

Interviewee: RENEE SIEGEL COLLINS  
Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS  
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**[BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1]**

**MEH:** [GIVES IDENTIFICATION]. I'll ask you the question I always ask people first.

How, Renee, did you come to be at Black Mountain College?

**RSC:** I was a student at Brooklyn College, and graduating there, and I wanted to go to graduate school. The two – Brooklyn College had a Bauhaus program, which was very Bauhaus.

**MEH:** Tell me more about it.

**RSC:** Well, this was the German program. I shouldn't say "the German" – from Dessau, was it? I don't remember – where they had a whole new arts program, which was very revolutionary. Our college, which really was essentially only a city college in New York, was one of the schools where they had this program. So, I wanted to go to a graduate school that was sympathetic to that, and there were only two schools in the country. One was in Chicago, the Institute of Design, when Moholy-Nagy was the director, or Black Mountain College, which – where Albers was the director. I didn't want to go to Chicago because I lived in a big city, and Black Mountain was a place I had never been, so that's why I selected it.

**MEH:** Who was teaching at Brooklyn then?

**RSC:** Let's see. There was Chermayeff, Ad Reinhardt, the famous artist, and there was Wolff. Some of them were commercial artists. Keppes – Keppes was there too. I can't remember anybody else yet, but there were a few others. But those were the most important people.

**MEH:** Do you remember Karen Karnes? Was she there at the time?

**RSC:** No. How does she spell the last name?

**MEH:** She's a potter. K-A-R-N-E-S.

**RSC:** No.

**MEH:** I think she was there a little earl-, a couple of years before [OVERTALK]

**RSC:** Probably was. I don't remember the name.

**MEH:** You're a native New Yorker?

**RSC:** Yes.

**MEH:** How did you come to be – We'll go back a bit. How did you come to be at Brooklyn College? What was your interest in the Bauhaus?

**RSC:** It wasn't then. I didn't know there was such a thing. I went – I had a choice between – I would have loved to have gone out of town to school but, of course, my parents couldn't afford it, so I had a choice of one of the city schools. I had passed the test for all the city schools, but I didn't want to go to Hunter College, because that was an all-girls school. City College was more of a commercial-oriented school. Brooklyn College, which was an hour and a half away from where I lived, but that didn't deter a stupid young woman, I decided to go there for one main reason – it had a campus. [LAUGHS] That's why I went to Brooklyn College. I always loved greenery, and that was such a relief.

Of course, you didn't use the campus much. You were very busy studying or going to school, but that's the reason I went to Brooklyn College.

**MEH:** Where did you go to high school?

**RSC:** Christopher Columbus High School which, if you've been reading the Times the last week, they had an article about Christopher Columbus. I don't know if you read it.

**MEH:** Is that the one that the Vermont –

**RSC:** The Vermont school.

**MEH:** Another student went to the same school that I have talked to. I think Sue Spayth Riley. She's one of the students from the thirties. I think she said she went to the same school.

**RSC:** I don't know if Columbus was open then.

**MEH:** Maybe it was another student. Someone else had told me on this trip the same thing.

**RSC:** Oh, that they went to Christopher Columbus also? That's interesting. I was so happy to see that it was a very highly-rated school. It was right – rated second after Bronx School of Science. It was a – I always liked the school, and I remember very well – I was in these special English-History classes, where they combined the two classes into like two-hour periods. We had such wonderful teachers. Two teachers would always – They were so interesting, and they were so different from the rest of the curriculum. They were obviously experimenting. I always remember those wonderful classes from the school, so I was very happy to see that in the newspaper.

**MEH:** So you went to Black Mountain. You went in the fall, so you must have been planning to go there on a regular basis.

**RSC:** I graduated Brooklyn College in June, and then I went there in the fall. I went and waited on tables, because my parents weren't going to send me there, because I think four years of college was enough. So, I just earned my money and saved it and went to school there.

