

Alyssa Pacy (AP): This is Alyssa Pacy and today's date is Wednesday July 15, 2009. I'm Diane Butterfield Brosnan and Jenny Gilbert of Lesley University and also Yvonne Higgins, Diane's daughter-in-law, here at Diane's home in Plymouth, Massachusetts, to discuss her undergraduate career at Lesley University. This is our first interview. This inter...excuse me...this recording will be deposited in the Lesley University Archives at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Thank you so much, Diane, for inviting us down and offering to do this lovely interview on a beautiful day.

(Chimes ringing loudly.)

Jenny Gilbert (JG): That might be an issue.

AP: Yeah, I just thought of that. (Laughs).

Diane Butterfield Brosnan (DBB): Do you want to move inside?

JG: Shall I take it down?

AP: Let me pause it...

(Recording paused so wind chimes could be taken down.)

Alright...okay as I said before, I'm just going to ask you a few background questions.

What year were you born?

DBB: 1931.

AP: And where?

DBB: In Plymouth at the Jordan Hospital. Massachusetts.

AP: And where did you grow up?

DBB: In Plymouth.

AP: And what did your father do for work?

DBB: He worked for the American Wollen Company. He was born in Tasmania.

AP: Oh, wow. The American Wollen Company?

DBB: Yes.

AP: And your mother?

DBB: Where was she born?

AP: No...what did...what did she do for work?

DBB: She never worked after she was married. She was a telephone operator before marriage.

AP: And did you belong any religion growing up? Were you practicing?

DBB: No because it was a mixed marriage. My father was Baptist. My mother was Catholic (clears throat).

AP: And where did you go to high school.

DBB: I went to a Quaker School in Providence, Rhode Island, called the Lincoln School. Meredith Viera went there.

AP: Who?

DBB: Meredith Viera on the Today's Show.

AP: Oh. (Laughs). Ah so you were a boarder?

DBB: No. My father had a couple of mills in Providence so we lived in North Providence and, you know, commuted every day to the school.

AP: So you moved to Providence?

DBB: For...yes. We did frequently. (Laughs). We were there for three years for that period. My sophomore, junior, and senior year I went to Lincoln.

AP: And what did you graduate high school?

DBB: 1949.

AP: And you started Lesley in 1949? Is that right?

DBB: Yes.

AP: And graduated in 1953?

DBB: Yes.

AP: And what did you major in, in at Lesley?

DBB: Elementary Education.

AP: Alright. Now that we have those basic facts out of the way. Why did you choose Lesley?

DBB: Well the headmistress of my school introduced me to a...I give her a lot of credit. Marion S. Cole (clears throat). (Sliding door opens.) And she knew that I wanted to be a teacher and she knew that I wanted to go to school in the city so she said to my father that would be a good place to take her. And when I saw it, that was what I wanted.

AP: And your family was supportive of you going to school?

DBB: Yes. Yes. All my brothers and I went to private schools and then to college (clears throat).

(Sliding door closes.)

AP: And do you remember the application procedure was like?

DBB: No I don't.

AP: Did you have an interview?

DBB: Yes with Dean Thurber.

AP: Do you remember that interview at all?

DBB: Yes...it's...it's interesting when I talk like this that my father was so active in my life more so than my mother. Daddy took me to Cambridge and...and he sat in on the interview if I remember. You know, it was in that original building. And she was very nice.

AP: Why do you suppose your father was more involved?

DBB: I don't know...maybe...it might have been because I was the only girl. (Clears throat). They had had four sons and the youngest one died and soon after he died, they decided to have another baby and they had a girl. (Clears throat). And they rang the bells in the old tower in Plymouth to announce "Charley Butterfield has finally had a baby girl." (Laughs). In those days, Plymouth was a mill town and he had a mill here.

AP: So what was the school like when you arrived?

DBB: Small. I...I...I just was so happy with the girls in the dorm. Just loved it. (Clears throat). And the day I arrived, my father couldn't go above the first floor because no men were allowed. So my mother and I carried things up. (Clears throat). And I had two roommates. And my two roommates now are multi-millionaires.

JG: Oh, yeah.

DBB: Peggy Lou and Nancy. And Nancy's...

JG: And what are their names?

DBB: Nancy Colman Cummings...

JG: In Maine?

DBB: Yes.

JG: I tried to get in touch with her.

DBB: Oh.

JG: And she hasn't answered my phone calls.

DBB: Oh, she's a love.

JG: Because I thought it seemed like she was so active.

DBB: Oh, she is.

JG: Okay. Can I use your name?

DBB: Oh, sure. She calls me...they all call me Dee. And they were...Nancy and Peggy Lou gave me that nickname. I'd never been called Dee before.

JG: What is Peggy Lou's last name?

DBB: Her real name is Mary Louise Vincent Fischer. And Nancy's grandfather was the one who started IBM.

JG: Wow.

DBB: So when he died...oh gosh...I don't know, fifty years ago, I guess. He left her several million dollars. And her husband's a CPA and they just (clears throat)...And Peggy Lou calls me quite often. We talk on the phone. I just felt it was very small and like we would have this joke, "I'll see you around campus." Because it was about as big as this deck.

JG: (Laughs).

DBB: But I was very, very happy there. I remember they used to make us take swimming lessons at Y in Central Square and we used to take the subway there. So we'd all come home with wet hair. It was required.

AP: Even in the winter?

DBB: Yes. Two...two other girls in the dorm were waitresses in dining room. It was the first time I ever served a dessert of graham crackers and whip creamed cheese and strawberry jam. They put that on the table every day. I mean we had other things, too, but that was an alternative. (Clears throat.)

JG: That's funny.

DBB: And it was delicious.

AP: For breakfast?

DBB: No. Just lunch and dinner.

AP: And just going back, I...I just thought of something...what made you decide to want to be a teacher?

DBB: When I was five years old, I went to a private kindergarten...they didn't have public ones...in this woman's house, Jeannette Holmes, and I said to my mother then when I was five, I said, "When I grow up I want to be just like Mrs. Holmes." And I never changed my mind. So I was the easiest one to bring up.

YH: And you did grow up to be just like her.

DBB: Yeah. She lived to be 103. I took my grandson to her hundredth birthday. Remember?

YH: (Yes.).

