

Transcript – Anna C. Renzi, class of 1947

Narrator: Anna C. Renzi (Anne Wright)

Interviewer: Amanda Knox, Pembroke Center Archives Assistant

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Track 1

Amanda Knox: It is Wednesday, May 23rd, 2018. This is Amanda Knox. I am the Pembroke Center Archives Assistant, and I am in Wakefield, Rhode Island, today interviewing Anne Wright, Pembroke College class of 1947. So, Mrs. Wright, I would just like to start by asking you about your family life; When you were growing up, your childhood, any memories you might have of that time.

Anna C. Renzi: Well, I grew up in Providence. I have one brother; I did have. He is no longer with us. And it was just the two of us and we were the only grandchildren at the time so I'm afraid we were quite spoiled. [laughter] My grandparents had a large house, so when my mom and dad were married, they were very happy to have my parents move in and live with them since they were alone in this big house and getting older. And so we – my folks did do that and we had a very lovely yard to play in. Big apple trees, pear trees, beautiful flowers. My grandmother loved flowers and my grandfather was an expert at gardening. He used to raise all kinds of vegetables and so we went through some very difficult years without much trouble.

My dad came here from Italy as a little boy. My grandfather had come first. He and his brother came here to Providence and they had been sort of recruited. They were looking for strong, able-bodied men to build roads and so for many years my grandfather did that and after six years he had saved enough money to send to Italy so that my grandmother could come with the three children. And so they did that. They arrived here in December. Oh, let me see. My dad was ten. I think it was in 1910. It was the three children and my grandmother who came I don't know just how they went from New York to Rhode Island because they came through Ellis Island, and of course in those days it was very different. You had to have a complete physical, you have to had money in your pocket you had to have a sponsor, a place to live, everything had to be prepared. You were not going to be looking for

the government to support you. And of course, my grandfather had been saving his money and sending it home to my grandmother and they were able to get here and took a boat, a second boat, that went from New York to Rhode Island. I really don't know why, except I think my grandfather was working here and he had made friends and had some kind of, well, he had a job, of course. And so, I heard the story of him buying some property not too far from where he was living. It was in the Oak Lawn area and he was a very handy man with, with a lot of true experience. And he started building a house with cinder blocks so that when the family arrived they would have a place to live and he had a lot of land around the house and he planted every vegetable that would grow there. [laughter]

So anyway, we all ended up on Laurel Hill Avenue and I was very lucky because we had a small school and they were all within walking distance. So, I went down a short hill to Webster Avenue and we had a little school there, brick school, beautiful building. And I did from kindergarten until the third grade there [5:00] and when I finished third grade, or the first half of third grade, I was sent to Webster Avenue school which was just a few blocks away. Just a little bit further to go, not much. And I was there until the sixth grade and then I went to Laurel Hill Avenue School and that was a little different because then I just went right down Laurel Hill Avenue which was on the other side of the house. [laughter] And I did sixth grade there and then next door we had Oliver Hazard Perry School, junior high school, and I did my seventh, eighth, and ninth grades there. And of course, I always wanted to be at the top of the class and I didn't like anything less than an A or a hundred. [laughter] I was very lucky. I made the honor roll every year which was nice. And one day, when I was in the ninth grade, I'll never forget, the principal saw me walking down the corridor and he came out and called me over and in those days they knew you. And called me into his office and he said I'll – and I'm wondering what in the world have I done wrong? [laughter] But he called me in and he said, "I have a little secret to share with you but you have to keep it a secret for only a few more days." I said, "Oh." I couldn't imagine what he was going to say and he told me I had been selected for the Anthony Medal. And of course, at that time it was a big thing. Nowadays people don't know what I'm talking about. They say, "Anthony Medal? What was that?" Well, it celebrated Senator Anthony and he had started this practice of giving out a medal to a ninth grader and I was very lucky I had won it. But we had to compete for it and what they did was have an auditorium gathering of all the students and faculty for two days and they selected something like ten or twelve of us in the ninth grade (because junior high at that time went seven, eight, and nine) and we were all ninth graders and they selected this

little group and half of us gave a talk one day and the other half the next day and we had to pick our own subject. And I had just recently read a story about the American creed, and I don't even remember the name of the man who wrote it, but it was a very beautiful passage that he had written and it really struck home with me and so I made my talk on that and then I recited the creed at the very end and everybody clapped. But then they were clapping for all the students. [laughter] But anyway, that with my big achievement at that time so I was very, very, happy about it and it's such a very pretty thing I still wear it today when I need a long necklace.

But then from there I went to Mount Pleasant High School which at that time was only about five years old. And I took all the necessary classes. I was majoring – I had taken Latin for a couple of years and then I decided I wanted a lively language that I could converse in and I switched to French which was really very easy for me because I spoke Italian at home with my grandparents and if I couldn't think of the French word I thought of it in Italian and that would give me a big clue right away as to what it was in French. So, I had no trouble reading stories in French and I enjoyed that because I, I studied the French for all three years that I was in high school. We had a very interesting French teacher he was a bachelor. And he loved to travel and during the summer he would go to France and backpack all through France and then he would come back to Providence and in September, during French class, we'd hear all about his trip, and the different cities he had gone [10:00] to, people he had met. And we started learning the conversational French because there was a little bit different. But it was a lot of fun.

So, one day when I was in the eleventh grade, my counselor called me and wanted to talk to me and she said, “Anne, I know you're planning to go to college.” I said, “Yes I am.” And she said, “I just got this literature,” because we were right in the middle of the war at the time, and she had gotten some literature from different aircraft companies and they were looking for women, young girls, that they could train to work in their plants since so many men had gone off to war. And she said they had gotten this literature from one of the aircraft companies that was looking for any girls getting ready to graduate who had taken sufficient math classes, algebra, etcetera, and were good at it and also, they were looking for people with drafting experience. And I looked at her and I said, “Drafting? What's that?” And she explained to me, a certain kind of drawing that you do. And I said, “Oh that's interesting.” We were trying to fill one opening that I had in my schedule, two or three days. And she kept saying, “Well, take home-ec class.” I said, “No. I've had a lot of those.” “We have cooking,

we have sewing.” I said “I’ve already had those.” And I had my language. Everything else was taken care of, all the necessities. So then when she said drafting I said, “Well, that sounds interesting.” I always wished that I had been artistic and I wasn’t at all. So I decided to take drafting for the two or three periods that I had to fill up each week. And I loved it. I enjoyed it tremendously. You had to be so precise and it just fit me perfectly because everything had to be very, very, neat. No messy erasures or anything. You have to do all your measuring and make sure everything was to scale and an accurate representation of whatever they had given you to draw up. And I enjoyed the class very, very, much. So she called me in, and said, “You’ve got, you’re the only one in the class that has drafting and the four years of math.” And I said, “Well, that sounds interesting.” They wanted to send me to college for ten months, two semesters I think. It was either two or three semesters, and then I would go to work for them. And I said, “Well, I don’t know. I’ll talk it over with my dad, see what he thinks,” because we were planning I was going to college, and I said, “I’ll see if he thinks this is something I should do.” When I went home and talked to him that night he said, “Oh, no, no, no. That’s not enough I want you to get your degree. Go for four years, never mind just three semesters.” I thought, “oh OK,” but it gave me the idea of going into engineering. And that’s where it started.

