

Interviewee: HENRY BERGMAN  
Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS  
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**[BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1]**

**MEH:** [GIVES IDENTIFICATION, SAYING 5th of March, label says 4th] Hank – do  
you go by Hank?

**HB:** Hank, yeah.

**MEH:** Yeah. How did you come to be at Black Mountain College?

**HB:** Well, I first heard about Black Mountain College when I was a student at  
Milwaukee Teachers College. Howard Thomas, who was the head of the Art  
Department there, had either been there for a visit or had been there for some  
kind of a summer program or something, but he was quite enthused about it. A  
bunch of us were having coffee one day over in the local hangout, and he  
started telling everybody about this great place. At that time nobody from the  
State Teachers College had been there. Eventually quite a few of us got down  
there. But in the meantime the War intervened, and I had been briefly in the  
Navy, but they took a chest X-ray there and found out I had TB so I was  
discharged. I spent the War years to about May of 1945 in this TB hospital  
getting over that business.

**MEH:** Where was the TB hospital?

**HB:** It was – Well, there were two of them. One of them was in Jefferson, Wisconsin. The other was in Madison, Wisconsin. I transferred from the one over to Madison after they'd decided to do surgery on me, which finally after a year got me out the other end of the horn and back in the real world. But while I was there, I was corresponding with a young lady whom I was very fond of, and she had been talking to a whole bunch of people. I guess the migration had finally started. Well, the upshot of it was I didn't want to go back to Milwaukee Teachers College. I thought that I was a poor, misunderstood sort of person and that this sensitive fine vibrant community was the place for a poor battered soul such as myself. So, I applied and was accepted and that's how I got there. I knew very little about the college. I had read the Adamic article and found out straight off that that was a crock. Anyway, I went there, and I enjoyed it and had a lot of fun. The experience was not anything like what I thought it would be, but I survived it somehow.

**MEH:** You didn't qualify for the GI Bill, or did you?

**HB:** No, I hadn't been in the service long enough. I could have gone to school back in Wisconsin on a rehabilitation grant, but I decided not to. So, by the time I got out of – or by the time I left Black Mountain two years later, I was in hock up to my ears and like everybody else getting out of school. Thank God it wasn't a hundred thousand dollars the way it is nowadays. Or two hundred, or whatever it is.

**MEH:** Do you recall how you physically traveled to Black Mountain at that time?

**HB:** Oh, yeah. I was living in a little town called Beaverdam, Wisconsin. The Northwestern Railway came through South Beaverdam, and I caught the 400 which ran between Minneapolis and Chicago. Took that to Chicago and then Illinois Central to Cincinnati. Then I got on the marvelous Southern Railway train that went from Cincinnati down through all the mountains. It seemed like a tunnel every fifteen minutes. The coaches looked like-- Well, I kept expecting Jeb Stuart to come through and punch the tickets every fifteen minutes. The acetylene lights, and the old green plush hard-as-a-rock benches. I remember all the windows were open about yea much, and they had screens in them which were marvelously designed to not admit any fresh air at all but to let in clinkers the size of your fist. But every time you went through a tunnel everything was just choking coal smoke. This went on, I think it was about a twenty-four hour train ride. So, I arrived at Black Mountain totally beat. I got there about noon. The taxi dropped me off from the station. Somebody met me in front of the Dining Hall and they took me over and showed me where I was supposed to be bunking over in South Hall. They said, "You've just got time for a shower and clean-up before lunch. You'll hear the bell ring out there." So, I said, "Fine." So, first thing I did was go in the shower and got the greatest surprise of my life. That's the one thing I don't think anybody has ever mentioned when they're talking about the college. The one luxury we had there in great abundance was soft water. I came from hard rock, deep well limestone country in Wisconsin, where every teakettle had a quarter inch of limestone deposited on the bottom of it. So, we'd get in this shower and one swipe of the

soap, and I was lathered from head to foot. Then it took about twenty minutes to rinse it all off. It was just incredible. Then I went over to – The bell rang and I went over for lunch, and, of course, I'd gotten cleaned up in a fairly decent pair of pants and a nice white shirt, and somebody had saved me a seat at the table. I went in there. Of course, everybody was in blue jeans and sandals or shorts or whatever the heck. I was vastly overdressed and felt very conspicuous, particularly when the crew came back from Black Mountain. These were all girls, because there were – I think Harry Weitzer and – Harry Weitzer and I and one or two others were the first influx of the men coming back after the War. All of these girls came in. They'd been unloading coal, and they were just black. They had a couple of white, white holes where the eyes were. Of course, they got their food, and they had to sit at a separate table over there because Albers was not about to have anybody disturbing the aesthetics of the dining group. I never forgot that. It was just these incredibly grubby, dirty girls, and they were having a ball. So, I figured, well what the hell, the place can't be all bad. What else? Oh, then –

**MEH:** Did you have any idea what you wanted to study?

**HB:** Oh, yeah. I was an art major. Yeah. And had been at Milwaukee Teachers College for a couple of years.

**MEH:** Had you known the Schmitt sisters or Ruth Asawa there?

**HB:** Ruth – No, none of them were there.

**MEH:** They came later.

**HB:** No, they had been there while I was in the hospital, and when I came down to Black Mountain, they were there. Ruth was there, and – Ruth was there and Elaine Schmitt was there. Not Betty. John Reiss – no, John Reiss, another fellow was there, had been there for the summer session. He was, he had gotten into commercial art, graphic design, that sort of thing, and he was down there for the Alvin Lustig course. Hazel Larsen was there, who had also been a classmate of mine. There were Rice and Hazel had been classmates of mine. The rest of them – Ruth and Elaine were younger and had been there, as I say, when I was in the hospital. Then, of course, there was – who else came that year? Oh, Pete Jennerjahn later. Jennerjahn had been another classmate. My younger brother John came there, and it seemed to me there was someone else. Oh, I noticed in the list of students in your book, there was a girl named Ann Thomas. Was she by any chance the daughter of Howard Thomas?

**MEH:** No.

**HB:** No. Okay. Because he had a daughter named Ann, whom I knew slightly from Milwaukee.

**MEH:** I don't think so. I should check that though. I think I would know. I'm sure I would know, because I was in touch with him many years ago. But he had quite an influence on the college, simply by sending so many students.

**HB:** Yeah. Well, you know, he was their chief recruiting agent, I guess. But he must have done a good job. He sure talked a lot of us into it. (LAUGHS)

**MEH:** Can you recall whether you had any real image in your mind? You had the Adamic article in your mind, the Louis Adamic article. Did you find that the college measured up to Louis Adamic's article? Or was the same?