AP: So and...and you were talking about the dorms, talking about your social life in the dorms, I was wondering if you could describe it a little more for us...the closeness that you had with your...

DBB: Yeah, we were, you know. I mean you got to put it back in those times. Like if we were...we...if several of us had dates on a Saturday night, we'd have two or three in the tub at the same time. And we weren't gay or anything. (Laughs) But I mean we didn't know what that was...(laughs)...in those days.

JG: (Laughs).

AP: (Laughs).

DBB: And everybody was so caring about each other, you know. If somebody was sick another one would be getting you something and sitting on your bed and reading to you.

YH: Tell that story of there was a movie, I think you went to see and you all came back to the dorm and shut off the lights or something and sang.

DBB: Oh, Nancy this...yeah...Nancy and Peggy...well, when Nancy, Peggy Lou, and I arrived at college we were all madly in love with the boy we met in high school. Mine was Bill O'Neil and Peggy Lou's was Neil and Nancy's was this guy, Bud. And so we were so immature and romantic and everything and we pulled down the shades and put on this song, "Are You Lonesome Tonight?" Elvis.

YH: Was it his version?

DBB: Well I don't know because that's his song, isn't it?

YH: Yeah.

DBB: I don't know but anyway "Are You Lonesome Tonight" and we'd all cry and everything. (Laughs).

YH: Well didn't someone have a picture of her boyfriend above her bed?

DBB: Oh, Peggy Lou had this tremendous picture of Neil. We called it Neily Pealy over our beds. And, ah, oh, he was a handsome fellow. And do you know she still communicates with him.

AP: Oh, wow.

DBB: And when her daughter died, she lives in Canada in East Married and he sent something and he called her up. I remember she called me and told me. Strange. And Nancy still sees...still sees Bud. But I don't see Bill O'Neil. I don't know where he is. (Laughs).

JG: (Laughs).

DBB: And I don't care. (Laughs).

JG: (Laughs).

DBB: And the boys across the street at Harvard Law were more like brothers...a lot of them when you dated them, were just, you know, out for coffee or something. They were just good friends. But they were over all the time.

AP: In the dorms?

DBB: But we had a...

YH: But downstairs, right?

DBB: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

YH: Because they couldn't come upstairs.

DBB: Oh, no. We had a house mother named Mother Caldwell in our freshman year and she was so sweet. And like I remember I was going to a dance and I wanted...it was a white dress...and I wanted this sash...satin...red sash. And she fixed it for me. You know, sewed it and everything. And interestingly, she was our freshman and senior so we were back again with her in our senior year and that's when Ernie was causing problems. Remember?

YH: Oh, yes. (Laughs).

AP: Ernie?

DBB: My first husband.

YH: First husband.

AP: Oh.

DBB: But I'm skipping four years because we were talking about our freshman year.

AP: And what...what was the issue with Ernie?

DBB: Well, when I was a senior, we were back in Oxford Hall and again we had Mother Caldwell whose...oh she...what a lovely person. She was a widow. It was a nice job for a widow. And Ernie had asked...every Friday night at the medical school, we had to kill rats because he would do...be doing experiments on them and Friday nights, you'd take a rat by the tail and swing it around and it hit it on a marble slab and kill it. And then he would dissect it to find out what the results were. And I got sick of Friday night doing this.

JG: (Laughs).

YH: The princess of the house when she was younger going and killing rats at Harvard.

JG: (Laughs).

DBB: So anyway, Donald Newhouse called me because he was still interested and...I... and...so he said, "I suppose you're going out with Ernie to kill rats tonight." I said, "No I'm not." I said, "You know what." I said, "I would love to see the movie Moulin Rouge." Everybody had seen it. I hadn't. He said, "Well, I'll come over and get you." And he was the only boy I dated in college who had a car. I never thought of that till... but anyway, so he took me to Moulin Rouge and Ernie called the dorm to talk to me because I wouldn't go out with him and so he got Mother Caldwell and he decided to get on the subway and come over. And he sat with her in her room and...so when I checked in that night. She said, "Oh, Diane, I've had a terrible time." I said, "What happened?" She said, "Ernie sat with me all night...all evening." He was furious. He was waiting for me to come home. So I felt badly for her. She was so sweet. She put up with him. He was so mad. So he didn't...he didn't get around to killing the rats that night. (Clears throat.) And by the way, I got a...a P.H.T...Putting Hubby Through medical school. They gave those out in those days at the ceremony. (Clears throat).

AP: Really?

DBB: Right on Longwood Avenue. I don't know if you know where the medical school is.

AP: Yup.

YH: (Laughs).

DBB: Okay. Well that big lawn.

AP: Yup.

DBB: They had chairs and everything and there weren't too many of us married in those days. And I was called up. I remember I had a big white hat on with a pink ribbon. (Laughs).

AP: As you put Ernie through, did that...that means financially?

DBB: Yes. Yes. And...well this part wouldn't mean anything to you but at the corner of Longwood and Huntington was a drugstore named Spa's Drugstore. And Mr. Spa owned our...our brownstone and there were all medical students in it and one divinity student and so he would say to us, "If ever you can't meet the rent, that was \$62 per month, you can work at the soda fountain at the Drugstore." So I did several times. And then every summer, I had a different job. I worked at Channel 4. I was a TV traffic person. And...

AP: Wow.

DBB: It was a very glamorous job because you wore heels and a dress and the salesmen would take you out for lunch and you'd have a two hour lunch...so different from teaching, you know. And it was fun. They begged me...how I got the job, when I was teaching in Lexington, one of the parents was the manager of Chanel 4 and WBZ Radio. So he said, if ever you want a job, come and see me. So I did. And...so he wanted me to stay. I said, "No. I really should go back and teach because of the pension." And everything. So I did that. And then another summer, I worked at New England Baptist. I was a personal shopper. And I did a lot of work for Mrs. Haines, Haines stockings. She was...

YH: That I didn't know.

DBB: She was a nice lady.

YH: I didn't know that.

DBB: In fact, when I left...I mean this was a big deal to me, it may not sound like it. She gave me a bunch of stockings, you know.

YH: Yeah. (Laughs).

DBB: That was...Because we were so poor. When I'd go out to Lexington to teach, I'd get a, you know, a hole in the stocking because, you know, you'd wear a skirt. And I'd get nail polish and paint it.

