians merged with Sock and Buskin, but…I think not too many years later. I believe—you know what happened—the war changed so many things because during the war years, the men began to have classes at Pembroke, and the women on the Brown Campus for reasons of necessity and, of course, and, we had a naval ROTC unit at Brown [33:34]. That…hastened changes, which I think would've come in any event, but uh, true necessity, and of course the—Pembroke was particularly important to the Brown administration during the war years 'cause it was a constant enrollment, whereas they would've had a very difficult time financially if it hadn't been for the, for the women who were so—well it is a very practical kind, because the women's enrollment stood out. Those were difficult—very difficult years, and the

faculty too. I was aware of it, because my husband was teaching, and the faculty taught from I guess it was ’41 to ’45, around the calendar year—classes went on in the summer you see, I think. And one summer, I think each faculty person got free, but it was an accelerated program, of course it was hard for the students too.

OP: What was the attitude toward coeducation when you were at Pembroke.

EA: I think we felt superior to women in coeducation colleges for the reason, I think I mentioned. We felt we had all the advantages of being known—what was it? A coordinate college. Just as Radcliffe, relationships with Radcliffe to Harvard. I’m talking about then. And, Barnard to Columbia. But we felt we had the advantages of, as I said, the faculty, the labs, the library, a Brown degree, but we had our independent—our own—independent organizations. And it’s been interesting to me—the changes—the merger, you see, which seems to be working well. But I wondered. And I’ve been interested that some of our fine colleges, such as Smith and Mt. Holyoke have—I’m talking about the East, because those are the ones I know—have been able to resist it, and have decided, apparently, they’re not going to become coeducation. I don’t know. We, as I said, I think we felt rather smug about it. We really did. I mean we never felt that we were—I think we didn’t have, but the older alumnae who had seen women struggle to become part of Brown, always had the fear that at some point the university just [unclear] on the women. But we, not having been a part of that early struggle, never had any doubt of that thing, that this would not happen. But it was interesting to see—but I can understand their point of view.

OP: So you felt pretty secure that the Women’s College…

EA: We felt secure. I guess two words are secure and somewhat smug [37:36].

OP: Uh-huh. Let me just check this, I’m afraid that it’s not still going. What about the name change? How did you feel about that?

EA: Oh, we were thrilled about it.

OP: Really?

EA: Oh, yes. I mean after all, Women's College in Brown University is such a kind of negative, almost blah. It doesn't, it doesn't even sound very attractive, whereas Pembroke College—and you know it was named for Pembroke College where you work. And…it…oh, we were, we were extremely enthusiastic.

OP: Was that pretty unanimous feeling?

EA: Well, among the undergraduates. Now, I have this vague recollection, and I'm saying vague because I don't want anything I say, since this is going to be historical fact, as fact, but I have a vague recollection that again, some of the alumnae, before our time were a little nervous that—you see Women's College in Brown University shows very definite connection, and they were a little nervous that by becoming Pembroke College the connection to Brown perhaps would—wasn't quite as strong. But we didn't, the college generation, did not feel that way. We were delighted with the change.

OP: When you graduated, did you feel like you graduated from Brown, or from Pembroke?

EA: Yes.

OP: From Brown.

EA: Yes, because we felt we were students of Pembroke College in Brown University, and therefore a Brown degree was what we always knew we had. So of course in a way we considered ourselves Brown women.

OP: How was the social interaction between the Brown men and Pembroke women.

EA: Well, of course we…I think that men tended to look down on the women, but many of my classmates married Brown men, so I think this was mostly an act.

OP: Why did they look down on Brown women?

EA: Oh, I think propinquity somehow didn't seem as attractive. I think if it was a dance. I think a man thought it was much more exciting to import a girl from Wellesley, than to go across campus, I think. I don't know what it's like now. I don't. But, I didn't do much dating while I was in college. Women [inaudible] much more slowly than your generation. And I wasn't, 'til I was about a senior, and then during graduate…two years changed a lot, but uh, I didn't, but I remember there were three big events in the senior year; an all college dance—something called a Tea Dance. Have you ever heard of a tea dance?

OP: No.