AK: Wow.

AR: Yeah. And of course, I went up to Brown and talked to Dean Morriss. And I’ll never forget, she said, “I don’t know. We’ve never had a girl do that before. You’re going to have to talk to Professor [Boll?] who’s the head of the engineering department and get his permission to take the classes.” That kind of threw me. So, I said, “Well, OK.” And I had no idea where his office was so I was told I had to go to the engineering building, make an appointment with him, and that’s what I did. I went to see him a few days later and I sat there thinking, “Oh, what is he going to say to me?” And he looked at me, and he looked at me, and he said, [15:00] “I see your marks in the tests that you’ve been taking for math. Your marks were very good.” I said, “Oh, that nice.” He said, “You had some drafting in high school?” I said, “Yes, my senior year.” He said, “Well, you know, we have no other girls really taking the engineering classes. There is a couple who take the drafting and a few take physics and chemistry, and such, but we don’t have any in the real engineering classes.” He said, “Are you sure you’re going to be able to sit there with all these young men around and concentrate?” I

said, "Oh, yes." [laughter]

AK: They weren't a distraction for you?

AR: No. I didn't even know any of them yet! [laughter] That was the last thing on my mind because I had it in my mind, I was going to go for four years and get my degree. That's what mattered to me. So anyway, he said, "Well, we'll try it and see how it goes, and I'll keep an eye on your work and make sure that you apply yourself." I said, "Yes, sir." So that was that. So I was able to sign up for classes. And of course, we didn't have S.A.T.'s in those days, but all the freshmen (we were only thirty-five girls in the freshman class when I started in that March), we went to school a whole week and we were the only ones on campus. The boys, of course, with there doing the same thing we would doing. And we had our language, which for me was French, we had our test in English, a test in mathematics, of course, and then just an overall test. And I was very lucky. I had a good mark in English so I did not have to do the dreaded class where you have to write an essay every week and turn it in by noontime on a certain day. That I was spared that, in fact I had no English classes that all while I was at Brown. But I had all lot of math classes. Oh I had a lot of those. I had a lot of math and of course the other sciences. Mostly physics and economics. And of course, all the engineering courses that were necessary, part of what with the menu for me. That was about it.

AK: So how did you find Pembroke? Did somebody at your high school tell you about it? Did you just know about it?

AR: I mean, I just knew about it because at the time Providence College was the only other college right in Providence and it was all men. They weren't taking women at that time. In fact, it was quite a few years later that they started taking women. The other, they had a couple of business schools, secretarial schools, but I wasn't interested in doing secretarial work and I thought of going to URI because all my friends were going to URI and I approached my father with that. I said, "You know, dad, I could go to URI, live there, and get all my meals and my boarding and it would cost less than going to Brown and living at home." [laughter] And he looked at me and shook his head he said, "No, no, no, don't worry about that, you're going to Brown." He wanted me home every night. I wasn't going to live at Brown either. I was going home every evening. Yes. There were only two children in the

family, myself and my brother, so he kept an eye on both of us.

AK: So, going into Pembroke you knew that you were going to be the only young woman in these classes?

AR: Well, I knew I would probably be. They did have a few girls there, [20:00] but they were getting ready to graduate and they were doing the same thing. They were going to work for an aircraft company and they had taken something like two or three semesters of certain classes, but it was not a full schedule of the entire engineering program and it was a lot of drafting and math mainly. That's what they needed. So, I knew that there'd be girls around in some classes. Math classes we had maybe half a dozen because a lot of the regular girls weren't interested in advanced mathematics, you know. But some of them were planning to teach math which is what I had thought I would do until I got interested in engineering. I fully intended to major in math. And I love solving equations.

But anyway, I did take economics, and we had girls there. And then I had a free period, I guess in my junior year, and I took one of the art appreciation classes because I was very interested in architecture and I loved seeing all the old houses up there around Brown. And whenever I got a chance to go on a tour around there, I would. And really enjoyed that. And so I took a class with the professor who was quite an artist, and right now I can't even remember his name, but his wife was the head of the Providence Preservation Society. And so they were very, very, interested in salvaging and saving a lot of the old houses that were in disrepair. And I really enjoyed listening to him because he would put on slides showing and the different rooms in the house and all of the exteriors and the different styles of architecture, and it's a very fascinating class. And one other thing I do remember, a couple of things, and I don't even remember where this was but it was somewhere out in the country, I think just north of Providence. A very old house that had been built in the late fifteen-hundreds, with the dirt floor, you know, and just one big room and very, very – what do I want to say? It was just barely some kind of shelter. And it's still standing, well it was at that time. And of course it was very old. It had been built around the fifteen-hundred-something. And then he would show us a lot of slides on the east side. All of those lovely old houses that I really enjoyed seeing and hearing about, you know. But anyway.

AK: How do you feel you were accepted into your program? Do you feel that your professors

were excited to have you there, or that you were treated equally?

AR: Well, they would look at me like this and say, “Yes, young lady,” and I’ll tell you what one of them, was really great he – I never wanted to sit in the front row because I didn’t want to be too obvious, you know, and I would sit in the third or fourth row and I was in this class, it was a small classroom and there were not many students and there was one other girl taking some engineering classes. I’m not going to mention her name, I do remember, but she would chatter constantly and would always have two or three of the boys sitting close by and talking back and forth to them. And it was a lot of distraction and I wouldn’t paying as much attention in class. And one day the professor called me up after as we were walking up out of the class. He asked me to [25:00] talk to him for a minute and he said, “You know, I’m sure you could do much, much, better. But I notice there’s a lot of noise going on around you where you sit. How about sitting in the front row?” And I thought, “Oh my goodness.” [laughter] And I said, “Yes, sir. I’ll do that.” Well, I tell you, I ended up with an A in the class. He was right. They were distracting me and I wasn’t really paying attention and listening a hundred percent and when I got away from it, in the front row, right in front of him, I was listening. And I got an A. Then it was easy to solve the problem when we had a test. Well, any other questions?

AK: What are some of your best memories of your time at Pembroke?