**HB:** No, Louis Adamic, I don't know. Somebody got to him early (LAUGHS). He was probably like a lot of the people who came down there, was there long enough to have a hot bath and a cold drink and a bite to eat and then he was gone. But his grip on reality was rather tenuous at best. No, for instance, he was the guy who started the folklore about communicating with "the lift of an eyebrow." Well, hell, half those people couldn't even understand a sentence, simple declarative sentence in English. I'm not talking about the non-native English speakers either. I, you know – Communication was a problem there. It just didn't happen in this (INAUDIBLE WORD)

**MEH:** Why do you think that was the case?

**HB:** I don't know. I don't know. Nobody listened for one thing, including me. It was a very argumentative place, too. There were very strong opinions on – just about every shade of opinion on any subject imaginable. Somebody once described the Irish -- they don't know what they want but they're willing to fight to the death for it, and a lot of times Black Mountain was that way. There were a lot of very intelligent, very sensitive, very talented people there, and it was not always clubs and daggers. But one of the things I remember was that when I was student moderator, we had this whole series of meetings that had to do with the Southern Negro Youth Congress. I had gone to that convention in Columbia, South Carolina, it seemed to me. Then we came back and, of course, a lot of

the, lot of the people who had gone there were very gung-ho on everything – vote social conscience and the race problem and foreign relations and all kinds of stuff. So, there was a movement afoot to associate the student body of Black Mountain with the Southern Negro Youth Conference. My attitude had been, “Well, all kinds of people are interested in all kinds of things. If there are students who want to join this thing, want to be active in it, fine.” But I didn't see any sense at all in associating with it. Of course, what they were trying to do was to just swell the ranks, in at least a numerical fashion if not in any real sense. But it became a big issue down there. A lot of people were just – said, “Hey, wait a minute. Now what are we doing here?” A lot of them said, “I wouldn't join that outfit for anything.” So, they had one meeting where they voted to associate. Then the discussion really started, so a week later we had to call another meeting, and we came in there and hashed it all over again. Of course, this totally frustrated people like Julie Scheir and some of the other guys who were, who were really into it. The thing that frustrated them the most was they couldn't seem to run the student meetings the way that conference had been run in South Carolina. Boy, that was a steamroller job. You know, you voted. If you had one vote more on this side, that (UNINTELL WORD) than on the other, that did it, you know. End of story. Next question. But Black Mountain had always operated on a kind of a consensus basis, which was that, you know, you don't, you don't count noses, and you don't bulldoze somebody along. You sort of pick a path that everybody is comfortable with, then you go that way until somebody changes his mind which I think is an eminently

sensible way to do this sort of thing. Well, the result of this thing was that one week they voted to associate. Then the next week they voted to disassociate, which [I can tell you, boy, TALKING TO PET?] which absolutely fried some of these characters. [There you go, boy. TALKING TO PET?].

**MEH:** Did such debates become rancorous within the community? Or were they civilly discussed?

**HB:** No, they became very heated. Oh, nobody, nobody went out and cut two-by-fours to beat each other with, but the verbal equivalent.

**MEH:** As I recall, the decision was that the school would not affiliate but individuals could.

**HB:** Sure. That's just exactly the way it was. That's the way it always was with everything. There were a lot of people who were, who went out into the community doing various things. Some of the students were active in some of the local churches. I was never active in anything particular except Roy's Roadhouse (LAUGHS) and the fruit stand. [IRRELEVANT REMARKS ABOUT DUSTY, THE CAT] [TECHNICAL REMARKS NOT TRANSCRIBED] Up until the War he (Julie Schier) had probably spent his entire life concerned with music. He must have been very gifted. He must have played, learned to play very young, and he had been at, I believe, Juilliard. Went into the Navy as an officer and was out in the Pacific somewhere as a, I believe, underwater demolition team, which is a (LAUGHS) a no-brainer in terms of career. But, you know, somebody had to do it, and I'm glad somebody did. But Niebyl was an enlisted man working under Scheir. So, when Niebyl was hired to come to the college,



he accepted the appointment. He sent a telegram. He says, "Would you be interested in an extra student who incidentally is a very talented violinist?" Eddy Lowinsky got wind of that, and he said, "Yeah, get him here quick." So, he did. He gave a number of concerts on the campus. It was just absolutely great.

**MEH:** Julie Scheir did?

**HB:** Julie Scheir did, yeah.

**MEH:** Did you think that they were "card-carrying Communists" at the time?

**HB:** I don't believe so. I don't really know. I have no way of knowing. But I think I agreed with Bill Levi, who said that Niebyl was obviously a Marxist, but Levi doubted very, very much if Niebyl was the kind of person who would put up with the kind of top-down discipline demanded by the Party. I think that's a pretty fair assessment. But, you know, I have no way of knowing.

**MEH:** Oh, the college was integrated at the time.

**HB:** It was integrating, yeah. The first year I was there, which was '45, must have been September of '45, and they had a faculty member, Percy Baker, who was a biology teacher. He was the entering wedge, or, you know, the first, the first one in the college. They decided that-- I think Eddie Lowinsky, if he did not promote this whole idea, he at least was very, very active in it. The decision made was to start with a visiting faculty member for a year and get the local community used to the idea. Then for the summer session, the summer of '46, which I was also there for -- they had several mostly girl students. Mary Parks Washington was there. Delores Fullman was there. A couple -- and maybe one other. They were there for the Summer Institute. Then that fall, they admitted

the first men students. Jeanne Belcher, who was certainly not a man, but she was there, and a guy named Louis Selders, who transferred from one of the other black colleges there, and Luther Jackson. I remember sitting on the dam one day over there looking, and there were a bunch or several natives who were sitting there fishing off the dam and could look across and see the path from the Study Building down to the Dining Hall. One of them was saying, "See, I told you, I told you," you know. "Yeah. Naw, naw." "Look, look, look!" Then they turned to me and said, "Are you from the college?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, you do have niggers here, don't you?" I said, "No, we don't have any niggers. I said we have some people who just happen to have black skin." Of course, I made myself very popular with those guys, and they just sort of said, "Well, you know, damn Yankee." So, anyway.

**MEH:** Did you feel this really worked within the college?

**HB:** Yeah, it worked fine within the college. It seemed to – Nobody's worst fears about attempting this sort of thing ever came close to being realized. The idea of admitting girls first was that – and this is probably a Yankee perception, most of us there were Yankees or foreigners – was that if there was any taboo greater than the color taboo in the Deep South, it was the sex taboo. It was a lot more acceptable for white men to be associating with black women than it was the other way around. So, when they started this program there was a lot of apprehension about it, you know. They didn't know what was going to happen – have a cross burned in the yard or find somebody hanging from the

apple tree the next morning. But nothing happened. I think in time it became accepted.

**MEH:** Did you ever have the experience of trying to go with any of the black students into Asheville? Or off of the college property?

**HB:** No, I did not. I did not. No. I went into Asheville very, very seldom. It just – You know, we were all poor as church mice, and Baptist church mice at that.

**MEH:** With whom did you study art?

**HB:** Everybody who was teaching down there. With Albers, of course. I took every course Albers offered. In the Summer Institute I had Varda's course. I took sculpture starting out with Concetta Scaravaglione, who threw in the sponge after a brief while and went back to New York. Then Leo Amino came down there. Of course, I took his course. Scaravaglione started everybody out with a little lump of clay and then we did this stuff. I don't know what it is about clay but it has always bugged me. In every pottery course you've ever heard of, the first thing they do is give you a lump of clay and say, "Make a pinch pot." Well, the darn stuff just doesn't fight back enough. There's no real interaction. You can do so much with it that, you know – So, when Amino came down there, with a whole big suitcase full of razor-sharp carving gouges and stuff, I went out and got myself an old black locust fencepost and started whacking away. Wood was a much more sympathetic medium as far as I was concerned. So, I learned a great deal and had a lot of fun.

