

Interviewee: VERA BAKER WILLIAMS
Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS
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[BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

VBW: [IDENTIFICATION NOT TRANSCRIBED]. What are you going to do with these tapes?

MEH: Well, I'll draw information for the book. For any direct quotes I'll get permission.

VBW: And when you're done.

MEH: And when I'm done, I don't know what's going to happen. They'll be somewhere to an archive somewhere or a library. But with permissions of people.

VBW: Also, I'll get to read anything connected with what I --

MEH: Any direct quote, anything that's directly -- that you're directly quoted as having said will be sent to you for permission before it's published. Any -- you know, if I'm drawing conclusions from what lots of people have said, of course, there's no way really to sort that out. But any specific incident, anything specific to the tape, your permission will be --

VBW: When you say "anything specific," I would like that to include specifically beyond the direct quote. If you use me, use my name and you have a certain presence of me in your writing, even without quoting me, I would like anything

directly attributable or said from talking to me that doesn't feed into a larger general picture, I would like to have – choose to look at.

MEH: You will be sent a typed-out permission form. Let's see, okay. You went to Black Mountain for the first time in the winter of 1945. How did you hear about the college?

VBW: I heard about it at Music and Art High School, where I was a student in New York City.

MEH: You're from New York?

VBW: Yes. But born in Hollywood, California.

MEH: Can you remember now what the college's reputation was? What you heard about it, why it appealed to you?

VBW: Yes, it appealed to me in a very curious way – kind of anti-Black Mountain way. I didn't go there because I wanted to go to Black Mountain, to some extent, though I was attracted by its location in the total countryside. I was attracted by the way it was organized and the community aspects of it, but I ended up going there because I could not go to St. John's in Annapolis. In high school, where I was an art student, you see, I became very interested in the Great Books Program, and I used to go to a seminar outside of school and was close to people who went there, so that was where I wanted to go. I wrote to them, and they wouldn't take women, and I said well, I would live by myself in the town and so forth and so on. I couldn't convince them, but they recommended going to Black Mountain where I could follow, they said, whatever course of study I wished, so that I could go there and more or less try to parallel what they did.

There was also, if I remember rightly, a professor at Black Mountain was shared with them or had some dual connection – Straus was his name. He was – I don't remember his first name. I'm pretty sure he taught philosophy and he was married to Trudi Straus whom I studied German with, and she taught violin and German.

MEH: You mean Trudi Straus.

VBW: Erwin Straus. I'm pretty sure he was a philosophy person.

MEH: He was psychology-philosophy.

VBW: He had some connection with St. John's – either they had close friends there and went there to lecture. So, in some way this connection was made through friends and people who were at St. John's and then my school, Music and Art, gave me the brochures. So, I decided to go there.

MEH: Did you have a particular interest when you went in terms of curriculum? Obviously, Black Mountain was not a place to study Great Books, you must have learned. I mean you could study the Great Books there, but that wasn't a set curriculum.

VBW: Well that first year I was there I took a course in the Bible.

MEH: With – ?

VBW: Ed, Eddie Lowinsky. I took philosophy with Dr. Dehn, and I took art and, I believe, German. Though in a way I took a larger part of my program in more traditional areas that I was interested in then – a lot of people (INAUDIBLE - VOICE TENDS TO DROP CONSISTENTLY), though I had been an art student literally all my life. I started to go to art school as a child.

MEH: How would you describe the general tenor of life at the college, in the early years when you were there? The post-War years.

VBW: (OVERTALK) Well, I came there at a unique time because it was in the middle of the War, and there were – if I remember rightly – the proportions were something like this. These aren't right, but there were perhaps fifty students, more or less, which I think was low, a low number for that. Of those I think only five were men, and we had – For instance, we hauled our own coal from the siding. We had to shovel it out of the railroad cars and all, and I imagine they didn't have to do that before the War.

MEH: They did.

VBW: They did that, they all did that.

MEH: To save paying somebody to bring it out (OVERTALK).

VBW: A financial thing. I had thought it was because of a shortage of males at the college. Also there was very little traveling about because of the shortage of gas, but it was mostly I think that it was small and (INAUDIBLE) that was any different than any other time.

MEH: Do you remember courses in particular? Were you acquainted with the Bauhaus and with the sort of curriculum Albers offered?

VBW: I don't know. I probably was somewhat acquainted with it because I had gone to an art high school, and I certainly knew the work of Paul Klee and some of the Expressionists. I don't know how much I would have been acquainted with that, I don't think I was at all aware of the extent of it or the architectural aspects of it when I came there, but I'm not too clear about that. I might have

been. I was aware of Le Corbusier, who wasn't Bauhaus but I mean I must have read some architecture and had some sense of what was going on in architecture, because we had to take art history at Music and Art. My long-time art teacher from childhood did not want me to go there, didn't think that it was the right place. She had been very interested in expressive art. Her name was Florence Cane. She was an (INAUDIBLE).

MEH: What was her name again?

VBW: Florence Cane. She was married to Melville Cane, a poet. She was part of circle around art history. She pioneered an expressive kind of free art for children, as opposed to what was going on in the public schools at the time. She had a school of her own in Radio City for a long time, and then she became affiliated with the New York University Clinic for Gifted Children. She did a book called The Artist in Each of Us and in which there were chapters about me and my sister, who had been long-time students, you know, because it was partly an experiment. I think that she was not – she didn't favor the Albers courses – she felt it was too rigid.

MEH: What is your impression in retrospect? What was your impression at the time, and what is your impression in retrospect? Speaking specifically of the art curriculum – the Albers curriculum.

VBW: I think her view is both true and quite wrong, actually. His curriculum was – The design course was very freeing and imaginative. It was not at all unimaginative or overly rigid or (INAUDIBLE). Nor was he interested in getting people to paint like himself. But there were aspects of really aesthetic dictation at Black

Mountain having to do with decor, design, more (?) attitudes I think. It's very hard to say anything very definite about this because – or not definitive. When you think that of the people he invited to teach in the summer, people so opposite to himself, such as de Kooning, whom he thought very highly of. Kline.

MEH: No, he didn't invite Kline.

VBW: Oh, that came after him?

MEH: He invited somebody like Varda, who was very different, or Jacob Lawrence, who was very different. Gave them their space, you know.

VBW: Right. So, I don't see how you could really say that in his conscious choices that he was narrowing. Quite the opposite. But there was an effect of his whole personality.

MEH: I think that's true.

VBW: Just the thing of what color you painted your studio, for instance, you had to be quite strong-minded not to paint his way. The white was to have a touch of umber in it, so as not to be dead white.

MEH: A touch of umber to give it some warmth, or – ?