AR: Oh. Some very nice friends. And, as I said, I had a young cousin that I had been very close to who came to Pembroke when I was a senior and it was nice seeing her and her friends. And, well, just the feeling that I was accomplishing something. That meant a lot to me. And at one time I played the piano a lot, I thought I was going to be a pianist. And my teacher’s mother kept telling my mom (because she knew my mother well) my mother had a beautiful voice and sang and played piano and it was fantastic. I grew up with all this music in the house every day. And so she had started teaching me how to play the piano and of course I would sit with the little alarm clock because she’d say I had to practice twenty minutes. And I’d put a little alarm clock on the piano sit there for twenty minutes, practicing scales and such, because that was not very exciting. And she saw that she wasn’t getting very far, so couple years later our church organists had a very attractive young daughter who had just graduated and was going into teaching and Lucien was a fantastic piano player. And, this

is the daughter, and she had majored in music and what they used to call auditorium because it was basically plays, and doing musicals, and things of that sort; having glee clubs, singing, and acting, studying drama. And she, who had just graduated and had gotten a job working as the school teacher, and my mom asked her if she would be interested in giving me piano lessons. And she said, "Oh, I would," because she was thinking she might do that on the side. And, so I started taking lessons from her and she made all the difference in the world. And so I was really very seriously considering music. And of course my classmates found out that I was playing the piano. By the time I was in the ninth grade I was pretty good and they would ask the teacher, the music teacher, if I could play the piano. And I would say, "No, no no." "Yes, we want you to play for us," because a couple of them had heard me play. And so the teacher would say, "Well, all right. At the end of class, the last five minutes, you can sit down and play something for them." So I would do that a couple of times a week and then I would be asked to play when we had programs in the auditorium and I'd get up on the stage and I would play a solo. And I have a picture somewhere of graduation from high school. I played a solo at the graduation ceremony and I thought, "That would be nice." My teacher's mother would be in the kitchen listening and she would say to my mother, "It's the same her hands are not stronger. [30:00] Her fingers a just not strong enough." And then my mom would say that to me. I'd say, "That's strange. I think I did pretty good." But she was right. Because I have a young fellow who comes here who is a fantastic musician. He's winning competitions all over the world, and he's been coming here since he was fourteen years old to play for us. And now he has graduated from Juilliard, and he's doing concert work all over Europe and the U.S. and I look at his hands when he's playing and mine were nothing like that. So I always tell him, take good care of those hands because the very special. It really made a difference. So anyway. Then I had to give up my beautiful Steinway when we were moving out of our house because there was no place for it in the condo and when I left the condo to come here there was certainly no place for it. But it was nice while it lasted.

AK: Did you participate in any extracurricular activities while you were at Pembroke?

AR: No, I can't say I did, because I really did not have the time. Because I would have classes all morning and every afternoon there was a lab from one to five, one to four, and that was every day, and then plenty of homework. So a couple of times when my class was doing something, they would put on a play, I played the piano. I was in a little dance group. And we

had a fashion show. I used to do a lot of posters. That was always my job. “Oh, Anne, you can do the posters for us.” “OK.” Because they'd figured I had learned how to print properly. [laughter] So that was about it I think. In some of my little mementos I think I was chairman or something for some of our activities during the Senior Week. But that – Oh, the only other thing I did do, we had a notice put up on the bulletin board one day that the music teacher at the School of Design was looking for a pianist to accompany the choir, the Glee Club. And it was a paying job, and I said, “Oh. Maybe I'll look into that.” And so I called to make an appointment, and went in to talk to him, and he listened to bits of music in front of me and asked me to play it, and I did, and he said, “Oh, that sounds pretty good. All right, now we practice at this time, and this time,” and he gave me a whole schedule, almost every day for a couple of hours, and with a pretty good sized Glee Club of somewhere between fifteen and twenty girls. And they were all students there. So. I did practice with them and then we gave some concerts. That I remember.

AK: So you were at Pembroke for a couple of the War years.

AR: Oh yes.

AK: Do you think the war affected your time at Pembroke, or any of the activities you did or didn't do?

AR: Well the big thing was that the only men on campus were the ones that were either Navy or Army. Of course, the army group was there only during my freshman year and they left. But I did make one very good friend there, and he was an artist who lived in the state of New York, and ended up after the war in New York doing commercial art. And the army boys had all their classes separately and they marched from one classroom to another because it was from one building to another. The Navy boys had more leeway. They didn't have to march from class to class because they all had different places they were going to. Some were taking [35:00] more medical-type courses, and some were in engineering. And of course I only saw the ones they were in the engineering section.

One funny thing that happened to me one time – I was taking class in surveying and I had my transit all set up because we were going to be surveying up and down the Thayer street and we were under the archway, the soldiers arch, and I had my equipment all

set up and ready to go. And I look to my left and there's a whole class of Navy fellows in unison marching with the drill instructor, headed right for the artist way. I had to pick up the transit, trying not to jiggle it, and move it over so it wasn't in the middle of their walk way. [laughter] Wait until they all pass by, and they're all giving me the side look of "ha, ha, ha. We got you. Made you move." And they knew I was kind of fuming inside because I had gotten it all perfectly set. The fellows up there with the rods waiting for me to – oh dear. And of course they finally got through and I had to start all over again. But, yeah.

I didn't really get to see any of the fellows afterwards. And then the fact that I left Rhode Island Labor Day weekend, I went to Washington to visit relatives, my dad's sister and brother both lived and worked there. And my aunt was married, and they had no children, and they used to send for me to spend summers with them when I was little so mom could have a little time off to have just my brother to worry about. And they loved having me there because they had no children. So I graduated in June, on the sixteenth, I turned twenty-one on the thirtieth, And Labor Day weekend I decided I was going to go visit my aunt and uncle because I had been sending out resumes, trying to find a job – Oh! My dad knew the man who was the head of the Department of Transportation. He's not in office now he's long gone. [laughter] Because he was about the same age as my father and my father had known him for a long time. And he happened to see him one day, and it was just about the time of graduation. He said, "Oh, by the way, do you have any openings in your offices that my daughter could apply for because she's graduating from Brown next week and she's going to have a degree in engineering." And he stopped and looked at my father, my father's showing me this, you know, "He stood there like this, and he looked at me and said, 'Earle, you know, I don't have any women at all in my offices and I don't intend to, I'm sorry.'" And my father was kind of miffed. He said, "Gee, you could at least talk to her." [laughter] He came home and told me about it. I said, "Oh, no wonder I'm not getting any responses. Do they all feel that way?" So I was really discouraged, and I said I just want to get away for a few days.

So I went to Washington and the day after I got there my uncle said to me, "Anne, why don't you look for a job here?" And I said, "Gee. Do you think I might be able to find one?" And he said, "You can always look, see what you can find." And I said, "Well, OK. Maybe I'll see." I had no idea where to go, what to do, who to see. And I looked in the phone book and he said something about, "Well, you go down to the district building because maybe they have some lists of [40:00] places that are looking for help." And I said, "Oh, that's a good idea," because I knew how to get there and where it was. I said, "Let me go see