**MEH:** What was – Scaravaglione, did she not stay her full term for the summer? Did she leave?

**HB:** She left, yes.

**MEH:** Why do you think she left?

**HB:** Well I think she – (LAUGHS). I think she met me, for one thing. No, I think she – Well, she was used to working, I mean I've seen pictures of her in her studio standing on a stepladder with a hand chisel whacking away at a two-ton chunk of marble. I don't think she had ever taught before, and I don't know what she expected, but I'm sure that what she found was not, was not it. She was a very nice person. I liked her a lot. But I just didn't like the damn clay.

**MEH:** What about Amino? What was he like?

**HB:** Oh, he was a neat guy. He was young. He was fooling around with all kinds of things. He was casting plastic, clear plastic. I don't know whether it was some kind of an epoxy or what. They were very small things because this material was not readily available. It was pretty expensive. But transparent sculpture has always bothered me, because you lose the, you lose the surface of it. There is no surface anymore, except just, you know, a variation of the transparency of the stuff. If you did it in opaque plastic, then you might just as well do it out of plaster or bronze or anything else, you know. Then you get the surface back. But the special qualities of the plastic are gone. But anyway, that was interesting, too. He worked mostly – he worked on several things of his own down there at the time. He was direct carving in wood. He'd just sit there with a block of wood and start whaling away at it.

**MEH:** What do you remember about Varda?

**HB:** Oh, Varda – Varda and I got to be very good buddies. We liked each other a lot. [END OF AUDIOTAPE 1, SIDE 2. BEGINNING OF SIDE 2] Well, he blew into town– or into camp – for the Summer Session with his Model-A roadster, which I don't believe had a top on it. But he had built a little extension off the back of the rumble seat. It was about three feet long, and it was almost the width of the car. This was propped up with probably two-by-fours and maybe he had a couple of cables on it to brace it. He had all his paintings stacked up on that. Then on the rear end of the whole works, he had a couple of spare tires hung. He drove all the way from California in this thing. Parts of it was painted in the world's first psychedelic paint job. It was a good deal more aesthetic and less cluttered than Ken Kesey's bus, but along the same lines. Varda was a very free kind of bubbling guy, and everything he did was sort of tied into his own personal mythology. All of his teaching and everything else was always great stuff. He'd get you into this thing and just sort of sweep you along with it. Frankly, after Albers, it was kind of like a breath of fresh air because Albers was always pretty buttoned up. I don't know. I think if you were one of his special students, and he did seem to have those, they probably saw a much different Albers than I did. But I was going to tell you about Varda's party. Have you ever heard about Varda's party?

**MEH:** I've heard bits and pieces. I'm trying to put together –

**HB:** Okay. Well, I was involved in it I think from the very beginning, so maybe my version's a little more definitive than some of the others. Varda was a great party animal. If the cork was pulled on a bottle anywhere on campus, it was a

matter of minutes before Varda would show up. So, by the end of the summer he had accumulated a vast array of social obligations. I guess probably it was the end of the summer when they finally got their pay that he decided that he was going to reciprocate. He got hold of me, because he knew I knew where these places were in Asheville. We got in his car and went to Asheville to the distributor. We bought a rather large quantity of wine, which was a good deal better known for its high alcohol and low price than anything else – It was a couple of steps removed from paint remove – and took it back to his place. He was staying in the Lowinsky's place. I believe it was in Black Dwarf. We planned a kind of a nice party. But in true Varda fashion he couldn't leave it at that. He'd been inviting – He would go up to someone and say [WHISPERS] "Don't talk to a lot of – " He said, "I'm giving a party on Sunday night," and he says, "We'd like you to come, but don't talk about it because I can't have everybody. So, there are a lot of people who are not invited." Well, of course, it was bull. He was inviting everybody. These little girls [WHISPERS] "Oh, yeah, and what kind of a party is it going to be?" you know. [WHISPERS] "It's going to be an orgy!" God, it just – So, that Sunday night was the last night of the session. It was the final meeting, and everybody had the traditional sandwich lunch. We met and we ate all together down in the Dining Hall. There were announcements and little speeches and this sort of thing. I noticed that there was a little group back in the corner, back behind the silver draperies that enclosed the stage when it was – Lorna Blaine and Albers and Max Dehn and Ted Dreier. I figured that they probably had some of, some of Lorna's booze

back there, which was fine, you know. [LAUGHS] I didn't think anything more about it, but Varda and I left early, maybe a couple of other people, maybe Mary Phelan and somebody else and went up to his place to set up for the party. We put out a bunch of candles, and he borrowed a phonograph and had some soft music playing and the candles going. He'd borrowed a punchbowl, and there was a block of ice in it. He poured the cheap wine over the ice. It was on a little table, which was set into a bay window, which jutted out on a deck. We'd gotten things nicely set up, and the first guests started to arrive.

**MEH:** Where did the party take place?

**HB:** It was in Black Dwarf –

**MEH:** I thought it was in the Dining Hall.

**HB:** No, no. That was where the dinner was. That's where the whole college gathered. Then afterwards all the guests for Varda's orgy came on up to where he was staying. So, the second people came in there because of all this expectation – the noise level just started to go like this. It was getting pretty raucous, and all of a sudden the windows were pulled open, the casement windows were pulled open from the outside. There was Lorna Blaine, Max Dehn, Ted Dreier – they'd already dropped Albers off at the house. He was a two drink man. I don't know, I think he had zero tolerance for alcohol, you know. Just fine, a good way to be. She whips open these windows and looks in. She was a very agile girl, anyway, and she says, "Whee!" She steps onto the windowsill, took one leap over the top of the punchbowl, landed on the floor. Max Dehn took one look at this and just shook his head, came around through

the door. But Ted Dreier decided to do the Peter Pan route. So, it was up on the windowsill. He leaps out. He cleared the punchbowl, he cleared the table, but he overshot the landing. He rammed his head right straight into a doorknob on the opposite wall and just laid out cold on a mattress which was conveniently lying in the corner. In the meantime, Lorna went over and pulled out the bottom drawer of a dresser, which was empty. She decided to curl up in it and go to sleep. Of course, she knocked the bottom of the darn thing (LAUGHS). But in the meantime, all these people were coming in and the noise just was incredible. Maybe about fifteen seconds after Dreier overshot the runway, the interconnecting door to Nell Rice's apartment swung open. There was Nell, full up to full height, all five feet of her, and just madder than hell. She said, "What in the world is going on here? What is the matter with you people?" She looked down and sees Dreier groggy on the floor. "You should know better!" The party just collapsed like a big old soufflé when you slam the door, you know. So, she – she did slam the door. She slammed the door and went back to her place. So, we picked up the wine and picked up the punchbowl, and we picked up everything else and went down to the Studies Building. I looked at my watch just to be sure and that party, from start to finish, which was the loudest, noisiest, most unruly party I have ever been to in my life, lasted exactly seventeen minutes. So, then it broke up into a whole bunch of little parties down there.

**MEH:** Now this was not the same as the Greek party.



**HB:** No, no. The Greek party was a dance, in the Dining Hall. Varda and a bunch of his cohorts had gone down to the scenery barn where they made all the sets for the plays and that kind of stuff. They had constructed this wooden horse, a Trojan Horse. It was a sort of a framework – well, you've seen pictures of it, I'm sure. It was mostly open framework in which all kinds of various things – what do you call them, matadors, and caches (PH). These were the little pretties that hung in the big places. I think we have some place around here a picture of him sitting up on top of this horse. This was to be the centerpiece in the center of the Dining Hall. Of course, everybody was getting costumes ready for the big party that night. It came time for the Trojans to bring the horse into the city, into Troy, you know. Of course, they got it to the front porch, it wouldn't come anywhere near. They couldn't get any more than the shoulders through the front door. "Tear the porch off! We'll make it – Get this thing in there!" Well, they finally talked him out of that, and so for several months it sat out in front of the Dining Hall. That was a very great party. It was everyone in Greek costume, and Joe Fiore showed up as the Minotaur with a big cardboard box over his head, which was painted up in Joe-Fiore-very-abstract fashion with the great colors. He was a big hit.

