

Interviewee: DAVID WEINRIB
Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS
Location: [Not Given]
Date: May 16, 1978
Media: Audio cassette (1)
Interview no.: 152
Transcription: Ellen Dissanayake, January 29-February 1, 2006. Converted from Word Perfect and corrected by Mary Emma Harris, April 2016.

MEH note: Minor editings have been made to make the transcript read more smoothly.

[BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

DW: So, I work in slabs.
MEH: You'd been working on the wheel before?
DW: Yeah. So this was done down there. That's one of my early – first slab pots I ever did. And then there was a craftsman who lived nearby who carved these handles.
MEH: [OVERTALK] Edward DuPuy, by any chance?
DW: Yeah. He carved these handles for Karnes' things, usually, and then I had to make a bigger one for this one. That belongs to David Tudor. I gave it to him because he was a great teacher. [OVERTALK]
MEH: [UNINTEL] David Tudor.
DW: This one, yeah.
MEH: Oh I'm glad you had it here today.
DW: It was by chance. I don't have many. I don't have many objects around but just happened to have those. I borrowed that from David for a show or something, and I never got it back to him.
MEH: The work that I've seen that you were doing at Black Mountain, the only work I've seen is tiles. I think one platter.
DW: Right. Right.
MEH: Why did you change from turning to slabs?
DW: I think it was a freeing thing. [SOUNDS OF MOVING MICROPHONE?] It's hard to know. I suppose it was. The spirit in a lot of the arts at that time was that all of a sudden crafts no longer thought to confine themselves to the usual limits of the crafts. And what happened, you know, like twenty, twenty-five years ago, in ceramics was there was this tremendous explosion of experimentation, you know, on the East Coast and the West Coast. And I think that all of a sudden the use of slabs, you know, and thrown pieces that were cut and all that was a kind of liberating thing and people never thought that anyone – that pottery was a thing for just utilitarian works. And I think we were interested in scale too. What slabs permitted you this tremendous scale. It's hard always to say exactly why, but I know that it was happening -- that point in time where I started I don't quite know, except I think that it was an interest in moving into space and lack of being confined.

- MEH:** You said there was an explosion of an interest in pottery. I guess I sort of think of that as having taken place in the sixties. Do you think that [OVERTALK] it was before that really or –?
- DW:** Well, by the sixties. I think it flowered in the sixties but it started in the fifties. Yeah, because Voulkos on the West Coast was starting to – You know, he came to Black Mountain. Did you read that article in Craft Horizons that M. C. wrote about two or three months ago?
- MEH:** Yes.
- DWA:** Yeah, that deals a lot with that. So he came at that time. Now he was still doing wheel-thrown things, but then a year or two later he –
- MEH:** He broke out.
- DW:** Broke out too.
- MEH:** How did you and Karen know about Voulkos? How did you know his work? He was so young at that time and he wasn't –
- DW:** He was known, though.
- MEH:** He was known.
- DW:** Yeah, he'd won – You know, we all used to send our work to the Syracuse show, you know. That became international show and so his work was – And I'd seen a few of his pots, you know.
- MEH:** But that had been sort of the big pottery show at that time that everybody wanted to be seen in?
- DW:** Yeah, was Syracuse. Yeah.
- MEH:** Who sponsored that? Was it [OVERTALK] –?
- DW:** It was the museum. No, it was the Syracuse Museum. And ,in fact they have a few of my pots which I'm supposed to have, which they kept.
- MEH:** From Black Mountain?
- DW:** No. Yeah. They have one. Yeah. No, no, that was done a little later. They don't have any Black Mountain ones.
- MEH:** I was just in Cranbrook and I found the résumé that says you did these tiles at a Methodist church -- that you didn't do. For Karen Karnes –
- DW:** There is something about a church. Now I don't know. You know, when you said it, it seemed like – I don't know what it was.
- MEH:** Well, there were two mentions. [OVERTALK] The Poteat House, I located quickly. And I did go into the First Methodist Church and looked, every corner and cranny, and I would recognize them immediately.
- DW:** I don't think I've ever done anything in a church.
- MEH:** How did the Poteat House commission come about?
- DW:** You know how Black Mountain was. Well, there's always a fraternity of people, you know, who – or sorority however –of people who once went to the school and come back and stay there. It happens much more nowadays. As, you know, social life on campus is much freer. I mean, like at Antioch, you know, there's like a whole bunch of people that come up and settle the town nearby and stuff, and that happened somewhat at Black Mountain. And there was some former student who was an architect –
- MEH:** Robert Orr. Bob Orr.

DW: Right. And he came and he was around on the campus and then he got a house, I remember, very nearby.

MEH: He wasn't living on campus though.

DW: No, no. He just came back and met some of us, and it was sometimes hard for people, you know, because they'd come back, and they were in a certain era. Then they'd come back and they'd think "Oh boy," you know. That wasn't the way Black Mountain was [LAUGHS]. And, of course, The Land was that way too. There were a lot of hard-nosed people there, you know, and so if you'd come back, it was not always a cozy welcome. But it was a whole ideological matter, and if ideologically, you know, you weren't really, you know, of the particular ideology of the time, you couldn't really relax into the thing. I mean, there wasn't hostility so much as it just wasn't that all, you know – In a way when you lived at Black Mountain, you always felt like you were in a family, but the family changed a lot. And it was the same way here at The Land, you know, among The Land people. But other people would be put off when they'd come to The Land because they'd think people were hostile or something. And they weren't. It's just that it wasn't always that kind of good manners or whatever. I know we had that at that pottery seminar. See, that summer, you know, we had Voulkos come and Dan Rhodes and all and – this shouldn't be for the book – but Dan came down. And, you know, the minute you got there, you had to really speak for yourself and just put forth what you were about. I don't know, that kind of spirit wasn't quite for Dan. I was his host, you know, and I remember after about a week or two he came to me and he told me he was so unhappy and discouraged. He was a mature man, you know. Discouraged and all. And I said "What about?" and he said "Well, when I used to be a guest out in West – you know, I'd go to a college on the West Coast, you know, they'd treat you right, and they'd dine you and wine you." And, of course, that wasn't the way it was at Black Mountain. You came among your peers, and it wasn't that kind of – When the architect came, he knew a few people. I think, in the other valley, he got a house, just rented a house temporarily, and decided he wanted to establish his practice there. I didn't understand why, because it didn't seem like a very fruitful place. And then, you know, he'd come to the pottery shop, and he was really interested in the work, and once he told me he wanted to do, me to do a commission. Well, that was great, you know, I had never done a commission in tiles. I had done these tile tables, you know, which another craftsman, Daniel Boone, who lived up in the mountains there someplace. He was a forge, forge man, metal worker. And he made the tables for me and we used to make some of the tables for Tom (?). .

MEH: This tile panel has holes in it. I've been told that –

DW: It's the heatilator.

MEH: Yeah. And how did that work? Can you tell me?

DW: Fine.

MEH: Not "Did it work?" But what was the technology.

DW: Well, you see, I don't know if you know about fireplace design, but the old fireplace design, you know, you have your opening and your chimney and the heat would just go out. Because, you know, a fireplace is one of the most impractical ways to heat. You lose like sixty or seventy percent of your heat. Very

impractical. So certain technologists invented this thing of heatilators where in a certain way you vent the heat so it comes into the room and this is a very common practice. And often you'll see just grating, you know, in a brick wall or stone wall. So this was where the grates were for the heating, and I just got that idea about why don't we use the idea of the heatilator as a, you know, as a kind of, you know, as a background for a design matter.

MEH: Okay. The panel's here and the fireplace is here. Okay, so the heat would have some way to carry over here. Would it carry through the bricks because the bricks would be hot?

DW: No, no, there was a, there was like a –

MEH: An open space behind the [OVERTALK]

DW: Yeah, in other words he had put his vent, see, there were two places, I don't know – it was here and here. There was a vent that came here and then there was a big grate in there. See, we just covered the grate.

MEH: I see.

DW: See that. I think for somehow – maybe it was just in the one place. But there might have been a second place.

