

Transcript – Marguerite Appleton '14

Narrator: Marguerite Appleton

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Marguerite Appleton: Well, I'm Marguerite Appleton. I'm class of 1914, Brown, and my father was a professor at Brown, John Howard Appleton, and he was a professor for 50 years, he taught straight. He taught chemistry. And I had two older sisters go through college, Ruth, who was the oldest – she graduated in 1902, and Alice, who graduated in 19– gracious, when did she graduate? Six. Then I had three brothers who went through.

Q: Who went to Brown?

MA: Yes, they all went to Brown. My father was rather proud. Six children graduated from Brown.

Q: I guess that was the reason that you went to Brown.

MA: Well, partly so, and partly because a poor professor. Now, in those days, professors' children did not get scholarships – I mean – financial aid. [01:00] You had to pay a tuition like anybody else, and he had six children, and so he – poor professor – and so that was one reason. And he was proud to send his children through Brown, you see. Now the first year, when I was a freshman, they didn't have semesters. They had a three-term system. And I remember that the tuition – this didn't, of course, include books or anything – but the tuition was \$86 a term. So you can see how much it's changed, now. Of course, after that, the year that I was a sophomore – and for the other three years, and from then on – they've had the semester system.

Q: We were talking about it before, but maybe you could repeat the story about the sororities – Dean King. [02:00]

MA: Well, Miss Lida Shaw King, whose father was minister of the First Baptist Church – she was the dean, and she conducted the chapel services, which we had five days a week – four days, I think, a week. And I don't know whether she was very much liked or not, because you didn't get to know the dean very well, but one of the things I was speaking to you about during lunch was that when I was a freshman, she announced – because this was – evidently, she had thought this over, and this was a great belief of hers – and she announced that there would be no pledging for the sororities until the sophomore year, which meant there were only, now, [03:00] three classes of students who belonged to sororities, you see. Well then, the next year, she just abolished the sororities. Speaking about it, I remember well, in chapel – and chapel was held, in those days, on the top floor of Pembroke, which is now, I guess, the library.

Q: Mm-hmm.

MA: Well, chapel was held there, and it was required, and you went. You had so many cuts during the semester, but you had to go. And so the whole student body was there when she announced that she was abolishing sororities.

Q: So one day, she just came in and announced it.

MA: Now, I suppose. Of course I, as a student, didn't know that she had talked it over with the president and, perhaps, the members of the corporation, so they backed her. So she just couldn't abolish sororities without, [04:00] perhaps, some understanding by Dr. Faunce, but it was a great blow to many of us – to me, because I had two older sisters who had been members of the Kappa Alpha Theta.

Q: I guess that was the way decisions were done then. The dean could just make a decision and –

MA: Yes, well, we had student government, and I don't know how much control, or what student government did very much, but we had what was called student government. But there, at those days, with 90% of the students living at home, the student government and the student council – as I recall, I guess – were not very active. They were respected, and the president of the student government was an important student, a senior, who would be a senior. [05:00] But as I recall, they didn't really do very much. I don't know.

Q: So there was nothing that the girls could do about that decision, when the Dean King made it?

MA: No, nothing.

Q: No such thing as campus protest.

MA: And it was, as I said to you, a very bitter disappointment to you, because – well, I loved Kappa Alpha Theta, because my two older sisters had belonged.

Q: Do you remember – I think I asked you this before. Do you remember any of the songs or –

MA: Well, I don't remember them very well. No, I guess I don't. The colors were black and gold, I think, and I remember the pretty pin. I still have the pin that my sister had. She was the unmarried one, you see, but of course, I can never wear it.

Q: That's because you weren't in the sorority.

MA: No, because I didn't belong. But while we were in college, we were sophomores then, and there were two classes ahead of us who were sorority members, you see – most of them. [06:00] And they, the sorority members, were very, very kind to us, at least to these two other girls – we three sisters. Now, whom else would have been in my class asked to join, I just don't know. We never discussed it with the others – never. But they were very kind and friendly, but that was all. When they had their meetings were secret.

Q: You couldn't go.

