

Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project

Smith College Archives
Northampton, MA

Evelyn Boyd Granville, Class of 1945

Interviewed by
Tanya Pearson, Class of 2015

May 22, 2015

Abstract

Dr. Evelyn Boyd Granville begins her interview recounting her time at Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., and the educators who encouraged the student body to apply to 'Ivy League' colleges. She describes her personal experience as the only African American student in her graduating class, campus life during WWII, academic interests, achievements, memorable internship opportunities, and favorite Smith traditions. Granville describes her post-Smith academic career, becoming the second woman to earn a Ph.D. in mathematics in 1949, and her career trajectory from joining IBM in 1956, to working NASA's Project Vanguard and Project Mercury space programs. She details her career in education and life after retirement.

Restrictions

None

Format

Interview recorded using Canon Vixia HF.

Videographer

Video recorded by Sarah Wentworth.

Transcript

Transcribed by Emily Pierce, Audio Transcription Center.

Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms

Video Recording

Bibliography: Granville, Evelyn Boyd. Interview by Tanya Pearson. Video recording, May 22, 2015. Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives. **Footnote:** Evelyn Boyd Granville, interview by Tanya Pearson, transcript of video recording, May 22, 2015, Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives.

Transcript

Bibliography: Granville, Evelyn Boyd. Interview by Tanya Pearson. Transcript of video recording, May 22, 2015. Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives. **Footnote:** Evelyn Boyd Granville, interview by Tanya Pearson, transcript of video recording, May 22, 2015, Smith College Alumnae Oral History Project, Smith College Archives, p. 3.

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Sophia Smith Collection
Smith College
Northampton, MA

Transcript of interview conducted May 22, 2015, with:

DR. EVELYN GRANVILLE

by: TANYA PEARSON

WENTWORTH: OK. And I'm rolling whenever you're ready to go.

PEARSON: Oh, OK. I'll probably do some laundry in front of the (tape inaudible).

GRANVILLE: OK. I'm somewhat deaf.

PEARSON: OK. I'll — I'll speak up.

GRANVILLE: Yeah. You'll speak up.

PEARSON: Because I'm going to be speaking up, do you want me to move a little further away from the camera, or is that going to mess things up?

WENTWORTH: No, no. Actually it's fine. Yeah, both mics are actually over there, so it's — it's fine.

PEARSON: Oh, OK. All right, good.

WENTWORTH: Yeah, I'm just going to make —

GRANVILLE: I — I have ears, but I hate to wear them. And they really don't help that much.

WENTWORTH: OK.

PEARSON: I can speak up. Is that good?

GRANVILLE: OK. That's good. That's good. That's good. Wonderful, wonderful.

PEARSON: OK. This is Tanya Pearson, conducting an interview with Dr. Evelyn Boyd Granville, class of 1945 on May 22, 2014, for the Smith College Alumni Oral History Project. Thank you so much for agreeing to participate—

GRANVILLE: You're most welcome.

PEARSON: It's an honor to meet you.

GRANVILLE: I'm honored to be asked.

PEARSON: Oh, thank you. I'm honored to be interviewing you. So I'd like to start at the very beginning. Which you started talking about when we were sitting on the couch. If you could discuss your high school education, the influence of family, educators, and teachers who encouraged you to pursue college.

GRANVILLE: OK. I was born in Washington, D.C. in 1924 and attended public schools of Washington, D.C. throughout elementary, junior high school high school. Of course, at that time, Washington, D.C. was a segregated city. So, of course, there were the — we were called “colored schools” at that time. And we had the other “white schools.” But of course, I went to the colored schools.

My first school, I think, was — I think it was Wilson. But later it joined with another school and it became Morgan Wilson for elementary school one through six. I lived in the northwest section of Washington, near Columbia Road. Eighteenth and Columbia Road. And, so I didn't have far to walk to school.

But when I went to junior high school, I went to Francis Junior High School, which was on the borderline of George— what is now the Georgetown area of Washington. But at that time it was a colored school. But one — and of course I went to Dunbar High School for the nine through twelve.

But one thing about Washington schools were, we had such a high quality of teachers. Because at that time, jobs for people of color were limited. So it wasn't — it was very typical for a woman of color to aspire to be a teacher, because that was considered one of the top professions for a colored woman. So that meant that in Washington, D.C. we had a very talented group of teachers. Very academic people, well-trained. And also, very eager and — to help us advance.

And that was one of the things that I think my generation benefitted from. The emphasis on education. I mean, there was no question about going to school and being a good student. Because if you want to live a better life, or have a better job, or be in a profession, you had to have a good education.

At Dunbar High School, we had really excellent teachers. One of my — my major topic was mathematics. And my homeroom teacher was Mary Cromwell. Who happened to be the sister of Otelia Cromwell, one of the — she might have been one of the first black women to graduate from Smith. But — and her daughter — no her niece — Adelaide Cromwell — had also — was — had gone to Smith or was going to Smith. So Mary Cromwell was one of my math teachers. So I was well-trained in math. Another math teacher was Ulysses S. Grant Bassett. A Yale graduate, of all things, who also was a mathematician. So I got a very good training. And Mary Cromwell, my homeroom

teacher, had her master's in math, I think from the University of Pennsylvania. So I had good instruction in mathematics.