EA: It was I the afternoon, and then a dance in the evening, and then a prom. And I took three—invited three different men—whom I knew to those three different occasions. That was fun. To be able to have three different—in other words, you see we didn't do much dating, on the other hand, I had a classmate who remains one of my close friends, who dated a Brown man all through college—started in high school, dated all through college, and never went out with anyone else, and married him [42:02]. So, you see, the experiences vary. But uh, oh, I heard, well I heard my husband about Radcliffe. And it's just—a lot of it's an act, or was an act.

OP: Did the Pembroke women feel the same way about the men? Would they get men from other universities?

EA: I don't really know. Well, it would depend upon the man, I think, really. So how did the dances work? It seemed like there were a lot of dances. Would the women ask men to come with them? Well there usually was someone that would ask, and it might be from campus, and it might be someone you'd known in high school you see, and you still dated, and it might've been someone from away.

OP: But it was all right for the women to ask?

EA: Yes, yes. But of course you would've known the person first. But I think it was, uh, not quite as easy a relationship, I assume you all have now.

OP: Was it a big deal—the dances, I mean?

EA: They tended to be, yes.

OP: So did the women feel crushed if they didn't have a date for the dance?

EA: I suppose so. I don't really know. I went to some, and not to all. I don't remember ever feeling crushed about it. And I didn't go to, you know, the fraternity dances were a big thing then. And I don't think I went to any until my senior year.

OP: So that was a big deal then?

EA: Yes, yes, oh yes. And I may say it was a very disillusioning experience, but at least I had it.

OP: Why was it disillusioning?

EA: Well, I, in those days, now this was supposed to be the wild twenties you know. And I didn't ever drink. I didn't drink 'til after I was married. And… didn't, you know, just wasn't even aware of it, and certainly wasn't interested, but I [Laughter]. Oh the young man was perky, and it was fun, I enjoyed it. And in those days you would go from one fraternity house and have a dance, and then you'd go to another, you see, and of course the idea was that it was supposed to be more fun, the more houses you got to, and this would be because your date knew people in those various houses…fraternity life was much more important at Brown than it is now. The reason I said it was disillusioning, I was in the powder room with a young woman who had had

too much to drink, and got violently sick, and I remember thinking oh well if that's what it's all about, I don't think that's very much fun.

OP: Did they drink at the fraternity parties actually?

EA: Oh yes, yes. I mean that was part of it.

OP: That was part of it?

EA: Brown has always been known, you know, as a heavily drinking college, I know that's what it's like now.

OP: It still is. But they never drank on the women's campus when there were dances?

EA: Now I suppose some people did, but I never saw any of that. I'm sure it would've been frowned upon.

OP: Weren't these Prohibition times though? I mean where did they get the alcohol?

EA: Well, that's a question, that's a question. Let me see, this was in the twenties, yes.

OP: How about smoking? That seemed to be an issue.

EA: Yes it was. I remember seeing the *Brun Mael* and something I had forgotten was the smoking room being open for the city girls, and somebody's…I remember one of my classmates was given some kind of disciplinary action because she smoked where she wasn't supposed to smoke. And she knew that this wasn't, but she didn't approve of the rules so she just defied it deliberately. Yes, I started to smoke when I was in college. Yes, that was a thing. Many of us—some didn't, but, our athletes tended not to, but many of us did.

[End of Part 1]

[Part 2]

OP: Was that an image sort of thing?

EA: I think so, I think so.

OP: Do you remember where you smoked? I mean did you…

EA: Not at home, may I say.

OP: Your parents didn't know?

EA: Not then. I'm trying to remember, that's why I hesitated. Not then. No, I—I'm sure they didn't. And it wasn't very, but it was an image problem, it was an image problem. I told you we were very immature.

OP: How about just the '20s in general? I mean, do you remember your school years as being part of the '20s?

EA: I mean they were—when you're in it, you don't think of it, do you see. And the image of the '20s is of the wild '20s, but actually—except for a few exceptional people, it wasn't like that. Now I wonder if I had lived in the dormitory if I might have known perhaps the occasional girl, because there's a rebel, you know it'd be a rebel, I'm sure in the 1820s or 1720s or whatever. And of course people who are—tend to get media attention, whether it's newspaper or television or whatever. I mean they—they from the image in the period, which is not necessarily accurate for the majority.

