

Interviewee: BARBARA "BOBBIE" DREIER  
Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS  
Participant: BARBARA BEATE DREIER (daughter of Bobbie Dreier)  
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**[BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW. BEGINNING OF TRANSCRIPT]**

**MEH:** This is a lot of pictures of you.

**BLD:** It certainly is. I don't remember it. There must have been some reason why he was making me sit there and make different faces, for some reason. I don't remember his doing this to us.

**MEH:** Do you remember his having a little Leica camera?

**BLD:** Yes. That was one of the active cameras, and he was a good photographer, and he took pictures all around the campus all the time of things. But not of me. I mean, well, yes, because there it is. But it's three different days, is it? Because it's different clothes.

**MEH:** It looks like it's different seasons.

**BLD:** There must have been some reason for this. I don't remember anything about it. The whole series of pictures of things. There must have been some....

**MEH:** He did take series. That's how he liked to do things. [OFFMIKE REMARKS NOT TRANSCRIBED]

**BBLD:** That was his nature.

**BLD:** I wasn't in on that exactly. I mean- --

**BBLD:** You didn't realize he took twelve pictures instead of just one. It's what the photographer decided to do.

**MEH:** And this is Eddie?

**BLD:** And this is Eddie.

**MEH:** This was Albers's godson?

**BLD:** This is his godson. My third child, third boy in a row. We couldn't seem to get Barbara until later. But we finally did, thank goodness.

**MEH:** That's the summer of '38, Lake Eden. What was it like to be a young mother in this community of people?

**BLD:** It was very distinguished because there weren't too many other people having babies yet there, and the ones that had children, they were more grown up, like the Moellenhoffs and the – what was the name of the nice people that came from Germany. No, that's Moellenhoff. And then the Georgias had two or three children, even. But the children were on display in that area between the Dining Room and Lee Hall, where we came out after lunch and sat in the sun, when the sun was out, and talked about things and saw each other and took a respite from the chores that were to come a little later, or before they went off to work. That was a nice time, because you talked to people that you didn't necessarily go to the classes with or anything. I didn't go to many classes, but I certainly went to some.

**MEH:** But like mothers or wives or husbands of faculty could take classes?

**BLD:** Yes. Anybody could take anything. Well, I don't know. I wasn't on the faculty. But many people did – that could, and were teaching themselves. They were interested in what Albers was doing, and a lot of people wove too. Anni, Anni had good students. And that was a lot of work, the weaving stuff.

**MEH:** So really everybody . . .

**BLD:** Everybody could take part in some of the riches that were there. And we always knew when somebody wasn't there, because there were so few of us in the beginning. It was – it was really fun. You had chinks of time between taking care of children, when you had someone helping you -- named Gertrude Lytle, who was extremely good and liked it and liked the children. And in good weather they could play indoors, in bigger rooms than we had in the cottage. But when they were this size, they just stayed home.

**MEH:** So you could be mother and student or faculty and student?

**BLD:** Yes. Not the kind of student that was taking exams and stuff, but you could attend classes and you could learn to make open the eyes, as Albers said. A lot of people took that because that hadn't been done, that kind of art hadn't been done in any of our experiences, namely sit down there and see what the colors did to each other. That – it was more that they'd studied painting, landscapes and nudes and inventing things. So it was – it was a wonderful change from taking care of tiny little children, to go out and study something when you didn't have to take exams in it and stuff, so that you could really do it. [LAUGHS]

**MEH:** Okay. These are photographs of Ted?

**BLD:** It was hard to find him standing still anywhere, but he seems to have caught him.

**MEH:** Well, he's sort of out of focus in a couple, so he was moving.

**BLD:** Yes. He was tearing around and seeing that everything was being done in time, ordered in time, enjoyed in time, and so on. Very good at it. The pictures of Norman Weston often. Norman Weston got in there and helped him. That was a very nice team. Norman just died this year.

