

Interviewee: Aimee Brunelle  
Interviewer: Heather Ewell, Kirstin Dessert, and Kellie Powers  
Date: March 13, 2013  
Location: Worcester, MA  
Transcribers: Heather Ewell, Kirstin Dessert, and Kellie Powers



Overseen by Dr. Carl Keyes, Assumption College

“I think the center of human life is relationships in the long run and there is nothing more important to me than getting married and having daughters.”

**Abstract:** Aimee L. Jacques Brunelle was born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts in 1951. She is a believer in love and is a hard working woman. Aimee married her husband, Roger Brunelle, in the chapel at Assumption College and is happily married with two daughters and no regrets. Aimee Brunelle is a part of three communities the French-Canadian, academic, and Catholic. Aimee attended Assumption College, furthering her French-Canadian culture, and was part of the first women’s class. She was the main class of student that Assumption College had aimed for when it was founded. She obtained her Bachelor’s Degree in Biology, in hopes of following in her father’s footsteps. This was not her original plan and, years later, she came back to Assumption gaining her Master’s Degree in Psychology. Aimee now works as an emergency psychiatric clinician at Harrington Hospital. She believes that human relationships are the center of human life. She lives a very privileged life and wishes to help others. Aimee has never felt excluded and furthers her academic involvement by volunteering at her local library in the Friends of the Library Organization. Aimee is a devout Catholic and wishes to maintain active in her faith.

**Quote:** I would like Worcester not to have such a negative opinion of itself...Worcester has always had a very negative self-image...It’s a small city, it has many colleges, there’s a great interest in learning...it still has some wonderful cultural institutions, including Mechanics Hall and the art museum...I think that there are many people that care about it, and there are certainly many wonderful neighborhoods, too.”

[Read this prior to taping- ]

**HE:** We are completing a citywide oral history of the lives of Worcester women, aiming to collect stories about a broad range of experiences. Based on the goals of the 1850 National Women’s Rights Convention in Worcester, we are focusing on the areas of women’s education, health, work, and politics/community involvement. We want to focus today on your experiences with Worcester and Assumption College. Thank you for your help with this important project! Do we have your permission to record?

**AB:** Yes, thank you.]

**AB:** I, Aimee Brunelle, here by give to the Worcester Women's Oral History Project and Assumption College for scholarly and educational use the recordings of interviews conducted on March 13, 2013 and grant to WWHP and Assumption College all the rights I possess in those recordings including all intellectual property rights. I understand that the WWHP and Assumption College grant me non-exclusive license to make and to authorize others to make use with the contents of these recordings and they will at my request make available copy of those recordings for such use. If I wish to remain anonymous in any transcript or reference to any information containing in this interview. I will note this restriction in paragraphs below. The forego and gift and grant of rights is subject to following restrictions and I haven't put any restrictions.

**HE:** Thank you. So, what is your full maiden name?

**AB:** Aimee Jacques, Aimee Lord Jacques.

**HE:** What is your mother's maiden name and your father's name?

**AB:** My mothers name was Lucille Isabelle and my father was Raymond B. Jacques.

**HE:** Are your parents from Worcester?

**AB:** No, my parents are both from Fitchburg Massachusetts.

**HE:** Can you tell me a little bit about your parents?

**AB:** My, father, was born in Canada and he was adopted. He was born to a larger family of 8 children and his father died when he was an infant. So he was put in an orphanage uh for three years because there was no welfare of any kind while his mother got a job. He and his younger siblings. He was adopted by, a childless couple, a doctor and his wife from Fitchburg, who brought him back here. He was an only child but also spent summers on the farm in Canada with his siblings, and so his father was very big, a very conservative French Canadian who was very strict and didn't let him, anybody speak English in the household even though Fitchburg was an English speaking city.

**HE:** When and Where were you born?

**AB:** Um, I was born in 1951 in Fitchburg Massachusetts.

**HE:** What brought you to Worcester?

**AB:** I came to Worcester when I, I came to Assumption College. I chose Assumption College because it was my father's school. My father had been in the class of 1940, he went both to the prep school and to the college when they were on West Boylston Street in Worcester. So, he went when the classes were all in French, every class and he use to

take the trolley from Fitchburg believe it or not to get there. He wasn't allowed to board there until he was in college but he went there because his family was so involved in the French Canadian Culture and Assumption College had been founded for that reason to perpetuate the French Canadian Culture.

**HE:** What cultures or ethnicities do you identify with your family background?

**AB:** My family background is exclusively French Canadian. My family came from the three rivers area in Canada, about three generations ago and on both sides basically.

**HE:** Where have you lived throughout your life? Did you grow up in Worcester, which you just said you hadn't, but what was your neighborhood like generally?

**AB:** So I grew up in Fitchburg there was a big French Canadian area in Fitchburg called Clegorn, but we didn't live there. My father was a doctor, he, unlike his siblings who grew up on the farm, he was given a college and medical school education, so we lived in what had previously been Yankee neighborhood and we lived in a very nice neighborhood. But next to an Irish family basically it was when the, different, immigrant groups the Irish, the French, the Polish, the Italians were becoming professionals because before that they had only been working in the factories. So I grew up in a I had a privileged upbringing I guess I'd say.

**HE:** Do you have family that lives in the area, close by or far away?

**AB:** Well my parents did, my whole family lived in Fitchburg, but my father eventually moved to upstate New York and he is now deceased. As a matter of fact, this would be his birthday; he would be 93 years old today. My mother is living in Florida; my older brother is actually is deceased. I have a sister in Pennsylvania and a brother in Florida, so I don't really have any family nearby.