OP: Did the women wear makeup then?

EA: Oh yes.

OP: Was that new, or?

EA: Oh, I don't think it was new at all, and I told you so many of us had shingle.

OP: Was that—that was a new style?

EA: That was. And that definitely is a '20s style. And it was wonderful 'cause it was so easy to take care of.

OP: I wanted to ask you about chapel.

EA: Oh yes, I made a note to speak of chapel [2:30]. We had morning chapel. And you know where it was? On the third floor of Pembroke Hall where the library is now. And I still remember, I guess it was five minutes of nine every morning it was dashing, because I was usually a little late dashing upstairs to be on time. [Phone rings] Will you excuse me. That's my memory of chapel; dashing up. It was not a religious service as such, it was what I suppose called an inspirational speaker or something. Now don't ask me any subject that was discussed—remember this is all fifty years ago. So…is there anything else specific you want to ask—and it was required.

OP: How many days a week? Three, or something like that?

EA: I'm trying to remember if it was three, or four. But it was required.

OP: Was there any complaint about the fact that it was required?

EA: Oh, there was grumbling, oh there was grumbling, yes.

OP: Did you enjoy it?

EA: Sometimes, depending on the speaker.

OP: Did students ever speak themselves?

EA: I can't remember that they did. I don't think so.

OP: Gym was also required, wasn't it?

EA: Oh yes [laughter]. Yes.

OP: And how often?

EA: I thought of that and tried to remember. Several times a week.

OP: That sounds like that wasn't your favorite subject.

EA: It was not. I told you, I was ill coordinated and I loathed it. The greatest—I had a pleasant surprise though the last semester, my senior year I discovered that people who had met the requirements, that is attended, not necessarily performed well, but went through most of the—those people were excused from gym the last semester, and I was so happy and joyous really that was to me.

OP: Did you ever cut gym previous to that? Or any of your classes?

EA: You know, we'd given—in each class each semester I think it was three cuts.

OP: And could you—did you use those?

EA: Usually, yes. Oh yes.

OP: And what happened? Did you cut more than three times?

EA: I think it affected your grade. Something happened. I don't think I ever did, but I think something—I don't know if it was—I don't think it was any serious disciplinary action, but I think Ms. Morriss would call you in to find out why this had been happening. I don't really know.

OP: Did any of the women ever drop out of school?

EA: Oh yes, some dropped out to marry.

OP: Really?

EA: Mm hmm.

OP: And then would they come back, or?

EA: Uh, they wouldn't come back. Uh, but I think some of them finished later on. Perhaps elsewhere. Or very likely elsewhere. But this happened to several people. And of course, I suppose the occasional person dropped out because of illness or maybe a change in family situation. But it wasn't common, but it did happen.

OP: Did any of the girls ever elope?

EA: Yes, and you know, in fact I had a classmate who was married in the spring of her senior year [6:34]. And she married a Brown man and they kept it a secret because they would've both been expelled.

OP: Why would they have been expelled?

EA: Because there was an absolute rule you weren't allowed to marry. You see how things have changed?

OP: What was the reasoning behind that, do you know?

EA: I don't know. Apparently it… I don't know if it was considered bad for morale, or disrupting, but it was a rule. When that was changed, I don't know. I don't know, but I know it was true, and I was particularly aware of it, because—and I know that uh later my friend told me that she wanted to ask me they—they went away and married, somewhere out of town, to go with her, you see, to be an attendant so to speak, and then decided that—that it would be too great a burden to ask me to do this because I'd have to keep it a secret, and it wasn't fair to ask me to do that. So I—I know that this was true, it was a positively medieval rule, but it was what was held then, and how long that lasted I don't—I don't remember.

OP: But your classmate was successful in keeping the secret until she graduated?

EA: Yes, she was, and she's had a very successful marriage.

OP: I wanted to ask you, do you remember any black students?

EA: Yes, there was one black student.

OP: Who was that?

EA: Let me see, if her picture is here. I have a few pictures and some, it was the very last one on—I can't remember. I think she's a mix of black and Indian. And there's only one I labeled with names now you see. Yes, there she is. This was our—our, in 1974. Let me see. Excuse me. First row…Estelle Lingham.