MEH: I think they run up another, but I'm not sure.

DW: Yeah, but there was a vent behind here and he had run his venting behind the wall so that the heat came into the room.

MEH: So you were making tiles and doing slab work when you were at Black Mountain.

DW: Yeah. I see – We did a nice project when we first went. Did Karen tell you about that, the whole dining room thing we did?

MEH: [NEGATIVE]

DW: Yeah. See, when we first came down – that first summer – we decided we would – Pottery, you know, even a lot of the pottery we make, you know, was very expensive. People I think at the college had asked us, you know, how much our work sold for and all that, and we told them, and they thought that was absurd. I mean for paintings, you know, people think large cost is fine but for pottery, you know – So I think that might have been some of it. You know, people go "Wow, that's expensive." You know. So we thought "Well, yeah, in a way." One is working for a kind of a, you know, a very esoteric market. So what really should happen is that the pottery should be for the college. So we decided we would make pottery for the college that summer we were there. So we designed serving bowls and ashtrays and made them. In other words, so every table, you know – we used to have this big roof (?) dining room. So every table had these two serving bowls, you know, which we designed and an ashtray. And every table had it. It was really exciting and nice and people, you know, really responded to it. In fact, people tell me sometimes that those ashtrays that we did are still in people's – I don't think it was like in nightclubs where people take ashtrays away but I think at the very end or something –

MEH: I'd love to find some of –

DW: Those ashtrays – I have one, I have one here. Over there. A model. A very close model of the way it was. And so we did that. That was our first summer. Then the second summer we had the seminar, you know, with all the potters coming then. I remember Warren McKinno [MacKenzie], who was a production potter in the

Bernard Leach tradition. He'd studied with Leach in England. We tried to get him to do something and he did a whole series of tea cups and pseudos (saucers?) for the dining room so everybody in the dining room had their own teacup.

MEH: That I didn't know about.

DW: [UNINTEL] find lots as you go around the country.

MEH: The pot shop was there?

DW: Yeah. Built by Bob Turner.

MEH: Yeah. You made an addition on it?

DW: Yeah. Yeah, with Jack Rice.

MEH: Was that so that you'd have more space since you were two potters?

DW: Well, it was for a number of reasons. One was that, yeah, I was getting very ambitious in my work, doing all these big tile things and all these pots. And the workshop was, you know, was a place for students. And Karen had her pottery, her wheel in the corner there. But my things just took so much space and they had to be left out and all that so that's why I built the shop. Mainly, it was an extra shop for me to do these large-scale things and then we found that in the summer, working in the shop, especially with the kiln, when you have the kiln firing then, for the next few days you couldn't really use the shop. You know, in the winter it was nice, it warmed you, but in the summer you couldn't. And we built this kind of big extended form, you know, which was an outdoor workshop for students. The picture of that's in – I have it someplace. It's in the article, M.C.'s article.

MEH: Yeah. And Jack Rice did that?

DW: Oh, yeah.

MEH: I've heard various tales about the levels of the floor.

DW: Oh, yeah. Who told you that?

MEH: I think everybody remembers that as sort of –

DW: Well, yeah Jack did that when I – Yeah, I really love Jack a lot. But he was -- if you've heard other histories -- he had a hard life. I mean he made that life for himself. You know, that was his nature – to construct a difficult life for himself. And so the building of the shop – I believe he might have even -- I don't know when that time was, but he was in a lot of trouble with the college. I don't know if that's when the boilers burned, you know, when the boiler burned and burst and all. But it was a way of getting Jack's energies, you know, into some more creative thing. He was sort of going crazy being keeper of the grounds or whatever and, you know, and not having the money to really do it all. And he was always bursting to do this, something creative, you know, as was, you know – there were a few, there were a few students at Black Mountain, too, who were bursting with creativity but never did any work, you know. And Olson sometimes coddled them, you know, which wasn't good. But there were a body of very creative people who did work but then there was a whole other body of people who, who talked, talked it. And Jack was one of those, you know. So he always talked about architecture. So we used to sell our pottery so in a sense we had some income. You know, so we took some of that money, and we put it into that and asked Jack to be the architect for the shop. And we worked on it, yeah – And we worked on it together. But then I went away, and that's when he did the

floor. And it was madness, you see, because first of all, you know, in a pottery shop there's a lot of dirt so what you want is a very smooth cement floor. And I came back and he had done this kind of, you know, beautiful floor but first of all, the rocks were laid and then there were depressions, you know. If he'd laid it in slate or something, but you know, he went out and had gone to all the trouble of getting more rocks, and, you know, so you could see that if you spilled a little water or something on the floor, you know, there'd be all these rivulets. And Karen came in – I don't know if she told this story – and at first we were just completely miffed that this guy, you know because it was like that, you really had to watch where you'd walk, and you don't want that in a workshop either. You have to be conscious of how you walk around. Karen and I came in and at first we were completely miffed. And then I remember Karen – this was in our freer days – she went over and she lifted her skirt – she didn't have any pants on – she lifted her skirt and she started to urinate and she stood at one end and we watched the urine – [LAUGHTER] and all these rivers came, you know, like sort of looking forward to what it's going to be if you dropped a little water in the shop, you know, all these estuaries. So we just laughed and laughed and laughed. I don't know if we ever told that to Jack. But I remember her doing that and we just laughed. And then what he had done – it was near the window – and all of a sudden there was this rock sticking up out of the floor. And I said "What's that, Jack?" And he went over to the window and he leaned his hand on the windowsill, and he lifted his foot up on it. And I thought that was pure art. I thought that was so beautiful, you know, this idea like in a bar, you know, where you put your foot – If you went to the window and you looked and you know –

MEH:

You wanted to prop your foot up on something.

DW:

Yeah, and then I couldn't be mad with him or anything because that was such a touch, you know, which again would not be that practical. And then I remember we had long philosophic discussions, you know. How much the architect tried to shape the client and how much you obey what the client does and I could see he was obeying his own desires a lot. But I always remember that rock sticking in the air there, you know. It only came up so high. And I thought "Oh Jack, you're wonderful." And that's what his nature was, you know, was he was an impossible person but also, you know, really profound in a beautiful way.

MEH:

He had a special touch.

DW:

And then there was a whole thing about the color of the shop. I mean coloring the wood and –

MEH:

From what I've heard, though, it was a very functional shop in terms of the kiln actually working and –

DW:

Oh, no, no, no. The first shop was built by Bob Turner.

MEH:

Right. With Paul Williams as his assistant.

DW:

I didn't know that. But see that was a completely functional shop. No, that had an excellent, excellent kiln.

MEH:

The kiln function then was –

DW:

Beautiful. See what Bob did was he took all his money – I mean, he had quite a bit of money -- and he built that shop as a completely functional – So, see, I was at Alfred, you know, and that job came up, and I think the pay was eighty dollars

a month, and all the people in our department there at Alfred were, you know, like – you know, they were all taking their M.A.s and all looking for those nineteen, twenty thousand dollar professorships and all. And nobody wanted it. And we went down, and man, when we saw that shop, I mean who wants money, you know! That was such a gift! Here's this fully engineered, beautifully-planned shop that Bob had put all this love and attention into – because that's what Bob is. Bob is a, you know, beautiful planner and, you know, and all that. And, you know, to be able to work in that shop and that atmosphere – But, of course, that's not what their values were of most of the people.
[OVERTALK]

MEH: When you were there, you and Karen were on a different basis, weren't you, sort of a production basis.

DW: Well, that was politics. You see, what happened was that we came down and, you see, the college was oriented toward, you know, painting and sculpture and music. And most of the people, you know, the students, I don't know about all the faculty, but they didn't really understand what pottery was about or didn't see it. You know, there's a kind of snobbism about craft. So I think that was one of the aspects, perhaps. And then, too, I'm not sure that they felt the work we were doing was avant garde enough. I mean, I think they knew that avant garde was in pottery, but they didn't feel it was avant garde enough. Then too I think personality-wise, perhaps they didn't feel, you know, that we were completely, you know, like perhaps sympathetic to the more radical you know – not radical politically, radical wing of the college. So it didn't seem that they really wanted us to stay on. You see, we had been hired only for the summer, and I remember the head of the department at Alfred said to us – see Karen was working on her M.A. – he said "Don't come back, Karen. You go there and you stay." That was his order. Forget your M.A. Stay. Go and stay. And so we wanted to stay. We loved it. But it seemed to be a whole segment of the faculty that weren't particularly enthusiastic about us.