YH: And you wore the high heels from bus stop to bus stop.

DBB: Yeah. I'd never been poor in my life but I was poor. I was very poor for several years. I didn't have any milk for two years. He didn't...he didn't drink milk or have it in his coffee so I just didn't. And he ate every night and every other weekend at the hospital but I didn't.

AP: And you were teaching in Lexington?

DBB: For four years.

AP: For four years and you were allowed to teach and be married at the same time?

DBB: Yes.

AP: Why is that?

DBB: Yes, that's true. With the...it's kind of personal. They...they basically told you if you get pregnant out you go. So, you practice birth control. Yup. And interestingly

when I was there, I had all these kids whose parents taught at MIT. Like I don't know if you've ever heard of moon hill but that's a section out there...these contemporary homes...round homes and everything. Weird. Weird people, too.

YH: They did a piece on that in the Globe Magazine.

DBB: Yeah.

YH: And you sent it over a couple of years ago about Moon Hill.

DBB: I...it...yeah...I guess it's still there and I taught at the Fisk School. Well when I would go in, there'd usually be a parent or two in the back of the room. Not just me...I wasn't taking it personally but they'd be sprinkled through the schools and then tell us what they thought we should do and how we should do it. So I took it and took it and took it and after school, I'd have all these different appointments. And Mrs. So and So wanted to see me and so forth. So I decided after four years to leave. But when I was there I made the nicest friends. Mrs. Link. Parky Link.

JG: (Coughs).

YH: Oh, yeah.

DBB: This boy that I had as a student...lives out in Texas now...but she used to have me up for lunch because we had an hour for lunch. And then there was a woman named...they owned Grover Cronins...I think her name was Whipple but she used to have me over for lunch, too.

YH: And Parky...excuse me...Parky Link, he's still...he sent you a Christmas card. Some of her old students back in Lexington still write her.

DBB: I'll have to tell them about my policeman ticket.

YH: (Laughs).

DBB: But anyway, so I wanted to leave and I went on interviews and we moved from the slums literally slums to Hyde Park. And we did that because Ernie was then taking... what was he...I think he was a Senior Resident at Boston City. And Boston City Hospital, they had three divisions: Harvard, BU, and Tufts. I don't think they do that anymore but anyway he was in the Harvard unit and he said, "Gee, I can take the subway right down from Hyde Park to Boston City" or something. So anyway, when we got established in Hyde Park that summer, I thought, "Well, gee, if I could in teach in Dedham, that's close." So I went to Dedham and I also had an interview at Dedham Country Day, which was attractive, but again I didn't want to leave the public school system. So I taught in Dedham and when I was in Lexington, I was in a very wealthy section and the kids would even...they rode ponies. We had a hitching post and they would ride ponies to school in the morning and so forth. Okay and that...and chauffeurs and everything. And then I went to Dedham and I taught in the poorest section. It was near Reedville. They were so poor. If you gave them a sticker, they were so excited and it was an old fashioned school. It looked like the Mount Pleasant School and that was nice. And I taught there for two years and the second year I was pregnant. And the parents in that poor section and they didn't have any money...they...they were really very, very poor but anyway, they and the teachers gave me a big shower in the school. A surprise. And that impressed me that these people would do that because I'd only been there two years. That's where I met Marie Cochrane.

YH: Oh, okay.

DBB: And that's...after that we went to Westpoint.

AP: Okay. So I have a quick question going back to Lexington. So did they actually... did the administration come out and say practice birth control?

DBB: Not in so many words but yes. Yeah. John Blackhall Smith, I think, was the superintendent, and I forgot to tell you something. The first year that I went there, they made you intern. They called it interning and so I was teaching in a room with another girl and I hated the school. I hated the job. I hated the principal. And I felt so pressured because I knew I had to work. So John Blackhall Smith came to see me and he said, "You haven't signed your contract for next year." And I, you know, when I think of it... so I looked at him and I said, "No. I think I'm going to get out of teaching. I don't like it. I don't like the school. I don't really enjoy it at all." So he said, this is the same man I had the interview with. Nice man. And he said, "I'll make a deal with you." He said, "I'm gonna put you in our brand new school that was just built. The Fisk School." And he said, "There's a nice young principal." And he said, "It's been built with a kindergarten room but we don't, obviously, have a kindergarten." So he said, "We're going to put you in there. And I'm gonna come back and see you after you've been teaching for a while and see." And you know that's the only reason I stayed in teaching because of him. I love it. I was in a room with a fireplace. (Laughs). It had draperies, lined draperies that I could pull for movies. I had a big...I'd like to go see that school...a big bay window and the window seat had covers that would lift up so I could put the kids books in there. And I was so happy and I loved it. I was there for three years.

(Interrupted by DDB's grandson. Recording paused.)

AP: (Laughs). Okay.

DBB: He probably has died. He was a wonderful man.

AP: So you taught kindergarten?

DDB: No. They didn't have a kindergarten. They...they...this was a brand new school that had just been built. And they anticipated that they would be able to get kindergarten in so I taught First Grade there.

AP: Ah, okay.

DBB: In that room. You know, I left in '57 and they still didn't have a kindergarten.

AP: So you wanted to be a kindergarten teacher?

DDB: Either that or First Grade. I wasn't fussy. I basically taught First Grade mostly.

AP: And when you were talking about the two drastically different schools, Lexington and Dedham, which environment did you prefer.

DBB: Dedham. I did. Yeah.

AP: And why?

DBB: I think the parents were so much more cooperative and they looked to you for advice instead of...in Lexington they...the parents ran the schools. And granted that...I don't want to take it away from them...they were intelligent people. A lot of them were mainly professors from MIT. And we...in that room that I had that...it was written up in all the papers and we used to have...I felt like there were always people coming through. We even had a big contingent from Japan to come through to see that room.

AP: What was so special about it? Was it a new design?

DBB: Well it was huge. It had a fireplace, which actually was used almost every Friday. The janitor would do that. I didn't. And...and even having a public kindergarten was, you know, something that was going to be strange but they hadn't done it by the time I left there. Oh and the...the little bathroom was adorable, I remember.

YH: Why?

DBB: It was...it...the...the...

