Transcript – Kristie Miller, class of 1966

Narrator: Kristie Miller
Interviewer: Jesse Marmon
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Track 1

Jesse Marmon: [00:00] May 29th, right? This is Jesse Marmon and Kristie Miller. Okay. I feel like I should just say a little something (inaudible) whoever listens to this knows what's going on. The first question that I asked to the bigger group, and that I'd like to ask you, is how and why did you decide to come to Pembroke in the first place?

Kristie Miller: Well, it's a slightly embarrassing story. My parents were divorced, and they both had very different ideas about where I should go to college. My father wanted me to go to Radcliffe because he thought that was the most prestigious, and therefore probably the best, girls' school or co-ed type school. And my mother didn't approve of it at all. She had been a very staunch [01:00] supporter of Joseph McCarthy. She was very anti-communist, and she felt – probably correctly – that the faculty of some of the Ivy League women's colleges were left of her politics by a long shot. So she completely refused to let me go either to Vassar – which I wasn't interested in anyway – or to Radcliffe. Those were the two that she absolutely proscribed. Neither one of them had ever heard of Pembroke, so I was able to go here without arousing too much controversy.

And what really clinched it for me was I had a wonderful interview. When I came up here, it was pouring rain. It was not an auspicious day. But, instead of talking about the sort of ordinary things that other interviewers had talked about, she asked me about what I liked to read. And I love to read. So we just talked about books the whole time. We didn't have to talk about my [02:00] biography. By then, I was really bored with it. And so I thought, "This is a really stimulating place, if this woman is any example." And so that's why I really felt happy here, and I loved it here.

I have to say, that after I'd been here for a year and a half, my mother realized that this was really not all that different from Radcliffe, in terms of the fact that there was a liberal atmosphere. And she persuaded me to go to the University of New Mexico for one semester. And we sort of made a deal. I said, "Okay, if I don't like it, then I go back to Pembroke, and you don't ever bother me about this topic anymore." And I hated it there. It was a really interesting experience because I came back here and practically kissed the ground. I'd never – and I've lived in a lot of very strange places since then – I've never been in a place [03:00] where I felt worse culture shock. It just was such a completely non-academic atmosphere. The teachers were excellent. And I realized then that you could get good teachers anywhere. In fact, one of my best teachers at Brown, Edwin Honig had been a professor at the University of New Mexico prior to coming here. So the teachers were excellent. But, it's the student body that makes a big difference. You can learn so much from your fellow students, and so that was very educational, too.

JM: Did the fact that Pembroke was on a coordinate system, and that you would be taking classes with boys, versus a school like Smith, or Wellesley, or a place like that – did that play any role in your decision?

KM: Oh, yes. I really wanted to go to a co-educational school, and Brown was essentially co-educational by then. [04:00] The only classes that we had separate were gym, and I just took the bare minimum. I think it was just one semester. Maybe it was a whole year of gym. And of course, then we had separate housing, which I liked. I mean, nobody had mixed housing, and I would have been horrified. But I had gone to a private girls' school as a secondary school. I'd liked it fine, but I was certainly ready to be with men and have classes with men by that point.

JM: Had your mother gone to college?

KM: Yes, she went to Bennington for two years, and then she left to get married. She was not at all academically interested. In fact, I think always sort of discouraged my academic interest. When I graduated from college, she gave me a sewing machine. She didn't do anything to try to get a job – help me get a job. Although she helped my husband get a job [05:00] in journalism, which

is what I had done as an undergraduate. I had worked on *The Brown Daily Herald.* When I did get a job teaching, she thought this was not a good idea. And it's ironic, because her mother – about whom I later wrote a biography – was one of the pioneer women in politics, and had a career all her life. And my mother had a career. She'd been the editor of a big metropolitan newspaper – the publisher for a number of years – and then had gone into horse breeding. But when I got a job, she said she thought it would interfere with my obligation to entertain my husband's business associates. She always felt that education was very overrated. That real experience was what counted. That was sort of her family tradition on that.

My father went to college, and in fact, his mother [06:00] went to college, which was quite unusual. She graduated from Rockford College, which is where Jane Adams had gone – after Jane Adams, of course. She graduated, I believe, it was in 1915. But, on the other hand, she did not do anything professionally. She was a housewife. And her husband had also been a college graduated. And then my father went to college, too.

JM: When you got to Pembroke, tell me about where you lived and what it was like in terms of living the residential life. The rules, the regulations, and what you thought of all of that.

KM: I liked it very much. I lived in Andrews Hall for three years, and the adjacent Metcalf Hall for the fourth year. When I [07:00] went back for my 25th reunion, what struck me about the changes were that it was less like a home, and much more institutional. When we were there, there was a receptionist on the ground floor. All the other doors to the building were locked. But the front doors, in the center of Andrews, were opened, and there was a receptionist there, who screened your call. And when somebody came to visit you, she would phone up to your room. We had a little intercom in our room – it wasn't a phone – but an intercom with the receptionist – and then she would tell you that you had a visitor, and you would come down. And there were two lounges there, and you would entertain gentlemen callers in the lounge.

When I went to the dining hall for my 25th, I was appalled by how shabby everything was. All the buildings here look very shabby to me. They were much better maintained when I was there. There was a beautiful mural, which is still [08:00] there. I think it's still kind of dingy looking. Or at least it was there five years ago, in the dining hall. It was only for the women. And we ate family-style, with the food brought to the table, and then served around by the girls.

I was in the Brown Convocation Choir. Convocation was then required of everybody. Two Brown classes did it one day, and then two more the next day, and then Pembroke the third day. And then we had two days of rehearsals. So on the days when we sang at Brown, it was a little five-minute song at the beginning of the convocation. And the convocation was a speaker. And that was required, and they took attendance.

JM: And how often did that –

KM: That was once a week. As I said, we rehearsed Mondays and Tuesdays, and then freshmen and sophomore men were Wednesdays, and I don't know the exact days but it was like that. And the juniors and seniors were Thursdays, and the Pembrokers were Fridays. On the days when we sang at Brown, [09:00] we would sometimes eat at the Brown refectory, which was called the rat factory, as I'm sure you know. And we were appalled at their terrible manners compared to ours. I appreciated that sort of gentility.