**MEH:** Do you remember – You mean waited on tables in New York to make money.

**RSC:** Right.

**MEH:** Do you remember how you first traveled to Black Mountain College?

**RSC:** By train. That's the way you went. I don't know – I don't even know if they had an airport near there. Never even went in an airplane then [LAUGHS] until many years later, right. You just went by train.

**MEH:** Was this the first time you'd been in the South?

**RSC:** Yes. Was that the first time I was out of New York City? Well, you know, I'd been to all the neighboring states around New York, but never to the South. It was a shock, too.

**MEH:** In what way?

**RSC:** Well, first of all the racial discrimination, because I remember I used to have to go into Asheville because I had to have dental work done. I just remember one particular thing – riding on the bus, and I remember a black man – and this is a bus that hardly had anybody – had about three or four people riding the bus and a black man came in and he sat down in a seat. I remember the bus driver stopping and telling him, but very politely, "Sir, you belong –." I don't remember

if he said "Sir" – "You don't belong here. Get in the rear." So I haven't forgotten that.

**MEH:** Do you remember your first reaction to the college when you arrived there? Did you have any expectations or –?

**RSC:** I just thought it was so beautiful.

**MEH:** Definitely had a campus.

**RSC:** Yes! In the mountains. The shock of the mountains and then this beautiful lake was in the center. I remember that. I had never been to a sleep-, so-called sleep-away school, so that was so interesting. Then met all my interesting people, and a very good friend there – I wonder if you've interviewed Inge Svarc. Inga was my roommate. In fact, I met her again when we went back for the reunion. Still her charming self.

**MEH:** So you already had a degree in art.

**RSC:** Yes.

**MEH:** With whom did you take classes?

**RSC:** In what school?

**MEH:** At Black Mountain.

**RSC:** Albers was the art teacher, and I took of course English with – My memory is going. Oh Charles –

**MEH:** Olson.

**RSC:** Olson, who was, of course, a magnificent teacher and an interesting man. Those were interesting classes. That was a – I think he was the best English teacher I ever had. Yeah. Because in a big school like Brooklyn you sit in a huge class. I understand most schools now are even worse than that and some

of them don't even see their professors, only on the video camera. So that was a wonderful experience.

**MEH:** Did you – You were taking – We'll go through several classes. You were taking classes with Albers. How did Albers's classes compare to the curriculum at Brooklyn?

**RSC:** I don't know if there could be any comparison. They were just different. He was such a – What is the word? I don't remember what to use? Hypnotic. Such a fascinating person. What I found most interesting is when, for example, we'd be in the life drawing class, he would be the youngest in the class and go over to the model and say, "See this here, and here, the valleys – " and you could see all that love and fervor and excitement. It was just wonderful being around a person like that, who could enjoy what he was doing so much.

[INTERRUPTION IN TAPING]

**MEH:** But in terms of content, did you have that same sort of basic course at Brooklyn? In color and design?

**RSC:** I don't remember. His classes were very different, I remember. A lot of the courses I had – Some of them were similar, but I think a lot of them in Brooklyn were oriented to more commercial uses. A lot of the teachers had been commercial artists, so you didn't – If I had gone to a more traditional school, let's say like Hunter College, I probably would have been painting models and things, but we didn't do that there. We were using the squares and all and very abstract material, which was, of course, first of all, was very new to me. A lot of what they said was so new and strange that it took me a long time to assimilate it, and I think most of the young people probably it was the same thing. You

know, when you think about it, we were young people, young men and women, eighteen – I was sixteen. Many of the young people in the public schools of New York who were halfway bright, were always skipped, so where I was usually, sometimes a young person in my class in Brooklyn College, many of us were the same age level, but we were all I'd say maybe seventeen, sixteen-and-a-half to seventeen, to begin with. We were very naive, and the things that they were teaching us were really so revolutionary. I was used to realism, you know, doing all that. All of a sudden, being talked and lectured about abstract art, that took a long time to – I knew it was relevant, but it took a long time to understand it. Now that I understand it so well, what I'm doing now is mostly – I work with a computer. I don't even know if you've seen my work. I'll show it to you later. I work with realism now, with things I pick on the way out – nuts and fruits and plants and everything, so everything goes but comes in a circle.