MEH: Which group would that be?

DW: I think it was Charles's – Charles and those people. I mean, we came very close friends after a while, but at that point in time, for some reason, there wasn't that closeness. So we didn't know what to do. So somebody said to us, "Why don't you just go around to each of the faculty and just talk to them. You know feel how they feel about you and all that." So we did. We went around to a lot of the people and talked to them, and there were quite a few people who were really interested in us, mainly the old-timers, because we were sort of – we weren't quite as hard-nosed, you know. Some of those older people around there, you know, they felt sort of a schism and so because we were perhaps more innocent or just more relaxed about things or whatever, they really liked us and they really wanted to have us there because they thought that we would be, you know, perhaps, you know a bit more sympathetic point of view toward them. But what happened was that – and I remember Charles came to me one day and [LAUGHS] in his crazy [UNINTEL] he said "God!" He was so angry. He said "What were you doing, doing this political thing going around and talking to every single person?" I said "I didn't try to make some power block or something.

Somebody recommended we go around and talk to people and that's what we did. We weren't trying to do that." So he had misread it completely, but he was angry. So, anyhow, it was a political matter it turned out in the end because they were afraid of votes. That they didn't know where, you know, we would stand. So that's why they resolved it by making us non-voting faculty. So they made this euphemism of "Potters-in-residence," no faculty. We weren't faculty, which was fine because, as you know, as you do your studies, that that's one of the things that ripped the college apart again and again was that double function, you know, of teacher and administrator.

MEH: That meant you didn't have to go to faculty meetings and all that.

DW: No. Not a bit. Had none of that. And, of course, in those years faculty meetings were really, you know, were really tough because, you know, the [TELEPHONE INTERRUPTION]. Faculty meetings were really tough and, you know, because the college had more than its share of problems. So we didn't mind a bit. So in a way it was blissful. Our spirit was with the college, but we didn't have to be involved in all that.

MEH: Where did you live? Did you live in the Studies Building apartment?

DW: Yeah. That's the best, the best, one of the best apartments. It was really wonderful. And it was quite private because the Studies Building, you know, there weren't that many students there so it was, it was really great. And then I had my workshop. Before I built my shop, I used to work right below it. You see, that last little apartment stuck out into space and there was an open space below it and that's where I used to do my early tile work before, before I had my shop. [OVERTALK]

MEH: And then the shop was just right beyond there.

DW: Yeah. Yeah. Right. So I used to carry the work over.

MEH: But you took your meals in the dining hall, generally.

DW: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Oh sure. Until, you know, they had that later thing where we all used to make our own meals. You know they closed the dining room after a while because they couldn't afford it.

MEH: Right. One thing, while it's on my mind: what – did you – were you at all interested in local pottery going on? [OVERTALK]

DW: Well, what happened was – An interesting thing happened was that there's a woman in Asheville at the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild. Margaret – I can't remember her second name. Karen would remember it maybe. And somehow we wanted – you know, we were starting to do a lot of pottery and we wanted to sell it so we went to her. And she just loved it, and we kept our price ranges so, you know, so I got a little mug for – you know, a hand potter down there, one of the local potters might cost a buck, you know, and Karen's thing might cost three-fifty. But this woman was so enthusiastic about the work and put so much interest and love in it that she made a whole section for us in the store, and she used to really sell it. You know, completely different price range but she was just devoted. So in that way we came to know her, and we came to know, you know, the work that she sold, and then we went and met a lot of the other potters. And then when Bernard Leach came over – you know, Leach had this whole mystique about the hand potter, you know, the local potter, and that's what he did

in England, you know, in Cornwall. He tried to take the style, you know, that would develop in Cornwall and trained apprentices just from the local people. And so he, even though he did odd pottery, you know, and sold it at absurd prices, he still had the feeling – it was a real schism in him. So when he came down during the seminar, he had to see all the local potters, and we went around and took him to see them all. And then I remember in his book he wrote that the the greatest potter he met in America, you know, was some one of our local potters.

MEH: Did you ever go down to Jugtown?

DW: Oh yeah, we were there. We made the rounds of it, but we didn't establish a contact with them, I suppose because – I don't know why. I just think it was our style to be rather self-contained. You know, a couple working together, there's a lot of, you know, artistic inter- –

MEH: Right, you get that [UNINTEL]

DW: Yeah and we even had it here when we lived here in the county. Not that we were snobbish about it but we never belonged to the New York Potters Guild or any of that. Potters would come by but we were never that – because it was, you know, Karen and I worked in diverse styles, and there was just a lot of, you know, back and forth. And therefore we didn't even do it there. But there were a number of young potters who would come and see us, who were setting up shops or stuff like that.

MEH: What about clays? Did you use any local clays?

DW: No, no. We – I mean actually a lot of your ball (?) clays do come from the South so we did use those.

MEH: You didn't go out and dig your own and that sort of thing?

DW: No. We did it somewhat, but what most potters find is that it's just so much work to do it. So we did it a few times. And then we worked in hire-fire clay a lot, and stoneware, and those clays were not, you know – They were brick clays, you know, and we could have but we didn't. But as I say a lot of the ball clay, you know, the kaolins and all that got shipped and were actually mined in that area of the country.

MEH: Right. What about students. I've seen, located not a whole lot of work, you know, by faculty who were there, by Rhodes and – Were students potting?

DW: Yeah. No, the students –

MEH: Were students potting?

DW: Not much. Part of it was that snobbism -- like pottery was for peasants. You know, when I started doing the slab stuff and some of the sculpture, then okay, then I was in all of a sudden. Now Olson, you know, after a while he was very enthusiastic about the work, and he could shift like that, you know.

MEH: I should think with his interest in anthropology and that sort of thing, he would be interested.

DW: Yeah, yeah. He did. He was. And, of course, that's what happened at Black Mountain very often was that if a faculty member was enthusiastic, the students would follow in the enthusiasm. But also pottery was a lot of work, you know. I'm not putting down painting or whatever, but there's an impulsiveness and a kind of natural flow that can happen in painting that cannot happen in clay. Because if

you're trying – You know, most young people are interested in the wheel. Nobody really picked up on my slab ideas at that time. I was just developing them at the end when I first left, when I left. So they went to work on the wheel. And you can't do things, you know you can do a large – you know you can do a fifty foot canvas and not have, you know – perhaps if your skill weren't that great by just, you know, pursuing you could do it. But you couldn't do a fifty foot pot unless you had tremendous skill. So I think that discouraged some of the – you know, some of the students. Jorge Fick, for instance, he came a lot to the shop but that particular discipline, you see, that's needed for craft, for that kind of craft, most of the students didn't have. So there were not too many students and that bothered us. You know, we talked about it to the faculty, you know. It was like being our rationale for being there at the school. But they were so happy to have us there because – especially, you know, especially people who were snobs about, you know, the work that was being done in painting and poetry, you know – some of the people, the old-timers felt that it was all a myth. But there we were doing it. They could see, you know, that we were turning out, you know, every two weeks, you know, fifty or sixty pots and all this -- [OVERTALK]

MEH: Product.

