

Interviewee: DAN HAUGAARD
Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS
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[BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

MEH: [GIVES IDENTIFICATION]. Dan, how did you come to be at Black Mountain College?

DH: Well, it was basically through Windsor Mountain—that the number of people that had, number of students and some faculty, actually, had been at Black Mountain, and also my brother had been there in 1940. So—I'm not sure quite how it happened, but actually I was at the University of New Hampshire, when I first went down, and I wasn't doing very well there. I wasn't very happy at the University of New Hampshire so I think it was perhaps my brother's suggestion that we try to go—I should have a summer there, so that was the first summer.

MEH: So you went to Windsor Mountain School.

DH: Yes. [AFFIRMATIVE] Right.

MEH: Did you graduate from high school there?

DH: Yes.

MEH: What was Windsor Mountain like? Do you have any particular recollections?

DH: Well, I was one of the early students. I was there since '41 or '2, I think, so—it first started in Manchester, Vermont where we had perhaps only twenty or thirty students, and then it eventually moved to Lenox, Massachusetts, where we ended up with probably seventy or eighty. Then after that it became much larger, and it sort of deteriorated, I think. The whole idea was lost of what they were—the Bondis were attempting to do.

MEH: What do you think they were attempting to do?

DH: Well, Max Bondi was an educator in Germany and Mrs. Bondi was an original student with Freud. So, they were into, very much into the psychology of education, and they had some rather idealistic ideas of how education should be done—in some connection with the idea of Black Mountain in the communal sense.

MEH: Why did your parents send you? Why did they choose that?

DH: Windsor Mountain? Well, my father came over here—my father and mother came over in 1939. My father was a biochemist and he had a fellowship at Rockefeller Institute and was supposed to stay one year. Now this was—We arrived in September of '39 on a Polish boat [LAUGHS].

MEH: Coming from—

DH: Coming from Copenhagen. So we were in mid-ocean when Germany invaded Poland, so we already got a taste of what was happening. My father then stayed for many years. Now he was then stuck, actually, for the first year in not having planned to stay here. I started in a public school in Queens, where they had an apartment. Then it turned out that since he had to stay that he

had to start looking for a job, so it was a very insecure period. I stayed for a year with an American family in Boston, and actually since that time—and then I went to Windsor Mountain and was at a boarding school for all those years. So, my parents moved from Boston—from New York to Boston to Chicago—a number of different places before they finally settled on Long Island.

MEH: But you were settled at Windsor Mountain.

DH: Right—to give some sort of security to my life at that point, because I was in the way, really, of his moving the way he did. I mean it was not easy with a nine or ten year old.

MEH: Right. Did you like Windsor Mountain?

DH: Yes, I did, actually. Very much, yes.

MEH: You went from there to the University of—

DH: Of New Hampshire for a year, a year and a half, I think. At that point I was thinking of—I was taking pre-med, actually, with that as a major, and some other courses I was not doing too well in. So, my other interest, of course, was in art. My brother, I think, was influencing me at that point to say, "Well, forget the doctor. Go ahead and take care of your art," in which case Black Mountain would be a good place to go.

MEH: Do you recall how—the first time you went, how you traveled?

DH: Oh yes. I went by Southern Bus Lines, I think it was called. That was quite an experience in itself, that bus ride through Virginia and the outskirts of

Richmond where that was still the segregation period when it was very poor, poor areas where the blacks lived in. So that was a bit of a shock.

MEH: Had you been to the South before?

DH: No, no, no.

MEH: What about your arrival at the college? Did what you found meet your expectations?

DH: I didn't really know what to expect, so I think so. I was used to being dumped into a situation where I had to find my own way, so it wasn't unusual for me actually to try to figure out where do you go next, you know. So that was not too unusual.

MEH: So you arrived, according to my records, in the spring of 1950. I mean in January. You didn't enter in the fall?

DH: I can't actually remember. I was there in the summer of '50.

MEH: According to my records, you were there in the spring and then you stayed—

DH: [OVERTALK] stayed for the summer—

MEH: And then you were there in the fall.

DH: Was that the—I'm not sure if that was the same fall or the next fall, whether I had gone away. I think I went away.

MEH: You went away. That's right. You came back the next fall.

DH: Right. The next fall. Because I went to Europe for a year and then came back.