YH: The little tiny seats.

DBB: Yeah, the little. And I was the only room in the whole school that had its own bathroom because it was built for a kindergarten.

YH: Lucy.

DBB: Now he was awfully good to me. I think he didn't want me to quit teaching after having taught in Lexington.

AP: And so you had to do practice teaching when you were at Lesley.

DBB: Yes.

AP: And where did you do your practice teaching?

DBB: I loved it. At the Buckingham School.

AP: Buckingham, Brown, and Nichols?

DBB: Is that what it's called now. And I was in a room with an old, old woman who had...I remember her hair pulled back in a bun. And she was in Second Grade. I don't remember her name. And they were teaching religion in...in that class.

YH: And it was a public school?

DBB: No it was private. Second Grade.

YH: Oh it was private. Okay.

DBB: Second Grade. And for public school I taught in Somerville. And there were two teachers and that was in a kindergarten and these two were...they could have been on TV. They were really floozies. And all they'd be talking about was what bar they went to and who they picked up for men and everything. And here I am, you know, and so what they would do was...they...they'd talk about their Friday night or something and they'd say to me to, you know, run the classroom, which I did. So that was a poor experience. I mean the kids were nice but the teachers were terrible.

AP: And you enjoyed your practice teaching. I mean other than that experience.

DBB: I did. Yeah, I did. I'm trying to think...we had was it through Lesley, we...we... we went to the Framingham Prison for Women? I wonder? 'Cause we met that Dr. Van Waters. I don't know if that was...I'm trying to think if it was that one.

YH: I've never heard that one.

DBB: I don't think it was in my practice teaching. I don't know. But I loved that.

AP: Can you describe that?

DBB: Yeah...we...we...a bunch of us went out and we met her and she gave us a tour of the prison and then she lectured us about some interesting cases and she was quite a woman in that Framingham Prison. It was all women. And she was saying how she wanted to revamp it because when she took the job, there was a woman in there who had gone into the...public gardens and had stolen a swan because she wanted to bring it home

and kill it and cook it for her kids. And Dr. Van Waters...this was written up in the paper, too, that...you know, she wanted to change the whole system because it was really corrupt.

YH: And was this for a class?

DBB: That's what I'm wondering if that was. I don't know. Probably it was at Lesley that I did that.

AP: Maybe a psychology class.

DBB: Maybe. I don't remember. I'm foggy about that. I don't know. I don't know why that just came to mind.

AP: That's really interesting. I haven't heard that before. But that's really interesting if you did in fact go there.

DBB: Yeah. She did a...she did a great deal of prison reform for women. Van Waters. Dr. Van Waters.

AP: And getting back to Lesley and some of the classes that you took...what...what kind of classes did you take, actually. (Laughs). Let me start out with that.

DBB: You know, I want to remember that woman's name...oh wait a minute...

AP: What did she teach?

DBB: Dr. Lindsay. And her husband was Vachel Lindsay. You know, the poet.

AP: Ah, yes.

DBB: And back in those days because it was all girls and there were so few of us, there'd maybe be ten girls in a class. And she told us about how...now...he left her for another woman and then I think he committed suicide in the Charles River or something. And we were so worried about her because she had her breast off. And when she came back her right arm was swollen. It was huge. What a wonderful teacher.

AP: She had her breast removed?

DBB: Yes. And in those days, she was out of, you know, teaching for quite a while. We didn't see her for quite a while. Then when she came back, we were so worried about her because of her arm. She had an enormous arm. And she's since passed away. But she still loved him. He was horrible to her. Vachel Lindsay. He wrote the one about..."there was a little turtle and he lived on the rocks."

JG: I don't know.

DBB: "There was a little...there was a little turtle." I don't know. I used to teach it to my class. Can't remember it.

AP: What kind of teaching techniques did you learn at Lesley?

DBB: I don't think I understand what you mean.

AP: Like you were being trained for...early childhood education. So what...what kind of philosophy did they want to learn to teach?

DBB: Well, I often say this to Yvonne. We were told to be like an actress. Be on stage. And...and that's true...truthfully the way it was and we...and we'd get on the floor with the kids and...

YH: Did you have any specific class for teaching curriculum or how to modify curriculum? You did have anything like that.

DBB: No we had classes like Biology and Philosophy and Psychology and History. I remember Dr. Dearborn. Dr. Cocket.

AP: Crockett?

DBB: Crockett. Handsome man. And the science teacher, we used to laugh at him. Mr. Morris. And Miss Boothby was the Science teacher, too. Oh, she was...she was good.

AP: Why did you laugh at Mr. Morris?

DBB: (Laughs). Barbara and I we...(laughs). I don't know. She used to...we used to laugh at the way he dressed and everything. He was...he was a little guy.

JG: (Laughs).

DBB: He was single. (Clears throat). We were not very good students. We, you know, when I think about it. (Clears throat.) Sometimes Barb would say to me, "Come on! We're going to Filene's Basement." We'd be down at Filene's Basement at 9 o'clock in the morning. Really.

AP: Instead of class.

JG: We've heard a lot of people also talking about cards and poker and...were you part of that?

DBB: No.

AP: Bridge.

DBB: No. No one did that in our dorm.

JG: Maybe that was a later fifties.

DBB: Smoking was a big thing. And we did have a room. It was called the smoker. And that was the only room they could smoke in. And we had...Nancy was a monitor and if you were caught smoking any place, she'd have to report you and you'd get grounded.

YH: You'd get grounded in college?

DBB: Yeah. You couldn't go out...all you could do was go out to class.

YH: Right. Right.

DBB: You couldn't date or anything. Yeah, that's what they did.

AP: And why was that?

DBB: If you smoked in any room other than the smoker.

AP: And...and why? Was it just a rule...part of the rules.

DBB: Yeah. Yeah. That was one of the rules.

YH: So if you had a cigarette in the hallway instead of in the smoker and if Nancy found you, she could tell the house mother and she'd say you were grounded for like a week or something? (Laughs).

DBB: Yeah. Yeah. And Nancy didn't...she was such a nice person, she used to say, "Well, you know, it's my job and I have to do it." You know.

YH: (Laughs).

