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Mrs. Brinton's French accent makes her speech very difficult or impossible for me to understand at times. I left these places blank as I could either not make out anything she was saying or I couldn't find anything similar in the dictionary. (please, etc.)
INTERVIEW WITH MRS. GEORGE E. BRINTON
July 4, 1970

Interviewed by: Myron L. Lazarus

MB: Mrs. Brinton
ML: Mr. Lazarus

ML: This is a recording of the Oral History Program of the University of Delaware. We are going to interview Mrs. George E. Brinton, and she is going to talk in this tape about the Junior Year in France, a program that the University had. What date was that?

MB: 1923.
ML: Starting in 1923.
MB: Until 1940. (?)
ML: Mrs. Brinton, where were you born?
MB: Oh, I was born in France at the Belgium frontier (?). About one hour from the Belgium frontier. I lived there until 1914 and left about 24 hours before the Germans arrived.
ML: Is that right? Is it near any particular city?
MB: Well, you see, there was ________. It was, as I said, about one hour--one hour walking--from Belgium. And the capitol was ________, and the next town is ________ but I'm thinking of, oh, it was a town like Newark twenty years ago. It had about six thousand, you know.
ML: Uh huh. You say you left that town before World War I?
MB: World War I, ha, ha. In the middle of the night, ha, ha. And the Germans came about twenty-four or forty-eight hours after.
ML: Oh, my. Where did you go from there?
MB: To Paris. And then I stayed in Paris until I came here.
ML: I see.
MB: Until 19__.
ML: How old were you when you left?
MB: I was fifteen.
ML: Fifteen. Did you receive much of your education there, I presume?
MB: In France.
ML: Yes, but let's say before you lived in Paris?
MB: Oh, I was in high school. I was in my second year of high school and then I . . .
ML: Was it a college?
MB: No, it was a high school. It was called a high school. It wasn't a . . . I was going to try the exam for the normal school, but I imagine I was gone. And I could have gone to a normal school in Paris, because three years in Paris. So I went to a private school preparing for the teaching.
ML: What did your family do?
MB: My family was. . . My mother wasn't anything (?). She was ______'s wife and my father who was working in the railroad.
ML: Where in the railroad, what did he do?
MB: Oh, what do you call that. He was managing genius (?). . .
ML: Did he work in tickets or . . .
MB: He was on the train.
ML: On the train itself?
MB: It was a passenger train.
MRS. GEORGE E. BRINTON - p. 3

ML: I see. Then when you moved to Paris, you say you went on to private school to prepare for teaching?

MB: Yes. Because I couldn't go to normal school. I couldn't go. Oh, I could have gone in ( ) in the end (?) in the department where I used to be. But my father didn't want me to go because ( ) was bombed ( ). So he didn't want to go so I went in a private school in Paris that prepared you for teaching.

ML: I see. What did you father do when you moved to Paris?

MB: Oh, he had these students; he __________________________. He was working all the time.

ML: Now how much schooling did you get in Paris? You said you went to this private school.

MB: Well, Cours Doimeaux. And that, I think it would compare to the University __________________________. It was not the secondary education. I was getting ready to teach in __________________________ School.

ML: Did you get a degree or anything from this school?

MB: Oh, yes. I got...

ML: Baccalaureate?

MB: No, it's not called a baccalaureate. Baccalaureate was in the secondary school. I was training to teach; that was in the two week school. That's what you had to do. The normal school would have been free, and the two weeks— it wasn't much. The time in school was not very expensive, but you had to pay. That's the only difference.

ML: What were you preparing to teach? What subjects or...?

MB: I got ready to... After I was through I could teach from five to fourteen.

ML: All the subjects?

MB: All the subjects! Ha, ha.

ML: My, my, my. And where in Paris did you live?

MB: Oh. Do you want my __________________________ address? I lived between the __________________________ and __________________________. Everybody (?) would know __________________________. I lived on the bank of the _______ ________, and I didn't even know it, ha, ha.
ML: Did you teach?