VBW: To take the chalkiness out of it. You became to some extent indoctrinated with the ideas some of which were really quite right. Then, on the other hand, really he encouraged you (INAUDIBLE), just the fact that there weren't very many facilities there. We had to do everything ourselves. The first – As soon as I got there I painted my study and I did something on the lathe. I made a table leg on the lathe and made a desk.

MEH: Let's stick with Albers and then come back to studies. I agree basically in your perception from people I've talked to and that it seemed that Albers could be very dogmatic in many respects, in his class, in terms of the way – but then there was like a contradiction. He didn't want disciples and he didn't want people to always – He could remain open in other ways, like bringing different types of people in. Even visually, you don't come up, even though obviously, you know, walls were to be painted white and things that were purchased at the college were very Constructivist in design, but at the same time you had cane-bottom chairs. There's this mixture of North Carolina mountains and Bauhaus that –

VBW: Well, the cane-bottomed chairs were chosen as a functional local article. We have to talk about Anni Albers when we talk about Albers, too. She was very interested in craft and the kind of craft produced by indigenous people. The school had a beautiful weaving collection that was given in memory of a student who died, and she collected much of that from South American sources. Educationally, they were certainly consciously broad-minded, but they had a – they spoke often – He, in particular, spoke with enormous disdain against any kind of expressionism in the student art, by which he had a lot meant an ego-centered kind of work in which studies would immediately become pictures, as is so frequently now the case and every little doodle, scribble – He was very against that. But I remember when I was doing my graduation project under him, I did – I began to do a lot of things that I just wanted to do of my own. When he saw them, he was very surprised by them. That was a curious thing

about him, too. He said, "Who did these?" Here I was his student. He didn't
(INAUDIBLE) That was – You were expected to be a student, not to be a
painter.

MEH: I think there's some truth in that. I think some people who consider themselves
painters, you know, very early, got caught up in this thing of stopping learning
too early.

VBW: And getting too interested in –

MEH: It seems that there was a strong reaction, in the post-War years when the GIs
started coming, against – you know, especially the students of Bolotowsky, who
– He would let students paint paintings and frame them immediately. These
students reacted very strongly against Albers. I'm not really sure what the basis
– if that was personality or if it was really theoretical or what it was.

VBW: Well, I think a lot of it was personality. I imagine – I'm not sure, it's just in
retrospect – that there were problems in all schools when the GIs came.

[INTERRUPTION FROM TELEPHONE]

MEH: Okay, you were saying that probably there were problems in lots of schools
with GIs.

VBW: Yeah, not because the GIs were problems, but because they were older than
students who ordinarily came to college, so that would not have been so much
the case in Black Mountain where people had always been somewhat older.

MEH: Yes, but not that much older.

VBW: They had just been through an experience which gave them leave to feel that
they were not to be treated as unknowing. Now, in Black Mountain, especially

since – I don't know in the other periods before I came so much– but it was in part, at least the air of life there, was governed by an elite and certain aesthetic ideas and certain ways, probably more than anything else, that didn't make room for these people. I mean even the clothes you wore, the color you painted your room (UNINTEL) more determined by use of the scru- (?), not because they made you do that, I mean you know that, but because you came when you were young and you didn't know and you were very attracted by that, and because these people had enormous authority in a good sense. Albers had many dictatorial ways and ways that would not be thought of as proper in a teacher, being overbearing and so forth. But they were completely made up for by his great ability to teach and his whole view of art and his view of education, his view of art and education and life. He was basically very committed to people and their education, which you knew. His ability (INAUDIBLE) shabby about that so that you accepted a certain amount of quite counterproductive ways, but everybody didn't accept that. As in all art schools, women accepted them better than men. It was easier to push women around (INAUDIBLE).

MEH: I think I've been told too that it was easier for women to get around Albers than for men.

VBW: Probably.

MEH: That a woman could wear a pretty blouse or –

VBW: Or cry.

MEH: Did women cry that much?

VBW: Well women students al – especially art students. Eddie Lowinsky's students, for instance, it seemed to me were always in tears. He was an overbearing person. Great learning. I learned a great deal from him, but in retrospect, I can see now that he was overbearing. These people, a number of them came from Germany and a very particular kind of position a professor has, and had, in Germany, brought that to America. The GIs probably were not about to like that, right?

MEH: It seems that there –

VBW: So, they came – Something else to add is they came is they came in a bunch. You always get that problem in a community or a school when the new comes in a group.

MEH: It seems, though, that they made a difference in the sense that in the early years, in the thirties, Black Mountain was very much caught up in Progressive Education, essentially, and Deweyism. There was much more emphasis on art expression than on any real rigorous attention to learning. Having these European immigrants come who had – their whole education had been very rigorous attention to learning – they made an important difference in the community in that they did have expectations, and just by their own example in their own work set an example which said that you just don't go out and write a song or paint a painting. It takes a certain amount of knowledge as well as inspiration and whatever. So, it seems to me that they made – this may not have been as evident in the later years because there'd been much more mixing at that point.

VBW: Of other people. Yeah, well, the period when I first came was very much in the purview of Albers. For one thing, it was right after a split, of which it was impossible to get full details when you came because everybody was so sore from it. But people had fought over – over the question of whether the school could take black students, who would have been called Negro at the time, and a number of progressive people left. It's really interesting, historically, that the Bauhaus, which was a very progressive force in Germany in its time, its teachings ultimately, as applied in architecture and advertising and so, forth, are not progressive at all. In fact, they have married beautifully with the corporate state.

MEH: Except if you – I agree with you. Except an interesting thing is in looking, for example, at the architects who were at Black Mountain – of course, Black Mountain drew a particular type of person who wasn't that committed to the corporate state. In those people who studied with Albers have not produced this sort of, you know, sterile, what we think of as what came out of the Bauhaus.

VBW: Who are you thinking of?

MEH: Oh, I'm thinking of Albert Lanier, Hank Bergman. I'm thinking of the earlier people – Claude Stoller, Robert Bliss, these are people who were there before you were.

VBW: Or Paul Williams.

MEH: Paul Williams. People – Of course, they had other influences, like Bucky Fuller, but (OVERTALK) Albers' teaching sensitized people to textures in such a way that they're sort of closer to Breuer in appearance than to Gropius in that

they've used a lot of stone and wood and natural materials. And (UNINTELL)
done domestic architecture, not skyscrapers.

VBW: I think that's a lot of it.

MEH: So, I think it's interesting that Albers' teaching really didn't produce what we
think of as Bauhaus Second Generation.

VBW: It didn't have to. I mean the actual teaching, as I said, what was taught of
materials and structure was totally progressive in the sense that it sought the
impetus in material itself and in the way it looked and acted. In nature. That I
think is such a basic ecological consciousness, really. It can't be unprogressive.
It was more in the teachings of the Bauhaus about working with industry,
without a further caveat who owned the industry and what the industry was for
that perhaps gave rise to the whole use of the kind of architecture you have to
produce in places like Park Avenue and Avenue of the Americas with its glass
corporate headquarters.

