

Interviewee: BARBARA LOINES "BOBBIE" DREIER  
Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS  
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Theodore Dreier, Jr. has been helpful in resolving issues in the interview. He arrived at Black Mountain College in the fall of 1933, when the college was founded. He was 4 ½ years old. He and his three younger siblings Mark, Edward "Eddie" and Barbara (she was at BMC up to age 2 ½) spent some of their formative years there. His father Theodore Dreier was mathematics and physics teacher and Treasurer of the College; his mother Barbara took classes, was "den" mother to many students, and cared for her young children. Ted Dreier, Jr. attended the nearby farm school (now Warren Wilson College) and Putney School in Vermont. After high school he returned to Black Mountain as a student for two years through spring of 1949 and took classes with Josef Albers, Charlotte Schlesinger, Charles Olson, Merce Cunningham and others.

**[BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW. BEGINNING OF TRANSCRIPT]**

**MEH:** [GIVES IDENTIFICATION] Barbara, you were just talking about Xanti Schawinsky's wife and the clothes she made, or helped you make?

**BLD:** Yes. She came with Xanti Schawinsky, from the Bauhaus, basically. She in her earlier time had worked with the stage and with the upper class rich folk in Berlin, and she was lots of fun. She had the feeling that we could all learn to cut out all kinds of dresses and fix them up in any kind of material and know how to make them look the way we wanted to. She got us to do it. That was really – I mean it was an abstract kind of approach. She would say, "Take a square and a circle, or an oblong and a circle and a triangle of any size and make a good afternoon dress," or "Make something narrow and able to go through subway turnstiles without getting caught," or "Make something very swirly that would be fun to dance in, do the waltzing that we do in the evenings in." So just vague

instructions and vague sizes. Any size of those shapes, so that you had to think in the geometry of those before you sewed it together. It was lots of fun.

**MEH:** And you were talking about Anni Albers?

**BLD:** No, I was talking about Xanti Schawinsky's wife, Irene von Debschitz. Irene, we called her.

**MEH:** But who was so fussy about the seams?

**BLD:** Anni. When we were sewing up things that we had cut out and Anni was with us doing that often, she wouldn't let us wear it until it was completely finished. So you couldn't just cut it out in the morning and wear it to the party at night unless you were willing to spend the time on it. She just felt that you ought to finish the thing. So that was a good discipline, and it kept us doing it.

**MEH:** What did she mean by "finish"?

**BLD:** She meant the inner seams should be bound if it was a ravelly material, or the hem should be neatly sewed. It should be pressed, of course. But all sewing should not be — all the edges shouldn't be pinned together or bound together with a belt held together. Just the garment should be self-sustaining. So you began to think how you could do it all in the time allowed, or how you would do it for the next party. You wouldn't finish it till the next party. You'd wear the last week's dress this time. But we were applying the Albers way of thinking about using materials to her class, how she was using those. So you took specific kinds of shapes to make dresses with, which wasn't at all what the dressmakers in town were doing or anything, but it gave you power to invent and, depending, of course, on what kind of material you'd gotten in Asheville as

a remnant in those mills that were so happily — cotton mills mostly — around Asheville, which was fifteen miles away and which we could often drive to for shopping at such good places as the mill showrooms. So you began to think of how it would — you studied how it would fit on a plump friend whom you were helping, or a skinny one whom you didn't want to look too skinny, and how you wouldn't trip over it because it wasn't too long, and how it wouldn't shrink, so you allowed it — if you hadn't had time to wash the material first, which you often didn't do. You allowed for a little shrinkage if it was a muslin. And you began to have sort of power over the material and notice that what you did to it had a lot to do with how long it lasted and how freely you could dance in it, for instance, or — well, everybody knows that. But we hadn't ever made clothes like that. I mean I'd shortened things and fixed hems and stuff, but I'd never had it to do with how I moved or could move or wanted to move before. So you took that all into account, and it made quite a difference in your designing, so-called designing. Very innocent designing, but we got good at it, and it's much cheaper to get remnants at a mill of unbleached muslin, and like Ruth Asawa Lanier to paint bamboo patterns all over it for an evening sheath or something. She was very good at painting cloth in beautiful patterns, simple patterns. But we also could dye it, of course. It was fun.

**MEH:** Do you remember any parties, in particular?

**BLD:** Any special parties? Well, there was one, for instance, when the subject was to change your head. So, you didn't have to worry about what you were wearing, but you did head-dresses of some kind or, let's see, what did we do? You did

your hair another way, of course. But you could do every type of crown or veil or rain hat or something. But we were dancing, so you didn't obscure your eyesight in any way so as not to mow down your fellow dancers. That was especially memorable. I mean Anni had a wonderful head-do, and the men all did sweet, complicated things with distant eyeglasses on wires and lots of things like that. We invented a lot of things with the plants and the stones and the leftover materials in the mills and stuff, which were reasonable but allowed you great freedom. You didn't feel you were ruining anything by having to adjust it to a party. It was amazing how good everybody was. The men were very good too. They did lots of interesting things to their heads. That was usually a Friday night. Saturday night we had music there, and the Friday nights John Evarts played for dancing in whatever costumes were available. Or, if there were visitors that were interesting, we turned that into the important night of the week, and a lot of good people came through there wondering what in heaven's name we were doing up on the mountain in the bottom of the Depression, having been "let go," as they say, from Rollins College in Florida.

**MEH:** What is your first memory of seeing Lee Hall?

**BLD:** It was — Let's see, we drove up from Florida. I had a four-year-old son, my eldest one, Ted Junior, and an eight-month-old son, who was Mark, and we had left — we were insulted at not having been fired when they let one of the best teachers go, Mr. John Rice, from Rollins College. So we resigned, as well as several other people. Mr. Rice was the main one that was fired. The rest of the people thought they'd better go, because they didn't think they could stay and

do what they didn't want to do there. So with no money back of us, particularly yet, we just got in the cars, packed ourselves out of Winter Park, Florida, and drove up there. [TELEPHONE RINGS. INTERRUPTION IN TAPING.] So we packed ourselves out of Florida as best we could and took — I've forgotten how many miles it is now up to Black Mountain, which is near Asheville, North Carolina, and saw this great big building, went up the steps of it, found out that those with children that were very young were going to be in the little cottages that were up a little higher on the mountain, not too far away from the Dining Hall, unpacked ourselves happily into that, and met in the lobby of big Lee Hall. It looked very substantial and nice. There were lots of rooms that had been made possible for winter by having had a school there before. We used those — one whole big wing of it and the main lobby and the big dining hall, which was in a separate building and lorded over by a wonderful man named Jack Lipsey and his wife, whose name was Rubye, so she was Rubye Lipsey. He was a very good cook and he had the best salary. I think he got 125 dollars a month. The money in those days was worth a little more too. Whereas we all got twenty dollars for the head of the family and five for each dependent, plus our living and our food and our comfortable bedding and stuff like that. It was very exciting. There were a lot of interesting people together, none of whom knew quite what they were going to succeed in doing there. We just talked a lot, to think up how we wanted to do it in that great lobby with tea in the morning and tea in the afternoon and three meals a day right away. It was — it was wonderful. Best view in North Carolina. Looking east you could see all kinds of

good mountaintops and we were – back of us to the west we were – that was the highest — we were on the highest mountain. Not high up on it, but that was the divide where the water— if the water fell on the top of it, it went either into the eastern or western side of the valley. The Gulf of Mexico got some of it and the Atlantic Sea got the rest of it. We settled in and talked ourselves into what we wanted to do, and those of us that had young children and could get someone to stay with them could go to any classes we wanted, if we were just wives of the teachers, wives of the professors. Although Mr. Albers wasn't there the first day, the day after — the first unknown-to-us teacher that we got was Albers and his wife Anni, who got there the day after Thanksgiving. This was in 1933, when there was the beginning of a big depression on and everything was scarce and money was very scarce and we just did without the money and pooled our abilities and even the mothers of the children, and I was one of those. There were some other children, not quite so young as mine, but we — when they were safely in bed and somebody was nearby that could listen for them, we could go to the classes that were going to get given and that were being invented, in the evenings, at least. It was a big extra education that we all enjoyed and thought we needed, and we just invented it to be done by those who were nice enough and bright enough and lucky enough to get away from where life was tough and come to this place. I felt very lucky to be able to — by the same time as having to take care of children to be able to listen to some of these very good teachers that did indeed come. Especially was, of course, the Albers pair, because they were our first that we got.