MEH: That's right. Yeah. Let's talk about the general college year—Okay, let's get our chronology straight first. You were there for the spring semester and the summer, and then you left.

DH: Right. Then came back—

MEH: You went to Europe that year?

DH: Yeah. I'm not quite certain as when I came back, actually.

MEH: What was the college like as a place to study?

DH: I thought it was great. I mean I was, I was very happy with it. There was a very good atmosphere. You could sort of choose whatever you wanted to do, so you ended up taking some courses or getting involved in conversations with people that you otherwise would never have met, and so there was some—I can remember even Max Dehn, who was—I mean theoretical mathematics was hardly my field [LAUGHS] but he was a wonderful man and I could spend some time with him. Actually, it was very—great. It was a very nice atmosphere, I thought. Of course, there had been this, coming after the sort of upheaval with—so I was conscious of the fact that there were sort of two sides and that some people were unhappy and other people were kind of triumphant that they could do things on their own now, whatever. So that—but I was not a party to that, in a sense, so I just was aware of it and I didn't take particularly sides on it, on that issue.

MEH: Did you have any idea what you wanted to study? Certainly there was not a pre-med curriculum at Black Mountain.

DH: No, I'd given that up, that idea up, anyway. I was planning to study art and painting and sculpture.

MEH: And let's see, Albers had left then, so Fiore and Jennerjahn would have been teaching.

DH: Right. I don't remember them really as teachers. [LAUGHS] I think my first strong influence was with Stamos in the summer.

MEH: Okay. So really, Jennerjahn and Fiore were very young and beginning and you—

DH: I didn't see them as teachers particularly—No.

MEH: How did you see them?

DH: As older students. [LAUGHS]

MEH: But you went to their classes?

DH: I think I must have, yes. I don't remember being particularly taken with them.

MEH: Did you take classes with—Did you take any other classes in general curriculum, that you recall?

DH: I know I did, but I can't, I can't really remember what they were.

MEH: Was M.C. Richards there then, and Bill Levi?

DH: Yes. Yes. Yeah. I must have taken some literature courses with them, I'm sure, with M.C. Richards. I think it was summertime I took a course with Paul Goodman as well, and Clement Greenberg. But it was so loose, in a sense. I mean you weren't really signed up and necessarily even committed to going. You could come and go as you like, in a way, so it was very loose [LAUGHS].

MEH: Right. Let's just go to the summer, because I think that probably was a more influential time. You'd mentioned Stamos, in particular. Did he hold a formal class?

DH: It was mostly I think sort of going out into nature, really, as a group and maybe having a picnic or something. But it was something that was—I don't I see or can visualize him holding a class in a traditional sense, no.

MEH: What was he like as a teacher? Personality?

DH: I thought he was very good, actually. I was quite taken with his work and the way he approached things. But I was very impressionable, so I probably liked his work and therefore thought that I was quite influenced by him.

MEH: Were you familiar with Abstract Expressionism at that time?

DH: I don't think particularly so. No. I probably was, but not, not, not in the sense that that's what I wanted to do. I mean, I think that was—I was influenced at that point by what was going on in the school, I think, to want that, to do that.

MEH: What about Paul Goodman? Do you have any particular memories of his class?

DH: No. I was a little frightened of him, in a sense, because he was quite intense. Of course, he was also a homosexual which—and he didn't—he was quite interested in anybody who was possibly interested in him [LAUGHS]. I wasn't really that friendly with him. But he was a fascinating person. He was a very brilliant man, actually, and I remember some evenings, some discussions that went on for quite a while with him leading it, and he was good at that.

MEH: What about Clement Greenberg?

DH: Well, I thought he was rather dull, actually. I didn't really take much to him [LAUGHS], but that was just my feeling at the time. I wasn't too interested in

Mr. Greenberg. He was not a terribly attractive person, I didn't think, and so on.

MEH: How would you describe just the general summer atmosphere at the college?

DH: I don't know. I thought it was very pleasant. I had nothing but good experiences in that sense. It was—it was much, I was quite used to this type of community aspect that we had from Windsor Mountain, so it was quite natural for me the way things were done. So, I didn't come from a very structured educational system anyway, so I mean that's—because it was quite loose. People went—spur of the moment type of things would happen all the time. But I was quite young at the time. I was what, nineteen? So quite easily influenced by whatever was going on.