DW: Yeah. And, of course, the summer people who didn't have that snobbism, I remember Jack Tworikov and Guston and all those people used to come to the shop and, you know, they were really excited by what was happening there. You know, we had no airs about us or anything. I suppose a little of what potters are about is, you know, they tend to be more earthbound and more earthy and so they said well, they were really happy we were there. And then we, you know, we never would have gotten that seminar going. Well, see, the early seminar – one reason we stayed was that they had started -- Olson in his enthusiasm had gotten wind of this idea that Margaret Wildenhain and Hamada and Leach were coming to America with Yanagi who was head of the museum, Folk Art Museum in Tokyo. And he'd gotten wind of it, and he started to write them letters urging them to come in his kind of very extravagant way. I know Marguerite told me once that she thought he was sort of – I mean, I'd read them, you know, and they were poems. You know, he was wonderful. But for somebody who's not quite, you know, used to that style of being asked, you know, to come to a pottery seminar, you know, in a six page letter. [LAUGHS] She said she thought maybe she wasn't going to come because she didn't know what was up. But anyhow he got wind of this, and I said "Well, how are you going to do this thing?" It was going to happen that, you know, that fall, after the summer. And I said "How are you going to do it? Who's going to run it?" And he said "Oh, Dan Rice." That's Jack's brother. Dan was going to run it, and be in charge. I said "What does he know about pottery? What does he know about clay?" Oh Dan was one of those people who Charles took over, you know. I felt hurt a bit, you know, because he made him too glamorous for him. I said "He's not going to be able to get this thing together." And I talked with Dan, and I said "What do you know about this whole thing? How are you going to pull this whole thing together?" So, that's one reason we really wanted to stay. We told him "You're not going to be able to run this seminar unless you have us there. Who's going to fire your kilns? Who's

going to get clay ready for these people? You're going to have all these students coming from all over the country." So that was, you know, that was one of the reasons we really wanted to stay, to make that thing work. And we did stay, and indeed it did.

MEH: Did it work?

DW: Oh it was wonderful. I mean – Well, Black Mountain was, you know – which made it different than any other college, it was indeed that kind of way of life we had, you know. That there was a dining room, and everybody ate together, you know. There was this whole free flow of enthusiasm, you know. You know there was nothing like, you know, the humanities department's there and this department's there. And all the students came and were enthusiastic. And, you know, Hamada was a fantastic person and everybody really responded to him. And so all the students came, you know. There was no more of that kind of snobbery about pottery. And I know Leach went on for about thirty seminars after, going across America. And he put out a newsletter and all and Leach was, as I say, he was a bit snobby about things. I remember he wrote in the newsletter that the best thing that happened, that was the best seminar they had in the whole country. And because it was just the way things happened at Black Mountain. When things really happened, that small organic nature of, you know, of the small unit, really – And we had all kinds of people come, you know, to it. I mean students and the hobby potter lady, older women and all, and it was fantastic.

MEH: Yeah, I've been told that a lot of local people came.

DW: Local, yeah local potters and people.

MEH: It was one of the few things in the fifties that really drew a local crowd.

DW: Yeah. Yeah.

MEH: Do you remember their have a pottery sale at the end of that for the benefit of the college?

DW: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, Karen has one of Hamada's pots that we got from that sale. Karen has that and a teacup. There's a white teacup came from that kiln. Yeah, we had a sale and that also was pretty fantastic. That they decided – I had urged them to do it, and Leach in his funny way was not so sure. And then there was [GOES OFF MIKE] – it sounds like I've got a thing against Leach, but he was a snobby person. And you could see it in contrast to Hamada, you know, who was all flow and warmth and earth and modest. And I remember the first day. We had our conference and we sat down, you know, with Hamada and Leach, what we were going to do. And Hamada said that he would – the way he was going to do the seminar was he was going to make pots. He just wanted to do pots. So he said, you know, "What was your clay like?" So we brought out the clay, and he felt it. And then Leach was next to him and he felt the clay, so – "This is short. It's not very good clay. So it's not very good clay," which was an insult to us because that's the clay we used and all. And we had a big conference and Yanagi, the head of the Folk Art Museum, you know, who was with me. He came and we had a big conference and Hamada said "If I went to England and I wanted to do drawing, I would go to the art store and I'd buy a pad and I'd buy a brush. So I'm in North Carolina now, and this is the clay that's here

and that's what I'll use." And Leach, you know – he just kept quiet. So Hamada did. He just, he worked every day. And then Leach finally, in the end, he started to do some work and he did some work. And he was snobby about the kiln and the glazes and all, but, of course, all the glazes we used, you know, the whole tradition in American pottery at that time all came from, you know, Japanese pottery and his book, you know. Leach's book was so inspiring to everybody. And then we had the kiln and the work come out, and Yanagi comes to the kiln and picks out one of Leach's pots and he says "I want to buy that. I want that for the Folk Art Museum in Tokyo. Bernard, this is one of your greatest pots." [LAUGHS] Of course, Leach, you know, first he wouldn't throw, then the glazes weren't right, the clays were – and then he did this pot and here's this great Japanese folk art expert and he's saying it's one of the greatest things you have and I want it for the museum. Silly man. You know, his book's inspiring and beautiful but – silly man. So, we had the sale and, yeah, they said they would give the money to the college. And we had this sale and there was tremendous enthusiasm. And here people were buying for modest prices. You know, Hamada even at that time was – I don't think he had quite been declared a National Treasure yet, but he was kind of a national treasure. And, you know, he was very colorful. He wears that native Japanese costume, and he wore it there, a great blue kind of – some very full pants with a, you know, tight kind of hobby (?) coats at the time.

MEH: Did Marguerite Wildenhain do much work that seminar?

DW: She wouldn't do anything either.

MEH: I haven't found anything.

DW: She did nothing. She was not quite in the right – It was a little hard for her.

MEH: Her memories were not exactly – I think she constantly harped on everything sort of being a back-patting situation – That everybody was sort of patting everybody else's back.

DW: No. Not true. She told me at one point that she was thinking even of not coming along. She didn't see quite, you know, how, how it worked.

MEH: I think she was actually asked because when they started doing this in the spring of 1952, when Olson started getting it together, of course, you and Karen weren't there and so they needed an American, and at that point she was American.

DW: Yes.

MEH: But then when you all came in, there was somebody there to host this.

DW: Yeah. What had happened was – You see, Marguerite was in – See, there was an international conference, in England, at Dartington Hall, and she was there. And, you know, Leach had started, you know, had sort of evolved this thing. And so she came along but she came along with misgivings because she – The back-patting thing she's talking about is that Yanagi, you know, the head of the Folk Art Museum, was a great, you know, the great fan of both Hamada and Leach. In fact, he most likely thought they were the two greatest potters in the world. And so he came along and sure, that's what she meant by back patting, is that, you know, that when Yanagi said to Leach "This is the greatest pot you've ever done." It was a beautiful pot. I mean Yanagi was no sloth, mind you. He was a very – But philosophically, it was very disturbing to Marguerite, you know, a lot

of their ideas, this whole romanticism about the folk art potter, you know. And I remember in a number of the seminars she really argued with them.

MEH: It was contrary to the Bauhaus ideas.

DW: Yeah. I think it was an over-romanticized idea, because, you know, they would talk about the, the folk potter, you know, who sat there all day and turned out all these, you know – they were so great because he was an unsophisticated, you know, he was just with the material. But what she would say is “But look, the one pot you have in the museum,” you know, “is like – I’m sure they went through a hundred pots and one was, you know, more *shibui* than the other. And that’s the one you have in your museum.” Or that was the one that was chosen for the tea ceremony. So it wasn’t as if – So there was a matter of choice and taste. It wasn’t just [OVERTALK]

MEH: Not just made in clay.

DW: Yeah. You know, it’s very hard. And it’s a hard thing in Buddhist thought to, you know – Well, where on the one hand you say there’s no judgment – that everything is of equal value. And then you start museums and write treatises and so forth, so she was attacking that premise which I think was completely, you know, viable. But I think she felt there was three to one, in a sense, and that’s what I think she must have meant by the, you know, the “back-patting” kind of thing.

MEH: Which was the book of Leach’s that had such an impact on potters then?

DW: I don’t remember the name of it, but you can ask. It’s the first book he wrote.

MEH: First book he did.