**MEH:** Do you remember how you dressed?

**HB:** How I dressed? I don't know what I – some kind of a toga or something, and – I don't know. The Romans wore togas. I don't know what the Greeks wore.  
Tutus! (LAUGHS)

**MEH:** Do you remember any of the other costumes?

**HB:** Mary Phelan was Psyche, with little wispy wings on the back of a wire frame with a very gauzy kind of covering on them. Oh Lord! Can't remember any other specific ones. But there were several friends of Varda's from California. They were young people who had come and they were just there for the party, I believe. Of course, they got into the spirit of the thing, too. I think every bed sheet on the campus was pressed into service of some kind.

**MEH:** What was your experience of studying with Albers?

**HB:** Well, Albers by all, by any standard you might imagine, should have been the most important and influential person on that campus for me. But somehow he wasn't. We just never made – we never made connections.

**MEH:** Why do you think that was the case?

**HB:** Well, I remember the first, the first day in his design class. He had assigned [IRRELEVANT REMARK TO CAT] – he was trying to assign a project. It was fall and the leaves down there in North Carolina are just absolutely brilliant, and they're all over the place. So, this design project had something to do with leaves. I don't know whether I hadn't been paying attention or whether I was totally expecting something else, but I evidently did not get the idea, which happened quite often with Albers. I'll tell you another story here in a minute. I'll finish this one. So, for a long time (?) people were working with these. They were putting them down on paper, and sometimes they were actually painting leaves. Frankly, I didn't see an awful lot of sense to it because, you know. I didn't have any idea of which direction this thing's supposed to be going. What are we really supposed to be doing? So, I had gone out and I had found some

grass. It was stalks with – well, like a bamboo, except that they were dry, and they were brown. So, I was going three-dimensional with this thing. I had made a little base of paper and poked some holes in it. I was sticking these things in. I thought it was kind of fun. It looked kind of sculptural. Albers came around the class to see us as we were working. He stood by me, and this is the first contact I'd had with the guy, one-to-one. He took one look at it. He says, "I zee no zense in this." He turned around and walked away. Never a question about, "What in the hell are you doing here, man? That's not what I told you to do." It was, "I zee no zense in it," you know. Well, I zaw no zense in what he was trying to tell us to do at the moment. So, you know, there was – right off the bat. At that point in my life I was not, I was not ready for any more rejection. But it went on. We worked together. With Albers – people usually took Albers one of two ways. Either he made the world and set out the trees, or, you know, they hated his guts. I think I'm one of the few who sort of came in between. I'm still ambivalent about the guy.

**MEH:** What was the other incident you were going to tell me about?

**HB:** Oh, I was going to tell you about in the Summer Session. Of course, everybody who came there signed up for Albers' classes, so he had his design – I don't really recall if it was the design course or the color course. But there were huge groups. The way he would teach, he'd give an assignment. Then you'd come in the next day, and you'd bring your stuff in there and you'd put it up on the wall and in the chalkboard tray and on the floor. He would sit on a little box, and people would gather around and then he'd talk about these. There was a girl

there, I think she came from a very prominent Hong Kong family. Suefong Li. She was just one of these people who sort of lit up the place. She was not a raving beauty, but she was a very attractive girl. She was rather tall, and she always wore, or usually wore one of these – do they call them cheongsam, with the high collar and the little – and the slit way up the side, and silk. She was very quiet, and she was very popular with the girls. They had a lot of girlfriends. Of course, every male on the campus was just absolutely falling all over himself. She would walk down the path from the Studies to the – sort of carrying her books or whatever and looking down a little bit and smiling. I'm sure she must have been aware of the havoc she was wreaking with all the males in the place, because women just seem to know those things. But somehow or other she wandered serene and unscathed through the hormonal minefield of (LAUGHS). But she also was in this class of Albers. He assigned this thing, and, as I indicated before, sometimes it was difficult to figure out what he was driving at because he would lead into something. He would talk just so far. You'd get to the point where you'd think he was going to drop the other shoe, but he never dropped it. Then he would just off on another one until he'd reach a similar point. So, his assignments were in many cases kind of guessing games. On this particular occasion he'd given something that had to do with colored paper and sticking colored paper down on other colored paper. Everybody came in with this stuff and pinned it up. Of course, there was tons of it. I don't know whether Albers had had a bad night or was just in a foul mood, but he came in. It was a bad day for him. He could be savage when he wanted

to. So, he was, he was very scathing about a lot of these things. Finally, way over in the corner he catches sight of this one thing. He says, "Oh," he says "This is this room (?) put up here." He puts it up, and it was just this piece of 8 ½ x 11 white construction paper with little torn out bits of other colored paper pasted around the edge, trimmed to the edge of the paper, but with this irregular large absolutely empty bare space in the middle. He started in on this one, you know. After savaging it for a few minutes, he finally says, "Zo, who does this? Suefong. Ahhh!" You know, because Albers was just – Albers was not exactly immune to Suefong's charms either. He liked girls. So, immediately when he – He could sense the hostility in the room. No, really, anybody who picked on Suefong was going to have to fight half the campus. So, he started backpedaling, "Ah, so," he said, you know, "different cultures see different things differently." He went on and on and on and on, so finally he said, "Zo, Zuefong, what means this?" In a voice that was barely audible, she said, "Humble in the heart." At any rate, that was the end of that discussion.

[LAUGHS] I don't know what else.

**MEH:** Do you feel, despite the personality differences with Albers, whatever, do you feel you really learned from him?

**HB:** Yeah, I think I learned things. I'm not sure what. I got a good deal out of his color course. I never really got the point of his painting course. I could never understand – Have you seen an awful lot of the studies that were done in those painting classes? Over the years?

**MEH:** The watercolors.

**HB:** The little watercolors, yeah. They all look like little flower petals sort of, you know. There was never a line in any of it, and they were always pastel. About half the class would be doing these things. These were the things that always got the attention, and I was never sure whether they were being, whether they were being done because these people were seeing something that I wasn't seeing, or because they knew that this was the path that wouldn't – if it didn't find favor in his eyes, at least was not going to find disfavor. It just seemed impossible to me that that many people out of a class of say fifteen, fifteen or twenty, would all be seeing things so similar and putting it down on paper in such a similar fashion. Obviously, I didn't get the point, and it was very frustrating.

**MEH:** Did you study with Bolotowsky when he came?

**HB:** Oh, yeah. Yeah.

**MEH:** You were there two years, right?

**HB;** I was there two years, yeah.

**MEH:** How do you remember – What was your experience of studying with Bolotowsky?

**HB;** Oh, I – We got along great. In the first place, he was a lot younger. In fact he was just fresh out of the army, too. I wasn't fresh out of the army, but many, many of the guys there. Joe Fiore and my brother John and I had one of the war housing apartments up in Last Chance. We studied up there, and we also took a design tutorial with Ilya. We would either meet at his place or up in our studio or down in the Studies Buildings, wherever it was. Maybe once a month

when the GI Bill checks came through, we'd wind up down at Roy's. So, it was – That was a very close kind of one-on-one, or one-on-three, kind of thing, and we all became very good friends, you know. I got a good deal out of that.