OP: Was that an issue at all? That she was black?

EA: I didn't think so at all. I don't think so. Now I didn't happen to know her in college. We weren't in any of the same classes. But I never heard anyone speak disparagingly about her.

OP: Did she go to the school dances?

EA: That I don't remember, so probably she didn't. There's an interesting article about some black students by people who've been out of college a long time. One of them about my time and the other—that is in college at my time—and the other years later there was several students. And it's in the current *Brown Alumni Monthly*. You might be interested in looking at it, because I remember that—I haven't quite finished reading it, but one of them said—these are sisters—one of them said that they commuted from Pawtucket, and at some point one of them wanted to live in the dormitory and was not allowed to do so.

OP: Yeah, did this woman live in the dormitory?

EA: I don't think she did. I don't think so, but I don't remember. I'm sorry, but I don't know anything about uh, I didn't remember her in college at all. But she has come back for every reunion. I think she has some ties with South County in Rhode Island, where there is a rather small Indian population, and I think she is a mix. She uh—she's a, but she has always come back for reunions.

OP: So she must have good memories of it, if she always comes back.

EA: Well it would seem it, doesn't it? Wouldn't it.

OP: Do you remember the Rhode Island Society for the Collegiate—

EA: The Collegiate Education of Women, yes.

OP: What kind of things did they do?

EA: I don't really know, I was not ever a member. They—well I shouldn't say I don't know, I know what it is. They were a – this was a very important group of women who helped

apparently tremendously uh when a few women were trying to Brown you see, and as the name implies, they believed strongly in the education of women. There was a great movement for the advanced education of women, you know, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and this, I perhaps began then, I don't know. But, uh, that's all I can tell you. But it was a very strong movement, and they were very strong women in it. And they really accomplished a lot.

OP: I think they were instrumental in getting Alumnae Hall funding?

EA: They helped, yes. And of course, alumni helped too.

OP: What did you do during the summers between school?

EA: Well now the first time I remember as I told you I spent the summer teaching myself to type. And the next two summers I don't think I did anything productive. And the third one—the next summer, I think in the meantime I was a senior, took a part-time job. Very part-time, I think I worked only one day or one evening a week at a club called the Plantations Club, which no longer exists, but it was a residential club for women [13:44]. Running the switchboard. It was a small club, not a large switchboard, but it was rather interesting, and I'm sure I did some of that during the summer, I don't remember how much time I gave.

OP: You worked as a volunteer, or for pay?

EA: No. For pay. It was the first time I had any, I remember thinking there were additional expenses senior year, and I remember thinking that. Oh, maybe I—maybe I started that the summer before, I don't remember, but I remember thinking my parents had been generous and I wanted to do something to earn a little money, so I did that.

OP: Your parents paid for you through school?

EA: Yes, yes.

OP: Was that a hardship for them at all?

EA: No, but I'm sure they—not a tremendous hardship, but I'm sure they made some sacrifices to do so. I'm sure they did.

OP: But you didn't work regularly during the summers?

EA: No, I was very lucky. I had a very close friend whose parents didn't approve of college for her anyway. This particular family, you'll be interested to know, were of German background, and lived in Germany, and I think her—they both felt the women's place was either in the home, or working. At least they didn't approve of higher education for women. I know her sister went to a—took a business course, and that they approved of, you see. And the one son, he was supposed to go to college. And the irony was that he didn't want to go to college. And she worked, and worked very hard all through college. I cite that as an example of that. And she—I think she almost entirely financed her tuition. She did all kinds of things. And I remember one morning, one of her jobs was reading to a blind person, and occasionally I did that too when she couldn't go, and that was interesting when she couldn't go, I went in her place. But that was only occasionally, I had forgotten all about that. And so, but there were some people who did, who did work, but I would say the majority of my friends did not. We were fortunate to have parents. And I don't mean that it was easy for my parents, because the income was a modest income, but it was—it was quite possible [16:41].

OP: What were your expectations when you graduated?

EA: I thought that I—I guess I said—that I would teach. But when I was a—toward the end of my senior year I was asked if I would like to stay on and do graduate work.