My family was — my mother and father were separated, and — there wasn't — my mother had worked in the government — she was at the government printing office — Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which where you made money and stamps. So she had a medium level government job, but not a lot of money. And my father was not a professional. He served sometimes as a chauffeur. He was at one time a building superintendent. You know, jobs were very limited for men of color. So there — in other words, we were certainly not — we weren't — we never considered ourselves poor, but we certainly did not have a lot of money.

But the emphasis at Dunbar was — they encouraged us to attend the Ivy League schools. So I got interested in Smith and Mount Holyoke. Because, as I say, the teachers there encouraged us to go Ivy League schools. The boys were encoura— most of the boys who went way — I don't know why it was — Amherst and Dartmouth, for some reason. I don't know why those two. But that seemed to be the place the males would go to. Amherst or Dartmouth. And but the girls would go to one of the, you know, the big five.

So I with the Cromwell's, of course, I applied to Mount Holyoke and Smith. But the Cromwell's, of course, you know, encouraged me to you go to Smith. I was accepted at both, Smith and Mount Holyoke. But I was not given any financial aid. But my mother — at that time, tuition, board, and room was \$1,100 a year. Can you imagine? Eleven hundred dollars. But that was, you know, that was big money then. But my mother had — my mother kicked in — to use the term — \$500. My aunt, my mother's sister, had \$500. And I won a national scholarship from an association of negro women. I can't — right now I can't call the name of the group — but it was an association of negro teachers — women teachers — who every year gave a \$400 scholarship. And I won the scholarship that year in '41. And I could get \$100 a year. So I got \$500 from my mother, \$500 from my aunt, and \$100 from the teachers, and I'm off to Smith.

The family friends, you know, made possible with other gifts, and buying — somehow or another I had enough clothes. I had enough luggage to get here. And could at least pay for the transportation. So I came and I stayed — I was put into Tyler House the first year. After that, I moved to Lawrence House. And Lawrence House was a — they called it — I guess they called it a co-op house. Anyway, Lawrence House was where we didn't have the paid help. The girls did all the work, and we worked in the kitchen. We worked in the — we served the meals. In other words, we didn't have the maids there. But, you know, that didn't bother us at all. So I moved into Lawrence House.

When I left the high school, my yearbook says I wanted to be — I would want to be a French teacher. But when I got here to Smith, I think I enrolled in a French literature class. And I decided, no, that was not my cup of tea. I better stick with mathematics. So I ended up at

Smith. I took math, physics, and astronomy. I think I took math, physics, and astronomy the first two years. I loved astronomy. I just was fascinated by astronomy.

But at that time, if you major in astronomy, you probably end up working at an observatory way off in the middle of nowhere. And I decided no, I didn't want that kind of life. So I decided, I better stay with mathematics. So I was — I entered the honors program here. And back then I didn't have to — I could study — I didn't have to take as many classes. I could do independent work. And my favorite teacher then was Mr. McCoy. Neil McCoy. Yeah, he was a great mentor. And I studied under him. And I — I was — I got Phi Beta Kappa. Graduated summa cum laude, and then I decided to go to graduate school.

PEARSON: Can I ask you a couple questions?

GRANVILLE: Yeah. And I — you know, I'm not giving you time to ask me questions.

PEARSON: Oh no, that's OK. This is great. It's great. You've actually answered a lot of them.

GRANVILLE: Really?

PEARSON: But I just had a few more about your time here at Smith before we get to the after.

GRANVILLE: OK. All righty. OK.

PEARSON: I read an interview that you did at the 2010 reunion. You were the only African American woman in your class in 1945.

GRANVILLE: That's right. The only one.

PEARSON: So I'm just wondering what your — what your experience was on campus. What social life was like? I know there was — there were a lot of activities. Did you —

GRANVILLE: I never had a problem. I really never felt that my color was a detriment. I mean, I just, I never had a problem. And, I, you know, I had friends. As I tell everybody, if somebody didn't want to be bothered with me, they probably didn't — they, you know, didn't come near me. But no, I had friends in — at Tyler. And of course I made — since I was at Lawrence House for three years, I made more friends there. And we were very close as a group. Yeah, very close. So I never really had a problem.

PEARSON: Oh, OK. And just — when I look at the old yearbooks, the old *Sophian*, the school newspaper, it seems like Smith really encouraged the

students to engage in the rich social life that was offered. So it seems like there were a lot of events, social events on campus—

GRANVILLE: Not during wartime.

PEARSON: Or social events off campus. OK, that was my other question.

GRANVILLE: Not during wartime. See we — the war started in '41. And it ended it '45. So we were called the, you know, the wartime class. No. The social life was nil. Although I remember — and I don't remember what group it was. There was a group of fellows at Harvard — I think they were at Harvard — who invited us, invited some ladies to come to Harvard or to Boston for the weekend. And I remember going there. But it was just a party. And I don't even remember who I — I don't remember any follow-up from that, no. No, as far as social life, that was nil.

PEARSON: Not during that time.

GRANVILLE: No, no, no. And I was always kind of a withdrawn person anyway. I wasn't a really — I was never a social butterfly. (laughs)

PEARSON: How would you describe the campus atmosphere during that time? Were there any kind of protests or demonstrations, or was it just a very conservative—

GRANVILLE: Nope. Very conservative. You know, the WAVS were trained here. And — on campus. So it was very interesting to see them marching in their uniforms. But actually, I don't remember any protests at all. That, (unclear) nothing that I can recall. It was just a quiet, academic atmosphere.