Also, I liked the fact that we had a curfew. It was very useful if you went out with some guy that you wanted to ditch. You could just say, "Gee, I have to be home at 12." And there you were, safe. Also, most of the women that I knew dated a lot. And so it meant that we were all locked up together at 12, and then you could see each other. Whereas, I think if it had been completely open, these girls would have been out a lot, and I would not have had the opportunity to get so close to them. You also met many people in the dining hall – many girls in the dining hall – that you would just sit next to randomly, and then strike up a friendship. So I liked [10:00] the living. I never found the housing onerous. When I did, I'm sorry to say, I had a friend who had a ground floor room, and I would just go in and out through her window.

Also, the second half of my junior year and the first half of my senior year, I was on the board of *The Brown Daily Herald*. I was the editor of the literary magazine, and therefore, as such, on the board. On the nights when it was my turn to help publish the newspaper – in those days it was published on Federal Hill. We had to take it up there. So I had a permission to stay out later and that satisfied the need I had for occasionally being rebellious about the curfew.

JM: You said that you were on *The Brown Daily Herald*. From what I know, a lot of the organizations, a lot of the clubs, were [11:00] merging at this time. Pembroke organizations and

Brown organizations were sort of coming together. In Grace [Hops'?] book she calls it "an era of progressive entanglement" because the two schools were really coming together. And you mentioned earlier that essentially Pembroke was a co-ed school. What did you think of the relationship between Pembroke and Brown, and was there any talk of a merger at this time? What were the attitudes surrounding the relationship between the two schools?

KM: We Pembrokers felt elitist. We were a smaller school, and we believed – whether correctly or not, I have no idea – that it was harder to get into Pembroke than it was into Brown. We certainly had nothing like the Tom Sawyer cop-out. Which I think, in fact, was good, and probably enriched the student body. But I certainly [12:00] felt – and I think other women felt the same way – that we were elite, and we looked down on them just a little bit. We felt we were better than they were.

On the other hand, there was something about their sort of male aggressiveness – intellectual aggressiveness – that was very appealing and interesting. And so, for example, I preferred to work on *The Brown Daily Herald* than on *The Pembroke Record.* I wanted to be with these guys who were very challenging. And in fact, the editor of *The Brown Daily Herald* at the time is now the political columnist of *The Providence Journal*, Charlie Bakst. And he continues to be a mentor to me. I now write a weekly column for my hometown paper in Illinois, and I send him my copy, and he critiques it. And he's savage, and correct. And so I always enjoyed that.

I don't remember anybody talking about it. I suppose I just thought it would [13:00] go on in that situation indefinitely. I thought it was a perfectly fine situation to be essentially a co-ed college, but to have little pockets – like our dormitories – of gentility and elitism. I don't know if that answers your question.

JM: Yeah, I know, it does. It sounds (inaudible) What about the sort of political climate – the larger political climate? For example, Kennedy's assassination and the mood on campus?

KM: Well to begin with, the first thing that happened – and I think it was my freshman year – was the Cuban Missile Crisis. That was the first thing. Last year, I met a boy that I hadn't seen since we were [14:00] students. And we were reminiscing, and he said, "What I remember best

about you is that during the Cuban Missile Crisis, you didn't panic." A lot of people did panic, and they left campus. I guess they thought we were too close to New York, and we were going to be ground zero or something. And I said something like I wasn't going to let a Russian farmer tell me what to do, or something. And I don't know. I just didn't see the seriousness of it, I think, is probably what it was, rather than being brave.

Of course, the Kennedy assassination was completely different. I was saying to Barbara, at the time I wrote down all of my impressions, and that I would send her a transcript. I wrote them in pencil, of all things. I would send her a transcript for the archives. There were just so many bizarre things. [15:00] I was going to a language lab – a tape lab, you know, for studying Spanish – and my boyfriend at that time had met me at my dormitory and walked me over to class – to the lab. And I don't know about things like baseball, so when I saw a lot of people standing on the corner listening to a radio, I thought it was the World Series. Of course, it's much later than the World Series. But I didn't realize that. And for some reason, I had no idea why, I said to him, "Oh, something's going on. Somebody probably shot the president." And I meant it just totally flip. And then then he said, "Oh, yeah, and that would be a good thing, too." Just the way that people tend to snipe at the president. I came, as I said, from this intensely Republican family, [16:00] and I lived in Washington – or my mother lived in Washington – and so we knew all of the rumors about Kennedy and his women, and this, and that, and the other thing. He didn't have the mystique in our family that he had in many other families. So we were just being sort of the usual callow iconoclasts when we said that.

And then, a girl I was very fond of – she was my little sister – I don't know if you have that anymore. When you were a sophomore, you got an incoming freshman to mentor. And she and I had really hit it off. And she, in fact, later married the boy that I was with on that occasion. We were all good friends. But anyway, she was standing on the steps of the building where I was going. And she was laughing hysterically. And she was, in fact, hysterical. And I said to her, "What's the matter?" And she said, "Somebody's shot the president." And then I felt horribly [17:00] psychic. I mean, especially since we'd been joking about it in such an awful way. And then she began to weep. Again, I didn't feel what many other women felt – what many other people felt – because he was not this sort of god-like creature to me. So, I went in, and started doing my lab. And then the lab instructor came in and said, "No, no. Go home." And I went back to my room, and my roommate was much more liberal than I was, and much more shaken, and

she was weeping. Nobody – I don't know what they do now – but nobody ever had a television in her room. There were only televisions in these lounges downstairs. So we all went down to the lounges and (inaudible) the televisions.

Then later that night – it was a sort of misty night – my boyfriend and I walked around the city. We would see little signs in the windows saying, "Closed on account of the president's [18:00] death." And of course, there was a big Catholic community here, so there would be little crude, sort of alter-like arrangements in the windows, and things like that. It was very eerie.

