

BARNARD COLLEGE CLASS OF 1971 ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Reminiscences of

Katherine Jessop Brewster (Johnson)

2015

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Katherine Jessop Brewster (Johnson) conducted by Frances Connell on October 18, 2015. This interview is part of the Barnard Class of 1971 Oral History Project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Barnard Alumni Class of 1971 Oral History Project Part II

Interviewee: Katherine Jessop Brewster (Johnson) Location: Katherine Brewster's home,
New York City

Interviewer: Frances Connell Date: October 18, 2015

00:00:03 Q: Okay, so this is an interview taking place, part two, with Katherine Brewster, at her apartment in New York City, on the 18th of October, 2015. Her original interview was done in 201, and the interviewer this time is Frances Connell. Okay, Katherine, I'm glad to be here—

Brewster: [Laughs] Thank you.

00:00:24 Q: And we'll go forward with some of the areas that you didn't have a chance to talk about previously. I think the first place we might start—or where do you want to start, is there a particular—?

Brewster: Well, I haven't looked at the transcript, where is it you'd suggest that we start?

00:00:39 Q: Okay, why don't we talk a little bit about your daughter, and the whole phenomenon, the challenge, of raising a biracial daughter, over a period of several decades.

Brewster: Good topic, [Laughs], right, good topic. I did mention one thing in the interview which was even pre-birth: my ex-husband [Howard Jan Johnson, Jr.]'s grandmother, Elkay, asking me how I would respond to having a brown baby. So the whole issue of the skin color was there in a way from the beginning. So what's coming up is pregnancy, which had nothing to do with her being biracial, but just my sense of pregnancy at that point. I remember hearing my mom talk about, when she had me people hardly knew she was pregnant because

she just wasn't showing. And I kind of went through the same thing—I didn't show a lot, I actually lost weight before I then started gaining weight, and I was working at the time. So thinking of the difference today of women I know that spend a lot of time rubbing their belly in relationship with the baby that's in the womb—I didn't have that kind of a relationship—I was more working and proud that I wasn't showing. And I thought about that, now what I know about how important the relationship is when you're in the womb, how that's affected my daughter and affected her life. Not that it has anything to do with being biracial, it just has to do with mother/daughter relationship, and—

00:02:52 Q: Which is crucial as well.

Brewster: Right, right, very crucial. The birth was interesting. She came a couple of days early. My bag of waters broke unexpectedly, didn't quite know what it was, we called the doctor, and he said, "Well, if you don't start with contractions within twelve hours come on into the hospital." This was early in the morning, right around midnight or so. I went into the hospital sometime around noon—contractions were really, really minimal. Eventually what happened is at that point if your bag of waters had broken and you weren't delivering within twenty-four hours—they wanted you to deliver within twenty-four hours—they induced labor. What I remembered about the labor is how I felt I was hit with hard labor immediately, and even though I had taken all these Lamaze classes about the breathing, and expected to have a natural birth—I don't know whether it was an hour or an hour and a half, two hours into the labor, hard, hard labor, I decided I would take an epidural. I was really disappointed with myself, but I was in too much pain.

00:04:31 Q: Now was your husband present?

Brewster: My husband was present, yup. My husband was present, and very supportive. And I came out of the epidural and suddenly they did a check, and the nurse said, “Oh, my God, we have to get you into the delivery room.” So I was rushed into the delivery room. I was told as I got into the delivery room, the doctor wasn’t there yet, don’t push—and of course at that point all my urge was to push. She crowned, my urge was to push, and out of the corner of my eye I saw the doctor come in and I just pushed, and he hardly had time to catch her, she just came out. So once she came out—once we actually got at some point to whether she was really ready to come and I was ready—I don’t remember anything about what my ex-grandmother-in-law had said about skin color, I just I looked at this little baby and I just loved my little girl.

We decided to name her not a family name, which was common in my family. I wanted to name her for someone that I thought might be a role model for her. The woman that was a role model for me, I think at that point, was Erica Huggins, one of the Black Panthers, so—her first name is for Erica Huggins, and middle name is her grandmother’s name, [Elkay], and then Johnson is her father’s last name. And my parents, Anne and Ben Brewster, fell in love with her too. And his mother, Julia Johnson, fell in love with her, and his grandmother was alive then, she died a couple of years later—actually I think she died in my daughter’s first year.

I’m trying to think, there wasn’t anything I remember consciously about race in terms of *her*. There were things that would come up with my ex-husband, like when we went to look for an apartment, in Albany; we were moving from one location, Sheridan St., where we’d been for a while, and we wanted to go into a better neighborhood. He was the one that said, “You need

to go be the one to talk to the landlord about us renting.” He said, “If I go we’re not going to get this place [Morris St.]” And this was a place in Albany that I was I guess not integrated.

That’s the first thing I remember about being much more aware of how race would be influencing simple things like going to find—I mean *not* simple for other people, black people—but going to find an apartment wouldn’t be an issue for me but was going to be an issue for him, and if I extrapolate, then could potentially be an issue for my daughter in her life. So I remember being a little of shocked by this when the discussion about getting the apartment and how to go about this came up.

So I had my own education in the “things of daily life” that become difficult for people who have dark skin, and not difficult for people that have light skin. I think I talked in the other interview about the other place that it became pretty evident that my life in terms of prejudice _____(??) through my husband was being affected negatively by race, was his experience in the truck driving school that he attended, and then not getting a job after we—you know it’s interesting, it was one of those profit-making schools—

00:09:00 Q: —Trade schools, yes—

Brewster: —and there was no attempt to really help him find a job when he came out of the school.

00:09:08 Q: And you really sort of invested in this as a way for him to find work.

Brewster: Yup, that was a big investment in him.

00:09:11 Q: Very important.

Brewster: Yup, yup, to find work, absolutely. I can remember at least one time, I don't remember if there were a couple of other times, but one time him not coming home at night, —and of course this is before cell phones—couldn't locate him, called all of his friends, got really worried. He came home about mid-day the next day as I remember, and he said, "You know, the cops picked me up last night." No reason, he wasn't drunk—he did have a drinking problem—wasn't drunk, wasn't high— as far as I know at that point he wasn't involved with any kind of drugs.

At that point both of us did smoke marijuana off and on, but— so there was no reason, he was walking down the street trying to come home from wherever he'd been, and they just picked him up. And wouldn't let him make a phone call, no charges, nothing. So it was another eye-opener of—you know, now we've talked about the last couple of years about young black men being harassed. I know it happens because I've experienced it with my ex-husband, and this was forty odd years ago, thirty-five years ago that that was happening.

How I remember race would show up with my daughter? Okay, there were a couple interesting sort of—I've forgotten if I mentioned this in the other interview—if I did again, then stop me. My daughter's hair was long, and she's about two, maybe three; and as I was working from home, getting her ready to go to nursery school, there was this huge hassle of getting her hair combed—it's very nappy, and in two big ponytails or one big ponytail. I did not know how to braid, you know, do the cornrow braiding of the hair.

And it was a fight, and she seemed to be tender-headed, and I said to myself, "I just don't want to be fighting every morning with my daughter—this is the time of Afros—I'm going to have her hair cut." So I had her hair cut into this short Afro, and suddenly I heard from her

Grandmother Johnson, “Little black girls don’t wear Afros,” and she said this in front of my daughter, I was mortified, and horrified that I’d done this horrible thing to this little girl.

And then, so maybe a couple of years later—I would think it was the same year, but it couldn’t have been the same year. Some people did look at her and call her a little boy, so my mother one day, after Ericka was visiting with her, she brought Ericka back home and Ericka had pierced ears. [Q laughs] And she said, “I did this because”—well, maybe she was five —“because I wanted it to be clear that she’s a little girl.” But the back-story of this is—when I went over to Greece, I was eighteen over in Athens, Greece and had my ears pierced, and when I came back my mother was horrified. I came back in 1967, so this was only—Ericka was born in ‘71, –‘76, we’re talking nine years later, and suddenly her *whole* attitude had changed. [Laughs]

Her skin is dark enough—and her features are very mixed, but just enough that when people look at her on the street, how they perceive her is she’s black—like with Obama. So the other piece of it is that if someone—as one of our classmates has said, how we determine the race of someone is by how much or how little “black” blood they have in them. So she’s not viewed as being multiracial or interracial, she’s viewed as being black, just as Obama is interracial, and—that word isn’t even used anymore—he’s the “black” president, not the multiracial president.

00:15:05 Q: So what sort of people are you surrounded by at this point? Did you end up getting an apartment in a non-integrated area, or—

Brewster: It was in a non-integrated area, yes. It was probably kind of an upper-working class neighborhood is what were living in at that point [Morris St., Albany, New York].

00:15:24 Q: And you'd gone back to work?

Brewster: I went back to work when she was six months old. She was I think two or three when we moved to this place, Morris St., because we were living in this apartment [on Morton Ave., Albany, New York] when Howard and I got married.

00:15:45 Q: Well, you mentioned in the other interview that she was able to go inside and outside so I guess there was a yard [with the Morris Street house.]

Brewster: Yes.

00:15:51 Q: And when she came here [New York City there was no going out in the street with her bicycle, maybe she was a bit older, I don't know?

Brewster: No, no, no, no. We didn't move here until she was five, we moved to this place, Morris St., in Albany when she was about two.

00:16:02 Q: Oh, the place in Albany, I'm sorry, I misunderstood.

Brewster: Yes, the place in Albany. A lot of different instances of race showed up. One is after I divorced her father, my ex-husband: I remember a night, lying on the couch in the ~~Morton~~ Morris Street house ~~Avenue~~ in Albany, *just*—I mean one, I was just reeling from the divorce. Even though I had initiated it, I was still reeling from it, and having two different senses that felt like this weight—one is that it was like, “Oh, my God, there's nothing between me and the rest of the world,”—that when I was married I had this sense of—it must not have been like both of us together, or maybe it was, but in some way there was *some* protection between me and the rest of the world—and this felt like, “Oh my God, there isn't, it's just me and the rest of the world and I don't know how well I can do this.” And the other

thing that came is, “Oh my God, how do I help my daughter learn how to live as a young black woman?” This is my conversation, is what I said to myself: I know that unconsciously as a woman I’m passing on to her all kinds of ways to figure out how to live as a woman. But I realized, I have *no* way to do that in terms of her being viewed as black, I *just* have no way, and feeling helpless and powerless and just devastated. Her father, after we divorced, he left for a year, so he wasn’t even around, I didn’t even know where he was, I mean there was no communication for a year—she *was* seeing her Grandmother Johnson off and on. It didn’t feel like enough in that moment, it felt like she needed someone there all the time who was just unconsciously teaching her stuff. So that was one of the ways —

00:18:23 Q: Was she close to your husband at that point, or her father?

Brewster: Pardon?

00:18:27 Q: Was she close to her father at that point?

Brewster: She was three or four—yes, she had been close to him.

00:18:34 Q: Or maybe was he close to *her*?

Brewster: No, she had been very close to him, yes. She had been close to him.

00:18:40 Q: But there was no other black woman to sort of be a model, and you were realizing this.

Brewster: No, no other black woman to be a model, other than her Grandmother Johnson. And there wasn’t anyone close in my life, like a close black woman friend that would’ve been willing to be that role model in her life—I didn’t have that at that point. One of the places Ericka attended as a nursery school, in Albany, was an experimental pre-

school/kindergarten/grade school, and that was interracial, and I remember choosing that specifically because it was. So I think what I'm beginning to realize as I'm talking is that as she grew older, I became more conscious of choices I made about race. Like if I was going to go to school where would I consider going to school, or where could we live, that felt comfortable. I actually didn't know much about Boston's environment; I had applied to Harvard Business School, was not accepted, and that may have been a blessing because I understand from friends that have lived there how segregated Boston really is, and it might have been a lot more uncomfortable. I knew that New York would be a comfortable place for us to be able to live, from my experience growing up here—I mean not growing up but being here at Barnard, I knew it would be a comfortable place.

00:20:17 Q: And you were involved with the groups, when you were living in the communal situation too. Well, that was all white, actually. It was a mixed neighborhood, right?