PEARSON: And I guess, I did read that you didn't attend your graduation, and that you disinvited your family.

GRANVILLE: Yes. Yes. It was because the war was still going on, this. I can't think of the man's — the — I can't think of the name of the president at the time.

PEARSON: I think was Davis. Was it Davis?

GRANVILLE: No, it wasn't Davis. Oh dear. Isn't that something? I can't think of it. But anyway, he asked us, because of the problems with transportation. At that time, of course, we traveled by train most of the time. Train — I mean air flying travel was not very prominent like it is now. And so he sent a letter. He asked us to ask our families not to travel because of the — you know, the soldiers were being transported. Travel was not as readily available. It was complicated. Not complicated, but crowded.

And so he thought as part of the war effort, that our families should not — would be better if they not travel. And of course I asked my — I told my family — my mother, you know, what the president had asked us to do. And my family was willing to go along with it. But now that I look back, you think, Gee, why was I — why did I go along with it? I should have let them come. But you know, you try to be a good citizen. And be a good — you know, you try to do what is right. I thought at the time it was fair. But, you know, from now, I'm thinking, Oh, I should have let them come. Yeah. But anyway, they came to — the next year, though, I got my master's and then later I got my Ph.D. and I was really — I mean, they exalted then. So they were all there then.

PEARSON: You made up for it.

GRANVILLE: They made up for it then, that's right. Yeah, they made up for it then.

PEARSON: Did you have a job? Did you have a job on campus? Did you work?

GRANVILLE: Oh did I — oh my, yes.

PEARSON: Because how did you afford every year?

GRANVILLE: Oh, no. Actually. OK. The first year — oh, right after I — after freshman year, I went back to Washington, and I got a job as a counselor at a summer playground. And I might have done that for about a month or so. And then the lady who was the professor of astronomy got in touch with me, and said they wanted — needed people at the National Bureau of Standards. And so for about the rest of the summer, I worked at the National Bureau of Standards. And I was doing, you know, with old fashioned desks, you know. Desk calculators, if you know anything about them.

PEARSON: Yes.

GRANVILLE: Yeah. In fact, we had the mechanical ones. And there was one electric calculator. And you should — we were never late for work. Because we always wanted to be the first one to get there to get to the electric calculator. But — so I spent my summers at the National — my summers working — at the National Bureau of Standards. So I made money there. Also, I moved into Lawrence House, the co-op house, and so I got a cut there on housing. And then I got a scholarship from Smith. So actually, I had no money problems at all. Yeah. I was able to go through on scholarships, working. Oh. And on campus, I worked at the Faculty Club. Twenty-five cents an hour. Worked at the library. Doing something here at the library. Any job that I could get. But mainly I worked at the Faculty Club and at the library. Twenty-five cents an hour.

PEARSON: That's a lot.

GRANVILLE: That's a lot — that was good money then, yes. Yes, yes, yes.

PEARSON: Did you have any memorable opportunities pertaining to academics while you were here? Any internships or trips—

GRANVILLE: No, no. No.

PEARSON: —that you can remember?

GRANVILLE: No, I don't remember any, no.

PEARSON: Anything that stands out?

GRANVILLE: No. As I said, my biggest job — my biggest accomplishment then I thought was being able to work at the Bureau of Standards for the summer. And I'm working with engineers who were development of missile fuses, then.

PEARSON: Did you feel any pressure to live up to expectations that you had of yourself or expect— because you really seemed to have excelled academically for most of your life. So it seems like you just set a really high precedent for yourself.

GRANVILLE: No. I never felt — I know, I never felt pressured. I never felt that, you know, I got to do this, I got to do that. I mean, I guess it just came naturally, yeah? But I never felt that I've got to do this, or that I wasn't doing as much as I could do. It just — I did want I could do, and that was it. Yeah.

PEARSON: Well-adjusted and smart. (laughs)

GRANVILLE: Yeah. I guess. I guess. Yes.

PEARSON: Well before me move on to the after Smith, just do you have any particularly poignant memories from your time here, or anything that you would like to share that I haven't asked about your time as a student?

GRANVILLE: OK. Well we always enjoyed Mountain Day, of course. That was always fun. And I'll never forget, the time though, and I was telling Sharon about it. I was in — I guess I was in somebody's room on the front of, on the front room at Lawrence House. And I mean we were studying together. And all of the sudden we realized that the dormitory across from us was on fire. And I can't remember the name of that dormitory. And it caught fire. And everybody got out safely. But the one

thing I remember about it — the maid was on the fourth floor of the building, and they had to bring — go — the ladder had to rescue her. But that's the most memorable thing I have about something on an incident at Smith. And I think eventually, I think they had to tear that building down. But I don't remember the name of it. But I don't think —

PEARSON: I'll have to ask Nancy the college archives if she would know.

GRANVILLE: Yeah. Yeah. The name of the building. Yeah. Yes. Yes.

PEARSON: Let me see. I'm trying to think, because you answered so many of my—

GRANVILLE: Well I kept talking. You should have stopped me. (laughter)

PEARSON: (unclear) Can you discuss how your Smith education has served you after graduation, personally and professionally?