The man I later married had graduated the year before. He was a senior when I was a freshman. And he was in the Peace Corps. And she was in the Peace Corps training at the time. And he told me afterwards that he had also broken down and cried because Kennedy was such a mentor to him, an example.

JM: What about other things? Vietnam?

KM: Vietnam was not much of an issue. The last year I was here, Bill Twadell, whom I married, came back from the Peace Corps. It was in October of 1965. And he sort of began courting me. [19:00] He had been accepted by the state department. You had to pass a written test, which he'd done, and you had to pass an oral test, which he did when he came back here. And he was accepted by the oral test. So the next day – this all sounds very Victorian – he asked me to marry him, and I agreed. And then the day after that, he was drafted. And it had been that if you were in the Peace Corps, that was considered government service, and you were exempt from the draft. Well, he hadn't been back two months before they drafted him. By the end of December, less than three months after landing in this country from the Peace Corps, he was at Fort Dix. He, however, took every test they have him, and was able to get a job in Washington, D.C. because he spoke various languages, and he worked in the [20:00] Inter-American Defense Board.

But those people that I knew who were in Vietnam, went after I left Pembroke. There was not – as I recall – much anti-Vietnam protesting. But I was not a particularly political person, so there may well have been stuff that I wasn't aware of going on. We had a riot here that was sort of like the ones they had Columbia and Berkeley, but pathetic. You can't believe how pathetic. And I don't even remember what year it was in, and I certainly didn't take part. But I heard afterwards that Barnaby Keeney came out and sort of said, "What are you doing? You're

supposed to be scholars. This is most unbecoming." And we all slunk away, and said, "Oh, well, right, of course. What were we thinking?" (inaudible) there was never any taking over the administration building that I can [21:00] remember. There was this – as I said – extremely larval type of riot that didn't go anywhere.

The Civil Rights Movement, there were, I think, a number of people who went down to the South. We, of course, had the relationship with Tougaloo, and so a number of my more political friends went there. My senior year, I knew quite a lot of sophomores. My roommate was a sophomore, and so I knew most of her classmates. And some of them were very political, and I think some of them took part in civil rights demonstrations that year. I know they did in subsequent years after I graduated. Again, I was very apolitical, and I didn't.

JM: You said you had a boyfriend. What was dating like for you when you were at Pembroke? [22:00]

KM: Oh, I was very happy because I'd been in a girls' school, and I'd lived out in the country, and I didn't do much dating when I was a high school student. So I was delighted. There were all these very interesting people. Brown, I thought, was a very heterogeneous type of place, and so I dated a lot, and went out with all kinds of people. I didn't tend to have one steady – in the case of this man, his name is Karl Schneider – I saw him probably more than anybody else until Bill Twaddell came back. I loved that aspect of it. We didn't have anything very elaborate. There was a little coffee shop down at the bottom, I think, of this building. On the far side, where there used to be a lot of ivy. I noticed it was all gone now. And it was called The Gate.

JM: Yup, it's still there.

KM: Okay. It was a little coffee shop. So you would [23:00] go to The Gate. There was this dismal place called [Toy Suns?] on Thayer Street that you could go and get a sort of ironed English muffin, and terrible coffee. So people had endless dates at Toy Suns. I don't think anyone much ever took me out to dinner as such. Or even to the movies. I mean, they were always just hang out-type date. The men had apartments off campus, which we did not, at that time. And so two of the people that I knew at *The Brown Daily Herald* had an apartment. I would go often and sort of

act as their hostess. I wasn't dating them. I was sort of more like a partner of theirs in the newspaper world, but they like to have little dinner parties and invite the dean or other people [24:00] to come. And so my roommate and I often would cook for them. And no matter what we cooked, they ate it. I hate to think of some of the ghastly meals we perpetrated. And it was a lot of fun, because it enabled us to have a little housekeeping, a little independence, without having the responsibility of an apartment.

You may have heard about the hoax that was perpetrated in – I think it was probably November, October or November – of 1965. *The Brown Daily Herald* decided it – they'd been crusading for months, in the editorial pages, about how women should be allowed to live off campus, too. And getting nowhere. So they did a hoax, and they said, "Okay. Dean Pierrel has changed her mind, and everyone who's interested should show up at her house at seven a.m." And [25:00] I picked up the paper, which was delivered to our rooms, and read this. And I called up the editor, and I said, "I highly disapprove. This isn't the first of April, and I think this is a distortion of the power of the press, and I resign." And he said, "Miller," he always called me Miller, "you can't resign because all of us have to. You were the only – you and the sports editor – were the only people who didn't know about this." And they hadn't made them resign, but they persuaded them that it was very irresponsible, and they should resign, which they did. So the sports editor and I ran the paper for the last two months. The term was from the middle of your junior year to the middle of your senior year (inaudible), and I just had to pick – that was when Bill Twaddell came back, and I was seeing him all the time. And I just had to pick one of my courses to do very badly in, (inaudible) otherwise I wasn't going to get [26:00] this daily paper put out and do everything else I was trying to do. So that was the housing situation (inaudible)

JM: Uh-huh. That's interesting. I haven't heard about that hoax.

KM: Well, maybe I'll send the archives *The Providence Journal* clippings of the time. I think I was the first woman – I was technically the managing editor for those two months – by a complete fluke.

JM: Wow, that's funny. In the classroom – these days there's all this talk about how women don't speak up enough, and the guys get more attention because they're more aggressive and

outspoken. I think it's interesting that the Pembroke women – because the other women that I interviewed before also expressed this feeling that Pembroke was sort of an elite, smarter group of [27:00] people than the Brown men. And I was wondering how you thought they played out in the classroom. Did you or any of your classmates, because you sort of felt like a more elite group, participate more? Or did you get more? Did the Brown men look to you intellectually in the classroom, or anything like that?