MEH: Did you have your own study, in the Studies Building?

DH: Yes, I think I did. As far as I can remember, I had my own room. Yes.

MEH: Had you had that at any other school? Windsor Mountain or—

DH: Well, not as a study. Obviously I had—No, I don't think I ever had a single room. I was always sharing with someone at Windsor Mountain. I believe I had my own room. Yes. Well for the next—When I came back in the fall, I was sharing a room with Rauschenberg.

MEH: What was he like then?

DH: Rauschenberg? Oh, he was a good friend. I mean I enjoyed his—He didn't influence me particularly in terms of painting because I don't think we did that much together, in the sense of working on paintings. But he was a good friend of mine, and he visited actually me and my family in Long Island later, and I

believe we went together to see Jackson Pollock. I believe that was with him, but I can't be certain. But he had a studio in Long Island, and we went over to see him, and Stamos had a place there too. I don't think I ever visited him, though. But I remember Bob Rauschenberg coming up, and so we were reasonably friendly, I guess. I didn't see him since, actually. I haven't visited him. We went our own ways.

MEH: Do you remember any other students in particular?

DH: Not in particular. I mean when you showed me the list before, I recognized a good many names, and I could sort of picture them and—but I don't think in terms of any strong influence on me in terms of friendships or so on. I don't, I don't really think of any. None that I actually kept up with. The only one I've seen since is Joan Heller, and that was basically because of a reunion at Windsor Mountain a few years ago.

MEH: Had you known Tommy Jackson at Windsor Mountain?

DH: Yes. Yeah. But he wasn't there when I was there, was he? Or was he—Maybe—

MEH: At Black Mountain, I think you may have overlapped.

DH: Overlapped a little bit, yeah. Right. No, I knew Tommy Jackson quite well.

MEH: What did you do on the Work Program at the college?

DH: I remember being involved in some activities on the farm. Exactly what I don't remember, but we did some haying or something, and something to do with taking out the garbage, and a few other chores as such. But I don't really remember being involved in any sort of ongoing program there to do with the

farm in terms of keeping the gardens or anything like that. I noticed that there were some of the students who actually were committed to a program there. We were asked to help out, but I wasn't part of a program where I was committed to doing some work for the college. I know we did. I did.

MEH: Did you ever leave the college to go into the surrounding area?

DH: Seldom. We occasionally went downtown, and we went to that little beer restaurant, beer place, that Paul Williams I guess had made, someone—I don't know if it was him, but one of the students originally back in the forties had set up that little bar on the way down to Black Mountain. I do have memories of being involved in activities to do with the NAACP, it seems to me. There was some connection there with that where we visited some farms and were involved in some activities, trying to organize some of the local blacks, but it's a dim memory. I'm not quite sure—and who else was involved in that, but I can remember that we did make some visits to some people in the neighborhood. I can't imagine who that was actually. I'm not sure.

MEH: There was some involvement at the time. There were some Freedom Riders who came through. I'm not sure if that was the group, or—

DH: No, these were people, I think they were students, other people at Black Mountain. But exactly who they were, and how we did this—but I can visualize being involved in some of this, because it was pretty dreadful at that time. I mean Black Mountain town itself, of course, was segregated and going—Well, we'd go into Asheville occasionally, and there again you were very conscious of it. But I don't remember.

MEH: What did you do for entertainment? You were pretty isolated.

DH: Well, of course, there were activities from the college. There were some—In the evenings there would be either some music or some plays or some dance programs and so on. Otherwise I know we played a lot of poker [LAUGHS] with people like Fee, Fielding Dawson and Joel Oppenheimer, and several of the others, we would play penny ante poker much of the night sometimes. [LAUGHS]

MEH: Were there any sports?

DH: I think we probably had a soccer ball somewhere, but no real organized sports at all. We might have played a game of softball or something like that, but there was nothing, no real organization of any kind.

MEH: Do you have other particular memories of the college? Anecdotes or things that happened?