GRANVILLE: Well, as a saying, when I left Smith, I left — Smith gave me a — I think it was \$800 scholarship to do graduate study. So that made it possible for me to go right straight from Smith right into graduate study. I applied to both Yale and University of Michigan. And Yale gave me — I don't think Michigan gave me any help. But Yale gave me a Yale scholarship. So between the Smith scholarship, fellowship, and the Yale, I was able to go to Yale for the first year. And after that, money wasn't a problem because the second and third years, I had Julius Rosenwald's fellowships, and the fourth year, I had an atomic energy pre-doctoral fellowship. And so that I never had the money problems of having to pay tuition, board, and room. It was just easy — smooth sailing, there.

PEARSON: How many women were in mathematics programs at the time? It doesn't—

GRANVILLE: I don't remember how many at here. But now when I went to Yale, there was — in the first year I was there, there were about four or five of us who were in the master's program. But I was the only one, as I recall, who went on beyond the master's program. Yeah.

PEARSON: So you got the master's in mathematics and theoretical physics from Yale in 1946, and then a doctorate in mathematics from Yale in 1949?

GRANVILLE: Forty-nine, yes.

PEARSON: And then, you can you just describe your experience in the workforce as an African American woman at that time?

GRANVILLE: OK. Now the — when I finished Yale, I was — there was a young man at the Yale graduate school who suggested that I apply to the New York University Institute for Mathematical Sciences. And I thought, Oh, this will be great, you know? To work in New York City, you know, be close to all the plays, and the shows, and the concerts, and all that. And I thought, Oh, that would be great. I'd love to live in New York.

So what I — I got a job at the New York University Institute for Mathematical Sciences as a research assistant. And also I — they did appoint me to teach one course. So I was there for a year. But I found that New York — first of all, New York's expensive. And New York — it was hard to find a place to live. So I ended up — my mother had a very good friend who lived in New York. So she let me live with her. But other than that, I mean, New York was just too expen— I think I was making something like \$300 a month. And at the time, you know, that wasn't bad salary, but it certainly wasn't good enough for New York.

So I decided about half-way through the year, that New York wasn't this great place to live. In the meantime, though, I was approached by the President Charles S. Johnson of Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. They were looking for a math teacher there. And he came to New York, interviewed me, and I liked — he made a good presentation about Fisk University. And I thought, Well, I'd like to — I'd never, you know, been in the south. That this would be a good opportunity for me to see the south. So I accepted the position at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee.

I stayed there for two years. That was an interesting experience because at the time, Lee Lorch — I don't know whether you ever heard of — Lee Lorch was a Caucasian, but very, very active in civil rights, you might say. He was very active in civil rights. As a matter of fact, at that time, Metropolitan Life had two housing develops in New York City. You ever heard of Stuyvesant Town? Stuyvesant Town, downtown, and Riverton, the Riverton uptown. Riverton was where the people of color lived. Stuyvesant Town where the Caucasians lived.

But Lee Lorch decided that, you know, this wasn't good. And he brought — he let someone of color live in his apartment, and so he lost his — he lost his job here in New York. And then he — I forgot where he went next, but he was always active civil rights. And as a result, he, to me, to me he suffered. But he did it because he was dedicated to it.

He joined the faculty at Fisk the same time I did. I stayed for two years. He eventually though, lost his job there because of his civil rights activity in Nashville, Tennessee. But I left after two years. I enjoyed Fisk. And it was there that I met or taught two ladies who later went on to receive doctorates in mathematics.

Somehow or another I was contacted by — I don't know, I don't remember how the contact came about — but I was contacted by a division manager, or a section manager, at the National Bureau of Standards. Who invited me — or offered me, rather — a job there, at the National Bureau of Standards. This is a group of mathematicians

working with engineers, doing the mathematical formulations that are needed for the war effort, really. For anything related the government war effort.

So that was — I was at Fisk from '50 to '52. And then I came back to Washington. So that would have been the summer of '52. And I worked at the National Bureau of Standards for three and a half years.

In '56 I went to work for IBM. And I tell everybody now — I have no idea how I — I don't remember my contacting IBM or IBM — I don't know how I got to IBM. You know, did I apply? Did they re— I have no idea. But anyway, I went to work for IBM in Washington. And that's where I was introduced to computers. I had — you know, here before it's always these little desk calculators. And now I'm introduced to the IBM 650 and symbolic SOAP, Symbolic Optimal Assembly Program. It was a computer language at that time.

And I worked in Washington doing programming. And of course, IBM had contracts with government and other agencies. Other industries. And I worked in Washington, I think, maybe a year and a half. Then my boss was transferred to New York. And I went to New York. I transferred to New York with him, to stay with IBM. And I guess I was there for about a year.

And in the meantime, NASA was created. National Asso— you know, NASA. And they — IBM — got the contract to write computer programs for the Project Vanguard. The first — you know, the space program. And my boss was — and they decided — well, they, I guess, the management decided they would set up the IBM space computing center on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. And my boss was invited to come and be the director there. Be the manager there. And he said, "Evelyn, you want to go back to Washington?" And of course, you know, working with this — I mean, the job sounded very exciting, and coming back to Washington. And getting out of New York City again (laughs) was very tempting. So I came back to Washington. So I guess I was in New York about a year, and I came back to the IBM space computing center and there we worked on programs for Project Vanguard, and then we worked on programs for Mercury, the next NASA program.

In the meantime, though, I met a young man in California. I went out to visit friends in California. Met a young man in California who influenced me, enticed me, to come to California, where I married in 1960. And of course I left IBM then. But I got a job at a space technology laboratories in the Los Angeles area. And they also were involved in the — well you know, writing programs for the space pro— writing programs for the space NASA space project. I stayed there — I can't remember how long I stayed there.