Brewster: No, that neighborhood is for the Patriot Party, [part of the Rainbow Coalition created by the Black Panthers—Black Panthers, Young Lords and the Patriot Party]. That was the working class neighborhood—it's been gentrified—Yorkville had been the big brewery manufacturing area in Manhattan.

I was looking for schools that would be interracial, and Bank Street was a school that was definitely interracial. It was good also because I'd hoped they would watch out for dyslexia—which they didn't, that's a whole other story. So when I was looking for schools I was conscious of the racial mix of the schools. St. Hilda's and St. Hugh's was the school she went to [sixth grade through high school]—so again when I was looking to transfer her out of

Bank Street and into a different school I was very conscious of the racial mix, and it was one of the things I talked about with the administration when I would have interviews for her to apply to schools. So as she grows it becomes more and more something to think about.

One of the things I didn't think about, and I wish I had more was, what was the racial mix of the teachers? And I suddenly went, [a couple of years ago,] "Oh my God!", she had, particularly at St. Hilda's and St. Hughes, even at Bank Street, very few role models of African American teachers, male or female.

I made a choice in terms of the dentist: it happened that the dentist we went to in Albany went to dental school with a dentist in Manhattan who was black, so we went to a black dentist. The hairdresser—I chose a hairdresser that my roommate in business school knew of, this man who is from Bermuda, and that's who we went to have our hair cut for years. I still go to the same guy to have my hair cut.

00:22:50 Q: And how did Ericka's hair turn out at this point? I'm sure it was changing over the years. Or was it always an Afro?

Brewster: I forgot when I said she could make her own decisions about her hair. It was an Afro until she made her own decisions. And then she's gone through all kinds of different things with hair—straightening it, relaxing it. I don't think she's ever gone back to an Afro. Having it long, having it short. But definitely one of those, and her hair products are very different than mine, and the way she takes care of her hair—I really had no idea how to go about taking care of hair that's that texture and that curly, and didn't know I didn't—I mean I really didn't know I didn't. So that's been an education for me with her in terms of the hair. So what are the other ways that—

00:24:10 Q: Did she ever voice her sense that, “Hey, mom, you’re not the same color I am,” or— was she conscious of that do you think at a very early age, and how did she respond and how did you respond?

Brewster: She never said, “Hey, mom, you’re a different color.” I had read a [book by a] woman by the name of either Alice Miller or Alice Walker—it was probably Alice Miller. She was an inter-racial psychologist; she wrote a book about her experience growing up as an inter-racial child—I’ve forgotten where whether it was the south or whether in was in the north. She talked about somewhere around age seven, eight, nine, becoming very conscious of the difference in skin color, and how walking down the street or being on a bus she would try and distance herself from [her mother, who I remember was white]. So I noticed that about that same age Ericka would do that. If we were getting on a bus together she’d try and be enough ahead or behind me, and was more ahead because I wasn’t going to let her run behind me, so it wasn’t clear we were together. Whenever it was clear we were together, we would get stares, we would get looks, and we would get them walking down the street, and get them on the bus—even today when we’re anyplace. It’s still not a common experience to have interracial couples, inter-racial parents and children walking down the street. So it’s still an issue, it’s still something we deal with when we’re walking down the street.

So that’s the way it began to show up. I can remember times when as a teenager Ericka and I were walking down the street—I think it was as a teenager. Young men—that was the other thing, the experience as her body developed of young men—suddenly there were cat calls. It was offensive to me. *Never*—I’d not experienced that in my life. It’s the equivalent—I could remember as a young girl walking by construction sites, and sometimes some of the guys would make comments. For Ericka, men made comments about her anytime and anywhere

she walked on the street—it wasn't just walking down the street up here. And so she developed this thing, if she'd see a group of young men coming she would cross the street, she would also distance herself from me at that point.

We have never talked about that, just these little things that I would see going—we talked about what it was like for her to have guys making comments about her as she walks down the street. So again it's not something—you know even a buxom white woman walking down the street doesn't get that kind of response. And it's primarily that what I remember, we're not talking about a middle class black man making a comment, we're talking about, you know, a working class poor man making the comments. I can't imagine what it's like for a woman living in the ghetto, *all the time* to have that.

The light just changed, didn't it, the sunlight? Actually the sun is going behind the building now.

00:28:12 Q: You're still pretty well-illuminated. The sun is still doing its job [laughs]. So did you feel as she got older it became more complicated?

Brewster: Yes, it does become more complicated. Yes, it is more complicated. I'm aware of it. As an example: I divorced when Ericka was three, 1974. If I think of the men I've had relationships with since then, the first one was black, Dana Black, then I haven't had—oh, yes, I did, there was another black man, Michael Stuart, I had a relationship with. The others have been white, and I'm—

00:29:11 Q: Were these long-term relationships, or—?

Brewster: Two of them were long-term. The one with the black man, Michael Stuart, was long-term, that's the one that ended so dramatically. The other long-term relationship was with a white man, Peter H. Fraser, and a long distance relationship. I'm aware with white men the fact that I have an inter-racial child could be an issue. It's not something I think about as being an issue with a black man—if he's dating me he's already open to some kind of an interracial relationship anyway, and the fact that I have a daughter wouldn't make a big distance. But I'm aware with white men that they can be—two things, I'm aware that it can be an issue for them unconsciously that I've had an intimate relationship, that I had sex with a black man, whatever that brings up for them, but it's also I have a daughter, and if he's going to be intimate and seen with me he's going to deal with the issues of race that come up when you're seen in public with— it's not only that this is a different biological connection, but it's different inter-racially.

I don't know if that in some way has been a factor in my not ever aggressively pursuing dating, or not. I'm thinking of that as we're talking, that may be a factor to why I haven't. I'm just aware it's going to come up, and I almost feel uncomfortable having to think about having that—you know, having that conversation. So it does have an impact on me, and dating and finding a mate, yes, finding another mate, yes, yes. I'm trying to think of some of the other ways that—well, it's a constant part of my daughter's life. I don't have specifics, but she's talked about when she finished culinary school and her job search to pursue a profession as a chef, that there were jobs she didn't get either because she was a woman or she was black.

00:31:50 Q: Now was she looking in New York, or—

Brewster: She looked in New York initially, and then she moved out to the Aspen area of Colorado. So she's very aware of that. She struggles sometimes in that her circle of friends where she's living is a working class group of people she's hanging out with now and some of them are pretty racist. She had an experience a couple of years ago where she was in a gathering and a man was making comments about his daughter going to a particular college, and he said, "Well, it's okay if she doesn't hang out with those black guys."

She was startled—she hadn't heard such a blatant—and he said something about, "You know, those rappers," and he's making all kinds of stereotypes along with this. She told me, the wife of the husband came out to her and said, "Ericka, I'm so sorry, that was pretty offensive," so at least someone in this crowd recognized, and she said, "Yes, that was pretty offensive." And then he came running out, his wife went to talk to her, he came running, and said, "Ericka, I didn't say that about you, it's not you, it's not you," and she called me in tears and said, "Mom, I didn't defend myself, I didn't defend the black part of me. That I'm with these people, I mean how can they not get that that's offensive to me?" So it's this funny thing, they're forgetting—they now view her as part of their circle, they don't—the stereotypes about her as being black aren't there.

00:33:57 Q: And yet they're racists—

Brewster: And yet they're racist, they're making racist comments, so she has this disconnect, it's like a _____ (??)—suddenly you realize you could be viewed by them, if they didn't know you, as something totally different, and maybe you really are. So it's a constant undertone of her life in a way that it is like it is of anyone who's got dark skin. It's part of

their life, and it's all those unconscious things. I guess that's the piece I understand. I feel like I'm having a hard time articulating—

00:34:36 Q: Yes, it is _____(??)

Brewster: But I understand through my daughter that those unconscious little things, they're constantly there, and they are constantly sapping your energy, it's a constant emotional drain. As women you and I might have some sense of it, and we do, because we're women and because we experience it as women, but white men, oh, God, they have no “effing” idea, no idea. None. So the other piece of it is a source of such sadness for me, it's a piece of my relationship with my daughter that in some sense feels as if there's something very different about our experience in life.

There's a gap in the connection, on some level—on other levels there isn't—but on some level there is because I don't have a sense—different from if she had a mother who was—or different I'm sure in terms of her father's understanding of—just, you almost don't have to talk about it. It's like, “Oh, yes, there it is again, yes,” or, “I had a really horrible day,” and some part of that horrible day is I just had to deal with so many unconscious insults. The other piece for me is that almost this sense of the words are, “Oh, my God, how do we ever solve this?” How do we—this is on a really emotional psychological level, the way racism has become so much so much a part of—it's systemic, you know institutions, but just part of this unconscious we're having, how in heaven's name? So in some sense there are moments where I feel very powerless and helpless in terms of shifting this dynamic in our society, in our culture, so that people can thrive.

00:37:07 Q: Yes, I know, it's a major challenge.

Brewster: Major challenge, major challenge. I'm trying to think of some other specifics.

00:37:17 Q: So do you think she ever found a role model of how a black woman navigates this world? A teacher or someone?

Brewster: I don't think she has. No. No. I was lucky—I mean I had hoped that there is a woman who'd become a role model. I'm not aware she has, they don't have a close relationship, but it may be that—that was my roommate, Renée Bradford, while I was in business school, I was very, very lucky to have—and I think I may have talked about this in the other interview—Renée Bradford was just a godsend, a wonderful black woman—fairly, at least working class, if not poor, upbringing, *really* intelligent. She's in the culinary arts, and she has her own catering business in Chicago. She's just wonderful

00:38:17 Q: But she still does the social work?

Brewster: Yes, she was a social worker, she was a probation officer, came to business school, she worked in marketing for quite a while in a couple of corporations, and I guess she'd had a lifelong interest in cooking and she slowly developed a catering company that's very well known in Chicago, so [Q: Wonderful] yes, yes. So I hoped that Renee would—I'm not sure that she has for Ericka.

I think the other thing Ericka has run into is—she ran into this in college—a great example, I think, about how race and class are confused in this country. If you ask most people, if you say, what do you think of when you say, a “black” person, what they will describe is someone who's poor—poor black. If you ask somebody, what do you think of when you say a “white” person, what they describe is middle class. It's really a class. So coming from a Marxist background from the political experience at Columbia I looked at things more from a class

perspective, and also the [Black] Panthers really promoted that, that's how they started. The Black Panthers formed the Patriot Party by making an alliance with the poor white hillbillies in Chicago, and said, "We got the same issues, it's just the skin color that the cops are using to keep us separate, so what can we do together?"

My experience growing up in the church in Albany always resonated with me, because I saw within the church congregation, the income, the difference in income levels, both black and white, and how you know that where people had common ground was the class, it was less the race than it was the class. Race is used to almost force non-class differences where they're there.

So Ericka went off to St. Hilda's and St. Hugh's, a middle class, upper-middle class group of people, multiracial, small—it was like the United Nations School, but small. She went off to school at Union College in Schenectady New York, now definitely in a minority. She got in through the Affirmative Action Program; she went to the pre-freshman year orientation for the black kids and the Spanish kids from the slums of New York City. And they said to her, "How come you talk white? How can you talk so well?" You know, like, "You're white." And that's when we had conversations about—I said, "Ericka, what's happening, and they don't even realize it, is it's a class difference." I said, "If you think of the kids you know from high school, the kids that are black, that are African, that are Chinese, you all talk the same way, it's a class. If you go to a poor ghetto, white ghetto, they're going to talk the same way the poor kids from the black ghetto are talking. And it's being confused— they're confusing race and class."

So we've had conversations like that, and that is still I think difficult for her, because as any middle-class black person, and particularly probably men more, we don't—we're not looking at all the cues that tell us this person, as they walk down the street, this person is middle-class, this person is working-class, this person is poor. They're there, we do see them; [however,] when it comes to race we tend to go blind to them. So rather than being viewed as a middle-class person she's looked at as being black and poor. And that's what's happened with the skin colors, that's what we do. So college was an interesting transition for her, and an education about race and how she's being viewed, and about class and—

00:43:06 Q: That's quite a challenge, for both of you.

Brewster: It's a challenge for us, yes, definitely a challenge for us.

00:43:18 Q: All right. That's a whole book unto itself I would think.

Brewster: I would agree.