**MEH:** So, at Black Mountain what do you remember in particular about Albers's color class? How did he conduct it? What sort of things did you do?

**RSC:** We had a certain program of studying color changes as, you know, he's done. I think I still have the lesson pl- – the lessons we'd have. But there were particular lessons you studied, and you changed the color, for example. That's the most – thing that just comes to my mind. How the blue can look green or whatever as you learn more about colors, which they now study in all the schools all over, probably, the country. But it's hard to remember so far back. My goodness.

**MEH:** Where did he hold his classes?

**RSC:** There were classrooms there. Weren't they in the –? I don't remember where they were. I think they were in the – oh, there was this, that's right, the building on the lake, where they had classrooms and our own little studios. I believe. Now I might be wrong.

**MEH:** What did you think was the effect of having your own little studio? As a student.

**RSC:** It was a place to work by yourself. I never had that at home. We lived in an apartment, a New Yorker, and you didn't have such a thing in Brooklyn College, of course – that. So it was my first step into a studio. I've had one ever since.

**MEH:** I made a note that you took some other classes, that you took a class in weaving with Trude Guermonprez?

**RSC:** Yes. You see – You know, as we talk, I remember. I really didn't know what I wanted to do, and I decided I really didn't want to tea- – Well, I didn't even take any teacher training courses, mind you. That wasn't too smart. I decided maybe I should become – go into weaving. You know, I always admired Anni Albers' things – work – so I went there primarily to study with her. I found out something. I am not the type of person who can sit at a loom all day long [LAUGHS]. I can sit at a computer now, and it does not bother me. But then, just the idea of sitting at that loom and working that loom was just too much for a tall skinny woman who liked to move around a lot. [LAUGHS] So I figured that was not something that I would study much further. So after – I don't know – the one course, I think she advised me that this was not for me, and I agreed with her.

**MEH:** I also have a note that you took philosophy. Would that have been – Who would have been teaching? Max Dehn, was he there?



**RSC:** Oh, Mr. Dehn. What was his first name?

**MEH:** Max.

**RSC:** Max. I remember that. Yes, he was very good. I don't remember – I remember liking – I've had a lot of philosophy courses, too, and I remember, in Brooklyn – I shouldn't say "a lot," but quite a few. What was good about Brooklyn College, which reminds me as we're talking, it was one of these colleges, one of the few colleges besides Harvard where you – I don't remember the name of the program, but you didn't have to stick in your, the one program you had decided on – teacher training or art or music. You could roam across the whole field and become interested in everything, which is important. So, I forgot the name of the major, but the major being that you, I suppose, took a little from each. You still had one major, but you were able to take courses like philosophy and languages or whatever else you wanted, English literature also. Which, when you think about it, I think is a much better idea. It makes a more rounded person.

**MEH:** I also have a note that you took printing with Pete Jennerjahn.

**RSC:** Oh, yes. I wasn't too good at that. [LAUGHS] I did a little printing there. I think I printed a poem of Inge's, which I never mailed to her probably. That's right. We had printing. That was kind of fun. He was very nice. I saw them at that reunion. The whole atmosphere was so beautiful and nice. It was just nice being around the environment. It was so lovely.

**MEH:** You mean the physical environment.

**RSC:** Physical environment.

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

**RSC:** After the troubles started? [LAUGHS] What was so awful – because then there were like two camps, if I recall. These are things I never even thought of for years. That's a horrible thing. And, you know what? I – Each of the teachers there all had equal voting rights, if I remember. Maybe that isn't so good. Maybe there should be one president, who is, well, or I don't know how to say it, but somehow that democracy didn't work. This wasn't the only time that happened. The year before – you probably know better than I. I'm just trying to recall it – they had with this Richards woman? Was it a woman or a man?