**MEH:** He got in and helped who?

**BLD:** Yes. He worked in the office, in the treasury and everything with Ted. Took it over, actually. Had a sweet wife, and no children yet. He ended up with four children, and we visited them up in Detroit, of course, later. Not so awfully long ago, but after his wife had died too. So this was Ted caught innocently with a camera, himself. We must have those pictures somewhere.

**MEH:** It seems that you, that Ted worked so hard that with the Albers he really could relax and have fun a little bit.

**BLD:** [AFFIRMATIVE]. And Albers was good at trying to find other people to come. As that top letter in the folder I was just looking at on the table would show that they were hunting people, not just art people but good other faculty -- in New York, and reporting to Ted about it on paper, and in the end we got some

of them, of course. He was looking for help in the art department too, of course.

**MEH:** Albers had his studio in your house? [MEH: I was referring to the shared house at Lake Eden; Bobbie is referring to the house at the first campus.]

**BLD:** No.

**MEH:** Where did he paint?

**BLD:** He painted – He had a studio in Lee Hall, on the top floor there. Heavens. You couldn't have him in your house! [LAUGHS] I mean he had a whole lot of stuff, and all his files and everything there too.

**MEH:** But at Lake Eden....

**BLD:** At Lake Eden what did he have? Yes. He had it in the house, in their double apartment there, across from our big lobby. He indeed had a studio as well as his business desk, and he – what did he do with it? Anni was up... Anni had a loom on the downstairs side of her place, and upstairs they had all their storage actually, but he had room to store his big pictures and let them dry. I mean they used each other's space. And he used the lobby space, if he dared, if we didn't have windy times, blowing in through those big doors. But yes, they – the whole Lake Eden time we were in the same house with them, and that was fun because you could watch them work, you know, and Anni also working there.

**MEH:** How did they interact with your children?

**BLD:** Well, he was very good with them. Anni didn't spend too much time interacting with children of any kind, but she tolerated them reasonably. And

she would often be sewing, and I would be sewing with her outside the doors there while Albers was working in his garden to make vegetables that he wanted her to cook for him [LAUGHS] and all. So we had, we had an outdoor life together there. But they were very concentrated workers. I mean, he really got lots in the mail and didn't spend any time being interrupted, in that office. And she was in and out and she had, of course, a big weaving room in the Studies Building when that was built – a really big wonderful two weaving rooms, I think, with several looms. And the kids that were doing weaving had a wonderful place to work at Lake Eden, better than the pretty big place they had in Blue Ridge, of course. But it was made for them in Lake Eden, better, with the light and everything. I don't remember this one at all.

**MEH:** Yeah, this was a study for a painting that he did and he made it a gift to you of it.

**BLD:** I've forgotten it. [INTERRUPTION IN RECORDING]

**MEH:** Okay we're recording now.

**BLD:** This is a good picture of him. This is the way he looked. He didn't wear ties, except when it was a formal day somewhere in the building. He took off the coat when he was painting, but he walked around campus that way and was able to be seen – You couldn't catch him very much of the time because he painted most of the time when he wasn't either writing letters about exhibitions or helping us to find people to come and help teach. But he put his attention very immediately on whatever was happening, and he liked it that his wife was out in the sun sewing with me, and any students could stop by and get his notions on gardening and color and study and other things.

**MEH:** You were saying that he let Eddie help him garden?

**BLD:** Well, no. Not really. But he showed what he was doing in the garden, and Eddie helped him once in a while. I don't remember any specific things, except Eddie – Eddie was helpful, like taking the weeds into the basket and things like that, when he was a little tiny boy. But Juppi did his own gardening. But that's a good picture of the way he seemed to look. That's the way I remember his hair and everything. [INTERRUPTION IN TAPING] It doesn't show the quality of color in that. [REFERES TO IMAGE ON VIDEO SCREEN] It shows the (INAUDIBLE)...

**MEH:** This, you can see how the quality of the color-- So what you see here is not what was being recorded. That's the funny thing about this.[MEH: Actually, the color is poor.]

