



# Pearl Brown Transcript

Q: Record, record, record. Testing, testing. You were at school during the Depression years. What was the atmosphere there? Was there any group that seemed to be more prosperous? Or were you all in similar circumstances?

Pearl Brown: I think we were all pretty comfortable, the Jewish group that I knew, anyhow. We never really worried about it, particularly. We did shop in Filenes Basement, and I remember shopping in one shop that I think I bought a dress for four dollars or something like that. And when I saw my friends, one of the Jewish girls said to me, "Isn't that a lovely dress? You must have gotten it in Jay's," which was quite a lovely place to buy. I did buy in Jay's too. I didn't tell her where I'd [actually] gotten it, but I enjoyed the dress anyhow. I can still picture it, even though I haven't seen it for so many years. I think we all – and we were commuters. We didn't always bring our lunches. We went into the lunchroom. I, for one, remember sitting from eleven o'clock sometimes until two because I enjoyed the different girls that came in for lunch at the – not eating all that time, just enjoying their company. Some of them were so delightful and brilliant and social. I mean, they went out a lot – very popular girls, and they all did very well as a whole. Some graduated with honors, some were Phi Bets, and we always looked to that wonderful feeling of education, and loved the learning part of it, as well as the social part of it.

Q: It was an all-encompassing experience for you. You're an observant Jew today. Apparently, you were at all times. You speak about having lunch. Did you have any difficulty on that score when at school?

PB: Well, it was always something in the dairy line, never meat. I can't remember if I brought lunch. I have a feeling I didn't. Latin School, I think we brought lunches because also they had a lunchroom, and so I'd buy little peanut bars or something like that for



dessert. I think I brought my lunch mostly to Latin School, but Radcliffe, I think they had enough on the menu that wasn't meat that I could eat, and I still eat fish out and that kind of thing.

Q: In the overall, Radcliffe really gave you whatever you had anticipated of it. But what has it done for you since you've graduated in your entire life? How would you evaluate that education? I know you've given me a certain amount, but I wanted to hear your true evaluation.

PB: I'd like to go back a little bit to Dr. Wolfson's course. He used to have teas on a number of Sundays during the year, and he would invite Radcliffe and Harvard students, and sometimes they were well crowded there in his apartment on Prescott Street, I believe it was. I was the hostess for three years. So, I had a wonderful time meeting (not the Radcliffe people I knew), but the Harvard Law School people, for one. I think one time I was the hostess all by myself because one of the other girls couldn't come. They were Harvard Law people, and a whole, really, two rooms of them, as I recall. I remember they were so amazed that I remembered all their names. I couldn't do it today! At that time, it was really quite something. I think as a result, I went out with a number of them. One I can remember, who became quite an authority in Washington, DC, working for the government. I'd heard about how wonderfully he had done. Can't remember his name, but he was excellent, and some of the others, too, that were really, really terrific. So, it was a wonderful chance. And Professor Wolfson, who never married himself, was also always so interested in having Harvard and Radcliffe people meet. Of course, we hoped that he would get married one day, too. In fact, they did discuss who might be a good person for him. He said in his book – I gave to the Wolfson fund so that they could have a chair in his memory. I was reading the book the other day, and Lou Weinstein wrote the epilogue at the end of the book, and in it, he mentioned the Harvard teas. I mean, the teas Professor Wolfson had run and how his [Weinstein's] wife, Selma, had been a hostess as well. I don't remember her being a hostess, but she was a couple of years



before me, anyhow, so she might just have given it up at that time, but that was one of the great, wonderful features of Radcliffe and Harvard at that time.

Q: What do you think was his purpose behind having these teas? It wasn't his subject. You weren't involved in philosophy and so forth. This is another aspect of Professor Wolfson that I've not heard about.

A: Well, in his book, according to what Lou said, reading his part, the last chapter was that Wolfson would have – he should have married when he was young. He mentioned that Wolfson did himself, and Lou and Selma were very close friends of Professor Wolfson and Harry Savitz. Of course, they're still close friends, and Wolfson did spend time with them. Also, I think it was because he really wanted the Jewish boys and girls to get together. I mean, whether they married or not, I think there were some marriages that came out of the wonderful teas. Also, I knew him in another way. One of my friends was a cousin of Rab; his name is Rabinowitz, who was on the North Shore in Swampscott. And they used to take me to visit with them, with Rab and his wife, and a lovely, lovely home in Swampscott. I remember on one occasion, and probably more than once, Professor Wolfson was coming out when we were going in. [laughter] He was very shy, but wanted to have people get acquainted and enjoy their lives, and he had many, many friends. If you read his book, it's really quite inspiring, even now.

Q: Did you retain a relationship at all with Professor Wolfson after you got out of school?