**HE:** So can you tell me a little bit about your siblings?

**AB:** I was the only biological child. My parents didn't have a baby so they went up to Lacresh, which was the same place my father had been adopted and adopted my older brother. Then I came along then they adopted a younger brother and sister from catholic charities in Worcester whose parents have subsequently found them, and so I don't know, we had a wonderful childhood.

**HE:** Do you have a close relationship with your family?

**AB:** Yes, but its a little bit difficult because of the distance now. As I told you I just visited my mother two weeks ago in Florida and I try to maintain the kind of relationship I like but it isn't like it was when everybody's relatives all lived in the same town a couple generations ago.

**HE:** Would you say that health issues have impacted your life or those in your family?

**AB:** Not mine. My older brother died of a brain tumor that was diagnosed suddenly, he died two years ago. Other than that, I guess I'd say there was no major health issues.

**HE:** Where did you attend prep school, preschool, elementary school, or high school?

**AB:** I went entirely to parochial schools. I went to Immaculate Conception High School, I'm sorry grammar school, it was run by the nuns. Some who I believe who had an 8th grade education. [laughs] Then I went to Holy Family High School which my mother convinced me to go to because it was all female much to my regret, [laugh] and I did not fall for that again in for college. Even though she tried very hard to talk me into one of the all women's colleges. [Laughs]

**HE:** So do you have any other connections to Worcester other than coming to school here?

**AB:** After, I married my classmate Rodger a year out of college, we lived in Boston for five years while he went to law school, then we bought a home in Worcester, and lived here for 10 years in the Newton Square area. We then were looking for a larger house, but we never found anything. What were looking for in Worcester, so we have been living in Paxton ever since, but it maintained a close relationship with Assumption.

**HE:** What challenges do you think the city of Worcester still faces?

**AB:** I think it has a lot of new challenges, it has totally new immigrant groups, that weren't here, that were in my class. There were, I don't believe any Hispanics, I actually looked it up today, they I believe, they immigrated to this area in the sixties and seventies and they weren't in a position to send their children to college by that time. But they had very large immigrant groups and of course families have fallen apart and which means their are a lot of kids with, with no fathers, so I think it is a huge challenge for the schools, a huge challenge to finance the city with so many, middle class people having moved out and so much poverty in the city. Basically I think it is very difficult.

**HE:** If you could change something about the city, what would it be?

**AB:** I would like Worcester not have such a negative opinion of itself. We still read the Worcester Telegram every morning, hopefully it's going to last a little longer, it's getting thinner and thinner. [Laughs] But, Worcester has always had a very negative self image and I don't really think it needed to have a negative self-image I think that it has a lot to offer. We didn't move away from Worcester because we didn't enjoy Worcester, in fact, we very much wanted to stay, just at the time, we didn't find a house that we wanted. But, I think it has a lot more to offer.

**HE:** What have you seen change in Worcester over time?

**AB:** Like I've said, the schools really went downhill tremendously, I ended up being happy that we were in Paxton because the schools were much safer for our kids, given all the changes, and just because they didn't really have the budget and were so many single parent families, I work as a counselor, so I know what a struggle they have and how those kids really don't have the support they need to be successful very often. So, that is the difficulty.

**HE:** What distinct characteristics make Worcester the place that it is?

**AB:** Well, it's a small city, it has many colleges, there's a great interest in learning around here, it still has some wonderful cultural institutions including Mechanics Hall. The art museum that is here because there used to be many very wealthy families living in this area. I think that there are many people that care about it, and there are certainly many wonderful neighborhoods too. I certainly love Worcester in many ways.

**HE:** What do you think women's experiences in Worcester have been generally?

**AB:** I don't know if women's experiences have been any different than they have been anywhere else. They changed enormously over my lifetime. I think the most remarkable thing is the women are now, seemed to be coming up in the world at the expense of the men. [Laughs] When I was a kid, if there was a newscaster on TV, they were all male because if a woman said something it wouldn't be taken seriously. Because women, everybody knew women weren't quite the same in fact, I can still remember when I was a kid, one child, a boy said to me, men do everything better than women, even cooking. That there was nothing, and this was basically the general belief in the population that you couldn't now my mother complains because all the newscasters are women and my stepfather says well they are better to look at. [Laughs] But at the time, there were really few options. You could be a secretary, or a nurse, or a teacher or work in a factory. And my mother always said that you don't want to work in a factory but there were very few options and now there are tremendous options for women. But unfortunately, at the same time, families are falling apart which, so we have had a wonderful improvement but a big loss at the same time.

**HE:** What made your decision to choose Assumption College?

**AB:** Well, as I said, it was my father's school, I loved and admired him, people would stop me in the streets, to tell me what a wonderful doctor my father was, and he had gone to Assumption, he also used to take us to the basketball games. He used to go to see the Greyhounds because he was still a fan, and so I would tag along as a teenager, and so it was cool and I knew. And I still remember when I was sitting at the dining room table, for Sunday dinner, once a week we would eat in the dining room. My mother said so

we'd learn some manners with the linen tablecloth and the whole thing. And I can remember saying something Assumption is going coed next year, for the year that I was starting, and was thinking well that is perfect and at the time, schools didn't advertise, schools didn't recruit, there were no campus tours, you just, sent a letter for an application where you went, parents didn't parade you around to look at different schools, it was different. It was a lot less to it. So the school that I knew, was the school that would be close enough to come home for a weekend anytime we wanted to and it was a school I already had deep connections to my family.