**MEH:** What media were you using?

**HB:** Everything. I'd done a lot of watercolors and oils and of course at Milwaukee Teachers College you used everything. Pastels and charcoal and god knows what. I don't know. I never made a great deal of sense out of the *matière* studies either. What you were talking about of course is visual context and how visual context – the context the thing appears in – can change your perception of it. Well, hell, that's what all art is about. I remember the time Elaine Schmitt came back from the farm with a pig gut and some candle wax, you know. She put this thing down and Albers was enchanted, you know, that you couldn't tell where one left off and the other began. I for one was not about to stick my hand in there to find out (LAUGHS). But he said, "Ah, it's marvelous, but please throw it out!" Or something to that effect. It was interesting. I remember one of the things that used flour on a board. It had been just loose flour, and then part of it was smoothed off. Little depressions were made in it with the back side of a measuring spoon, and then there were some little bumps made with the concave side of the spoon. Of course, it was just flour, but it looked like plaster. I mean totally – it looked hard. It looked hard, it looked rigid. Of course, it wasn't. Of course, this was, this was the prize pig for that day. There were a lot of those things but, you know, how many do you need to do before you get the point?

**MEH:** You did the tutorial with Bolotowsky. Did you take a general class with him or just the tutorial?

**HB:** No, I also took – I'm not sure what he taught. That's the one I remember the best. But, yeah, we were also in the regular class. I always meant to ask you. When you went through the whole roster you've got in your book, everybody who ever went to the college, and in compiling that list you must certainly have been, or had available the time span in which they were actually on the campus. I've often wondered how come you didn't include that information with the roster (OVERTALK) –

**MEH:** Right. It was just too much for the space. Let's see, what was I going to –  
[TECHNICAL INTERRUPTION].

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

**MEH:** What courses did you take besides art courses?

**HB:** Well, I took – Let's see, the first year I took Problems in Philosophy with Max Dehn; I took Reading Literature with M. C. Richards; I took Introduction to Psychology with John Wallen; took Albers' Design – well, that's the art course. I think that's all.

**MEH:** How do you remember Max Dehn?

**HB:** Oh, with great affection. He was probably one of the most influential guys I ever met down there. His class met at night, after dinner, in his little apartment at the end of the Studies Building. There were only five, possibly six of us. I remember Harry Weitzer was there. I think Harry was the only other guy. He would just start out, and essentially what he was, what we were doing was studying sort of



the history of knowledge. How did we – Of course, we started with the observation of the seasons and the solar and the lunar cycles and all having to do with crops and this kind of stuff, and how this thing led to investigations and putting things together. We just – there was practically no reading. If you wanted to read something, that was fine. But it was simply sort of a Socratic dialogue on all of this stuff. Then I remember when he introduced us to Descartes and various kinds of truths, or at least Descartes' definitions of it. No, I'd never been exposed to this kind of thing. You know, every adolescent and college age student goes through a lot of bull session stuff where you're very earnest and very unfocused and trying to carve marshmallows and this kind of stuff, you know. But this had shape, and it had substance. It was great and we just – it showed you how – You know, if you're going to think about something, let's really think about it. Let's get rid of the baggage and throw the bull overboard and let's get with it. He was just such a wonderful, warm person anyway.

I remember one time in John Wallen's class, in the second term, John had a way of sort of thing: "Well, what do you want to do, Marty?" [LAUGHS] "What do you want to study? What are you interested in?" Because in psychology, I guess, everything is grist for your mill, and so it doesn't matter where you start. So, the class as a group decided that they wanted to study sex. What else?! Dehn heard about that. I had a long conversation with him about it, and he was very, very disturbed. "Why is he asking – ?" There was a – John made up a little questionnaire, and the object of the questionnaire was to determine not

what people knew about sex or not who was an authority and who wasn't, but simply what are your attitudes towards this. Dehn's feeling was "These are young people. They don't – They've never been married. What do they know about sex?" Well, you might not know a damn thing about sex, but they've sure got opinions about it, you know. This is – I could never convince him that this was really all John was after. You know, what are your attitudes about it, and are these – What's the basis of these attitudes? Anyway, the other thing was that Dehn was a great hiker, and he would go off all by himself with practically nothing in his backpack but a salt and pepper shaker. He could be gone for three days, and he could live out of the woods. To anyone walking, he would – Much of the walking around Black Mountain was up and down hill, and with only half a lung on the right side, I wasn't into much uphill stuff. But I knew that Dehn had an ironclad rule that you would never talk and walk at the same time. So, when we were out walking, we were going uphill, and I needed a chance to breathe, I would ask him a question. So, then he would stop and he would answer the question, and when we got done, then we'd walk some more until I had to ask him another question. He showed me all kinds of stuff – edible plants. Most of them tasted like [UNINTELL] but obviously you could live on the stuff. Sorrel and some of the rest of – He never would – he never would show me where his – He had discovered a place where a very rare flower grew, and he would never show anybody where that was. But I made the mistake of showing him where I'd found the strawberry patch (LAUGHS), and so I had competition with the strawberries after that.

**MEH:** How do you remember M. C. Richards?

**HB:** I liked M.C. We got along fine. She was – She had a good sense of humor, and she was very, very articulate and very bright. She was a kind of a tough – I took her course the first term, Reading Literature, because I thought with all that other stuff I was taking that this would be a little, this would be a little fun, a little light reading on the side. Well, she not only wanted you to read, but she wanted you to write. You handed it in when she wanted it, and you got it back when you wanted it. So, I remember the first – because it was, the paper was due on either the Thursday or Friday of the last class of the week, and the paper was handed back the following Monday or Tuesday, which was the first class meeting the next week. You'd put down when you came into class on due date, and if you didn't have it ready then, just don't bother. Then you got it back when the time came. I remember my first, my first paper. I just pulled out all the stops. I just, you know – Ostensibly, it was about something we had read. These were short papers, only three or four pages. I remember getting mine back the next week, and there was only one note in the margin. Of course, it was the opposite of the best part of it with the most subtle insights and the most searching inquiry and all the rest of it. Just the one word comment was simply "Bullshit." That really – I was furious, of course. But having had a weekend to reread this thing with this one word sort of welded in my eyeballs, I came to the conclusion that she was – she had me dead-to-right, you know. That it was. But at any rate I did (UNINTEL WORD). But there was a lot of bullshit around that place, too.