OP: Who asked you?

EA: Dean Morriss. I'm sure it was Dean Morriss. And two years, instead of one, and work part-time in the College Personnel office. And I didn't intend to do this. I intended—I didn't tend to

do anymore studying immediately, I didn't intend to stay in Providence. But this was '29, and the beginning of The Depression years, and jobs were not easy to find, and I thought well if I had a Master's degree it might be easier. And of course, it was a very—a very attractive offer, I had free tuition. Though it was a nature of a fellowship really.

OP: So that's what you meant by she asked you to stay.

EA: Yes, yes. I should've said she offered me this I guess you'd call it a fellowship. And uh, this was something, I don't know that it was the first time, but it was quite a new program. And I had a classmate who was asked to do the very same thing, and only she was to be an assistant in Admissions. And we both took our degrees in English. And that's when I met my husband.

OP: While you were doing graduate work?

EA: Mm hmm. Yes. He'd come to Brown in 1927, and as you see was—1929—the, you'll be interested that the director of admissions was also the director of personnel, Ms. Mooar whom I spoke of. And she had an assistant in admissions. And she had another—oh, I'm mistaken, my classmate who was asked to stay on, was assistant reporter, that was it, not admissions. But there was an assistant in admissions and she did remember one admissions office instead of the huge staff there is now, and was one of sixteen. But she doubled, you see, because she did the personnel, which meant that her office handled part-time student employment, and then what now would be called career planning. And what I did was handle student employment. And that was very difficult, because the Depression was growing worse. And it was very difficult to find a job for a student, and the, almost the only jobs available were living in a home, doing housework, helping take care of children. Then there were a few others. Those were the majority of the jobs for students.

OP: Wasn't there even some bias against women working in The Depression?

EA: I would say not. I really would say not. I—I went on then and when I left graduate work, you see that was 1931, and it was even much worse then, and there just were no teaching jobs. I

mean it was really, the situation is quite comparable to the present situation, and that's why I really identify with people leaving college, or leaving high school and looking for jobs, it's very difficult. And I had an opportunity to take a job in a social work related field, and so I stayed on, and did that. So I never did teach.

OP: Can we back up just a second?

EA: Yes.

OP: You said that when you were offered the fellowship, you potentially wanted to travel, or to leave Providence?

EA: No, not to, initially. You know in those days young people didn't travel as they do now. Uh, no I wanted to leave Providence for a job.

OP: Oh I see. Was there a specific—

EA: Because I thought it was—teaching—I thought it was time for me to break away from my family.

OP: You'd been living with them all this time [21:48].

EA: I'd been living at home. Mm, as most of my friends did you see. This was the pattern then, women tended to stay at home until they married and established their own home. But, uh, I uh, I thought it would be wise to get a teaching job out of town. You know probably in a Providence school where you're lived at the school, but, or not necessarily. But uh, out of the city. But you see, I did all of the things I didn't plan to do: I stayed in Providence, I did more studying.

OP: You lived with your parents when you were doing graduate school?

EA: Yes, yes. Oh in those days the salaries were so—well I didn't have a salary you see. Not at all, because, and I was working hard. I mean I wouldn't have found time to teach. That is, you know there are some people with so much energy, they seem to be able to do three or four jobs. I never had that much energy. Yes, I lived—I lived at home.

OP: So you said you went on to do work in social work.

EA: Yes, yes because there were no teaching jobs. And there again, as I told you, at that point I was sure I was going away, you see I had my master's degree, but there just weren't any teaching jobs. This job came along, and it was something, um well I wasn't prepared, this was not to do casework, but an agency needed—well I better back up myself. There were very few social agents in the early thirties existing. Then suddenly, there was a—because of the needs of people without jobs it was a tremendous proliferation of agencies to assist people [23:57]. There was a need, and they came, and then of course then, you probably have read about the New Deal and the money that became available from the government. And I was asked to set up a file listing people who were known to social agencies—welfare, health, children services, whatever, to avoid duplication. So it was in the nature of a huge index, and you understand I had no experience, nobody else you see, it was uh—what would now correspond to United Way, it was known as the Community Fund and this was the Council of Social Agency and I was, they were looking for somebody to do this, and uh, I made it plain that I didn't know what, how to do it. And they said "Nobody's ever done it before, so nobody can tell you." So it was what is known as a challenge. And I stayed for five years. In the meantime marrying in 1933, and I worked for two and a half years after I married. And, of course, all my friends were too, working. Whether married or not, because uh, their, the men they married may not have had jobs, you see?