**HE:** Did you commute or live on campus?

**AB:** I lived on campus.

**HE:** What dorm did you live in?

**AB:** Well, when we first got here, the first dorm for women was not ready. So, they gave the women till Thanksgiving, they put all the men tripled or quadrupled for three months [Laughs] and gave the women's dorm, Alumni hall to the women, and maybe we had one floor because, who would trust the men [Laughs] and so we had no complaints, nobody complained at all, but until right before Thanksgiving, that first building was ready, they put us two to a room and they, the men had bunk beds. All the classes I believe had to do that in order to make room for the women's class and so then after that, as soon as the first dorm was ready, when you take those stairs up to the hill, I don't know what it is called now.

**KP:** Hanrahan?

**AB:** No, the first one you would come to as you walk up the stairs.

**KP:** Nault?

**AB:** Yes. I looked it up and (\_\_\_\_\_???) I reading. That was the first one ready and our whole class fit into it I believe, cause then they started working immediately on the other dorms, which were ready for the next classes. They, had in front of it this, fenced off area that they told us, was so that the women could sunbathe without the men seeing them. Now, why, how would there ever be weather to put a bathing suit on, [Laughs] around here, even when we start or when school ends, I don't know, and none of us were at all interested in that and but it was that kind of old fashioned way they were looking at the women that we wouldn't want male eyes on us, well we never wore anything that we couldn't wear on a sunny day next to the duck pond. And that was never used and eventually they took it out. Those concrete pillars may still be there.

**HE:** Did you get to pick your roommates and if you did, did you like living with them?

**AB:** Yes, I picked, I stayed with the roommate that I had just been assigned to. Down, when I was in Alumni Hall and we got along really well. She was from Rhode Island, and I switched roommates going into my senior year, I roomed with a sophomore because my first roommate wasn't studying and it was making it difficult for me so I just switched roommates.

**HE:** Would you say that you had any best friends in school and if so, who were they?

**AB:** Well, my Liz Migure I don't know where she is. I'd love to find these people on Facebook [Laughs] I'll have to get on there, and drag them out of the woodwork for our reunion because they haven't been showing up (\_\_\_\_\_) graduate from my, with our class, although she was valedictorian. Her high school class, and Andre Magon (\_\_\_\_\_) About my sophomore year, I was going to study with Roger Brunelle, a member of my class. And I, I was just a little disappointed because dates freshman year. All girls school where I had very few opportunities, but only had a couple of boyfriends of convenience because you couldn't go to your prom if you didn't have a date. [Laughs] I met a lot of nice guys; my sophomore year Roger disappointed because I really hadn't dated and I decided to until, ride it out until it wasn't good anymore.

**HE:** Were you allowed to have cars on campus? And if so did you have a car?

**AB:** I don't think freshmen were allowed, I never had a car. I never had any money for a car. Roger had a car... by junior year, and he spent every weekend at home in the car wash, washing cars in order to pay for the car so he could go back and forth, home and here, [laughs] so I would miss him all weekend long. But, so that was convenient, but most students didn't have cars, didn't have much money. It was not a wealthy campus.

**KD:** How old were you when you were allowed to date?

**AB:** I think I had my first date at sixteen. I wasn't exactly eager [laughs]. As-in an all girls high school, I wasn't- I was very, very, very shy and so I think I first started seeing somebody at sixteen, I had one boyfriend of convenience at seventeen; at- in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and one in 12<sup>th</sup> in order to go to the proms and I really felt they were dating me for the same reasons [laughs]. And they were nice, pleasant, but nobody that... we were different people. At any rate, we- things were much more restrained then and parents kept much better eye on you.

**KD:** Where was the place to hang out in Worcester when you were in college?

**AB:** We didn't have any cars, we hung out here [laughs]. Nobody- virtually nobody I knew had a car and we seldom left campus. I mean I heard stories of guys going to Leitrim's Pub, which was suppose to be a place to find a cheap beer, we occasionally went out for french fries or something like that, we had no money, and we lived here, which was wonderful actually, and we had- we weren't distracted by things I watched a

lot of TV in high school but we- the only TV's were this big and they were in the hallway and then ( \_\_\_\_\_ ???) (23:20) I never watched a minute TV here. We didn't have cellphones. The only phone was in a phone booth, one per floor so we never used that, except to call to come home every, about every six weeks call your mother. And... we didn't- well we listened to radio we just listened to music so we were just- we had each other. And in a way, it was- that was wonderful.