MEH: Also, I think that when you have a movement as powerful as the Bauhaus was,
if you have a lot of people who are very ambitious, who lack imagination, who
get caught up in it and produce Park Avenue –

VBW: Well, I don't think those people lacked imagination, actually. In fact, I would say
that in fact the Establishment uses, buys imagination at phenomenal prices. I
mean, the field of advertising for instance, you know. Immensely – Mies van der
Rohe was not unimaginative or I. M. Pei, or the people who get used up in the
process. That's a whole other question, but I think that – I would not have – I
have not changed my mind at all about the worth of Albers' teaching. It might

be that there was an element lacking in it. I had had a lot of that as a child. I put it by for a long time and then had to rediscover it, but certainly in the teaching there was just so much to take that would free you. For a lot of people who came from a much more limited art background than I did, it was totally opening, full of discovery. When people came in with those *matière* studies – I'm sure other people have talked to you about the excitement that there was and how it sent people out looking in the dump and in the kitchen and in the canister there. Somebody, maybe me but I don't think so, made this study with – it had like nests of raveled nylon stockings. They came out like little nests, and they were filled with colored crystals from the chemistry lab and smashed glass. I knew Elaine Smith [Schmitt], her father was stained glass contractor, so she had a lot of boxes of colored glass and she made this whole thing. And candied fruit. So, when it came in, Albers was going to eat – he took a piece, and he was going to eat it, you know, because everything looked so decorative and candy-like. (LAUGHS) No, it's all poisonous, or glass. But it was such an inventive thing. People made – I remember those studies 'til now better than I can some of the events there. Somebody made a tar and eggshell, crunched eggshells. I made something of pongee and – that natural-colored pongee and the seed balls of the dandelion, you know, I don't know what you call, that you play with.

MEH: The center.

VBW: Yeah, when you blow. Puffs.

MEH: Oh, the white.

VBW: Yeah, (UNINTELL) so pongee and lemons, and really beautiful. Many things were very exciting that people brought into that class. So, that was certainly an exciting and freeing experience. The drawing class – well, it's certainly the best drawing class I've ever encountered, and one of the few places where they really, where you could really learn to draw. But everybody did draw in the same way, it seems to me, and similarly in painting class. All the painting that we made were made by the same – we were taught to make them by a certain way of placing the colors. Usually there was a lot of white and the color was just placed to delineate the forms.

MEH: Were they watercolor, basically?

VBW: Yes.

MEH: Did you take weaving?

VBW: Yes.

MEH: With Anni or Trude.

VBW: It would have been Trude. I'm not certain. Yeah, I did it the second year I was there and Albers wasn't there that year, if I remember rightly. He took off part of that year which was unfortunate. (UNINTELLI) more than a certain length of time, and I didn't want to use up the time when he wasn't there, but I did come part of the time. I did take weaving. I think I took – I can't remember, but I think I took it with Trude.

MEH: Do you remember other courses in particular that you took?

VBW: Yeah, well. I remember the Bible course very well. it was a very valuable course.

MEH: With Lowinsky.

VBW: With Lowinsky. I took a course in the summer, the name of which I don't remember, with Paul Goodman.

MEH: What do you remember about Goodman's course?

VBW: It was wonderfully thought-provoking and exciting in the same way that the design courses were. It turned your attention to social and political facts in that same way of looking into it and seeing all that they imply. I remember him talking about – he talked about space in relation to how it's used, such as in the subway and lunch counter and Protestant church and Quaker church, having to do with the relations vis à vis each other and how this related to architecture. He didn't generate the same kind of excitement in class that Albers was able to do. Albers was very dramatic in class.

MEH: That summer Goodman had just not long before that published *Communitas* (1947) and then he was working with Perls on his book on Gestalt.

VBW: That was a while after that.

MEH: No, I think it was published the next year. I'm sure. Do you remember a class, it may be the same class if you were talking about space, where chairs were put in particular ways or there were particular exercises in relaxation or – ?

VBW: Yes, that was the class I took.

MEH: Did you take his writing class?

VBW: No.

MEH: Okay. His two classes I have a record of are a Shakespeare class and a writing class.

VBW: These may have been just talks that he gave. I'm not so clear about him. I mean we became friends with him and stayed friends with him through the following years pretty much 'til he died, though I moved to Canada and didn't see them. I'm still friends with his wife Sally.

MEH: Susie lives in this building.

VBW: Oh really! Well, I know Susie. Susie later – My children were tutored by Susie when they were high school age. Paul Goodman was on the board of the school we organized. We later had a school from 1969 to 1970.

MEH: Okay, why don't we move to while we're talking about Goodman, to Rockland County and then we'll come back to Black Mountain. To what extent did Paul Goodman's thinking influence the formation the cooperative in Rockland County? Or what were the influences? Where did you get the idea?

VBW: Well the influences were, insofar as they were connected with Black Mountain, they were Bauhaus and Goodman. The fact that we had loved it there.

[SIDE 1, TAPE 1 ENDS; SIDE 2, TAPE 1 BEGINS]

MEH: Okay, you were saying that in Rockland County you really were recreating a new Black Mountain, in a sense.

VBW: Well, that's not all we wanted to do, but that was the, one of the things that moved us to do it. I was saying that we had been – though we were students, we had been students, we were very involved in keeping the place going and making it go on. I had run the kitchen for a year. I think, I did that. Paul had built the two buildings, and I helped on one of the buildings, and we just became very involved with its continuance. So, when it didn't continue, this was almost

instead of continuing. In fact, there was a definite meeting to decide whether to continue it, to try to put into it what it would take to make it go on or to start a new place and we decided to move.

MEH: The –

VBW: That didn't involve everybody. That just involved a small group.

MEH: That was later, when Olson was there, I think. The – The community at Rockland County. To what extent were you politically involved at that time? It seems that this was set up – there are letters from Paul Williams to Olson in which he felt that Black Mountain should be more politically active, and I think Deeva or Daiva, how you pronounce her name –

VBW: Diva .[Deeva]

MEH: Diva he had wanted to have come to Black Mountain, So, Olson felt that there was a political context to the community in Rockland County that didn't interest him. Was that really there? Was there a sense of political commitment?

VBW: Well, I've always had a political commitment. I was raised with a political commitment. I mean I think people willy-nilly have a political commitment. They're just not conscious of it. There's a poem of M.C.'s..

MEH: "The Way a Man Eats Is – " (OVERTALK)

VBW: Yeah. I think we all believed that very much, because it was also McCarthy times, which was not unconnected with Black Mountain's not going on. Not that the McCarthy Committee took to end it, but the atmosphere in the country was not favorable to an unaccredited adventurous place that could be labeled –

MEH: Communist.

