

Interviewee: MARY BRETT DANIELS
 Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS
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[BEGINNING OF DV CASSETTE 1]

MEH: [GIVES IDENTIFICATION]. Mary, we have the other interview, but let's start now with what you did after you left the college, and then we can step back in time. Why did you leave the college?

MBD: Hmm, that's a very sad conflict, which some day needs to be really explored from its complicated aspects. We left. The whole group of us left – half the faculty and a lot of students – we left because we had – we tried to effect change. We had signed a petition to the student government, saying that if they went through – “they” in the sense of the opposition – if they went through with forcing Fran de Graaff to leave, we would leave. I wrote part of that petition. It began with “We are deeply disillusioned.” We had thought we belonged to a democratic community. We had thought that no democratic community such as this one would circulate a secret letter asking a faculty member to leave, expecting her to quietly leave, having no recognition of the amount of support she had both among the faculty and among the students.” We were sure that we would prevail. So, when I – So, when in fact we lost – I couldn't believe we would lose because we were right, we thought, whatever other people think. I learned a lot of things. I learned that you can be right and lose, which [LAUGHS] I've subsequently learned over and over and over again. So, we left without – most of us – without any plans, without any resolution, and what had been so vital to those of us who signed that petition was without any solidarity, because we had some illusion – well, we'll all go to New York. Various faculty members were going to New York. We'd go to New York and we would continue our education, Black Mountain style. We had no money. We had no base. Some people never went back to school. It was very, very disorganizing, personally, for every single one of us. Finally I came to recognize that I had no money. You know, it didn't matter at Black Mountain if you didn't have any money. It really didn't matter. So that was sort of a major insight that I had to sit in my study and say to myself, “Brettchka, you have no money. You have bus fare to get back to Detroit and that's it!” So, I got a big – a great big box because the most precious thing I owned was my brother's typewriter. My brother was in the army and he had lent it to me, so I knew that I had to protect it. So in my totally unresolved, unrealistic, distraught state, I got a great big box, I put the typewriter in the middle of it and put all my possessions around it and got a freight truck to come and pick it up, and took the bus – It was August, and I took the bus and went back to Detroit.

MEH: Which is where your family was.

MBD: My family was there. It was during the War. Both my brothers were in the army. It was '44. It was the Battle of the Bulge, both of them were in the Battle of the Bulge. My family were very happy to have me. My sister, Betty was married and living away and their lives – my parents' lives – were totally dominated by the War. Their anxiety. My mother used to wait until after ten o'clock to kind of relax about the day, because she had heard – true or not – that the army always informs people of the death before ten o'clock. So, there I was. I had none of my possessions because it took the box two months to arrive. I had my espadrilles and a green dress [LAUGHS]. Of course, we wore espadrilles. They were unheard of in Detroit. I had that and my state – which was one of having to put my life back together. Also I had my determination, because I thought I'm going to validate Black Mountain education by finishing my degree and by going to graduate school. I went to Wayne University, which was a tuition of sixty dollars a semester. I had a part-time job. I worked for the Red Cross arranging emergency furloughs, so I could work from four o'clock till midnight. I took the maximum number of courses that they would allow me, and I took them in my Black Mountain transcript – to the registrar -- in my espadrilles and my anger and my conviction that Black Mountain was the only way to be educated and everything else was totally hopeless and reactionary and impossible and traditional. When I came in, they must have looked at me and thought, "What are we going to do with her!" [LAUGHS] I'm now more sympathetic to registrars than I was at that point. So I took them in my Black Mountain transcript. They looked at it, and they said, "We can't give you any credit for this. This is not an accredited school. In fact it doesn't – it isn't even clear to me what you were doing. For example, you took Psychology of the Human World three times." That was Erwin Straus's course. It had been a wonderful course, fascinating course. It was a little seminar. We began with Descartes, we had highly philosophical discussions. It was really – Now that I know more, it was really phenomenology, a lot of it, because Straus became a very prominent phenomenologist. It was – But I was unable to explain this to the Registrar of Wayne University. He said, "What happened? Did you fail?" I said, "No." I said, "We didn't have semesters. We just continued." He said, "Well, is it beginner and intermediate and advanced psychology of the human world?" I said, "No, it was just Psychology of the Human World." I was interested in psychology. I read everything Straus told us to read. At one point I went to him and I said, "What about contemporary American psychology? What is it?" you know, and he said "Oh, take any textbook and read it." So, I did. I did that too. Straus said it, so I did it. I continued with our philosophical discussions. Well that was just one aspect of my transcripts. I had history from Bentley, I had history of opera, I had, you know, dance from Elsa Kahl, I had – I had Russian from Fran de Graaff. They thought about giving me some credit for that, but that was too much of a puzzle. They didn't have semesters either, and it didn't have credits, and didn't have a grade, so I ended up with nothing, zero. After two years of the best education I could possibly have had, I had zero recognition of this experience, and that made me even more determined to justify it. So, I said to them, "Okay, give me exams. I'll take exams, and if I pass these exams will you give me credit?" So, I mean this is again the angry misfit. They said, "Yes."