KM: When we were freshmen, our freshman week – I don't know if they do this anymore – but we had about two days ahead of everybody else to be indoctrinated. And we also had a faculty member who was sort of our sponsor. And in our case, it was Henry Kucera, who was a professor of linguistics. And when he gave us this speech that week – our sort of first faculty address – he said – used the term ["colrucultornay?"] which is guess is a Slavic or Russian term which means a sort of anti-intellectualism. And he said [28:00] there was a tendency at Brown to indulge in this kind of thing, and it was up to us to pull the young men up to the mark, and not to let them get away with it. He says, "You know, they'll go on about football, and if you just sit there with your chin in your hands, looking at them starry-eyed, they'll go on about football. But if you say, "I'm not interested in football. I want to talk about Proust or whatever," then they will do it. And so, I thought that was an interesting mandate, and I always kept it in mind, that that was part of it.

The other thing is that one of my favorite professors, Jose Amor y Vasquez – I was a Spanish major – was some sort of fellow at a Brown dormitory. It was, I guess, like being a house mother. And he used to invite me and my roommate, Lisa Manfull over, because he thought that we gave tone to his sherry hours. And it was again, the same kind of thing. That we were to [29:00] have intellectual conversations, and not let them just talk about football all the time. So we definitely felt – or I certainly felt – that it was up to us to demand the level of conversation that we wanted. I certainly never had any hesitation, as you can imagine, in speaking up. It may be because I'd gone to a girls' high school. That's, I think, the age when you're vulnerable to thinking you ought to pull your punches. But I never had to, because if I wanted – I can't remember that I ever did – but if I wanted to appear dumb in a social situation, I could do so without ever jeopardizing my academic interactions.

When we came here, we had a lot of seminars. And one of the reasons I concentrated in Spanish is because the classes were small. English, in those days, you had to take a lot of survey courses, which would be two centuries, and you read little [30:00] snippets of things, and I thought that was a terrible way to study. So I actually took as many courses in English as I did in Spanish, but because I wasn't majoring in English, I picked the ones I wanted, and I took writing courses and seminar courses, which were very small.

And I know that at least on one occasion, I really upset some of the men. It was a course with John Berryman. He was a famous poet. And he was a visiting professor here. And I'd had a writing class with another professor. I'd gotten to skip freshman English. This was my freshman year. And I'd gone into the sort of next level of writing course, with another professor whose name I won't give. And he had, I suppose, the term would now be sexually harassed me. In other words, he made – when I was in his office – he made a very explicit, indecent proposal, and in fact, partially undressed himself. And I said, "No, thank you, very much." [31:00] And then I said, "I do think it would be awkward for me to stay in your class, because how do I know that you would give me fair grades? You might give me bad grades because I didn't, or you might give me better grades because you're hoping I will, and you know, this would be terrible." And Berryman's class was technically closed to freshmen. So I said, "I want you to recommend me for Berryman's class."

And then I visited Berryman's class, and it just happened that on that night, he was talking about the importance of first line. This was an expository writing class, not a poetry class. And so he said, "What's the first line of *Anna Karenina*? And there was this sort of stellar pupil named Mike Samuels, who has since become a doctor and publish a book. And so he turned, "Mr. Samuels." We were always "Mr. and Miss." "Mr. Samuels, what's the first line of *Anna Karenina*?" Well, nobody knew. And it just so happened that I'd read *Anna Karenina*, and I remembered the first line. [32:00] And so then he said, "Wonderful." And then afterwards I went up, and I said, "And can I be in your class?" And he said, "Yes, you know the first line of *Anna Karenina*, of course." So I got to be in this class, and that was something that I thought was wonderful about Brown and Pembroke versus Harvard and Radcliffe, is you had the best professors your freshman year. I mean, we had the dean of the college teaching anthropology – an introductory anthropology course. All of the best professors taught introductory courses. Very, very important part of (inaudible) what was going on (inaudible) So anyway, I was in that

class, and I wrote vaguely anti-male – sort of male-bashing essays that were supposed to be humorous. And I know it infuriated Mr. Samuels in particular, and probably some of the other (inaudible) because word would get back to me. [33:00] How angry they were. But I never felt abashed. I just felt that was sort of good war between the sexes kind of fun. And I don't remember ever knowing of anyone who pulled their punches.

JM: That's a great story. What about important traditions? We didn't really get into this with the other group, but one thing that they regretted having not been able to talk about was, I think, Father-Daughter Day. I don't know if any of these traditions were important to you.

KM: I was very busy being very iconoclastic at that time. I mean, I arrived in 1962. Okay, this is the year that American Graffiti, the movie, is supposed to portray. It was almost an extension of the '50s. And I had little matching sweater sets, and little pleated skirts, and this kind of thing. [34:00] And I immediately decided this was absolutely not where I wanted to be and so I went in very much for black tights, and heavy eye makeup, and I was going to be sort of – we didn't have hippies, but I was going to be a sort of proto-beatnik type of person. And so I was very iconoclastic. That was sort of part of that shtick. I wasn't going to go to anything traditional. I didn't even go to graduation. So I don't even know what they were because I was so busy distancing myself from anything like that. I don't know if I'd do it differently now, but anyway, that was sort of – I mean, I think it was part of the same mentality that later went with the sort of anti-war – it was an anti-establishment mindset. And although we didn't have the war, really, to rebel against, especially in the beginning, I just was going to be kind of [35:00] iconoclastic.

I have no idea what they were. My father never came to campus at all. My mother came twice, I think, just sort of randomly. As a matter of fact, my junior year, I had a single. And there was a whole wing of Andrews that were singles, and I think most of us were juniors. And almost all of the other girls were local girls who were Jewish, and their families came all the time and took them out to dinner. And they all thought I was some orphan because my family never came. I mean, that just wasn't our style, and I wouldn't have wanted them to come. But it was wonderful, because all of these wonderful Jewish mothers would sort of take me along and feed

me. That was great, but it wasn't really what happened in my family. I don't remember [36:00] ever participating in any kind of traditional thing.

JM: What about as you were getting to the end of your Pembroke career? What did you think about in terms of the next step?