MB: In France?

ML: Yes.

MB: Yes. I taught—which grades—second grade, fourth grade, and twelfth—that would be sixth grade—

But I didn't go on with the teaching. I went to England.

ML: England?

MB: Well, the American Army came and...

ML: About what date was this?

MB: Well, I was through school in 1916 or 1917; and the American Army was in Paris. And I was told that if I would go and work with them I would learn English. So I got a job there with the American aviation and worked with them from 1917 until 1919. Then I decided that I didn't know my English well enough, so I went and spent one year in England.

ML: Why did you want to learn English?

MB: Well, first it was curiosity. I mean, I had had four or five years of English in school. I knew I could write, but I couldn't talk. And then with the American people, after a month or two, I started to understand them. But I knew that I didn't know it well.

ML: Did you want to learn English so you could teach it or...?

MB: No, it was...

ML: Strictly curiosity?

MB: I was curious and I thought at that time I would go back to teaching. And then when I came back I found that...

ML: From England? Coming back from England?

MB: Yes. When I came back from England, I found out that I got, oh, I don't know, about four times my salary (?) if I would go as a French/English secretary in business. That I would get a salary that would be about four times what I would be getting as a teacher. My father was mad, but I just went on and quit, ha, ha. I knew that he didn't know that I wouldn't go back to it. I just thought, why get a hundred francs if I can get four hundred or five hundred, why couldn't I do it? I was young. I liked to have money to do all sorts of things, ha, ha. That's what I...
ML: Now, how did you get associated with the University program?

MB: Well, I was ________________.

ML: Secretary?

MB: Yeah. And at that time I was working in a bank which I wanted to quit and...

ML: You worked in the bank after your trip in England, after...

MB: Oh, yes. I worked in __________, I worked in a bank, and I worked with advertising people.

ML: As a French-English secretary?

MB: Secretary. At that time, you could quit, in Paris you could quit your job, put an ad in the paper; and if you were an English-French secretary, you got twelve jobs if you wanted to. Then Mr. __________, who was in Paris at the University __________ needed a secretary. And he had asked an agency, and one of my friends had been offered the job but she couldn't take it; and she said, "That's exactly what you want. Just go and see Mr. __________." So I went and that's how I got there.

ML: He was the gentleman who started the program?

MB: He started the program, yes.

ML: Where was the first office?

MB: It was ________________. It was a few rooms in an apartment of the dean of __________, and he was the dean of __________. And he had rented Mr. __________ the two or three rooms.

ML: Was it a double house?

MB: Yes, it was an apartment.

ML: I see. And he rented the University of Delaware several rooms?

MB: Yes.

ML: Yes.

MB: Two or three rooms. I'll tell you, it wasn't much room. When I got there, they had forty-four students; and forty-
four students filled three rooms. Well, they didn't live there; but, I mean, they came here most of the time.

ML: What did they actually do there?

MB: Oh, uh...

ML: In the office, that office?

MB: Well, first they came to see, oh, what was going on in the office, what they had to do, to get all the instruction. And, on top of that, that year they started a program of tutoring—I think that's what you would say. And they had ____________.

ML: They tutored the Americans in French? Is that what the tutoring was about? The French language?

MB: They went to Cours ________________ and they chose the ________________ not the faculty course. ________________, but they had seven or eight very good courses. And the children could take four. And later on the most advanced one could take one or two of the __________ faculty courses. That's what they did.

ML: This was a course mainly about French civilization or culture?

MB: Well, ________________, I can't tell you. We had history of France, evolution of history of France; we had __________ culture of the Middle Age, _______ culture of the Seventeenth Century, and _______ literature. I don't know if I said an history of art. I mean, practically everybody took that because it was very interesting.

ML: And this was a junior year requirement for those coming...?