OP: Was that common?

EA: Fairly common. You know, women, and then of course in other cases, and then at one point, bring in, this was an emergency job we were doing in the it was then known as the Exchange and it became known as the Index because that's what it was, this great file of names. There were young people working for what was known as the WPA. That was the Work

Progress Administration. And that was set up with federal money to pay salaries to people in lieu of jobs. And, uh, there were several young women who came to work for me who were supporting large families. The father had no job, and these young people out of their small salaries were supporting an entire family [26:43].

OP: Do you know, I mean did you have friends that had class tensions in their marriage or relationships. If the wife was working—

EA: And the husband not. Uh, if so it wasn't talked about. It wasn't talked about. But I know I considered myself very fortunate because George was teaching, and the job was secure. Brown did ask the faculty, and the administration staff to take a ten percen—well they didn't ask, they said we have to give you a ten percent cut. And there wasn't a word of protest. You know now, if that, if that happened in most organizations it would be a great huge cry and the unions would protest, but everybody there felt so grateful to be working, and so many people around them who with good educations were not working. 'Course this was only temporary, and maybe a matter of two or three years, or less, and then husbands found jobs.

OP: When you met your husband, what was he doing?

EA: He was in the English Department. He had come as an assistant professor.

OP: Was that your first big, serious relationship, or?

EA: Yes, yes. Oh yes indeed

OP: And how long did you know him before you got married?

EA: We met in…I guess it was the fall of '29. But about four years.

OP: That's a long time.

EA: That's a long time, yes. But, uh, his salary was miniscule, and I wanted to work a while before I married.

OP: Had you expected that you would stop working when you married?

EA: No, because most people—most people didn't. Women did work. I think as I remember, all my classmates, married or not, were working. You know we just took it for granted that we worked. And wanted to.

OP: So when did you have children?

EA: Our first child came—I say came because I wasn't able to have children, and I had to have a hysterectomy early on. And we adopted our first child, our daughter, in um 1939, so that was—I worked 'til 1936, and uh then, we went abroad for a while, and uh—oh just the summer, not, and I thought, you know, we'd start our family, and uh, but it didn't happen. So I went back to work at Pembroke for about, a couple of years, part-time in the Alumnae Office, but it was our first child. And then, you see, came the war. You know, normally you wait a couple years, but the war came and George thought he might have to go because he had a very low number. Everybody had a number and you were called. But he didn't and instead he—well he wasn't called, and also during the war years at Brown he taught math. The faculty were asked to volunteer if they could teach either math or chemistry. And George, who'd had one year—well however long, of astronomy in college, and liked it very much volunteered to teach navigation, and did so. And taught more math than English during the war years. He also taught something you call baby math. You know, I guess the elementary forms. So that was not the—the uncertainty of life, and it was uncertain—was such that we didn't have our second child until 1945. So there was a six-year interval, which certainly we wouldn't have chosen to do. But uh, but we always said we wouldn't possibly want to do it any differently, because we wouldn't have had the son we had if we had done that early on. So we had just the two children [31:52].

OP: Did you stay at home with the children then, when you adopted your first?

EA: Yes, I didn't work again until John was in um, until he was in his early teens, and then I worked just one day a week. Something I still do. Um, I did a lot of organizational work. You know I worked in, well I was active in the [American] Association of University Women. And then I became a president of the Ladies of Faculty. I did that kind of thing. Little bit in the League of Women Voters, so I did that, but uh, by the time he was as I say in his early teens, I wanted to do something outside of the women. So I went to work one day a week, and writing case work summaries for the Court. As it happens, adoption summaries, but that was just by chance, for the family court, and I still do that. But I work at home now, and I do less than I used to. But it's been a long interest. So you see my type—I told you the typing was very useful.