what I can find out.” So I went over there in the late morning and they had this great big board up with all the offices listed and the room numbers and I thought, “Department of Sanitation? No, I don't think so. Department of” – something else. What else was it? I'm trying to remember. Sewer and sanitation. The Water Department. And then they had a Legal Department and I didn't have any legal experience. And then I saw Department of Highways and Traffic. I said, “Oh. That sounds interesting. I might be able to handle that.” So I went upstairs, it was on the fourth floor, I got on the elevator and I went up to the four floor and I'm looking for the room number, and I walked into this office and there was only one person in the office. A man, maybe in his forty's. And he looked up and saw me and said, “Yes? Can I help you?” And I said, “Well, my name is Anne Renzi and I just graduated from Brown with an engineering degree and I'm looking for a job and I wondered if you had any openings that I could apply for?” And he looked at me he said, “Really? You just graduated from Brown?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Are you a Rhode Islander?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Well so am I!” I was floored. He was the nicest, friendliest, person. He said, “Well, let me talk to you for a few minutes.” So we chatted for a few minutes, and he found out about some of the courses I had taken, and all the marks I had gotten. And he said, “Well that's very interesting, Anne. When my boss gets back from lunch” – he'd gone to early lunch – he said, “When my boss gets back from lunch, I'll tell him you were here and see if he has any openings that you might fit.” He said, “Give me your phone number. Can I contact you here locally?” I said, “Yes, I'm staying with relatives.” And I gave him the phone number. Next morning, I had a phone call and he said, “You know, my boss said he might be interested. He wants you to come in and talk to him. And he's thinking of offering you a job, such and such a grade. Grade three.” – which I found out was really very low – and he said, “But he wants to see you first, but he said he does have a couple of openings in about that level.” And I said, “All right, I'll be in. What time would be convenient?” And he told me. So I got there. This was before lunch. [laughter] And talk to him, and he was very, very, nice. He said, “Well, I can't offer you very much, but we're starting something new and it's a project we have never really done before like this. We're working on the development of the interstate system. And we're connecting with Maryland on one side and Virginia on the other. And we have to determine the proper routes going through Washington for all these different highways. And we're going to be hiring a staff to do a lot of work interviewing people and we need somebody to work on getting things ready for that.” And they had hired, just a couple days before, this young man and I think he graduated from Dartmouth, I think, and he was going to be

working on it with me. And he said, “We've got to develop a system to give to people to go out into the neighborhoods so that everybody brings in answers that will be useful. Information we can use. [45:00] And we have to finish developing that first.” And I said, “Well, OK. I'll give it a shot.” I don't mind trying something new. It was hardly what I expected, but you know start anywhere. I've found you got to get your foot in the door. So. I was told to go in the following Monday. They have to go to the personnel office and fill out all the forms that are necessary, you know, and then report to work at 8:15 in the morning. Me, who doesn't even like to get up until eight o'clock. [laughter] So I learned to get up early in the morning.

And he was right. It was just the very beginning job, beginning level. Something like \$2,168 a year, but this is in 1947. I came home a year later because after a couple months I went up to grade four then I went up to grade five, but I got up to grade six and of course there was a raise gone along with all of that. And I came home because we were having a little reunion in June, the following June, and I met with some of my classmates at the Biltmore for lunch and we're sitting around the table. They were either teaching or working for the telephone department and I said, “Oh my goodness!” By that time I was up to something like \$4,500 a year and their salaries were not even half of mine. I said, “Wow!” Of course, living in Washington is a lot more expensive, but I was lucky I was living with relatives so it worked well. But, anyway. It's just a matter of showing them what you're capable of doing. If they give you a job to do, just go ahead and do it. And if you give them the right answers everything turns out just right. Then when a job opening comes around they remember you, which is what happened with me, because I worked on this big survey that we were doing until the survey was completed. And we were developing the roadways themselves and deciding percentage of people going down this route and the percentage going there is much smaller, so we're going to concentrate on this area. And we had artists who did the work actually mounting it on a board and you work with them. And when we finally had all of this put into the computing system that they had, which was not very high functioning at the time, it was all very new and just starting to do things with computers. And I even went out and talked at night to neighborhood groups because they were interested in what was going through their neighborhood and why, and how much land with being taken and why did it have to come through here? So you had to explain all these – people you had talked to for six or eight months and getting all this information and putting it into format so you can use it and determine where the busy areas are, where the people are that have to be

moved, and where you move them to. And so we did a lot along that line, just getting people accustomed to the idea of tearing down buildings and houses and building a roadway through it. But it was very interesting.

AK: So how long did you stay in that position and then what did you do next?

AR: I stayed in that position for maybe, in total, about a year and a half and then they had an opening because this elderly fellow who was a math whiz [50:00] was retiring and they were going to replace him with me. And he was the Reviewing Engineer. And the other job at the office did, was prepare the bidding contracts to give out to contractors when we had a particular roadway. The design was all fair and we knew what had to be done. We had engineering groups that would be assigned. You'd have Chief Engineer and then you'd have somebody who did work with the surveying equipment and laying out the roadway path and all of that, so that we could develop a contract and put that contract out to bid. So that was part of the job. We would find out that this job had been approved, we had the money to do it, and now you've got to draw the contract bid and put in all the if-and-s-or-buts, and what they have to do, the requirements, the type of material that have to be used, etcetera. So that was part of the job. We'd put it out to bid and of course you had to be a qualified developer in the area. You had to have licensing with different departments that give out licenses for that. And we would prepare the contract and the contractors could come in get a copy of it, take it home, put their figures in, and then we'd have a bid opening and decide who's going to meet it. And the fellow would get the job, and we would make sure that he had all the proper plans that had been drawn up for it, and there would be a contract group assigned to this particular project, and this would be the head engineer and then all of his assistants helping out on the road, keeping track of what the contractor is doing, what material he's using, and making sure all of that is done. And then, when it's totally finished, I would get the finished information. I would have a sheet showing everything that was used and all the tickets that were left by the trucks showing how much material was pulled down, and the people who were working, how much time was spent, etcetera, and make sure that they had met all of the items in the contract, and I had to approve it so that they could collect their money. And if it's a project that took several months, which most of them were, they could get paid for a certain amount of work as they completed it, as long as I got the ticket showing what had been delivered and used, and it was okayed by the engineer on the job. So, I had contractors calling, "Is my

check ready?" And I said, "Well, I'll check with the other office, the Disbursement Office." But, I did that for about four or five years.

And then they had an opening in the Design Department and I thought, "Oh. I would love to do that." So I applied for the opening and they gave it to me. And so then I finally got my professional rating and I was up to something like a P1 or P2. And then they finally did away with those. So, I ended up with a grade nine. And I did the design work for a couple of years.

And then they decided to start a new office. And this new office was going to be long-range planning. Doing, taking all of the material information we had gotten a few years before and bringing some of it up to date on roads which had been [55:00] designated as needing repairs. We had a maintenance department that went out searching the neighborhoods for pot holes and anything that needed to be fixed; any kind of problem we had at intersections, because I did one study for a few months on dangerous intersections, and the accidents that had happened there and why, and so we started putting in islands and roadways that went around circles, and deciding just where the islands have to go to keep traffic going in a certain path so they had to go right, they couldn't go left at all. And things of that sort which was really very interesting, drawing all of that and then drawing it up in big plans for the engineers to take out on the job. And also for the contractors to see so that they could put in bids on the job. So I worked I was back in the Office of Planning and Programming, which is where I started, because I had gone from there to construction, and then to design, and then back to planning and programming.

So, anyway, I was assistant to the fellow who's in charge. And then after a couple of years he went to another job and so I moved up as in-charge of it and I had three men in the office. Two were engineers and one was my private secretary. And I ruled the roost. [laughter]

AK: What year was this? Or about what year?

AR: Oh, let me see. This was around 1958 to '60. I started working there in '47.

AK: OK.

AR: Yeah.