So I designed exams. I designed exams based on my Eric Bentley notes, three different exams in history. I designed an exam on history of opera, based on my, you know, wonderful work with Jalowetz. I designed an exam on psychology based on the text I'd read, and it went on like that. So I took the maximum number of hours and on top of that I took exams. I did nothing but study and try to deal with my parents' anxiety, which I was not too helpful but at least I was a little bit present, and my own anxiety, of course. I worked every evening. I had no money. Finally about October my box arrived and was left out on the sidewalk, so my brother's typewriter was intact and I had another outfit to wear. [LAUGHS] I did that for two years. Summer school. My job as the – arranging emergency furloughs, made it possible for me to work nights and weekends and holidays and so on, and that was very interesting because our task was to validate the information that the GI had given his commanding officer. Somebody had died, somebody was having a baby, somebody – So we had to locate validation, either through the hospital or the undertaker, etc. It was, you know, it was, it was war effort. I went with a taxi driver who was going to be an anthropologist, and he used to pick me up at midnight [LAUGHS]. [INTERRUPTION IN TAPING]

MEH: Okay, so we were talking about you were in Detroit

MBD: Right, going to Wayne University.

MEH: I have one question. After you prepared these exams, did you get credit?

MBD: Yes. Yes, I did. I did. It was sort of – Not only for me, it was, you know, it was a victory. It was proving to them that education, from my point of view that education can occur without credits and without semesters and without transcripts [LAUGHTER] and without – without their framework. So I had – That's where I put my energy. I put all of it. I mean, I was working so hard me – it was one of those periods in your life when you kind of figure out you don't really need sleep, you just – [LAUGHTER] You really do, but you think you don't and so you keep going. Then at Christmastime, I went – I'd saved up some money and took the bus and went to New York to see my Black Mountain friends I had counted on.

MEH: Most of whom left with them – Most of them had gone to New York from Black Mountain?

MBD: Most of them had gone to New York. Jeanne Wacker was there and Barbara and Ruth Currier and my sister. Gwen Currier and Elsa Kahl, Fritz Cohen. But I came back – But they weren't in school, and I came back feeling this is what I absolutely need to do and I'm going to stick with it. Then I was more resolved, and I began making friends [LAUGHS] and wearing the more Wayne University outfit and thinking of myself as a Wayne student. In a way it was a very good school. It was like NYU. It was a city school – for low income, people living at home, some people were sort of living in cars. Some people – Most people were working. It was very near the Detroit, wonderful Detroit museum, and I took some glorious art history courses that I will never forget, and found that professor – a professor of anthropology, a professor of Russian poetry, a professor of sociology – who were great, great teachers. So that was then – Then I felt, "This is where I need to be. This is where I can continue my education, and there is in fact more than one way to be educated." [LAUGHS]

After working very very intensely for those two full years – in the meantime my brothers, my brother came home from Germany, my younger brother came home from Germany and my older brother, the War was over in Germany and he stayed on. In fact he was – he was stationed at the Nuremberg trials, and there he met a woman from Germany who was a translator and married her. I just finished editing her memoirs, which was a big effort, and it's a very very interesting account. So, I ended up with a scholarship to Cornell, backed by my professors who were – you know, they were very – Once I got through the registrar's office and to the professors and to the content, then it was all right. They were – I had a wonderful anthropology teacher who was from the University of Chicago, and he and his friend, who was the sociology teacher – and I'd majored in sociology/anthropology – got me a teaching assistantship at Cornell. So I left for Cornell, two years later.

MEH: What had you majored in at –

MBD: At Black Mountain?

MEH: No, at Wayne.

MBD: At Wayne I majored in sociology/anthropology, right. Right. I did – The first summer, I went to Kenyon College because Elsa Kahl and Fritz Cohen moved the Black Mountain Music Institute to Kenyon College, and I was – That's Ohio, of course, so it isn't very far from Detroit. I had planned to stay two weeks, and for other reasons I had to come home in kind of an emergency. But during that time – So, I was there only one week, but it was just, it was so exhilarating, so wonderful. The music was, you know, always they – the whole atmosphere. But the memorable thing that I want to mention is that during that time they dropped the bomb in Hiroshima, and my first thought was that my brother, who'd been home from Germany for a two-week furlough and was on his way to invade Japan as a member of the infantry, wouldn't go – That was my first thought, and that was a relief. I was walking around the Kenyon College campus, where my grandfather the bishop had graduated and so on and so on, so it was sort of a family place – with Elsa Kahl. She said to me, "What do you think, Mary? What do you think of your country dropping the bomb?" My first thought, and I said it to her, was, "Now I know my brother will be safe." My second thought was, "It's terrible, isn't it." Then after that, I've thought a lot about that, because it was Elsa saying to me, "What do you think of your country doing this?" right? It's come back to me again and again that my country did this. My first thought was my brother, and has given me both insight into other people and a whole new kind of awareness that I have some responsibility for what my country is doing.