**MEH:** What do you remember about their arrival?

**BLD:** I remember — I didn't meet them at the station, but a group went down to get them. We were all on the lobby porch of the big Lee Hall when they were brought there and had to come up those steps. They were very a sober, serious-looking couple, Anni with very dark and he was a blonde, and he — they came up the steps, and one of our fresh students there, whose name was George Alsberg, did the first talking. He said, "What do you think you're going to do here, Mr. Albers?" And Albers smiled briefly at him and said "Make open the eyes," which is not what most educators were telling each other to do at that time. So we got the idea. [LAUGHS] He was not as good at English as his wife, who was very good at it, but he didn't need it really. He could act out things. We all tried to take his class to get to know him, you know, any of us that could get somebody to take care of our children for those two hours. It was terribly exciting to look at colors, for instance. He gave one called "Color," and we studied painting at various times. Some of us could paint. I didn't, but I'd gone to Bryn Mawr College and majored in history of art as well as English, and the history of art was lectures showing the Quattrocento painters in Italy, for instance. Nothing to do with doing anything. Albers, it was all doing so you could see and influence what you were looking at, and you got kindergarten paper blocks of all different colors such as they used in schools and could take out any colors you wanted and make anything you were told to make. I mean, I can't remember the names of what he ever asked us to do, but he gave us a certain amount of time to tear it into different pieces or cut it into different pieces

and try to make a noticeable demonstration of what colors did to each other, without being put on with a brush with more oil or more water than other parts of the same color face. So you got a real sense of what they really did to each other, not how the light hit them and stuff, which I hadn't ever heard about or thought about, and I had done almost no painting anyway. It was terribly exciting, and he was very stimulating and he would — everybody wanted to take his first classes. I mean, all the other teachers that had just gotten together too, at least many of them got into those group, classes, in the very beginning. So he would give us twenty minutes to do something with whatever colors we'd picked out of the group — place, and then he'd start turning around to see what we had done, and he often said, "That's fine! Make another!" and took it away, so you didn't worship your work so much as notice what you'd succeeded in doing. What you began to notice is, was, that the quantity and placement of any color next to any other color had a lot to do with what color it was. So then you began to have intentions that you could control, at least that your eyes could see. That wasn't the way we had been taught to paint or had learned to paint or anything. That was great fun. As I say, everybody took it so everybody could talk about it. You weren't worshipping and competing with anybody. You were trying to see what you could make happen on a paper, which wasn't irregular, like a painted oil surface would have been or watercolor, where there was more water in one brushstroke than there was in another of the same color, so that the effect on the neighbors was quite different than straight paper, solid, dry



color. So you began to do intentional things and not have lucky accidents. That was fun.

**MEH:** Did you take his design course? Do you remember any — Did you do the matière studies?

**BLD:** Yes. That also was lots of fun. You — and he often worked with corrugated paper, which was more nearly sculpture, and often later with wire too. You just had complete liberty and noticed that what you wanted to do was often doable, and you hadn't ever thought of it before.

**MEH:** What was Albers like as a teacher? As a personality?

**BLD:** Well, he was — he sort of thought he could tell you in such a way that you would understand what the subject of the day was. You didn't spend any time expressing yourself or anything. You looked at what the color — if it was a color class — what colors were available and how you could carry out what the command was this day. They weren't the same commands every day. I mean, he had intentional ways of making you change the effect of the colors, by the neighbors and the quantity and the placement on the rectangle or square that you were working with. So you began to have a little power over the colors and the — It wasn't accidents that you were doing. You were intentionally trying to see what magic you could do with these simple materials and not draw landscapes and draw portraits and draw nudes or anything like that and then color them, or anything. We just were studying the capacities of relating colors. Great. It was no need talking about it. You just had to do it, you know. It wasn't — There was no need talking about what the Italians had done very well indeed

in the Quattrocento in Venice, for instance. You could enjoy it and you could then see what you could do in this century. Nothing comparable.

**MEH:** [TECHNICAL INTERRUPTION] Did Albers teach art history?

**BLD:** No. No. We were living in the present and trying to improve our eyesight, really. If you could prophesy because of any experience you'd had the time before, you could take advantage of what you had discovered happened because of placement or quantity or anything, and do a better such study. I remember that lasted for several weeks, that class. Six anyway. You found yourself noticing all kinds of things you could put together. We worked with leaves, and we worked with ordinary papers and pleating the papers and doing more sculptural things. Not in the color class, but in — he called it Werklehre, I think. I was bound to get home pretty soon because of the two children I had, both very young, so I didn't linger too long for — except for the classes, except when the children were in bed, and we were all dancing and things. You could talk also about what to do next or what you had done and things. But he was ever so good. He didn't have much English yet, and that was a big advantage because it was all action there, and he didn't demonstrate anything other than discuss what you had made and tell you that it was fine and to make another. So, you didn't worship your work so much as see what hadn't happened in it, or what had happened. Some of the things were lovely. Very good and very interesting. It was just a whole other way of looking at things. It interested people of several ages, the sophisticated men that thought painting was a sissy thing to do were interested, very interested and very good at it too — a lot of them.

**MEH:** You and Ted and the Alberses became very good friends.

**BLD:** Yes. Ted could speak German. His grandfather had been German, and he was very helpful therefore with these people from the Bauhaus in Germany. The Bauhaus had just been closed, and Gropius had gone to Harvard, and Breuer had come and we had — Several people that had been at the Bauhaus swung by and some stayed awhile in the later time. But Albers was the first that came, and so we think — He was an assistant to Klee. He had been there a long time and he got to be extremely good at things like Werklehre, which was like a combination of materials and sculpture and stuff like that, as a teacher. But the Color one was the first one we took, that I took. Then when it got to be collecting grasses and stones and things, I also took as much of that as I could. But it did “make open the eyes.”

**MEH:** You shared a house with the Alberses when you went to Lake Eden?

**BLD:** Yes.

**MEH:** What was that house like?

**BLD:** It had a big lobby. It had been part of an inn. It had a big lobby and it had — It was two-story, and it had room for a grand piano, which we had, and it had a good fireplace. We didn't spend much time in front of any fireplace. The Albers had one side of the house on both stories. They had bedrooms and workrooms both upstairs and down, and we had — I had the two children upstairs and Ted and I slept downstairs. He had a study there besides one in, down further in one building where a lot of the professors were, and later, of course, in the big building which we built. But it was a short walk to the dining room. That was

fun, because you could see everybody on the way, and it had — Albers had a garden outside. He wanted fresh vegetables, and he grew them. But Lake Eden — we didn't move to Lake Eden for nine years. I think that was right. In '41 I think we moved there. That was a great liberty, and then we gradually had a farm. We gradually built a farm, and although we got Gropius and Breuer to make us a plan for a good center for the college, in the end we built our own big building with a great many studies and piano rooms and things. Still going there. It was — We were spread out, and it was much better than in one big building, especially in the warmer, summer sessions we had later. There was room for the children to play, and you had to walk — you want to get outdoors you didn't have just walk time. To get to any classroom you had to go outdoors and you could see what other people were doing. We all ate in the same big dining room down there, and danced in it after meals. It was lots of fun, really. You could — you began to notice what people did. You'd notice what they thought they were doing and then you'd notice what they were really doing. What they didn't know how to do, they could find out themselves how to do. It was — I mean, shy ones learned to talk, and the talkative ones got to learn not to talk quite so much. It was a very do-ative activity there. We had to do all our own work. There was someone who brushed the halls down, a pair, Willie and Clarence, every day, or — no — three times a week, I guess. But we didn't do cooking, and Jack and Rubye ran the dining room, and so that was very good. We all ate together, and you could notice when the sociologist wasn't able to handle his own children and things like that. I mean, you, they could see what