AK: Tell me more about ruling the roost. How did that go? Was that easy for you?

AR: Let me show you something. That little folder, right there on top. This one right here. Oh I got in print when I graduated. [laughter] And this, I really sealed this well. I'm having a problem finding where it opens. There it is. This was in 1963.

AK: Oh my gosh. Wow. So, I can see here you sort of make headlines this one here from 1963 clearly says "woman boss."

AR: Yeah.

AK: Not just regular boss, woman boss.

AR: Yeah, woman boss, yes.

AK: And then this article here where you graduated from Brown, it starts, "Prettiest graduate among the ninety four Brown University Engineering students who received their degrees today was dark eyed half pint Anna C. Renzi."

AR: Yeah.

AK: Did any of that ever strike you as something worth thinking about?

AR: Well, I'll tell you. Just the fact if they were there to interview me, I thought, "Oh, I've really made it. I'm making some headlines, [laughter] and letting them see [1:00:00] that a woman can do that."

AK: Right.

AR: Yes.

AK: Right.

AR: Yeah. When they called to make an appointment, because I was home, it was midafternoon, and this reporter called me. It was a woman reporter with a male photographer, and she told me who she was, and she wondered if she could come talk to me because they had just gotten word that I was graduating, and I was getting an engineering degree, and I was the first woman to do that at Brown, and they decided, "oh, a story." Yes. So she came in early June, you know, summer time, and I happened to be home alone that afternoon and the two of them came to the door and we sat in the kitchen. This is at my kitchen table. And they took the picture and we had a very nice chat, very nice. So, I'll tell you. It was kind of unexpected because I didn't even know that they had put out the word at the school. I don't know who did, but.

AK: It must have been very empowering to a certain extent –

AR: Yeah, and –

AK: – and especially to make it to this point, the head of three men.

AR: I know. My secretary, and he was a very good secretary, he was I would say, close to fifty. And the fellows that I worked with were all about my age, maybe a year younger or a year old here and there because we had all started working at the Highway Department about the same time. And, in fact, at the time that this happened, the office was on tap to be changed. They were going to combine two offices into one and I would be the head of the two offices because they had decided that it was very difficult to draw a line between the work being done by both places and they wanted to consolidate them and have all of the men doing the whole job instead of dividing it. And it was all in long-range programming and planning where to put things because the district was going out further and further to Maryland and through the line, you know, lots of areas that had never really been built up and now there were so many people coming to work in Washington they needed more housing. And we had such a good transit system that it was easy. Plus, the fact that it was in the future already thinking of going underground. And they were going to do another study similar to what I had done at the very beginning. Just to find out where these lines needed to go, and of course, connecting Maryland and Virginia with us. So, anyway. Yeah. It was very satisfying. I had a man as my secretary, answering the phone for me, taking messages, doing my typing.

AK: It sounds dreamy. [laughter]

AR: But he was very, very, nice and very – he was older than me and I think he took a fatherly interest. He was married and had children. He had daughters too, so. He was very well behaved. He was very, very, nice, you know. And these others were more my age, maybe a year younger, you know. They had not been they are as long as me so I had seniority, and seniority can give you a lot. I have some pictures in that big album from when I was working there.

AK: Oh, really?

AR: Here I'm going to a bridal shower that the department held for me.

AK: Wow.

AR: And this is the people I worked with every day but this is at one of our local restaurants. And this is a fellow, I first worked for him and then we worked when we split the office, he had one [1:05:00] section I had the other. And this fellow worked for me in this one. And there's Don. He was moving into my job when I left, but he didn't stay very long. We had quite a nice group. But it was really a very large department. And this young woman, very talented, from North Carolina, was an artist and she used to draw all the beautiful pictures of the freeways and especially where we had cloverleaves and circles, and she did a great job on that. So, anyway. My gift they gave me. And she wrote that little poem for me and this with the sketch that she drew.

AK: Oh, wow.

AR: Very sweet. Very, very, sweet gal.

AK: That's wonderful. So you were leaving this job because you had just gotten engaged?

AR: I wasn't leaving yet.

AK: OK.

AR: I was getting married.

AK: OK.

AR: Yeah. And I did work for a while. [laughter] We got married in April, April 22nd, and about two weeks after we got married I get a phone call from my husband at the office and he said, "Anne?" "Yeah, hi." "How would you like to go to Hawaii?" I said, "What are you talking about?" I thought he meant for a vacation. He said, "I've just gotten word they're going to send me to Hawaii." He's going to be captain of a ship there.

AK: Oh my gosh. He was in the military?

AR: He was Navy. Yeah. He was a Lieutenant Commander when we got married and he got his commanders license when we were in Hawaii, but he was going to be captain of an LSD. This was during the Russian crisis with Cuba.

AK: Right.

AR: And he was working in the War Room at the War Department. So, they were keeping an eye on the Russian ships that were going down to Cuba with all these missiles that they wanted to put in Cuba. And so I didn't see very much of him then because he was working nights, all hours, sleeping there next to the office. And finally, when Khrushchev had the ships turn around when they got to Florida to go back to Russia he said, "Oh, I can live again." [laughter] So then I would see him for dinner and he'd call and say, "Let's go out to dinner." But anyway, he called me and said, "My tour is up here and they've given me, they've assigned me to a ship that's home ported in Pearl Harbor. Do you want me to turn it down?" I said, "No, no, no. Not at all," because I know he doesn't want to turn down being captain of a ship no matter where it is. He'll go anywhere. The one before that, before he had gone to Washington, was an LST that he had in California. And so I said, "No. That sounds very yummy." [laughter] So anyway, that's how we got to Hawaii. And that's how I got the

notice from, I don't know how they knew I was there, at the Pembroke office, but somehow they found out I had gone to Hawaii. And they called me, and sent me messages, and asked me if I would be willing to talk to some students, and give them my ideas about the girls, whether or not they would be good students for Pembroke. To this day I don't know how they found out. But they did. So, anyway. To get [1:10:00] back to other things.

AK: So you've now, you're married, you are leaving your job in D.C., and you're moving to Hawaii.

AR: Right.

AK: What did you do once you got to Hawaii and how long were you there for?

AR: We were there for two and a half years and, well, I got pregnant. [laughter] Just before we left Washington, so it was not a very comfortable trip. We drove. We stopped in Tennessee to visit his family and say goodbye to them, because he comes from Tennessee. And we just went the southern route. I had never gone cross-country. I had gone up and down the East Coast. From Maine down to Florida, but I had never gone across. So we went the southern route because Ross had to go to San Diego and meet with the admiral there who was also partially responsible for the Pacific Ocean, and the people stationed in Hawaii, because he was going to be on this DER which is a destroyer escort with radar. And they were going, they were patrolling all of the Pacific Ocean and he was going to be in the section that patrolled the Northern Pacific around the Aleutian Islands, they were keeping an eye on the Russians. Yeah. And, and of course, the Korean War had just ended a couple of years before. And he had gone all the way to Korea with a ship full of soldiers to fight, trucks, all kinds of armament, big guns, little guns. And just before he got to Korea, they got word truce had been signed. And he said, "Oh, what do you want me to do with all of this equipment?" "Well, leave all of the equipment on the beach that you're supposed to land on. Leave everything there. Just bring the men back home." And I have a picture of all these LST's over there, because they're the ones with the front brow comes down and everything comes rolling out down the ramp. "Just leave it all." All those trucks, and lorries, and big guns were just left there to disintegrate, which was a big mistake. Because when they went to Japan everything was brought back home. But all of that material was left there. So anyway.