But at that time, jobs in space industry, jobs in government, you know, anything in research, were just burgeoning. I mean, just everywhere. They were looking for people. And if you had a friend over here, you know, who was say, who was running a project, and he

needed somebody, he would come and say, “Evelyn, don’t you want to come over here and work for us?”

Well I had a friend at North American Aviation. And North American Aviation had gotten the Apollo project. So he said, “Evelyn, we need somebody. We need some mathematicians over here.” So I went to work at North American Aviation, and worked on the Apollo project. And as I say, I don’t remember, you know, how long. And then one day, I got a call from IBM. We need people, don’t you want to come back to IBM? (laughs) And of course I — at that time, IBM was, you know, the company to work for. I mean, IBM was way at the top as far as employer, employer-employee relations. And I said yes.

And North American Aviation — was, you know — it was industrial plant. Not very fancy. You know, kind of down to earth. But the work was interesting. But I thought, No. IBM. I’ll go back to IBM. And I say, I can’t remember the dates and all that. So I went back to IBM. All these were in the Los Angeles area. And that had to be about 19 — let’s what year would that have been? Nineteen sixty-six. Nineteen sixty-six I think. Or — I — I went through a divorce. Divorce in ’66. Got my divorce in ’67.

In the meantime, let’s see, it was ’67, yeah. I guess it was early part of ’67, IBM said, “Evelyn, we would like you to go” — I think they offered me — oh, they wanted me to come back to Washington. You know, I, at that time, IBM always stood for “I’ve Been Moved.” You ever heard of that?

PEARSON: Yes, I have family who worked for IBM.

GRANVILLE: “I’ve Been Moved.” Well that was true. Because, you know, they would get a contract here, and they would need people. And so they’d move you there. Or they’d get a contract over here, they’d move you there. So they came to me one day and said, “Evelyn, we’d like for you to come back to Washington.” And I really didn’t want to leave California. And I thought, Oh dear. I don’t want to come back to Washington. And I’m going, you know, through — I guess by that time, the divorce had been granted.

So I said, No, I’m going to stay put. And I said maybe the best thing for me to do is to find a job — to find an academic position. And so that’s what I set out to do. I applied to several places. And I was offered a job, a position at California State University, Los Angeles. In the mathematics department. That was — that would have been ’67. So I said I’m going to take that job. I’m not going to work in industry anymore. I’m not going to move anymore. I’ll try to stay. I’ll stay put and try to get tenure.

And of course, and as I tell everybody, I was making 20 thousand at IBM. Which is a lot of money then. I took a job for around 10 thousand. And I don’t remember suffering from it. But I do remember saying to myself, I can work in the summers and make a little

extra. But I was — I did all right as far as financially. But I took a big drop.

But I was appointed there as — I guess I started as assistant professor. And then I slowly moved up to associate professor, and finally full professor. So I was there from '67 to '84. In the meantime, I got married again. In '83 we decided that we old enough — in 1983 — we decided, we were about, we should think about retirement.

My husband was a native of Texas. And he wanted to go back to Texas for retirement. So that's where we ended up, in Texas. But I haven't given you a chance to ask any more questions.

PEARSON: Oh, that's OK. I mean, I did want — it's — you've had a lot of jobs.

GRANVILLE: Yes, yes. I've had a lot of jobs.

PEARSON: I wrote them all down. It's a very long list. I guess I have a few going back. I do have to remember that you were an African American woman — very successful and educated woman — working at a time when many women and African Americans were being discriminated against. But it seems like you've had a very long — that you've always been working. You've had a very successful career. Did you ever feel discriminated against based on your sex or race?

GRANVILLE: OK, let me tell you this. Going back to New York. The first year that I'm out of graduate school but I decided to — I was at the New York University Institute. I did apply for a job at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. Because I thought I would like to teach. And I went there for an interview, and I was interviewed, and you know, it went smoothly as far as I thought. And I didn't get an offer from them. But I never thought any more about it. You know, it never — I mean, I was — there was no indication that they were surprised that I was African American or a woman or wanted to work there. But later it was reported by Pat — Patricia Kenschaft who did a study of African American women mathematicians. She learned somehow that they — I did not get hired there because of my being an African American woman. But this was years later that she discovered it.

PEARSON: It was nothing that you felt at the time?

GRANVILLE: I don't. I never felt it. Because you don't really expect to. You don't expect to get hired by everybody you interview. I didn't get the job. But I got the job at Fisk University. And I never thought any more about it. But she said that they did not hire me because of my being an African American woman. But I never — I never got — I didn't get that impression, yeah.

PEARSON: And just the jobs that you've had. Not the teaching, but working for NASA. Like, how many women were working at NASA at the time?

GRANVILLE: Well because I wasn't working. I was with IBM, who had a contract with NASA. Of course, at IBM, there were — in New York City — there were several African American women who worked for IBM, but not necessarily for NASA. But at the IBM space program, I think I was the only woman. Let's see, no. I think I was the only woman working there, I think. Yeah. They did bring in Jane Cahill, but she was not — she did more of the computer operations, and then later she was hired to do a personnel work. Hiring. So she was never in the scientific or mathematical field. But I don't remember another woman at the space computing center, yeah. I don't remember, no. I think I was the only woman there.