MEH: I think also there's a double edge there, because she was – In a sense, at that point it was her country also, even if she didn't get citizenship. Well, probably it wasn't her country also yet.

MBD: Well, it was still just '45.

MEH: Yes, it wasn't her country yet.

MBD: [OVERTALK] It hadn't given her citizenship.

MEH: No, no, no, no. It wasn't.

MBD: I don't think she felt she belonged. I mean so many – so many of these perceptions and insights kind of get put together as you go along, as the years go by. But anyway, just to continue the biographical narrative, I – The following

September, after going to summer school and working all the time, I left for Cornell, equally impoverished because I had barely enough money. But I had an assistantship, and I started a Ph.D. in anthropology at Cornell with an assistantship, with a very good teacher, and again worked very very hard. I was finishing up doing an index for a book for my sociology professor [LAUGHS]. But, again, I felt – My major focus was my coursework, was my training, were the ideas – and they were always absolutely dominant. I mean I had some boyfriends at Cornell, but they were kind of – I used to come home early and study and do boring things like that [LAUGHS]. Of course, I had no money, so I didn't have money to go to the student union for coffee. I used to – I had a lot of, oh, oatmeal, and, you know, cheese, and different things like that. I used to babysit for my professor, and he'd give me supper and I always ate heartily at that point and I'm sure he knew it. That's the other thing I did, you know. I did that to make money and to get good supper. So, that was a year and a half at Cornell, and then my future husband came back from the army – his name was Neal, and he was a very good friend of my brother's and he was living in New York, and he began writing me letters and he came to see me at Cornell and I stopped being able to study very well. I'd get distracted sitting in the library – It had never happened to me, you know. So I began going to New York weekends and he had a little apartment in what is now SoHo, six floors up. He was out of the army, he was on the GI Bill, he was taking dance, he was taking psychology at the New School, and so I began spending more and more time in New York and less and less able to focus. So the second semester of that second year, I arranged to go to Columbia and have a transfer semester. It was a wonderful semester. I studied with Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Abraham Kordiner. They were working on reconstruction in postwar Japan and understanding the cultural aspects of that. So I was finding my way in New York from SoHo up to Columbia and living with Neil, unbeknownst to my parents, and supposedly living with my sister who lived a few blocks away on Jones Street. So, that was wonderful. Then I also spent the summer – I found another course to take at Columbia that Cornell would accept. I went back to Cornell for a little while that semester, and then Neil had finished his M.A. and had arranged to go to Kansas to the Menninger Clinic to the first program for clinical psychologists run by the V.A. at Menninger and Kansas University. So, so we decided to go to Kansas together. We bought a Model T Ford, and got in the car. [LAUGHS] Drove all across the country with great hardship, because again we had no money. We had all our possessions in the car. It was the only car you could get after the war, in '47. At one point when we got out of the car at midnight somewhere in Missouri, and they said "Are you pickers?" [LAUGHS] We said, "No," but we didn't say "No, we're going to get our PhDs at Kansas University." So we had five years in Kansas, in the course of which Neal got his degree, and I decided, "Well, I'd better finish something," so I got an M.A. in Child Psychology, with a minor in anthropology, not knowing what we would do next. But they were very very important years for us, and extremely interesting, and not easy. But again I guess for me the focus was, "All right, now I'm going to finish this M.A." But I also ran – For those five years, I ran an interracial cooperative nursery school that was mornings only. It was the only one in the