But, in the meantime, I'm home being a housewife, trying to get used to my new surroundings, and learning my way around the island of Oahu and Honolulu. We lived in Honolulu itself for a few weeks while we were waiting for a proper sized house that we could move into because they always do a thorough cleaning job repainting and all of that. And they have houses, they have apartments, it all depends. The rank matters and where you are stationed matters because you have to be close to where your ship is and his ship was right there, right in Pearl Harbor, and so we had to be very close to Pearl. It was only a five to seven minute ride. And we had shipped my car over there because we drove across country and we went from San Diego up to San Francisco, spent a few days there, and put my car on a ship that was going to Hawaii, and then we took the Lurleen, which was a passenger ship, to Hawaii, which was a lovely trip. And it was my one and only time on the West [1:15:00] Coast.

AK: So you had your first daughter in Hawaii?

AR: Yes.

AK: OK. How was it? Did you enjoy being a housewife? Was it – it must have been a big transition for you.

AR: It was a big transition. But I was having enough of a problem just getting used to having a baby to take care of. I had done babysitting when I was a teenager but never one quite that young, you know, just new.

AK: Right. [laughter]

AR: Yeah, so, that's quite different from babysitting a two-year-old. Oh yes, because when I was living in Washington before I got married, my father's brother who also lived there had married and his wife had twins and I used to babysit them every so often. And then when she went back to the hospital a couple years later to have another child, I was the one who took a few days off from work because I had leave that I could take and stay home with the little ones because they were only two. And so, I had a lot of babysitting that I did. So, they're still in Washington of course, and two years ago my daughters had a surprise birthday party for

me to celebrate ninety and they all came up here. We had this big room in the restaurant that was full of family and friends and I was so stunned because they came from all over and we had a wonderful party. It was great.

So anyway, we – I got acclimated and of course then Brown asked me to go and talk to students, prospective students, and then we had somebody come out from one in the recruitment office. I don't remember her name, but she was coming to Hawaii to talk to prospective students at the high school and I was asked to have a very nice luncheon for her and to contact this other Brown student who had graduated, a girl. Pembroker. And she was from Hawaii so she had family there. In fact, they had a restaurant, and so she and I were to do this together and since she knew all of the people in the restaurant business she found the perfect place for us to have the rest of the little luncheon. And we contacted the high schools so that they could have their personnel from, I guess they call them still the same, talking to the seniors about the various schools that are available and the classes that they enjoyed taking. And I had no idea that Brown did any recruiting over there way back then. I mean, now I know they're all over the world and they have been for a long time, but in those days I had no clue that they had people coming from Hawaii. And then sure enough, I had something like four girls they came to the [Poona Hall?] and met met in this very lovely room and we talked about school and we talked about Providence, and Rhode Island, and the weather which is so different from what they have. Very different. Yeh, so. It was quite interesting and I knew that a couple of the girls were accepted and actually went so I wasn't surprised when the gal came into one of our meetings and she said, "Oh, I met somebody at Brown that knew you in Hawaii." I said, "You did?" "Yes," she said, "You recruited her." And she gave me that [1:20:00] little note. It was quite a nice surprise.

AK: So, after having your two daughters did you go back to work?

AR: Yes. I had Julie Hawaii. We left when she was a year old because we were there for only two and a half years. And we came back and were going back to Washington, and we bought a house shortly after we arrived in Virginia, a brand new one that was lovely, and we got all settled in. And after a couple of years. I still had just the one. We were sent to Newport. So we rented our house out to a soldier, a colonel and his family, and we moved to Newport which was fine because I like Newport. My folks are still living in Providence. I have cousins in Providence, lots of friends, and so I was very happy to be in Newport. Unfortunately, it

only lasted something like a year and a half. I was so disappointed when we found out we were going back already! Because they had decided my husband was captain of the destroyer that was home ported at Newport. And they had decided that the destroyers were no longer necessary, we're going to put him in moth balls, so you have to take it to Philadelphia to the shipyard and they removed certain parts and get it ready to be stored. And he had to spend time there, making sure they knew exactly what had to be done, that they were doing it properly; he, you know, stayed while they were doing the work. And then they had a ceremony because another fellow was coming to take his place in Philadelphia at the shipyard and oversee the rest of mothballing this ship and my husband's going back to Washington. Back to the Pentagon. They do that, you know. Once you go there and you learn the ropes, how to behave, and what to do, and who to listen to and who not to listen to, they keep sending you back. So you had a tour at sea, and then you go back to Washington, another tour at sea, and you go back to Washington. So, that's what they did. He went to Long Beach in California and he had this LST. He was a lieutenant then. And he went back to Washington and he got his lieutenant commander stripe and they sent him to Hawaii. And we stayed there for two and a half years, and he did all of his – he had a bigger ship this time, it was a DER. He did all the radar work, patrolling, keeping an eye on. Russians, making sure they didn't overtake all the islands, Japan and Korea and everybody else on the south side. And they're just trying to get into Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. They send their ships and planes over there still. So they're still patrolling and they're still keeping an eye and hoping nothing goes wrong. So we stayed there. For that year and a half. And he had to report back before Christmas. And I said, "Oh, this is a terrible time to be moving, especially when you've got a five year old who's looking forward to Christmas." And so he said, "Well, I'm going to go ahead," because he had to report on a certain date. And we had to make arrangements for moving and that takes a couple weeks to do all the paperwork with the Navy because they take care of the moving. And of course by that time my daughter is in Kindergarten and she had gotten into the first grade. And she was in a private school in Newport. And so, we didn't move until January and he came back [1:25:00] for a couple of days the weekend that we were actually moving, because it was holiday time anyway and he took leave. And we spent the holiday in Providence with my family. My aunt and uncle came up from Washington and joined us and, and then we drove back to Washington after the holidays. And he settled down at the Pentagon and we had to wait till – this is after we left Hawaii. We did a little looking around to buy a house, we hadn't bought the house yet, of course. But, because at the time we

got married I had a larger apartment than he did and he was sharing his with a fellow that he had known for years who was a lawyer with the federal government and he moved out of that apartment and into my apartment which was a bigger one bedroom. And then we went to Hawaii, so we had to come back here and find ourselves a place to live decided we'd buy a house. So we bought a house in Fairfax, Virginia, and it was a fairly easy commute to the Pentagon for him.