DW: He ever wrote, and then he’s written some since. But that book, I don’t think he wrote another book for ten or fifteen or twenty years. It was the first book. It may be called The Potter’s Craft. And it was all about his work in Japan and all. It’s a beautiful book. It’s very great. And it was interesting because that next summer, when Warren MacKenzie came – he came –

[END OF RECORDING ON SIDE 1, TAPE 1; SIDE 2, TAPE 2 BEGINS:]

DW: [MEH: it is not clear whom he is talking about. Possibly Leach.] –dynamic guy, but we didn’t like him because he didn’t really like us, in a sense, you know. I remember he used to come into our apartment and he’d go like this – you know, he’d look at a pot and he’d go like this, and you knew he was cutting off certain pots, you know, that maybe the spout was too big and he’d go like that a lot of the – And I’m a little harder on him than Karen. You know, Karen, you know, she was always a little softer on people than I. But Hamada, you know, he came and I remember he came in our apartment and he saw this pot and he wanted that, could he have that, he wanted that for his own collection and all, and, you know. Leach wouldn’t want anything because everything was too long or too short or [LAUGHS] that kind of – But I say Charles’s inspiration, you know, to bring that about, you know, was beautiful. I mean, Charles had an ability to, you know, to just really know where the vitality of things was. And then it was his idea that next summer to do this giant seminar, you know, which again was very ambitious. I mean, we weren’t that well known and they had this idea to do this whole thing and we, you know, we made it all happen. But it was his inspiration to do it, and it

was a very vital thing, you know. That summer. And a lot of those potters like Voulkos, they really weren't that well-known yet, you know. And we just gathered them all together, and it was really good. And I just read in Voulkos's book that that was the most important summer of his whole life. You know, that it shaped, he felt it shaped his – Because indeed, like you're saying, he was not doing that much experimental work yet. And that freedom he felt by just that contact with, you know, Kline and all those people. And Tworkov and Vicente. When he left – I didn't know it, you know, it was just a very seminal, important summer of his life. I just was looking through that book that Rose Slivka wrote about him.

MEH: They did a tea ceremony that – at the pottery seminar, the '52.

DW: [AFFIRMATIVE WITH QUESTION SOUND] I don't remember it.

MEH: I was asking you. That was really a question. Did Yanagi do a tea ceremony?

DW: I don't remember. I don't remember. He might well have.

MEH: First, let's go back to Charles Olson. He's a very difficult person for me to deal with.

DW: He would have been if you met him.

MEH: [LAUGHS]

DW: Unless he loved you. Then everything would be fine.

MEH: It seems that he was sort of the source of vitality at the college through that period, but then, on the other hand, it seems that so many of the things he did were destructive.

DW: That's true. That's very true. Very true. Very true. I would say that's true in his own life, you know, that he – even in his work, you know – You know, there were whole periods of time when he wasn't that productive, you know. Somebody once said that to me about – because Charles, you know, that this great ability to talk and speak. And somebody once said to me “Well, you know, Charles doesn't produce that much work but it's because he puts it all into talking – that's his art.” And they likened it to I think they said that Harold Rosenberg was a lot like that too, that Harold Rosenberg could just talk, you know, endlessly and all he needed was somebody to ask a question every hour, you know, and then he would go on. Perhaps that's why the environment, you know, that Charles was in down there was perfect for him because he always had that core of students. You know, for somebody who talks in that way, you can't be with your peers because they would challenge you a lot, you know. Because Charles was often extravagant, and then that would break the flow. [LAUGHS] You had to have that body of slightly admiring, you know, more accepting people. Oh yeah, he's a hard person, and I think that's what's interesting about Duberman's book is that, you know, Duberman catches some of that. I think Duberman says he loves him, but he's never met him, or something like that. Isn't that what Martin Duberman said?

MEH: Something like that, yeah.

DW: Yeah. And he was, you know, he was just this very many-faceted person. I suppose after you talk to everybody, you'll get some more idea of what Charles is about.

MEH: Yeah. There's always this ambivalence, though, that you have to deal with Charles in that –

DW: It was his nature.

MEH: Yeah. It seems one of the weaknesses at the college during the fifties, one of the things that – Always before that, I mean there were several strong men at the college. Obviously when Albers was there, he was always sort of the seminal figure, but he could tolerate other people, you know, in different disciplines, who were equally as strong as he. But I'm not really sure that Olson could do that. I see him as this tremendously egocentric man who –

DW: Well, yes and no. You know, like his relation to Huss was that, you know, I feel that he sort of dominated Huss a little but with somebody like us, you know, he didn't want us there. We stayed. He never dominated us, you know, at all and after a while he came – I mean we never threatened him but – And like Wolpe was there. Now, Wolpe, in a sense, respected him a lot, and he respected Wolpe. I mean in my time, there wasn't anybody that left because they had an ego difficulty with Charles, you see. I know at one point he sort of turned against Cage but – I mean, Cage, you know, was there, and he loved Merce, you know – Merce was only there summers, you know, but he [Olson] respected Merce tremendously and they got on very well. I think it's just there weren't that many people available, you know, peers available who were ready to do that, you know, to come to that kind of place, to fit into a structure which was in great difficulty.

MEH: I'm sure that's true.

DW: And so, you know, the whole – I mean, even like in the field of art teaching, there were a lot of faculty positions, you know. Like maybe fifteen, twenty years ago – No, modern artists were ever employed in art schools. And then after a while, you know, artists could teach in art schools any place in the country and get a day or two of work, you know, and be involved with your own studio. You know, because at Black Mountain it was different. You were involved with students a lot, real involvement, you know. So I think there weren't that many people involved. And in the painting field, a lot of New Yorkers didn't want to leave New York. See, like I remember Guston came down. We were very enthusiastic to have him join the winter faculty. You know, it was always easy to get people for the summer. People wanted to come vacation and all. But for winter faculty, you know, it was very hard, and it was very small, and I don't think that encouraged people that much, you know. When you have, you know, maybe twenty people, that's pretty tight, you know – students and faculty. You know, it was always a time. So I think that maybe people weren't encouraged that much to do it. I never think of Charles as egocen – I think of Charles as being willing to like control things, but it just happens naturally. I mean, I'm head of this foundation here. I find that I'm trying to control things. But I like to think about it in my more positive moments as being creative, you know. That if you want to create something from a place, you try to put it together. Now people will say you're on a power trip or an ego trip. But, on the other hand, you're trying to be creative and shape things. So sometimes it depends which side you look at it from.

MEH: When you left Black Mountain, you came to the Gate Hill Community directly?

DW: Yeah.

MEH: Why?

- DW:** What did they say to me? You go to eat at the rich man's table. They really put me down.
- MEH:** Oh, you mean at Black Mountain.
- DW:** Yeah. I remember Creeley said that to me one day: "Yeah, David, you're really going up there to eat at the rich man's table."
- MEH:** I think Olson really felt – I've read some letters – and he was very bitter toward the community.
- DW:** For having stolen us all away? We were traitors?
- MEH:** I think it was he was concerned that Paul's money was going somewhere else which he hoped to have for Black Mountain.
- DW:** Yeah. Well, that had stopped earlier. See, they invited Paul down to be on the faculty and that [OVERTALK] had fallen through. And after that didn't work, that's when Paul got this inspiration. I believe while he was still there, he asked me if we'd still be interested to come and join them here. But I think that's exaggerated. He never said that to me, and I just maybe vaguely heard him having said that about, you know, about the money going there or that we were traitors or that kind of silliness.
- MEH:** I think this was like the fall when Paul Williams came down to sort of see if it might work out for them to work there. I mean, Olson was very realistic. There were very few sources of income for Black Mountain then. [OVERTALK]
- DW:** But Paul had already given money, you see. Paul had already given money and –
- MEH:** I think Olson realized that this would be a real commitment. Gate Hill would, and his energies would go elsewhere besides Black Mountain. OVERTALK]
- DW:** But that isn't realistic. I mean Paul came. It didn't really work out. There weren't that many students for Paul. Paul didn't know quite how he'd function there. Then there was the whole thing with – Paul wanted to have a friend come down – Dave Week [PH] – and join the faculty. And I remember Charles thought that Paul was trying to already take power, you know. Silliness. [LAUGHS] But Paul had given money already and sure – But Paul was, you know, you could tell that Paul was not that interested. He really wasn't, because, you know, there was always that seamy aspect of the college at that time, and, you know, we didn't feel it because we were so involved in our own work. But somebody coming from the outside – you've got to pick up the energies that are going on. It's important to you, you know. And Paul, I suppose, didn't see that, you see, while we were in it and working. You know, it was wonderful for us. A very rich time for us.
- MEH:** How would you compare, how would you relate the Gate Hill Community to Black Mountain? I mean obviously the people –
- DW:** Well, Paul wanted to start another Black Mountain, and he couldn't. That was his idea. He wanted to – I just wrote an article about it recently. And see, what Paul wanted to do was he wanted to have a common dining hall and small houses.
- MEH:** You didn't do the article that – someone recently sent me a copy from some newspaper up here – did you? Somebody else did that article.
- DW:** Yeah. I helped him but I'm sorry I did. [LAUGHS]
- MEH:** Where was your article published?