KM: That is the saddest chapter of my Pembroke experience. Nobody gave me any mentoring at all. Now, I have to say, again, the climate of the times – this was sort of the beginning of the hippie, flower, generation type of thing – and everybody thought, or I think, at least the people that I knew, sort of thought that working in the business world was very crass. So while some of the men I knew were very busy getting jobs, none of the women I knew were busy getting jobs. I was recruited by the CIA because I had foreign languages. I think they recruited [37:00] everybody. Well, you can imagine what kind of odor the CIA was in in the Vietnam period. And I was interested, and I listened to them.

And I later learned – because I was a foreign service wife for many, many years, and had a lot of CIA friends – when I would tell them about my recruitment experience, which was they made it sound like the world's most depressing job. I was going to be in a basement, translating reports from the field on various people, and keeping files. Keeping secret files on all these people. Well, it sounded so grim to me. And they said, "Oh, well they did that on purpose. They make it sound really grim, because then if you still want to work there, you won't be discouraged." And, of course, they don't want you to go in, and get all the training, and then leave. And it was probably just as well, because I know that other women who did join the CIA then had to leave when they got married. That was part of the deal in those days.

That was the only job interview [38:00] that I had. I very much wanted to be a translator, and my senior year, there was a class called "Novel Writing." And it was with Edwin Honig, whom I mentioned before. And he was a famous translator of Federico Lorca in Spanish. So I translated a novel as my senior project. We didn't really have a senior thesis. But anyway, I did that. And in retrospect, after I learned a little more about how life works, I would have thought that he might have given me some mentoring. He might have said, well this is – he loved it. He said it was excellent. And he might have said, "Well, you know. Here's a publisher you might try, and tell him I sent you. Or this is the next thing you could do." Nothing. Nobody ever did that kind of

thing. I must say, to my own shame, that I never sought out career placement, because I had no idea what I wanted to do, other than be a translator, and I had no idea how to go about [39:00] doing that.

My father found a job – or got an interview for me – in Chicago, at a library. And that also didn't sound very interesting. So I have to say, when Bill Twaddell turned up and said, "I'm going to join the foreign service, let's get married," I thought, "Oh, good idea. This will solve my problem." Well, when he was drafted, of course, he had to serve in Washington for two years. And I wasn't going to just cool my heels in Washington. And I was trying to think what to do, when my high school, which was also located in Washington – the one I'd attended – called me up.

JM: What high school did you go to?

KM: Holton-Arms. It was then located down by Dupont Circle. And then it moved out – it moved out right about the time I graduated. It moved out to River Road in Bethesda. But it was such a small school. I mean, there were 69 girls in my graduating class. And also, it so happened, that my step-father had been on the board of Holton-Arms. [40:00] And he engineered for them to buy that property because it was across the street from where my parents had their farm. So they had kept track of what I was doing, because they were right next door to my parents, and they knew that I'd majored in Spanish. Well, they needed a Spanish teacher. So they persuaded me to teach there the first year. Because it was a private school, you didn't need teaching credentials. And I thought, "OK. This is something I can do." I went back to college for a year, at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, and just took the required education courses. And I worked as what was called "a home instructor" in those days. Montgomery County paid any college graduate to teach people at home who had health problems – and that included pregnant girls, at that time. You had to leave in your fourth month. So I thought that was fun. I liked doing that. But I didn't want to teach in a private school.

JM: Oh, so you didn't teach at Holton-Arms. You did this home teaching thing. [41:00]

KM: I did both. I didn't teach full-time at Holton.

JM: Oh, I see. While you were going to Holton, you were also going to Hood.

KM: Right. And also taking the courses at Hood. It was very part-time. I only taught one class at Holton, and then I had these home teaching things. Now when I had been at Pembroke, my impression was that girls who were studying education were a sort of intellectual cut below the others. That was sort of like vocational education. You shouldn't do that. You should only do very intellectual things. And I still think, in a way, there's a certain amount to be said for just having a plain liberal arts education, which in the '60s you could afford, because the minute I finished those courses at Hood College – I had started at an awkward time, so I graduated in January – I got a job the next week. The first interview, because the baby boom was hitting the high school by that time, [42:00] and the schools were bursting, and they needed teachers badly. And I never had trouble getting a job.

Of course, it's very different now, because you have to think, when you're in college, about what your career's going to be. On the other hand, women now get some career counseling, and some mentoring, and people asking them what they want to do, which we really didn't. I mean, all of my close friends went into teaching. One of them eventually wound up in the State Department, (inaudible) but it took her many years to get in, because she was married, and she had to wait, basically, for the women's movement to come along and change that.

But I really enjoyed teaching, and it turned out that was a very good mix with being a foreign service wife, because there was always an American school. And the one place that we served, which was in Mozambique, in Africa, [43:00] there wasn't an American school, I simply started an English language class for diplomats. And I recruited other women as teachers, and I had a whole business. And so, it's a great, portable profession. And I did that up until 1984 when my own children were school-age, and I was divorced. And I thought, "You know, if I keep teaching, I'm never going to meet any grown-ups." That's when I started becoming an historian.

The other thing is, there were no women – I never had a woman professor here at Brown. There was this scandal in the modern language department, because there was a French teacher – a woman – who hadn't been given tenure. And a lot of the French students, whom I knew slightly because we all shared the same building – they were absolutely up in arms, because she hadn't been given tenure. But, I sort of didn't [44:00] notice. But on the other hand, I just didn't

have any role models, either, for a lot of – whatever else I might have wanted to be, like a history professor. I didn't even like history, and I think one of the reasons was, there were no women in it.

After I decided to stop teaching, my mother asked me to write her mother's biography. Her mother had died when I was an infant. I'd never known her. But as I said, she'd been a pioneer in politics. And so, I think, because the education I'd gotten at Brown – which was always to do good research, and look where to find things, and trust yourself – enabled me, you know I wasn't a professor in the field, or I didn't have any history background except the bare minimum, enabled me [45:00] to go back and study about the women's movement – the first women's movement in the teens suffrage movement in the 1920s when she was active in politics, and do this work. But, I don't think I could have gotten it published, had it not been for Professor Louis Gould in Texas.