DH: Well, I've been thinking about that. I don't know that I particularly can think of anything. I guess I felt in some ways a little bit of an outsider, particularly coming back, actually, from having been in Europe. I remember being very disappointed that nobody gave a damn, that I had a lot of things to tell them about what happened here, there, and everywhere, and they said, "Oh, that's nice." Well, you know "Are you back?" or something. Which was kind of typical, because there was a great deal of egotism. People were not—more interested in what they were up to than anybody else. So to that extent, you sort of fended for yourself. That was disappointing, actually. I remember being disappointed. Otherwise—

MEH: What did you do in Europe?

DH: I went to live in Florence, actually. I was supposed to be at this Scuola del Belle Arti [Accademia di Belle Arti] there, and I signed up for that and showed up. My teacher never did. So I gave up on that, and I had an apartment which I shared with a fellow that I had met on the boat going over. He was a writer, and we together shared an apartment in Fiesole for the winter there. That was great. My brother at that time was living in Rapallo, so I could visit him occasionally.

MEH: Was this your first trip to Europe since you had left as a child?

DH: Yes. Well no, actu—Well, we had, my mother and I had been back after the War for a six-month trip in Denmark, or four months. But on my own, certainly the first trip to Europe, yes. So—

MEH: So you came back to the college for a semester.

DH: [AFFIRMATIVE]

MEH: Why did you not stay? What did you decide to do?

DH: Well, I think it was already somewhat in dissolution at that point. I mean it didn't seem like there was a continuation likely there. I'm trying to think what actually happened. I think I went back to New York and eventually went back to Europe, rather than—then eventually, when I came back in '55, I guess, I went to Mexico and studied there at the Instituto Allende, which was interesting. There actually I wrote to Black Mountain, to whoever was in charge at that point which was probably Olson, but I was trying to get some certification of the fact that I'd been there and taken some courses, because

at the Instituto Allende, it was part of the University of Guanajuato, and an art education degree was possible for me if I could document the fact that I had had some previous teach—experience there. They never answered, which kind of annoyed me, because that would have been—At that point I might have gone into an art career in education, perhaps. Because it's not that easy to make a living as a painter. But I did it for a while. I went to live in Spain for two years, and I had an exhibition in Madrid that was quite good, and I started to make a living.

MEH: This would have been about when?

DH: This was in the early 'fifties. We lived for a year in Mallorca and a year in Madrid.

MEH: You were married at that time.

DH: [AFFIRMATIVE] Yes. Right.

MEH: And sort of run through—After that, you came back to the States?

DH: From Mexico, we came back here. Yeah. Then stayed here ever since really, more or less. No, went back to Denmark for a few years, later on, but.—

MEH: And basically your career has been—

DH: Well, I wasn't able to stay with the art as such and make a living on that, so eventually I got into importing some Danish—initially handcrafts and Danish articles and eventually got into furniture. So I started a number of stores that sold Scandinavian furniture.

MEH: The stores were called—

DH: Danco.

MEH: Danco. Did you have a particular line by a particular designer, or did you—was it just—?

DH: No, we just tried to take the best of what was made in Denmark at the time. It was a very popular time for Scandinavian furniture, so it was a good time to do this.

MEH: Did you continue to paint?

DH: Oh, yes, yeah. Well actually for a number of—I did for quite a few years, and then when I really got involved in the business I probably let it go for another ten, twenty years. I haven't done much since the sixties, I think, seventies. I did a lot of painting in Mexico and in Spain, but I didn't do much when I came back. Now I'm doing it again.

MEH: Looking back, what do you think really was—I mean do you think being at the college had any influence on you? Was it just a passing thing?

DH: I think it was a passing thing. I think as far as—The influence that I had there was with a few people. I mean the one who I think was most important to me was Leo Amino. I got started doing sculpture because of him, but also he was a good friend, and I kept up a friendship with him until he died some years ago. We used to visit him quite often. So I think individual people influenced me and stimulated me in one way and another. I mean, both Rauschenberg and Twombly were influences in a sense, and certainly Stamos was originally—not particularly Fiore or Jennerjahn or the people who were associated with the college as teachers. They didn't I don't think had much influence on me at all. Although I saw Jennerjahn later in Europe, and Urbain,

as well. We met in Paris. Ken Noland's brother, actually, we saw in Paris. But Ken Noland, again was, that was not what I was interested in, what he was doing. But also I mean there were some marvelous people there. Katherine Litz was a good influence. She was a nice person.

MEH: Did you take dance with her?

DH: No, no. I was not—No.