you thought you were doing and what they hoped you'd do and what you could learn to do. That was — We danced together most nights, because John Evarts could play the piano very well. But not Saturday nights. There usually was some kind of good lecture. And when a person like Yella Pessl came with her harpsichord, just stay a week, she put the harpsichord in the lobby of the main building and people just stopped having classes. They all came down. Anybody that could play anything she would play with, and, well, they didn't really stop having classes, but she was the center of a week's attention. And she was good at getting shy people who played cellos and things to play with her, anything they wanted. That was — You could take advantage of such things. That was fun. Thornton Wilder came down for a weekend, stayed three months [MEH: days], taught them how to write novels. That was fun too, apparently. I didn't write any novels. I was a living one. [LAUGHS] But you could take advantage of guests. We were informal, but we did our own work. We made our own beds. We saw to it that fresh things were put on beds. We shoveled coal in the winter, a coal car from in the town, and volunteer boys and also girls went down and shoveled coal into trucks, two trucks that we got. When they came to dinner that night after a shower, they hadn't gotten all the black off their eyes so they were beautifully made up, and boasted of it. So we kept warm. There was lots of coal in the mountains there. But also there were good talking sessions all the time. Anybody who — Many lecturer-type people looked down on — came down to us to see what we were up to and how we were doing things. It's fun to have a Thornton Wilder come or a John Dewey come and think they would only

stay the weekend and then stay quite a long time, and send us other pupils and stuff like that. [MEH: When she mentions guests coming for a brief visit and staying a long time, she is mixing them up with Louis Adamic, who did just that.]

**MEH:** You and Ted took trips with the Alberses to Mexico?

**BLD:** Yes.

**MEH:** Where did you go there?

**BLD:** The first year that we opened, it was just after the Bauhaus had closed, and there was a girl, young, beautiful young woman in Cuba called Clarita Porset. She came to check up on Albers because she was interested in art and had to do with a school in Matanzas in Cuba. She came down there and got to know the Albers. Came over and got him to promise to come. I can't remember whether — It wasn't the first year that we did that. I think we put that off for a year. But at the Christmas holiday time Ted and I drove them, via Florida, to Miami, of course — happened to be in Florida too — to the boat. We stopped and had Christmas dinner with my grandmother at Winter Park, and then we went down to Miami and spent the night, because the boat didn't go till the next day. Juppi said, "Well. why don't you come?" So we telephoned back to the house that we wouldn't be back quite yet, and we went. That was very exciting to go. Albers stayed with Clarita, I mean, worked with Clarita at this school where he lectured for several days there, and Anni and I and Ted drove around. Clarita took us often, although it was her connection that got Albers started, but he was perfectly independent. So we did some sightseeing in the beautiful un-Castroed type of Cuba that we had then. New Year's Day on Veradera [PH]

Beach, with the Cuban custom of an apple and a glass of wine or something at midnight. But just seeing the landscape there and the seashores and everything, it was lovely. So — He went back — Clarita thought he was terrific, and she was going to go to Mexico the next year and asked him down. We drove them down. And they went several times to Mexico, as anybody can read about now. Anni had had a very good education from her father about going to museums and things. She had a disability in her walking. Her feet were not so reliable, and so she didn't go to regular school. But she was taught at home. He took her to the very good museum that happened to be in Berlin at the time, way ahead of any museums we had in America, about Aztec early art and the extraordinary early textile things that the Mexicans had made. So she was on the lookout for it. Locally, the Mexicans weren't looking at that. They'd had a Spanish invasion and a French invasion, so the main Mexican museum in Mexico City had fancy French furniture from the invaders in one room and fancy Spanish in another room and no signs of what they considered ignorant early sculptures. I was there at one of the sessions of the Albers when Juppi went to the head of the downstairs — was there an upstairs? — Anyhow, the main floor there, and was looking at the various things they did show. He said "What about the early Mexican things?" to this man. He said, pointed to the counters underneath. Juppi made them take them out, and he really talked them into showing their own early sculpture, which then became seeable to those of us that wandered around in other cities too. It had been considered not as elegant as the furniture and painting of the conquerors that had possessed

them there. So that was fun. They got very good at it. He really — He got us to really notice how incredibly good some of those old things were that hadn't been broken or stolen or discarded. So that was great fun.

**MEH:** What were some of the places that you went in Mexico with the Alberses?

**BLD:** Well, where did we stay? Well, we had a base in Mexico City because somebody had heard about us and invited us to it. We — I don't know where Clarita took them. They also spent, later, of course, a sabbatical year down there, painting. He loved that. But — Well, we went to the neighboring towns, you know, to all the museums and to all the ruins within fifty or sixty miles of things. The roads weren't terribly good. At that time we only had the Christmas vacation, so that it was a little over a week, but we did a lot. They, as I say, spent a sabbatical year, a whole sabbatical year there, and went in detail into the far reaches of Mexico. Got the stuff that was hidden in the old, old museum places out to be seen again. Some of the early textiles were extremely subtle, good things, not just primitive stuff at all. Telling stories even, the textiles, you know. So that was interesting to do. That was hard to do. There were no bridges, and you crossed rivers as you drove down through whatever state it is before you get to Mexico City. You crossed — You got on a boat, on a barge or whatever it was, which was swept downwards towards the river, in the river, and you landed further south or west or whatever the river was doing at a dock that you could get that barge to go to with your car. But you didn't have good bridges over the — There were two rivers we had to cross to get to Mexico City.



**MEH:** I was reading in the papers yesterday about the work that had to be done to be sure that the Albers could re-enter this country because they were not yet citizens. There were so many refugees trying to get in.

**BLD:** I don't remember that. But Ted usually was pretty good at getting that done.

**MEH:** I had never thought about that before. [TECHNICAL INTERRUPTION]

**BLD:** I can't remember lots of things. I can't accurately remember. That's the trouble.

**MEH:** You have an amazing memory.

**BLD:** But it was a very nice kind of training. I'd majored in history of art and literature and stuff at Bryn Mawr and it was just talk. They didn't have — I mean the Quakers hadn't had art teaching going in that early college that they had there at Bryn Mawr, so to suddenly begin to use your eyes and notice the shapes and relationships and things the way they made you, if you studied the way Albers made you, was a whole new thing coming into — You didn't, you hadn't had any such experience in all the college that I'd been exposed to. Just talk.

**MEH:** What do you recall about mealtimes at the college? With the kids, did you eat in the dining hall?

**BLD:** Yes. You could see when the sociologist didn't know how to handle his children and so on, perfectly happily. You'd go into the kitchen and get your — in a line, and Jack would put the food — or Rubye or whoever was helping — that you wanted, of what they had. It was usually very good. It was very simple. We had very good food, I think, compared to any other college food that I later had or earlier had had. Then you can get seconds and all that. That was fun.

**MEH:** And faculty and students and children all ate together?

**BLD:** Yes. Then if you didn't happen to want to eat with those children, you could eat with those children, or you could eat with no children, or you could eat with the guests. And there were interesting guests often, once we got going, that wanted to see what you were like and questioned you out of earshot of the professors and stuff like that. You urged them to come and stay and see for themselves. We had a lot of good guests that were somewhat bored with their either teaching or learning experiences and were interested in the emphasis that we were trying to make. It was a good help to those of us that had passed exams fairly creditably elsewhere to see how much you didn't know about anything.

**MEH:** Did you help out with the building of the Studies Building at all?

**BLD:** Well, I was still taking care of children, of course. Well, you went down and cheered them on and fed them, or they came up and sat down in exhaustion afterwards. But I can't remember — No, I did no real help. Well, you helped by deciding what you wanted and told them what to do for your study. We had — I had — they let me have a place there, Ted and I, besides his office and so on. We had our grandfather's piano there. When we left, we left it there too. Good Steinway grand piano. Bimbus — Charlotte Schlesinger, who was very good at playing and getting people to play and know about music and notice about it. I can't remember what year she came. It wasn't the very beginning, of course. But she was awfully good, especially on that piano. There was another piano, too, so the two Steinways in one room made you able to play with your students at the same time, so to speak.