OP: You mentioned League of Women Voters. I wanted to ask you when did you first vote?

EA: Oh, just as soon as I was old enough to vote.

OP: So when you were in Pembroke you voted?

EA: Well, now let me think. Oh I'm sure I did, I'm sure I did. Because I was terribly excited. Well if you ask me what year it was, and whom I voted for, I haven't the faintest recollection, but I was excited to vote.

OP: Did your friends vote?

EA: Oh, I'm assuming so. I think we all did. I mean, I think we thought it was important.

OP: So there was a real feeling [inaudible].

EA: Oh yes.

OP: You must've seen Brown go through a lot of changes, especially being—

EA: Oh, oh I have. I've seen every change. The growth of the administration particularly, I mentioned the number of, you know the Ms. Mooar's carrying that double job and, and, unassisted. And I've seen—and of course the whole college. And I think in the recent years, the medical school again has made this vast increase in faculty. Yes, I've seen a lot of changes. Oh, I think an institution has to grow and change, even if it isn't quite as cozy as it used to be. It has to. Or it doesn't stand still, it tends to slip back [35:24].

OP: How do you feel educational opportunities for women have changed from what you've seen especially with your grandchildren?

EA: I would assume, that there is a mark— that there are many, well I know that there are many, many more opportunities. Really.

OP: How do you feel, what do you think you could out of your education that was most important?

EA: I think I enjoyed it. I suppose that in a liberal arts education is the fact that you can, you find that you can do a variety of things. For example, for that first job I turned to a necessity, was something that I absolutely had no idea what to do and there was nobody to tell me what to do. And I just by trial and error worked it out, and I do think, and I think that my graduate training, the research, the writing of papers, the synthesizing information, has helped in this job that I've been doing for so many years. You know taking a lot of material and boiling it down, and picking out the essential things [37:09].

OP: The other thing I wanted to ask about… oh yeah, do you go to reunions now, you mentioned?

EA: Yes, I do. Because I've lived here, it's simple to go, you see. And I've always been interested in the class. And for a few—two or three years I was class president, until I, you know, I thought I'd done that and I thought let's let somebody else do that. You know I've always been interested in the class, and I do go to reunions, and I've been fascinated that

reunions. Not in recent years because we haven't changed so much, but in the early years, and then when we were about middle-aged, I would say about fifty, some of the women who were big women on campus, well some of them don't come, but some of them have lost interest in it entirely, or haven't developed. And sometimes some of the retiring, you know most of the women who have developed into very interesting women who do interesting work, and are more attractive as their own. I find that fascinating. And I know there are people who say "Oh, that's so depressing to go to a reunion," but I don't find it so.

OP: What about the women's movement?

EA: Probably have thought—not given it as much thought as I would have twenty years ago. But, I think it's good. I think I have sometimes been put off by abrasive women, who, do you know the kind of personality I mean? But I think the general philosophy is good and important.

OP: Did you read Betty Freidan's book by any chance?

EA: No my daughter did [laughter], but I, I didn't. But I've read quotes from her, but did I sit down and read the book? No, I didn't. But I know in general what she said, and I've been interested in, but she seems, she seems to have a somewhat softer personality. [**After 39:50 most of the rest of the recording is inaudible**]. Have you been aware of that?

OP: [inaudible]

EA: Well I didn't read the book but I've read, I've her speak [inaudible] before, and read from her current speeches, and gathered what she has [inaudible]. But she has, oh she's [inaudible].

OP: [inaudible].

EA: [inaudible].

OP: [inaudible].

EA: No, no I've. I do think that traditionally women have not been paid enough. I really don't think that [inaudible]. And I supposed that's horrible [inaudible]. I think, I think it's good that women are, have become aware that they need to express themselves [inaudible]. I'm sure. On the other hand there are women that look for [inaudible]. But you see, I don't think I'm really equipped because I'm not actively involved in the women's movement.

OP: I wanted to ask you two more questions. What would you say [inaudible].

EA: Now you talk about college?

OP: Or in general.

EA: Oh, well I'll tell you [inaudible]. It was a beautiful Saturday. It was a stimulating atmosphere. That was a very [unclear] of our lives. [Inaudible].

[End of Part 2]

[End]