PB: No, except that one time we were in New York, and Arthur and I – I was pregnant with Michael, in fact, and he went by with some other gentleman, and he looked at me and smiled. And I thought to myself – I didn't go over and say, "Professor Wolfson, how nice to see you," and I was sorry afterwards. I've been sorry ever since. That was thirty-four years ago. Thirty-three years ago. I would have liked to. No, I didn't keep in touch. As a matter of fact, I read in the book that his wife ended at the rehab center in Roslindale, and then they had a memorial service at Hebrew College. And I said, "Where



was I?" I didn't know about it because that was in '73 or four. Why wasn't I there? So, I have this wonderful feeling about him. I took a course in Semitics with him, Semitics 9, I believe it was called, which, as I said, I used for so many years teaching in history. Then I led a Hadassah study group for 13 years and used it as well. In fact, I wanted to look up some of the notes before I came here, but I didn't have a chance. Then I took a course in Spinoza, and that was the year he wrote his book on Spinoza. And I used to love to go – I had to get, I think, special permission, because it was a graduate course, but I got it, and then I didn't have to take the exam in Spinoza because I was taking my generals. But there was a question on Spinoza, and I did use it. I remember going to one of the classes anyhow at Harvard, and by then Rabbi Kazis was in the group, and some others that I knew. He made it sound so easy. You know? When I read Spinoza [now], somehow it isn't that easy. But he made it sound so easy, as though it was just marvelous. Then I read, too – I think it was in Lou's chapter on him that he was telling – I don't remember whether it was Spinoza or Philo or one of the other philosophers of whom he wrote. Also, everybody stood up and cheered afterwards because he made it sound like it was just the easiest thing in the world. So, it's still a great source of inspiration to me.

Q: I know you've mentioned a number of people that went on to Radcliffe from Girls Latin School, and of course, you knew most of them. But did you make any sustaining friends just explicitly from Radcliffe?

PB: Yeah, there's (Ellie Kunin?), who I'm still close to. We've been invited to many of her wonderful occasions, and we invited her to some of ours, like Michael's bar mitzvah. We're still close friends. So, she lives in Marlboro, and I spoke with her just last week. Evelyn Craven, Evelyn Foster Craven). My friend (Leah Levy Solomon), we've been friends since we were three years old, went right from kindergarten through Radcliffe together. And, of course, Ann Zonderman, I became friendly with her after Radcliffe through Hebrew College, actually. There are a number of others, yes, that I haven't seen



all the time, but I'm always glad to see.

Q: Radcliffe, from a social aspect, it was a great success. From an intellectual aspect, it was a great success. It has affected your life completely.

PB: Very definitely. And I am afraid to say, I'm a Radcliffe grad, though, half the time because some of my friends who didn't go to college, for example, but who are very bright, I feel – one of them, particularly, went to the New England Conservatory of Music. And somehow, I shy away from saying Radcliffe, that I'm a Radcliffe grad, a Harvard grad. Even with some of the people that I work with today, I don't say it. I'm a trustee at the Hebrew College, as you might know. And last year, when we went to the graduation, I was wearing my son's gown, actually, and I took his cap. It was so heavy I didn't feel like wearing it. One of the girls said – I said, “Well, you're not wearing one either.” She said, “Well, I shouldn't, but you should.”

Q: Did your son go to Harvard?

PB: No, I think when he was a little one, just two years old, I taught him to say Pusey President of Harvard. And somehow, through the years – I don't know whether he just didn't want to. Well, he didn't apply, so that was it. He went to U Mass, as a matter of fact, and then on to the University of Wisconsin, where he got a fellowship. Those are the two colleges. But I think he did take some kind of course in Harvard Extension. I don't know whether it was for my pleasure, but also, he found an interest in anthropology, particularly, which is his field.

Q: [inaudible] Were you disappointed that he didn't go to Harvard?

PB: Well, I was disappointed that he didn't apply. Right. I would have enjoyed his being there. My brother enjoyed it so much, and the other people that went to Harvard enjoyed it so much. And of course, I enjoyed Harvard, too, as well as Radcliffe, the times that I had there. I think the boys that commuted during the times that we were there, they used



to be very closely bonded, you might say, at the Phillips Brooks House, where they had their lunches and that kind of thing. Somehow, Harvard and Radcliffe and Cambridge – Cambridge actually was where a number of my family lived, the Andelmans. A number of the Andelmans lived in Cambridge. Very few do now, but they did at one time, and I just loved it. I hated the thought that I wasn't going to be there anymore, my senior year at Radcliffe, when I'd go to the square and think, “Jiminy, is this going to be the last year at school?” I really loved it.

Q: Were you a member of any of the clubs?