**MEH:** What do you think was the importance to the college of the refugees? Or what effect do you think that had on the community?

**BLD:** The community?

**MEH:** On the college community.

**BLD:** The college community. Well, they were lucky. There were some rather distinguished people that were trying to get out of that country at that time, and if they were interested in art, I knew them better because I went to those classes. There was good music. Jalowetz – Heinrich Jalowetz and his wife, who was a singer — didn't do much singing there, but she was awfully nice and had two daughters who were also very able, sweet girls. He was extremely good at all orchestra things, urged people to learn how to do it and led it and conducted it and everything. Who else was there? Max Dehn, who was a mathematician. We taught them enough English so we could understand what they were telling. If they didn't know very much and it needed more detailed vocabulary, you could playfully help in that. But we got some very able, good people, and they were relieved to be out of the kind of danger they were in, and they put up with the extreme simplicity of our life there because — We didn't have money, particularly. Ted could somehow get money for any emergencies, of course, but any regular spending money you didn't have. You made it, if you could, and so that made the carpentry center at Lake Eden, for instance, which was more active than any carpentry we did in the other building a very important place. I mean we made plates which would hold sauces, wooden plates. We made wooden tables and wooden, every kind of wooden stand, and

then later wire-legged tables and strong ironish tables. But you, you got the feeling of an international seeing business, a little, you could say. It wasn't just about talking. It had to do with how they use things and how very simple — We didn't have any fancy anything much. Painting wasn't used for fanciful stuff much, yet, in my time at least. But you could see what other painters had done with the colors that there were, and then the shapes became interesting because of making things to furnish yourself with because there wasn't much furniture in the Lake Eden place either. But you didn't — you didn't feel impoverished in any way. It was a relief that you didn't have to deal with the heavy old things that were considered aristocratic or suitable or whatever the words could be. I was — You began to see what you were looking at and make open the eyes is what happened to most of us. It didn't mean you had to go on doing painting forever, but you noticed the suitability of the shape and size of anything that you were going to use in the way of a table or a chair or bureaus. Tables — shelving. So that you had a peaceful space, however small, with things that you didn't have to trip over. You — They consolidated under each other if they were extra stools, or if people came pouring in they sat on the floor around the fireplace and listened to somebody good playing the piano in these perfectly nicely built buildings, at Lake Eden for instance. That was nice. Then, of course, we got a farm going, which helped the food supply, and we in the end had beef cattle and everything. No things in them that are in all the beef cattle these days, which nobody thinks is very good for us. Hope we can still see and hear, in spite of them.

**MEH:** Do you have any particular memories of Buckminster Fuller at Black Mountain?

**BLD:** I certainly do. He built his first dome there, and we all sat around watching it go up and watching it collapse, when the time came. Bucky Fuller was a really exciting man to have there, and the boys all were thrilled. I mean most of the people were duly thrilled with his rebelliousness about things. He made a car that wouldn't have to be backed into a parking place so much as go in straight like that. That one didn't take, but it was a good idea. I mean, it would have saved a lot of fender-bending, for instance. He wasn't well thought of yet, although he got to building them for the deserts. They rode sandstorms beautifully in Africa, you know, those domes. He built them in the wartime as lookouts for airplane raids coming in from Germany over Canada and all. There was a ring in the top. A helicopter could take a fully made dome up into the air and up into Canada and drop it accurately on a site and then it could tell or watch out for enemy air raids. I think they had none, but maybe they had none because people were afraid of being seen in some of those times when we weren't too sure about how to handle who was an enemy. But he was lots of fun and everybody went to his lectures, and he went — he worked in the dramatics — He was in several plays and — He saw what he was looking at, and he tried to teach other people to notice what the capacities of what they were looking at were and whether they could be improved and how a dome would ride winds better take less heat, fuel to heat. We built a dome — he built a dome for us, not too big, in which they could be warm in winter with a very little bunch of coals in the middle of the floor. The convection currents would keep you

perfectly able to read the Sunday paper down there and stuff like that. But it didn't take as a — Maybe architects of the world didn't want to be all run out of business.

**MEH:** What do you think about Black Mountain really worked? What do you think its real value was educationally?

**BLD:** Well, I'm no authority on education. But it certainly made you see what you were looking at in a way that the conventional educating, lectured education of the times, took no responsibility for at all. You also knew what it'd take to shovel coal, how to keep warm, how to paint properly, how to — your whole relation to the physical world of housing could be expanded happily. You could see what people advocated for other people and didn't do themselves. You could observe your faculty, how they were with their children. Sociologists maybe not too good with them and things. What all being a sociologist so as to learn, maybe that was what they were aiming at. You could see who wasn't good with their husband or wasn't good with their wife, needlessly. You could see who was very good with a whole lot of things, and you could — you could try things there that were not only in art and furniture-making, but socially you could learn to speak in class and not be just lectured at. You could do your homework and you could — I mean, it was practical, in that sense, as well as necessary because we didn't have the money to pay other people to do it and then walk into it all finished. You could see the results of your judgment in making a table — how high it had to be so your knees wouldn't hit, where you could get the wood at the lumber company and the leftovers of the buildings that were being

built around, if any, and get four pieces that would make four legs, or one piece that would make a big central thing. Then — Well, it was just — Then there were people who were getting over a lot of anguish from Germany at that time, and you could — you could value them and readily accept what they knew and couldn't do any more over there, grateful that they could come here and teach us to see color and weave well, and you could bring all their relatives over, as we did with Anni, on the last boat. They couldn't believe — her sister's family couldn't believe they'd have to leave Germany. They had four hundred publications, and they were very rich and everything. They came on the last boat and we had to go to Vera Cruz — was it Vera Cruz? — to get them, down South? Yes.

**MEH:** Was it Cuba they came into? Or Vera Cruz? [MEH: Mexico]

**BLD:** Somewhere down there. I didn't go, but Bill Reed went. They couldn't get them off the boat, even. The Mexicans wouldn't let them come. But that was the last boat that freely brought them. Anni's wonderful sister and her un-Jewish husband and her three children — the daughter of which stayed with us, and she was fifteen I think when they came and she stayed with us and graduated and went to Mount Holyoke and became Dean of Women and has just retired. This last Christmas I got a card from her that she was retired with her grandchildren now. But she was awfully nice, and her mother did the Window Shop in Cambridge, Mass., which was a very successful restaurant and shop, and was a perfectly lovely person. That was a sweet relative of Anni's. I was very fond of the Albers. Anni taught me a lot, all about sewing and talked

interestingly about things that we hadn't been able to do here. I mean, she thought about lots of things. Her father had educated her a lot, because of her disabilities of walking, which weren't very severe actually but kept her out of athletics and stuff in Germany. But she was very humorous and happy, and happy that her husband could do so effective a job teaching people that hadn't ever thought about color before.

**MEH:** What were Josef and Anni Albers like as a couple?

**BLD:** They were fine. They argued happily with each other, and they were sort of our best friends. I mean, Ted could speak German, and Juppi was grateful for that. He was trying to learn it. Anni was good at English. But Ted could understand the German and was fascinated by what he was doing. Juppi had a lot of sense about how to handle some of the other refugees that were coming, and got some. The Moellenhoffs came on account of Anni. She was good friends with them. They did very well there, and their children did well — two sweet, young girls. Went into teaching and one of them got married early to somebody good and practical out in California. We all went — When Juppi's — They built an art center was it? Or they built a museum for Juppi in Bottrop, or maybe it wasn't that — but he had a big exhibition there, which was of stuff that was going to stay there. We all went over and so did the children of the Moellenhoffs and anybody else that could get to it, and most people did from wherever. That was really nice. For lunch they served us a special kind of fried potatoes that Juppi liked. [LAUGHS] I think he had died by then, had he?