PEARSON: Yeah, it seems like a very masculine field, or (unclear) time.

GRANVILLE: As a matter of fact, I guess I might say I've always worked with men. Yeah. For the most part, yeah. Because of the field that I was in. Yeah. Yeah.

PEARSON: And then, how much of your career success do you attribute to your Smith education, or your high school education at Dunbar?

GRANVILLE: Well, as I say, when I came here, to Smith, from Smith — from Dunbar — I did not feel academically insufficient at all. In other words, I didn't feel that I had not — that I was not up to some of the gals from private schools, you know, or any other schools. I never felt that I was not well-prepared for college. I was well-prepared. The — what was the other part you were asking me about? About Smith, yeah.

And of course, at Smith, excellent — excellent training in the sciences. As I say, they let me take the math, and the physics, and the astronomy. And I kind of avoided the liberal arts, you know? I did. They didn't make me take much in liberal arts. But I did very well there. And of course, my Smith education, I had no problems at all at Yale. I did very well there. So Smith really gave me the education in mathematics, of course, that I needed.

And as I said, I — because I was in the honors program, I had to do a project for the honors program. Write a paper. And I did that also. And in fact, you know what, I didn't remember that until I was going through the archives. And I found it. I said, I really did — did I do this? I had forgotten it. I had forgotten it completely that I had to do a mathematical project for the honors program. Yes. Yes.

PEARSON: And I did want to ask you — this might be a little off topic — but I think it was in the last 15 years that you were working — you really encouraged college professors to go back and teach math to elementary students? And you've been a big proponent of teaching math to—

GRANVILLE: No, not really. Actually, you might be referring to the time that I was

hired by Dow Chemical Company. See, I retired from Cal — I stayed at California State University from '90 to '97. And — no not California, I mean Texas. University of Texas at Tyler from '90 to '97. After we retired, we moved to Texas. I guess I haven't talked about that. I taught at the University of Texas at Tyler for seven years. From '90 to '97. And then I decided, eh, it's about time for me to retire. And everybody at that time said, "Well you've always been so busy, what are you going to do?" And I said, "Oh, I'll find something to do. I'll find something to do."

But I was contacted by a representative from Dow — representing Dow Chemical Company — that wanted to find someone who could visit middle school to encourage students to take — be more proficient in mathematics. To study math, and be prepared in mathematics. So for two years — let's see, that was '98 and '99, 1998 and 1999, I traveled, not every day, but maybe five or six times a month, to middle schools in east Texas, southeast Texas, Louisiana, visiting middle school students to talk to them about the importance of preparing themselves well in mathematics. So that was mostly what I did as far as encouraging students to study math.

PEARSON: OK. Yeah, I thought — I guess I thought you taught at the grade school level.

GRANVILLE: No. Oh, the only thing — the only teaching I did at the high school level — when I retired. When we moved to Texas in '80 — well we moved in '83. But I didn't retire until '84. I finished the quarter out. And went down in March of '84 to Texas. In the meantime, my husband found out that they needed people — someone to teach math and computer science at the high school in a nearby school district. In the Van Independent School District.

And so my husband told — this man also was a contractor, and we were adding a room to the house that we had bought in Texas. And he said, "Oh, your wife teaches math?" And, "Oh, she was in computer science? We need someone. We're introducing computer science in the high schools." And so he said, "When your wife comes, let us interview her for the job at Van Independent High School."

So when I came down, I was interviewed. And so that fall, I started teaching mathematics. I think I had one math class at the high school and three computer science classes at the junior high school. So I'd go teach the computer science classes then go to the high school.

But it turns out that I knew nothing about classroom management. I was a total disaster. Total disaster as far as managing the class, you know. Keeping order, getting the children to do what they're supposed to do. And so about midway the semester, I said to Ed, "Ed, this is not my cup of tea at all." So I went to the superintendent. And because they knew also that I was having trouble. They were aware of it, that I wasn't really cut out for the job. So I went to the superintendent, and I said, "Could you release me by the end of the

semester?” I said, “At least I’ll let them have me until the end of the semester.” Well about just before Thanksgiving, he came to me one day and he said, “We have someone to talk your position — to fill in for you right now.” In other words, this is it. This is the last day. You’re off.

PEARSON: You were relieved.

GRANVILLE: And I was relieved. I mean, he didn’t give me until the end of the semester. He said, “We found someone right now.” So that was my experience. I found out that I really, you know, just, I just couldn’t manage this high school, junior high school, high school class. And so I didn’t work for about — that was ’84. So I didn’t work really — I didn’t get the job at — I decided, no, I’m not going to work at all.

But then I met someone from — who was connected with the University of Texas at Tyler. They were looking for someone in math and computer science, and so I was hired there. I was given a one-year appointment. They called it the Sam A. Lindsay Chair. I was given an appointment there for one year. And they gave me an appointment for second year. Third, fourth. Kept going on. So at the end of the — toward the end of the fourth year, I said to my husband, “You know Ed, you know what? If I make five years I’ll be vested for a pension.” He said, “Go for it. Go for the pension.”

So they appointed me the fifth year, and then a sixth year, and a seventh year. So then after the — toward the end of the seventh year, I said, “I think this is it.” And that would have been 1998. 1997. I said, “I think maybe I can quit now.” I always liked to be busy. I like to be busy. And, you know, keep active, yeah.

PEARSON: What was your favorite job? I mean, it seems like they’ve all been so different.