**MEH:** A woman – and her husband. M.C. Richards and her husband, Bill Levi.

**RSC:** Right. There was almost a revolution then. I wonder if it went on every year? I don't know, but I remember – I don't remember what was wrong with our – what happened, the program, except I remember the two camps. Do you remember what it was about?

**MEH:** Did you find that as a student you could avoid getting involved in this sort of thing?

**RSC:** You couldn't, really. That's right. We wanted to – The school needed money, and we had to ask all these other foundations to give us money or something. It was very bad, because instead of learning and being in that type of atmosphere, all of a sudden there was all these poisonous things going on. Of course, you had to be part of something, and I don't even remember what part – where I was. That's how important it was, it is now. But I remember those things. When they tried to convince you to come to their side, and then no, you went to that side – I didn't even know which side I was on. I'm sure it was pro-Albers.

**MEH:** And so – I have a note also that you took dance?

**RSC:** Pardon me. Oh, dance. Yes, modern dance. That was nice. With Betty Jennerjahn. We had such nice performances also. That's my claim to fame. I was Bob Rauschenberg's dancing partner. [LAUGHS] Because we were both tall.

**MEH:** This was in performances?

**RSC:** In performances we gave. Performances were very nice, lots of fun.

**MEH:** What was he like then?

**RSC:** He was a playboy. Very much – He was a fun person. He liked to have fun, and he liked to play around. I think everybody that I knew was very surprised when he became famous. [LAUGHS] But it was funny. I met – One of the fellows – we decided to go see Bob's exhibition. Was it at the Guggenheim? I don't remember. The one person show that – So he and I went together to the museum. This was a few years ago. Like all the others, we hadn't thought much of him as a student and we went through the whole thing and we said, "Gee, he really is talented!" [LAUGHS] Then it didn't show. He was really having a lot of fun. But, you know, that's part of the thing. Then when he took that, I think that – Patchwork quilt was something they used there. That was the one that's famous now, in that painting. We used to – Sue was one of the few people who had a car – a station wagon. Bob, Sue, I, and a few others who lived in New York, we would drive home in that. It must have been overnight, I don't remember. That was how we got home and back, in Sue's station wagon.

**MEH:** Do you have any particular memories of the dance classes? These things were worked out in the class, with Betty teaching? Or do you recall?

**RSC:** I think – Betty was our teacher, in modern dance. I had studied it a little before when I was in – No, I probably am thinking of later, in graduate school. I didn't study it at Brooklyn, and I doubt if I had extra time to go to a class in the city, when I had to travel. That was the thing that impressed me. I don't know if I mentioned this. It was an hour and a half to get from my house to Brooklyn College – each way, on the subway. One of the first classes I went to in Black Mountain College, it took me five minutes to get to class, and I went, "Oh my God. I've wasted four years!" [LAUGHS] What a difference between a city kid and a city school. We were so used to it. I didn't even think anything of it. Right. Then I learned better.

**MEH:** Do you remember anything – Were you involved at all in the unicorn costume that Bob made for – that Inge wore?

**RSC:** Inge. You know, I gave them the picture. Black Mountain. I don't know, for some – I had a picture of that, and I looked for it because they asked for certain things for their repository? I think I sent it to somebody the first time, because I have no trace of it. Oh, well – He's very talented. He should have been a clothes designer [LAUGHS]. He was just a very talented fellow as far as making clothes. He made that for her, and he also made her wedding gown when she got married. I remember – I don't remember the exact things, but I remember him doing it, and that's all. I can still visualize it. I see that picture right in front of me. I hope I gave it to them and didn't lose it.

**MEH:** Do you remember anything about a birthday party that they staged – he staged that year for Sue Weil, and it was a performance? A birthday party that was a performance. Were you part of that, that you recall?

**RSC:** If it was that year, I probably was, but I don't remember. We had a lot of parties then. It was nice to be young.

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

**RSC:** [NEGATIVE] The only thing I remember, as you're talking is the performance that Betty Jennerjehn designed for – what was the name of the Spanish poet? We did five in the [OVERTALK]

**MEH:** Lorca?

**RSC:** Lorca. Garcia Lorca. Five in the Afternoon. I can see us walking across the stage and stopping and things like that, in the performance. I just loved that. I love the poem.