MEH: Did you get involved in any of the music or drama activities?

DH: I was in some of the plays. I used to play the guitar, sing a lot [LAUGHS]. In fact at one point I made a record for Folkways, you know, of Danish songs.

MEH: Was it actually recorded? Was it published?

DH: Oh, yeah. It's now in the Smithsonian or something took over, I think, because Mo [Moses] Asch, when he died and Folkways Records went to pieces, I guess. So that was my musical contribution. No, I don't think I was there long enough and with enough of a commitment to the place to really take away a strong, strong influence. So, I don't know. I can't really be too helpful, what I remember.

MEH: There was something else I was going to ask you—I seem to recall that when I talked to you before, thirty years ago or thereabouts, that you had some paintings you had done at the college? Or did I not remember correctly.

DH: Yes, I don't know that I have them anymore, actually, or whether—I think my brother has one. Some of the things I'd done actually at the college. Yeah. So I did—Because they were sort of color studies, so to that extent I guess I must have taken courses with probably Jennerjahn, in relation to color, from

the Albers idea. But I did more sculpture, actually. I did several, I worked on several pieces of sculpture there.

MEH: With Amino.

DH: With Amino, yes. Yeah.

MEH: Any other memories that float? Any other recollections? Stories? What about booze? Did people drink a lot at Black Mountain?

DH: [LAUGHS] I can remember from one of our poker games, the local sheriff showing up and playing with us. He brought some confiscated moonshine [LAUGHS] which I thought was a marvelous thing. So, there was some moonshine available, occasionally. Otherwise we would drink some beer since we never—I don't think there was much heavy drinking going on, as far as I can remember. No, not really.

MEH: Do you think you really took your studies seriously at the college? Did you work hard?

DH: I don't think I did—not well enough, actually. I don't think I was—Probably not. At least not structured, not well enough structured. I did spend an awful lot of time with my sculpture, and I did quite a bit of painting, but I don't think it was structured well enough for me. I've got to have a break a minute.

[INTERRUPTION] [IRRELEVANT REMARKS]

MEH: So any other thoughts? Did you play baseball at Black Mountain? Do you remember baseball games?

DH: Not really. No. I'm trying to think even where we would have played it. Was there a field that we could play baseball on? Vaguely. I mean I think probably

we may have done, but I don't actually remember. It wasn't a major part of the activity anyway. No, I'm trying to search my memory for anything that could be useful or could be, that I can remember that I haven't said.

MEH: What about Fielding Dawson? Do you have any particularly rec—What was he like?

DH: I can remember him as just being a character, I mean funny funny all the time, trying hard to be amusing. I didn't take him too seriously, but he was a good, fun fellow. I didn't take any of them too seriously, I think, as a matter of fact, so I don't know in terms of some of the other students that were there. Like Joel Oppenheimer or Fee Dawson, there were a number of others that were—I was friendly with them, but I mean we were never really close in any way.

MEH: Did you have anything to do with the printing press?

DH: No, I didn't. No. Was that Mark or who was doing that? I forget who that was. I mean with Jonathan Williams, was he there?

MEH: Yeah, he was there, and Joel was doing printing. Yeah.

DH: No, I didn't, I didn't get involved in that. They were doing bookbinding with Jalowetz and so on, right, Jalowetz.

MEH: Did you ever get a degree?

DH: No. No, I didn't. No, I didn't.

MEH: Do you think that's really made a difference?

DH: Not really. I mean I was offered a job and possibly could have had a job anyway at Antioch, at one point, in the art department there. At least I

interviewed for it and I think—but I decided I didn't really want it anyway. You can be an art teacher without having a degree. They don't mean very much, I don't think. No, you try to reconstruct why things happen, and why you ended up doing what you did, and why you didn't do something else, and it's often difficult to really determine that. I must have had a pretty good idea of what I wanted to do, and it was not actually really that connected with Black Mountain. I had no wish to continue at Black Mountain. I felt that a number of people needed Black Mountain and were—couldn't survive very well outside of it, whereas I didn't feel that. I felt I could perfectly well manage somewhere else. But I think it had already somewhat started to collapse when I was there. I think there had been a much more, stronger regimen and a little bit more structure before I came, which would have been better, I think, because at this point people's egos just took over and some of them weren't really that capable. But I enjoyed it. I mean I was glad—I'm certainly glad I went, and I think it was, it had tremendous potential, being able to do that, to have a place where people who are keenly involved in their work, who can share it with you in a kind of—especially the summer session was wonderful. The idea of being able to sit in on some other lectures where—in a very informal way. That's a great idea. In fact they're doing that now, I just talked to somebody in that Renaissance Weekend thing, and that's somewhat—They're dumping people into different groups, smaller groups. I asked the fellow, "Do you choose what group?" He said, "No, they just put you into a group." So, in other words, you could suddenly be in a totally