**KD:** What was considered fashionable?

**AB:** [laughs] Well the skirts were very short. I brought this just for the length [shows us picture], and this was not a short one! The shortest they've ever- they've never gone higher than what we wore. We came in wearing dresses; many of us were from all girls' schools, but not necessarily all. In high school we weren't allowed to wear pants and- so we most came in in dresses and I've got some pictures actually. [Laughs] [Mumbles] Really old fashion. How do you like that? And I was probably wearing the skirt too, but within a few months I started wearing jeans and I never got out of them again. So everybody and- nobody wore sweats either. I might have worn a dress for a dance, that was it everybody wore jeans. It was... we weren't really hippies although there were a few boys with long hair, but even having- a boy having hair down to his ears was the focus of a lot of criticism. So it was just very casual clothes and there wasn't this great interest in clothes partly... as women we didn't want to emphasize our sexuality, we wanted to be part- we wanted to compete equally with men and weren't looking to dress up to be... to look like a model. I mean we did not have high options of Miss America or any of that stuff, so it was it was part of the whole kids movement

**KD:** What was your favorite genre of music to listen to?

**AB:** Rock of course. I was very lucky, when I was twelve years old the Beatles came to America and one of my first memories is sitting in my Father's car and hearing the song "I want to Hold your Hand" and that was their first song and it was my first awareness of rock music and that was *just* when they came. And so we rode that whole wonderful movement of rock/soft-rock through our teen years and it was- I have to say of all the things the baby boom generation had that was the best, it's never been equaled because it was a huge amount of people and a huge amount of money and energy going into that and we bought every song because there was no getting them for free [laughs]. So, it was... it was wonderful. And I would- I would say I was familiar with classical music because I would attend classical music concerts with my father, but there was only one- there was only one station to listen to. There wasn't a wide variety that teenagers were interested in in that time.

**KD:** Is that genre the same- still the same today?

**AB:** I think they've finally stopped those old 60's and 70's stations [laughs], which, I don't know. They- they're not making that anymore today. I have to say that, I think it's a



little sad that the themes of our songs use to be about love, and some were about protest, but they weren't about violence, they weren't about derogation, they weren't about negative things. I mean it was a generation that was maybe very... felt secure enough that they didn't think they had to worry about their future, which probably was wrong of us but we weren't aware of that. We were... it was... love and freedom basically so, it was wonderful it was very encouraging.

**KD:** What was your favorite band?

**AB:** The Beatles [coughs]. Who unfortunately retired after years, but.

**KD:** And what was your favorite song?

**AB:** "Cherish," that was not a good sign and I should remember who sang it. Might of-might be the Four Seasons, but that was... I don't know if you know that song. My kids had to learn all that music [laughs]. It might be by the Association but I don't remember.

**KD:** You're Dad came here, but what else- did your Mom have like an education?

**AB:** Yes. I actually didn't talk about my Mom. My Mom's family also came from French-Canada and she was one of four children and her Father who had- her Mother had a fourth grade education because her- her own Mother fell sick and she was pulled out of school to cook for the family. And then she fell behind and then the priest said 'Oh she doesn't need to go back to school.' So, she basically, from when she was in fourth grade was an adult. And my Grandfather went to school until the eighth grade and then he worked in a factory because French-Canadian kids were expected to go and support the family at 13, but he had a lot of ability. He ended up being a- he was foreman in a factory. He actually, worked in Worcester for a while at the Worcester Corset Factory, which made corsets and they eventually went out of business. So anyway, my Mother got a high school education and then she went to nursing school, became an RN, at Burbank Hospital. When she went to school her grandfather said, 'There's no need of that she should be working and bring her paycheck home,' but her mother with the fourth grade education didn't listen to him. So my mother got a very- an RN was considered a very good education in those days, but would always have loved a college education, but at that time only wealthy families could send their daughters to college. There was no student aid; it was only basically for the wealthy. So, she became a nurse and- what was the question [laughs]?

**KD:** What did your parent's education consist of?

**AB:** Yes, so she became a nurse. She worked her way up very quickly in the hospital, but unfortunately right as she was given charge of the operating room, she got married and then she couldn't work because it was insulting to a man if the wife worked. It meant that

he couldn't support his family. So she always regretted that, but many years later when my parents were divorced she went back to work... and worked many years.

**KD:** What did you come to Assumption College to study?

**AB:** I was a science major. I thought of... being a doctor like my Dad. I was interested in becoming a psychiatrist actually. And so I went all the way through biology major, but I ended up doing medical research afterwards. I didn't go on to medical school. I went back years later and back to what I wanted to do in the first place and got a Masters here at Assumption in Psychology and I now work as a psychiatric emergency tech- clinician in emergency rooms so... I wondered back to what I wanted to do in the first place but I got a bit (\_\_\_\_\_??), derailed I guess you could say.

**KD:** How long were classes here?

**AB:** Classes were either three 50-minute sections or two... maybe 90 minute- 90 minute sessions and we took five per semester. Are you down to four?

**HE:** We still do five.

**AB:** Yes, I thought that was wonderful and if you got- if you were on the honor roll you could take an extra one, which was pretty hard [laughs].

**KD:** You took science classes, so did- was there like a separate class for lab and lecture?

**AB:** Yes.

**KD:** So that's still the same.

**AB:** But the labs were very... old-fashioned and almost every experiment far as involved Benzene or Toluene which years later they totally banned from the labs because it was so dangerous [laughs], but they didn't know that yet! We're still around! But all those- those very dangerous organic substances they didn't really- didn't realize at the time what they were so we just floated around in those fumes [laughs] a couple of times a week.

**KD:** What was your favorite class that you took here?

**AB:** [long pause] That's a good question. Botany, I'm a gardener. And I enjoyed- I really loved botany. All the science teachers were men, by the way. Virtually every teacher was a man [laughs]. And half- a third of them were religious.

**KD:** What were the professors like?

**AB:** [sigh] Science professors don't have a sense of humor [laughs], at all [laughs]. They were not open-minded. There were a number of religious professors still, the- I've noticed going to Assumption chapel that the only Caucasian Priests who are left are about in their 70s to 90s and can... are really up there. I think our generation was the end of vocations. But when we came here there were Priests who were in their 20s, 30s, or Brothers, 40s, and all ages. And... I have no complaints about the professors.