MB: Yes, they had to take that because, you see, their credits ________________ were transferred here. I mean we took the marks and the American credits (?) and that was from their junior year.

ML: What were your responsibilities?

MB: Well, for two or three years, I was taking the dictation and talking to the students most of the day, ha, ha.
ML: What kinds of problems did they have?

MB: What?

ML: What kinds of problems did the students have there?

MB: Don't ask me that! Ha, ha. They had all the problems that you could imagine. But there was an American person, I mean a (tape is messed up) that the University of Delaware is starting again. I know there are many problems like that now, but at that time we were the first one; and Smith College were working at the same time in Paris.

ML: Smith College also had a program?

MB: At the same time we had. I mean they...

ML: Who was first, Smith College or the University of Delaware?

MB: I think we started about the same time.

ML: I see. Okay.

MB: I don't know. You see they started in 1923, and I wasn't there; but I knew in 1926 when I started with the University of Delaware that Smith College already had it.

ML: I see.

MB: They were _______ the same thing.

ML: Uh huh. You were going to tell me what your duties were now.

MB: Oh. Well, as I said, most of my work was talking to the students. And after the students were gone, I was doing the correspondence and doing all the clerical duties. After--I couldn't tell you exactly what date--probably in 1930 or 1931, I was assistant to the director. Not the director, my husband. He was not my husband at that time. Assistant to the _______ woman who was the directress who was...

ML: Who was that, do you remember?

MB: Oh, yes, I remember. Do you want all of it? The first one, the one before I ______, the first free (?) group. But when I came in it was Miss Fitzwater. She was a teacher in my high school in Wilmington. Then came Miss ______. She was a professor at Wesley (?) University. Then, the next one was Miss Dillingham (?). She came from ______. And then came Miss Patch (?).
She was from Mount Holyoke. Most of them were professors of French.

Their jobs were to oversee the program in France, in Paris?

No.

No?

The, well we talk about it and they talk too (?). Their job was to talk to the girls. And, if they were sick, to take care of them, to know what they were going to do. And the different problems that girls can have.

Chaperones, then?

Yes, because now and the times have changed and they are not chaperoned as we had them. We had them, most of it, like French girls (?), and they lived with French families. And in order to go out after night, they had to have an authorization from that person.

We don't have that any more, ha, ha.

No! Ha, ha, ha. Well, I don't know if it was best or not.

You started to tell me something about the problems that the American students had.

Don't ask me.

Oh.

We had so many, ha, ha, ha.

What types of problems did they have?

I don't think I want to talk about it, ha, ha.

Oh, I don't think we have to worry. You don't have to mention names.

Well, most of them were very ________.

Very what?

Comparative. (?) But there were some students who didn't want to follow the rules it wouldn't _________. But the ________ with persons that they should have been going (?), would get into trouble, and they would get married when they were not allowed to and
MB: (Cont'd)

things like that.

ML: Now they lived each with a different French family?

MB: Yeah.

ML: How... 

MB: Sometimes we had two in the same family, but it had to be a French family where there was more than young people, more than one young person. We absolutely, I mean no two families were _______ because they arrived in Paris and in ________. We checked, and we had three kinds of prices. We had girls that paid so much money ________; there were three kinds. The higher price could have a bathroom, but they all ______.

ML: This is for board, room and board?

MB: Yes, it was for room and board. They all were placed in very good families--I mean middle class to aristocratic people that did not have enough money. They didn't always have a mother. Now in apartments, ________ in Paris. But they always had a very good family. And we tried, we didn't succeed all of the time, but we tried to have young people about their age that were members of the family to whom they could talk. But they were not supposed to talk anything but French. If we caught them in the office talking French, they had to pay--I don't remember how much--but they had to pay something.

ML: I imagine the young French people learned to speak English.

MB: No.

ML: No?