**BLD:** Right. Right.

**MEH:** Yeah, that's the funny thing about this. Now, this Ted did for you from...?

**BLD:** Ted Junior. Must have been a Christmas present, was it?

**MEH:** Was this the sort of thing that you did in Albers classes?

**BLD:** I didn't do it in Albers class that I remember, but if that was what was happening, then we were doing it. I must see if I can find any examples of my own stuff.

**BLD:** Ted took the classes toward the end, in the late '40s, whereas maybe – you usually talk about the early thirties. So over that time Albers probably evolved.

**MEH:** Well, they did this throughout. But I think one thing about this that's interesting, and from your folder over there, is that one way that life was integrated with classes is instead of going out and buying a Hallmark card, people made lovely little things for one another.

**BLD:** [AFFIRMATIVE]. Showing off what they did. And using the general supply, which was easier than going and buying your own things, and was available there.



**MEH:** But it seems this is one way that art was integrated with community, and, you know, people writing songs for one another and poems to one another and giving....

**BLD:** And you could tell what they were learning by looking at what they were making. That's fun. I'd forgotten all about this particular picture. I'd forgotten that he'd taken that course, too. One doesn't always know what one's oldest child is doing if one is taking care of one's younger children, you know, because it isn't in the same room [LAUGHS] basically. But Ted was – Ted liked him ever so much, young Ted. And was taking advantage of it. If Albers didn't think your study was pretty good in those hasty first days, he would say, "That's fine. Make another," and snatch the other thing away, put it out of sight down below on the floor or on a neighboring chair so you didn't think you had to work on it so much as do what he had asked for in the beginning, so as to get the experience of what colors – those particular colors – were doing to each other because of their placement, their quantity, or the light. And so you had another relation to what you were doing. You weren't making masterpieces. You were making things happen that wouldn't happen if you weren't handling it, and made you feel powerful, and it opened your eyes just to what you weren't liking about what you were making, or what you needn't have made that you therefore had to dislike. And it was – it empowered you to handle color and not feel you were not getting the right attention or had to throw it away – that it was bad to have to give it up or do another. But you got the notion of how to do it. He was – He taught us that, you know, that you – it

took doing, and you jolly well had to see how you had to do it to get the effect that was being asked for, either by the teacher or – I mean, he didn't tell you which colors to use or anything, but how to make it change by its neighbors. How to make it change, the visual effect that was happening. And who else had ever told us things like that? They just told us what Don Giovanni had done in Italy, you know, and what the geography was like in Italy, and things like that. [INTERRUPTION IN TAPING]

**MEH:** Okay, this was the program for *The Ruse of Medusa* in the summer of '48, but you don't remember the play, with Bucky in it?

**BLD:** I must have been there. But what was I doing? '48. I can't remember too vividly, but I knew there was a good thing and they had John Cage and all that good list of people.

**MEH:** I think you were away for part of that summer actually.

**BLD:** I wonder if I saw it really. I just heard about it maybe. It was the most interesting looking, by the program, most interesting thing we'd done to date, with a lot of quite grown-up people in it. There weren't just young unknowing types acting in it. Bucky had a great flair, so he stimulated other people to think they could do things too. He was wonderful. He didn't get enough coffee in the dining room so we were lucky in that he always came up after breakfast and sat at our dining room table and played

with Barbara, age two, who – I sat Barbara in his lap and she played with the pencils in his pocket while I got the coffee, and he drank at least two of them with cream and sugar in it, before going off to give a good class or do a good rehearsal or something.

**MEH:** Do you remember, do you have any particular memories of John Cage or Merce Cunningham?

**BLD:** Yes. I certainly do. Merce Cunningham started his dance program there. He'd been a dancer, more individual kind of dancing, in New York. And he came down there and let it be known that there would be a class and a lot of people came. That he did one year and then the second year they came, and more came. It was good music, and they made a whole program that they took around the country, I think, or at least up and down the East Coast states. He was very good. My son, Ted, took it, loved it. His grandfather was terribly worried that he might turn into a dancer, but there wasn't much danger of that [LAUGHS]. I remember being told by Mother Dreier that Father Dreier was really concerned that his grandson would be a dancer. [LAUGHS]. That was more than he could take. But Ted was good at dancing and liked it, and that was fun to see.