00:43:24 Q: So you alluded to—on one level you could understand what she's going through as a woman in this society and having grown up in the last sixty years through various changes, but I'm not sure your own sense of yourself as a women—as I read over the previous transcript I realized you had alluded a lot of times to relationships with men, which is totally normal but—[laughs] but some were good, some were bad, some still I think are sustaining friends for you. How has that really changed? And how has that affected your eventual choices to going into yoga, and your own independent work vs. sticking with a corporation like Citibank or what have you? As well as your personal life, you know, intimacy or lack thereof. So it's really two questions, grab your handle and start anywhere.

Brewster: So when I think about the women I knew in my life growing up and what they were like, and then how that has influenced me, and then myself as a woman [Sighs], so of course my mom. [Q: Yes, your mother, obviously] I've often called my mom, Anne Haworth Cammack Brewster, "the administrative mom." She had seven children at one point, six are living. [Barbara Shippen Brewster, Edward Yates Brewster, James Burd Brewster, Richard Cammack Brewster, Margaret Anne Brewster; Benjamin Yates Brewster, III, died in 1965]

What I wasn't aware of was my mom as a real nurturing mom, that's I think what I'm also trying to say. There's a lot, I mean, just physically getting everything done, and she didn't have help—there was not a maid or a nanny to help—so she was doing all the work and just physically getting everything done, and then managing, I mean it's like managing six kids. And then as we went into teen age, and all these interests, how do you manage the different interests of six different kids and keep the family together? All of those kinds of questions and issues—so to me she was kind of the "administrative mom." My perception was that she was overwhelmed, understandably, thinking back, that she was just overwhelmed with it all, and exhausted probably. That was also my sense most of the time, again understandably so. I wasn't aware of her having her own voice at all, with my father.

I became aware of her beginning to have a voice and take a stand different from my father's when that incident when I'd come back to Barnard, so it would have been the spring of '69. She said, "I'm not coming here [to change the hem line of your clothes] *I'm not doing that.*" That's the first time I *ever* remember her standing up to my father. And then it seemed to go quiet, and the next thing I remember was the summer before I went to business school I lived with my parents. I was taking two courses at SUNY-Albany [University at Albany, State University of New York] in preparation for going back to school, and so I was living with

them, and that was the summer of the bicentennial in New York State. And she wanted to go to New York City and be there for—she’s an extrovert—all the festivities. And my father, who’s an introvert, had no interest whatsoever. That’s the first time I remember them doing anything separate, and she said, “Well, I’m going.” He was not happy. He didn’t stop her.

I don’t remember anything that he said, but there was all this tension around her going, and then her coming back, and it felt *really* uncomfortable in that situation. And she did it. So it was the second time I remember her just kind of becoming more independent. So she was late forties when I remember her being more of an independent person. So I guess I had this mixed sense of—I think unconsciously I felt that these women had to make this binary choice. I just saw the Steve Jobs movie, and there’s this interesting comment—at one point this guy says, “It’s not binary—you can be successful and be nice.” But that’s how I experienced life as a woman growing up, that either you get married and have a family and that’s your focus and that consumes you, or, you can have a career and make a contribution to society [and be single]—so that was the other thing, making a contribution to society.

00:49:30 Q: Which you’d learned from your father.

Brewster: Right. Now, my grandmother, my mother’s mother, Sarah Burd Tiers Cammack, was very active and had been active particularly in Huntington or Charleston, West Virginia, as a volunteer, and she had helped create a hospital in West Virginia. And my mother’s story was that my grandmother went to her husband, my grandfather, Howard Haworth Cammack, and said, “If I do this, it’s going to take this number of years.” She was asked by the nascent board to be on the board and help create the hospital, and she said, “If I do this I’m really not going to be available to be your wife.” And my grandfather said, “Do it.”

But it was a permission; if you were a society woman—which she was in Charleston, or Huntington or both, they lived in two different places—then you did things at the discretion of your husband. It wasn't as if you made your own choice or you had a collaborative conversation. So those were my perceptions.

I remember the books that I read of women, there were three that stand out, three women in particular—I've forgotten who else I read, but Clara Barton, Florence Nightingale, and Marie Curie. I know Florence had a love and he just couldn't find a way to make it work. She chose to do her work, basically creating nursing, which didn't exist, and creating hospitals. So she chose career and making a difference in a society and life; Clara Barton the same as I remember—she never got married. I don't remember if she had a lover, and it couldn't work out because he couldn't make the shift to allow her to be the kind of woman she was. Marie Curie was married—that felt great, at least she was married, she had this wonderful partner she collaborated with, no kids. So that was the other choice, okay. [Laughs] So those were the unconscious things in my psyche growing up.

And I think in some ways I've struggled with that, I very quickly went to work, had to, and have been single and raised my child—so I have the child part. I haven't had a consistent ongoing intimate relationship, and focused then more on career. And I would say even in terms of raising Ericka that I'm embarrassed to say and feel badly saying—I can remember nights I wasn't home until ten o'clock, and arranging for baby sitters to take care of her.

One of the things I felt particularly working at Citibank, which is where I was working when Ericka was growing up, I always felt this tension between being the mom I wanted to be—she played volleyball and basketball, and I couldn't get to her games. The sense that I had to

put 110% into what I was doing, and my jobs, and then that meant I might not be home until ten o'clock at night, because there wasn't ever a nine to five job, it was always a nine to whenever you can finish it—you know, get the work done. So that pull and tension as a woman. It's interesting, I remember coming out of business school, and although I was trying to start a property development firm as I came out of this in school, I remember thinking that I probably would have enjoyed investment banking. There's a rhythm to it, like when you're producing a play, which you know I had done for the Capital Artists Resident Opera Company [in Albany, New York]—you get the team together and you've got a vision and you're creating this, and it comes together on stage, and you manage the production each night. When you do investment banking you're getting the deal together, you get the people to bring the deal together, the deal happens. And then there's a letdown and you go on to the next deal. That was the thing I remember thinking, and then I thought well, I'd never see her, I would definitely have to hire a nanny or something.

Now as it turns out [laughs] I'm not sure I saw her any more than if I would have had a constant nanny. I didn't have that. So I remember that tension as a woman, I remember the tension—I don't remember a sense of being in Citibank when I was there, “Well you can't do this because you're a woman,” like, “That's a guy's job and that's not a woman's job”—I don't remember that.

What I do remember is a funny undertone at times. I'm thinking of one particular time that I wanted to make a transition into the private bank—I think I would have been really great in private banking, good relationship skills, you know customizing things, working one on one with people, which is what a lot of the private banking was. And the man who was in charge of it at that point seemed really interested in me, and really liked me. But I didn't get the job.

What I remember is a funny thing: he asked me to go to lunch with him one time as part of the interviewing process, and it just had this strange feeling, as if there was a particular restaurant we went to, right by the window, really visible. I had this sense later, it didn't quite feel like a business interview. There's nothing tangible I can point to—it's an unconscious sense, one of the times I remember feeling, "Ooh, this feels like more of a sexual domination thing going on here." I remember wanting to back off and say, "Hey!" I'm wondering to myself, do I need to say something to him? So, then the dialogue would go, Do I say something that says, hey, I am not interested—is there something? I'm not interested in you sexually, I'm not interested in any kind of a dalliance or an affair—is that partly what's going on—or not? Am I misreading? And if I say anything then do I jeopardize a potential job?

So I do remember that and that particular situation, wondering what was really going on. And it's interesting, I don't know if that's why the job I was at that point interviewing about—no, I think that was a different situation. There were two different times I think I interviewed for the private bank—the second time would not have been, it was a job in market research, which was not a good fit. That one though, I think I was interviewed to become a private banker; I've forgotten why it didn't happen. Yes, so that was one example of in the corporate environment having this sense how sexual attraction could be used as a weapon.

00:58:41 Q: I mean another woman might have responded and used a run on the bladder (??) —I don't know [laughs]_ _____ (??)

Brewster: I don't remember that or was aware of that happening, where other people I knew at Citibank—I'm sure it did happen. What I was very aware of—so this is another interesting

thing, I had forgotten about this—very aware of the difference, and again it's a class difference but at that point it was a really business professional difference—I'm very aware of the difference in what women, at least at Citibank, professional women wore, and women who were the secretaries wore.

And, again most of the times there was also, I would say, probably a class difference that was being played out although we wouldn't have talked about it that way, but it was really clear, and I remember being *very* conscious of how I dressed, that it was okay to dress to be attractive but not sexy. That was my sense, and I don't know if it was just me, I don't think it was just me but I think it was a lot of—. So as an example, I had really short hair—I had my first short hair when I was coming back from Greece and France, but I had let it go up and down over the years. This was really short. There were some times when the same hairdresser cut it too short for me and it looked more like a boy cut, but it was always short, more like what you would see women—you know, often women get into their sixties, seventies, and start wearing short hair, and that used to be the thing you did, it was really short—I'd have to show you pictures—it was *really short*. And that was one of the reasons: I could be attractive, but not sexy.

So the clothes that I chose, the pants suit, and the suit, the skirt never above the knee, and then watching other women that were the secretaries that were dressing in much sexier kind of clothing, it felt to me like they had more options in what they could wear. So that was a real difference, you know really making a distinction, yes. That was my experience anyway. And it felt like the women all around me—the same kind of thing. What else as a woman? You asked me about my sense of myself as a woman.

01:01:35: Or how it had changed from your first wild year in Greece, and experimentations, etcetera. And living with your boyfriend briefly in Paris, and all that. I think you were what, sixteen?

Brewster: Seventeen, no, eighteen, I was eighteen.

01:01:57 Q: That's right, because you're an early birthday.

Brewster: Yes, early birthday, February 3, right. [long pause] What my mind is going through is the different aspects of being a woman, that's what it's going through in terms of trying to answer the question, and sort through and answer the question.

01:02:17 Q: Take your time.

Brewster: If I took a slightly different approach for a moment: [pause] as a person—[long pause]

01:02:39 Q: We could take a break now if you like—

Brewster: I feel the most centered and comfortable with myself now as I have in my life up to this point. And that includes being a woman. I have not been in a corporate environment with men recently, over the last twenty years, to know how my executive skills— how I would be managing men, how I'd feel managing men. So I don't know that piece. My experience creating this oral history is that I'm the most comfortable I've ever been really, and feel, I mean empowered, in fully using my executive and management skills in a way that I didn't feel when I was younger. And you know if I think of the full breadth of a woman, I think that's just as much a part of us as women as raising children is.

01:04:43 Q: So you kind of go back to your mother, the nurturer, but also the administrator.

Brewster: Right.

01:04:47 Q: Although she's dealing with children, not with men at a corporate—

Brewster: Right, right, yes, yes. Yes, and she's an absolutely great administrator, she has her volunteer work, she is amazing in Albany, she's a major producer of Show House, which is a major fundraiser for the Albany Symphony Orchestra. For years, absolute years she's been doing it, and it's a huge production. So she's really good at that. I think I'm much more integrated in those two aspects, nurturing and administrative, within myself, when I think in terms of how I relate to people, how I relate to my daughter, much more integrated and balanced in those aspects of myself. And they weren't for a while, they were really kind of separate—they felt almost like a bifurcation. We talked earlier about—I'd say the place where I would love to go further, and it's in the realm of kind of sexuality, feeling more comfortable being sensuous around men, or just being sensuous in life, and knowing when to be clear that that sensuousness doesn't mean I want to jump into bed with a man. I've not yet felt I really know how to flirt. And I guess that's an example to me of feeling comfortable with flirtation, feeling comfortable enough to kind of enjoy the energy and not necessarily have to go to bed with somebody. [Laughs]

And I would love to grow more in that area, I mean that's a whole area I've been thinking about, you know that was another whole piece of it, talking about the dress code as I remember it in Citibank at the time. It was a real piece, it was like if there were going to be flirtatious dalliances that might happen between the manager and the secretary, but boy if it was known it was happening between peers, or between the manager and his next level of management then that wasn't okay, and the woman was going to be the one that was going to

get fired, not the guy. That's another example of the double standard showing up unconsciously in all of the relationships I was aware of at Citibank and at work.

01:08:10 Q: So what would that look like, Katherine?

Brewster: What would what look like?