MA: No, no, no.

Q: What sorts of things did they used to do – the sororities?

MA: I don't know.

Q: You don't know from your sisters?

MA: No. They were just chiefly social, as I remember. I think they had a dance once a year, something like that. They had meetings, perhaps once a month. I don't know. I remember my sister, Alice, was – I think – president of the society when she was a senior, [07:00] but it was so secret – I didn't even know that. I used to have a picture of the members of the sorority, and she sat in the middle, so that's all I can say. My sister, Ruth, who was the oldest of the family, she was a very, very scholarly person and an excellent student, and she wasn't as social as my sister, Alice. So anyway, I was just a youngster when she – my sister, Ruth – was in college. She graduated in 1902, as I say, and I was just a youngster – a child.

Q: What year were you born? 18–

MA: Me? Well, this is off the record, please.

Q: We don't have to say it, then.

MA: No, I was born after the Civil War. (laughter) [08:00]

Q: OK. Then, you told me you were on the tennis team.

MA: Yes. Now, we used to play indoor tennis – I remember – and we played at the gymnasium. The gymnasium had been built just a few years, perhaps, before I went to college. And in the old days, when my middle sister was a student, they used to have gymnasium classes in the top floor, which is now the library, because I remember visiting and going there and seeing, and the teacher was a nice teacher, and she taught marching and club-swinging.

Q: What was club-swinging?

MA: Indian clubs.

Q: What was that? It was a sport – club-swinging?

MA: No, it was just a form of exercise. And she taught, and they did marching. I don't know what else, but I used to go and watch them. [09:00]

Q: Did you have to take physical education?

MA: I didn't have to take it. We were physically – they gave us a looking-over, first.

Q: You didn't have to take classes in physical education?

MA: No. We had gymnastics, as we called it, twice a week.

Q: Maybe that's the same thing.

MA: Yes, physical education – and we had marching and we would swing Indian clubs. And then, they played basketball, but I never played. I wasn't that interested.

Q: Did you have to climb ropes?

MA: I don't think so. I never did that.

Q: I've seen some pictures we have of the girls climbing ropes.

MA: Maybe they did, but I remember dancing. We liked dancing very much, indeed. Have they told you about the sophomore masque?

Q: Mm-hmm. You can tell me what you remember about it.

MA: Well, I know that our class flower was blue, and the one ahead of me was pink – sweet pea, I think – [10:00] and I've forgotten what the senior class was. And when we gave the sophomore masque, which was to tell the class – to introduce our flower, class flower, to the others. And you inherited the color from the former graduating class. There was pink and blue and yellow, I think, and maybe white. I don't remember – maybe green, I don't remember. But I do remember that the class ahead of us – the color was pink, and it was a sweet pea. And when we had the sophomore masque, I had a solo dance. I was a sweet pea.

Q: What did you have to do?

MA: I was dressed. I had a special pink costume, and I had sweet pea flowers here, and I gave a solo dance and so forth. I love that kind of dancing.

Q: What sort of dancing was it?

MA: Well, it was like [11:00] the great dances of today. You see them on the TV and all. I couldn't stand on tiptoe, but I had ballet slippers, and I danced. The masque was written, The story of the masque – I think it was about Robin Hood – if I recall – by one of our students, the members of my class.

Q: Was it a real presentation, or was it a satirical?

MA: A what?

Q: Was it a satire of the story, or was it the real story?

MA: Well, yes. And then, we presented, you see, our class flower. I've forgotten who served as the flower, but I was, as I say – it's a compliment to the class ahead of me – I was the sweet pea.

Q: What other sorts of things did the girls used to do for social –

MA: Social [work?]. Not much. They had a dramatic society. I've forgotten the name of it, now.

Q: The [Comians?]? [12:00]

MA: The Comians – they used to put on plays.

Q: Were you ever in those?

MA: No, I wasn't ever in it. My mother objected violently, in the first place. It took my time when I should be studying, and secondly, she didn't want me to go up at night, say, and go to rehearsals.

Q: Your mother was strict with you.

