

Interviewee: RUTH ASAWA
 Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS
 Location: Telephonic interview
 Date: January 18, 1997
 Media: Audiocassette (1)
 Interview no.: 235
 Transcription: Transcribed by Mary Emma Harris, August 2018

The interviews with Elaine Schmitt Urbain, Pete and Betty Schmitt Jennerjahn, and Ruth Asawa were conducted by telephone. At the time I was trying to determine whether Ray Johnson was at Black Mountain College for the 1946 spring term or whether he was away. The interview with Elaine Urbain is on Side 1 of the audiocassette. The interview with Pete and Betty Jennerjahn continues on Side 1 and overlaps onto Side 2. The interview with Ruth Asawa is on Side 2.

I mistakenly locate the Ox-Bow School in Saginaw, when it was in Saugatuck, Michigan. It was the summer school of the Art Institute of Chicago. Elaine Schmitt Urbain, Betty Schmitt Jennerjahn, Pete Jennerjahn and Ruth Asawa were all students at Milwaukee State Teachers College in Milwaukee. Ray Johnson lived in Detroit and attended Cass Technical High School.

Mary Emma Harris

[TAPE 1, SIDE 2. INTERVIEW FOLLOWS PETE AND BETTY JENNERJAHN.]

MEH: Were you and Ray and Elaine all at Saginaw [MEH: Saugatuck is correct.] together? Did you go to Saginaw [MEH: Saugatuck]?

RA: Oh, no. Saugatuck.

MEH: Saugatuck, okay.

RA: Saugatuck, Michigan. Ox-Bow.

MEH: Okay. Ox-Bow—

RA: I never went there.

MEH: Okay.

RA: It was—Elaine and Ray met there.

MEH: They met there. But you didn't go there.

RA: No.

MEH: Okay. Good. Because Betty remembered you did go there.

RA: No. I didn't go there.

MEH: So, you met Ray at Black Mountain, not there.

RA: No. I met Ray in Milwaukee—

MEH: Okay. How—

RA: — with Elaine.

MEH: Did he come to visit Elaine?

RA: [POSITIVE]

MEH: Okay.

RA: I think that's how I met him.

MEH: Okay.

RA: I'm not sure now. I'm trying to remember. I think I— I think he came to Milwaukee.

MEH: Okay.

RA: After Ox-Bow.

MEH: Was Ox-Bow the name of the school?

RA: Ox-Bow was the name of the art school.

MEH: Do you know who sponsored that? Do you know whether—?

RA: Saugatuck. I don't know anything about it.

MEH: Okay. I can check that out.

RA: Betty would know. Elaine would know.

MEH: No. Everybody gives me different information. One called it Saugatuck. One called it Saginaw. [MEH: It was I who said Saginaw. Elaine had it right.] One said Cranbrook, and one said the Art Institute of Chicago.

RA: I remember it as Saugatuck. [SPELLS THE NAME]

MEH: Okay. That's something I can check out in books.

RA: Saugatuck, Michigan and it was called the Ox-Bow.

MEH: Okay. The Ox-Bow.

RA: And Ray went to Cass Tech in Detroit. He lived in Detroit, as I remember.

MEH: Okay. Now were you at Black Mountain—? What was your first summer at Black Mountain? I could actually--

RA: 1946.

MEH: You were '46. Okay. One thing I need to clear up is Ray was there in '45. Summer of '45, and then, according to my records—and I'm not sure how I got this—he stayed for the fall but then left and came back for the summer of '46. I need to check that out. I'm not sure.

RA: I don't know that because I wasn't there.

MEH: You weren't there. So, you are no help.

RA: I think Elaine was there.

MEH: Yes, but she doesn't remember. So, anyway—how do you remember Ray at Black Mountain?

RA: Very, very cheerful. Buoyant. Enthusiastic. Good student. Good Albers student. Good independent.

MEH: What do you mean by "good independent"?

RA: Independent. I mean, he came up with designs on his own.

MEH: How did he relate to Albers?

RA: I think he respected Albers very much, and he listened to Albers very intently, I think. He was a very serious student.

MEH: Okay.

RA: And his interpretation of the design classes, courses, color were very, very original.

MEH: Okay. Do you have any other particular memories of him at the college, just in terms of how he related in the community, particular things he did?

RA: No, I think he was very socially adjusted to the school. He was a very good participant there.

MEH: Okay.

RA: I think I met Ray after that.

MEH: Okay.

RA: After Elaine met Ray there.

MEH: You met Ray—Okay.

RA: I think I met him in Wauwatosa where there lived. And he might have stayed there or something, overnight or a couple of nights. And that's where we met.

MEH: Okay.

RA: But it may not be accurate. I can't remember.

MEH: Well—

RA: Too long ago.

MEH: Hopefully, if I piece very body's memories together and compare, I'll come up

with the right thing. Okay.

RA: Okay.

MEH: Okay. It's good to talk to you. And by the way, Betty and Pete sent their love and greetings and whatever.

RA: Oh, good.

MEH: Okay.

RA: Are they East or are they—?

MEH: They are in Arizona.

[END OF INTERVIEW]