01:08:13 Q: What would that look like, if you were more flirtatious and felt more comfortable, just sort of exuding your sensuality without expecting it to become sexual.

Brewster: I may actually be [Audio drops out, resumes 01:08:27] As we're talking I'm wondering if that's one of the things holding me back. I would be online, and might feel more comfortable going online and you know, flirting with some guys online and not have to go anywhere!

01:08:48 Q: Just having fun.

Brewster: Just having fun, exactly. Just having fun, just having fun, yes.

01:08:55 Q: And yet some of the crises in your life, obviously these were earlier on, but they really involved your relationships with men, who for whatever reason were not the best for you.

Brewster: Right.

01:09:06 Q: So do you look back and think, Well, I wouldn't make that mistake again, I wouldn't become involved with someone like that again. I mean they were all different people, right. Or would you still be drawn to—'

Brewster: I don't think I would do that now. In fact it's more than I don't think, I wouldn't do that now. Twenty years ago I might very well have. The last twenty years a lot of my energy has been involved healing the parts of me that didn't like me, and it showed up in being with men that—you know I chose men that also did not, for their own reasons, treat me with the kind of respect that I thought I wanted, and clearly was choosing men that weren't doing that. That's not the case now.

01:10:15 Q: So let's move into your whole involvement, which has been your life, along with other things, with the Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy. I know I had a conversation with you _____ (??), the early lunches we had maybe earlier last year, and you talked about the travels and pursuing almost prophetic experiences. So do you want to touch on that a little bit? I know you're—yes, some of the mentors who were teachers, and then the actual work you did. It's a big one. [laughs] It's a big one, I think!

Brewster: It is a big one. It is a big one. It evolved out of my own personal traumas I went through particularly coming out of the relationship that ended in 1986 with Michael Stuart—in a way an awakening. It was a very, as I said in the other interview, Dark Night of the Soul for about four years. Trying to—it wasn't a trying, it was more as if—the way I would describe it is my soul said, “You're not hearing me.” Okay, “you're being called to do work that other people would call more spiritual, and you're not hearing me.” And therefore what I was trying to pursue while still trying to pursue a life in the corporate environment for a while, it was *physically* painful to be doing that. I wasn't hearing that, until finally I just heard that that's not what I'm supposed to be doing right now, it's just not it.

It was the beginning of a spiritual awakening, or saying the spiritual part of me is as important as the rest of me, it's important as my body. I actually hadn't been spending much time probably on my emotional life, and that was the other thing, that the emotional life is really important to you, you need to spend time on your emotional life. So that was the quest, it was almost like it was a quest that I started on to develop a relationship, to *allow* the spiritual part of me to flourish, to *allow* the emotional part of me to really flourish.

Along the way I had done trainings in body, mind, and spirit work that focuses specifically on integrating, and looks holistically at the “being,” that the body, mind, and spirit are integrally interconnected. The Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy Training was, that's the whole basis of it. And then training to teach yoga classes. The particular approach to yoga that I eventually trained in, Svaroopaa yoga, is *all* about the spine, which is the source in Hindu philosophy of the spiritual energy that connects us. It's as if at the base of the spine there's this connection to, and remembering of ourselves as one with everything that exists, that's waiting for us to awaken to it.

And when we *open* up enough, and part of that is the muscles in the body expand enough, and you need the ones along the spine to expand, this energy then just shoots up. It's called the Kundalini Energy, and it shoots up the Sushumna channel, and it's a visceral sense, it's a visceral experience, it's not just the mind going, “It makes sense, everything is one,” but it's the whole being experiences that. And the yoga I teach is about preparing the body for that to happen by specifically focusing on the spinal muscles and getting them to expand. The woman that created that, Svaroopaa yoga, is called, Rama Berch, and she's now Swami Nirmalananda, so she was an important person in my life. The other was a man named Michael Lee, who started Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy, and Karen Hasskarl— she was a

main teacher at Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy. I then had a group, there was a group here in New York City called, The Children of Light. They still exist. The man who was the channeler, his name was Robert Baker, he since died. For about thirteen, ten years I was involved with ‘The Children of Light,’ Robert channeled the energy of the Archangel Gabriel.

And what came through was this incredible information about the paradigm shift that creation is going through at this point in the history of creation—it’s not just the history of this planet, but the history of creation. So through Children of Light I was exposed to— how will I describe it? [pause] It’s like real time, this is the bigger perspective of what’s happening; if you look at what’s happening from a different spiritual level this is what it’s really looking like, and that’s what—

01:17:28 Q: Different consciousness.

Brewster: Different level of consciousness, what we call a different level of consciousness, because it’s the same, it’s just that because we rotate at a slower vibrational level—just like there’s no such thing as time, there’s time because we vibrate in physical form at a very low rate, it’s a low level of vibration, and at that level of vibration everything slows down. You know what we can do now by taking a movie—you slow it down, you see it in slow motion, you see the discrete steps? That’s like being in physical form; what happens is we think of time as things happen over—there’s a different level of consciousness that says, “everything’s happening instantaneously.”

Same thing with levels of consciousness: it *is* all one – Everything is actually a manifestation of undifferentiated consciousness, it’s just we’ve separated undifferentiated consciousness

into many different forms and then forget that everything that exists— seen and unseen, animate and inanimate—is actually just energy vibrating at different levels of vibration. From the perspective of undifferentiated consciousness, it's just like there's no such thing as energy and physical matter, all that exists is energy. The different forms are a result of energy vibrating at different rates.

So we can talk about it in this physical form in those ways, otherwise it's hard to talk about it. So that's part of what I learned, part of what Gabriel was talking about, that's what he was communicating. And I heard it from other sources, it's the same way the Hindus talk about it. Just as Gabriel was talking in different words but the same concepts, and he would say that.

So it was like another confirmation of this broader and more expansive way of looking at what is happening here in this realm. It was another example of trying to live—and Gabriel would talk about this—it's like, can I live in this physical form knowing it's not reality, or knowing what it really is, and not getting caught, and this is what it really is. Okay, the very simplest example of it is, “Am I a human being having a spiritual experience, or am I a spiritual being having a human experience?” It's the simplest way to describe it. When I'm believing I'm a human being having a spiritual experience, I'm in the realm of saying, “Well, they're separate.” I'm caught in what the Hindus would say, “forgetfulness,”—

01:20:34 Q: That bifurcation again—

Brewster: I'm in Maya. If I'm a spiritual being, if I am living as a spiritual being having a human experience then I'm living from the place that says, ‘Everything is spirit. I've chosen to have a human experience, can I remember that in this realm it's really all spirit, it's not—’ So that's the difference, Gabriel would talk about it in a lot of different ways. And what also

came through was a whole psychological model, spiritual psychological model, that's absolutely just fantastic that I use with my clients, that I've used with myself—it's amazing, illuminating.

01:21:29 Q: Can you say more about it?

Brewster: It relates to childhood development. It's a model of five different areas where we can get emotionally stuck. Parts of us continue to grow, some parts are really stuck. As an example, in the womb up to about two years old, there can be traumas that happen, particularly in relationship with the mother where what happens is the spirit or the—Gabriel would talk about “soul fragments,” the part of us that's coming into physical form of our soul. It's not our whole soul but it's a part that doesn't feel comfortable being here in physical form, so its main connection is with what we call the spiritual realm. And they're like Robert, the channeler, people that are channels, the real psychics, not the—most of them their whole—they'd *much* rather be on the other side, they'd much rather be connecting than to be physically here. And physically the kind of a body is more wraith-like.

01:23:05 Q: Wraith-like?

Brewster: Yes, so each one of these five—Gabriel would call them, “ego defense masks”—that then we create defenses, we have a set of beliefs about ourselves, okay? And there's a physical form that takes as well. So there are five of them; the second one is what's called, “oral,”—he calls that one “schizoid. [The first of the five ego defense masks]”

01:23:31 Q: Aural, A-U-R-A-L? or O-R?

Brewster: O-R. So the first one he called “schizoid”—I’ve forgotten the beliefs of that person. It’s like: I don’t belong, I don’t belong. It’s a basic fundamental, psychological belief we have.

The second one is the “oral,” and it develops somewhere between birth and two, again, it has to do with the relationship with mom, and this particular—trauma is not the right word—but this particular break in the psyche goes to, “I’m basically worthless,” “fundamentally worthless.” There’s a constant yearning, and it’s as if the nervous system is excited by yearning, and the yearning is, “I’m worthless, I can’t have what I want. I want it, I can see it’s possible, but I can’t have what I want, because I’m worthless.” Again, these are fundamental beliefs, a right—

01:24:42 Q: That dominates someone’s life.

Brewster: Yes. The next one is called masochist, and it’s somewhere around three to eight it develops, and that’s where the sense of self is that, “I have to please other people. If I don’t please other people I won’t be loved, I have to please them. And that’s my only job.” So one’s own needs are not important, and that body type is very interesting because it tends to get very fleshy like.

The next one I’ve forgotten the name for.

The next one, psychotic, is around somewhere between eight and probably twelve or something, and this one is, “I have to be right.” And it really is, “The only way I’m going to be loved is if I’m right.” And this is where somebody, it doesn’t matter what you say, you can see energetically they go, “I’m right, I’m right. It’s like this.”

And I think I've forgotten what he called the next one. And the last one is "perfection," Rigid. And that happens in teenage. "I have to be perfect—if I'm not perfect I won't get love." And you can see, you know if you have—and we all have all parts of these, you know like other models there's more, some of us have more of ourselves stuck in some of these than others.

And if you start to think about it, we can then see those parts of yourself come up, we can look at it, "Oh, that part of me is coming up right now." It's like I know when I really kind of dig in on something, like my sense of self has gotten tied up in whether or not my viewpoint is prevailing or no. That's different than a stand—it's like I'm taking this position, "*This is the only way! And it's only going to work if we do it this way.*" It's something I notice and I work with in terms of—and the different ages, you know it's the different—.

If you listen to the sound of your voice when those parts come up you can see that there's a different energy that comes up, so I work with that with clients, I notice and I invite them to notice the—I don't use those in meetings, I just ask them to notice the age and notice what the belief is that's coming up.

01:27:53 Q: That's fascinating.

Brewster: So, it was fascinating to me, one of the things I loved about this particular experience was this marrying of—I had taken an early childhood course early on, with this marrying of the psychological and the spiritual, and in working with people in addressing those parts of themselves, and inviting them to soften and shift. So that was actually a major part of the work I started doing with people, with the influence of Gabriel and Robert, and I took two trips with them, one to Egypt and one to Bali, and those trips were spiritual

journeys. The trips were between ten to fourteen days. We went to the sacred spiritual sites of those countries, and in each one of them then we did seven rituals, and they were each for the chakras, and each time they were different.

Q: For each of what?

Brewster: For the chakras, the seven chakras.

Q: Chakras, okay.

Brewster: Seven energy centers in the body, the seven chakras. Each time they were different. Gabriel would tell, even though each trip there were seven, we went through the seven chakras, the ritual that was done was different, and it was transmitted by Gabriel to Robert, and then they would —. There were some places we did them where there was tension, we did one in the Temple of Luxor, Egypt. _____ (??) and [Wexer(??)], and you know, the police were *really* not comfortable, the guards were not comfortable, and we talked to them and talked to them, and they let us do it. So there was a real commitment on the part of Robert and his partner in this, Ron, that trusting, that energy, that Gabriel said, “This is what you are to do,” that they would be safe. It didn’t mean that there wouldn’t be some tension around it, just to trust that this is what they were meant to do, and it was amazing, yes, to go through this.

01:30:28 Q: So what was your role in the ritual, what kinds of things, is this something you can share or is it—?

Brewster: It’s hard to describe, but it was a pattern in which we would move, and there were sometimes there were things we would individually say. We were asked to reflect before each

ritual, and sometimes as part of the ritual were asked to then share what our reflections had been on the particular topic we were asked to reflect on; they were all about personal development topics. There was always like two or three times in the trip, and then there would be times when we would just get together and share what our experience had been so far. Robert would channel different energies other than Gabriel.

We were in a church in Cairo—this is near the end of the trip in Egypt—I’ve forgotten the name of this church, it’s famous for the icons that are there, and people have experienced healings touching them. We were in the courtyard waiting to go into the church, and suddenly—and this was unplanned, sometimes the energy would just come through—and he started channeling Mary.