**MEH:** Do you remember Olson working with you at all on that? Or was that purely –

**RSC:** Oh, Olson – working –

**MEH:** On that particular performance.

**RSC:** I don't think he had anything to do with the performance, did he?

**MEH:** I don't think so.

**RSC:** I don't remember. Not really. I don't know if he was there then. I'm not sure. Originally there was – What was the name of his friend? I have his book also.

**MEH:** Edward Dahlberg.

**RSC:** Edward Dahlberg was a very talented writer. I have his book here. Then he was– he was not temperamentally suited to us, and so he had to leave and that's why Olson came? Who was a guy that loved to talk and loved to have all his adoring students around him. But he certainly was an excellent teacher.

**MEH:** Did you ever go off campus at all? Did you leave the school at all?

**RSC:** Well, I went – I had to have a lot of dental work, so I went to Asheville [LAUGHS] – if that's leaving the campus. That's about all. I went probably at least once a week, for awhile. Asheville was a tiny little city then. I was quite surprised when I went back to it a few – you know, to see this metropolis of that part of North Carolina.

**MEH:** Do you have other memories of the college? Particular things you remember? Anecdotes or things that you did in the dorm or in classes? Anything like that? Other students?

**RSC:** [INAUDIBLE]

**MEH:** Do you remember the relationship at all between Rauschenberg and Albers in Albers' classes?

**RSC:** Yeah, Albers didn't like him. [LAUGHS] I don't think Bob really did too much, or he wasn't very serious. I'm sure Professor Albers didn't find that very good. If I was a teacher, I wouldn't have either, but I don't recall anything in particular. I'm sure Sue can tell you everything. Who was a very serious student, and a good painter. Have you ever seen any of her work?

**MEH:** [AFFIRMATIVE] Any other particular memories? I'm asking you to remember things that happened over fifty years ago, and ideas float and come and go. So, I try to think of things that might prod a memory. What about – do you have any particular memory of mealtimes at the college?

**RSC:** Mealtimes? Well, I wasn't used to fried Southern food. [LAUGHS] I remember that. But otherwise it was sociable. Sociable times. But that's about all I remember. I'm not a big person for meals anyway, so it doesn't matter. All I remember is fried chicken. I don't know how many more memories I have,

really. Except I enjoyed the classes tremendously. He didn't think I was much of a student, I remember, Professor Albers. Then when he went and visited me in my studio and he saw the work, it was a little better than what he thought. I think he said he was quite pleased that I had worked more seriously than he thought I had. What I – Of course, I'm a better artist now, but it's taken many years of practice, so –

**MEH:** Well, he gave you the two prints, so he must have been pretty happy with –

**RSC:** Yeah. But he didn't sign them. The real super-students got theirs signed.

[LAUGHS] I couldn't complain.

**MEH:** Well, most students didn't get prints, so –

**RSC:** Probably not. But maybe the art students did. I don't recall. What I really liked there too was the – what was the beautiful building up in the woods?

**MEH:** The Minimum House, or –

**RSC:** Where you could meditate.

**MEH:** Oh, the Quiet House.

**RSC:** The Quiet House. That was very lovely. I liked that. It was so nice and peaceful.

**MEH:** Did you ever go hiking in the mountains?

**RSC:** We did. We did. A whole group of us. Oh, a whole group of us went hiking in the mountains. I remember we had to cross the water, a little – a stream, not so little. The people on the other side – it was the first experience I had meeting – I don't want to use the word hillbillies. These people lived in this shack. I remember we had to cross over, I believe, with some kind of rope. A group of us, as we're talking – I wonder if I still have those pictures. A group of us got together, and it must have been Susan's car, it was – I don't remember,

somebody's car. Oh, no, no, no. It was, there was a young fellow, I don't know why – he was a friend of mine – I can't remember his name. He lived in Chicago. I don't know if you've heard of him. He was much younger than the rest, and he had a car. We got into the car, a whole bunch of us, and decided we were going to Florida for vacation time. We got down to Florida, and – oh, what's his name told me the beach is further up north. We stopped at this beach, and we found a deserted shack and that's where we slept and spent our vacation. It was loads of fun.