MA: Well, fairly. She was a Victorian lady, you see. She was fairly and didn't want me to even go over to Pembroke for the rehearsals, and also at night. I don't think I was very much interested anyway, and so it wasn't a hardship not to act. Well then, we had bowling teams. We played tennis indoors. I guess that was about all that we did. [13:00] And we used to have about a dance a year, each class. When the sororities, you see, were there, they would give a dance. The sororities would give a dance. I guess my sister went – my sisters – I don't recall. But of course, we didn't have any. I didn't go anyway, because there weren't any after my sophomore year, you see.

Q: Did you go to the campus dances?

MA: Not over on campus, no.

Q: Not the sorority ones, but the –

MA: The regular class – yeah.

Q: – like the junior prom and those. Did you – you went to that.

MA: Oh yeah, but not over on the campus, not with the Brown boys. You didn't see many Brown boys.

Q: What do you mean? How did that work?

MA: Well, we could have a junior prom.

Q: And you could invite the –

MA: And we could invite anybody we wanted – Brown student or else. But we very rarely – and we had practically nothing to do with the Brown students. [14:00]

Q: Really? Even at the dances?

MA: No. Well, I don't remember ever going to dances over on the campus.

Q: But if you had a dance on the women's campus, the Brown men would come?

MA: Yes, if they were invited – otherwise, not. Oh, I knew quite a few of them, and I knew them at the dances, you know, that were held in the gymnasium.

Q: What were those like – those dances?

MA: Oh, they were very nice. We had a small orchestra about 3:00, and the dance about, say, 8:00. You got there rather early – eight o'clock – and you danced till, say – oh, 10:00, I guess that's all. And then, you were taken home. One of the ladies I know now, who's a member of the Central Church, her husband used to come and I always had that-- She had a card, you know – you filled out. And he always [asked people?] for one, [15:00] if not two dances. Then, the man you went with – you could always have at least four dances with him, the first dance, the one before intermission, and the one after intermission, and last dance.

Q: And then he took you home?

MA: Then he took me home. And the first year I was out of college, a group of ladies – girls, and my friends – ran a dancing class up at Froebel Hall, which is now that Jewish building on Brown Street. Hillel – I guess – they call it. Well, we had them there. And I [belonged?] and asked one of the men. We used to go up there for dances every – a dancing class, it was called – every two weeks. We had a lovely time. Then Ivy Day was one of the big days, which I suppose Mrs. [Burroughs?] and others talked to you about.

Q: Well, I've heard about it from other people, [16:00] but I don't think I understand the idea behind Ivy Day.

MA: Well, I think it wasn't – it was just a Pembroke celebration. Now, commencement, were – a Brown celebration, and the girls weren't given much part in it, you see, in the Brown celebration and commencement. As you know, even – well, all the time I was in college, we didn't march down the hill with the men. We weren't allowed to. We weren't included. The seniors marched all alone quietly down Angell Street – Angell Hill. We did sit in the Baptist church. We were allowed to take part in that, and the



girls got their diplomas first, before the men, and the parents were there and all. And in those days, the student body and the senior class wasn't so large, but what – the parents could be in the church and up in the galleries and so forth. [17:00]

Q: That must have seemed unfair, that you couldn't go with the –

MA: Well, it did seem unfair, but we accepted it and that's the way had been. We'd always accepted it.

Q: There were no girls who wanted it to be different?

MA: Well, I don't know. They never even talked about it. That's one of the things you did. If you went to college, you accepted that. I mean – that was of the custom. And I don't know when the first – when they changed that, and the first class was able to march with the men.

Q: I can't remember. I used to know which year it was.

MA: I don't know because after I was through college. Now, the girls got their diplomas first. Now, as my name began with A, I marched up. And Dr. Faunce, up on the platform – and Dr. Faunce presented the diplomas to us. And I was the first one up. I stood at the top of the steps, and he addressed me in Latin. And then, I came forward and took my diploma, and for one-half second, I was the first person in my class to graduate, [18:00] because all the others were behind me.

Q: That's exciting.