**MEH:** Do you have any memories of the Satie Festival, the Satie music that summer?

**BLD:** No. For some reason. Maybe I was just more taking care of Barbara or something. That was that same summer, right? Were you alive then? Yes. You were two. But I didn't – I couldn't be sure to go to the things, depending

on what the kids needed and who I could get to take care of them. Evenings were better than afternoons or mornings.

**BBD:** I was just asking Ma, did you really go away that summer of '48 if Bucky was there? You always talked about that. Did we go to the Vineyard or something?

**BLD:** I don't remember.

**BBD:** I was pretty small.

**MEH:** I think maybe – This is August and I have a feeling that you, maybe at the end of the summer went away. I'm guessing.

**BLD:** I may find a diary (OVERTALK) somewhere that I used to keep.

**BBD:** I'm sure in the correspondence in the forties we could probably find it right here.

**BLD:** This is a northeast shot of Lee Hall. That was at the front columns. That's where you first go in to the big lobby, and you're curving around from the north curve there as you come up from the town. And it had a beautiful view. We did a lot with the porch under those columns. There were a lot of rocking chairs out there and some – and we often danced out there, if it was warm enough, in the evenings, with John Evarts playing inside, a piano, with wide open windows so you could hear every sound. And it was a very, a very encompassing type building. We liked it. You couldn't hear from one end of it to another, so you shut the doors,

you had privacy for the classes or the business offices on the first floor, and you could have tea going on in one corner of the lobby in the afternoons when people came in from their working, without really disturbing something that was going on in the opposite corner of the building acoustically. When Aunt Kate lent us all those modern pictures that they were scared to look at in New York and we put up in the lobby all around, in this big lobby. They could be safely there and people could come in – I mean, late at night they'd still be there. Early in the mornings they were there. Everyone went through the lobby to go anywhere else in the building. You came in that – That was the main entrance. There was a door opposite that entrance, but that was up towards the dining room. You went out that door, climbed up a slope under a good little waterproof entry, and found Jack and Rubye Lipsey with food ready for you, and sat down and talked with all your friends and students and children and guests in this great big dining room. That was very good, because you could really meet people there. You didn't have to walk all over trying to find them. Everybody ate together three times a day. You could sort of see how people handled their children, and you could see how they got there on time or how many times they went back into the kitchen to get some more. and you could remark on all kinds of things about people in the dining room, to yourself. Then you could clear it away and dance up there. That was a good floor. We weren't so numerous as to take up the whole area, so you could crowd the tables and chairs away if you needed more than often. But there was a piano there and John Evarts would play, and after eating you

could, you could waltz around happily before you went to a class that was starting at eight, for instance. So that's a very – It was a very encompassing building, and that's where you went to fuss about things with the office, and that's where you got the mail, and that's where you dressed up and showed off what a good dress you'd made under Irene von Dlpshitz's [PH] guidance. And there's were the parties were – the dress-up parties. There's where Aldous Huxley came and spoke to us, and there's where Einstein came and spoke to us, way back when he had just been taken by Princeton, who was bright enough to get him to teach physics there. He didn't think we had enough students for his niece. He was looking at us with the idea of his niece coming there, so he took her out to California with her mother to find a more, a bigger student body. But a lot happened in that lobby. A lot of the meetings with the new people, the talking that they did. Yella Pessl came, put her harpsichord in the middle of the lobby, and invited anybody that could play any instrument to come and play with her. She would accompany them. We stopped all of the classes and just did that for several days – two-and-a-half, at least. That was great fun too. And any big audiences were held in there too. We also had a theatre. So I have nothing but happy memories of that encompassing building that rescued us from Rollins College and rescued – gave people both a sleeping place, because there were a lot of rooms in that half of it that was heated that we rented. Everybody could have a bedroom. And they were – the faculty were in one area and the students were in another so that you didn't disturb each other acoustically. You could be sure to

meet them, and you could have tea with them every single afternoon in the corner. Blessed, blessed building. Those of us that were banished on account of the acoustics of the children we had to cottages, up the hill, could – when children were asleep and someone could be bribed to stay listening to them – you could come down there and go to all the meetings too. They didn't necessarily have to go to. Or there was the beautiful and sweet Gertrude Lytle, a black girl whose good family lived across the valley from us, who stayed with us all the years we were there and who came north with us and who just recently died and whose sister I'm in touch with still, her younger sister who was a very capable nurse and whose mother I knew well. I know that family. I knew that family very happily. She could do anything.