Now, it turns out, I discovered many years after I started corresponding with him, that he was a Brown graduate, too. And he had graduated before I'd arrived in 19 – I think he was five years before me – in 1961. And I met one of his students at the Library of Congress when we were doing research. And she was also doing it on the suffrage period, and she said, "Well, you must write to my professor. He'll be interested in your project." This is way before we knew were fellow alumni. And I've been corresponding with this man now for 11 years. We've never met. [46:00] He never leaves Austin, Texas, and I've never found my way to go there, yet.

But he was everything that my professors here should have been. He said, "All right. The first thing you need to do is publish an article in a scholarly journal. Send me a draft." And I sent him a draft, and he sent it back, and he said, "This is not history. It's a narrative. You need analysis. You need to answer this, this, and the other questions." And he put me through two more re-writes, and then he said, "All right. Now you're ready. Send it to the *Illinois Historical Journal*."

JM: What did you write about?

KM: My grandmother. Out of this research that I'd been doing. I wrote it. She was the first woman to run for the senate, and I wrote it on her senate campaign. And they accepted it. And then afterwards – after it had been published – they asked me where I'd gotten my Ph.D., and I had

to say, “Well, I only have a master’s degree, and that’s in linguistics.” And there was a visible – I mean, audible – intake of breath. She just went “Oh!” [47:00] You know, “We published a non-Ph.D.” But when the book was accepted by the University of New Mexico Press, that editor later told me that she would not have considered it had I not already published in an historical journal. And, of course, it was peer-reviewed, and so forth.

And then after my book was published, he then continues. Even now. He said, “All right. The next thing you need to do is write for encyclopedias on other people.” And so for the –

Track 2

KM: [00:00] – mostly to show that now I know what mentoring is, and I didn’t get any of it here. Nobody ever tried to help me publish, or do what I wanted to do as a translator, or do anything. Again, I said, I didn’t go to the career center either. But I know that Honig was aware of my condition, and he never – but I didn’t ask him, either. I didn’t say, “What should I do next?” I just was not at all assertive, and my mother – neither of my parents had sort of taught me how to be assertive. And I think that’s hopefully what women of my age can do for our daughters, is to say, “Okay, when you want to do something, and these are the things you must ask for, and these are the things you must pursue.”

JM: How long did it take you to write your book?

KM: Eight years. For biographies, I think that’s about normal. [01:00] Because, especially somebody who’s in politics. I mean, she participated in every major – in every election – from 1896, when she was 16. Her father was Mark Hanna, and he ran McKinley’s campaign. And she helped him. So she was part of that, and she ran Thomas Dewey’s presidential campaign in 1940, and was also active in it in 1944, which is the year she died. So, for 48 years, she was in every political movement. So, I would have to read usually two books, at least, for every four-year segment, just to be able to write one page of “this was what was going on at the time.” Also, she had 44,000 documents in the Library of Congress that I had to go through. [02:00]

But, I was very fortunate because when I got divorced – my father's a newspaper publisher – and he asked me to write a column from Washington. I had written occasional columns from overseas. And he said, "Well now that you're –" this was before email, but – "now that you're in the United States postal system, you can write a weekly column about foreign affairs in Washington politics for our little paper here in LaSalle." And that gave me health insurance, which I needed. And an income. And enabled me to write the book. I had two children, also, so I had to do something (inaudible)

JM: Since the book, you said you've written about 25 articles for encyclopedias?

KM: Right. One of them has just come out. Louis Gould, this professor, edited [03:00] a volume on first lady. And I wrote about a 12,000-word essay on Grace Coolidge. And then I've written most of them for an encyclopedia to be called *Women in World History*, published by York and Publishers. And *American National Biography*. I think three of them – three or four – and *The Encyclopedia of Women in Chicago History*. (inaudible) And I loved that, because an eight-year commitment to one subject is like a marriage, and this is kind of dating around. I spend six weeks with somebody, and then on to somebody new. I had a great time.

JM: What is your relationship with Pembroke now? Do you [04:00] correspond with friends from college? Do you have any who (inaudible) connections?

KM: Oh, yes. Well, I remained very close to my college roommate, because we wound up in parallel careers in the State Department. And whenever she comes to Washington, I see her. She's stationed in Washington. And in fact, she's had some major health problems in the last two years, and she's single. And so yesterday, I was over bringing her books, and trying to take care of her a little bit. I've remained in correspondence with my other roommate, who teaches English in Indonesia. And I try to see her about once a year when she comes back. I continue to see Charlie Bakst, who's the person I'm having lunch in a half an hour, as well as writing to him. I'm still in touch with Carl Schneider, the ex-boyfriend, and Mary Ellen, my little sister. We've [05:00] continued to correspond, and we can visit each other over the years. And then there's several other men and women that I see. There are another two guys who – one guy went into the

foreign service himself. I see him every month. We have lunch together, and gossip. There are several other people that I see pretty frequently.

Because my ex-husband's family are here in Rhode Island – we were married for 17 years, and I'm very fond of them – and so I come up here to visit them. And so I'm on campus a fair amount. I've seen Dr. Amor, the Spanish professor, almost every time I've been up here.

My book came out the year after my 25th, and Kathy [Weeke?] and Barbara Anton came to a book party that my ex-mother-in-law gave to me here. And a lot of my professors where here. And then some of my students were here, too, [06:00] and it was a wonderful experience being able to introduce my students to my professors. That was one of the best days of my life.

My ex-husband and I gave quite a lot of money to Brown, because his father was a professor. But since our divorce, whenever I've given money, it has been to Pembroke. Unfortunately, it doesn't look as if either of my children are going to go here. My son's going to Case Western Reserve next year. My daughter's a junior. But it's gotten so much harder to get in to Pembroke. It was a lot easier when we were undergraduates, even for the women, that I'm not sure she's academically strong enough to go here.

JM: Well, she should apply, anyway.