**KD:** Did you have a favorite professor here?

**AB:** [long pause] Pat Powers, I- I don't if he's still around. Probably not, he's probably too old to be around. I- my husband got me involved- got me frittering away my time with difficult... non-science classes and so I- I enjoyed Shakespeare's politics. I enjoyed ideas. I was only taking biology to be practical, not because I liked it [laughs].

**KD:** Do you think professors are different today from when they use to be?

**AB:** I don't think so. I came back, to get a Master's Degree here when I was about 38 and I didn't find them any different.

**KD:** What kind of technology did you have access to, to help with your studies?

**AB:** Nothing [laughs]. There- we have- we might have our own typewriter, but it was a manual typewriter. We didn't have electric typewriters. We didn't have to type things in general. There was a computer room, which was an entire room in I believe the basement of alumni... but I might be wrong about that- that where-somebody could- there were a couple of computer course, but at the time they were teaching these- it was before the simpler languages, you had to learn a computer language. I knew virtually nobody who took them so there not available. There was no technology.

**KD:** What were your challenges in education?

**AB:** [long pause] I don't know. The fun challenges of being the first women in class -- woman in classes --were there had only been men. It was fun to go in and earn an A from professors who never -- who rarely gave A's, who doubted that the women could do it. But other than that, I mean I- there were... caring teachers I have very few complaints about anybody and I... I was a good student I didn't have any problems.

**KD:** What was it like to be the first women in class at Assumption College?

**AB:** It was wonderful. I hadn't really thought out what it was going to be like, I knew we were the first class but I didn't really think about that because we were very naïve. And you just thought- I thought 'oh I'm going to college' and so I can remember... my mother and friend- I- I- came here the (\_\_\_\_\_) also in my class, and our Mother's drove us here. Now we didn't have very much luggage, if you can imagine the luggage of

two students went in the back of a station wagon. All [laughs] we had was a few clothes, that was it, and it wasn't many. But I can remember coming down Salisbury Street, she took a wrong turn, my mother took off on Grove Street instead of Salisbury Street. And I thought 'thank goodness, I hope she never finds her way' [laughs]. Well of course she found her way! But it was wonderful, I- we had this wonderful welcome from the upper classmen and I think it was mostly the sophomores and the juniors, but I don't really know, obviously they had a welcoming committee. So I brought these pictures [points to pictures on table]. At a time where guys only wore jeans, they dressed up in suit jackets, and carried our luggage, and gave us a rose corsage, talk about kind of corny, but very sweet. And, these are all from I believe- I got these from the seniors' yearbook; these are pictures I believe of their meeting us that day. And I thought it was a single rose we got but I guess it was a corsage because you can see it on some of the girls. That's from the senior class' yearbook [points to picture]. So, they made us feel really welcome, and I didn't- I (\_\_\_\_\_???) felt special, but they made us feel special. And nobody griped about having to triple up in the dorms, and although I understood that some of the upperclassmen hadn't wanted it to go coed, I- I knew they chose a certain school and it turned on them basically. They didn't get what they chose, but sophomores knew we were coming and so they were not conflicted at all and I never had any negative reactions from anybody, I only heard stories that some of the upperclassmen had questions about it. And some of the reasons given were that they couldn't be natural with us, they couldn't have food fights in the cafeteria anymore, and they couldn't swear which was all like news to us, but- so they were worried about that. Anyway, it was wonderful being in the first class of women and I can remember specifically within the first, couple of months, I can remember a group of us sitting on the floor in a corner somewhere or in a stairway, about eight or ten of us, and somebody said, you know just women, somebody said 'we have no role models, we don't know what upper-class woman look like, we don't know what they do, we don't have anybody to copy, we're it,' and we always were it, we were always the upperclassmen, but it didn't obviously didn't end up being a problem. By sophomore year, everything had really normalized and... I think anybody who wasn't happy about it, I just think that maybe as the seniors graduated, but it was at the beginning with seven guys to every female that for the first few weeks it felt a little awkward walking around campus, but that may be because I came from an all girls school and I wasn't use to it anyway, I might have felt that way anyway. But, it was great.

**KD:** Was anything here like segregated like girls and boys?

**AB:** Well the dorms were not-were all male or all female, which I was glad of actually. And at the beginning we had parietal hours, which you probably never even heard of, and that means that a boy could visit you in your room. So, the first year they had to come in and there would be a desk at I think it was like between six and eight pm in the evening and Sunday in the afternoons or something. They would have to sign their name in so that somebody could see that they had signed out and they would just come to visit you. But I think by sophomore year they just eliminated it altogether, but you had to be out of the

dorm of the opposite sex by ten pm. Which I am very glad of because you didn't have to worry about walking around in curlers or whatever you looked like it was actually nice. But...we actually didn't have any privileges at the gym [giggles] we had gym class, but although they thought of nice little things that we might like, they didn't think that we might like to use the gym, and I can remember a discussion about that, but then they started putting in some hours where we could play or play with the guys. Let's see what else was segregated, that's about it. And at first it was an all-women's college it was considered a separate college and we had this-our own dean whose name was Lola Boyd and she was this very prim lady and we weren't at all interested in being separate. I mean we didn't see what the point was, or what that was going to do, or that we needed anything different. But I think, in thinking about it, that they might have been trying to ease it in, for the maybe the alumni who didn't want it to change, that it could be a separate college. Anyway freshman year she had us at her apartment for a tea, which I guess was something they did at fancy women's colleges, but we thought it was a little...unusual but sweet. Anyway so and everything by...probably by junior year was, all that stuff was gone except that we couldn't- that you had to be out of the dorms by ten pm.