DW: It's not published yet. It's an exhibit I'm going to do. It's just an overview. I'm going to do an exhibit in a year-and-a-half on the architecture of Gate Hill Co-op.

MEH: Oh, wonderful.

DW: Somebody asked me to be curator for it, so I called Paul Williams and said "Would it be all right?" and he said "Yes," which surprised me because Paul didn't like that kind of stuff. And so I was just writing, you know, a history of that. So when we first came, Paul's premise was that you're all living in little apartments in New York so at least you'll have your little apartment up here. So we'll build all these little apartments and a big dining hall, common dining hall. Well that's not what happened at all. What happened was that once most people were in the country, they wanted to have decent houses and their own house. It was Vera who said that, you know, because none of us had children except she. And she said it wasn't really realistic to have a common dining hall, you know, with kids have to eat at a certain time and all. And it just wasn't realistic. So we didn't do it. But that was Paul's idea was to try to, you know – And then M.C., you know, over the years, tried to bring that other aspect of Black Mountain, the teaching situation. She tried to start a summer school a number of times, and most people weren't interested. I mean, she wanted, you know, to have John and Merce, and John was never really that interested. She knew she needed him, but like he didn't need her. You know, it wasn't reciprocal, and it was hard for her. And then I remember even Karen – Karen, I don't know what I thought exactly but the idea of giving over her pottery shop every summer to a school did not – because Karen was a production potter, and she knew it would be hard to be a production potter and all. So Karen – I mean she's relaxed a lot now and she teaches and loves teaching and gives seminars all over the country. And so what we were going to do was build a theatre, you know, which would be the core of the school. It would be the performing place and all. And Emile d'Antonio was supposed to be involved with us and all, but that never happened. So the aspect of school never developed, which was Black Mountain. And the aspect, you know, of community in that kind of very close way did not develop. But that was Paul's idea – was to make, to have that spirit. And in a way it was, you know, it was right. It was to take the school spirit and bring it into like what you do when you get out of school. You know, then you become a worker and a producer but you try to keep that sense of community. And in a way it was there. In a way it was there. I found living at the co-op was really exciting – not the way Dollmuss [PH] made out in his article, which was all about divorce and death.

MEH: Right. [LAUGHS] It seems that for you and Karen it would have closely really duplicated Black Mountain because you were production potters and you had the shop.

DW: We had the richness of all the other people there [OVERTALK]

MEH: [OVERTALK] The stimulation of friends and community.

DW: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

MEH: When did you start making film? When I started doing this project, I think you were in Japan and you were doing sculpture.

DW: Yeah. Right. And then I went to India on the research grant after that.

MEH: It's India. You were in India.

- DW:** Yeah. And then I came back and I, you know, we came to live here. We did the foundation.
- MEH:** What is the foundation?
- DW:** Well, there's a whole other of history. It was started in about – see, in the early sixties. A number of people came to live here at this church. They bought this church and they started this investigation into multimedia art. They were one of the real pioneers, you know. Ken Kesey on the West Coast? They were here and, you know, there was Millbrook up here with, you know, Leary and Alfred and so there was that kind of thing. So there was a giant psychedelic tabernacle in the main church here.
- MEH:** I didn't realize that.
- DW:** And, you know, twenty speakers and sixteen slide machines and a fountain and psychedelic paintings and lights and sound.
- MEH:** This would have been during the early sixties?
- DW:** Yeah. It was a church, and at that time there were a number of people interested in it. You know, electronics manufacturers and all. And so they formed a foundation at that time to receive money to do their projects. They toured different colleges doing multimedia things. And so there've been a number of people, you know, involved in it. And then when we came back from India, you know, we decided to come and live here. And the foundation was very quiescent, but then there was a kind of commune situation. And then we sort of cleared that up and then we were just here alone with a beautiful space. Gerd Stern, who was executive director of this rather quiescent foundation, said "Well why don't we try and get some grants and get it going?" So that's what we've been doing.
- MEH:** So it's a continuation of the same foundation?
- DW:** Yeah.
- MEH:** What is it called?
- DW:** Intermedia.
- MEH:** Intermedia Foundation.
- DW:** So for the last four years we've been doing like thirty performances a year, and we have video projects and movie projects and now we have a joint art gallery in Sparkill. And we're doing all this, you know – You know, John Cage's, and we're trying to get Merce next month, and almost all the Black Mountain people in the area have done work here at one time or other. And David Tudor – the person who works with David Tudor – John Driscoll – just gave an electronics music concert here. So we're doing media work and that's what we're doing now – you know, video and movie work. That's what I'm involved and a lot – plus, you know, running the foundation. Yeah.
- MEH:** So it's sort of a group of people, the foundation, who –
- DW:** Yeah, it's a loosely –
- MEH:** [OVERTALK] You have people come in and do things.
- DW:** Yeah, it's a loosely-linked group of artists, you know, who put on performance and then there are others, you know, who come also from the community. But also a lot of people from New York and all over. We had Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre here this year and now Music for A While. LaNoue Davenport, who is – I believe his wife –

MEH: Patsy.

DW: Patsy was involved with Black Mountain. Well, it's like this other resident company here, and they do that. And now they're going up to Bread and Puppet this August and doing a thing with the puppet theatre. And then we'll be presenting it here. So that's what the foundation is. It's unique because we live here, you know. So that's sort of us there and them here.

MEH: It seems for so many people that – I mean, a lot of people are doing different things than they were doing at Black Mountain.

DW: No.

MEH: Well, like look at M.C. She came there teaching Thomas Mann and literature.

DW: Well, I think that's part of –

MEH: Look at Peter Voulkos. It seems like it was a seminal place where people sort of gathered energies and have continued.

DW: Yeah. I don't think they changed that much. You see, what Black Mountain did – because it was small and all – to me it was always like a weather vane, you know, or a bellwether, like they say, of what was happening. My theory always about why Black Mountain, you know, closed finally was that we were in the time of the Beat Generation and, you know, that whole thing started to come to us and the whole language thing, that whole kind of simplistic language thing that happened with the Beat. All of a sudden people were talking that way there. I mean, they were hardly talking that way, maybe a few – a small group in New York, you know, and all of a sudden there was this way of talking. And I don't even know if it was involved with drugs. It might have been just drinking and all, but there's a certain patter. It comes from drugs and all, but there it was and people were talking that way. And, you see, the whole thing – the way Mailer sometimes talks between, the difference between the "beats" and the "hips" was that the beat people were beat and the hip people had a more positive creative aspect. That the beat was a time of like it's in the dance of Siva, you know – like first it has to be destruction, there's a breaking down, you know, like your – a lot of beat ideas were sort of destructive of society so you were always thumbing your nose at it or ridiculing it. Then in the hip generation, people decided they weren't going to thumb their nose at people anymore. They were going to give love to everyone, you know. That was the way you conquered, you know, this society.