**MEH:** I can't remember. I'm not sure, but I think so. I'm pretty sure. Yes.



**BLD:** But Anni was there and Moellenhoffs were there and everybody that could get there went there.

**[END OF DV CASSETTE 1. BEGINNING OF CASSETTE 2.]**

**MEH:** Let's just go back a little bit. You went to Bryn Mawr?

**BLD:** Yes I did.

**MEH:** And what did you study?

**BLD:** I studied all the requirements in the beginning. You had to take a science and a this and a that and all. Then I majored in English and history of art, and they were very well taught and interestingly taught, but there was no practical art until we brought it. Our class got somebody to come out Saturday and teach people how to handle paint and stuff. But it was good. They were small and good, and it was limbering up a little from ITS Quaker stringencies. The Quakers were very simple in dress and in behavior. They didn't do fancy things. They didn't drink and we didn't drink. We got — cigarettes finally came, so we — other people smoked. I didn't ever get smoking. So I still have my lungs as a result, maybe. It was very nice. It was small. I was a good athlete. I played on the varsity team four years of field hockey along with a lot of awfully nice other girls. No men, yet. Good professors. What was the name of our early head? She was training professors that later went to Harvard, mostly, but elsewhere too, so they learned on us how to lecture on some subjects. She believed in women's training. What was her nice name? The first president of Bryn Mawr? Oh! I didn't know her, but I knew of her. I'll think of it. [OFFMIKE REMARK AND IRRELEVANT REPLIES]. She was for real training for the girls. She thought

they ought to know languages and sciences and things like that, so we had very good, small, energetic classes. I took geology because the biology classes were all very smelly. I mean, you were always cutting up disintegrating fish and things like that. [LAUGHS]. I didn't care what was inside those things so much. And geology was fun. You could see what had happened to the mountains in Pennsylvania. They weren't very big. You could learn about what had happened, what would probably happen again and stuff. That was good. But they were very good at English. A certain amount of history. They were readers in my family. We had a lot of books. My father wished he was a writer. My mother was a very good reader. He thought he couldn't make enough money to feed us with the kind of writing he would do, so he ended up as a very good lawyer for shipping. His early ancestors had gone on schooners to Canton, where the English had gotten before us for the tea trade and we caught up with that because everybody wanted tea. Along with tea came silks and ivories and plants, a great many plants that are in our southern states came in on those so-called tea ships. My father was very good with sailboat and knew how to handle winds and things. So he got to be a lawyer for that. In those days, of course, you couldn't hear enemies or see anything. Now you press a button, and you can see your friends in Canton in hair curlers and all. In those days it took eighty-nine days for a fast schooner to go from Salem, Mass where the tea traders started from in those days, because that harbor hadn't silted up yet. Later they moved to New York and off the edge of Brooklyn. They had the bottom of Manhattan Island. They traded there for I don't know how many

years. But my great-grandmother was over in Canton, over near Canton on Macau. They wouldn't let the women come onto Chinese holy soil. Written in red ink by the emperor. Nothing back of it. They perfectly well could have. But their wives and daughters and other female relatives all lived on the island of Macau, then a Portuguese colony, but it's just south of the Canton entry where the sort of channel, ten-miles that they went up to — The men all worked up there in great luxury. My great-grandmother and her aunt, whom she was accompanying everywhere, got so tired of not knowing what was happening up there that they dressed up as men and were going to go up there. They got caught, but the Chinese let them go, and they were able to stay up there in these big hong (PH), which were the offices where all the loading jobs were calculated and done. They saw the life of luxury that the husbands and uncles and cousins and nephews all were working in. Then they came down every three or six weeks and had parties on the island of Macau. So she kept a diary. That's how we know about it. Just to amuse herself, and for her sister, her older sister. That is one of the few documents that isn't a bill of lading of the time. The day-to-day life on that island and with the traders. The British warmed up to the Americans, apparently, liked them, and were very snooty indeed in the beginning because they had gotten there first. But everybody had to drink tea, so they stayed.

**MEH:** What was her name?

**BLD:** Her name was Harriet Low (Hillard). That's my great-grandmother.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the interview Barbara Loines Dreier confuses the names of the Hillard women and their relationships. Theodore Dreier, Jr. has helped clarify: "Harriet Low (married name Hillard) was the relative who went with her aunt and uncle to Macau in 1829. She wrote the diary for her sister back in Salem, which diary is now in the Smithsonian. Harriet Low Hillard's daughter Mary Hillard Loines was Barbara Loines Dreier's grandmother on her father's side (born in 1844, and lived to be a

**MEH:** How would you compare study at Bryn Mawr with study at Black Mountain?

**BLD:** Bryn Mawr had formal regular classrooms where you went to. Black Mountain had special rooms where you went to, but you could do a lot of working in the lobby, for instance, of the big place. When we got all the abstract painters from Katherine Dreier, pictures, we put them up in the lobby and so you could talk about them by having a group there. It was a big lobby. You could have two groups at different sides of it that didn't interfere with each other — couldn't hear each other wrongly — if you wanted to. There were no informality things at Bryn Mawr. I mean, you had regular classrooms and that was good. It was snowy and everything. But at Black Mountain, a lot of talking went on wherever you were, and other subjects happened than the ones you happened to be — assigning yourself to. So you could hear interesting talk and take part in it — not if it was a class, but classes sometimes went on a long time after they were supposed to stop because there was interesting things were happening in it. Or you could interrupt. I mean you could watch a splitting-up class and nab somebody and make them go on telling something that you hadn't understood or something. It was a very free atmosphere like that, as well as formal enough. It could be very formal too. It was — You can learn so much more, after you've graduated from college, of the college stuff that you wonder why you were overwhelmed by the quantity of it to such an extent that you didn't take it in. The later you could do it over again or do it with somebody else too, same kind of quality. [INTERRUPTION IN TAPING] I mean they advocated others to do

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month short of 100)." The lineage was: Harriet Low Hillard – Mary Hillard Loines – Russell Hillard Loines -- Barbara Loines Dreier. The names have been corrected in the interview.

more clearly than you could in most institutions, because you saw them around the clock, and how the sociologists couldn't handle their kids and stuff like that, you know. I mean — I don't think that's a general statement that's quite true, but there were — You learned to look in a different way at — I mean make open the eyes. That's what he said he was going to do, so you could — You could also see the improvement in your own seeing, which is harder to do if you're just being lectured at and giving back notes. I mean the talkativeness was helpful to me after all the stuff we hadn't had at Bryn Mawr.

**MEH:** What was Molly Gregory like at Black Mountain?

**BLD:** She was wonderful. She was very rebelliously practical. She ran the shop. We made furniture there. She knew all about animals. She was — she was a good dancer for our parties. She was very able to solve every kind of problem with wood and animals and anxiety in other people. She taught them how to handle the wood and finish the wood and wouldn't let them take an unfinished piece of furniture yet until it was finished. I mean, she wasn't talking about that very much, but she just saw to it that they really did it right. What else? She was good with all kinds of animals. She always had a dog, I think. Then we had a farm, of course, and built buildings there. Did she come for the building of the buildings or did she come after they were built? But she was, you know, she knew — She was good with animals. Period. And very good with people.

**MEH:** She built quite a bit of furniture for you.

**BLD:** Yes. Where is it?

**MEH:** I see it all around.

**BLD:** Well, that was one of the doors, the extra doors — that table was — for the Studies Building. There was a sort of closet in the home. They had a few extra panels that they didn't need so we made that table out of it. This table, who made that table for us? That was made at Lake George, I think. What's in the other room?

**MEH:** There's the little stools that you have in the — and the chairs.

**BLD:** Yes. She made those. The main table here. Oh, this table she made.

**MEH:** She made this one?

**BLD:** Yes. All the stools to go with it. That was our main table, and a great many famous people came up and had supper on it. I mean, Bucky Fuller who didn't get enough coffee always came in for another one at 9:30 or something. I sat Barbara on his lap. She was two at the time, I guess, and she played with the pencils in his pocket and he guzzled down whatever I had beside the coffee. He liked a lot of coffee. So, she did indeed make those stools. Ted in frustration towards the end went up to where — was it Philadelphia where there was a Japanese man? And those two tables at the foot of our living room — seats, benches, I mean those are beds. We used to take — people from Naushon came in off their boats and were able to spend the night because the wind wasn't blowing or something, and so we had beds in the living room there. We didn't have the barn then so we could put up the sailors. But those — at the end of those beds there were some rather carefully made tables that Ted made under the guidance of this Japanese man. I can't remember his name — was available in Philadelphia, outside of Philadelphia [MEH: George Nakashima],

and he came down to us too, but not for long. But Molly did lots of the regular stuff, very carefully and very well. She was lots of fun. I'm ever so fond of her. She's still going pretty strong. She's retired and lives on the Cape as you probably know. I'm hoping to get her over this summer.