KM: Well, my ex-husband keeps saying that. Her father really would like her to go here, [07:00] and so I hope she will apply. She would love it here. And I just was so nostalgic when I was walking around. I mean, I had a wonderful time here. You know, as I say, there were things that could have been improved on, but I'm sure they have been improved on, and it was not out of malice, it was just out of not thinking of women as needing careers as much as they do now.

There was another thing here that I wanted to comment on. I think they talked about the – or the physical education requirements for graduation, right? They were really dumb. And what was really dumb were those posture pictures. I was so interested to read – you did that *New York Times* article about it?

JM: I haven't read it, but I've heard about it.

KM: You should read it. I've sent it to Charlie Bakst, and I said, "When you were looking for great causes [08:00] to expose, why did you never think of the posture pictures?" What a really dumb thing that was. But we all, just sheep-like, went and did it. I was not vastly humiliated by it. I don't have a great deal of personal modesty. But I think for people who were reared in a family where they did have a lot of personal modesty, it must have been very traumatic. Because, naturally, there was all these jokes all the time about how the Brown men were going to get a hold of them, all these pictures of the girls in their underpants.

Part of that – there was a sort of a – I think we had to play one quarter of some actual sport, and I don't even remember what I did. But one quarter was a whole bunch of things, including the posture pictures. And another thing we had to do was to learn the correct way to carry a 40-pound suitcase while wearing high heels. Other people have discussed (inaudible) So dumb.

JM: They talked about passing the salt [09:00] and pepper together in the – what was the name of the class where you learned how to do all this stuff?

KM: I don't even remember.

JM: Like "Freshmen Fundamentals" or something like that?

KM: Yes, I think that was it. "Fundies."

JM: "Fundies." Yeah.

KM: Yeah, right. Yeah. I didn't even remember the good manners, because I'd grown up in Washington, and you know, people went to embassy parties when they were 16 years old. Especially in those days when one was a debutante, and that kind of thing. But the suitcase in the high heels. And I think we had a swimming requirement, which I felt was not a bad idea. I think you had to prove that you could save yourself from drowning before you could graduate.

JM: Did you all think about these things when they were actually happening? Did anyone ever turn around to the next person in line and say, “Why are they taking these pictures?” Or, “Why are we learning how to do this?”

KM: No. No, not really. [10:00] And I think, again, that that’s hard to understand now, and I think that the watershed probably came about 1970. Maybe even 1968, which was another very confrontational year. But 1963 was still very much the conformist ’50. We bitched about it, and we said, “This is dumb,” and everything, but it never occurred to anyone to challenge authority. As a matter of fact, as I said, I resigned when he challenged, on the level of a hoax, the authority of Dean Purell to decide where we were going to live. I mean, very conformist.

The one other thing that we did was – Charlie Bakst and his crowd, I think, broke the story that the Pembroke Health Center was giving birth control pills to girls. And then I used the so-called literary magazine to [11:00] print the letters to the editor that came flooding in after this story. So that caused a sort of delicious little amount of controversy. But, for example, we were not allowed to wear pants to class. And I don’t think anyone – well, I challenged it only because a boy I knew – I had done some favors for – bought me this very elegant pair of flannel trousers. But very tailored. Very neat and everything. And I wore them to one of Professor Amor’s Spanish classes. Very small, seminar-type class. And afterwards, he came up to me and he said, “Miss Miller. I’m not going to rebuke you for wearing those, because you look very well turned out, and therefore I’m going to overlook the fact that you just transgressed the dress code.” And I thought, oh, I was so daring [12:00] to wear these tailored slacks to class, because it just wasn’t done.

We were cold all the time. I was cold all the time, anyway. I think they turned the heat on in the dormitories about 11 o’clock. And so I made myself two floor-length skirts, and that was considered so bizarre that I went out on a date – I went downstairs to meet my date in one of these skirts – and he said he wouldn’t be seen with me in public like that because it was too non-conformist. And, I’m sorry to say, I went upstairs and changed, although that relationship certainly didn’t go anywhere. He certainly thought I was much too iconoclastic for him. So there was a lot of peer pressure to conform.

I did run around with the sort of bohemian literary [13:00] crowd. Not that I – I hasten to say the journalists – but the people who were in the sort of creative writing classes. And some of

them were smoking pot, and that was just beginning to happen, I think. And I was on campus with such a party when it was raided. And much to my horror, the campus police who raided us came up to me and said, "What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?" And I hadn't, in fact, been smoking, because I did it once and I thought that it made me too vulnerable to the other kids' suggestions, not just for sex, but for, you know, I just felt really vulnerable emotionally when I was stoned, and I thought, "OK, I'm not going to." I didn't drink much either, for the same reason. And I didn't trust the guys, basically, and wanted to be in control. So I didn't know how they knew I hadn't been smoking when the other kids had. [14:00] But, in fact, some of the other kids were thrown out of school, so I was really lucky.

JM: Somehow you just managed to –

KM: Right. I mean, I think I was really testing the limits, but without ever sort of going over the edge. But the limits were so pathetic, is my point, is that we weren't very – we didn't challenge authority in any really meaningful way. Or at least, nobody I knew did, and I didn't either.

JM: What was your reaction when the birth control story came out?

KM: Well, I believe there was a certain amount of outrage that this should be going on. Because there was definitely the feeling that Pembroke was *in loco parentis.* That was why you had to sign in and sign out. Now, it was slightly demented, because if you were dating somebody in another town, you could sign out to go stay where [15:00] they were. You were supposed to stay in a rooming house with some nice widow lady or something, but nobody ever checked up to see if you were there or not, and so it all seemed a little contrived to have such security here about where you were, and whether you had signed in or signed out. But I think that the fact that they felt that the university was condoning premarital sex was still considered pretty –

JM: Was the reaction from the students, or from parents, or from alumni, or from professors, or who was –

KM: I don't remember, to tell you the truth. They have back issues of the literary magazine. *The Brown Review*, it was called in those days. So it seems to me it has a new name about every three years. You ought to be able to find it. That is not one of the back issues [16:00] that I have, I'm sorry to say. I always had a terrible time getting people to contribute to it. I would have to go around and sort of shake people.