area. It was developed by a group of Lawrence, Kansas people who'd been trying to work on interracial problems. They had developed – Some of them were students and some of them were faculty. They had also developed kind of an interracial dorm. They needed a teacher. They had started a co-op school, because they wanted it to be interracial, and they had started it a few months after we arrived in September. When I began looking for a job, we connected. It was quite remarkable. I had – One of the things I had done when we lived in New York was I had – again, you know, I've always done work with children, you know, babysitting or nursery school work or something like that. When we were in New York – Neil and I – I worked over at the Chelsea – Eighth Avenue, in the Chelsea Daycare. I used to have the late shift, 2 to 6 to fit with my courses. I've always worked and gone to school. I don't think I've ever just gone to school except at Black Mountain. So, I connected with them. I was looking – We had the GI Bill, so, of course, we had eighty dollars a month to live on, and I connected with them. We liked each other, and I was so sympathetic with what they were doing. They had tried being – taking turns being teachers. Well that doesn't work, particularly in four-year-olds. They need a mother and a teacher, and they need two different people. So I was hired. They pay was six dollars a week. Something like a dollar and a quarter a day, something like that. Of course, this was 1948, and I was there for five years. Recently someone has written an M.A. thesis on the Lawrence Cooperative Nursery School. It's still going. It has its own building and was seen as a very important experiment, because that was before the Supreme Court decision, right? So all the schools were segregated. Our kids from our nursery school went off to first grade together. Nobody said anything. For me the sort of impact of segregation personally was new. I remember there was one African-American parent who had three little girls, and she was in a terrible domestic abuse situation. At the end of the nursery school day – it ended at noon – she confided in me when we were talking and I said to her “Well, you know, let's go have lunch, let's go have coffee somewhere in Lawrence, you know, in town,” and she said “Mary, there isn't any place that you and I could sit down together in Lawrence.” So I said “Well let's go sit in my car.” But, you know, that impact was – It was – To me I was teaching nursery school. Of course, it would be interracial. So for me that wasn't a paramount consideration. However, it was extremely extremely – I also wrote an article on this. Because I remember one day a mother came up to me and she said, “Mary, I touched one!” I didn't know what she was talking about! She was saying that she had – Although she believed in it, she'd overcome the idea of contact. We were fragile economically, of course. We were in church basements. We had to move three or four times, because we'd fix up the church basement, and then the church would find uses for it. For awhile we were in the African-American church basement with a minister named Reverend Fant [PH], who was there around, who was around a great deal because I think he was just flabbergasted watching the white children and the black children play together, and he became part of our – sort of part of our curriculum. In fact, when he moved to Topeka, we took the train from Lawrence to Topeka to go and see Reverend Fant (?). That was one of our nursery school projects. We had, you know, intense parent involvement. Neal and I had an

apartment part of the time on the main street of Lawrence. Part of the time we lived in Topeka. We had parent meetings twice a month, and lots of discussion, and cleanup day, and crises, and the parent group was fascinating. You know, I think that in a sort of paradoxical way much more significant than I realized, because I was also surviving and taking courses and taking care of the children from nine to twelve and so on. But, but in reading this M.A. thesis – I gave her a lot of material for the thesis, and I had a lot of notes. The parents -- then I'll move on – there were two very significant families in Lawrence, Kansas, each of whom had three children and each of whom went through the nursery school with those three children. One of them was the plumber of the town, and the other one was the pediatrician of the town. Between those two families, who are still there and I've been back to see them and I've corresponded with them, were stalwart. I mean what one couldn't solve, what crisis one couldn't solve, the crisis, the other one could solve it. So it was with great reluctance that when – but when Neil finished his degree and I finished my degree, we left Kansas, and left the families and those children because it was a very important epoch for me. I kind of came into my own in so many ways as a child development person, because I connected with – You know, I connected the school with the university in terms of observations. I had a child development, child psychology teacher who was kind of my advisor. I read, you know, everything she suggested about children's behavior, and some of the early works, Stern and Susan Isaacs and Winnicott. She was the one who introduced me to Piaget, who at that point was not really known in the United States. So, she was a – She was a German woman, again kind of like Black Mountain, my professors [LAUGHS], you know – there was that European side of my professors. So when we left Kansas, with our two degrees – and most people expected us to get jobs and go back east, and we said, "No, we're going to go to Europe. We're going to stay in Europe until we don't have any more money." We succeeded. We stayed nine months. We had a wonderful time. We went all over, and, you know, we took a boat – so that was a whole era for us, and very, very much our goal. When we came back, we came to New York where we'd lived before, because we had an arrangement with a settlement house that all we needed was carfare to get to the settlement house, and I would teach dance, and he would teach carpentry, just as we had done before, and then we would look around for a job. That's what we did. Not too long after the settlement house period, and we were reconnecting with New York and so on, Neil got a job as a chief psychologist in a state institution for delinquent boys in New Jersey. Very punitive place. He was the first psychologist. He was supposed to change into a treatment focused facility. We moved to Jamesburg, New Jersey, stayed there two years, two and a half years, had our two children at the Princeton Hospital, survived living in an institution with an incredibly authoritarian, punitive plantation kind of – I knew the map of New Jersey by the prisons of New Jersey – Bordentown, Trenton – I used to watch, standing my little girl in the window of – because we lived on the grounds of the institution – I used to stand my little girl in the window, my older daughter, to change her diaper, and she'd say, "Boys. Boys." There'd be the lines of boys being marched around the so-called campus, with a man with a stick at the back. Neil