VBW: That could be labelled Communist. The question of whether – It could not have gone on in the South, certainly, without solving the question of black and white students and how it was going to fit into that battle. The last years I was there, I think – the first desegregation of the buses effort came through and the people who were doing it – Bayard Ruskin, Jim Peck, and a group including others – I don't want to give one precedence but I can't remember the others. They stayed at the college overnight when they came through doing this thing, which was right after the War. So, we would not have escaped that. They never had escaped it and certainly would have become more and more –

MEH: Do you think there were things internal at the college that contributed to its closing?

VBW: Oh, yes. Sure.

MEH: I see it as being both an outside and an inside thing.

VBW: Every alternative small effort organized in a kind of community, anarchist way that I've been connected with seems to go through phases, you know, in which it seems to me that it would tend to get more – it would tend to get less ad hoc. Now what form it should get less ad hoc in is a big question. That's actually a very major political question, I think. Black Mountain I'm sure became less so, as it went on, but not enough. The kind of administration it had was so demanding on the teachers, and it was extraordinarily difficult to do. It didn't have enough structure to hold it together. But it might have had the time to evolve one if it hadn't hitched up with the times in a certain way– that quality. For instance, after the War, it became possible for people like Albers to get

other jobs, they were probably – Maybe it had been possible before, I'm not sure if it had been possible before.

MEH: It may have been possible before. Albers had had very good offers.

VBW: He had offers before? Perhaps, he could have come directly to another school, I don't know. But he had not played out his desire to do this kind of thing first (OVERTALK).

MEH: He was very devoted to Black Mountain.

VBW: Yeah. So, I guess I'm wrong about that. But I didn't know – a certain impetus had apparently run its course, and it would have taken a new one.

MEH: Yes, there I agree. I think there was one problem, especially in that '49-'51 period where, after Albers left and the early Progressive education, "little democracy" idea had its run that people really couldn't find a new definition for the college. There was a lot of squabbling about what the college ought to be, you know, because it had been sort of thing.

VBW: Yeah. Well, the past had a tremendous power over it.

MEH: I have many disagreements with Olson in terms of his impact on the college, but I do think that he did try. One of his early statements at the college when he came back was that it couldn't continue to sort of play out this Roosevelt Era image, that it had to find a new impetus to go on. I think that was an important recognition. I think Albers also when he left was trying to reorganize, to redefine the college. I mean he recognized that most of the students that were coming were art students, which bespoke a need in this country for a school that could meet – But then there were a lot of people who reacted against him, who said,

"No," you know, "we have to have a total curriculum. You'll destroy Black Mountain if you don't have everything taught." (OVERTALK)

VBW: I don't think he had a great – at least in the time I was there, I don't think he had a great use for the other things that were taught. Except possibly music.

MEH: No, I think the curriculum he supposed, planned was he did believe that art studies should take place not in specialized schools but within a total context of a general curriculum. So, his idea was to have a general curriculum, on like a sophomore level, but he felt – which I think was possibly true – that the college could not support the number of faculty necessary to offer graduation work in every area.

VBW: No, it couldn't. You couldn't support a lab, and you couldn't support a library.

MEH: You couldn't have advanced work in everything. It had to narrow its scope in terms of advanced work. Which was realistic, but the people (OVERTALK) –

VBW: It didn't even have what would now be considered advanced work in art. I mean, I was a graphic arts student, and we didn't have a graphic arts workshop. We didn't have etching and lithography presses. He thought that was all right. I don't know if it was.

MEH: No, I agree. It was very – There was a lid, like where it cut off.

VBW: But also the new impetus, which seemed to go in the direction of certain poets and writers and their style of life, was not a communitarian style. It was destructive of community, I think. Those people felt very close to each other, you know, but I don't think that they knew how to make the place work. They

were adventurers. They were gypsy-like and more inclined to feel outside of society than to create a viable one.

MEH: I think that's true. You left – You were at Black Mountain from the summer of '45 –

VBW: No, the winter.

MEH: I mean from the winter of '45, right, through the spring of '47. I think you weren't there for the summers of '46 and '47, am I right?

VBW: No, I had to work. I had to earn money.

MEH: What did you do those summers? Did you come back to New York?

VBW: Yes.

MEH: Then you left at the end of –

VBW: Oh, I was a counselor in a camp, in a camp for disabled children, I'm pretty sure of that. Then I took a fall off also when Albers wasn't there, and I worked in the nursery school for the “crippled children” in New York. That had been connected with the summer camp in Oakville, New Jersey where I was counselor.

MEH: You came back for the spring when Albers returned.

VBW: Yeah, and then I stayed, I believe I stayed that summer.

MEH: The Buckminster Fuller summer.

VBW: Yeah. I stayed that summer, and then I – Did I graduate that year?

MEH: You graduated that fall. I think you both came back down.

VBW: I graduated in '49.

MEH: No, you graduated in '48. I know that! You came back for the spring of '48 and the summer of '48, and then you graduated at the end of the summer when de Kooning and Fuller and Cage and those people were there.

VBW: So, then did I get married in 1948?

MEH: I don't know about that.

VBW: I got married before I graduated.

MEH: Yes, that's right.

VBW: In June, yeah. I know, because I just saw it last night. I was going through my pictures and I printed all my wedding announcements.

MEH: (UNINTELL)? (OVERTALK)

VBW: Yeah, part of what I did for graduation was print on the college's platen press. I did a History of Typography and I did printing for the college. I printed a lot of things.

MEH: What sort of things did you print?

VBW: I printed all the programs that summer. I believe there was a quartet in residence or trio.

MEH: Bodky's.

VBW: I think so, yeah. I printed those. I printed the announcement, printed and designed the announcement for that summer. It has a drawing on it in a yellow

—

MEH: It was a later summer, but you did do that one?

VBW: I did that one, yeah. I did all the – I did everything, I think, except the major thing like the publications with photos that would have gone to town. I think to Asheville.

MEH: Who else was working in the print shop then?

VBW: Harry Weitzer. Somebody named Jim, but it wasn't Jim Herlihy. There were two Jims. Jim Herlihy worked there sometimes but this was another Jim, who – Harry Weitzer and this other Jim were veterans.

MEH: Jimmy Tite.

VBW: Jimmy Tite. They set that – That shop had just been a little jumble when they came, and they set it to rights and cleaned up all the type and all, and then they got from the U.S. government a new press. After the War we got things like a dishwasher and a press and two buildings. They set that press up, and they taught me what they knew, and I worked there.

MEH: So, after you graduated, you went to – Did Paul Williams go to Harvard then?

VBW: Yes. He went to Harvard and I went to the – I took a course in etching at the Museum School.

MEH: In Cambridge?