DBB: She was an only child and Nancy was a perfectionist and we had an art class with...what was her name...Sharples...Miss Sharples...oh, she was wonderful. And, you know, Miss Sharples wanted us to just...like one assignment was sit in your dorm, look out the window, and draw what you see. Well, outside of our dorm, there was a sidewalk that was a...a brick sidewalk. So Nancy being the perfectionist that she was,

she was sitting at her desk, looking out the window. She had a ruler and a pencil. And she cried and she cried so we hugged her and everything and I'll never forget that, you know, she...she wanted that drawing to be perfect. (Laughs).

AP: And going back to Mrs. Boothby, you mentioned that she was really good.

DBB: Oh, she...she was... some of the things she'd say. She said something one thing one day about an assignment and she said something about all you good little virgins should do it or something. She used the word "virgins" and I was shocked. (Laughs).

YH: (Laughs).

DBB: She was a good teacher. Yeah. She was. But she shocked us once in a while.

AP: Do you remember what made her such a good teacher?

DBB: The way she explained things and, you know, draw things on the blackboard. And she wouldn't...it was like she wanted to make sure that everybody got it before she went on to another subject. She was good.

AP: Um...did you know President White very well?

DBB: Yes.

AP: What was he like?

DBB: What was his first name was?

AP: Trentwell.

YH: Trentwell.

AP: Trentwell Mason White.

DBB: He was the kind...he was very active with the kids and he'd be in our dorm frequently. And Ernie got to know him. They used to play a lot of duets on the piano. And, you know, we'd sit around in the living room at night...all of us in our nighties and bathrobes. You know, covered up and everything but I mean, it was very informal.

AP: And Dr. White would come in?

DBB: Yeah. Yeah. He had a very nice wife. She would come sometimes, not a lot.

AP: Alma?

DBB: Very attractive. What?

AP: Her name was Alma. Does that sound right?

DBB: Okay. I never heard...I never knew her name.

AP: And what would she do when she would come around?

DBB: Oh, Mother Caldwell would serve us, you know, tea or something and...and she'd just sit and talk to us. I think it was because that dorm was right there on, you know, on the campus.

AP: Oxford Hall, right?

DBB: Yup.

AP: And just so I can get it on record. Can you describe the dorms that you were in the four years...Oxford Hall, then you went to Concord Ave. for two?

DBB: Yes. There were two dorms on Concord Avenue. I can't remember the names.

AP: Concordia? Does that ring a bell?

DBB: Yes. Yes.

AP: Okay.

DBB: And then there was another one.

AP: I don't know the name of the other one.

DBB: One was nearer the street and the other one was set back. Well, in Oxford Hall when you go in the foyer, there'd be the stair way in front of you.

(Sliding door opens).

To the left was Mother Caldwell's room and to the right was the living room and then we'd go past the stairway to a hallway and down and back was the smoker and then

(Sliding door opens).

a couple of students' rooms. I was on the second floor. And, you know, when you think about it, I think we only had perhaps one bathroom, might have been two on the second floor for all those kids.

AP: Do you have a memorable dorm event or story?

DBB: One story that everybody remembers is there was a girl in our class named Barbara Hoyt, very bright girl. I think she was from Chicago or something and I don't know what the story was but her grandmother was her only relative. And she got going out with this boy at Harvard Law who was the handsome black boy. The next thing we know, Dean Thurber called her grandmother in Chicago and the grandmother came to Cambridge and this was a big harangue, big to-do. And she was told that if she ever dated him again, that she would be asked to leave Lesley because he was black.

AP: Oh, wow. Do you know what year that was?

DBB: I'd say...I'd say might have been 1952 around there. '53. 'Cause we were back in our...back in Oxford Hall. It was our senior year. And he was a...a...a like a Barack Obama. He was a nice looking man. We all liked him. He was intelligent. And, anyway, she didn't see him again. I don't remember his name. And then I told you about Brenda Tudhope that was kind of sad.

AP: Can you...can you tell the story again?

DBB: Yeah, it was in our freshman year and she had never had a date and she met this nice boy. And he was a senior at...in the Law School. And they got married unbeknownst to anyone and she came back and spent her honeymoon night with...Zoe Ebberheart, who was her roommate. And then about a week later, she finally told everybody. And we had a party for her. And she left. And we all cried. (Laughs). And she and Joe were very happily married for many, many years.

AP: And was there a rule that said you couldn't be married and be at school at the same time or was there a reason why she left?

DBB: Well, as a matter of fact, Peggy Lou got married in her senior year. No I think you could be married but you just didn't live in the dorm. 'Cause Peggy Lou commuted in from Fitchburg every day.

YH: Wasn't Hammond Hall the one that you were in? Was it Hammond?

DBB: I don't know. It doesn't ring a bell.

YH: And then there's Parker Hall. Concordia that you mention.

AP: (Yes.)

YH: Then Everett and Jenckes Hall.

DBB: Well, I know there was another one on Everett Street and I think the infirmary was in that one. That nurse, I can't remember her name, but she was good because she called

my father. I had a temperature and she wanted me to go home and...it was strep throat. There was so many things...I can't think of any thing right now. Like there was a picture of Barbara and I, we received great big bouquet of roses. I can't remember what that was all about. Two men. I don't know. (Laughs). But you know, in those days, you'd have a date with one man Friday night, another one Saturday afternoon...to a game or something. Another one Saturday night and another one Sunday. When I was...we still had our home in Plymouth and I used to come here summers before I was married. And I started going out with a sailing instructor at the yacht club and he was a student at Harvard and he was worried about me. So when I went to Harvard...I mean when I went to Lesley, I...I saw him. In fact, they teased me I had the first date. Because the phone rang the first day and he was active in the Hasty Pudding Club and everything. So I had fun, right off the bat. He was good to me. Stew Clifford.

AP: And who were the other men that you dated that mentioned who ended up becoming really famous.

DBB: Oh, Donald Newhouse. Stew Clifford is the president of some big bank in New York City and he has a summer home in Duxbury.

AP: And he was the gentleman from the sailing club?

DBB: Yup. That's how I met him. And Dick Button. I met him at the yacht club, too.

AP: And what did...what...what's Dick Button fame?

DBB: Skater.

AP: Ice skating, right.

DBB: So you figure, he's an old man now.

YH: Oh, yeah.

DBB: He's balding, I think.