So no, I did not go back to work while I was there. And then of course somebody else had taken my place. That that nice job was gone. But after two and a half years, or so, they were sending him up to Newport to take a destroyer that was in Newport so that was good, we like the idea of coming up here. And we rented the house to an Army colonel. Unfortunately, he had three young sons who kind of trashed different places in my house. But they, they lived there while we were in Newport. And like I said, I was enjoying it tremendously. I thought it was wonderful. I had Julie in a good private school and she was doing fine. And she had made friends in the neighborhood which was very interesting because just two doors from down lived the young engineer who was the construction engineer on the Newport Bridge. Because they opened the bridge on my birthday that year. On June thirtieth they had this big ceremony and all the people who had the big wigs who had helped build it with the concrete and steel and all of that. The senator was there to make a speech, and we had a big gathering of the – all the governor and his staff. And the mayor in Newport. It was quite the thing. But, anyway we enjoyed being in Newport very much and I just wish it had been longer at the time. But, like I said, they decided that the ship was going to go into mothballs. So he took it up to Philadelphia. And I drove up to Philadelphia when they were having a farewell ceremony – not cemetery. Ceremony. And someone else was taking the ship and going to be with it while it completed getting ready to go into mothballs. So, we had to go back to Washington and wait a while till our house was emptied and I had to have some work done to get things repaired, and we moved back into the house. And my husband reported back to a new office. And all of these offices are in the Virginia area, just outside Washington. [1:30:00]

And shortly after I went to Washington, way, way back after graduation, I saw a little article in the newspaper one night about a Pembroke Club having a meeting. And any Pembroke or Brown people in the area were invited to attend, call so-and-so to make a reservation because they were having a dinner. And I said to my aunt, I said, "Oh, how wonderful! I didn't realize we had a club here. I think I'll call and see if there's anybody there

that I might know.” Well, there wasn't anyone I knew, but they were very friendly. They told me, “Oh, we'd love to have new members. We are looking for new members all the time.” You know how it is, the same people are always doing all the jobs and they're looking for new blood to come in and do some. Which is what we're doing now with our club because we have no new entrants. Oh my. So, anyway, that's how I became involved with the Pembroke Club in Washington. I went to a meeting, a dinner they were having, and they pounced on me right away. Signed me up, give us your telephone number, your address, and in a couple of months we're having elections. [laughter] The next thing I know, I think I was vice president or secretary, I can't be the first job. Oh my, nothing changes.

AK: Right. Well, and it's my understanding that you're still very involved here in Rhode Island now.

AR: Oh, here in Rhode Island, yes. Well, I was very involved over there because I would go back and forth, you know, and I got to be very friendly with a lot of the people there. In fact, one member who joined about the time I did, had been a classmate. She was the daughter of Professor Lindsay, the physics professor that I had had. And I'll never forget him. He was a very spry, slim man, and he always wore sneakers and he'd come bouncing into the room and there was a platform stage, low platform. And he would bounce up on to it and get to the blackboard. “ $F=MA$ and you will never forget that! That's the basis of physics. $F=MA$!” [laughter] And I haven't forgotten it. It's been all these years and I haven't forgotten it. I think it's the only thing I remember of physics! But it's so funny. [1:33:10]

Track 2

AR: I floored one of my table mates a couple of months ago. He graduated from Brown a couple of years after me, but he's of a year older than me because he was in the Army for a couple of years. And he got an engineering degree too and we were talking about Professor Lindsay and $F=MA$, he said, “Never forget it,” I said, “That's right, you don't.” Every morning he came into class, bounced up on the platform, and on the chalkboard in great big letters. And so, we were doing something and I had a little bowl of ice cream I put the spoon in when I finished it and it flopped over, so I took the spoon and turned it over and he looked at me said, “You know why it did that, you know, made the bowl tip over?” I said, “Oh, yeah, weight distribution.” [laughter] He said, “I wondered if you'd remember that!” See, you still

have to be on the ball with them.

AK: Right, always.

AR: They can't believe it. I said, "Yes, I remembered." But it's fun and we really have a great time reminiscing. So anyway now. At about that time, this time is 1972, I have another baby. I'm forty six years old.

AK: Oh my goodness.

AR: Yes. She was born twenty-three days after my forty sixth birthday. Yes. At Bethesda Naval Hospital. And they used to send everybody home after three days. I looked at the nurse and I said, "Na-ah. You know, I'm forty six, my husband goes to work every day in the early morning and doesn't get home till about six o'clock at night. And I have an eight year old and a baby." I said, "I want a week." She says, "Oh, okay. You sure you don't have anybody who can come and stay with you?" I said, "No." Of course, after I got home my aunt came and stayed with me for a week or so. But that was so funny. But I was really quite proud of myself. I had a beautiful child.

AK: Well, it sounds like you have a lot of reasons to be proud of yourself.

AR: Oh, well, I don't know. You know, sometimes you just get a thought in your head and it just won't go away, and it just keeps pushing you, "You ought to do this." And the big thing was I liked math. I loved solving equations and problems. I use to thrive on it and I really enjoyed it and. I found out that a lot of engineering depends on math. So it was just kind of a natural step up. Plus, I liked art, and I'm not an artist at all. I have a couple of daughters who are artists. My little granddaughter who just turned fourteen does all my artwork. She's always coming over here with something for me that she's done. She makes her own little cards over there. You see that pretty white album on that able behind, right there?

AK: Yes.

AR: She did that for me for Christmas.

AK: Oh, nice.

AR: It was a project at school but it was my Christmas present. It was the family history, the family tree.

AK: Oh, wow.

AR: Yeah. And of course, she knew that I had gone to Ellis Island with my husband while we were living here in Rhode Island. A group for Narragansett seniors were going to Ellis Island because they'd done all of that work, put all of their information on computers, and we were anxious to see what records we could find. And I found a lot of records.

AK: Wow.

AR: Yes. And of course, when my grandfather came he came by himself with his brother and a couple of nephews. Because they had a road building company that's looking for workers and they were good, strong, sturdy men. [5:00] My grandfather was a wood cutter by trade and he and his brother, and as I said, a couple of nephews, one nephew was an excellent carpenter, and they came here through Ellis Island and somehow got to Rhode Island. And found jobs working for a road construction company. And they would say they lived in boarding houses, they saved their money, and it took my grandfather six years to save enough money to bring his wife and three children. And by that time, well the youngest one was born a couple of months after he left Italy so we had never seen him. He was six, my dad was ten, and my uncle was twelve. And my grandmother was in her mid-thirty's, I guess, late-thirty's, early-forty's. Yeah. So they came to Providence, and all I know – and I wish I had asked my aunt more questions because she was the only one who was old enough to remember what they did. And they took a boat from Ellis Island, after they'd gone through the physicals, they have money in their pocket, they had someone waiting for them with a house and a job. My grandfather had a job, so they were not going to be on welfare. But I don't know why people complain nowadays about laws because they have had them for years. And when I remember how my family came and met all of these laws and never complained. They were checked to be sure they were healthy, because my aunt told me about a couple of people who put back on the boat because they weren't well. They had doctors and nurses in a special room where

they gave you the complete physical. And the two folks who were not well, they put them back on the boat, told the man, "Take them back. They can't come in." But anyway. They took a small boat that made the trip to Rhode Island. And I've always wanted to research that and find out what it was, but I've never gotten around to it. And my grandfather had bought some property in Oak Lawn. Do you know where that is?