VBW: Well, the Museum School was in Boston. Paul and I redid a basement in Boston to live in. Then we went back to Black Mountain for the summer and I took care of the kitchen.

MEH: You were with June Rice?

VBW: Yeah, with June Rice took care of the kitchen – made menus and ordered the groceries and supplies. But there were two cooks.

MEH: When you came back, that was summer of '49, and then '49-'50. The Alberses had left then. You were involved very closely with the Light-Sound-Movement Workshop? The class, where people were doing a lot of experiments with drama and dance? Jennerjahns were sort of directing it. [NO AUDIBLE REPLY TO THESE QUESTIONS]. You were dancing then?

VBW: Yeah. I did dancing. I was in plays. I was in some plays. I was in – Mary-Averett Seelye came and taught drama, and we did a Molière. I didn't take that course, but I had a main role in it. I played Bellissima in *Les Femmes Savant*, and I designed the costumes.

MEH: For the Molière?

VBW: Yeah.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

MEH: So, the Molière performance was a staged performance with costumes and sets.

VBW: Yeah, it had very elaborate costumes, really.

MEH: What did you make them out of, do you remember?

VBW: Yeah, all the hats were made of different arrangements of balloons, ranging from very large clusters. The gowns were made of – they were some kind of a cotton garment with wire in the bottoms and they stuck out. They were not realistic.

MEH: The *matière* tradition?

VBW: Yeah. Well, there was a strong costume tradition at the school that came through Schawinsky, which I had not gotten in on but it – So, much of that was still there.

MEH: The costume party idea?

VBW: Yeah, and I had been on the Entertainment Committee from the time I was there, and I did many varieties of re-doing the dining room for events.

MEH: Do you remember particular decorations that you did?

VBW: Oh yes, very well.

MEH: Like what?

VBW: One of the first ones we did was an enormous bone-mobile. Willie Joseph and I made it. We went to the pig pen and collected pots and pots of bone, and bleached them out and painted some of them, and we made – I remember a long tail of ribs. It's interesting, I've since seen Sari Dienes, who lives up in the Rockland County community and is a collagist and artist. She has made a thing called "Bonefall" (PH), that is – I mean it isn't rela – She never saw that one and hers is much more elaborate and is related to a long trend in her work, but ours looked something like what she's done. I have pictures of it, actually. That was one thing we made. Then we made – We planned a whole party to be held at different levels in the room, and we built platforms and they were going to be High, Low, and Middle. We built platforms and we made – we practically made little rooms in the room, with scrims of gauze, and everybody was to come in red, yellow, and blue, so we had a party to dye clothes. Very elaborate. Then another one we made, which didn't work but we spent a great deal of time on,

was a giant paper construction that was developed from the things we did in the matière study. No, that would have been the construction part of the design class. We used them, but we had wanted it to be like a roller coaster but instead we had to use them as flat forms, because we used too heavy a paper. So, that was three that I remember well.

MEH: These were parties for dancing and socializing?

VBW: Yeah.

MEH: Did people – Did you use records, or a band? I mean did students play, or – ?

VBW: Yes, somebody named Judd Woldin used to play the piano at night. Probably, there were records, but I remember Judd Woldin. We used to dance quite a lot, even when there weren't parties. We used to dance on Wednesday and Friday nights.

MEH: Folk dancing or – ?

VBW: No, social dancing. I remember that. The parties were very good. Excellent. I was in several productions there. I was in the one that Averett, Mary-Averett did. Then I was in the one that Olson did of Yeats. I played Eithne Incuba in *The Only Jealousy of Emer*. That was – I don't know now how good a quality it had, the production, but it was staged wonderfully. It took place under the Study Building. I think they did three plays –

MEH: Was that Cuchulain?

VBW: The *Death of Cuchulain*, yeah, which is in three plays. Betty Jennerjahn, who was a good friend of mine, she did the choreography for it. She also was in it. It was done under the Study Building in that long gravel place, and there were

these sort of flat pillars. It was exciting. The blind man – there's a blind man in it (played by Mark Hedden) – you could hear him, he went down the whole hog, upstairs, and you could hear him tapping. It was on the shore of the lake. I think it was lit with kerosene lanterns. I took part in that. I was also in and did the, yeah, helped with the costumes for the Cocteau. Who gave the Cocteau?

MEH: M.C. did *Marriage on the Eiffel Tower*?

VBW: Yes. Well, I was the child who murdered the wedding party, and I did the – Everybody's hands and feet were painted with wall paint. It was horrible. We had dishes, pans of texolite that we – they were either white or yellow or pink, I think. I worked on that. The whole dining room was enshrouded in blue paper so you could feel you were in the Eiffel Tower. It was given after Thanksgiving dinner, which I also cooked! (LAUGHTER) I don't really know how I did all those things, but I was very – I loved – That was one reason I loved the place, because you could do so many things. You could do such a lot of things. I mean I did those things. I was active in almost everything. I made the butter. I cooled the milk. I worked on the farm. I did some carpentry. Did the kitchen.

MEH: It seems that it's an excellent basis for education, you know, a beginning level essentially.

VBW: I did the printing. I – and, you know, art. I wrote papers. I did a lot of hiking. I did pretty much everything I was interested in actually.

MEH: What do you think the influence of Olson was on the community?

VBW: [LONG PAUSE]. It was probably not good. I don't know, I don't need to evaluate it that way, just call it by quality (?). Well, it injected a lot of excitement,

let's put it that. He certainly did that. But the excitement collected around one person. It was somewhat destructive of work in the day because he was a night person. It was high. It was maybe too high.

MEH: How would you compare –

VBW: I loved him though. He was a person who gave you a great sense of joy and feeling good about yourself. Now for instance Albers did not give you that feeling. He got a real (INAUDIBLE). The fact that his talk consisted of a certain manner, just made up stuff, I think, you know,=. It didn't matter. He was just glorious. He was like royal, you know, by size and everything else. He just managed to convey that to everybody.

MEH: You left Black Mountain. You came back and you stayed for that year – was it a year?

VBW: [AFFIRMATIVE]

MEH: Then you left and – Is that when you went back up to the Boston area, or did you go to Cape Cod? I'm not clear in my sequence of what happened then.

VBW: What did we do? [PAUSE] Yeah, I know what we did. We went back to the Boston area, and we got a house outside Boston in a place called Hyde Park, which we shared with people we had met through Charlie Bloomstein, business manager, whom we had met at Black Mountain. They were conscientious objectors who had been paroled from Massachusetts General Hospital. We started to live with them, and Black Mountain people came to live with us, such as Stanley Vanderbeek and Nick Cernovich, and Andy Oates and Dan Rice, all came to live with us. So we had a little community of our own. I had already one

child, I think – No, the child was born – my first child was born in Hyde Park. My second child was born there, too. In the summer of that year – Another person who came, but he didn't live there constantly, was Tommy – T. R. Jackson. In the summer of that year, or the spring, we got the Cape Cod property because Paul wanted to build a house. He was going to M.I.T. and transferred from Harvard to M.I.T. because they had more – He was not interested in a regular architecture degree. He wanted to take courses in Indeterminate Structures and more technical courses, so he went to M.I.T. We got the property, and then that summer we built the house and a lot of Black Mountain people came to work on it.