MA: Of course, we knew – I knew, and my parents knew, Dr. and Mrs. Faunce fairly well, you see. And he was the person, all the time, that I (inaudible). Well then, when I got my Master's degree, I, again, got it at the First Baptist Church. But my doctor's degree, because we had such a large group – by this time, they were graduating – the seniors were a good many. These exercises were held in Sayles Hall, and those getting the doctor's degrees stood up together. There were six of us – men and women – who got the degree up on the platform at Sayles Hall, and Dr. Faunce was still the president.

Q: What year did you do that?

MA: That was quite late – '28.

Q: And what field did you get that in?

MA: History.

Q: And when you left college, right – immediately afterwards, you went to teach. [19:00]

MA: No, not right off. I didn't know what to do. And my older sister, who was a very great influence on me, didn't like teaching at all. She said, "Oh no, you don't want to teach." Well then, I accepted that, and for three or four years, I just didn't do anything much. I tried this, and I tried that. Well then, two things happened. First off, I did some substitute teaching at Lincoln School. The president of Lincoln School – the chairman there – was a friend and a classmate of my sister, Alice's, and she knew me, because I used to visit up there a lot – I mean, from my sister, Alice's, class. And her father was quite ill, and she asked me, personally – because she knew me – if I would take her classes at Lincoln School for a half a year, and I did, [20:00] and it was English. And I enjoyed it. I went down to Lincoln School, and I enjoyed it. Well then, the next year, the art teacher was getting a year off, I think, and I enjoyed it.

And then, I finally decided, "I guess I'd like teaching." So I went back and got my Master's degree, you see. Meanwhile, my sister, Alice, didn't think much of it. And then, a Pembroke graduate who was a friend of my older sister's, was teaching at Wheaton. And I was asked by somebody there to help at Wheaton, which I did. I used to go up there and taught, say, three days a week. Well, she told me – this friend who was on the faculty at Wheaton – she said, "You'll never get anywhere – advance in teaching, if you like college teaching – [21:00] if you don't have a doctor's degree," which is true. So I went back to Brown. I spent one year at Columbia, or one summer in summer school, but my father said to me, "Why go to Columbia or anywhere? There's a fine college here." So I stayed on at Brown and got my doctor's degree.

Q: How many years did that take?

MA: It took, I think, about four years.

Q: Going to school full-time?

MA: Yes, I went up there, and I wrote a thesis, you know. I wrote two theses – one a master's thesis, and one for the doctor's thesis.

Q: What subjects?

MA: History.

Q: What was the topic?

MA: Well, now, for my doctor's thesis was – the relations of the corporate colony of Rhode Island and the British Crown – British government. And that was a regular doctor's thesis. It was accepted by the man who had charge of me, a professor at Brown. I think the name is Crane. [22:00] And so then, I received my degree, and I had, of course, the oral examination there, at the college, for the degree. And I also took an examination – which was required, naturally – French and German.

Q: I guess not too many women, at that time, were getting doctorate degrees.

MA: I don't think so. They got them mostly in science, if they did. They'd get them in chemistry or mathematics, I guess, or something. And I think – the day that I got my degree, I don't think there were more than six, all of us – men and women. One other girl, I recall, got hers – I think – in biology. But the others, I don't recall. I didn't see them. You work by yourself, especially at the end, when you're writing the thesis. [23:00]

Q: By the time you went back to get your other degrees, had it changed a lot for the girls who went to school

MA: I didn't pay any attention. I was a graduate student. I didn't know them at all.

Q: So you lived at home?

MA: Yeah, mostly. And in the Historical Society, because I was writing this history of Rhode Island and you had to – to be accepted, you had to use source material, so I was ultimately in the Historical Society Library. Now, in those days, the Historical Society was not as – let's say – they didn't have as many

members, and it was held in that little building on Waterman Street, on the north side, next to what was the first library, that gothic-y building on the corner of Prospect and Waterman, you know – very gothic-like and brick. That used to be the library. That was before the John Hay was built. [24:00] Well, the Historical Society is in that building next door, and it was just used by scholars of the (inaudible) of Rhode Island –of the genealogy or something. And there, you got – well, I got what I needed. (inaudible)

Q: So you didn't have too much contact with the [undergraduates?]?