MB: Well, I don't know if they ever did. But the idea was money, I think, and companionship. And I don't think ________. They knew that they were supposed to talk French, and they talked French to us. That was the main idea. They did talk French when they left. When I ________ the American people here, and say, "Oh, I'm Mary Kincaid, now I've learned a foreign language (?)", oh ________. I can tell you, it's not true because all those children--some talked a little bit when they came--arrived in July. When they left the next July, they all talked fluently French. They, some had a better accent than the other. You can't help that. But, as far as talking fluently, they all talked fluently.
ML: Nothing like a year in France, huh?

MB: Yes. Well __________.

ML: Certainly. Tell me something about their life in Paris. Mainly it was concerned with their studies?

MB: Yes, they were __________. First, we wanted . . .

ML: Was it a difficult course? Did it require a lot of work?

MB: It required more work than the University, than the work here. The first three months, I didn't tell you that the first three months, from July until October, we __________, and they studied there for four months before. And that was the hardest part, I think. They had four hours of courses every morning, listening to conferences, dictation, different subjects, but I mean four hours. And in the afternoon they had one private lesson to talk, phonetics, and grammar. And they had a lot of reading and a lot of composition work which was very difficult for them. And they said that they were not used to so much, and they didn't want to; but the reason was that we wanted them around (?) and Professor __________ wanted them to be __________ when they got in Paris, that they could understand the professor at the Sorbonne, you see. And they did, ha, ha!

ML: This concentrated course you're talking about, this was before they went to the Sorbonne?

MB: Yes, it was from July until October. See, the Sorbonne opens in November.

ML: And the courses are all in French?

MB: Oh, yes! There is no. . . Even the _________________

ML: Is in French?

MB: Yes, there was no English. So they had to be able to follow those courses. They had to be able to understand, you see. Some already did when they came. Bryn Mawr, Wellesley, you know, the best universities, that had been taught French in French. I mean they already could understand a little bit and could talk. But there were many other universities that couldn't and didn't have courses before. I mean I think they would have been able to do it.
ML: This course before they went to the Sorbonne was mainly to speak French?

MB: Yes.

ML: Mainly to speak French?

MB: To understand and to talk French and to learn some background about what France was about.

ML: I see. Well, what else did they do besides their studying which sounded considerable? What else (double voices)?

MB: Oh, they did all sorts of things. They went to During we went all around . We went to Luxembourg. We even—I don't know if we did it every year—but we visited the family which is one of the most interesting and most wealthy families in France. And why I say interesting is because their property was between Germany at the frontier of France and Germany. And they had called it an island; and when they fought in the War of 1870, it was divided—I mean their property was divided—the frontier line passed in the middle. So most people. . . Well, they always knew what to do so half of the family became Germans and half the family stayed French. It was very interesting, and it was not before 1916 when the Americans came that their property was bombed. Neither side bombed the other one. There were two or three nice big treaties (?) that when one on the other side. Mrs. herself told me, ha, ha, so I know it's true. Then, after was full, we all went and saw different things. And we always and saw different things. And then at Easter sometimes we went to the south of France, probably in Spain; and we saw everything that was historical and interesting to see. When we were in Paris, every week I think they went to see something special, inside and outside Paris. And we had a good professor, Mr. . . . He was professor in the secondary school, and he was so good. I went with them so I know, ha, ha.

ML: You liked (double voices)?

MB: Yeah, yeah.

ML: I see. It sounds like the program was very cultural. Did they get to see much of the life or talk to the people?
MB: Oh, yes, yes. First they are in their family, and they see all their friends in their family. We had parties for them where they could meet French friends. And we also went to the theater once a week.

ML: Where?

MB: To the theater.

ML: Pardon?

MB: To the theater. I'll spell it--theater. Yes, every week or every other week we went to the theater in Paris. And, you know, in Paris, it is everything--concert, opera. So it was easy (?) and very interesting. They didn't have anything to do. I mean we reserved the seats for them, and we told them when it would be; and all the girls were chaperoned--I mean somebody, they were picked up in a taxi for them. And they were taken back in the taxi straight to their home. They wouldn't like that now. They didn't care; they didn't mind. Ha, ha.