MEH: Now let me get my sequence, because I have problems sometimes. You were there '48-'49, and then you went back to – '49-'50, and then you moved to Hyde Park like '50-'51, then it was like the spring that you got the house at Cape Cod – the property. You didn't have a place to live, so you didn't move there, or did you move up there and work on the house, or – ?

VBW: Yeah, we rented a nearby place on Cape Cod, and we lived there. Paul went there in the spring and started the house. Paul and Tommy started the house and they got us a place to live and all –

MEH: Tommy Jackson?

VBW: Yeah. Sarah, my baby, was only – she was little then. She must have been born that March. Oh, that's how we can figure out the date. Sarah will be 28 this March – no she'll be 29. She was born in '53.

MEH: Oh, well that's much later, because 53 –

VBW: She was born in '52.

MEH: It was the spring of 1952 that Paul moved up there, and then you all moved up and were working on the house?

VBW: You mean at Cape Cod? We never moved to Cape Cod. We just got a summer place.

MEH: Oh, it was the summer of '52.

VBW: Yeah. We built the house.

MEH: Who were others who worked on the house, other Black Mountain people?

VBW: Stanley Vanderbeek worked on it. Tommy Jackson worked on it. People came for a week and worked – Joe Fiore worked on it.

MEH: Was Nick working on that?

VBW: I don't remember. I think he came out on weekends, came back and forth from Boston. Oh yes, he came quite often.

MEH: Was this an A-frame house?

VBW: Yes, it was an A-frame house. A lot of people were – Just about everybody we knew. Then at the end of the summer John Cage and Merce Cunningham and Company came, or a certain amount of the company came, because Merce had had an appendix operation, and we rented another house for them to stay in.

MEH: That's right. That would have been '52 then. So, you really sort of kept in touch with a Black Mountain community that moved from place to place.

VBW: Oh very much. When Cunningham and Cage Company came to Brandeis to give a performance, they all stayed at our house. Yeah, we kept very much in

touch, particularly with – Well, Nick and Andy lived with us. Andy lived with us.

We stayed very close to Andy Oates for a while.

MEH: The Boylston Street Gallery that he had, that was in Cambridge? In Harvard Square at first. I believe he later moved it to downtown Boston across from the Commons.

VBW: Yes.

MEH: Oh, this house, from what I can tell, Paul Williams and those around him were very interested at that point in things like solar energy and – was that not true?

VBW: No. That's recent.

MEH: That's recent. At that point, you were more interested in construction – forms or – I mean is there anything about this A-frame house that really distinguishes it from –

VBW: Well, there were very few A-frame houses then. That in itself – A number of things distinguished it. He made an attempt to have –The outside walls, the inside walls, and insulation were all part of one kind of panel. He'd found this new panel. He went on with that idea of adapting industrial materials to residential houses and trying to rationalize the design and building of residential houses so they would be more – less of an old-time craft, you know, so that you could do it faster. Not have so much construction on the site. So, that was – .

MEH: These were really Bauhaus ideas in a sense – making livable housing more cheaply. The same sort of social ethic that the Bauhaus had.

VBW: Yeah. Yeah. Then the community way of building it. He never just hired carpenters or built it all himself. Everything he built – I think he still does it that

way as long as he was with friends and people, a little group of people who all contributed to it. When we lived in the house in Hyde Park, it was always a shared house.

MEH: So, just sort of working out chronology here, that was just the summer of '52 you were working – The spring and summer of '52 you were working on the house. Then –

VBW: Yeah. Well, during that time – I mean I only worked on the house somewhat. I had this baby whom I was very interested in bringing up, and I also did my drawing. Do a lot of – I did that. I made a little movie which I drew on leader film. I tried different things (OVERTALK), but I did spend time laying the brick floor. I was also very interested in cooking and in gardening.

MEH: Did you do any film or photography work at Black Mountain?

VBW: No.

MEH: Did you go to Europe at some point there?

VBW: Yeah, we went to Europe (LAUGHS) – [PAUSE]

MEH: You went back to Black Mountain in the summer of '53, for that summer and fall.

VBW: That would be (INAUDIBLE)

[END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1; SIDE 1, TAPE 2 BEGINS]

VBW: We went to Europe before we built the Cape Cod house, because Sarah was conceived in Europe and I had no child in Europe.

MEH: So, that would have been before the summer of '52. That would be '51-'52.

VBW: Yes.

MEH: So, then you built the house in the summer of '52 and that was the summer that Merce – he didn't do much at Black Mountain that summer because of his appendix, and apparently he had it removed, and they came up for a while. Do you remember – did you live on the Cape in that year before '52-'53, or did you go back to Boston before you went to Black Mountain for your last time? Sarah would have been like her first year.

VBW: We went back to Black Mountain after Jenny was born.

MEH: So, you had two children when you went back to Black Mountain? Jenny must have born that winter of '52-'53.

VBW: She was born in the summer. She's a year-and-a-half younger than Sarah.

MEH: What's the date in the summer? I know you went back in the fall, and you must have waited until she was born that summer to go back down.

VBW: Yes, I guess we get that fall because I remember where we lived. We lived in the same building with Olson, so we must have stayed there that whole winter with the two children.

MEH: That winter of '52-'53 before Jenny was born, do you remember where you were living when you were carrying her, for example? That would tell me where you were that winter.

VBW: In Hyde Park, Massachusetts.

MEH: You went back to Hyde Park for the winter and then came down to Black Mountain after she was born. Then you had two little girls that summer. I mean when you came back to Black Mountain you had two little girls. That was the time you were trying to decide – Black Mountain was really in trouble then.

VBW: Yeah.

MEH: Everybody moved up the hill.

VBW: We were trying to decide what to do, and – Yeah. Paul's father had died, and we had inherited money. I remember we talked about a radio station. We talked about many different things. We helped the – We were always interested in a number of different things. I had made a good friend at Black Mountain, Patsy Lynch – Davenport, she married LaNoue Davenport and they had started this – She was a music – She was first a drama student but that ended when whats-his-name was arrested and banished.

MEH: Wunsch.

VBW: Wunsch. So, she then became a music student though she had always played and she decided to do her graduation in music, so she graduated in sort of early music under Lowinsky and Jalowetz. She and her husband had a little, started a little Early Music group and we were close to them and helped them get instruments. I just cite this because we were wondering what to do – We just automatically I think believed we would do something with this money. Then I remember Dave and Diva up to talk about a radio station, what we might do. Dave was the editor of a magazine called *Resistance*.