different field and trying to make heads or tail out of something you don't have a background for. That's somewhat what happened at Black Mountain. I mean, you'd suddenly be talking with a physicist or an analytical mathematician or a dancer or an architect on a level where you were just people together in a room, sharing ideas. Which, it's a wonderful idea.

MEH: I think one of the things that would be—people ask me, "Well should we have a new Black Mountain?" I say, "No," that the things that can be learned, and I think one thing that they might do is in the universities, instead of having departments is put together people of different—one person from each discipline in an area, and then every three years, shuffle, you know.

DH: Sure. That's a great idea.

MEH: It'd be much more lively.

DH: Yeah, yeah.

MEH: I think it was a strength of Black Mountain that you didn't have departments and you didn't have classes.

DH: Not as such, no.

MEH: At the reunion there was no—The Class of '50 will go here, and—

DH: No, no, no. But we could end up not knowing you were going to do this after dinner or something. Some people would get together and end up in somebody's room, and you'd get a conversation going that would last for four or five hours. It's very intense and you were talking to people who are really sort of tops in their field, which is extremely interesting. That's a great way to learn. So to that extent, it's wonderful. But there still has to be structure. I

mean you have to keep people's egos intact, and they have to be some base in reality in what in fact they're capable of doing. Otherwise I think you can get off into a never-never land where—But—It's a great idea.

MEH: Do you have any recollection of mealtimes at the college?

DH: No, not really. How shall I think about that? No. I think they were reasonably orderly, as a matter of fact. I was surprised at that, in a way. I think they were pretty good. We did help ourselves a lot, I think. It wasn't sort of served or anything. No, they were good times, actually. The mealtimes were good times, and I think they were—As far as I can remember, they were pretty orderly, which was nice. But there again, they would flow. I mean they would—You could end up at the mealtimes maybe going off into a play, or some discussion, or somebody takes up some instruments or whatever. So, I mean they were not sort of—No, that was good. But again, I mean, people would come at odd times. So nobody's going to be there right there at time—I guess it's pretty frustrating if you're the cook, but otherwise—

MEH: Tell me more about your record. What was the title of this record, Folkways?

DH: Oh just "Old Danish Folksongs."

MEH: You were singing?

DH: Yeah. And playing the guitar. I don't know how that came about, actually, how I got—I'm not sure how that, how I got in touch with Moe Ashe (PH). But somebody introduced me and suggested that I do it. I don't remember who it was.

MEH: These are things you had learned when?

DH: Well, I got them out of a book, mostly. I mean some of them I remembered, but I mean I'd left Denmark as a nine-year-old. I mean, I spoke perfect Danish, and I could sing in Danish, but I didn't really have a background in Danish folk music in any way. But I was interested generally, as most people were at that time, in folk music, so it was just a question of a little research to find a few songs. I didn't take it terribly seriously, but in fact I did it all in one session, which I much regretted afterwards, because I was really getting tired and just running through, one song after the other, so I don't think it's all that great. But I did—a few of them worked pretty good, I guess. [LAUGHS] But I never heard anything from him. I know a few people who bought them. I never got any money out of it, but they did make—they did sell them. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

MEH: Now go ahead, be honest. It's okay.

DH: I think before you had, when you had the GI Bill too, you got people who had to work quite seriously. Many of the early people with the GI Bill, and when you had the European influence that was there originally. But you got into a lot of teenage kind of [LAUGHS] people, who were not really—I don't—

MEH: I think it was these very same people in an environment for which they had no responsibility, it would have been one thing, but at Black Mountain there was no outside group or administration that was creating an environment. You know, you really had to be taking care of the people inside.

DH: Yeah.

[END OF RECORDING TAPE 1; END OF INTERVIEW]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]