**KD:** Were there any athletics available for women to play?

**AB:** Well I wasn't really interested in that. We had to take gym class and you had a choice at things like bowling, which you probably still have now, and that very nice. We had these terrible uniforms [laughs] in the beginning. I don't really know, to be honest, I didn't look into it. I don't think there really were. I don't think they thought women were interested in such things. But title nine came in about two years later and all of the sudden they had to do all sorts of things. I think the school needed to real-to think about what it needed to do, I don't think they even knew. I didn't take it negatively that those things weren't available yet.

**KD:** Were you involved in campus activities?

**AB:** No, not particularly I was a student. I was a very serious student who studied every night. I don't know what kind of activities there were, in the beginning there were old fashion mixers like, like they used to have in high school and I think those got eliminated pretty quickly. And I don't know what kind of activities you guys have. There were some clubs, but I wasn't apart of them, I was just a student and I was-had a big relationship my sophomore year so. [laughs]

**KD:** Did you have any support networks or mentoring that were important to you?

**AB:** No I don't think they had any of that stuff. I had a...an adviser who was Ronald McDonald. Who was this very...let's see what he taught some of the science courses. He was very odd [laughs]. He really couldn't relate to the students at all so I really he wasn't a support at all, he was just somebody who sat down with me once a year and asked why

I wasn't taking more science electives and why I was wasting my time on other things. There really wasn't that-they didn't have any tutoring for students for the most part students came ready. They didn't-you didn't really have a lot of kids who didn't have a background maybe some kids could have used it but, I don't think that there was a kind of lack of preparedness that kind of came along later when kids came from tougher backgrounds.

**KD:** Did you face any challenges here?

**AB:** No [laughs]. It was easy! It was easy for me. The school was very supportive; I never had a hard time from any students. I had no problem doing well in classes if I worked at it and not really, no.

**KD:** How many years did you attend Assumption?

**AB:** Four years and then went back for a Master's.

**KD:** How much did the campus change over the years you were here?

**AB:** Not at all really, while I was here. The only newish looking place was the chapel, which is still beautiful. They talked of replacing...Kennedy, but didn't get around to it. It really didn't change in those four years, other than they built the women's dorms.

**KD:** What was one of your greatest memories at Assumption?

**AB:** This is tough. [laughs] I guess I'd say just coming here and seeing how enormously welcome we were and how gracious everybody was. The whole thing was wonderful; it really was...it was...it was a privilege.

**KD:** Have you ever traveled out of the U.S.?

**AB:** Yes, we never had those kinds of opportunities as students do now. Nobody thought of sending their kids overseas. [laughs] Maybe very wealthy families did but Assumption was not that kind of school. Yes I...a few years after...we...graduated, after my husband finished law school, and right before we moved to Worcester we went to Paris for a week and that was our three year delayed honeymoon because our honeymoon was three nights in a motel at Cape Cod, in a no name motel. But-so we went to France then, and then since we have been to in the last ten years we did a lot of traveling once our kids started our kids are only twenty-five and twenty-eight. We waited a long time to have them. They both did a semester abroad and so we to Egypt to visit my daughter who studied Arabic there and we went to Spain to visit my other daughter, we went to England we brought them back to France, where else have we been. We just went on one of those river cruises that they show on Masterpiece Theater, the Viking river cruises

down...passed Vienna down the Danube River. So we have done some traveling I would love to do more.

**KP:** Where do you work now?

**AB:** I work at Harrington Hospital, in an emergency room. I have a Master's in Counseling so we-our job is to sort of do psychiatric triage. We see the patients that come in from the police, or because they were pulled off the highway, or because they come in on their own, or because they are intoxicated, or because they are referred by the E.R. doctor and we do psychiatric evals, and determined if they need to be hospitalized, we find a hospital, we get insurance authorization, so I see a huge range of psychiatric disorders, which I really love all the way from one extreme to another and also see a huge range of social problems, including a lot of the kind that they have in Worcester now. What-what you know the result of the kids...kind of not getting enough support anymore. And I love my job. [laughs]

**KP:** Is this the only job you have had since college or have you had other jobs?

**AB:** Well I worked for a while in medical research because one of us had to work if we were going to get married, we needed an income. Our parents were not going to support us that's for sure. So I worked in medical research in Boston for five years while my husband went to Boston College Law School. And then I actually got a CPA in accounting, which I ended up hating, believe it or not, and decided that even though it was something that people looked up to, I hated it. And I wanted to do something that I was going to spend the rest of my life doing. So I came back at 30 and got my Master's at Assumption and now I love what I do.

**KP:** Where did you work when you worked in medical research?

**AB:** I worked at the Boston VA hospital in Jamaica Plain, at the time there were a lot of Vietnam veterans there because it was right as the Vietnam War was winding down.