MEH: Were Dave and Diva, were they involved with the community when it was formed? Who were the initial group of people who were involved with the community?

VBW: They were in on all the early meetings, but they decided not to move there. The early people who came – The very first meeting that I can remember and

that was not held at Black Mountain but the people were all still connected, which was John and Merce and M.C. and David Tudor. David and Karen – David Weinrib and Karen Karnes, Peter Voulkos, myself, and Paul. That's all I remember being there.

MEH: The community was not really supposed to be another Black Mountain, but to embody some of the concepts of community that had been so important there. What was your general idea when you started? What did you expect to happen at the Land?

VBW: Well, I think everybody had very different expectations. (LAUGHS)

MEH: Like most communities.

VBW: I always assumed there would be a school, that there would be a communal dining room, that there would be communal clothes washing facilities. Paul assumed that, too, and that's why the houses were built with very small spaces. I believe that we thought there would be a children's house. I think that our other artists, like John and David, hoped there would be a tape lab and performance space. I think M.C. eventually wanted there to be some kind of education there, like a weekend college – that – she may have developed that at the time. I don't know that people had ever worked out the degree of cooperation that there would be (INAUDIBLE).

MEH: Just sort of everybody had his own idea – You had sort of in common the idea of community, but different ideas. Now, one thing that I'm particularly interested in as an outgrowth of the school, you had – You had – you and who else? – started a school for children?

VBW: Well, first we had a nursery school.

MEH: Who's we?

VBW: Everybody there had a nursery school. Well I think there was probably (INAUDIBLE) but some of us together had a revolving nursery school. Then together with – and mostly on the initiative of Bob Barker, who was not a member of the community but we had met him through Paul Goodman, and he was interested in Summerhill and lived in the area. In fact, it had been through him we found the property when we came to that area, so we knew – started, we started a school. It was not at the beginning a parents' cooperative. He started it, but with a lot of help from us, but we had a meeting which we petitioned for it to be at the community, but the community didn't want it. They said start it first and then we'll see. They didn't have great faith in him. They knew him.

MEH: Who was he?

VBW: We had met him through the pacifists we lived with in Boston and Paul Goodman. He had been a conscientious objector. He was a carpenter and architect in the neighborhood. He was building a house. So, he and Paul had gotten together, and then they had shown us around the area, (INAUDIBLE) the property. So, he was a person with a lot of different interests. He had two children, and he became very interested in this alternative education and Summerhill and – He was also – he also knew Paul Goodman. So, he really sort of got the school underway. I taught in it. My children went to it though they had previously gone to the Steiner School in Spring Valley. Then I got more and

more active in the school, and Paul was very active in the school, too. Other people in the community. But never everybody. It was always a big bone of contention (INAUDIBLE).

MEH: There were – The school was – I know that M. C. and David Tudor were very interested in the Steiner, the Waldorf Schools. Was this an influence on the school, or Summerhill, or Black Mountain? What were the basic ideas behind the school?

VBW: Well, Bob Barker's ideas were Summerhillian. My ideas were much more an outgrowth of my whole early education which was very much influenced by Settlement House and this art education I had had, and a little bit by the experience of my children at the Steiner School, and some reading about Progressive Education. I mean I sort of grew up in the heyday of Progressive Education, though I went to public school all my life. But even in the public schools, through the WPA, we were introduced to art. There were efforts to have Progressive Education. Then in the art school that I went to and the attitudes of my parents and all. I had a long-time drive that way. I had worked in camps and groups and all since I was fourteen. See, I didn't realize that all those things that were a big part of my motivation – I would have said if I had been asked earlier that it was Black Mountain, but the whole – I had had a very constant pattern – not pattern, progression in my life from my early education up until now. I mean, I teach at Goddard.

MEH; Who were the people primarily interested in the school, in terms of running it?

VBW: Paul Williams and myself. Myself and Paul Williams. I'd say LaNoue Davenport and Patsy was somewhat interested. They got discouraged with – M.C. at first was interested. I think she did think it was a good thing.

MEH: What was the name of the school?

VBW: It was called the Barker School at first, after the man who started it. He was to some of us a problematic person, and the school had a lot of problems. It wasn't only for kids at the land. There were other kids, too. Like all those schools immediately attract a lot of people, problem children.

MEH: Was it physically located on the Land?

VBW: No. The Land wouldn't have it. That made a big problem. That probably split the – That probably was something that was very bad for the community, actually, because I started to put all my effort into the school. The school is a whole other story. I mean it's only an offshoot of Black Mountain.

MEH: I'm interested in offshoots of Black Mountain, in terms of – Well you said this existed from 1960 to '70?

VBW: To '69. M.C. was always interested in education. She wanted to have – She attempted to teach the children at the pottery, right there, and the children used to go there and all. But Karen was not interested in that at all. I mean our idea through all the early years, through all the time I was at the community, was to make a whole out of art and community and community work and education. I mean it was partly because of that that I didn't put the effort into becoming a professional artist. I didn't even believe in it.

MEH: This is a strain you find in like someone like Betty Jennerjahn, who once her tapestries started selling commercially stopped making them, because she thought there must be something not right about them – which I don't agree with.

VBW: (OVERTALK) Well, see, it's interesting that you would probably find that in women, but not in – Well, you find it in Paul Williams, too, very much, but in an interesting way the teachings of Black Mountain and of my parents, too, and of the settlement house that I grew up in, which is that art is part of life and the people around you and not a means of fame and fortune. We did not see how this played into the forces that decide, that trap women in society. It's hard to figure out which was which, you know. I came to resent that I had put all my efforts – I used to put a fantastic amount of effort into creating the décor of the picnics at the Land and to everything that went on there, and at Black Mountain too. At the school we had astonishing fairs, events.

MEH: I'm unsettled myself. I mean here I'm doing this book with MIT, you know, which is an establishment situation basically. I found myself when I started talking to the Black Mountain people, getting caught up in this idea of you don't really do anything that's commercially successful or especially for a woman, that's professional in a sense. Mary Fiore is another person who's done wonderful things for her children, built a wonderful home, and this is sort of her art work, in a sense. I don't totally agree. I think we live in many different worlds and on many different levels. Of course, there was a big problem then because art had been so – it was on this pedestal. It was something that only a few had

access to emotionally or intellectually. I think this was an important move to make it real for our lives.

VBW: But I think if I hadn't been held back by things that had been taught me and were absorbed as a woman, you know, I would have made more of a profession of art in the community or art in education, just like the other people who were in alternative education became well-known. I never did that. It didn't even occur to me to do it, but – It would not be possible to thread out, I don't think, what was characterological and what was non-feminist, which was the handicap of being a woman in this case and what I believed. I don't know.