**MEH:** Did you take any science courses?

**HB:** No, I did not. No. I did take – I started to take a course from Dehn on Statics, which was a math course. I got interested because I was starting to make some furniture, and I made a little sort of a couch thing. It was an oak frame on some rather low legs and went to Asheville and bought some upholsterer's webbing, the kind that goes under the springs and the stuffing on davenports and that kind of stuff. I had worked with that in high school when we'd done some upholstery work, and I knew how to stretch it and make a stretcher to pull the stuff tight. But the first time I sat down in it, you could [MAKES TEARING SOUND] – sort of popped a lot of the joints at the corner. Then I realized that there were stresses in this thing that I was totally unaware of. Well, I'd never thought about it. So, I went to Dehn, and I asked him. I said, "Is there any way you could figure out what these stresses are so I can fix this thing, and it isn't going to do it anymore?" He took one look at it, and he says, "Oh my, oh my." He said, "Yeah, I could do it," but it was, you know, it wasn't anything simple that he could explain to me in about five minutes because he knew what a supposedly mathematical idiot I was at that point in my life. Anyway, I took this course in Statics, and it began to make a little bit of sense. It was funny because there were only – all of us artists. He'd make these drawings, these diagrams, of the situations he wanted us to analyze. I could look at these things and just intuitively say, "Okay, well this thing is stressed and bending, or it's in compression, it's in tension," that sort of thing, but I had no way of quantifying this stuff at all. So, we'd talk about it and the rest of these guys just seemed to sit there and not have any big feelings about it one way or another until Dehn

would write an equation on the board, you know. Well, they'd have that damn equation solved in about fifteen seconds, and I was sitting there, "Duh," you know, because at that point I had no clue about that sort of thing, which is stupid because I should have learned it in junior high school. At any rate, Dehn finally taught me that I was not the mathematical idiot, that I had just been poorly taught and probably utterly turned off in high school about this sort of thing. It's a good thing I never went to architecture school out of high school. I wouldn't have made it. I would not have gotten past freshman math. In fact, when I went to Milwaukee Teachers College, they give you these placement exams. I did very well in the English one. Take the math placement test, the answer came – the appraisal came back: "You are strongly urged not to take any math in college," you know. I was only too happy to oblige them on that one. Thank god they weren't going to force me to do it. So, then you wonder how does a guy who can't solve basic equations end up as an architect. Well, once I got the general drift of these things and saw for the first time that these equations were just not numbers and letters and this kind of stuff, that they actually stood – they actually meant something in terms of the real world and that the quantities could vary according to the situation, then it began to make sense. But aside from that brief fling at Statics, I hadn't had a mathematics course since tenth grade in high school, which was plain Euclidean geometry, which I was very good at because it was visual. You could see it. The one bad part of that year was the semester that they spent reviewing algebra, and I went right back in the soup.

**MEH:** What do you remember about the work program at Black Mountain? What did you do?

**HB:** Did a number of things. I never worked on the farm. I worked – they had a painting and glazing crew for a while, and I was – Dor and I were on that. We went around repairing window glass and painting wherever stuff needed painting. For one term I was work program coordinator. That was my job, sort of putting the whole mess together and seeing when things needed doing that we got somebody assigned to it and this sort of stuff. I worked in the store, in the post office, for a term. Oh, and we went up and we planted trees up in the pasture one time.

**MEH:** Was there any construction going on while you were there?

**HB:** Molly Gregory was rebuilding the farmhouse, which was a very strange kind of a proposition. No, there wasn't, aside from that.

**MEH:** Were the FHA buildings already up? The army –

**HB:** They came while I was there. They were coming in in the fall of '46, and before the – I don't know, anyway, Joe and John and I moved into Last Chance, which was one of these buildings. We were there for the last term, the spring term of '47.

**MEH:** Did they come really prefabricated? Did you have to put them together?

**HB:** No, they came – they just went into these old army bases around the place, presumably they were nearby, and they jacked them up and put them, put some big timbers under that were up on dollies and lowered them down out of the dollies and hooked a truck up to it and hauled them up the road and

skidded them into place and propped them up in air high enough so that they could get underneath and put plumb bobs down to see where the corners were and build a foundation underneath it, and then lowered them down onto the foundation and that was it. Didn't take them very long either.

**MEH:** Were you there when there was discussion of the dormitories designed by the architects collaborative?

**HB:** Yes, that's one of the – that's I think when I started to get seriously interested in going into architecture. Yeah, Norman Fletcher came down there. They had done one – Of course, there was the old Breuer-Gropius study of the big high-rise thing that was stuck up partly off the dike and partly on pilings over the south end of the dam. Then they'd gotten estimates on that thing, and then they had to move before they could ever hope to raise enough money to build it. That's when Kocher got involved in the thing and designed the Studies Building, and that had been built. But they still had problems with the dormitories, and they were getting all of these – All of a sudden they had a full enrollment, first time ever, and they had as many students as they ever wanted to have and most of them were GI Bill students. So, they were – they were higher income students than the average – Most of us were there on some kind of student aid. So, the first time – for the first time the college seemed to be able to see its way out of the woods on a few of these things. So, then they decided that what they needed was dormitory space, and that's when Fletcher came down there and Chuck Forberg, who had been a student there. He just left shortly after I'd gotten there in '45, and, of course, he and Ati Gropius were

probably engaged at that point and later married. So, he was up at Harvard. They both came back and there were a couple of schemes. The Forberg scheme – he may have been doing something as a student project – and he had another much less ambitious scheme, which was also built. One side of it was on stilts in the lake, and the other side was – you entered off the top of the dike. He was building a model of this thing. Then Fletcher came down there and did this, oh, did a different version. It could be built – it was sort of supposed to be a prototype which could be built in several locations around the campus. That was the idea that there'd be sort of a dispersal of – you could build the units as you needed them, and this sort of thing. I built a model for that thing just for the heck of it. I think at that point I went and talked to Albers, who was my advisor. I told him I was seriously thinking about going into architecture and what did he think? He says, "Oh absolutely not." He says it would be crazy. "You've got all this time invested in this other thing. What's the point?" The point was, I guess, I was beginning to see that maybe that wasn't the direction I really wanted to, I really ought to be going in. But at any rate – Jalo was there then and, of course, that got things started. So, then Don Wight and – I don't know, there must have been a couple of other people involved in it but I can't recall who – got to thinking about it and got to looking at the Architects' Collaborative scheme and came up with some smaller units. The Fletcher scheme had – in every unit there was a faculty apartment on one end, so they had the built in babysitter thing, which on further reflection I don't think would have been too happy a situation for either the faculty or the students. You know,



good God, you ought to be able to get away from each other once in a while. So, that meant there was a big brouhaha about which direction we wanted to go in, and we wound up not going in any direction at all. But another incident that I've never read about in any of the books or very little discussion on it was when an architect named Goodwin [Bertrand Goldberg] came – Do you know anything about that? He came to the campus and his wife had been a student at the Bauhaus. I guess his wife had died, and he was the – there were two Goodmans, who were very well known architects. One was a Chicago Goodman and the other was someplace else. Ulysses S. Grant said he only knew two tunes: one was Yankee Doodle and the other one wasn't. So, this was one Goodwin or the other came down there, and he wanted to – he wanted to donate a building to the college as a memorial to his wife who'd been an art student. His idea was that it could be a studio-gallery kind of thing. He spent about a week there on the campus and looked at all kinds of sites and decided that where this building ought to go, or where he'd like to build this building, was down off to the southeast of the corner of the Studies Building, probably about where the dock is now. It's a big spooky slide that goes out there? He came in with – He had a budget, he had a schedule, he was going to donate this thing, he was going to design it and for somehow or another, Albers just resisted the idea all the way along the line. I never understood why. The college being that hard up for space and for money, you know, and all of a sudden we were looking at the back teeth in this gift horse, and – I don't know. Albers was a master of the hidden agenda. You never quite knew where he was coming

from or what he – I ran into that all the time when I was on the, when I was student moderator, on the Board.