**MEH:** How did you and Ted meet?

**BLD:** Well, I was a junior at Bryn Mawr and nineteen, and my Aunt Sylvia was working in Schenectady and knew people at the General Electric Company. She thought "Poor Barbara, she doesn't know any boys. She's just down at that girls' college and everything and she's very young. I will have a house party for her over New Year's." She asked three or four people and then she asked Ted Dreier, whose parents she knew, and he was a good skier and skater and everything, to come for that weekend. He wasn't going to have anybody decide who he spent the weekend with, so he refused it. Said he was sorry but he thought he'd better not accept that. So luckily he didn't know that I was the niece when we were all out there skating at Lake George on a new amount of ice about that thick on this four-mile bay with the wind about thirty miles an hour, blowing, and we were skate sailing. We had one of these big kite-like things, so it wasn't an iceboat you were on. It was a sail that you could let flap overhead. It didn't flap, because it was framed tight. Or you could lean against it into the wind and go very fast. And luckily he didn't know that I was the girl that was going very fast, about thirty-five feet from him, on Northwest Bay that New Year's morning — as were a lot of other girls and boys, including all her house party. I looked over and took one look at him. I didn't know who he was, but I —

That was enough for me. He seemed to like me. We sat down after this — We skated back to the group place and sat down on an uncomfortable place on the shore and got talking and it turned out that he was Ted Dreier. [LAUGHS] That's all it took. Then he came — Where was I? I was at school. I was at Bryn — No, it wasn't. He came down. He was working days at — or nights was he? — at General Electric. Anyway, he came down to Bryn Mawr and camped out on the campus, so he wouldn't get indoors, I guess. It didn't rain. I went down and found him, knowing that he would probably be somewhere down there. Took awhile. He was whistling, finally, but the sound high up in the air is hard to locate on the ground, and I finally found him, up a tree. We had a nice time. And did he watch me play in a basketball game that time? He came down twice. Three times. We got engaged the second time, if you call it serious. I think it was. I just thought he was fine. He seemed to like me. The third time it was definite, and our parents were amazed. We got married six days after I got my degree. I thought I'd better stay and get my degree the next year, so if it didn't work I could earn my living differently. But he was lots of fun and very outdoorsy and very interested in all the things that interested me. I didn't have to climb every mountain. I got pregnant fairly soon when we got married, and I didn't feel that I had to compete on the slopes of high mountains with him anymore. Didn't do much skating either. But he — he thought we'd make a good team, and that's what he asked me. We had a really very interesting time together. I mean, that was two world wars and two depressions and Black Mountain College. We got — when the physics professor at Rollins got — died



in an automobile accident, Mac Forbes who was Ted's best friend at Harvard and teaching down there — what was he teaching? Psychology, I think already. Called up Ted and said, "Would you think of coming?" Ted was bored to death with what he was doing for the G.E. at that time. It was a slow speed synchronous machines. He said, "Yes." So we packed up and went, and our friends the Forbeses made it interesting and easy to get going there. They had a child, and we had a child a month apart. I mean, they got married a month ahead of us and had a daughter, and we had — started our pregnancy a month after we got married, of course — and that days, those days that's what you did [LAUGHS] — and had my first son. Three sons before I had Barbara. Two of them died in accidents, in the middle of a good early life, and Ted went into psychology and got to be a good doctor. Psychiatrist. He's retiring at the end of this month from a lot of the work he's been having to do at — outside of Boston there at that, what's the name of it? I don't know much about psychology. I'm bored to death with most of it. But — They don't get you well exactly, like the doctors don't get you well. Don't touch it? [REFERS TO HER MICROPHONE] But he was lots of fun as a partner and interested in learning and interested in teaching. Not terribly good at teaching but very careful in a scientific way about information and new information. And we blame that on Mac Forbes, his best friend at college, whose wife Ethel Ted had loved in college, but Ethel picked Mac. But I got to know her quite well in Florida because our children were the same age, a month apart, and because she just was the most interesting of them all down there. We're still in touch with Ethel's daughter Holly Forbes

Leon, who came over with Molly Gregory last summer to visit us here.<sup>2</sup>

Expecting them over again. She's just been with my daughter-in-law Katharine "Kit" Dreier in Italy<sup>3</sup> at this painting class that some very good able person takes a bunch of ladies to. It's about twelve days of — Now what's the name of the place they go to? Oh! At my old age! It's in the part of Italy which is very rural with lovely little villages and you can do wonderful landscape painting and village painting too, and they — This is her third time, my daughter-in-law. She just got back last Monday.

**MEH:** And it's Molly who's there? Molly who's with your daughter [daughter-in-law] painting?

**BLD:** No. It's Ethel Forbes. Mac Forbes who got us to Rollins. His widow.

**MEH:** Oh, his widow is there. Not Molly.

**BLD:** No.

**MEH:** Oh, okay. I'd been confused about that earlier.

**BLD:** No, Molly isn't a painter, and she's retired up here. She was a carpenter, woodworker, and all kinds of a bright girl. But she didn't paint.

**MEH:** Okay. Okay, that's clear now.

**BLD:** So, anyway those are two long-lasting and continuing relationships. I mean, we were three years at Rollins and Mac Forbes and Ethel both helped us secretly with a little money to get started with so we could pay the rent there, as did Ted's parents. Nobody knew where the money came from.

**MEH:** What was Ted's family's relationship to the college?

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<sup>2</sup> The four ladies referred to are Ethel Forbes Amory, the widow of Mac Forbes; their daughter Holly Forbes Leon; Katharine "Kit" Dreier, Barbara Dreier's daughter-in-law; and Mary "Molly" Gregory, who taught woodworking at the college.

<sup>3</sup> In the interview Barbara Dreier says the class was in Spain. It has been corrected in the transcript.

**BLD:** They helped every way they could. The mother, especially, had all kinds of contacts in New York. And Ted's aunt, Katherine Dreier, had got the first Museum of Modern Art going with the help of Marcel Duchamp, the Frenchman who painted the picture called "Nude Descending a Staircase," and in 1916, I think it was, wasn't it? Something like that. That was a big sensation. He took Katherine Dreier, who got excited about abstract stuff, who was a strong-minded, redheaded, dominating woman, he took her all over Europe to buy modern pictures — wet from the painters, not cheap from the widows — and she got a big wonderful collection and she began showing it all over to the horror of all the other art people. No sympathy whatever, for a long time — and the head of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, by quite a lot. When we needed something like pictures that first year at the college, or was it the second year, I guess, she let me come over to the north side of Manhattan Island where she had this big collection of the Société Anonyme is what she called it, pictures, and she said "Take some. I'll lend you some." I think I had twenty-four modern pictures by not Picasso but almost everybody else that is now pretty well-known. She let them all get sent down there, so we had them all around the lobby of Lee Hall, and you could take them into your rooms if you were reliable and careful and a nonsmoker and things. She came and lectured to us. It wasn't exactly the kind of teaching that Albers liked, and he found her quite difficult. And she didn't like his kind of work either But she gave a long lecture. Mr. Rice, as we came out of this long lecture all about how she'd gone to Europe and gotten them going, and she'd been to China also — she told in

detail about that. I remember when Mr. Rice came out of that meeting, out of earshot of everybody, he said to me "Art is long" (LAUGHS), because she'd kept us there so, waiting so. But she was very generous with us and came — You know, it's quite nice to have a real picture in your room and to swap it with another picture so that you see how the guy did it. It made a big sensation in most people's minds, to be related to those quite well known already, but not in America. The Bauhaus.