AK: It's familiar.

AR: Yeah, it's in Cranston –

AK: Right.

AR: – and it's off Garden City area.

AK: OK.

AR: And he had bought several lots together and he was very, very handy at building and he and his friends had taken cinder blocks and built a little house that was very bare, but at least it was a house. And they had bought a little furniture to put in it and he said, "Well, when my wife gets here, she will go and shop some more." Because he was still working regularly and it was just – he was determined and he was going to get them here. It took six years but he did. Yeah. And it was not long. My grandmother could make a dollar bill cry, she could squeeze it so much and she was a magnificent cook. And she used to make her own pasta. She would make the dough and make it herself. She didn't buy it in the store, she made her own. And everything was made from scratch. My grandfather, this land that he bought in Oak Lawn, he turned that into a big garden and he raised all the vegetables he could get to grow in it. Anything that would grow he added in there. Because I remember going there when I was a young kid one time, we were going over there to dig up all the potatoes because it was time, and he brought me and my brothers because we could get down there very easily and dig them up. He'd brush the dirt off and put them in his bag and we'd bring home a bag of potatoes and then we go get some more. But he had, like I said – my grandmother managed to save enough money so that [10:00] a few years later, by the time my dad was fifteen, which was only five years later, they had bought this big house in Providence with four bedrooms

and a bathroom, a big living room, dining room, and kitchen that my grandmother remodeled a few years later so we had two bathrooms instead of just one. But it was in a beautiful neighborhood. We had a big yard on the side with a winter apple tree and a pear tree. And then we had this great big piece of land, bigger than this area, that my grandfather farmed with his vegetables. We had another big apple tree where he put the swing for me. And it was Mackintosh apples. And they had built a garage with bricks. A double garage my father could put his car in there, but the car came later. By the time he was in his twenty's he had a car.

AK: Wow.

AR: Yeah. But, as a ten year old, my grandfather would take him with him. He was the water boy when they were building roads. In the winter time, they couldn't build, he would go to school. That was the only schooling he got, but he learned to read and write. And the next thing you know, he was at [Brown and Sharpe?] as an apprentice. He's going to learn how to do the machine work. And he became very interested in the electrical work that the electricians were doing. He said, "Oh, what's all this?" So he decided he wanted to learn to be an electrician, so he did. He had to sign up with a registered electrician who would teach him. And he would take the test, and if he passed it he would get his license. So he did. He got his license so that when – By the time he and my mom got married in 1925, which is about ten years, fifteen years, after he came here, he's a licensed electrician. He has his own company, he's got a couple of fellows that work for him, and he's doing electrical work, and his pet project is taking a new house and totally electrifying it. And anything that came out – We were the first ones to get an electric refrigerator, the first ones to get a freezer top, and a washing machine. An electric refrigerator with the freezer, that that was first. Bought a stove that was half electric, the top, and the rest of it was either coal or wood and gas. So you could use either one, you could switch. It was really amazing. I'd never seen anything like it before.

AK: Wonderful.

AR: It really was. He was quite the fellow. Until he became interested in cars – oh, and he had an automobile. When he was dating my mother, this is a couple years before they married in, they married in 1925, he had a car of his own and it was all paid for. And he would come to – my mom lived next door. And so they knew each other growing up as early teens. And

he would have to take my cousin as a chaperone. She was all of maybe ten or eleven, but they knew she would be very alert and aware of everything going on. She could not leave the house without a chaperone. They were very, very strict in those days. Anyway.

AK: Well, it looks like –

AR: Have we done enough?

AK: – we have chatted for quite some time now. Do you have any final comments you would like to make about your time at Brown, your work life, being a mom and a wife? Anything that you would just like to wrap up with? [15:00]

AR: Well, I've always been very happy I went there because Brown does have a good reputation. It's a little bit iffy now. Some things happened that are strange, that I don't like, that a lot of people don't like, but some people just have to do their thing. So, anyway. I've always enjoyed going back. I do not like the behavior of some of the students today. I don't like treating visitors the way they do sometimes just because they don't agree, they don't want to listen to anyone else's ideas. But, I think Brown is doing a fantastic job with what they're doing now in the medical school and the engineering school. I am just overwhelmed when I read of some of the experiments. We've had some people come in talk to our group and this one young woman, Indian, from India, who is an engineer and was talking to us, to our club, about one of the things she was working on which would give dosages of different medicines at the right times, in the same instrument. That's fantastic to me that anybody could figure out how to do that; different kinds of medicine at certain times all in one thing. And she was just as lovely as could be and she was so bright and she gave such an interesting talk. And then we had someone else come talking about Alzheimer's. Of course, at my age now, I'm going to be ninety two next month, I'm worried because I get very forgetful. I have a hard time remembering names and I used to be known for my memory, remembering names of streets and everything. And I think, how did this happen? But it does happen and she was so interesting talking about all of the research that they're doing trying to find the basis of what is causing this. And they think they're getting close to a tie. Keep our fingers crossed. It's going to be too late for me.

AK: One never knows, though.

AR: One never knows, I know. And how they have grown in that way I really, really am happy about that and I give them great praise for it. I'm so glad they're doing that, that they're taking such a lead role in so many different things that are important today because the world has changed so much. But, I sometimes think you know, women – There really are some things I would not want to have to do. They talk about fighting out in the fields, forget it. I'm going to leave that to men. I don't want to go out there. I don't have to worry about periods anymore so, you know, that or getting pregnant, but still I know that my body is not physically as strong as a man's. And they think differently too. I see that all the time. They – I sit every night and have dinner with two men, sometimes three, this is a table for four. And I listen to them and sometimes they'll ask me for my opinion, you know, and if I feel strongly about something I don't hesitate to speak up, but they approach things from a very different angle and you can't change that. And there are many, many, things I was able to do better than they could do in my job, but there were other things out there, tracking around in the dirt and the concrete and all that. I really wasn't keen on that. I liked going out. I would measure, bring it back, draw it out, work on the parchment. But, I don't think I would want to take a man's place in the world because [20:00] different things are expected of them and I don't think it's ever going to change and I know women fly planes, they fly in combat, that's fine. But, getting down in the mud in combat? They can't hoof it the way a man does. I'm sorry I don't believe it. And I've known too many men who have been in combat that I have met through my husband and through my cousin that know what it's like. I wouldn't wait to be in that position you know, waiting for that helicopter to get there and pick you up and bring your up there away from all those horrible people coming.

I get annoyed that men think they can take advantage of a woman that's working with them or under them, especially, that bothers me. Once in a while I've found somebody who had a roaming hand I just learned never to stand on that side of the desk. I'd stay on the other. Yeah. Just watch out for yourself, that's all.

AK: Well, I guess that wraps up our interview. Thank you very much for sitting down with me today to donate your interview.

AR: Oh, you're welcome.

AK: It's been really fascinating.

AR: I did a lot of talking, didn't I?

AK: We'll that's exactly what we wanted! [laughter]

AR: Oh, you know I wanted to show you somethings that, yeah –

AK: Shall I turn this off?

AR: Yeah, you can turn it off. [21:55]

--End--