JG: (Laughs).

YH: She has a thing for bald guys.

DBB: He was on TV that's how I saw him.

AP: Olympic skater, right? Is that what you said?

DBB: Yeah. But he was handsome when he was younger. Well, there are pictures in there.

YH: Yeah.

DBB: Because he was in all the newspapers. Yeah and then I ended up marrying a loser. (Laughs).

YH: Oh.

AP: And when did you get married?

DBB: 1953.

AP: Right after graduation?

DBB: Yeah. I didn't want to. I was accepted at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. I wanted to get my master's. My dad wanted me to. And Ernie said, "No. No. We're getting married. We're getting married." So we got married.

AP: Wow.

DBB: You did what he said or else. (Laughs).

YH: I didn't know you were going to get your master's.

AP: Wow. So...

DBB: So I didn't go to graduate school. I never did.

AP: So what gave you the idea of wanting to go to graduate school?

DBB: Well, it was kind of talked up in those days and I just...I just thought that would, you know, I think kind of hated to leave Cambridge. I could have been a student the rest of my life.

AP: And...and was Lesley talking about or was it...

DBB: Yes.

AP: Lesley was encouraging?

DBB: Yes. Yeah. Yeah. They were.

AP: So they said, you should, you know, go to graduate school?

DBB: They thought it was a good idea. Yeah?

AP: And was that Dean Thurber?

DBB: I think it was. I think it was she. Yeah. I think it was.

AP: And when did you start teaching in Lexington?

DBB: The fall of '53.

AP: And go ahead. I'm sorry.

DBB: I got...when in our senior year, we would go into, I guess it was Dean Thurber's office and they had a list of...of vacancies and places and then...the starting salary...so Lexington, I think I started at \$2,500 and that was the top salary. It was higher than Newton.

AP: Wow.

DBB: Yup. And, you know, that was foolish decision to make. We didn't even have a car. My father had bought me a little car, convertible when I was sixteen and Ernie made me sell it because he said he didn't want people to think that I don't know but anyway, it was sold. We didn't have a car. (Laughs).

AP: So how did you commute to Lexington?

DBB: I'd get up early and leave the house at six, take the trolley down Huntington Avenue, go to Park Street, get on the...the subway going to Harvard Square, and go to Harvard Square and go up to the surface and get on the bus. And the bus would take us out Route 2 to Lexington.

AP: And you were living in Roxbury at the time? (Coughs). Excuse me.

DBB: Roxbury Crossing. Yes.

AP: And so how long would it take you to commute?

DBB: About an hour and a half.

AP: That's a long commute.

DBB: Yes. In heels. And I'll never forget one time in the winter, we came out of the... you know how the trolley comes out of the ground right about at Northeastern. And it had snowed. So the trolley car driver said, "Everybody's gonna have to get off." Because he said, "The tracks hadn't been plowed." So I walked from there back to...well we were about where Longwood goes. And in my heels in the deep, deep snow. There was so much crime in that area that it's kind of near Mission Hill Housing Project. Now I guess it's quite nice but it wasn't in those days.

AP: It's still a little...

DBB: Is it?

AP: Yeah. You have to be careful in that area.

DBB: Well, my street was so bad it was torn down. It was called Connant Street. C-O-N-N-A-N-T. And now they tore that whole...all the houses and the street up and they put a big high rise...Miles building there. That's where our street was. Everyone was breaking in. Our apartment was broken into all the time. And they took my typewriter, I remember.

AP: So you taught in Lexington for two years...

DBB: Four.

AP: Four years. First Grade.

DBB: Yes.

AP: Then you went to Dedham.

DBB: Yes.

AP: And just one quick question about Dedham...they let you teach while you were married as well?

DBB: Yes.

AP: And why was that?

DBB: And I was pregnant.

AP: Really.

DBB: Well, I got pregnant. Excuse me. When they hired me I wasn't.

AP: And that was okay?

DBB: Well, this Mr. Dunn, he was the principal and...well let's see, I had the baby in October. So when would I have been pregnant?

YH: January.

DBB: Okay. So I probably didn't show for a while. But I did tell him. And I...I did end up the year and they gave me the big shower and everything.

YH: So back then, you couldn't teach and be pregnant?

DBB: No. No.

AP: You couldn't even be teach and be married.

JG: Yeah. That's what I was just...couldn't teach and be married.

YH: Wow.

AP: That's why I'm curious.

YH: Well they talk about those spinsters type of thing.

DBB: They were kind of progressive at Lexington to be able to because I don't think many towns did but Lexington did hire you if you were married. But some towns didn't hire you, even if you were married. Oh, another thing I forgot to tell you about Lexington, their salary schedule, the men made \$300 more than the women.

(Sliding door opens).

YH: Men made \$300 more.

DBB: Yup. Just because they were male.

AP: (Laughs).

JG: (Laughs).

AP: And were there many male teachers?

DBB: We only had two in our elementary school and it was Grades 1 through 6.

AP: And did they teach early childhood or were they more middle school.

DBB: No it was early childhood...first...we were just six grades in that school.

AP: That's unusual to have male teachers.

DBB: Yeah. Yeah.

AP: What was that like, teaching with men?

DBB: It was nice and they were young. We were all young teachers.

AP: Do you know where they got their training?

DBB: No. I don't.

AP: I was just curious. Okay.

DBB: It was interesting, all the women I taught with we all had husbands in graduate school. And we were all poor. I mean, eking out a living.

AP: And supporting your husbands.

DBB: Yes. A lot of the girls' husbands were in law school. So when we'd go into the teachers' room that's what we'd talk about...all our husbands were students.

AP: So can you describe for me what happened once you moved to Westpoint? You stopped...you stopped teaching...that's what I mean...in terms of my career?

DBB: Well, in terms of my career?

(Sliding door opens).

I mean I didn't teach. Was that what you mean?

AP: Right. Right.

DBB: And it was the first time since I'd been married that I didn't work. And I had a baby, you would've thought that nobody else in the world had had a baby. And my father being British went down to Manhattan and bought me a pram. (Laughs).

AP: (Laughs).

DBB: He...

YH: He was quite a father.