This was the first time for me that I really got that, because I went to these and I kept questioning—you know, channeling was still new to me, did he really—? And he’s a trans-channeler—trans-channellers go unconscious. He would wake up after the channeling and have no idea what he said—okay, different from a channeler whose eyes are open. It’s like they’re connected but they’re aware of what they’re saying while they’re saying it. They’re not controlling it, they’re allowing the words to come. But he goes unconscious, and I kept going, “Is he really unconscious? Is he not? Can I really trust this?” In this instance his whole body changed. It became energetically feminine, his voice changed, visibly changed. That was the most amazing—.

Prior to that, a couple of nights before that he had channeled the energy of Merlin, and that energy felt very different, and the words were different, and the language was different than Gabriel. This was markedly, markedly different. And I think that was when I became—to me

that was the visceral experience of, I think so many things, of energy. We're energy, if we allow ourselves, we are going to be the energy that we're connecting with—which is what he was doing when he was channeling, he was just being the energy.

That there is a connection, you know if we open up there is this—it's like he was opening to the energy that is, it's just we perceive it as being not accessible. It's there, it really is there if we can open to it, and he had the gift of that, cause he was one of the—he's a schizoid, he's much more—he was much more connected to the energy of, "it is there," and not less connected here on the, you know, in this physical form.

So for me that trip was a real—I guess it was an affirmation or a confirmation of all the other stuff I'd been learning or exposed to about, everything really is one, and that this level here is—it's an illusion. It's real to us, it's an illusion of what's really happening—this trip was like a confirmation of that in a whole lot of different levels. The Bali trip for me—it took me actually a while to integrate it. I found myself I think disoriented in a way for quite a while. The physical structures are so different. So for me thinking of starting with Egypt and going through at least around parts of the Mediterranean I've been in, and then up into Northern Europe, and into [Brewster sneezes] Russia. The physical structures of what we call sacred spaces are similar; there's a temple in Egypt, it's enclosed, it has passageways through it, that migrates with the temples in Greece, and temples in Rome; and then we moved into the church, and the church is much more enclosed, because most of the churches were in northern climates, you need to be more enclosed, but the concept of physical space you move through was a temple. That's all similar.

Bali is eight degrees or three degrees south or north in the equator, it's in the equatorial, *everything's open. Everything's open.* If you don't have to have—you know there is, might be a roof, but the sides are open. So, we walk into this quote, “sacred space,” and there was maybe a short wall, like head-height, but *not* walls with a roof—open. And there wasn't a sense of you're walking through space up to an altar.

01:36:51 Q: No designated spot within.

Brewster: No designated spot, there is a spot—there's a little—I've forgotten what they called them now, but over here and over here and over there are little like structures—they're kind of house-like, they're up on stilts, and there's a statue there—and that's one of the gods or goddesses. The there's one next to it, and then there's—so it would be like multiple, and it just felt different, because I think the physical structure was so different. Even in the temples of Egypt there might be these side places where there'd be other gods or goddesses, not the main one. This just felt so different in Bali for me. There wasn't a “main,” or a temple “of”—or if it was the temple “of,” there wasn't a main designated space to go to main altar, or main statue—in Egypt there was a “main” statue, you go get into that destination—this wasn't. So I think as I'm doing this the sense was that there was for me, more of a meandering quality to it, because I was used to, “There's a designation, the journey is a designation, it's the altar, the focus up here.”

Q: Very Catholic! [Laughs]

Brewster: But that's even the way the Egyptian temples are, at least in my perspective that was the way—and this was more like, ‘Okay, let's kind of meander around, and yes, I feel like this one today, and let's go say hi to this god or goddess.’”

Q: Fascinating.

Brewster: It was, fascinating! Absolutely fascinating! And the outdoor quality! So Egypt was different because it was dry. I mean Egypt is really warm, from my experience, really warm. So Bali was—I hadn't been to the Caribbean; there's probably an equivalent in the Caribbean, or whatever is another of the same latitude around the globe, I'm sure it's kind of similar—this is my first experience in a more equatorial-like [place], but not rain forest. The ability to really have—you don't need sides, you rarely—they had mats you could roll down when the rain came to keep the rain out, otherwise very few buildings had sides. If there was a general meeting area in a person's home compound it had open sides. Bathrooms are enclosed, well, in public bathrooms, but in some of the places we stayed the bathrooms there were walls but no roof. That was kind of neat, except of course when it rained, but it was kind of neat. I had the sense of being outdoors so much more of the time, and a sense of the soft temperatures, soft air on the skin felt really sensuous, just loved that sensuous sense in Bali. The other piece, I just lost—what was the other piece that was important for me in Bali?

01:40:24 Q: Maybe it will come back. It's funny, your conversation—not funny, but it's interesting as I'm remembering what you said about—occupying Avery, the architecture building, how taken you were with the whole—the focus of the discussions at that time were how to use public space, not necessarily sacred space but public space, so really it's something about you that's drawn you to look at that whole—

Brewster: Yes, to look that that, right, yes, yes, exactly.

01:40:56 Q: But, Bali, I'm not sure what else you were going to say.

Brewster: I know, I think it had something to do with the openness—so one day, wherever we were, we took a walk through—I don't think it was a farmer's land, it might have been, I think it was coconuts—it was a local person that took some of us on this walk, and we stopped, and I think it may have been a coconut, it was something we cut from the tree and we ate it right from the tree. It was an example of my sense in Bali for the first time of how you could live—the sense of abundance, that so much a part of my experience of more eastern religions, the concept of abundance, that abundance is there and available for everyone. And I had my visceral sense of that in Bali; I remember thinking, Oh, my God, the climate is so—I mean, this was unconscious, but it's a moment of, I can sleep outside and be okay.

And when the rain comes—because we weren't there in monsoon season—I don't know what people do in the monsoon season, but there is a sense—and it's abundant—I can walk anywhere and get something to eat that I needed, I would be okay, and can trust that I would be okay. My sense of the way life is in temperate climates is that concept is hard because the sense is you got to in a way collect, hoard for the times when you're not—because it's in cold weather you're not sure you're going to have enough. So the concept of abundance, and I guess also—I had this thinking before that there's a relationship between the geographic location where people were living, what life was like, what the climate was like, and the kinds of religions that developed; and that would be an example of the way Christianity—

01:43:31 Q: A Northern European religion.

Brewster: Pardon?

Q: Christianity, a Northern European religion.

Brewster: It became a Northern European religion, it didn't start there, but it became a Northern European religion. But anyway it was just for me a visceral—you know this wonderful visceral sense of, "Oh, my God! Yes, of course, Southern India would have this sense of abundance as part of Hinduism or Buddhism, or—of course! It makes sense, and of course there would be this difficulty in temperate climates, wherever it is, your different sense of life and relationship with what we think of as being one and right, and we're really caught by our physical experience here, this is what we think is real.

01:44:25 Q: So when do you think you've replicated that in your life, that feeling of being one with the abundance of nature? And if you weren't able to do that do you think you would run off and live in Bali, or [Laughs] somewhere in the tropics?

Brewster: Well replicating being one with nature is more sporadic. I feel that when I'm in nature, and that's not very often living in the city, I feel like in what was the family's summer place up in Essex, New York, on Lake Champlain, I always feel that there. I think in a way how it showed up, it showed up slightly differently, I would use the word "trust," that when I made the choice, after finishing my training as a Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy Practitioner to pursue it, I was trusting that this is the path that I am meant to follow at this point, and that it would work out, I would be taken care of—taken care of is not the word, but I would be supported energetically in this. Now, have I struggled with that? Do I struggle with it? Absolutely, all the time. I mean it's not a trust that—it was enough that I made the choice.

01:46:11 Q: There are so many forces against you trying to balance that, I think.

Brewster: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes.

Q: The realities of sustaining yourself in a city like New York City.

Brewster: Right, exactly, exactly, so every time I have had a drop in clients I become absolutely terrified that I'm not going to make it financially. That I'm going to have to move, I'm going to have to do something else. So I would say that rare moments, I have had moments. I had a moment coming back from either Bali or Egypt—when I came back from both of those trips I had like a day, and I don't remember which trip this was, but each one of them I had a day kind of like this: I woke up and it was as if it was like, everything is one, and a real sense of, I'm absolutely okay. I didn't have any underlying sense going on of the critic going, "You're bad because you're not doing this, you should be doing this—" None of that.

01:47:34 Q: That voice was quiet.

Brewster: It was quiet, it was just this wonderful amazing sense. And I always realized also, I had no big—nothing was right or wrong, nothing. Everything was fine. Everything was valuable. What I became aware of is that I had no basis upon which to make a decision. What to do even next. And that said to me that most of the time I'm making a decision, and I'm making a decision with a value judgment, this is good, this is bad.

Q: We all do.

Brewster: This is right, this is wrong. This is valuable, this is not valuable. But wouldn't it be wonderful to make a decision and say, "I'm choosing to do this just because I want to experience it. And what I'm not choosing to experience right now is just as valuable, I could choose this too, it's not less valuable." I unconsciously go, "I've chosen this, therefore—" It's *so* unconscious.

01:48:42 Q: Well, we're trained.

Brewster: No, we're trained. But I got this moment, this experience, of, "Wow!" "Whoa!" And I don't know how to make a decision because I'm so used to this other thing, so, what do I do? And I remember delighting in it, and also I wasn't able to sustain it, it was so different and unusual, and I didn't know how to reach out for support either to help me sustain it—because that's the other piece of a spiritual journey is the support of people around you.

01:49:32 Q: What supports have you maintained? I mean you're no longer part of The Children of Light.

Brewster: Not actively, no, I'm not really a part of them. Robert died, and unfortunately the time period that his partner is available—Robert would have his gatherings on the weekend, which worked well for me having seen clients in the evenings, but Ron tends to be here on the weekend, and has a boyfriend out of town, and goes to see him, so that hasn't worked out unfortunately—I really would like to do that. I created a Women's Spiritual Support Group about five years ago or so, specifically to support me in the spiritual journey, and the women have become, most of them have become my very close friends. So that's the main support that I have actually at the moment.

01:50:32 Q: Great, things will be really good. Okay. So you had, back in your early years, you had quite a bit of—some issues with your father. How did the two of you finally become reconciled after that tumultuous beginning when you were a student?

Brewster: Um—

Q: And is he still alive?

Brewster: Yes, he is still alive, yes, he is. Both of my parents are still alive, yes, as we speak.

01:51:10 Q: Is he staying busy as well, or—your mom you said was very involved with—

Brewster: He's, well he's having a lot of health problems right now. He has COPD [Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease]and he has a leaky heart valve right now, so he gets winded really easily, and quickly. He is an incredible artist. Yes, in addition to being a musician he is just overall artistic. That statue he carved, and those two meerschaum pipes, he carved.

01:51:50 Q: My gosh! He's excellent, he's very skilled, yes.

Brewster: He's very skilled and excellent, yes. And he draws well. He took up photography after he retired, so he works with his photographs now, and he still practices the piano.

01:52:11 Q: He had always wanted to be a musician, you had said.

Brewster: Yes. So how did we become reconciled?

01:52:15 Q: Part of the process, yes, how long did it take?

Brewster: Well, it took many years, but it took about six months after he—

01:52:26 Q: When you throw your daughter out is pretty strong stuff.

Brewster: To throw what?

Q: For a father to throw a daughter out is pretty strong stuff, right?

Brewster: It is. It took about six months, and it was more I contacted him. It happened to be around the car, I've forgotten all the particulars of this, but there was a young black man that they were helping out, and I suddenly saw the car, their car, one of their cars anyway around,

and it didn't seem right. So anyway I called, and I said, "I just wanted to let you know I just saw this car, I just saw your car, and it seemed unusual, it didn't seem it would be in this spot, what's going on?" And that began kind of a tentative conversation, and somehow he then came to visit—Howard, my ex-husband and I were living in downtown Albany, and he came to visit to say hi. And I felt it was tenuous. We never talked about it specifically, then, and I was I think afraid to bring it up, I didn't know how the conversation would go and I didn't want another big huge fight. The tenuousness showed up, I think as I remembered, I said in the interview, he wouldn't walk me down the aisle when I was married because I was pregnant.