**MEH:** That was Frank Eisendrath.

**RSC:** Yes! [LAUGHS] You know more than I do. Have you spoken to him? Where does he live?

**MEH:** South of L.A.

**RSC:** Oh, really. Is he in real estate? Was he? Right. No, I think I heard that. But he didn't come to our reunion. He was – It was Frank's car.

**MEH:** Do you remember who else was with you on that trip?

**RSC:** Well, it was Inge, I – God, you must forgive me. My memory goes. Because Victor –

**MEH:** Was it Kalos?

**RSC:** Victor Kalos and who else was with him? I should know, because he visited here two or three years ago with his wife. Oh no, it had to be six years ago. Excuse me. I'll think of his name. I always thought he was a friend of Victor's. He wasn't one of the fellows. New York, he's in New York. His wife is a dental assistant?

**MEH:** I'm not sure. I don't know.



**RSC:** I'll think of the name. I'm embarrassed. Don't tell him I forgot his name.

**MEH:** [BREAK] Renee, tell me about what you remember about this photograph.

**RSC:** I remember this is the trip we went to, when we went to Florida and camped. Oh, Don says it was New Smyrna Beach. Don Alter. If he says that he's probably right, because I don't remember what beach it was. We found this old house on – right on the beach. We camped there.

**MEH:** Was this like a vacation?

**RSC:** Yes, this is – must have been intersession, right? In between sessions, or something, you know, spring maybe, springtime.

**MEH:** Do you remember something about the car getting stuck in the sand?

**RSC:** Yes! Yes, yes, yes, yes. I remember we had to push it out or something, or got help. That's all I remember.

**MEH:** Okay, just use your finger and identify the people you can identify.

**RSC:** There's Inge. Here is Don Alter. That's Renée, that's me. I think this is – This is crazy, but I think it's Victor Kalos, because I can recognize his ears. Don't ask me why – the shape of the head.

**MEH:** The shape of the head. There's something about it.

**RSC:** The head, something about that head and the way he probably, his demeanor. I don't know who this is.

**MEH:** Maybe in another photo.

**RSC:** And I don't remember his name. I think this was – had been a classmate of his, a very nice young fellow. That's all I remember about that. We had lots of fun,

and I remember the police. First we camped out in our car and were sleeping there. Was that the trip, I think? The police came and they flashed a light on us, and they guessed we were a bunch of innocent kids so they just left us alone. That's all I can think of, except I remember lying in bed that night and listening to the waves and the wind, and even made up a poem, which I'm sure I promptly threw away. But it was lovely.

**[INTERVIEW CONTINUES ON PAGE 19]**

**MEH:** And tell me about this photograph.

**RSC:** We were still at that bungalow – cabin or house. Inge was posing with I don't know the fellow's name. This is where we set up housekeeping. It's nice to be young, isn't it?

**MEH:** It sure is. Okay, you talk.

**RSC;** This was – We're probably packed up or just left our camping trip, or just began it, I don't remember.

**MEH:** Tell me about the car.

**RSC:** Was that – I don't remember. Was that Susan's?

**MEH:** I think it was Frank's.

**RSC:** Oh, Frank's. Frank Eisendrath. That was his car, right. This must be Inge.

**MEH:** And everybody was packed in there with all your stuff?

**RSC:** All our stuff, right. There was no such thing as sleeping bag. What was a sleeping bag? [LAUGHS] We had a good time, and maybe we just found our lovely hideaway, or we were leaving. I don't remember. This is when we were camping, and I must have been, I don't know, was I cooking? I couldn't be. What was I in the middle of there?