JM: I don't even know what it is called or – like, I don't even know if I've seen one.

KM: Yeah. Well, it was subsidized by the university at that time. We sold some ads, but not enough to cover it. It was glossy magazine, so we would have to go around. Usually one of the BDH staff and I would go around to (inaudible) once a year, and hat in hand, (inaudible) and maybe there was some thought that this was going to jeopardize that, although I don't think anybody seriously believed that. But, you know, it was a big issue. This was before abortion was legal, so getting pregnant was a pretty serious problem.

One of my friends did try to give herself an abortion and wound up in the clinic. Then they gave [17:00] her a D&C, but she, by then, had a roaring infection. None of us wanted to do that. So it was a dicey proposition, and I think it was very wise of the university to give them birth control pills, but I think they felt that (inaudible)

I don't know what the legal status was in Rhode Island. Eighteen was legally adult for women in Maryland, which is where I lived in (inaudible) so I don't know what the legal situation was. I wish I remembered more of the details but I don't.

JM: (inaudible) the people go to get illegal abortions?

KM: I think they did. I remember once that one of my friends – he was a close friend of Carl Schneider's, the boy I was dating – and [18:00] he had a long-term girlfriend. And she got pregnant. It was during the summer that they found out they were pregnant. And I was at home, and he called me up and asked me for a loan to get her an abortion. I think they had to go to Mexico. And I was mostly horrified to think that maybe my mother would be listening in on the other line. So I could say, "Yup, yup, anything you want." Get off the phone. But she found out about it. She was putting into it. But anyway, they then went to Mexico where she got an

abortion, and they got married. They never had any children, and I don't know whether the abortion left her sterile. I expect they didn't want children. He had terrible, terrible problems with depression, and in fact, died in his late 40s. I think probably because he tried to medicate it with alcohol [19:00] and other controlled substances. They were very devoted – she was very devoted to him, always. It was a tragic situation. And I'm sure that other people must have done it. That was just the only person (inaudible) but they had to go to Mexico and get it there. Probably Rhode Island, as a Catholic state, would not have been a great source of abortions.

JM: Was there anything else that you want to tell me, or any questions that we didn't get to that you particularly wanted to respond to?

KM: I think the last one, when you said, "How have your Pembroke and Brown experiences benefitted you?" I thought the writing programs were great, that I got a good grounding both in the classes that I took and in the work that I did at the BDH. I've basically done a lot of writing all my life, or [20:00] I taught writing, and that gave me a – and it really stimulated my interest, which had been there anyway, but boy encouraged it, and gave me all the practice.

And I think the Spanish. Even though I chose it sort of whimsically, I really chose it because it was a small department, and I missed grown-ups. I didn't like a homogeneous peer group as my entire social life. As I said, I'd started going to my mother's dinner parties in Washington when I was 16. And there was a guy named David Kossoff, another professor of Spanish. And he and his wife had what they called a tertulia, which is like a tea party, at their house, which was over on Brown Street, every Friday afternoon. And anyone could go who would speak Spanish. And my roommate and I – she was a very [21:00] accomplished linguist, certainly leagues beyond I – and we would go to tertulia, and they would all give me advice about the guys I was dating, if they thought I was going with some loser they'd tell me so. Although they didn't mentor my career, they mentored me as a person, and I really missed that. Our house mothers didn't do that much. That sounds really retro, but I needed it so much that I sought it out, and I had specifically majored in Spanish so that I would have this small group of faculty members who were taking care of me in a way that I somehow suspected I needed. I think that's (inaudible).

JM: Oh, what about Dean Purell?

KM: I have to say, I have no remembrance of her. I mean, she just seemed to me like this rather [22:00] stuffy authority figure that one scorned because she was an authority figure. And I just had no contact with her, that I can recall. And she was just not a figure in my life. We had a very old, stuffy house mother in Andrews, and then we had a rather wonderful young nun my last year as a house mother. But again, she didn't do much in the way of doing anything for our lives.

JM: Were they mostly sort of to check-in to make sure that you were in on time, rather than that mentor role?

KM: I think so. I can't imagine anyone going – especially to the older woman, whose name I don't even remember. She wasn't any kind of trouble. Thinkable. I do remember. She used to have a sort of open house during exam [23:00] week, where you could go. She always served Constant Comment. Never can take Constant Comment without feeling myself ready to take an exam. To have Constant Comment and cookies. Otherwise, she was not a figure in my life. But these Spanish professors, especially the Kossoffs – because Mrs. Kossoff, I think, taught at URI. And, again, it wasn't a lot of personal advice, but at least you had some kind of contact with older people, and a certain amount of socializing with them.

JM: They actually have at Rochambeau – which is where the Spanish and French houses are – alternating every Friday, they have *tertulias* and *pain et fromage,* and they sort of alternate.

KM: Well, that's great. I'm glad to hear that's going on still.

JM: Well, [24:00] is there any other last comments?

KM: I can't think of anything. I guess it's probably more than you needed.

JM: It's been really, really great. I feel so lucky to have – I sort of stumbled into this. I was at the Pembroke Center, just asking around, telling them about what I'm going to write my thesis on,

which is the Brown-Pembroke merger, and looking for advice on who I should talk to, and books, etc., etc. And then Barbara Antoine mentioned that she was going to be doing this oral history thing, and did she want any help. And I was like, "Yes." And it's really been such a treat to get to meet you and the rest of the people from the class of '66.

KM: Do you know Don Ritchie's book on doing oral history?

JM: No. I should read that.

KM: It's been about two years. Yeah, I think it's very good. He is the Senate historian. R-I-T-C-H-I-E. [25:00] And it's got some self-evident title like, *Doing Oral History* or whatever. If you have any trouble finding it, you've got my number. You can call me, and I'll put you in touch with it. When I worked on the oral history project for the foreign service spouses, I went to one of their conventions – the Oral History Association. Again, this was not something anybody did in the '60s – oral history. And I had so much fun doing the oral histories of the foreign service spouses. I was saying to Barbara, that was probably in 199–

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