ML: Did they ever study any of the problems of France, social problems?

MB: Well...?

ML: It sounds like a program for the elite.

MB: It was (whispered).

ML: Ha, ha, ha.

MB: It was for the best students in the different universities. I mean the best students in French and also students that could...?

ML: Afford it.

MB: Well... The first price--the only thing was the difference in the room--was not much more than the price of the university here. At that time it was $1,200 and the last one was...?

ML: Was that for everything?

MB: Yes. And the...?

ML: The trip over?
MB: I'm not sure.

ML: And the board and the education?

MB: No. I think the trip was not. And we had some scholarships up to four or five years. The university here got some people—I mean they gave $300 scholarship. I mean that paid for the trip at that time. No, they weren't really good students and they got, oh, they thought they got too much. But, I know, after they came back, they all found nothing was like that here. You talk about that...

ML: When you were talking about too much, you mean... (double voices).

MB: They had to study too hard, ha, ha, ha.

ML: Ha, ha.

MB: And they did. Now there were some students, especially boys, that were interested in politics and economy; and they were allowed, if they were good enough, to go to courses to give them an idea what France was. But I think they got more by being in a French family; and I think if you choose their family and you know the friends they are going to have, you know where they are going to take them (?). I mean, even alone, they are getting a lot out of that. It was not only that they talked French, but they really got a lot of the things that... Well, they were free. They were not free at night, but when they didn't study I mean they could go in Paris any place they wanted. And I lived in Paris more than twenty years and I haven't seen everything yet; probably will never, ha, ha.

ML: How did you... I guess you met Mr. Brinton as a secretary?

MB: Yes, I did. I did the classic coup (?) of marrying the boss, ha, ha. My husband. . . I didn't think that, though. I started working for Dr. ________, and the second year Dr. ________ wanted some help. He liked the administration, and he wanted somebody to supervise the study. And he asked my husband, who was working here, if he could come. So, in 1927, he came and he started working with Mr. __________. When Mr. __________ got sick, and he had to come back, probably early in February, he didn't want to, but he had to. He didn't know that they told us in Paris that there was once chance that he could be saved if he would go to Baltimore. He did... I mean, he died one year later. But my husband stayed. And I had no idea. I liked him.
MB: (Cont'd)

Well, I liked the thing he did with the problem. I mean, he had so much imagination. He just fascinated me. But there was no question of getting married. He was married, and he had a child. And that was enough for me. I hadn't of marrying him. Then his wife died. Then I married him later. I married him in 1932. We came back in 1934 when the dollar dropped from fifty to fifteen (?), ha, ha.

ML: Uh, huh. Now, that was the last time he was director of this program, when you came back?

MB: Yes. My husband didn't think that he could do with the money if they didn't change the tuition. And my husband didn't think that he could do what he wanted with the students with that amount of money. So he asked Dr. Hullyon (?), who was president at that time, to be, if there was a vacancy here. And there was a vacancy here in the French Department. The person who knows all the ________, I mean, is Miss ______. She's retired now; I think she lives in Wilmington. She knows how the children were. . . . I mean she got all the applications and so on. Dr. Hullyon was very much interested in that program. He used to come every year. They had started one in Germany, but they closed it after Hitler tried to, you know when Hitler tried to kill so many people, I think at that time, it must have been--it was before we came back--so it must have been '32 or '33. The director in Germany didn't want to stay; he didn't want to have the children stay there because he was living himself with a very nice German family. And they had a boy who was 17 or 18, but he had to be in the ________. And he came back that day, and that boy told his mother and father, "I'll never be able to go back to you again." Poor boy, he didn't kill anybody, but he had to go and get the people in the house and take them to the place where they were being killed. So you know 17. . . . So after that we didn't send another group to Germany. But we were going to have one in Spain, but it never materialized.