**MEH:** Looks like a bunch of cans of Campbell soup there on the shelf.

**RSC:** Right. My goodness. Oh, what shelf? Oh there. But what's this? Ugh. I wouldn't do that today. I was out in the –

**MEH:** You were barefooted, weren't you?

**RSC:** Yeah, and I think I was in a bathing suit and it must have been chilly if I'm wearing something on top. That's all I remember.

**MEH:** Okay we're recording. Yeah, he may have had a camera, because he had some income. Okay, this is –

**RSC:** This is the dorm, and the –

**MEH:** Studies Building.

**RSC:** Study Build- – This was the study building and also there were classrooms there. There is – what is his name again?

**MEH:** Stan Cooke?

**RSC:** Stan Cooke. There is Gerda, his girlfriend now. I think she's his wife now, is it?

**MEH:** Jeannette, why did you leave the college?

**RSC:** Renée.

**MEH:** Renée. Who is Jeannette? I think there was a Jeannette Siegel. Renée, why did you leave Black Mountain?

**RSC:** I was just there for a year.

**MEH:** But why did you not stay longer?

**RSC:** Why did I not stay lo- – Well, because Albers left. That's why I really went to the school. From there, I learned from Ruth Asawa that the American Friends

Service Committee had these groups in Mexico. So I applied for one of the places, and I went to Mexico. Besides, how many years can I go to school?

**MEH:** Right. So that was the summer of '49.

**RSC:** Was it '49? I don't remember. I'd been in college four years. I'd been – Oh, what am I saying? Then when I came back from Mexico, I went to New York University graduate school to take teaching courses, so I can get a job teaching. Right. I forgot all that. Which – I originally wouldn't take teaching courses when I went to college because I didn't want to be a teacher, and I decided maybe that was the best thing to do. I found out that I liked teaching very much, so I was quite lucky.

**MEH:** So you got your what? Your Master's in Art Education or –?

**RSC:** I never – though I had 37 graduate credits, I never officially got a master's, because I needed one other course at NYU, and we were moving to upstate New York. So that was the end of my graduate education.

**MEH:** So you – you were married at that point.

**RSC:** Yes.

**MEH:** So what did you do afterwards, professionally?

**RSC:** I taught.

**MEH:** In public schools? In private schools?

**RSC:** No, in the public schools.

**MEH:** Taught –?

**RSC:** I, I – Oh, I'm trying to think back.

**MEH:** Did you teach art?

**RSC:** First, when I was – After New York University, I was married. I became – I was married after that and then we were living in New York. Of course, I lived in Greenwich Village. I had to live in Greenwich Village, and had a little apartment and had everything but the kitchen sink. Even had a back yard. But we really didn't have a kitchen sink. We found out – we were such young and stupid – When you look at, come into a kitchen and you see cabinets, who thinks of looking for the sink? I just assumed it was there but it wasn't. Well, that wasn't so bad, so my husband did the dishes in the bathtub. But I taught – In New York City you have to take tests. I passed the test for art teachers, but there weren't any art teachers jobs. But they certainly needed – I became, I became a substitute – a permanent substitute teacher in Harlem, where they badly needed teachers. In those days, that was the years that the Puerto Rican children were there, and my class was either Puerto Rican or black children. They used to fight terribly. They'd yell at each other: "You're black!" No, the Puerto Ricans would yell at the black kids, "You're black!" and I remember the black kids looking at them and say, "Nobody is purely white. Look as Mrs. Collins. Her skin isn't white!" [LAUGHS] I remember that stupid thing – talking about prejudice, right? What else.

**MEH:** So you – Later, did you continue to pursue your work as an artist? You had a family and –

**RSC:** I didn't have a family for a long time. When we went upstate, I taught first in New York and then my husband got a job with IBM and I taught in the public schools there. There I was able to get an art teaching job, which was great. I remember I taught in New Jersey too, in Hudson – My goodness, how it all

comes back. Jersey City, New Jersey, was best known for – They were the place that had the burlesque shows? That was the level of the culture in that town.