had extensive records of brutality to the boys. He did his best to help them, but then they would become marked. There were eight year olds there that had committed no crimes, but the State had no other place to put them. This was 1955 and 1956, 1957. Finally, we left when there was a total crisis. A boy was killed. He was thrown across the shower, and his skull was broken, by one of their adult – what were they called? “house parents.” Neil was the star witness for the investigation, because he had all the records, that nobody’d asked him for. So he was the star witness, and it was a very tumultuous time. At that point I had a one month old, a twenty month old – they kept me sane – and the institution was turned around by the State. They got a new director and so on, and they asked Neil to stay and he said, “No thank you. We have done our time in this setting.” Then we went – We had a friend who was in Europe and went to her house, Josephine Herbst, the writer, who was a very good friend of ours. Many times we had gone to see her because she was a close friend of Jane Mayhall’s and in fact – Eleanor Langer’s biography of Josephine Herbst begins with a letter that Josie wrote us. She wasn’t very far away from Jamesburg, New Jersey, you know, she was living in Erwinna. We used to leave at five o’clock and go and talk with Josie. So she was really our lifeline at that point. She was a wonderfully fascinating woman. So we stayed in her – She was in Europe. She’d finally gotten her passport back. She’d had to fight to get her passport. We stayed in her house, her little house in Erwinna, for six months until we got a job. A job came through, and that was Chief Psychologist at Philadelphia General Hospital in Philadelphia. That’s why we came to Philly and we’ve been there ever since. I’ve neglected to say that while we were in Jamesburg, I decided I should try to finish my Cornell Ph.D. I forgot that part. So, I was going up to Cornell – I was going up to Ithaca to finish my residency and two courses. I succeeded in doing that. I had to flag a train in New Brunswick to get it to stop to go to Ithaca. Stop for me. It went to Ithaca with chickens, [LAUGHTER, UNINTEL] with baby chickens, and I stayed over one night – and that was before our second baby was born. I took my exams for my Ph.D. and I finished my coursework and I finished my residency. That’s what I was doing along with two children.

MEH: Now, going back – in that period you were in New York, or when you were living in Jersey after you got back from Europe, who were Black Mountain people in New York that you were in touch with?

MBD Jane.

MEH: Jane. Jane and Leslie.

MBD: Jane and Leslie. Very much Leslie and Jane. Very much. Ruth Currier. When we were in Kansas, Ruth – That was the period that Ruth Currier was in the Limon Company, so if – They’d go on tour. So if the Limon Company came within three hundred miles of Lawrence, Kansas – whether it was – You know, they would go to that woman’s college in Missouri, and they would sometimes be in St. Louis, right? Once in awhile they would be in Albuquerque, you know. Neil and I would get in the car and drive to see Ruth, drive to see Ruthie. Who else? I think some people came through. I know my – I can’t remember what people – I can’t remember.

- MEH:** So, when you moved to Philadelphia, you had two very small children. I'd like to know more – and it would do to me to compress things a bit, because we could go on forever.
- MBD:** I feel like I'm rambling.
- MEH:** The sort of thing I would be interested in is what you did in ter- – professionally in terms of – Not just sort of positions, but sort of your ideas in terms of how they informed what you were doing. Okay?
- MBD:** [AFFIRMATIVE]. Okay. Those are the important themes. I get distracted by how we managed.
- MEH:** Right.
- MBD:** How we moved, and how we lived. [LAUGHS]
- MEH:** I think up to this point that was, you know, but now when you're –
- MBD:** Right, well I finished –
- MEH:** Your education.
- MBD:** I think the – what was the prominent thing for me was, still, "I'm going to finish," right? Okay, I had an M.A. I had a B. A. I was still going to get a Ph.D. and so I managed to do that segment of it, and I switched – Because of my work with the nursery school and my new interest in psychology and my M.A. which was on children's understanding of time and very much influenced by Piaget, I switched my major to psychology and my minor to anthropology. Cornell was sympathetic with that although there were quite a few hurdles to do. Then we came to Philadelphia, and as the children got a little older, I took a research job with the understanding that I could use the data for my thesis, because that was what I still had to do. The research job was observations of the interaction between one-year-olds and mothers in their home. It was focused in and around what they called objective competence, and the influence, sort of – of course, partly a normative study, since it was a child psychology study, and partly a question of the influence of the family atmosphere in terms of stimulation and inhibition. So, this turned out to be a five-year job, in which I learned enormously in terms of observation, and at the end of which I had a lot of data and I had a thesis proposal, which I sent off to Cornell. Then I thought well, there's – I have a month off, waiting for a response to this thesis proposal, I'll go down and work for Women Strike for Peace.
- MEH:** What year would this have been?
- MBD:** I'm trying now to figure it out. I'm quite sure it was '65. It was the beginning, the heating up of the Vietnam War. I worked for Women Strike for Peace and Against the War for the next six years. I'd covered up my thesis proposal on my desk with a big blotter. I never lifted the blotter. The war, and what was going on, what my country was doing in Vietnam, was so salient, you know, it went into nightmares. Women Strike for Peace, it was '63, because we picketed Kennedy about nuclear testing. Then, then as the war heated up, we worked full time. I mean there weren't a lot of us, and somehow or other I became one of the core groups in Philadelphia, so whatever time I had from childcare, I was working against the war, and Neil was, too. All our friends were. Our friends were those who were doing it, because we lost friends in the beginning, lots of friends, from just being so angry and upset. I mean, we picketed presidents, we worked on draft resistance, we were part of draft card burnings. I went to