MEH: But now you're working more professionally in the sense of illustrating children's books and teaching, in the sense of doing it professionally.

VBW: Yeah.

MEH: When did you leave the community, the Land?

VBW: I left the Land in 1969, and I went – I thought I was going to Canada for a year as a cook for another school community. The experimental Everdale. I went to another community, I became part of another community, and I stayed there for three years. Then I went off on a number of canoeing adventures and roaming around adventures and I ended up buying a houseboat in Vancouver where I started to write prose and illustrate children's books. I had always been interested in children's books. I had done one in high school, I had done one at Black Mountain, and I had always told stories and drawn for children. But it had never occurred to me, partly because I had not previously needed to earn a living. I mean, having access to the money inherited by my husband Paul. That

was another thing that had directed where my life went. Or I might have done all those things commercially, but when I did have to earn a living, my first book to be published I did with Remy Charlip, who I had met at Black Mountain.

MEH: Which one was that?

VBW: *Hooray for Me*. He had gone to Cooper Union and then became a dancer in Merce Cunningham's troupe. Then he became a published creator of children's books. Also a founder of the Paper Bag Players.

MEH: I know some of his books, but that one I don't know.

VBW: I think he sort of did it so I could get a break and –

MEH: Do you do the stories for your books and the illustrations?

VBW: Yes. I also write poetry and fiction, and when I was in Canada, that was published, but I haven't had any, hardly any published here at this point.

MEH: You teach at Goddard. Apparently it's having real struggles now.

VBW: Goddard is in a number of ways a kind of descendant of Black Mountain.

MEH: Certainly there's a parallel there. Will Hamlin has been very active there. He was Black Mountain. Okay, I'm not that familiar with Goddard's program in terms of its – I think one thing that made Black Mountain really exceptional was the fact that it was owned by the faculty, which certainly presented its own problems.

VBW: Yes, it really did. It never had an administration. It never had the situation that you have at Goddard now where it's financially totally strapped and may fail, but where it continues to pay administrative salaries. I mean the administrators

did take a cut when everybody else took a cut, and I'm glad to say that the cut was graduated so that the –

MEH: The more you were earning, the more you were cut.

VBW: Yeah, so that does represent somewhat of that tradition of responsibility, and that's rarely done anywhere else. But there was no difference in what you learned and experienced at Black Mountain from administration or from teachers. That was unique.

MEH: (OVERTALK) Well, that was one problem.

VBW: But it was a problem.

MEH: I mean in that post-Albers period when everybody was sort of looking for something new –

VBW: The nonexistent money.

MEH: But everybody realized at that point that they had to have an administrator – You know, that they needed somebody to run things, which Dreier basically had done a lot of undercover administration for years.

VBW: Well Albers had, too.

MEH: Albers had too. Lots of people had. Theodore Rondthaler and Ms. Rony in particular. But I think that the – I mean they couldn't find an administrator who was willing to come for what the faculty earned. To pay an administrator an administrator's salary would have taken half of the college's resources.

VBW: Yeah, there was this whole reorganization where they got a man named Pickering from Swarthmore.

MEH: Not Pickering. Pickering bought the property in the end. Pittinger.

VBW: Pittinger, right. Pittinger. I don't think that worked. But I teach in the Adult Degree Program at Goddard, which is different than the rest of the – Goddard has many programs, and this one is for people who are mostly older people who have not finished school or had a chance to go. It's correspondence, with a three-week residency twice a year.

MEH: So, you don't have to be there all the time.

VBW: No, no, I couldn't. I wouldn't be able to do it otherwise. You can pick up different cycles and do two cycles a year. They have – It's a great program. It will just be really sad if it went out of business. But it's interesting that Black Mountain was never accredited, and that would not be the slightest problem now if you were a graduate of there.

MEH: No. Now.

VBW: That may come to be the case at Goddard though conditions are very different now.

MEH: I think that people understand what an accreditation represents now, in a different sense.

VBW: Well so government loans don't –

MEH: Don't go to unaccredited –

VBW: Whereas the GI Bill of Rights– we were allowed to have GI students.

MEH: That was a big battle getting those.

VBW: It was a big battle. I think Rondthaler maybe negotiated that.

MEH: (OVERTALK) He was very instrumental.

VBW: That was very important to the college.

MEH: It sure was.

VBW: I don't think we could have gone on if that hadn't happened.

MEH: That really kept the college going for quite a few years.

VBW: It just becomes clear that like everything else in this country, there just is not much room for small enterprises, that the large institutions just gobble up everything that there is, and there's nothing left for a place like Goddard.

MEH: It really ends up being a matter of personal commitment, people living on very little –

VBW: Yeah, the first thing they did at Goddard was ask the faculty to take a cut. Well, if you make thirty thousand that's one thing, but the ADPs and all the faculty members at Goddard are grossly underpaid to the general standard. But that's how they did it at Black Mountain, too. But having started in the Depression, all – they were able to live much more cheaply than anyone would want to do.

MEH: Yeah, the Depression made a difference. But they lived with no salary in the early years. Just a minimum needs basis. There's one letter where one of the faculty is trying to get married, and he had to make a list of what he needed – wedding ring (LAUGHS), weekend vacation. It was really pitiful. But there also was tremendous commitment of the idea of the college, and people – Albers could have left. He had offers from Bennington, from Harvard, from Sarah Lawrence. There were a lot of people who wanted to get him in the New York area. But he really believed in that democracy. Also he had a lot of freedom there he wouldn't have had in programs – It's one thing to go into a beaux-arts

setting and have to reform it and to be in a place like Black Mountain where you have free rein – really.

VBW: A lot of power.

MEH: A lot of power, right.

VBW: I remember something very nice there that was to do. I don't know why it strikes me as so nice, but the faculty used to take home their – take home food for the weekend, and there would be all these baskets. People had very nice baskets, and they would be on the table in the kitchen. We would make up the baskets for them to have their breakfast at home on Sundays. It was very hard to have a family life there. It exhausted people. All communities seem to do that. They – I mean our school we had in Stony Point, New York simply exhausted us. That's why I became the cook. I did it everywhere. I went to Everdale School in Ontario, Canada because I just couldn't – I said, "I'll come, but I don't want to have anything to do with your administration or teaching or anything. If I – You're thinking of it like a rescuer, and if I can stay in the kitchen."

MEH: You were comfortable there. You knew your way around.

VBW: Well, I actually had to learn a lot to do it, to cook for that many people every day. They also had a farm, and I went back to doing a lot of things I had done at Black Mountain. I made the butter. I made bread, started a bakery and then I became part of the board So, forth. I didn't stay out in the kitchen! No. I don't know if we're getting too far afield –

[END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 2; NO RECORDING ON SIDE 2, TAPE 2]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]