GRANVILLE: IBM. Well being involved with the space program. Because, you know, this is — I mean — this is something brand new. Space program. NASA was new. And the idea of being able to write programs to track these satellites. That was really the most fascinating job I’ve had, yes.

PEARSON: I guess I just have to ask this too. Because it seems like you were really encouraged and influenced by educators or teachers throughout your life. So was that where — is that how you were drawn to teach?

GRANVILLE: Yes. Yes. I think that’s probably why I — well as I said, when IBM wanted to move me, I decided I’m just not going to move again. Then I was thinking, well what could I do where I could be sure that maybe I won’t be — they won’t lose a contract, you know. Because at that time, private industry, they were getting government contracts. They would lose them or they would end. And I thought, I need something more permanent. And so that’s when I thought of — that’s when I decided I

would look for a job at the college level. More for stability, yeah. For stability.

PEARSON: That's funny. Stability in academia. (laughs)

GRANVILLE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. At least I thought it would be stable, anyway. And I enjoyed teaching, yeah. I enjoyed teaching, yes, yes.

PEARSON: We have about nine minutes. So is there anything that you would like to talk about that I haven't asked? Anything that you can think of? Wanted to just give you some time, if there's anything.

GRANVILLE: What have we missed? What have we missed? I'm not sure what we've missed. Well I could talk about what I did after I decided — let me talk about my move to Texas. We were in California. And we decided that it's time to retire. This was only '83, though. That we decided that it was time to retire. And we move to Texas. And then of course, for a while I was very active. And as I say, I taught at the Van, and taught at Te— I don't think I mentioned that I taught at Texas College for two years. That's a predominant — a black institution in Tyler, Texas. That's where I taught.

Oh, after I left — after I left Van. I taught at Texas College in Tyler, Texas. We were living on about — we had about — we were out in the country. And we were about 15 miles from Tyler, Texas, which is a pretty good size town in Texas. But we were out in — we called it the country. So when I left Van — when I left the Van school district — my husband had met one of the members of the board at Texas College which is a historically black, small historically black college in Tyler, Texas. And they also were looking for someone to teach math. So this would have been — so I was at Van — this would have been '84. Yeah, '84. So this would now be '85, now. So what I did — he said, they'd like to hire me at Texas College. And I taught there, at this historically black college, for two years. No, I was there — was I there two years or three and a half years? But anyway, for several years I taught there.

Then that's when I decided I wouldn't — I'd stay retired for a couple of years. But then I was hired at the University of Texas at Tyler. So I stayed there seven years. In the meantime though, we moved from — we'd traveled for Dow Chemical Company. I traveled for Dow until the year 2000. That was it. I thought the Dow was going to continue the program. I had worked in it '98 and '99. And in fact, the public relations people who were handling the appointments or the assignments had already had some appointments set up in the year 2000. But Dow decided they were going to cut the program at the end of '99. So that's when I stopped working for Dow. After that though — and to me, that's just the year 2000.

In the meantime though, we had never joined church. We had moved to Texas in '83, and we had never joined a church. And this was the year 2000. And one of the reasons why my husband's brother and

his wife had moved to Texas two years ahead of us. And he was an ordained Baptist minister. So when he went to Texas, he thought he might — he looked for an appointment in Texas where he could serve as the minister. And so when we came, we thought, well when he gets appointed to a church, we would visit or support that church. Well he never got an appointment, and we never joined church. For 17 years. That was '83 to 2000.

In the meantime, Ed, my husband Ed, had grown up in the little town called Corsicana, Texas. Where we were living was about 75 miles east of Dallas. Corsicana was about 50 miles south of Dallas. That's where he grew up when he was young. He grew up in a country — little country town. But when the children finished the eighth grade, there was no high school for them. So their mother said — Mrs. Granville said, "We've got to get the children into Corsicana from the farm. We live in Corsicana where they can go to high school." Otherwise, there were no high schools in this little country town for people of color. So he grew up — he spent some of the years in Corsicana.

And so in the meantime, he had made friends there. And he had a very good friend who was a member of a Methodist church. And sometimes we said — we would go over and visit his church, and go to church there. This is 60 miles, now. But it would only take about an hour to get there. We'd go there. Have church. We'd visit. Go to church. And then we'd go out and have dinner together. So it became not only spiritual experience, but a nice social experience.

So we did that for two years. First we said well we'll go over every other Sunday, or every now and then. It ended up we went every Sunday. Every Sunday we'd leave home. We'd leave home about 9:00, get there for Sunday school at 10:00, and church at 11:00. And we did this for two years, and then we said, "You know what? This doesn't make sense. Why don't we just move to Corsicana?" So we had a house with six acres. We were on six acres. And we had built another — we had a nice house with a nice big six-acre lake. And we had built another house on the other side as a rental property. And so we have our house and the rental property and the nice big six acres. So we put it on the market, for sale. It didn't sell real fast, though.

But in the meantime, we bought a house in Corsicana. And I said, "Ed, what are we going to do? We haven't sold the house here. We're buying a house there." But do you know what? The two houses sold — closed within two weeks of each other. So we sold, finished, the house — closed off the house in Corsicana — in Tyler — it's (unclear) really, and moved to Corsicana.