Canada and met with women from Vietnam who were talking about agent orange and what it was doing. We brought back secret records with their photographs of birth anomalies, and, you know, it sort of progressed with the progress of the war. What happened to the political candidates who were against the war? What happened to the sit-ins for the draft resisters? The work with the prisons after they were imprisoned. It didn't seem as though anything else was important. It really – I mean the fact that I once long ago had wanted to get a Ph.D. was, didn't matter. So taking care of the children and working in the peace movement – We had draft resisters living at our house. We had papers that let people into Canada, and someone would come to our house and then hide out until the papers came back and we'd give them the papers and they'd go on to Canada. That was – that was Vietnam. That was Vietnam. It was extremely dominant in our lives. I mean we tried – we tried to protect our children from our own preoccupation, and we didn't entirely succeed, of course. It was their school years and the beginning of their high school, their junior high. That – I'm trying to think. Oh, and I also was working. I got a job teaching at Temple. As they got a little older, I got a job teaching. I'd finished my research job, I'd finished that plan. I never heard from Cornell and when I did hear from them I didn't pay any attention, you know. [LAUGHS] I went up one time when they were occupying Willard Straight, the students were occupying Willard Straight, the campus student union. It was probably '68. I thought "No, I can't. This is not relevant." Like so many people at that point. In '71 I was asked to teach a course at Temple University on psychology for educators, a summer course, by a friend who needed someone to fill in. I did it and I loved it. After that, I taught at Temple for five years, Temple University, and then I began trying to put my degree back together, which I did, and I graduated from Cornell University with a Ph.D. in 1978. My little girl, who I had been pregnant when I took my qualifying exams, came and took photographs of me. She was sixteen. [LAUGHS] And, like everything else, I had to struggle with the university's system. I had to get waivers for defying the residency, you know, exceeding the residency limits, exceeding the Ph.D. proposal limits and the completion limits. I had to go to the archives and get my records. I had to say – I know that they were reluctant to give me the teaching assistantship because I was a woman and "women never finish." I said, "I'm determined to finish." One of the reasons, again, with my kind of stance of determining, you know, determined that there's some way to change this, I said, "I'm getting my degree as a second priority. My family is my first priority." During that point, during that period, my mother was very ill and dying, and I was taking care of her also. Betty died – my sister died. So, I said to them, "I'm getting this degree as a second priority. It's just as valid a degree as if it were a first priority. If you say that you don't want to back women because women never finish, of course, they don't finish if they have to make it a first priority." So, I finished. [LAUGHTER] I didn't have a lot of friends, but I finished. So, then I was teaching at Temple and I had a Ph.D. and I was teaching at Temple. I continued to teach there, and I also taught at Arcadia College, and that's when I began teaching – Then I taught graduate school, and that, of course, was also the nuclear freeze – '82. We were running workshops centered in and around how

do you deal with children's nuclear fears. Very prominent psychologists like Escalona and Robert Lifton were looking at trauma of veterans and trauma for children. We were doing – and I wrote some articles. But we were doing workshops on answering children's questions. We had a wonderful film that we used called "Will Bombs Make the Rainbow Break?", which ended up with a glorious scene of children making posters and so on for the '82 march to the U.N., the Worldwide March for a Nuclear Moratorium, which we almost got. Then, of course, there was – So, all that time I was – we were, those of us who'd been politically active with Women Strike were working on the Nuclear Freeze, and were working for the ABM Treaty and were working for the – So, so this continued to be a very very important part of my life. I was teaching Conflict Resolution, Negotiation, right? I was teaching graduate students how to negotiate with parents and special needs experts or about children's problems, and I began – As part of that, I'd begin doing a lot of consulting for daycare centers. Again, working as a problem solver. You know, I'd get referrals from daycare directors. No daycare can afford a chief psychologist, you know, can afford a fulltime psychologist. But I had three or four very good friends who were daycare directors, and some of them had been my students when they were in Temple, and so I would go in one day a week and observe the child and work with the parent and work with the teacher and develop a plan, and do referrals. Then I moved from Temple, which was more of a fulltime job, to working in a maternity hospital, because I'd been very much interested in mother-child bonding at two, and so on. This was a maternity hospital that was working on natural childbirth and midwifery and all those things, and lots of parent support. So it was extremely interesting. So I went there to become the research psychologist for the parenting department. I was there for about ten years. I was also teaching part time and I was also doing consulting part time. My daughter always teases me. She says, "Which of your three jobs are you doing now?" [LAUGHS] But that was kind of the way I worked.