DBB: Well, when we moved to Westpoint, Ernie had, you know, he was a doctor and he had...and he went in as a captain in the medical corps and that was kind of interesting because we became very friendly with General Westmorland and his wife because when you're at Westpoint, you can't have your own doctor. You sit in line and wait, you know what I mean. And he was the only one in internal medicine so...anyway, they showed us the quarters that we were assigned. And I thought they were magnificent after coming from the slum. (Laughs). Beautiful. Brick and you...you had help because a lot of the enlisted men's wives did housework and everything. So I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. He did not want to live there. Now I see why but I didn't see then because his drinking was starting and I...and I think that was why. So we stayed for six months...no not six months...no...six weeks was it? I don't know. I remember the number six. In the Thayer Hotel, which is on the grounds of Westpoint. It is the only hotel owned by the government. And ate all our meals out and during the day my job was to find a place to live. So I finally found a place and it was just around Storm King Mountain, the very first town, called Cornwall on the Hudson. And found this...well you saw the place.

YH: Yes.

DBB: So cute. It was like an old farmhouse and you could see the...the Hudson. I could look out my kitchen window and see the Hudson River. And I could look out my dining room window and see the Storm King Mountain. And, in a way, it was good because I got to know a lot of the neighbors and remember the neighbor you met?

YH: Yes.

AP: So what was it like for you to stop working?

DBB: I loved it.

AP: You did?

DBB: I loved it. I had a baby. I mean. In fact, this...I found this elderly woman to take care of him and 'cause I was kind of active in the wives' club...the medical wives' club. And it was fun because we were only an hour out of the city. So you could just get on the Palisades Parkway and in an hour you were down Manhattan. So we'd go to museums and stuff but I hated to leave and I'd say that to her. She'd come over. I'd say, "Oh..." I can't remember her name...Mrs. Something. I'd say, "Oh, I hate to leave him." You know, and go off with the women. She used to lecture me, "You've got to do what...you should do these things. Get away from him for a while." But no I loved it. I loved it. Loved every minute.

AP: And you went back to work eventually.

DBB: Eventually. 1969.

AP: And can you talk about your reentry into the work force? Why you decided to go back and...

YH: That's ten years because Sandy was born in '59.

AP: Okay so ten years later.

YH: So that's a ten-year span.

DBB; I had since had another baby in '63. And Rusty was born in Boston but we were living in Plymouth. We only stayed in the army for two years. And, you know, it's funny the things that come back to you when we talk about...General Westmorland and his wife. He was the superintendent of the Point and it was the first time I'd ever seen a woman at a party in a long dress 'cause we wore long dresses...sitting on the floor. She was so informal and such...I remember that...

YH: I remember you saying that.

DBB: Yeah. She was wonderful. But anyway, '69, that was when I said I missed my... my little boy because he'd gone to school so I went and I got a Title I job. I worked from 9 to 11. I had left Ernie and we lived right across the street from the school. And at 11 o'clock in the morning, there was nothing for me to go home to. The boys were gone off to school. So I used to say and run off mimeograph papers for teachers and I did that up until '72 and then I...the principal, you know, you're always here so why don't you work fulltime. So in '72, I started back fulltime.

AP: And what did you teach?

DBB: First Grade.

AP: And how had it changed since you last taught in Dedham?

DBB: Well, I remember thinking that I would...when in '69, I wouldn't know what to do and I was kind of glad to get that reentry. You know. Working in a closet. Title I. And But really and truly when I started in '72, I was in that same school. I knew all the teachers...and I knew, you know, I felt very comfortable.

AP: And how long did you teach for?

DBB: From '72 until '85.

AP: And what...what elementary school was it?

DBB: That was Manomet Elementary.

YH: But not the full thirteen.

DBB: But then I went...well, Plymouth was beginning to grow because of the nuclear plant and that Manomet school was the only school south of Plymouth all the way to canal. So they decided to build a...

(JG sneezes.)

God bless you.

A south elementary school. And they wanted a mixture of ages and experience down there so they asked me to go down there. And I did. And I was there...let's see from '74 to '77. (Clears throat). And then they built Federal Furnace School, which is just three miles away from here. And they wanted me to go there. So I did. And I was there from '77. We opened up the school...until '85.

AP: And do you have memorable moment from your teaching career?

DBB: I can't...one...(laughs). This elderly woman...she was from Finland, Sydney Broman, and she had an upright piano in her room and it was kind of pulled away from the walls so there was space behind it and we had a door between our rooms and we always kept in open. She was awfully nice. She had been Sandy's teacher by the way, once.

YH: Oh, that's right.

DBB: And...so every Friday afternoon, my room would go on to her room and she'd play the piano and we'd all sing for just about a half an hour. And this little boy was acting up so she told him...she said, "Now I want you to stand over there." And she put him behind the piano and then later on we went back to our rooms. We got our coats on and they went home. And I went back to the room. And I saw him behind the piano.

YH: (Laughs).

JG: (Laughs).

DBB: So I said, "Sydney." (Laughs). So anyways, Sydney had to go to the phone and call his parents. And she drove him home.

YH: Wow.

DBB: And she felt terrible because she was a kind teacher, you know, she wasn't mean or anything but...oh...I remember that. What else? (Laughs). What I love, is, Alyssa, is having taught in Plymouth I still see a lot of my old students. And Yvonne's probably sick of this story but...one of my students is a policeman in town and I was taking the grandchildren to church one Sunday and I was speeding. I was. I was late.

YH: (Yes.).

DBB: And all of a sudden, we hear the siren, the blue light and everything. So I said, “Oh, no!” So anyway, he comes up to the window. I put the window down. And it’s Keith Larson and he said, “Oh, Mrs. Brosnan, I can’t give you a ticket.”

JG: (Laughs).

YH: (Laughs).

He gave me a big hug. Well, that impressed the grandchildren. (Laughs).

JG: (Laughs).

YH: (Laughs).

DBB: They...and then, I’d say maybe not too long ago, I had a blow out up near the police station. I was all by myself and I thought, “What am I gonna do. My cell phone was back here on the counter being charged.” It was stupid to do. And all of a sudden, who should come along but Keith. And he took right over. So...it’s...it’s...he’s...he’s been wonderful to me. And our dog groomer’s son, I had in school. He just had a baby, by the way. So it’s kind of fun to see the students. One of my old students is now a teacher in the school that I retired from. Susan Martin.