**MEH:** What was Katherine Dreier like?

**BLD:** She was redheaded, the youngest of the family, and she had a big temper and was difficult in that way. But she was modern, interested in modern things, and skillful. Had some money, so she could buy these things early, and had the wit to accept the help of somebody like Duchamp who was in no way in a temper and very skillful and a good painter and had a brother who was Duchamp — what was his name? I've forgotten all these things. I can't remember his name. But he had a brother who was a good painter, and she had some of his paintings too. She used all the money she could to buy these things, paying, paying people enough so that they could eat some more and paint some more, you know. I mean it was — She was very nice and had — She was very good to me when I joined the family. Bought me a good necklace and thought it was interesting that Ted would do a college, put all this energy into getting that college going, and wanted to help. It was quite something to lend those pictures free for all those there. So you could have a picture, and you could swap it with your friend's picture after you'd all thought you'd looked at that one enough, to

see how the people had made the colors work in those days. We had a lot of distinguished people's pictures.

**MEH:** Do you have other particular memories of the college that we haven't talked about? Anecdotes or experiences?

**BLD:** We danced there, and we — Fred Stone [MEH: Ted Shawn] came the first year. Didn't stay very long. Merce Cunningham in the second place we had started his group there. But we had John Evarts play dance music, and we — He ran the party so that if you got stuck with somebody, you took all hands around, and if you had guests, you gave them to the best dancer. "Take your partner." He was very good at waltzes and polkas and foxtrots and so you got to know people that were too shy to ask you to dance with them or to ask — to hope that you'd dance with them. I taught a lot of people how to do just simple dances — foxtrotting and waltzing. John was good at running the party, so that was a gaiety that we looked forward to every time. If you had guests that liked it, he'd do it, not just at the time when it was supposed to — not the night that it was always but the night that they were there. We all adapted to the situation. So that was fun. Who was good at dancing that we had? I can't remember too much. The whole college, making of a group feel at home, all those different refugee ones who had to leave so much behind, and some had only left at the last minute and weren't allowed to take all their tools. The Albers came early. They could bring their clothing and things. The ones that came later came with a hat and coat and not really warm enough sweaters, you know, and things. Crazy. Utterly crazy. But we were pretty good at giving them contacts and

knowing people that if they weren't good at teaching or didn't want to stay with us that they could find other contacts. Ted was good at that. It didn't happen very many times, but several.

**MEH:** Do you remember specifically where you were at the bombing of Pearl Harbor, when you heard about it?

**BLD:** No. What year was it?

**MEH:** '41. December. In fact, was it Mark's birthday? What was Mark's birthday?

**BLD:** I've even forgotten that. Maybe August. Could that have been Mark's birthday?

**MEH:** In a letter from John Evarts, he said that it was the anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor but he preferred to think about Mark's birthday, so I thought maybe it was (OVERTALK)

**BLD:** I've forgotten Mark's birthday. How crazy of me. I can look it up.

**MEH:** What about — But you don't remember where you were specifically at the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

**BLD:** '41 and in December. Well, if it wasn't the Christmas vacation, we were right there. No, I don't remember.

**MEH:** Do you think — during the War were you really aware of the horrific things that were happening to Jews and other people in Europe? Do you think you really knew?

**BLD:** We didn't get pictures of it, you know, because they weren't being photographed. I mean we didn't get a picture of the Bauhaus closing, where we got so many of the people came. I mean, Gropius got to Harvard and we got Juppi, early on, and the Schawinskys. They were very good too, you know. She

taught us how to make costumes and dresses and everything. He was very good at making stage sets — abstract and other kinds. He was good. He worked in the drama a lot, and was amusing and fun and inventive. His wife was perfectly beautiful. She was a glory. She was the best looking of all of us, by a whole lot, and quite a good disciplined one, too. I mean she wouldn't let you wear it till it was finished, because she knew you'd never go back and fix those seams, you know. But we had a — There were quite a variety of capacities in a very small group of people, all of whom weren't going to be there for life but who were reasonably grateful to be eating regularly. And one was on one's — We tried to make them laugh, you know, I mean make it laughable enough or caring enough so that the anguish of what they'd had to leave behind or what had happened to some of their relatives or anything wasn't the only thing they had with them. Then a good many of them — I can't think of their names now — but we got them places to go when they weren't suitable for the college or didn't want to stay there. Ted had quite a good way of finding places for people, rather secretly. I wasn't party to any of that, having the children at home. I took pretty good care of my children with the help of somebody, most of the important times I could get her. But there weren't enough children in the beginning for that oldest boy. He had the hardest time there, but by the time Mark came along there were some other little ones. Barbara was too late for most of it. I mean, at three you don't take advantage of that place that we left. But we're in touch with a lot of the children of the people that were there, and that's — It was — You just had the fun of inventing what

you needed, and so you began to notice what it took to do things, and you learned how to cut out clothes, cook, make furniture.

**MEH:** Did you help with the hardware jewelry?

**BLD:** No. We did it a little, but some of the ones that are in the museum now Anni and Bill Reed made — for me. I gave them last year, a lot of washers and red grosgrain ribbon and what other one did I have there? I can't remember. But anyhow she's got about three necklaces of mine there, as well as a jacket that she made me make out of good material she'd made. She was good on the design, Anni. She — uncomplicated but well-enduring type coats and skirts and things. Unfussy. I loved Anni. I mean, I learned a lot from her, and she didn't mind us. She liked Ted too, and it was a help to have a whole other side of you wake up. It had nothing to do with talking. It had to do with seeing and doing, much more, so you found that you could influence what you looked at in your house by where you put things, much more effectively than your great grandmothers had. You made good materials for bedspreads, like the Mexicans. We had a second chance in Mexico to see making of things. But they were waking up our visual knowing and our — And Alex Reed, who was one of the good students there, was very visual too and very sweet guy, did wonderful weaving with Anni, very — Got depressed because of his family but he was — He was Barbara's godfather at that time. We had him, he and what was her name? Ati. Ati was sweet. That was fun too. But Anni was one of the skillful ones of putting it over. I mean, she made you make it, and it wasn't just painting or finding so much as cutting and sewing and painting too, of course.



She didn't do any painting but she certainly noticed what you were doing in the way of painting. She had — she got the Moellenhoffs to stay. They were good — scientific, doctoring types. Two nice daughters. But we just used who was there and let them use us so that we learned things from each other and healed up some of the anguish that they all had leaving there with not sufficient backing. Then we were able to pass them on, or help them to get to where they really wanted to be, like the Strauses, for instance, and Mangolds [MEH: Fred Mangold and his wife were not refugees.] and stuff. It was a good second education for any of us that were lucky enough to be there, even though we weren't — didn't have teaching capacity. I mean, I can teach them to dance in one direction. If they were Cubans and only just waltzed in one direction till they were exhausted, I suggested coming back the other way [LAUGHS] and be not exhausted, but in balance. I mean you weren't dizzy, didn't have to sit down and be hugged [LAUGHS]. You could just stop. But John Evarts was a big help because he could run the parties. And all guests were given the best dancers. "Take your partner," at first we were all hand around. It got to be a bigger and bigger circle as we got more students.

**MEH:** Hansgirg.

**BLD:** And Hansgirg came. Ted got him out of incarceration out west. Stood up all night on the train to get there. They had money and a very good car and a lot of records, musical records, and we told them to come. We got them there, and they lent us their records or had record playings, and he thought of what to do with what's the name of the chemical?

**MEH:** Mica.

**BLD:** Was it mi- —

**MEH:** You had a mica mine? [MEH: his specialty was magnesium. At BMC he directed a mica mine during the war.]

**BLD:** Was it mica? Maybe. Good. Well, there were lots of mica mines around there, and he — the Navy was needing it up until then. Didn't need it for much longer, but he thought of stuff that they could do with it, and he had made around a Japanese harbor, Tokyo harbor. He'd had some kind of chemical or stony stuff happening. He was a magnate-type man, but shared what he could do — he shared records with us so we could hear music other than our own making, and was fairly interesting. I liked his wife very much. But he got — he was too good for us in one sense. He ought to have been out in the field doing his thing. But it was absurd of the army to put him in what amounted to detention. I mean he — Ted got him out of there by going out there and just taking him out and saying we were told by a Harvard professor to do it, that we could do it if we would. So we offered him a teaching place and he did indeed teach — a little complicated.