So once I got to Corsicana, I got very active there. Corsicana is a location for the Navarro County Junior Coll— well says a two-year college, Navarro College, there. Navarro County College. At the college they had a — the Methodist church has a — what do you call it? A campus ministry. And so we had jointed the Methodist church, so we were associated also with the campus ministry. So once we became there — once we got there — the minister of our church was the

director of the campus ministry. He had a dual position. But the Methodist church had given him this dual position.

So when he found out that I could add and subtract, multiply and divide, he said, "We want you to be the treasurer." So I became — I got very active then with the United Christian Fellowship at Navarro College, which was the campus ministry conducted by the Methodist church, and our minister was the director there. So I got very active there. I was the treasurer there. And we got involved with a lot of activities. I met one of the teachers there in the math department at the community college. Who ran summer programs for teachers. They were called the Eisenhower Program. Eisenhower Math Program. She got grants. So she found out that I could teach math, so during the summers I'd work with the teachers. These were teacher preparation classes. Not in preparation, but let's say teacher enhancement programs.

So I worked and was treasurer at the United Christian Fellowship. I taught during the summers at the college. Then of course they had the Boys and Girls Club. I tutored there. I was a tutor there. Well I got involved in a lot of — it's a small town. And of course, once they find out that you have a certain talent, everybody wants you to work for them. Treasurer, yeah treasurer, or financial officer. Whatever they call it at the community college. Also teaching during the summer. Doing workshops for teachers. Doing Boys and Girls Club. So that kept me really very active. And it really probably was a good thing that we had moved to Corsicana because I was able to be more active in the community. So that kept me busy there, yeah.

I lost my husband in two thousand — my husband died in 2008. And I decided that I would probably — I have a very small family, really. My family consists right now of only my sister who lives in Washington, D.C., and a nephew in New York City. And I decided, if anything happened to me in Texas, there's no way in the world — well he could get down to Texas, but that would be quite a burden to put on him. If I'm in Texas, and I need help, and he's in New York. So I decided I would come back to Washington, D.C. And so I sold my house and came back to Washington in May of 2010.

I lived with my sister — my sister's house for a while. She was in assisted care, at the time. But she wanted to come back to her own home, so when she came back to her home in September of 2010, then I went to an independent assisted living facility right across — well it's Silver Spring, Maryland. But it's right across the border from Washington, so it was easy for me to get back and forth. And my nephew — it was easy for him to come. He would stay with me when he would come to check on his mother and take care of her affairs. So it made it easier for him for me to be there than way down in Texas. You know, if something were to happen. I wasn't getting any younger, obviously. And I'm thinking, now if something happens and he — it's just too much responsibility. So that's why I came back to Washington in 2010.

I moved into an assisted living — independent assisted living facility when she came back to her own home. She's still living in her own home. And I said, I didn't want to live alone. Oh, one thing — one reason I wanted the independent assisted living facility — I had been gone from Washington for 50 years. And so I had lost so many of my friends had passed on. And I really didn't know anybody there. And I thought, I don't want to go back. And I don't know anybody. And at a certain point in time, you don't make friends that fast. Because, you know, people have their already have their little social groups. So I decided I would live in an independent assisted living facility. But it was right across in Silver Spring, Maryland, very close to Washington. Easy for me to get back and forth to my sister's or do anything I wanted to do in that area.

Well that was 2010. In February of this year, we got a letter from the management — or the company that runs this facility — that we had to be out by June 1. They were going to sell the building. And we were shocked. We were just devastated. And some of the people there had been there for 17 years. One lady, I was talking to her caregiver recently, said this lady who had been there 17 year was just totally, just very despondent to have to move. But we had to leave. We had to vacate.

So I did not want to leave the particular area. Because it was such a convenient area. I am now living in a private apartment building. But it's — but you know what I miss? I have to cook my own food. I have to prepare my own meals. Independent living, you know, they feed you. So I'm learning to cook again.

PEARSON: Oh, I didn't realize that they feed you. I knew there was landscaping and trash removal and —

GRANVILLE: No. At the independent assisted living you get your meals. And then another thing. You're around people, and of course there's always a lot of activities. There are people coming in to give lectures, or there's somebody giving in to give a musical program. There's always something that if you're interested, that you can do. Or just talking to people. I moved to my new location April 1, so I'm kind of missing it, but I'm getting used to it. I'll have to get used to it, yes, yes.

PEARSON: Well we are a — we're a little over time.

GRANVILLE: OK.

PEARSON: I just wanted to ask you what it's like to be back. I know you said that you've been back for three — three reunions so far.

GRANVILLE: Oh, I mean, it's just wonderful to come back. And I think — actually, I really enjoyed Smith. I really did. I enjoyed the — I obviously benefitted academically. Friends that I made here, I've kept in — even

though we don't see each other, at Christmas time we always — the letters come back and forth. This is what I've been doing all year, this is what you've been doing. So it's — Smith was a great place. And I enjoyed it. And I really feel that Smith stands for something of quality as far as education, and also, Smith to me, has been very brave in not — in accepting changes in lifestyles. Smith has been very brave in that sense. And what they did recently.

PEARSON: The trans —

GRANVILLE: Transgender. Yeah. I mean, they have not been afraid to take the step that needs to be — that I feel should be taken. You know, reflecting what's happening in the world, and with life around us. So I really respect and salute Smith for that, yes.

PEARSON: Well, thank you very much for your time. It's an honor to be able to interview you.

GRANVILLE: Well I hope I didn't talk to you to death.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Emily Pierce, June 11, 2015.