YH: Yup.

DBB: And she used to say to me in Second...I was teaching Second Grade then...she said, “Oh, I want to be a teacher just like you when I grow up.” And here she is.

YH: And didn’t she go...I think she went to Lesley, too...didn’t she?

DBB: She did.

YH: Didn’t she do her...some of her undergraduate or?

DBB: Yup. She did. That’s...Yup.

AP: That’s amazing. Well is there anything else you’d like to add? This has been wonderful.

DBB: (Laughs). I feel like I’ve...I don’t know. Well, I should talk about my friend, Martha, who was my roommate.

AP: Okay. Okay.

DBB: And so we spent a lot of time together after she was a widow, after I was a widow. When my husband died...I should tell you this...all the girls came here to the collation... I guess my...yeah...my sister-in-law...my late husband’s sister-in-law kind of did it all with one of the neighbors. But that day, the girls from Lesley got together in the house and they decided that they signed up for different weekends. Somebody was gonna come and stay with me every weekend and they did.

AP: Oh, wow.

JG: Wow.

DBB: So for about eight weekends, I had a different person here for the weekend.

‘Cause in our crowd...we got together a lot...and he was the first husband to die.

Now a lot of them have died.

YH: It was fun for me as...well, I wasn’t even quite in the family yet when her older son, Sandy, got married, we...my husband and I...well my fiancé at the time came back for the wedding and all the college girls came back to the house after the wedding. And it was funny to see them all chatting and it was like they were young girls again back when

they were at Lesley...and...and they'd tease each other and rib each other. And especially about him marrying Ernie.

DBB: Nobody wanted me to marry him.

YH: No! And I remember my husband, "Why did you let her marry him."

DBB: (Laughs).

JG: (Laughs).

YH: But it was cute 'cause of the way they all just...it just kind of like...they picked up from where they left off.

DBB: Well, you know, when Governor Dukakis, his wife came and spoke at one of our Reunions.

YH: Yes.

DBB: We were just so rude and our husbands all were some place else. I've forgotten. They met someplace. We were all at the Reunion and then they were gonna come and then we were all gonna go out to dinner. And, so anyway, I remember, my husband said to me, "Now what did Mrs. Dukakis talk about?" And we just roared with laughter.

JG: (Laughs).

YH: (Laughs).

DBB: We didn't listen. (Laughs). And we got the prize...the most...most people coming back. But all the girls who came back were all borders not commuters. There was a real divide...I will say that there was a real division in those days. And they certainly were nice girls but we just didn't get to know them.

YH: Now you talked about Martha. Now when she...she wasn't a boarder. I mean, she was a boarder, but she was one of the few that worked at the school, right?

(JG blows her nose.)

DBB: She was a waitress. Her mother was a widow (clears throat). And she was a school nurse and they just didn't have that much money. I don't know how she did it.

YH: Well, that's what I was getting at was that whole thing with Martha and knowing her background and knowing your background so extensively is the socio-economic background...it...it melded, which I think was unusual back then. But it melded at Lesley, especially, I think, with Martha being from one background and you being from a completely different background.

DBB: Yes. Yes. And, you know, Nancy and Peggy Lou, I mean...

YH: Oh, and Peggy Lou.

DBB: Her family owned the Foxborough Company and they sold to a British firm, and, you know.

YH: I think it speaks to Lesley, though, that they opened it up in a time where things were so segregated in so many ways that they opened it up for so many different families and girls.

DBB: One thing we were not segregated about, we had a lot of Jewish girls in the dorm. And...

YH: Although not many blacks, did you?

DBB: What dear?

YH: Not many blacks.

AP: Nope.

DBB: We might have.

YH: I don't see one mom.

DBB: No.

YH: No. (Laughs).

DBB: But there was no...what do I...none...no discrimination...none at all. In fact, Barbara Goldsmith, oh god, I loved her. She was Jewish and so she said to me...she said, "Dee, how about going down to the Boston Common." And did you ever hear of Father Feeney?

AP: No.

DBB: Okay. Well, years ago, he was a professor at B.C. and he would go down...very, very controversial man...he would go down to the Boston Common and he would get up on a soap box and talk about kikes and I don't know what the other words were, but anyway. And she had heard about it and she said, "I want to hear it." And I said, "I do, too." So we went down and we listened. Well, after this Father Feeney was excommunicated, fired, excommunicated from the Catholic Church. He started a sacred...sacred hearts of Mary school in Harvard Square near Saint Paul's. And he would recruit these wacky...especially Radcliffe girls...they used to have hairy legs, very bright girls but not attractive. And basically they were having kids out of wedlock and then he would march them through the square and they all had little black clothes on. And the Pope, I think it was, or the Cardinal, I don't know. I think it was the Pope. Made him get out of there and he relocated to a farm in, it was a commune, in Harvard, Mass. But we used to be afraid of these nuns and...and the students.

YH: Wasn't there a movie made of it?

DBB: What, dear?

YH: Wasn't there a movie made of him, Father Feeney's or is that the same guy?

DBB: There have been books written about him. I...He may have died. I don't know.

AP: And...and these were Radcliffe girls that he would...

DBB: Mostly and they were kind of on the fridge girls. I mean they weren't...we used to make fun of the Radcliffe girls but they were hippies like, you know, they were just very, very bright girls but looking for something and...and he used to entice people to come there to him with food. Coffee. Donuts and stuff. I never went.

YH: I was just looking here. Is this Alice Galligher? Was she...she looks...

DBB: She was an older woman, right?

YH: I don't know. But she was...but she was a student? Was she black?

DBB: No. No. I don't think so. There's Peggy Lou.

AP: I don't think there were...

YH: I don't think there...

AP: There were no.

YH: Just the look of her, looks like she might be.

AP: Yeah, there were no.

DBB: Well, look what that...

JG: Yeah...

DBB: The girl was...all she did was date him.

AP: I think the first African American student graduated in 1959.

YH: Wow.

AP: So she would have come in right before...right...you know, two years after you graduated. Well if that's it, I think we can stop for now.

DBB: Okay.

AP: That's great. Thank you so much. This has been wonderful.

DBB: Oh, you're welcome.

AP: Really wonderful.

DBB: It's been fun for me. I've got to go to the bathroom.