MA: No, not at all. I just never thought of it. I was living at home. As I recall – and I may be wrong – I was in some seminars – at that time, in some of the undergraduates, there. I remember being in a seminar for two years that was held up at the John Hay. And one of the men in the seminar was a very nice fellow. He, of course, was a student there – [25:00] younger than I – but he was very, very friendly, and he later became the dean of students, I guess, at Brown. Bigelow – Bruce Bigelow – very, very nice fellow, very friendly, and I later knew him and his wife quite well. And then, I also knew Sam Arnold, because he was a great friend of my brother, Paul's. And he also was my father's assistant – I think – when he was in college. Later, he became dean of students. And I knew him.. But the others, I didn't know at all, and I have absolutely no recollection who else was in the classes, when I was doing my graduate work.

Q: I'm interested in what you said, that the undergraduate – you didn't think you had to teach.

MA: No.

Q: So (inaudible).

MA: Well, the trouble was, my sister was very influential. [26:00] We were very close friends. We had different interests entirely. She never liked teaching, and my father didn't say anything one way or the other. (inaudible) And my mother was very much a quiet, Victorian mother, and she didn't have a [big?] say. I don't think I asked her. But it was this sister (inaudible). Well she was right in one respect, because I would not like teaching in a public school, and that's what she thought of.

Q: And the dean (inaudible) other things.

MA: No. (inaudible)

Q: So what did you (inaudible)?

MA: Oh, I just fooled around. I didn't do anything. I went back to school up at Froebel Hall for dancing class. (inaudible)

Q: Was that a good time? [27:00]

MA: [I guess so?]. It's a long while ago.

Q: I was just trying to think (inaudible).

MA: Oh, one other thing I did, too – and that told me that I liked (inaudible) teaching – I had a troop of girl scouts. Now, girl scouts – scouting for girls – was just developing around 1917 or so. And scouting for girls was just developing, and it (inaudible) – those who liked it liked it very much. I had a big troop. I had 56 kids from – through the school – kids from Lincoln School, (inaudible). And one of the kids in my class – in my scouts – was Professor (inaudible)'s daughter, Harriet (inaudible). We had a good troop, and I enjoyed it. Well, I taught them. I didn't know a thing about first aid or anything, [28:00] and I just taught and directed them, and I realized that I liked it when (inaudible).

Q: So, it wasn't a big disappointment for (inaudible).

MA: Oh no. I didn't get my degree until after I decided to teach – either of them.

Q: No, but I mean the undergraduate degree.

MA: Oh, I got an AB. No, I didn't have any plans for the future at all.

Q: So, you really went to college as an end in itself, not –

MA: Yes. I went because the rest of the family went, and my father was a professor, and that was the thing to do. There was no question. You do certain things as children, you know. You go to Sunday school. You join the church. You do things like that. You go to dancing school because that's what's

done.

Q: That's right. And I guess neither of your brothers couldn't have gone to college, and then – they had to have plans.

MA: Yes, they did. Now, my brother, Paul, who is the closest one to me in age, was very much interested in science. He did very well, and he became a very successful doctor here, in town. He went to Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General, and he became a very successful doctor.

My brother, [Evrad?], the oldest of the lot, was very, very musical. And he really didn't want to go to college, but he was the oldest son of the professor, so there was no question – you just went. Well, he didn't know what to do. He became a lawyer – very successful. My middle brother, Billy, took a course and graduated in engineering, and he got a job in Mexico. My parents nearly died – Mexico. Well, he stayed there for eight years, and then he had to leave during the Civil War, when Wilson sent troops to the border, so he had to leave. Well then, he was, soon after that, killed in an automobile accident. [30:00] The boys just went to college because of – the boys, their friends – they all went, and that was that.

Q: A little bit different than for girls.

MA: Yeah, and they took different things. Evrad became a lawyer, and as I say, Billy was an engineer. Paul was a doctor.

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