**KP:** Ok. Do you work outside of the home or do you work- yeah you work at a hospital.

**AB:** Yes, I work three twelve hour days.

**KP:** Ok. When did you begin working?

**AB:** Well, as I said, I worked right out of college. I did take time off when I had my second child at age 35; I was only bringing home less than a dollar a day. [Laughs] Believe it or not, working in accounting and so I thought this is really not worth it. I stayed home for about five years with them and then I started, well maybe not that long, I started working for my Masters Degree while they were small. So that when they got a little older, I just started working. I didn't like being at home.

**KP:** Ok. How did you come to do this work?

**AB:** Which work?

**KP:** The work that you do now.

**AB:** As I said, I took this long convoluted course, from science, to accounting, back to... psychology, which is what I was interested in the first place when I wanted to be a psychiatrist. But I just I am glad I threw away that CPA degree because it was not making me happy. And... and I have been at my job for 12 years and I love it and am good at it.

**KP:** Ok. Have you been involved in any community service events or organizations?

**AB:** Not a lot of them, Friends of the Library, that sort of thing.

**KP:** Ok. What convinced you to...join the library?

**AB:** To what?

**KP:** To join the libr- Friends of the Library.

**AB:** Well reading is my favorite thing and Paxton just asked me, my husband's on the Trustees, and it's just the cause we are devoted to.

**KP:** Ok and you're-when did you get married to your husband?

**AB:** A year out of college, so we-so I-he actually saw me the first time when we were walking up the hill to the girl's dorm [flips through papers]Thanksgiving of freshman year, this was-there were no steps, so we walk up through the mud, up the side of the hill, and the guys helped us. But they were probably anxious just to get their rooms. And then...what was the question? [laughs]

**KP:** When did you get married to your husband?

**AB:** Oh yeah, and then by junior year we were starting to talk about maybe we were in love and going into senior year, Roger proposed to me and the reason was that we had to decide whether we were going to stay togeth- make plans to stay together or not after college. And he ended up going to Boston and...I got a job doing research in Boston, so we got married the following summer at the chapel here.

**KP:** Ok. Do you and-you-ha- how many children do you have?

**AB:** Two and we were married for ten years before we had our first. [laughs]



**KP:** And do you have any grandchildren?

**AB:** No, they said that we should have had them earlier if we wanted grandchildren and they are right [laughs] because if they do the same thing to us we will be in wheelchairs [laughs] by the time we have grandchildren.

**KP:** What are your responsibilities in terms of housework?

**AB:** I do more housework than Roger does, we have a big house. I don't keep it up to my mother's standards, [laughs] but she is in Florida so I don't have to worry about it [Laughing]. My grandmother was very picky! So it is kind of a relief [says through laughter] that I don't have to do that, but I probably do 60 or 70 percent of it, but he pays the bills and that's a big job. I am a gardener, so I do a lot of the yard work. But we've had much more equitable marriage than my mother's generation did. They did not have an equitable marriage at all, if I was-if- Roger works longer hours and if I ask him to-for more help he will give it to me.

**KP:** What historical events have occurred in Worcester that you have been here to see?

**AB:** In Worcester...well I wasn't part of it, but freshman year they had a moratorium on the Vietnam War in October. My husband tells me he went there and I didn't really know him well at the time, but a group of- so basically the moratorium was speeches down town and apparently they did this across the nation, students, to protest of the Vietnam War. And a group of students from Assumption Roger says, I don't know maybe a hundred...probably not that many though, walked down Salisbury Street to town hall and listened to these speeches and walked back. While I was here freshman year, they had- there was- there was huge protests about Vietnam because the draft was instituted in 1969, the year that I-the year we came, and so every male when he was 18 got a draft number they and that wasn't necessarily-it was based on your birthday- but it wasn't necessarily the date of your birthday. And if a man...if they weren't in college you could be called up for the draft and that's it you'd be arrested if you didn't go. And so there was a lot of talk about-that caused a lot of protest, that's why students really protested the Vietnam War because the ordinary students were being sent off and it was understood that when you graduated from college your deferment was over and oh he went. So unlike the Iraq War and the Afghanistan Wars they had a very person-the men had a very personal stake in it and while we were in high school, there was only news a couple times a day at like noon and the evening, and every evening they'd show on the nightly news, caskets coming home being taken off of airplanes. Now when they had the Iraq War they banned all that, they never have allowed that to be photographed anymore, but the what 58 thousand kids were killed in that war over ten years and that's what caused the huge student protest generally. So...in spring of freshman year Kent State happen, which was a big deal...apparently at Kent State in Ohio...[flips through papers] they had some rioting of some sort of-the National Guard was called in and these were actually probably kids

about the same age as the students, but some of them opened fire on the students and more students were killed, I guess 60 bullets were fired and nobody said to fire but maybe they panicked who knows. Four students were killed two of them-a couple of them were girls I think or at least one, two of them were just walking to their classes walking by, nine were wounded, one of them was paralyzed from the chest down for life, and that caused a huge student strike. So this was May fourth and there was protest at Assumption, but not on the scale that it was at many universities, Assumption is not a radical school, but some you know some students boycotted classes, not me a science major I knew better than to do that and I didn't see what the point was, but at any rate. There was talk about-my husband remembers there being talk about whether it was the moral thing to refuse take your exams and whether being-losing your scholarship and being kick out of school was worth it to do the moral thing, and at any rate he didn't fall for that either. And they called amnesty and basically there-finals became optional. But my husband and I took them all anyway, but it really wasn't the kind of radical school where whole buildings were being occupied by students or there was rioting. But it did affect us just the same.