MEH: I see Black Mountain and –

DW: Also – Just let me finish. So what I'm saying is that that was my theory of why it sort of failed, you know. It was because a beat mentality does not make for strong community. You see, Black Mountain started at the time of Roosevelt and the whole – you know, it was a very positive thing. So that in a sense Black Mountain ending was only a kind of real reflection of what was really happening with young people – was that you cannot have – I mean, a college is a community and you can't have this strong community. And the same way, I was just saying to M.C. that a lot of what happened was it's not that we changed but that we reflected a lot which was happening. I mean, what M.C.'s about and I'm about is the sense that an artist is no longer a man of one discipline. You know, that used to be the idea – the romance of the artist, you know. You spent a

hundred hours every day doing his art, and he was ready to die for it, and he was going to shape the world. And then there's another consciousness now. And so what M.C. is doing is, I mean, a rather beautiful thing, is integrating the two, you know. She still is very – you know, her book, Centering and all of that, is indeed an integration of, you know, her poetry, her Thomas Mann or whatever, into, you know, the hand and clay and trying to bring the two together. You know, she came back and studied with us and then started the shop with us.

MEH: I always relate the early years at the college as being much closer to the hippie mentality really of the sixties, you know, the return to nature, the idea of nature being good, the idea we're going to win the world through love, you know. Real optimism and a sense of community, even though there was a lot of antagonism, even in the early years within the college community. And then the sixties as being, you know, much more closely related to the Beats and alienation.

DW: Except the hips came after the beats.

MEH: Well that's why I think that – the early – Yeah, in terms of Black Mountain, the Black Mountain during the thirties and early forties was more like the hips of the fifties or the sixties, in their mentality.

DW: [OVERTALK] Possibly. Yeah. [AFFIRMATIVE]

MEH: This alienation, sense of alienation. I always think of kudzu as being – this idea that nature isn't good, that it's destructive, that it's taking you over. And I just see the kudzu taking over the campus, you know, a couple of feet every day.

DW: Yeah. Did you know that Rauschenberg did that for one of our big – I don't know which evening it was, but I remember he went out and got the kudzu and covered the whole hall with it? It was so beautiful, you know. He has that way, you know, a wonderful decorative sense, and he just went out and got tons of it and decorated the whole hall. It was so beautiful, really great.

MEH: No, I hadn't heard about that. But I wanted to ask you if there were other particular events like that that you remember – parties or –

DW: No. I mean, you know, the formal dances of Albers were gone. I don't know. Everything was an occasion, in a way. You see, for instance, Wes Huss was having a birthday. M.C. was no longer on the faculty but she was visiting. And I said "Let's do something for Wes, for his birthday." So she and I worked together, and we decided we were going to do a thing on great lovers of all time. You know, like Abelard and Heloise and Romeo and Juliet and everybody. So we got this raft, which must have been for floating out in the river for – maybe it was for swimming from or something. And I remember Jorge Fick was the oarsman. It had a long rope on it, and we all sat on the porch looking in the lake. M.C. and I did the whole thing together. And she read something about them or whatever. And the light would go on, and Jorge Fick would be rowing this big raft out into the lake and the light would come on and there would be these lovers doing some mime thin. And the light would go down and pull in the raft. And it was really great. I remember that. And I remember Karen was – did some whole kind of romantic – oh, when it all started, I remember we dressed her all in leaves and she had a big like a lily trumpet and she sounded the trumpet and then said that, this was going to be a night, you know, of lovers and we had [INAUDIBLE]. I remember that.

MEH: Everyone remembers Karen from that.

DW: Really? Yes. Because, see, their idea of Karen was Miss Tight. And then when there she was with her pubic hair sort of half hanging out and all – and I knew the other part of her but – because I lived with her – but a lot of people didn't.

MEH: [LAUGHTER] This is what everybody says. They just thought of her as being so prim and proper and here she came out in the nude. Everybody was astounded.

DW: Well, I made her do it. But I mean, you know, I told her to do it and she [OVERTALK]

MEH: It made a definite impact.

DW: Yeah. And she had a nature, too, which a lot of people didn't know. I mean like, you know, when she peed on the floor, you know. But that was her nature to, you know, just open up.

MEH: Do you remember anything about the drama performances that Huss did?

DW: Well, I remember Blood Wedding a lot.

MEH: How is that? I mean could you describe the performance? I hear various things. Some people say the performances were wonderful and other people say no, they really weren't.

DW: Yeah, I think Huss was mixed beans. But I remember Blood Wedding was pretty good.

MEH: Was it performed in the dining hall?

DW: Yeah. A lot of it in the dark, you know, and all. [LAUGHS] Don't put this in the little [UNINTEL], but my sister, you know, was the star and Jack Rice was the gypsy or whoever – what is he? I don't know who. But, well, you know, the lover in Blood Wedding who goes in the woods with her and then follows – Do you know the story?

MEH: No. [NEGATIVE]

DW: Well, I can't remember the tale, but I think it has to do with classes – that this woman is of more noble birth and she has this lover who is of less noble birth or something. And the end scene is they go in the woods, and the horsemen are looking for him, you know, to kill him or whatever. And [LAUGHS] the stage was [UNINTEL] and I don't know what it was, maybe his nervousness or something, but he really tried to attack my sister in the last act of the play and all of a sudden, you know, these lines coming out, and he'd just gotten so passionate and all. But he started to, you know, try, make approaches to her, and he got out of the play and into real life. You know, my sister was really put off, but I thought that's really – I mean, this was pre-Artaud, you know. I mean there wasn't that much talk about that. But I said "That's for real, you know." Jack really got so carried away with the role of being her lover that he was trying to really make love to her on stage. I remember that one. I don't remember much else that Huss did. M. C. and I put on another small thing here, but I don't remember – Maybe you should remind me. I don't remember too many other of Wes's plays. Oh, he did Woman of Szechuan.

MEH: Szechuan, yes.

DW: The Brecht play. Yeah. That was pretty good, yeah. I thought that was pretty good.

MEH: Oh, do you still have work done at the college? You have this teapot.

DW: [AFFIRMATIVE]

MEH: The only thing I've located – I think Karen has a platter and there is a tile panel at the Poteat House. And the other things, you know, I found like – I haven't found [BREAK IN RECORDING?]

DW: Margaret Roberts at the Southern Handicrafts Guild – if she's still alive. I think Karen, yeah, she would because she used to buy a lot of Karen's stuff, you know. She loved it so much, so I'm sure she had some of Karen's best things. And Peter – well we have some of that stuff that – Dan Rhodes – I don't remember what he produced at that time.

MEH: He did – Like three small pots that he did there or something.

DW: He had them? You've met him?

MEH: Yeah.

DW: Where, on the West Coast?

MEH: New York. He was in New York when I started this about six years ago. Is he on the West Coast now?

DW: Yeah.

MEH: Yeah. Warren MacKenzie I haven't met. I haven't found anything he did at the college.

DW: He might not have – I think maybe he just did the teacups or something and – Peter – I said Karen, yeah, Karen has a pot that he did down there, one she owns. That we own three. I know Dorothea – what was Dorothea's last name?

MEH: Rockbourne.

DW: Yeah. She might have some of Hamada's things but she really loved the man. And, as I say, I might be able to locate one or two of the slab pots that were done. There was a sculpture. I have a photograph of it. It's gone, and the other sculptures I did, I don't know if I'd want to show this stuff. God. Yeah, then we had a big show at America House of a lot of those tiles, and we sold them. You know, they sold a lot of it, and so and I don't know if America House doesn't have the records. [UNINTEL]

MEH: As I see the exhibition, it would be both historical but then also in terms of what people are doing now, you know. It would be contemporary also, which I think would be much more exciting, you know.

DW: Maybe you could take some of the material I did for this other show.

MEH: Right. Yeah. Sure.

DW: That would be interesting.

MEH: I'm also interested if you do this exhibition of [OVERTALK] architect.

DW: That's what I'm talking about.

MEH: Yeah, I immediately hit on that, you know, you might be able to work with us on doing a section on the Gate Hill Community.

DW: Because John, John Cage did a whole wall in his house there.