**MEH:** I was going to ask you about that, especially what it was like to be student moderator.

**HB:** Well, it was great. I learned an awful lot. The first thing I learned was that – Well, the very first thing, I went to the first meeting, it was in somebody's study. I was the last one – I wasn't late, but I was the last one to arrive. I came in and there was the fanciest chair in the whole place. I thought, "How nice, they've left this nice chair for me." It was Albers' leather chair, the sling chair that was patterned on the Mexican things that he'd seen. The leather was nice, thick cowhide, and it was tacked down with nice little brown-headed bronze upholstery nails. So, I sat down in this thing. I realized after about fifteen minutes that nobody was being nice to me. This was probably the most – It looked great, but it was a back breaker. It was just a very, very uncomfortable chair. So, I made a point of getting there earlier after that. I also learned that if I had any kind of a disagreement with Albers during the course of a board meeting, which happened every Wednesday afternoon, I could almost automatically count on a bad time Thursday morning in class, which was, you know, strange. I don't know. I remember one discussion – Oh, Bill Levi and I were on a committee on tenure and pensions, but Bill always insisted on calling it the Committee on Penury and Tensions, which was a lot closer to the truth.

[END OF SIDE 1, AUDIOTAPE 2. BEGINNING OF SIDE 2.]

**MEH:** Okay, you were talking about being student moderator on the Board of Fellows. What was the nature of the board meetings? Do you remember the particular issues at stake at that time? You were talking about the tension-pension issue.

**HB:** Right. (LAUGHS) I remember one of the perennial topics was – particularly when they were hiring a new faculty member – was what is his academic rank going to be. I just – at first blush I thought the whole subject was kind of silly, you know, and I said like, "What the hell's the difference here? You're all here. You're all making twenty-five bucks a month and room and board. What's the difference what your rank is? Why don't you just make everybody a full professor and not worry about it anymore?" Boy, they educated me on that one in a hurry, because you just don't do this sort of thing because if you are a full professor in one institution you can't move to another institution. You've got to – It's like the Masons. You work your way through the chairs or whatever it is they do. If you're an associate professor in one place, you can't take a job anyplace else at a lesser rank. I don't know. It was kind of silly. I learned about that sort of thing. I later became much more aware of it when I was teaching part-time at Portland State. I have a friend who was a chief administrative officer over in the Sudan Project, and he'd had a great deal of experience in academic life. He said that the only reason academic politics could be so vicious was because they're so trivial, which I thought was – I don't know fair or not. But it's a good, it's a good line.

**MEH:** Why did you leave Black Mountain?

**HB:** I ran out of money for one thing.

**MEH:** Was this on loan? Did you have a loan? Was it –

**MEH:** Yeah, I had a loan from my parents, and I also had a loan from the college, the Derek Bovington Loan Fund, which meant that they would – You didn't have to pay anything back until a year after you had left. So, I left. I was pretty well in hock, I mean to people who were not going to come out and break my kneecap if I didn't pay up tomorrow, but still it was an obligation and you had to take care of it. Well, the other thing was that I – Well, I had taken and passed senior division exams, and at that time, of course, I was determined I was going to graduate. But then it became apparent that I probably was not going to be able to hang on that long, and so – I don't know – Dor and I had gotten together in the meantime, and we wanted to get married and all this kind of stuff. We had spent a year planning with the group to come out to Oregon or wherever the heck they were going to go. At that time that issue was still in doubt, but – Well, there were probably a number of reasons for it.

**MEH:** What did you do?

**HB:** What did I do? After I left? Went back to, went back to Beaver Dam, and the first thing I did was – first job I got was in the local Kraft Cheese factory, making Philadelphia Cream Cheese. I lasted – Well, I couldn't stand it, actually. Two times a day – This whole place was run with pumps and pipes, and the trucks would come in from the creamery and then back up to this place. They'd put a great big stainless steel – couple up a great big stainless steel pipe to the back of the truck and turn on the pump and pump all the cream up to the top floor. Huge storage vats, where it was drawn down into the pasteurizers and all the

other stuff. Then it went into – it went through a machine. It was piped over to this machine called a viscolyzer [PH], and from there it was drawn down under the floor down below where they put a bunch of – well, you don't want to learn about cream cheese. You were wet up to the knees all day long, and your hands would get so – Twice a day you took all this piping and stuff apart and you scrubbed it, disinfected it, put it all back together. So, I left that and got a civilized job on the night assembly line at the local Monarch Range Company, making stoves, electric, gas, and combination. They sold a lot of stoves out in the West with a trash burner on one side and coal fire and this kind of stuff. I left there to come on out to Oregon. Both kind of no-brainers in terms of work. I was able to live at home and save some money and pay off some of my debt, and have a little fun on the side.

**MEH:** You and Dorothy were married before you came out to Oregon?

**HB:** Yeah, we came out here on our honeymoon. We were married on July 11th in Minneapolis, with a bunch of Black Mountain people in attendance. Schauff was there and Verna, of course, and Ed Adamy and Charlie Boyce and my brother John. Then we left from there. We went by bus down to Los Angeles to visit Dorothy's parents down there and then came up here from there to join the group, which was sort of arriving – Well, the Wallens were here. Who all was here? The whole group was here, because when we got married the rest of the group – Harry Holl was in that group too. Maybe he wasn't. I don't know. At any rate, they had their old car and the trailer loaded with stuff and came on out.

They were already installed in this war housing project by the time we arrived, so that worked out pretty well.

**MEH:** But Dorothy was saying you lived in Troutdale. You didn't live –

**HB:** Yeah, it was a place in Troutdale . They had built during the War the big aluminum smelter out there, and they had erected all of this temporary housing for workers at the aluminum plant. That's basically the same kind of buildings that they had moved into Black Mountain College from. Sort of two-by-four and sticks and spit and baling wire and –

**MEH:** At that point did you know that you wanted to be an architect? Was it still a goal?

**HB:** No, it was not a goal at that point. We'd looked around for jobs, and Harry had been – Harry actually took the job for a while as a substitute teacher of art at Lincoln High School. We'd gotten to know this gal who was the art supervisor for all the schools. She was kind of intrigued with Black Mountain but would really have preferred somebody with a whole load of credentials. So, one of the teachers in the fall came out here and was hired for this art class and met with the class about six times and quietly went off her rocker and quit. So, I was offered that job. In the meantime I'd gotten a job with the Soil Conservation Service, which paid about the same. I found out later that the high school job was sort of a penal battalion of the school, you know. This is where they sent the louts, and they had a history of heaving the benches and stuff out the window. I had never really – even when I went to the teachers college where presumably they were preparing me to become a teacher, I really wasn't into