**KP:** What was the most difficult transition from childhood to adulthood?

**AB:** I think the difficult one was when I realized what it meant to be a woman, in my early teens, and what it meant to be a woman is that there was-that you weren't respected, and that there weren't any opportunities for you and whatever you did was going to be looked on as second class. And my mother was a kind of radical ahead of her time, my mother was very frustrated about the fact that she couldn't work, not that you could with four kids very easily anyway. But I can remember her saying, about my dad who was the doctor, "He gets all the glory," and it was true, and that stuck with me. But I mean not that he wasn't a wonderful person, but there-to realize that there were so few things, and to-I was a real big T.V. watcher as teenager and the popular things were westerns. And in the westerns all the women did was get rescued, they were never the rescuer, they were helpless and they-they spooned out the soup that was it. That is all they ever did, there were-there were no women on T.V. doing anything of value, and it was a very hopeless feeling really, and everything somehow changed, in a miraculous way for me. And so that when I got married I remember telling my grandmother and my mother I'm going to sign my name Mrs. Aimee Brunelle, and my grandmother and mother said, "I don't think Roger is going to like that", they thought I should sign it Mrs. Roger Brunelle, that is how little identity they were used to having. So that was the difficult transition, the wonderful thing was that I never had to live that life.

**KP:** What are memories of you have from your childhood, like including the history, historical events that happened?

**AB:** I can remember in our neighborhood... playing with kids by a stream, I had a-a swamp to play in, a stream to play in, a fantasy place to play in, we would just roam there was no- nobody was worried about us, nobody thought; "Oh somebody is going to come grab them." So we would disappear in the morning, maybe show up for lunch and come

back for supper time. And my mother had a bell to ring, but nobody was worried about their kids being kidnapped. And so we just had a lot of freedom...and that was really wonderful and I tried to give my daughters some of that by letting them play in the swamp across the street, although they now criticize me because the snapping turtle might have got them. [laughs] But...I had a lot of freedom, my family used to go on skiing trips, and my parents would take us out of school, I went to parochial schools and there was no stopping you. And so I went on some wonderful ski trips, which most of my classmates didn't get to do because they weren't-because their families couldn't afford it. I just had a very happy childhood.

**KP:** Ok. Did you go through any rough times?

**AB:** Nothing that comes to mind, I don't consider them rough times. I mean some of the things I went through people would consider rough today, I mean there was a lot of...when I first started working there was a lot of...you know, you have to have your name called out on the street, there were all sorts of sexual stuff that we just handled on our own, and to me it almost... seemed surprising now that we need so many laws. But nothing to me that seemed rough.

**KP:** What thoughts kept you going in school and-in your work?

**AB:** Well that's a hard question I mean, I have always been somebody that has been very motivated. I did it because I loved it and when I didn't love it, I found something I did love, and I wanted to do it as well as I possibly could. But...I didn't need to struggle to keep myself motivated and the boyfriend I found in college was equally motivated, so that made it easy.

**KP:** Would you define your life as a success?

**AB:** Yes, although my daughters are a little mortified that we were married at 23, but at the time... we were are- I am throwing extra thing on the sides, [laughs] but we were are our parents children and they-so we were part of that and we didn't want to disappoint them by living together or anything of that nature. Because it would have...terribly disappointed my parents and so we got married. But there was no reason not to get married, and nobody was worried about divorce, and it was a way to become an adult, and to have freedom, and I've never regretted it.

**KP:** If you could do something in your life over would you do it?

**AB:** I thought about whether I should have gone to medical school, but I now look at psychiatrists and I don't like what they are doing. They're doing nothing-they don't actually; the profession of doctor isn't as happy a professional as it was for my father when it was tremendously respected. And psychiatrist mostly just prescribe meds, so I thought of whether I should have done that instead, but I am not really sorry I am not a

psychiatrist now because of the fact that it's so changed. But no I don't think I would do anything different.

**KP:** Ok. Now that we are working to tell a fuller story of history of women than has been recorded in the past, what should we be in sure to include?

**AB:** What it was really like to live before the Women's Movement came along and it was very, very restrictive, and women simple weren't respected. I mean some courageous women became lawyers and did things of that nature, but on-the-only ones that manage to do it were the ones who never married. And...the Women's Movement has done tremendous things for women.

**KP:** What advice would you give to any women today and to future generations based on your life experiences?

**AB:** Well, I think today's women have a problem with relationships. I think they are afraid of them and I know that from what my daughters tell me, who are my-one of my daughters is 28 and is working on a Ph.D. in Arabic, and my other daughter is-just became an attorney. But now the women are so driven to careers, that is seems the relationship part has fallen apart and partly that's because men have decided [laughs] that they have more freedom and that has hurt women. Men are now afraid to commit and that wasn't true of our generation because they weren't thinking that way. So I don't necessarily think its women's fault, but that although work is wonderful, I think the center of human life is relationships in the long run, and there is nothing more important to me than the fact that I have been married and had daughters. There was nothing, to be honest I wasn't even looking forward to it, I was worried about losing my freedom and everything, but it turns out to be the best thing that ever happened and my daughters are wonderful women, so...

**KP:** Is there anything you think that is important to this interview that we have not asked about?

**AB:** Not that I can think of. [laughs] I'll have to have to look at this [flips through papers]. That's pretty much it.

**KP:** And is there anyone else you know that we should talk to in future interviews?

**AB:** I think they already contacted the women in this area.

**KP:** Ok.