01:54:16 Q: And no white dress either.

Brewster: Right, no white dress, yes. The tenuousness for me still existed for quite a while. Periodically I would bring up that incident, and hope that in talking about it—what I wanted to hear from him was to say, "I'm sorry you were hurt so much." And he's never been able to say that. I finally—it's like in my own therapy over the years I found a way to do that with myself, to in essence—sometimes it's called "re-parenting"—to do that with myself and sort of help that part of me feel healed to a great degree. I mean, it's still, there, it still feels—yes, part of me still feels really upset at times about that.

And what I would notice is that he became defensive. And I don't know at what point I became aware of things that happened between Ericka and me that were traumatic for her, that it was hard—I could say the words, "I'm really sorry," but for a while I was saying it with defensive energy. And it wasn't until I—what would come up for me was, "Oh my God, I'm the most horrible bad parent." And so I finally got at some point that that was

unconscious, it was going on for him, and when this defensive energy would come up about that situation when I brought it up is he's really feeling that he's a horrible bad parent, on some level: "I did what I thought was right, and how dare you, I mean you're making me feel bad, how dare you make me feel bad!" So in a way raising my own child helped me understand the dynamic that was happening with the two of us, as we were, or I was asking to try and heal, reconcile this particular event.

And then over the years he would, at some point I noticed—the first couple of times I brought it up he remembered saying, "I don't know if I ever want you to be a member of this family again or not,"—and then he forgot it. It was like he said, "I never said that, I never kicked you out of the family, I kicked you out of the house, but not out of the family." I know, I remembered, and my mother remembered, it was an "Out of the family!" This was not a—so that was interesting to see that kind of unconscious shift happen. But when I felt finally as if I was okay in the family with him was one of our family reunions, I think it was the second one. I love doing bonfire on the beach, and I was arranging to have as part of our reunion we'd have a bonfire on the beach. A couple of my nephews, really adorable guys [Andrew Clark Brewster, ten and Samuel Robert Brewster, seven]—they were in love with me that particular summer and I was in love with them [Laughs], and it was one of those wonderful—.

So there were two piles of wood, one pile was underneath the house, and you know it had been drying out, and the other pile was under a bunch of trees, and there had been a rain, and it was probably wet. They said, "Do you want wood that's going to burn, not wood that's wet?" We were using the car to take the wood down the hill close to the beach and then be able to carry it down to the beach and set up the barn fire, and I had taken wood from

underneath the house. And he [my father] came out furious, “How dare you, you shouldn’t take that wood! He was yelling at me. “That wood is—we need that for the house, take the wood down!” I said, “Dad, the wood down there is—” “Don’t tell me about it—I know about—I know about wood, don’t tell me what to do!”

I said, “Okay, Dad.” So I put the wood back under the house. He and the boys drove down to the other wood pile site, sure enough it was wet. And they came back with the car to the wood under the house. And he later came to me and he said, “I’m so sorry I yelled at you and didn’t listen to you, you were right.” And that was the first time in my life I remember my father apologizing, and that apology, it was then—I was in my forties, or early fifties, but I think late forties—that was the first time I finally felt—[takes an audible breath]— I can trust that I’m a member of this family, that it doesn’t matter what I say, I’m not going to get kicked out.

Because even though I would still disagree with him on things, soon as I would start to disagree after he kicked me out of the family I felt this— you know, I was quote “back,” but I felt this sense of, “Oh my God, have I disagreed too much, am I going to get kicked out again?” Yes, it was definitely, definitely traumatic.

01:59:54 Q: So this would have set the barrier there in terms of your relating to him, and him deciding when you were part of the family. How about your own relationships though with your siblings, how did they evolve over the years. You were the older sister, and then—

Brewster: I was the older sister—

Q: You were the trouble-maker(??)]

02:00:08 Right, I went off and I was creating—you know I seemed to be this—well, for many years I was, I was perceived as the source of tense times at the Thanksgiving table, you know, Christmas, so I was the source of tension. And that took a long time before that shifted. My youngest sister, Margaret Anne Brewster Willingham, who is nine years younger than I—so when I went off to Greece at the age of seventeen she would have been eight—I was really scary to her. It took us quite a while. It was when I was in business school, Columbia University Graduate School of Business, that we began to develop a relationship, she was at SUNY Purchase [State University of New York at Purchase], and we began to develop more of a relationship.

The relationships have become closer over the years, there are times—and one of my brothers went off—I mean three of my siblings became Evangelical Christians [Barbara Shippen Brewster Shepler, James Burd Brewster, Margaret Anne Brewster Willingham,] and at least two of them are probably conservative right as well. One I know is [Barbara Shippen Brewster Shepler] And one of them—

02:01:39 Q: Did they influence each other, or were they separate decisions?

Brewster: I think they influenced each other to some extent, yes, I think they did.

02:01:53 Q: And then one of your brothers, you started to say.

Brewster: Well, it's one of them that's the Evangelical Christian, James Burd Brewster. The whole thing about obedience and obedient relationships to him is really important.

02:02:04 Q: Meaning your wife obeys you?

Brewster: Your wife, and you obey your parents. So he and I have sometimes gotten into some stuff about [sighs]—I can't remember a particular, but about questioning parents, and who I was at that time, and I feel like he's saying I was the wrong party in the interaction. It wasn't like it was a combination—I would hope as we get older we can say, there is a combination here going on.

You know, twenty odd years ago I still really was blaming my Dad for that whole experience. There was a combination of stuff going on for both of us. One of the big things with my father which took I think years—it took years for him to say, and I think years for me to understand the full implication of it, when—the summer before—when I was sixteen my baby brother died traumatically.

02:03:20 Q: And this had such an effect on your mother too.

Brewster: Pardon?

Q: It must have had such an incredible effect on your mother too.

Brewster: Yes, it had on both of them. But my father's response, his sense of control and needing to control things, became mega. None of us realized that, and he couldn't even talk about it for about ten years. It came out of one conversation I had with him, one of these about trying to talk about him kicking me out of the family, and that's when he said, "I'm in charge. I'm the one responsible for raising these kids. And I was responsible for raising the kids a certain way, and all the values you were bringing into the family were just bad and wrong, and I didn't want the kids to be around it."

So that moment when he kicked me out of the family, part of it was coming from this tremendous sense of, “I’ve got to protect all my kids and keep them safe, and you’re a threat right now.” And it also came out, I mean the other thing that was part of that experience is my mother just said, “Whenever Kitty’s [nickname for Katherine] around I feel angry.”

02:04:37 Q: Your mother felt that?

Brewster: Yes, and she—the other piece of the night that my Dad kicked me out of the family he wanted to have sex with my mother, and she said, “I just feel so angry I can’t have sex.” And that’s why he—

02:04:53 Q: He told you this later, or—?

Brewster: He did. That’s when he *stormed in* to my bedroom. So there was another component going on with her which is she felt angry. I was the catalyst for unconscious feelings that were going on that just weren’t being expressed on all different levels, and that was the way—yes. So my brother, you know this particular brother, I’m not aware he’s even yet gotten to that place—and he’d be about sixty, he’s five years younger so he’s sixty-one now, or he will be sixty-one—of saying, there are always two sides when people collide, and when people and things—there’s an energy that just gets triggered and blows up in ways. So for him, I’m still in many ways kind of the black sheep. I think for a while I was the black sheep for my brothers and sisters, and that’s—as I’ve grown and they’ve grown, as we’ve had interaction with each other that isn’t volatile—that’s changed over time, yes.

02:06:11 Q: Okay, good. So another element, you’ve been very involved with Barnard, although in terms of physically occupying the space there you had a really minimal time on

the campus. How do you address that? I mean we're all glad you did, but I'm just curious.

[Laughs]

Brewster: I've been forever fascinated with the question of how did that time period affect us in our lives. I don't know why but it's always that I'm curious, and that's one of the reasons—and I've lived in New York since 1976, so it's easy for me to get to reunions. I don't know if I lived some other place how I would find a way to keep in touch and answer this question for myself, but it's one of the reasons I've kept in touch, I'm just *really* curious, always been: “How has that affected all of us? What have we done? Did it? Did it not?” So that's why, and it's more of the class.

Also, Barnard, even the short time I was there, it really was what I, I think I unconsciously dreamed of, as an intellectually stimulating place for women. So to go back to something else, I mean I wasn't aware of being hungry for a place that valued women's intellects, I wasn't consciously aware. But I think that there was that, so I did have some unconscious sense that women's intellects were not being valued as much in society and I was hungry for a place that did. For me Barnard really—I wanted to support Barnard in that. And in it continuing to provide a place like that, a place like it was for me and it is. So the combination of this kind of anthropological, or “What's happening to us as a result of growing up in that time period?” Yes.

02:08:37 Q: Good, good. Okay, let's stop a second because I have to think what else I want to ask you.

[pause for a break]

02:08:49 Q: Brewster: Okay, so one thing before you ask me those questions, I remember I did want to mention the influence of another woman in my life, which was my father's sister, Joan Brewster, the woman that I went to live with in Athens, Greece, Psychiko. The other piece of the women on the Brewster side of the family—at some point I remember hearing stories of my father's relatives, and particularly his aunts, Stella Brewster, Josephine Brewster, and Katrina Brewster. So I remembered at some point hearing stories, I think it was not as a young girl, but it was after I had participated in the [1968 Columbia Student] strike, about how his aunts, Stella and Katrina Brewster and Josephine Brewster—they had been involved in the Women's Suffragette Movement [the effort in the 1920s to pass legislation allowing women to vote]. So, but there was a history of active social involvement, and social activism on the part of his aunts, in his family, and of course talked about going back to William Brewster [of the Mayflower].

The other piece of that—so I'm going to get back to Joan Brewster in a moment—that I'm thinking of now as kind of a history in the family of social activity. My mother's father in West Virginia—and again I forget if it was Huntington or Charleston—was a [board] member of [the Huntington Symphony Orchestra]—and he talked to me at one point after the strike, about change, and whether or not you're outside of the establishment in trying to create change or you work from within the established organizations. His path had been to work within the established organizations. He was on the board of the symphony in West Virginia, whether it was Charleston or Huntington, and he actively worked to get the symphony to sell tickets to black people. So, that was another example, and I knew somehow of that, again I don't remember if it was before I made the choice to participate in the 1968 Columbia

Student Strike or after that. Some of this other social activity, and activism within the family was very, very strong.

My father's sister, Joan, went to Swarthmore, and came out of Swarthmore, and it took a while for us to realize she was working for Army intelligence. She's got a medal—there are certain kinds of classified service that you can get a medal for, but it's like the medal is locked away and no one knows except your immediate family—she has one of those. A strong woman, clearly—really, really, really sharp intellect, and she didn't like people that weren't very smart.

I lived with her for her for a year, so she was an influence. I didn't know then if she was having a relationship; I learned later that she had a ten-year relationship with a man, and they were living in clearly separate places—I never was aware of them living together. She really loved him, and then he ended it and shortly after that got married. I've heard that kind of a thing before, you know those kind of stories before.

So she clearly was interested in having—and never did marry, and was therefore single and lived as a single woman, and had wonderful friends, many of her friends for some reason from the intelligence community retired in Peterborough, New Hampshire. I have no idea why, but that's where a number of them retired. So I remember meeting her, it was after she retired and was living in Peterborough, New Hampshire. My father's parents were living there, and she took care of them as they aged. But these wonderful friends that she had, close friends, and she was one of the few women I was aware of where she was actively part of this circle that wasn't just single women.

I have found that I've lived as a single woman, but I'm very rarely around couples, all of my socializing is with single women. But she had this active life, very much a part of the lives of these married couples. What I think was such an influence for me is she had a real intellectual mind, and I mean her intellect, her mind, her career choice. Clearly career was important to her, and she was very influential, and I know she was part of writing the Marshall Plan.

02:14:15 Q: So she had lived abroad most of her life.

Brewster: She did live abroad most of her life, yes, she lived abroad most of her life. And then it was possible to be a single woman and to make it, because I think she was the only other single woman—she *was* the only single woman I knew in my immediate family at that point, everyone else was married. So she was an important role model for me, so I wanted to acknowledge her in this. So your other questions were about?