the teaching. Actually when I finally did some teaching, I liked it and enjoyed it and I think I was fairly decent at it. But at that point, anyway, I went to work at the Soil Conservation Service as an engineering draftsman. We did mostly cartographic work for all the five Western states, Hawaii, and Alaska, which were not then states. We did a lot of map work and made engineering drawings for all kinds of erosion control structures and this kind of stuff. They even had me doing visual aids for their agents to teach classes of farmers, for instance, how to plow on contour. Siphon tube irrigation systems. I did all the technical illustrations and the graphs and the charts and all this kind of stuff for the first big definitive handbook on sprinkler irrigation, which was just sort of coming into its own at that time. We used to get these sketches, field sketches that the engineers and these guys would do out in the field. It would come in and then we would take these sketches and make the final drawings for them. The drawings were all in ink, and they were on linen, they were standard size paper and they had standard filing numbers and they had a standard way of using these little lettering templates to make it all – all the lettering on every drawing was beautiful. I got this thing one time, and it was a reinforced concrete structure. I took it in to the chief engineer whose office was next door. I said, "Frank, get a look at this thing." He said, "What's the matter?" "Well it's stupid." He said, "What do you mean 'stupid'?" I told him. So, he says, "Yeah, it is kind of stupid." "Okay, well, I'm going to change it." "No," he says, "you better draw it just the way it's drawn." I said, "But, Frank, if I draw it that way some damn fool's going to build it that way." He said, "Oh, it's already built." I says, "It's

already built? What did they build it from?" He said, "Oh, those sketches." I said, "Well why am I drawing this thing?" He said, "You're drawing the file copy." I said, "Well if they can build from this, why can't they put a file number on it and file the damn thing?" "Oh, no." Then as I was going out the door, I stopped, and I said, "Frank, are you telling me that everything I've been drawing here for three years is as-built drawings?" "Yeah, didn't you know that?" "No, thank you very much." I was out of there. That's about the time that Harry was moving the shop into town, and I then went to work with Harry for about a year.

**MEH:** His woodworking shop?

**HB:** The woodworking shop. Part of my job was to go out and call on the local architects to try to sell stuff, so I got to know a bunch of these guys, and in the meantime the guy I lived next to on the houseboat was a young architect who worked for Belluschi in town here. Belluschi had the biggest and most prestigious office in town at the time, and he was just on the verge of going back to MIT to take over as Dean back there. I'd built this houseboat that we were living in in the meantime. I'd gotten kind of interested in construction. What really happened was I decided I was getting too darn old to be doing something that I didn't really want to be doing for the rest of my life. So, if I'm ever going to do it, I'm going to do it now. I searched around, and I investigated going back to school, go to architecture school. I would have had to practically start over. By this time I had a wife and a kid, and it didn't look like it was a paying proposition. What I needed was a way to make a living, so I found out that instead of spending five years in architecture school with a three-year



afterward internship, you could spend eight years working for an architect and take the exam and get licensed that way. In the meantime you'd be earning a living. So, this is the way I did it. So, anyway, that's –

**MEH:** So, you really became a licensed architect by experience.

**HB:** Well, you could call it an apprenticeship or an eight-year internship if that sounded more professional.

**MEH:** Did you ever get a degree?

**HB:** No, never did. Never got a degree of any kind. In fact that's one reason I was no longer teaching at Portland State, which was kind of a fluke to begin with because they all of a sudden had this great glut of students who came in when the baby boomers first hit college back in the early – was it '62, something like that. I got this call from my friend, who was full-time at Portland State. "Hank," he said, "we got all of these kids. We need to put on another section of graphics, and we want an architect who has his own firm and is not all that busy to come down and teach one course a week. It'd be two mornings a week for two hours a morning." So, I started naming all the guys in my – He says, "No, you idiot, I mean you." He says, "Come on down and talk to me." So, I went down. Got the call on Friday, or Thursday, went down and met with Gil and the head of the art department on Friday and met my first class on the following Tuesday. So, there wasn't any search committee, there wasn't any of this and that. So, I just started teaching, and I did all right, and I was there twelve years. Finally, Fred Heidl (PH), the head of the art department – arts and architecture department – we didn't have a full professional program anyway, just had the

first two years, then the kids had to go on to someplace else – Fred said, "Hank, how come you never participate in baccalaureate?" "Fred," I said, "I've never been able to decide what was the correct academic regalia for a Black Mountain guy. Blue jeans and T-shirt occasion, with sandals?" I don't know what made me do it, but I said, "Actually, what I always really thought would be fun to do would be to finish up my bachelor's so that I could get up out of the faculty section and come up and get my bachelor's degree." He just turned white. He said, "You wouldn't!" I says, "I might!" Short time – I realized later that this is the first time that he ever realized that I did not have a degree. But it literally scared the prunes out of him. Of course, I was hired on a year-to-year contract. If they didn't want me to come back, all they had to do was not offer me a contract and that would have been that. So, I get a call from – My friend in the meantime had become my partner, and his schedule was such that he had about half-a-week free to work in the office. We were partners, and I got this call for him one day, from him one day, and he said, "Well, you're not going to be offered a contract this fall." I said, "Fine." In the meantime I had gone off and was working, had taken a job with a big firm – couldn't afford to starve any longer. So, I said, "Fine." He said, "But would you write a letter of resignation?" I said, "A letter of resignation? What the hell's going on?" "Well, they want a letter of resignation." I thought, "Aw, don't be silly." He said, "Well all right, I'll write the letter if you'll sign it." Cover their butt, you know. Anyway, I was highly amused by that whole thing. What they were talking about was the

government-approved stamp and, more to the point, was competence. If you're competent, what difference does it make how you got there?

**MEH:** You had your own architectural practice?

**HB:** [AFFIRMATIVE]

**MEH:** Was it basically residential? What sort of work did you do?

**HB:** Well, we did a little bit of everything, you know. We did churches. We did research facilities. Schools. Houses. Banks.

**MEH:** The full gamut.

**HB:** Anything that came in the door. It was never very big projects. That was one of the things that was so frustrating about it, because you got a lot of these jobs that the big offices weren't interested in, and a lot of them were dirty alteration-remodel kind of things – some of them for very good clients like Hyster Corporate and Oregon Graduate Center. I think the Graduate Center was the one that finally ripped it for me. They had taken over an old building which was built for Martin Marietta as a metallurgy lab, and then Martin Marietta had consolidated – I think they moved that function back to Georgia someplace or other. The guy who owned the – big gun at – Howard Vollum of Techtronics had bought the building, and he as the guy who actually started the Graduate Center. The big firm that usually did Techtronics work was unavailable at that time so they needed somebody to do this funny alteration job so they got hold of us. We had been recommended by a big contracting firm here in town. So, we made this old lab building – it had an electrical panel big enough to serve Bonneville Dam, you know, it was huge – and we put all kinds of – with mass

spectrometer – At any rate, yeah, mass spectrometer and then magnetic resonance something or other counting, and an organic – I don't know. I don't remember. Got a big chemistry lab and all this stuff and a laser lab back where they used to have the drop forge, because we used the pit and the dampening thing to put the laser equipment on so it wasn't going to vibrate every time a truck ran by. We were just finishing this job up, and we were being very good to these people, trying to do the best job because we knew that they had property and were going to build a whole new campus. We thought well maybe we'll finally get a foot in the door, at least have a chance to talk to these people about it. I came in to see the director one day and he just sort of – He said, "Hank, go on in and sit down. I'll be there in a minute." I went in and sat in my usual chair and right here on the desk, even facing me, was a contract with the biggest firm in town to design their new – You know, I thought, "Oh (Jesus? UNINTELL), I'm tired of being a bridesmaid." Well, what it really amounted to was I wanted to get involved in something bigger, some more important projects. I felt that I had labored in the vineyards and over the years learned to be a pretty damn good architect, and I wanted to do it, you know, I wanted to apply it to something besides some woman's bloody kitchen.

**[END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1]**

**[END OF TRANSCRIPT]**