**MEH:** Let's go to another picture. Okay now, these were, on the left, a faculty study in Lee Hall and, on the right, a student study? Everybody had a study?

**BLD:** Everybody that wanted to have a study, yes. I think so. There were a great many rooms in that big building, that were heated. In half of it the rooms were heated, because it had been earlier used in the winter too. Built as a summer conference ground originally. But this faculty study shows that somebody put a bookcase together, but they did not make, of course, that chair. Whereas in the student study on the right, I can bet that whoever that was made that table as best they could with the

carpentry shop that was available at Blue Ridge. When we moved to Lake Eden, we had an excellent carpentry shop and a great deal of – very much better than that – furniture was then made by the students with Molly Gregory running it. We did a lot of experimenting there. They did, as to what would work, what kinds of tables you could move yourself and work on in the study and you could look at without anguish. I don't remember those. I was in A cottage. I mean I couldn't tell you who that left-hand study was. But you could be interviewed, as a student you could be interviewed in the great big public building, public room like the downstairs lobby, or sometimes you could get into somebody's study and tell people, tell the teacher what was really bothering you or what you hoped they could answer. Ask them things. But on the whole, these were private refuges for the victims of our institution.

[LAUGHS] [INTERRUPTION IN TAPING]

**MEH:** You're on.

**BLD:** So here they are over at Lake Eden, at the place we moved to and spent the rest of our time down there in. We had to clear the land and make a farm and grow food. We ended up growing a lot of food and having a dairy that produced enough milk, and we made our own butter and cheese – not too much cheese, but certainly butter. All the time you knew that that view to the left – no you can't see it yet



– but you were in a valley and not on a deep slope there. The first place we had water rushing down the hill. Here there was a lake that caught it, and there were – and that you could go out in boats on, if you wanted to, little boats, canoes and things. There was all this land that we were going to grow food on and have cows grazing on, and I think we had pigs. We certainly had goats. We had two tame goats in our family. People that had never done anything with their hands outdoors learned how to not get too muddy, and dig holes, and evade work, and all kinds of the things like that. [LAUGHS] I, luckily, had children to take care of which was my substitute for farming.

**MEH:** Ted loved to do this.

**BLD:** He knew it had to be done and he was willing to do it. He was big and strong, loved to carry things around. And the boys – you know, you could show off at how good you were to the girl you were liking at the moment, if you carried big heavy things and put them somewhere else. I'm not – I don't recognize any of those holes that are being scratched around. [LAUGHS] It was definitely at Lake Eden, because we didn't have that kind of a landscape over at Blue Ridge.

**MEH:** But you see here, on the right-hand side, that's a girl behind the plow.

**BLD:** Yes. There was no end of showing off and learning new things there. The boys were in there so that the boys could see how good you were at things, and vice versa. Not too much talking. In most places at Black Mountain people were talking and talking and talking and talking and talking. Albers got them doing. And the farming got them doing. It was a good change. You knew

other things about people when you saw them doing things and learning how to do things and finding out what would work. It was fun. The level ground was a big change in what we did outdoors. A lot of painting went on outdoors and with a bigger flatter area so classes could be held with the doors open and Jalowetz' music things in that entry, round stone building there, that Gatehouse [Roundhouse] where he had pianos – two pianos, I think – and where violinists and piano players and singers and everything could get together and be heard by everybody. It wasn't all shut up. It was fun to see that.

**[END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1; SIDE 2 UNRECORDED]  
[END OF INTERVIEW: END OF TRANSCRIPT]**