02:14:50 Q: So we were going back a little bit. You never spoke a whole lot about your early years as a student— elementary, middle school, high school—

Brewster: You mean as a student, what I was like as a student?

02:15:01 Q: Yes, what you were like, what you were doing. I mean clearly you were— everybody was *crème de la crème*. [Laughs]

Brewster: Well I had a rocky academic—

02:15:13 Q: And also the dyslexia, you keep alluding to it, but you've never actually spoken about it.

Brewster: Okay, right, right. The way I came to describe myself after delving into dyslexia, because of my daughter, is that she's medium dyslexic and I'm mildly dyslexic. So one of the ways I remember it showed up, we lived in Rochester, New York—[pause] God, when I was three and a half or four, to about seven, we moved to Albany, New York, and I believe I came into, it was first grade or something grade, I've forgotten. I definitely went to kindergarten in Rochester, I think maybe first grade. But anyway in Rochester I think I was in the high reading group, then I came to Albany in this grade school in Pine Hills—PS 16—and suddenly I was in the low reading group. And I was having difficulty reading. And I don't remember what the difficulty was, it's just that it wasn't quite clicking. I don't know what I did because I don't remember—I mean at this point my mother had five children. If I was seven the twins were two, so she had five children under the age of seven, and—

02:16:45 Q: And also twins, I didn't realize that.

Brewster: Yes, when I was five there were twins born, James Burd Brewster and Richard Cammack Brewster. And they were not expecting twins either, so it was a total surprise, a huge surprise. Definitely, I mean they were both overwhelmed, it was just an overwhelming situation to have five kids now under the age of five—four would have been enough, but to suddenly have—I can't imagine it.

So I have this unconscious sense that I was really aware that I couldn't turn to my parents for help, they were just totally overwhelmed. I don't know what I did but I forced myself to figure out how to read. And in the process, my unconscious memory, sense of it is in order to do that it was like I cut off another part of me, or I suppressed another part of me. So my dyslexia, it would come out in I wouldn't know how to go about organizing a paper. I could

probably think of five different ways, I didn't know how to think about make a choice. I mean I'd be all over the place, I'd spend hours trying to think about how do I organize this, what makes sense? And *really* anxious over it, and I wrote some wonderful papers as a kid. But the process was just excruciatingly painful. I never felt, and I still don't feel, that I write well or that I express myself well in the written word, and I attribute some of that to the dyslexia. So it didn't show up as for me reversing letters, it didn't show up as reversing numbers. It shows up sometimes I can reverse the beginning phrase of something. If people's names begin with the same first letter or first couple of letters I'll mix the names and the people, and in teaching yoga I've mixed words up. And I'll suddenly go, "Oh, that's because they sound the same, or in my mind"—anyway, it's the dyslexia showing up. So although I can appear very organized, and I do appear very organized to people, organization is *really* difficult for me. [Laughs] I hate details. I'm good at big broad concepts, I really hate—I got good at details, I had to be good in details in Citibank, but data entry feels like a line is drawn across, like nails on a chalkboard, it's like it draws a line across my brain and I can't even think.

So that first experience with reading, and then I excelled in reading, but that was when I was really aware of the dyslexia. So I was an A/B student most of the time, all the way through grade school. I'm trying to remember were there years when I had more difficulty than others?

02:20:45 Q: This is all public school?

Brewster: Yes, public school, I was in public school.

02:20:49 Q: But you're from this ostensibly Catholic—

Brewster: No, no, no, we were—no, no, no, we were —

02:20:53 Q: You spoke of a priest earlier.

Brewster: We're Episcopalian.

02:20:56 Q: Oh, Episcopalian, I'm sorry, of course, because of the _____(??) priesthood(??) that makes more sense, a Brewster would not be Catholic. .

Brewster: On the street we lived on in Albany [24 Terrace Avenue] what I may have talked about in the other interviews, we were the minority; the religious background was predominately Roman Catholic. And in the school, the public school I went to—I have a sense we were like a third but I'm not so sure. The Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish [population] was really equal; it felt like we were pretty [equally distributed] in terms of the population that was living around that particular school, yes, yes.

I remember *loving* my experience in middle school, *absolutely* loving it. I was coming alive more intellectually, or the teachers, I remember these *wonderful*—it was at that point— [Milne School Junior and Senior High School] _____(??) was the practice teaching school for—it wasn't Albany State University, it was Teacher's College, Albany Teacher's College, and the teachers were excited about teaching. This one paper was, "Was it the times or the man that was more important?" It wasn't nature/nurture, it was—the intrinsic qualities of the person or was it the times that brought out the quality? I just remember loving that kind of topic, and I don't even remember who I chose, I think it was a musician. And for years I kept that paper, I loved it, I loved doing it, and I did well on it. But it was that kind of environment. And I was so excited to be in this school all through middle school [seventh and eighth grades].

And then we moved to the suburb outside of Albany called Slingerlands [1719 New Scotland Road] That was in between eighth and ninth grade, so now I was in a totally different school. This was a new experience for me. The people I knew in Milne—were people I had known in grade school, since second grade, so when I changed schools from PS16 to Milne, I knew people, I had a group of old friends. Of course, at Milne, I made new friends with people I didn't know,

But we moved to this new school, Bethlehem Central Senior High School [Bethlehem, New York] I didn't know anybody, and felt lost, and—I don't know, I think I remember unconsciously this is really not a real intellectual environment.

So in Milne okay, my experience is that it was intellectual, it was like an integrated environment for me. People were intellectual and excited about intellect, and they also were on the cheerleading team, and they also played basketball, it was this sense that there weren't—I didn't have a sense at that point of these cliques of people, where you had to make a choice between being intellectual or interested in sports. That's what I remember in Bethlehem Central, is suddenly there were cliques, and it felt like I had to make a choice between, was I going to be more like the sport person and do cheerleading—which I'd done at Milne— or be more a part of the intellectual group, or the drama group, or—I hadn't had to face that before, and I didn't really like it. And I kind of don't know if I ever totally fit in anywhere, that was my sense, I didn't quite fit in anywhere. I did the cheerleading.

02:24:47 Q: In high school.

Brewster: In high school, Bethlehem Central Senior High School.

Q: Oh!

Brewster: I was in the fast track, the college level, whatever they called, I've forgotten the grading then—I was in that, and liked those people. I was *very* involved in drama, acted once in one play, was head of costumes in another, I mean for Mikado.

02:25:16 Q: You were in the Mikado, wow. It's complicated.

Brewster: Yes, and I loved that. But in a way I was really glad to be out of High School.

[Laughs] Interesting.

02:25:31 Q: Did you maintain any friendships from those days?

Brewster: I haven't. No, and I don't have any friends from my grade school. Milne I would have loved to kept in touch, but I didn't, having moved to Bethlehem Central Senior High School _____ (??) and lost track with some of those people.

The other thing is that at that point in Albany there was enough distance between Albany—the roads were different between Albany and Slingerlands—it was a thirty-minute—it now could be a ten-minute drive or a fifteen-minute drive. It wasn't part of the culture at that point to travel, take your kids—I mean in Slingerlands where it was a car culture, a real car culture —

Q: A suburb now.

Brewster:—and it was a different suburb. It had been a summer community, so it wasn't a box-built suburb, these were really unique individual houses. I rode my bike, so I could go see friends riding my bike; at that point I wasn't dependent upon my parents for a ride, but to bike into Albany was just not part of what I would have done. So, yes, I lost track of a lot of

people that had been really fun and interesting. Haven't yet been back to a high school reunion, hope to join the next one.

The seminal experience for me, the real experience—I slowly began to reconnect with people that I was in the program with in Athens—College Year in Athens, Greece.

02:27:06 Q: They were _____ (??) you said.

Brewster: Yes, most of them.

02:27:08 Q: At this point it—

Brewster: Yes, it just doesn't ring as many—but the people I've really stayed in touch with have been Barnard [people]. That whole year was a real bonding year. The other reason to stay in touch, is the—

02:27:26 Q: And you had this incredible roommate too.

Brewster: Yes, Josephine Biddle-Duke.

02:27:30 Q: An icon for everybody at Barnard. [Gasps] *Where did Josie come from?* And then she left after the first year as well, right?

Brewster: Yes, she was really involved with organizing—so through SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] she got really involved in organizing veterans. She was part of a group that set up what's called the Fort Dix Coffee House, right outside of Fort Dix, and that's where she met her husband who's been her husband forever. Yes, they've had this wonderful marriage, five kids.

02:28:09 Q: And she didn't really want to keep up with people at Barnard, per se, or else she would have kept up with you.

Brewster: She's not wanted to. I've reached out to her; we have a sporadic Facebook/email exchange and that's it, yes.

02:28:25 Q: Anything else about Barnard in particular that you haven't covered? Mentors, other people who were influential? Sort of the transition you went through from—I don't know if you had already been exposed to what became the sixties culture in high school—

Brewster: No.

Q: —or if you came to Barnard with the button down blouses and little collars, and matching shoes and socks or whatever, and sweaters and skirts. [laughs]

Brewster: Right, I had not been exposed to the sixties culture, and having been in Greece in '66-'67, I was really out of the loop of that kind of stuff. What I got exposed to, which I didn't realize was so much a part of sixties culture, over in Paris—I'd been exposed to civil rights issues through the church, Cathedral of All Saints [Albany, New York] I was attending and people I knew who'd gone south, so I knew about that. I wasn't really aware of Vietnam, I was exposed to the Vietnam War over in Greece, and I spoke about that in the previous interview. In France people were talking about it, a lot of people were talking about the Vietnam War in France.

I was exposed to miniskirts, I came back wearing a miniskirt, and that was one of the first things that got my father upset, and my mother, was the miniskirt. So *that* I was exposed to, that part of how the clothes changed. What I came to school with in terms of clothes was

more—I don't remember if I had pants or jeans—I don't think it was jeans, it would have been pants. I don't ever remember wearing them to class. I mean I always dressed up to go to class, so I came with that, and that was a big change to then be in the buildings and be wearing jeans and pants, whatever we were wearing, and then shift, come out of that and not go back to—well, first of all classes were cancelled, but then not go back to wearing dresses. But the whole dress code shifted, shifted dramatically.

I don't remember being aware of—I grew up with, you don't have sex before marriage. I don't remember what I was aware of, did I question that? I don't remember in high school, I don't remember what shifted in Greece, whether I—but clearly by the time I got to Paris in the Summer of '67, I felt perfectly comfortable having sex with this Frenchman, Henri Helman, I met and fell in love with. So something shifted for me in that year.

There's not a pivotal moment I remember; I don't remember what I was—okay, yes, something is coming back, okay. So I was around kids in the dorm at College Year In Athens—I was not living in the dorms for the college, but I was around kids that were, and I was hearing there were kids in the school that had hooked up and were having sex. There was a woman who was part of the school who came from Europe, so she had a much more open sense of sexual relationships, so yes, I'm sorry, I'm glad I remembered that, wow, the things you can forget. Yes, so that was my exposure, the people around me, and it just seemed like—I don't remember, we probably had conversations about it. Yes, I lost my virginity over in Greece with a guy, there was a one-night stand. It was disappointing, for me. [Laughs] I remember coming back and talking to this one woman, concerned about whether or not I could be get pregnant, and what to do.

02:33:07 Q: Yes, that's a scary one.

Brewster: I did come to Barnard College already aware of change in sexual relationships, and I did come very aware of civil rights issues, and some nascent sense, but not much of the Vietnam War—that was more of an education I went through in the fall and spring semester of 1968. So in terms of teachers, there were teachers that might be—see, I don't remember Kate Millet, I don't remember Professor Juviler—I didn't have either one of them in the year and a half that I was there. I just remember the excitement of the classes: the Physics for Poets, that was intellectually challenging and just, I mean really hard for me. The Russian Literature course and the Art History. Barbara Novak, Art History. Barbara Novak to me stands out as a woman who was intellectually just really excited intellectually, and had a flare—you know she was feminine, had a flare, the way she dressed—just had a flare. And so that's been a role model for me, that yes, let me develop a flare, what's my flare.

02:34:33 Q: And she was a good teacher.

Brewster: She was a what?