ML: Do you have any other memories of the program that I haven't covered in the questions that have been asked?

MB: I have a lot of memories, ha, ha. But I don't know if it's . . . I talked to you about the trip; I talked to you about the fare (?).

ML: Did you have any contact with students who left the program?
MB: Oh. Yes.

ML: Have any visited you? (not clear due to double voices)

MB: Not here, but I mean... Oh, I had some of them who came here, not here when I lived in ________ or where I lived in ________. I don't know if it's the second or third group that was only Delaware people. The third group. And sometimes we had parties for them. Dr. ______, who was blind, came a number of times to see my husband. And Dr. Pack (?), who was the president of Du Pont in Canada...

ML: Was he on this program?

MB: Yes, he was one—I think it was probably the second group—and he was a very good friend of my husband's who _______. Dr. Dougherty, who is now head of the French Department at ________, was one of those first group; and, anytime when my husband lived, I mean anytime his mother was visiting Wilmington, anytime he came, he just came with his family. And so I think the sister of Mr. _______ I see at different times. I also see different directors (?), you know. The only one living actually of that time was this woman that was taking care of a girl, Miss _______. She was a directress of the Wheaton College, not the president. I mean, she was _______'s teacher, I think. She retired last year, and she's working for another university.

ML: (question unclear)

MB: _______. And ________, well, no, she's not Betsy Maxfield now; she's Betsy Miller. I saw her once or twice. I think the saying that we were all so happy doing everything (?), it didn't matter how much work. First, it's nice to work with young people; and, second, I don't know if we were right or not, but we all thought we were working for peace. I don't think we had much __________, but a little bit of it, I think.

ML: You did your little part.

MB: Yeah. And the students thought so, too, and all the professors. When they came, we had Professor of the Sorbonne coming to a special conference with them. I mean, they took the course of the advanced scholars, the course that the French people took (?). Well, instead
MB: (Cont'd)

of leaving them only with the course at the faculty (?),
I mean we tried to get the man who was teaching that
course to come in our office. Now, he did stay. One
thing I didn't tell you. We didn't stay in those three
little rooms. I mean we went _________, which was
given by the American _________ Francais (?). The
___________ Francais was an organization that was sup-
posed to _________ people. And the American youth had...
There was an exposition of houses, and the United States
sent a copy... No, no. Is it Washington? Oh, I'm not
sure, so you'd better not say it. I think it was a copy
of the Washington House in Paris. So we rented part of
it. Then we rented another house...
And when we rented a very nice hotel, I don't think I ever
worked there (?). I think that's when we stopped—the
Hotel Luxembourg (?). And that's when the war started.
And naturally we didn't have any program when the war
started. Mr. Dougherty was with the group that year,
and he _________
when the war was declared. So they had to wait one month,
I believe, to come back. Naturally, then they started
again after the war was over. They started again in
Switzerland. They had two years in Switzerland. But then
the university here decided to stop the program. And we
cried, ha, ha, ha. Not really, but, as I say, I would be
so happy before I go if I heard that Delaware had started
again. I know
I don't know how many universities are doing it. Smith
is still doing it, and there are a lot of others. I heard
from my niece the other day that the University of New York
is starting something there. So it doesn't really matter
to me if the university started again. But I would be so
happy, ha, ha.

ML: Well, thank you very much. I don't want to take up any
more of your time. (double voices)

MB: Well, now, I don't know. I have the book here of all
those students that have been contacted about what they
were doing at that time and what they would advise for
them to do (?). I can show you that.

ML: Have you had any contact recently with any students that
you knew?

MB: I write to Miss Littlefield.
ML: Where does she live, Miss Littlefield? You say she's retired.

MB: Yes, but she has started to... I can give you her address. I don't think I have it in that one, but I have it in...