PB: Well, this was after Radcliffe, actually, when I was studying with Gephardt, and the MacDowell Club was interviewing people to play a concert. So, I tried out, and at first I got a letter saying sorry I wasn't accepted or whatever, and someone else that I'd known who studied with [inaudible] thought, well, in another – not the main MacDowell Club, but then I got a call saying we'd like to have you play at Brown Hall. So, I didn't say anything, except to Gephardt. I went for my lesson, and I said, “I've been invited to play at Brown Hall at the MacDowell Club, and I don't understand it because they'd written me that I wasn't accepted.” He said, “Well, just go ahead and play.” [laughter] So, I did. I played an interesting group of numbers – Brahms, Chopin, and they invited me again, but at that point, I wasn't really studying. So, even though I had sort of worked on the Beethoven “Appassionata,” thinking if I were to play there again, I would play that, but I refused. So, since then, I just haven't been involved with them.

Q: Are you active in your alumni club?

PB: I go back to reunions, yes, and my class keeps in touch. I've gone back many, many times, and I've worked for the Radcliffe alumni fund and raised some money, and I've gone to different groups, and I'd like to go back on commencement, not commencement itself at Harvard, but in the afternoon when they have speakers. And I enjoy just thinking of myself as a Radcliffe-Harvard graduate and the people that were there, and I have a



lot of wonderful feelings about it.

Q: After you left Radcliffe, did you keep in contact with any of your professors or anyone in the admissions office, or those people whom you came in contact with and had someone relationship with?

PB: Well, the admissions office, I think I mentioned that they had suggested that I go to Family Society after I took the secretarial course. Of course, I guess if they called Radcliffe, they gave me a good recommendation. I kept in touch with – I guess I did talk to Gordon Allport occasionally, not too often. I think I mentioned to you that I'd seen him when they eulogized Professor Roback, and he was one of the speakers, and I was glad to go back to talk to him. It's a long time ago. You really don't remember so well.  
[laughter]

Q: Were the majority of the Jewish students active in any of the Zionist or Jewish events?

PB: We didn't talk about it in Zionists, particularly at that time, except the [inaudible] was really more or less a Zionist group. But I don't think too many of them belong to the [inaudible] chapter and was connected with Menorah [Harvard Menorah Society]. But yes, many of them went into Menorah. They enjoyed it. They came. It was a nice group that had cultural activities. I mean, they'd have good entertainment. They tried to make it as interesting as possible – speakers. I remember going to Harvard, now that I think of it, on a Sunday morning when Rabbi Stephen Wise was the speaker. It was really wonderfully crowded. I don't remember whether it was Phillips Brooks House or just where it was, but so many came in from all over. They didn't have cars at that time. They came by streetcar or whatever. And that was a very exhilarating kind of meeting. It must have been the Menorah chapters of both Harvard and Radcliffe that invited him to come. Whenever there was an interesting speaker, we were there. And after I graduated, Eleanor Roosevelt came to Harvard to speak. She spoke at Sanders Theatre, and I remember that. One of my friends who graduated in the class of 1940, I think she told



me, mentioned it just the other day how thrilling it was to see Eleanor Roosevelt. We all, of course, stood up when she walked in, and I'm sure gave her all kinds of accolades after she spoke. Very, very thrilling. So, we were very much a part of Cambridge, a part of what was going on in the world.

Q: There must have been Jewish students that came from other areas than the New England region. Did they identify as Jews? Or were they active in any of these Jewish-oriented programs?

PB: I think that was one of the nice things about Menorah, not just the commuters that met, but people that lived at the dorms. I remember one girl, Pauline, I can't remember her last name either, that came from New Jersey, and we were very friendly with her. Others that came from other areas that we were very happy to meet, and especially if they came into [inaudible], then we knew who they were, but otherwise we didn't always get to know them.

Q: Are you aware of any Jewish quotas or any of the turbulence that surrounded that period?

PB: I was told that there were Jewish quotas, and I know that when my brother applied to medical school, they said it was particularly difficult to get into Harvard Medical School unless one was a football player. My brother happened to have run cross-country, so he was on the team for that. I don't know whether he didn't apply to Harvard for some reason, but he went to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] afterwards to get his requirements for medical school, because his field was French history and Lit of the 19th century, and that really didn't include any of the things that he needed for medical school. So he went to MIT, and he was given a fellowship there, as a matter of fact, for the next year. He spoke to one of his professors at the time to say what should he do because he'd gotten into Buffalo medical school, to which he had applied, and should he give up the fellowship after this professor had given him such wonderful recommendations. He



wanted to go into public health work. The professor said at the time, “Go to medical school because then you can be in both medicine and public health work.” And as it happened, the Buffalo medical school did give him a public health degree with the medical degree, so that he interned at the Walter Reed Hospital, which was particularly good. So, that's when I heard about quotas, particularly, and I know other Jewish fellows that had had to go to different colleges because they couldn't always get into Harvard, to which they might have enjoyed going to.

Q: You did not experience the quota condition, but you were aware of it.

PB: That's right. And also at law school, too, at Harvard Law, I heard there were people who found it difficult because of the quotas that they might have had for Jewish students. But fortunately, I didn't experience it myself.