MEH: Right. So you did that, and then you – You retired at some point?

MBD: I retired last year.

MEH: Okay.

MBD: So, I did that – Actually, the maternity hospital closed because of – whole changes in the hospital picture, and also the changes in the fact that midwifery became recognized, so then the bigger hospitals took it over. But during the course of that time I did research and wrote up and participated in the teen pregnancy program, which was a group that we worked with a great deal. I worked with an experimental program called Siblings at Birth, and wrote an article for the Journal of Nurse Midwifery, and was on the Donahue Show for that, because it became, you know, it became sort of a media – that was an interesting event. Also continued my work with parents. We had a group at the parenting department. It was all focused around group work, and I was there both to lead some of these groups and to do research. That was my title Director of Research. But it was very much participatory research. We started – Since the mothers would become very bonded in the prenatal groups, and then they would want to continue, so then there was breast feeding support groups, and then they would want to continue. So then there would be a lot of

workshops on how to raise a toddler and so on. Then as people became more and more concerned about Central America, a friend of mine and I began a group called Raising Children in the Nuclear Age. This group continued for five years. It included – I made three trips to Nicaragua. It included supporting child care and mothers in Nicaragua, sending supplies, sending support of whatever we could figure out. It was a way, it was I think very very appropriate and kind of nourishing for something that I had experienced so acutely, and that is young mothers, who have no time to be politically active but have nightmares about what kind of world their children are growing up in, so for them it was both nourishing and supportive and a way to handle despair and a way to be active and a way to keep things in perspective. Because I remember mothers would say, “How can I stop the fighting in Nicaragua, when I can’t even stop my two boys fighting,” you know. [LAUGHTER] They were all – Those issues got just totally tangled. Kids that wanted guns. Kids that – for the sake of power. You know, kids that wanted – were intrigued with military and were involved in aggression, and then there’s your country’s aggression. So, we had – we had wonderful meetings. We wrote an article on that. I presented it at the Orthopsychiatry meetings, my friend and I, Joan Reivich. We felt that this was an approach that could meet a very particular woman’s need and was very political at the same time. So we did that. That was again – I was organizing doing that. Whatever I did I tried – I kept journals. I always kept journals, and then I’d pull together an article, whatever I could, and this – This didn’t become an article, but it was a presentation at the orthopsychiatry meetings, which was very satisfying and kind of ultimate career move, you know, that you need to make. [LAUGHTER].

MEH: Okay, the tape is running out.

**[END OF RECORDING ON DV CASSETTE 1,
BEGINNING OF DV CASSETTE 2]**

MBD: How shall I pick up at this point?

MEH: Well, we were talking about – How do you remember Eric Bentley as a personality? What was he like?

MBD: Well, I think, as I said in our earlier interview, he was extraordinarily charismatic – for me, as a young student, because of his brilliance. I think his lectures were exhilarating. He pulled together – He gave a series of lectures, one on each century, beginning with the sixteenth century and going through the nineteenth century, through the twentieth century. They were – It was a single evening for each period. They were lectures in the evening from something like after – We’d walk up from the Dining Hall and they were something like seven to nine, or seven to nine thirty. The entire community went. They were events, and they were performances, and they left you with an integrated understanding of a period which I had never experienced in the study of history before – because he integrated the customs, the language, the fashions, the politics, the economic state, the diet, the – I particularly remember the way he would pick up – it’s sort of intellectual history, certain words or phrases that seemed to characterize, or an image. I have those notes, and it was on the basis of those notes that I took three exams in history for Wayne University [LAUGHS], right? I think for the members of the faculty that had been in Germany, especially

during the War, or just up to the War and during the repressions in Germany and so on, I think they were full of some new, really new facts and new kind of integrations that they hadn't experienced. So in that way, he was also a very demanding professor. I mean he demanded high scholarship in terms of papers and a real reading in a variety of sources, you know. He had a sense of what scholarship should be. That was in a setting where there was no library, so we had to borrow books from each other and borrow his books and borrow other faculty people's books and make do. It wasn't as though – I mean later on, when I knew what writing a research paper consisted in and you went to the library and you followed up all these references – we couldn't do that. That was that side of him, as a history professor. Then there was Bentley as very close to the student body because of his affair with Maja and because of all the women that were in love with him, right? I mean, there were students that were just starry-eyed in love with him. I had a brief period of that, and then I recovered from that, you know. I could tell "No," you know, "that's –" And, you know, I just wasn't susceptible at that point in my life as some of the other young women were. So, that gave him a role in the student life, you know, the life up and down the Studies Building and in and out of people's studies, and at the table. We all used to walk down and then would you be sitting at Bentley's table or would you not be sitting at Bentley's table, and raucous laughter. If you weren't, there would be this raucous laughter coming from Bentley's table [LAUGHS] that would be very distracting in the dining room. I'm sure with mixed results and resentment and disgust and so on, right.