**MEH:** What was John Evarts like?

**BLD:** He was — He liked music. He liked boys. He was very interested in men, but he knew they liked to dance with girls and he ran the dances. He taught music. I didn't go to any of those things. I had babies all that time and took art courses when I could — not all of them. But sit in Juppi's first class. And then I could paint while the children slept. Then finally they went to school and I could do a little more, and sew clothes with Anni and things like that. But I didn't do

intellectual work for the college, except as through unsuitable comments. Bad behavior. [LAUGHS] We all took care of each other very sweetly there. It was really good.

**MEH:** It's interesting that John Evarts was very open about his homosexuality.

**BLD:** He wasn't. He didn't talk about it.

**MEH:** I don't think he talked about, but everybody knew. There are records of a meeting that was held to discuss this.

**BLD:** Are there?

**MEH:** Yes. It was an open meeting and, you know, sort of everybody decided it didn't matter, which was interesting in that time (OVERTALK).

**BLD:** I didn't go to that meeting.

**MEH:** It's not the sort of thing you talked about then, but it was . . . .

**BLD:** It was our first experience of it, you might say.

**MEH:** It's interesting that he was totally accepted. It was not an issue.

**BLD:** We didn't have many of them, I don't think. I mean, they'd try it out sort of but they — One wasn't aware of it as a great problem. There were quite a lot of girls around, and in the wartime, too many girls around. That was hard when they went off to war and complicated ones came back. But it was a wonderful graduate stuff for anybody that had gone to a regular old girls college or a — It was a quite distinguished college, Bryn Mawr. They had a higher academic standing, way up above what the Smiths and Wellesleys of the world were then doing. I mean they had — She — Mrs. Thomas, M. Carey Thomas was the name of the first woman head of it, and she trained a lot of the people that went

to Harvard to teach later. I can't name them, but there were several. She just thought that women's education shouldn't be just cooking and sewing, you know, the things like that. Although we did some sewing in our place. We didn't do much cooking. [LAUGHS] We left that for Jack.

**MEH:** What — Now I've lost my question. What was my question?

**BLD:** About homosexuality was it?

**MEH:** No. [IRRELEVANT REMARKS ABOUT FORGOTTEN QUESTION]. Did you take part in any of the drama productions?

**BLD:** One.

**MEH:** What was that?

**BLD:** I can't remember and it was a minor part too. But it was fun. But that took night time rehearsing and I just — I had the children, and I didn't really leave them when they were tiny and small. I mean, I didn't want the black girl to have to do it all afternoon and all morning and all evening too. She was very good with them. She was a very good girl. Just died recently. I know her sister who's still alive in North Carolina. She got real education, as a trained nurse. Taking care of a sick husband at the moment, I think. But many have died that were there. Those of us that didn't learn enough are still around trying to find it out, whatever it is. But it was, it was — You got much more sense of what it took to learn something there than to be lectured at and give the notes back, you know. That was a Quaker college, which music and art and things had to be introduced to later and on Saturdays and things like that because they didn't sing much, and they certainly didn't paint. So we got, we got the first painter on

Saturdays. There was a Christian Association which meant that the people that came out of New York and Philadelphia to lecture in the churches in the morning, to preach in the churches on Sunday mornings would love to have a Sunday evening additional thing paid for, before they took the trains back to their homes. So that lots of the Jewish and foreign students, and we had some Orientals and everything, couldn't go to the Christian things, or thought they couldn't, or didn't. And I thought it was dumb because it was some quite good speeches, the speakers that came. I hadn't ever been taken to church much. My family were Quakers on the father's side and what was it? Unitarians, my grandmother was a Unitarian which was just like being a communist in those days. They — When a Quaker, my good Quaker grandfather from Hicksville fell in love with and asked her to marry him, my grandmother, the Quaker people ran him out of the meeting. Then they met her, the Unitarian, and they liked her so much better than they liked him that they asked him back, and he wouldn't go, of course. But they spoke gently to each other all their life. I remember the thee and thy and thou stuff. He was — His passion was astronomy. He had an eight-inch English glass looking at various constellations in February with his middle daughter, who was good at it too, with Harlow Shapley, and went to Nantucket. In the end of her life she had a spell at Nantucket, and she left her telescopes and things to them in Nantucket. They're still there. But — Where were we? How did I get off —

**MEH:** What did your family think about your going to found this new college down in North Carolina?

**BLD:** Well, it was the bottom of the Depression, and there were all these people coming over from getting out of the Hitler thing. They — And our best friend had been fired from Rollins. And my father had died. I didn't have any objections from him. He wouldn't have objected anyway. Mother thought, mother thought almost all education wasn't terribly interesting. She was very bright and sort of knew what was going on in that respect, although she hadn't had much training herself. She was an early theosophist and got interested in the Indian thing way before a lot of people did. Annie Besant was over here trying to get England to let go of India in the early days. The English hadn't been very good in India. So then Krishnamurti came along, and mother knew him, and we knew him quite well. She, she thought the Episcopalian stuff that her father did was incredible, I mean, unbelievably uninteresting. I mean, she saw her sister lying crying on the floor till her will was broken. No way. So this was better, she thought. The Quaker people didn't behave like that either, so she didn't mind my going to Bryn Mawr. I had no objection — Mother was very — She knew what she was looking at, in a very good way. I had a very able mother. Hadn't been very well, and died but quite long after my father died of pneumonia because they didn't know what to do about that in those days, or that kind of pneumonia or whatever it was. But I had very interesting parents. They made a school out in Staten Island, and Daddy, who wished he was a writer himself, helped the English writers who came over here get speaking places and they all came to speak at our school. We had Rupert Brooke. We kept good track of him, and Walter de la Mare and —

**MEH:** What was the school?

**BLD:** Dongan Hall. Dongan Hills. Dongan Hall. The Stettinius Mansion. The Stettinius family had built a house. They were a well-to-do family. They'd built a big house and then thought that socially it wasn't up to what they thought out there. There were lots of not very distinguished and certainly not very rich people who were living in Dongan Hills, so they went to Washington and he was in the government for quite a while. But there was this building and it was a block and a half from our house. There was a lovely big yard that you could make hockey and tennis courts — one tennis court there already. So he got a bunch of the Dongan Hills Country Club people to buy it and made a school and brought out all his writer friends to lecture at it whenever he could get hold of them. So we had a lot of interesting speakers. I was brought up there. After his death, Mother lived there awhile and then sold it and began buying land that they had picked out here, building a house on it and everything. So I've — They brought me here in 1907, when I was just a few weeks old, with an Irish wet nurse, so I'm partly Irish. My mother's milk didn't agree with me. So it's a different life now, isn't it? You can learn it all here. You don't have to go to make colleges everywhere. It comes right over the wires, and you've got your choice, and you almost could write the headlines in several newspapers for the next day because of what you hear the day before. Internationally. But I would love to hang around just a little longer. My grandmother lived to be just short of a hundred, and her rivalrous daughter lived to be a hundred and nine months, and if we don't put all these peculiar chemicals on the food supply, we may be

able to maintain ourselves longer than a hundred years, in which case you could get a lot more done, find out a lot more things. You can find them out worldwide now. You don't have to wait eighty-nine days for the boat to go from Canton to Salem, Massachusetts to get the letter to your sister who, if she wrote back the next day, it would be eighty-nine more days and a boat was going. So it would be eight-nine more days. That's six months before you could hear what was happening over here. And now you can hear the church bells ring in any city in the world by pushing something. See your friends and what they're up to. If you don't plan to kill them all with the defense systems, so that the oil sellers and the gasoline sellers and the magnates can rob us all [LAUGHS], then you can live for the rest of your life.

**[END OF RECORDING ON DV CASSETTE 2]**

**[END OF TRANSCRIPT]**