**MEH:** [IRRELEVANT] Okay, I'd just like – Renée, I'd just like to have a general idea of what you've done professionally. Personally you were married and you reared three kids.

**RSC:** [AFFIRMATIVE]

**MEH:** And you taught for awhile. Did you get, did you continue to do your own artwork through that time, or –?

**RSC:** Yes. Let's see. When the girls went to school. Before then, I was a little busy. But when the girls went to school, I always had a studio.

**MEH:** And what type of work were you doing then?

**RSC:** First, I was doing watercolors, which I liked. Then I studied printmaking, and I was a printmaker for quite awhile.

**MEH:** Where did you study?

**RSC:** In different schools. One in Boston. There was a special school. I should say a professional etching studio. It would give lessons. But I did, I did originally take printmaking courses in New York University, Brooklyn College, you know, a little bit of that. So I didn't do anything with it. There was no course like that in Black Mountain College.

**MEH:** Were you doing this really for your own pleasure? Or did you try to exhibit and –

**RSC:** I exhibited some. I belonged to different organizations. Mostly I did it because you did it.

**MEH:** Right.

**RSC:** I think the only organization that I belonged to was Cambridge Art Association, when I lived in the Boston area.

**MEH:** But you lived mostly in New York. Or Boston?

**RSC:** Massachusetts. We lived in Massachusetts for about thirty-five years.

**MEH:** Was your husband working for IBM then?

**RSC:** No, he was working for a company, in fact Terradyne. This is the book about Terradyne, the first forty years. He was one of the – not the earliest, but very early in the company. So we were in Boston mostly for that company.

**MEH:** Let's go back to Black Mountain and just – I was going to ask you a couple of things. You had asked me about Delores Fullman. The college was integrated then.

**RSC:** She was the only black student there.

**MEH:** A little bit.

**RSC:** As much as we could – I think she was probably the only black student who applied.

**MEH:** Did that work out comfortably?

**RSC:** Oh, sure.

**MEH:** Were there any problems?

**RSC:** No, not with the school. We had black – I remember we had black kitchen help. Very nice people. Those were the only other black people that were there, but I'm sure all the kids were liberals. There was never any question about that.

**MEH:** We had mentioned – I think he's in one of the photos – was it Rudy Heinemann-Rufer?



**RSC:** Peter Heinemann.

**MEH:** Yeah, and you had sort of made a comment. What do you remember about him?

**RSC:** He was – First, he was a very nice fellow. I liked him. He was also – he was always very sad, and he was always – Oh, I think that would be the general thing. He was just a quiet, sad kind of fellow. I think he might have been a little younger than some of the people there. I don't remember.

**MEH:** Do you have any other memories, before we turn this off, of other students or incidents or activities?

**RSC:** Susan. Sue Weil. Bob Rauschenberg. There were a few others. There was a nice young man who was friendly with Susan, and I don't remember his name. We had a Southern gal there called Mary, and I don't think she was interested in art. She just went to our school because it was in the South. I don't remember. I think that's – Yeah, Mary. Then she met a nice fellow there. I think that was her interest, but she was a sweet girl. Let's see, who else? It's hard to remember. Of course, Inge, who was my roommate, and, oh, God, one of the fellows, I think we talked about him – he became the designer?

**MEH:** Si Sillman?

**RSC:** No, not Si. Si is dead now.

**MEH:** Donald Altman?

**RSC:** Donald, no. Tall and slim. Oh Pe – He had a Russian last name?

**MEH:** I'm not sure.

**RSC:** If I saw it, I might remember. I think I saw him at the reunion. They were such a – With his daughter. I remember he had a lot of problems, but a lot of these

problems were young people's problems, when you think about it. All these  
horr- – these things that we – Well, that was part of growing up. I remember he  
seemed to be kind of disturbed, and it was nice to see him with his – I think he  
had white sideburns and a lovely young daughter. Was he in the theater? I'm  
not sure.

**[END OF INTERVIEW]**

**[END OF TRANSCRIPT]**