MEH: Are you going to do a film or –

DW: What, on that?

MEH: [AFFIRMATIVE] – or do it with photographs? How are you going to do your exhibition.

DW: I don't know yet. We're trying to do an exhibit of [UNINTEL] about South Mountain Road which, you know, is right down here in New City where –

MEH: Fred pointed that out to me when we were coming in.

DW: Yeah, Helen Hayes lived there and Maxwell Anderson and he wrote *High Tor* there, the play, early play. And Henry – [UNINTEL] And they're doing an exhibit next year on that, and we're trying to do a movie about that. And we're trying to tie the people to the architecture, not just do a film on aesthetics. So we may do the Gate Hill Co-op that way.

MEH: It would be great for our exhibition.

DW: Oh yeah, I think it could be helpful. So people have warned me against doing that movie about The Land because, you know, they say it's going to open – just like I'm sure – I don't know if it's happening with you. I mean Duberman, when he did his book, he said never had so many people cried, you know. It was a very searing thing for a lot of people to talk about the college again. And Gate Hill, even a short history, you know, is a lot of people's energies and spirits have gone into it. And even Paul, in a way, I think he may be the saddest of all is that he's not living there. It was his vision, his design, his idea. He lent the money to the co-op, and he's not there and I think in a way he feels –

MEH: Is he not there by choice though?

DW: Well, I don't know, he's living with my sister on Cape Cod. That's what he's doing.

MEH: They're out there now. See, when I talked to him, they were still here.

DW: Yeah. No. He was here. Oh yeah. No, he's up there. But yeah, that would, that might be an interesting aspect of the exhibit too. I mean, as far as Black Mountain people. Well, Betsy was at Black Mountain. .

MEH: Right.

DW: She was there and she had a house there.

MEH: Most of the houses there were designed by Paul, weren't they?

DW: All.

MEH: All of them.

DW: In one way or other, they were all designed by Paul. Well, he made out that anybody could do what they wanted, but he really wanted to design them all. That's why M.C. stayed in the white farmhouse because she didn't like Paul's ideas. I mean, she and David didn't like modern (?) design.

MEH: Well they're all very exotic, you know.

DW: Oh yeah. Oh, I think they're great. It's funny, we were going to do this exhibit and some of the people at the Rockland Center, who are going to do it, their impressions of the kind of architecture, they didn't want to do it. She didn't think it was architecture. [NOT SURE OF THE ACCURACY OF THIS SECTION] You know, I mean it's very interesting. The building is not always that refined but it's full of ideas.

MEH: Okay. One thing I wanted to ask you. Bernard Leach later married.

DW: Yes. Right.

MEH: Janet – Let me see if I can identify from my list. Janet Darnell?

DW: Yeah, right. She lived right near here, which was funny because we, we weren't even thinking of coming to live here. She was involved with Threefold Farm, which is the anthroposophist community here. Well, she came all the way from there to Black Mountain for the seminar, met him at that time, corresponded with him, and then, I don't know, went to be his secretary or something. And then we

came and lived here, you know, which is just fifteen miles away from that whole community and got involved with quite a few – My son, in fact, went to school there, because, you know, the anthroposophists were interested in schooling. Yeah, Janet came from around here. [AFFIRMATIVE] In fact, I met them in the railroad station in Japan about five or six years ago. You know I hadn't seen her ever since that seminar. So what kind of book do you want to write?
[INTERRUPTION IN RECORDING] I wouldn't even see him.

MEH: Oh really?

DW: Yeah, I was a little more hard-nosed then, and I said "Well, I'm not interested," and a lot of people of course gave him a hard time. And then he came, and we started talking about modern theatre and all and he was really, you know, a terrific guy. And from then on I told him anything and he used to – You know, there were whole sections of the book which were, you know, the whole thing I think about (?). Yeah but he used quite a bit of what I told him in the book. I'll keep in touch if that, you know, if that show develops, you know, about The Land. I think it would be interesting in the sense of, you know, following – It would be in a sense a following what people do, you know, did when they left Black Mountain, how they took what from there and how they integrated it and all. And, of course, Paul, you know, who did his main study in architecture there and all. Actually the inspiration for that property there but was from Percival and Paul Goodman's book called Communitas. And I don't know if Paul got those ideas, you know, when Goodman was down there or whatever. So it's really an interesting extension of – he most likely did meet Goodman, at first, there and then became, you know, connected and his ideas did inspire the whole way that that Land was built, the whole idea of a little town communities rather than spreading everybody out. Philosophically that came from his book. Yeah, we could do that. [OVERTALK] I don't know quite how I'm going to do it. I'm most likely going to do it photographically with – I don't know if they're going to do a film. I'd almost like to do it photographically with some kind of documentation which will have to do with people's lives and their relation to the architecture and the place. I think that's the way we'll do it. We just did a big show of Karen Karnes's work at the art gallery in Sparkill.

MEH: I didn't know about that one.

DW: Did you go see any of the writers? What was his name? Do you ever see Hellman. Robert Hellman. Have you seen him?

DW: Oh yeah, I haven't – [INTERRUPTION IN RECORDING] I was going to do the dishes but students don't have to work in the kitchen and do farming.

MEH: There's a wonderful quote of Charles's in a letter in which he says, you know, "Just academics. No more dishwashing, no more of this horseshit." He was just –

DW: Silly. Silly. I mean, you know, especially when you have a small college and you don't have money, who's going to do it, you know?

MEH: Right. It seems things had changed at that point though, that the people who were at the college then, for the most part, say after '50 or after '51, were really interested in their own professional work, be they students or faculty, and not that interested in community in the sense of washing dishes and farming.

DW: Well, I think that's true. But I had always thought philosophically that was always the idea of the college was that they would be professionals at work rather than just teachers.

MEH: There also was a corollary. I mean, that was an important idea that teachers should be professionals in their own, producing people. But there also was the idea that, an early idea at the college, that people who were – should be not only an artist and a teacher or a historian and a teacher or whatever, but that a person should also be able to handle practical functions of a community, be it administration or be it washing dishes or – [MEH: this is very confused!]

DW: Yeah, I think that idea was –

MEH: It was this whole work program idea.

DW: Yeah, that was –

MEH: It partially grew out of necessity, because they had no money in the early years.

DW: Nor in the later years, in the end years. Yeah. I, I don't know. Yeah, I think that again reflected something that happened in the whole country, that there was a kind of reaction against any kind of ideology – and that seemed like ideology. The ideology of community, you know, was like something that was being pushed at people. And, I mean, it happened in a natural way, in a certain way. But the whole idea of upkeep is really a hard thing. I mean, they have that at Gate Hill now. Especially when you have a student population, you know, where the students are passing through. They're only there to use a place. So the faculty really have to like, you know, have that sense, you know, of the importance of that.

MEH: Then there was this whole other thing about structure because when I was – I was at Warren Wilson, and all of the students there pay only tuition. They earn their room and board by working fifteen hours a week.

DW: At Warren Wilson?

MEH: At Warren Wilson. Which can be on the farm or it can be upkeep of mowing grass or it can be in the cafeteria or even – I mean some people are doing things like exhibitions, you know, for their work program. This one guy was doing an interesting oral history thing for his work program. But it's a required thing. I mean, you do that because you know you have to do that assignment of fifteen hours a week and you don't say "I just don't want to go to work today", you know, or this sort of thing. [INTERRUPTION OFFMIKE] Sometimes it worked, you know. In the early years there was this lady, Mary Gregory, there.

DW: Right. Molly.

MEH: Molly. I mean, she got things done. I mean, if she was going out to the farm and ten kids knew they were expected, then they were there. But it was a matter of the authority being in her personality, not in the matter of they'd be kicked out if they didn't show up.

DW: Oh yeah. By inspiration.

MEH: So how – Did people still talk about Molly?

DW: I didn't know her. Karen studied with her and was very inspired by her. See, Karen was a [OVERTALK] student.

MEH: [OVERTALK] Yes, Karen was there earlier.

[END OF RECORDING ON SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]