Q: She was also a good teacher.

Brewster: Yes, for me she was a great teacher, yes. So Barbara Novak, yes.

02:34:45 Q: So do you think of yourself as a healer? Is that your main vocation?

Brewster: I think of myself—

Q: Or am I putting a label that shouldn't be applied.

Brewster: It's interesting to say "healer," because really what the healing process is, it's actually supporting people to find the healing within themselves. So I don't know if I'm a—

02:35:11 Q: A facilitator.

Brewster: I think that's really what all healing is, is that someone is a facilitator. That the way to help the person, something gets sparked within them. Yes, facilitate, facilitate healing. It is my vocation. What I don't know now is because of so much time that I've been spending—I've really been enjoying using my executive and management skills with the oral history project, and realize how much that I have missed in the one-on-one healing work, I've been doing working with groups of people to create something. So I don't know where this goes from here, and I've had to question—I don't know, from here how these two strains—two parts of me—are going to be manifested as I move forward in life. Yes. I'd love to find a way to feel that they're much more integrated than I've felt like they've been, but I hope that in working with the group that's creating this oral history project that I'm bringing the facilitation that supports it, and yes, a communal sense of it being created. And if that's happening then that is one way that facilitation part of healing I would be using, or applying.

02:36:50 Q: Could you see yourself starting spin-offs of the kind of program you run?

Brewster: Could be, that could be, right, yes, a possibility.

02:37:03 Q: So you can get skills also—

Brewster: Right, yes.

Q: Okay, what would you say you're most proud of? Your greatest accomplishment in life.

Brewster: Um—

Q: And then the most satisfying—

Brewster: Yes—raising my daughter.

02:37:25 Q: So we come full circle.

Brewster: And my ongoing relationship with my daughter. Yes, that's one of the things that I'm very grateful to have as a part of my life, and grateful to her to be a part of my life. I think the other is having developed enough trust in myself, for example, to have followed the inner voice that said that what was important in 1994 was for me to really work in this whole metaphysical healing area, and to follow that. And to continue to follow it despite financially it not being the best decision I could have made in my life, so retirement and financially supporting myself in retirement in a way I'd like to live is an unknown and a real challenge.

02:38:43 Q: A fear.

Brewster: Pardon?

Q: And a fear as well.

Brewster: Yes, and a fear. I'm really proud to be part of the class, creating a historical record of our experience, and I'm really proud of supporting that, and supporting a sense that we're aware—I think without being arrogant—that this is an important, historically significant role that we have played, some large, some small, with historical change that we've been a part of, both affected by and then creating the changes that have happened in our lifetime. We've been part of creating those changes. So I'm really, yes, proud to be a part of that.

02:40:02 Q: Any advice you'd give yourself on the future, or someone else, a student? I'm sure as a mother you've had to give your daughter a lot of advice, right?

Brewster: [Laughs] Right.

02:40:16 Q: Well not necessarily your daughter(??) I think you said, “Believe in yourself.”

Brewster: Trust yourself, love yourself.

02:40:22 Q: Which is still good news.

Brewster: Believe in yourself. Follow your dreams.

Q: _____(??) Yes.

Brewster: And allow—I’m thinking of young women, allow yourself—try and find the ways that support all parts of you being alive in your life, from the sexual and the sensuous and the intellectual, the whole part—just find the ways to allow that all to be really present and part of who you are. And acknowledge and love all of your experiences, that every single one is a part of who you are, every single one is a part of what’s made who you are today, every single one.

02:41:37 Q: Okay, so I guess the last question will be, what do you look forward to in the future? You’ve already alluded to a certain sense of uncertainty, but some confidence as well.

Brewster: Right. I look forward to enjoying myself more in life. However it unfolds, I will help it unfold. I look forward to finding for the remaining of my life a life partner. I really look forward to having—

02:42:15 Q: _____(??) please let me know—we’ll clone him! [both laugh]

Brewster: I know.

Q: _____(??) Exactly. I look forward to that. Oh, God, I mean I would love—the financial piece of how to do this—but love to travel more. I can't think of a place on the planet I wouldn't want to travel, so that makes it real challenging to figure out where to go next, what to do next. And I look forward to wonderful friendships, and having those as a part of my life. So good people in life. Physically active. I look forward to continuing a growing relationship with my daughter as she unfolds more. Yes—yes.

02:43:23 Q: Okay, anything else that we haven't touched on? We'd sort of been on a couple of large chunky eras, and not going _____(??)

Brewster: Right. Right now that's all I can think of, thanks, Frances.

02:43:37Q: Well, we'll let you off the hook, and take it off the calendar, thank you, it's been absolutely amazing, I always learn so much.

02:43:45 Q: So we're going to pick up with one more addendum here, which is to ask Katherine to share a little bit about her whole sense of art and her artistic abilities and interests.

Brewster: [Laughs] Oh, God, to me it's fascinating that you're asking that, because I don't think of myself as being artistic in the way that it's been expressed, for example, through my father, who was clearly a gifted musician and clearly a visual artist. So I explored music in grade school and middle school. I guess I continued to play clarinet a little bit, because I was a freshman in high school—anyway I played piano and I took up piano again in high school. I've played clarinet, piano, and guitar. None of them to the point where I then have continued, but I did continue guitar for a while and then I stopped playing it and I [speaks in

an exaggerated sad tone] *gave my guitar away*, something I'm very sad about because I'd actually love to be playing an instrument now.

So there was a musical, and I've sung in choirs, so I do have a musical ability. I don't have a fantastic ear. My daughter has an incredible ear. I know how to read music, so I've learned the basics of the music, and I love music, I love all kinds of music in terms of listening and being a participant.

02:45:52 Q: You always have something good playing when I enter—[Laughter]

Brewster: Yes. One of the ways my artistic sense did show up is I also love to move to music. I took up figure skating when I was in about sixth grade or fifth, and I did that through eighth grade until we moved [to Slingerlands, New York.]. I was taking figure skating lessons in a nearby town, Troy, having to travel, and it became a big family thing: my mother was driving me over for sessions, I joined the RPI [Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute] Figure Skating Club and took lessons. At that time you had to do figures and dance, and freestyle, and I did up through the first level, there was preliminary and first level. I *loved*, I mean I'd choreographed a piece, as part of a competition, to the Overture to the Mikado. I loved the piece, I got accolades on my choreography, I did some unusual things that now people do in terms of patterns on the ice that I came up with. I got accolades from people whom I respected, for how high I could jump, and just my general line when I skated, loved it.

And it's a long story, I worked myself to pay for my lessons, so I was always doing something: babysitting, shoveling walks, I took up selling Christmas cards to make money to pay for my figure skating lessons. I skated one summer, so the summer in between eighth and ninth grade, the summer we moved, I skated in the summer, and I didn't pass that level,

Level 1, until the end of it—there were tests and I didn't pass that level of tests. It's not uncommon, sometimes it takes a couple of times to pass, so at least twice to pass to the next level of tests—preliminary, then first level. And we moved, and my baby brother, Benjamin—that was when they weren't sure what was going on with my mom, and it turns out she was pregnant. My father had a vasectomy, and didn't know then that it takes six months for the sperm to work through the system; they had sex and she got pregnant. The doctors couldn't figure it out for a couple of months because she wasn't supposed to be pregnant.

So all that was going on, and that resulted in they didn't support me in continuing my figure skating, and we were now living in Slingerlands, another twenty minutes away from RPI, it was a bigger trip. And I wasn't strong enough emotionally then to just continue on my own, something I regretted for many, many years, hadn't made peace with for a long time. Because I really love that sense of being on the ice, and periodically I'll pick it up and then I don't, you know I haven't really pursued it actively as an adult, but _____(??). Since business school I haven't really pursued it actively.

Once in a while I put on some skates and—I love the sense of just—. So then I was involved with, more on the administrative side—in high school I did act, but was more involved with the costumes, getting the costumes, and costuming people in high school. And then with the opera company that I worked for I was the production coordinator, so I was managing the artistic personnel in creating the production that was on stage. So I moved more into that as an adult.

I would say the way that my artistic expression has come out, it's in terms of how I dress. I talked about the flare of Barbara Novak, and my mother's mother had quite a flare for

dressing. Five years ago or so—no, seven—I was in Fallbrook, California, for a yoga training, and met a man who was running this café, and we took up and I went to visit him a couple of months later, went back to Fallbrook, California to visit him, and one of his patrons said to me as I worked through the café, “Are you an artist?” And I said, “No,” and she said, “Yes, you are, the way you dress—artistic.”

I really hadn't thought of it that way, and it is how I try and decorate. When I finally got the money to try and put together my own place, how I decorate is a part of my artistic expression. I realized in the process of decorating that I have an eye for design, and so when I'm taking pictures—my father once said, or I heard in terms of creating a visual painting that in addition to the depth that the Renaissance painters revived is the one-third-two-third rule—so when I'm working with just my own camera taking pictures I'm looking to see the kind of one-third-two-third and figure that out in what I—.

So those are the ways I'm aware of—and in fact I was thinking last night for some reason there's something I put on, or maybe it was this morning, and I went, “I really, I really—” in terms of the wish to find a way—. I've had a fascination with the Japanese drummers, these huge drums, because it feels like the whole body—it's almost like dancing to me as I watch it with the drums—I'm going, “I would love to do that.” So I would love to find my next real artistic expression and be practicing it and doing it, yes. I love the arts, all of them, absolutely love them, fascinated by them. But my expression has been more in the ways we just talked about it. And it's really important—

02:53:09 Q: I can see you in a drumming circle one of these days.

Brewster: Yes, right, oh, yes, yes, yes. [Laughs] Right. But to have it as part of my life is important to me. In other words to have a place that visually and tactilely is pleasing to my eye is important. Hearing music that speaks to my soul, to have that on and around is important to me. Yes, thanks.

02:53:46 Q: Okay! Thank you for sharing that. Okay, we'll stop now.

[End of Interview]

Addendum

Key Facts for Katherine Jessop Brewster Johnson, b. February 3, 1949

Parents

Mother: Anne Haworth Cammack Brewster, b. November 5, 1927

Father: Benjamin Yates Brewster, Jr., b. December 4, 1926

Siblings

Sister: Barbara Shippen Brewster Shepler, b. February 3, 1950

Brother: Edward Yates Brewster, b. May 23, 1952

Brother: James Burd Brewster, b. December 8, 1954

Brother: Richard Cammack Brewster, b. December 8, 1954

Sister: Margaret Anne Brewster Willingham, b. February 12, 1958

Brother: Benjamin Yates Brewster, III, May 14, 1964–August 19, 1965

Maternal Grandparents

Sarah Burd Tiers Cammack, October 30, 1902–Aug. 1, 1967

Howard Haworth Cammack May 21, 1897– April 15, 1984

Paternal Grandparents

Benjamin Yates Brewster, December 28, 1896–January 1, 1984

Marjorie Florence Jessop Brewster, December 24, 1894– December 16, 1990

Marriage

Howard Jan Johnson, Jr., Feb. 1971. Divorced August, 1974

Children

Ericka Elkay Johnson, b. June 13, 1971

Places Lived

Washington, D.C., Area: 1949–1951

French Morocco, Port Lyautey, and Rabat: December, 1951–March, 1953

Concord, New Hampshire: 1953

Rochester, New York: 1953–1956

Albany, New York (24 Terrace Avenue): 1956–1963

Slingerlands, New York (1719 New Scotland Rd): 1963–1966

Athens, Greece: 1966–1967

New York, New York (890 West End Ave., #4E, New York, New York): 1967–1970

Albany, New York (Morton Ave., Sheridan St., Morris St.): 1970–1976

New York, New York (890 West End Ave, #4E, New York, New York): 1976–Present

Education

Grade School, Kindergarten–mid-second grade: Rochester, New York

Grade School, second grade–sixth grade: PS 16, Albany, New York

Middle School, seventh and eighth grades: Milne Jr. and Senior High School, Albany, New York

High school, ninth and twelfth grades: Bethlehem Central Senior High School, Bethlehem, New York

Study Abroad: College Year in Athens Program, Athens, Greece

Undergraduate: Barnard College, Columbia University, New York, New York

Graduate: Columbia Business School, Columbia University, New York, New York

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