MEH: [OVERTALK]

MBD: Then there was – excuse me, go ahead.

MEH: What sort of thing would have engendered the laughter at his table?

MBD: Raucous jokes.

MEH: Jokes about other faculty people? Or other students?

MBD: Could be, yeah, could be. No, he was – He loved to, he loved to dismiss – summarize and dismiss in a humorous way, right? He was very good at it. So, he also created dissension, because students – they don't balance things very well. They form alliances. Or twenty-year-olds or whatever we were – eighteen, nineteen, twenty. Then there was his role in – There was his interest in drama. We did play readings, and – on, I don't know, Sunday nights or Friday nights or something – and there was that circle, and at that point he was writing – he was working on his book on Shaw and Ibsen and who was the third one? Anyway, so he introduced me and many of us to drama as an intellectual expression of the culture, and that was – he was brilliant at that, and he – you could tell that he also loved to act, because he loved to read the long monologues, you know, I mean. So – Then there was Bentley in his relationship with Fran de Graaff, right? So it was very complex. Fran de Graaff, who is one of the Black Mountain people I continued to see, really, until she died, which was only a few years ago, and who continued – Did you interview her?

MEH: [AFFIRMATIVE]

MBD: Right. Good! Because her story is a very complex and interesting, thoughtful – It's a thoughtful story. I mean her early – you know her life in Holland, her father as a Communist Party member.

MEH: I'm not sure how much of that I actually got in the interview, so why don't you just sort of review [OVERTALK].

MBD: Well, all right. Because, you know, she was Dutch. Her father was a Communist Party member in Holland at a time when this was a completely respectable thing to be. She was always a scholar. As part of her degree, she went to Moscow, and she was writing a dissertation on the history of the Labor Party in the Soviet Union. She spoke fluent Russian. She apparently, and this was all kind of mysterious, but she apparently became very close to a party member who then become endangered because of his relationship to her. But also she was in danger. So, he disappeared, and I have more notes on this, but he disappeared – for her it was personal grief and loss and a mystery. He arranged for her to leave safely, and arranged to save all the work she'd done interviewing Labor Party people and translating the interviews, which otherwise she would have been stopped at the border and these would have been taken away from her. Fran was very very loyal to the Soviet Union – as an idea, as a culture, and as a hope. This fact – that the relationship that ended without any explanation, became clear to her much much later. I mean recently, in terms of a few years, maybe ten years before her death. She taught at Bryn Mawr, so she wasn't far away and I would see her. After she retired, she lived in a retirement home rather near Philadelphia and I would go – Neal and I would go and see her as often as we could. The son of this man came to see her, and gave her more insight into how, you know, what a dangerous position she had been in and how he had truly, in his disappearance which was such a personal loss to her, he had loved her and protected her. Well, so then there was Bentley's relationship to Fran, right. Fran, this very proper Dutch woman, very radical Dutch woman, very smart Dutch woman, but with a totally different sense – I mean, different from Bentley's in terms of her responsibility to students – She felt – I mean she was really *in loco parentis*. Bentley was – didn't know what he was, right? He was certainly neither a student nor a parental figure. He was – at that point where he was in his life. So that relationship was both very very interesting for the students, right, because I took courses from both Bentley and Fran. I took Russian from Fran, I read Marx in her study. Fran came to the play readings. But at the same time, Fran was the one who protected the students. I mean there was this student who was suicidal, and you'd look around the faculty, who was going to – You know, there were no counselors, right? Who was going to take responsibility for this student? Who was going to take responsibility for the students who were drinking wood alcohol behind their Do Not Disturb signs? Right? Fran, as a very motherly person, filled that role in Black Mountain, when nobody else did. Really, nobody else that I know of, in that way. Fran and I – this student who was suicidal, Fran asked me, and the two of us – because I was a friend of hers – the two of us went together to take her into a sanitarium in Asheville where she could be on a suicide watch ward, and then tried to follow up with, you know, her parents and – So Fran was very fond of Bentley, could be teased unmercifully by Bentley because of her Dutch proper qualities. She knew that. From the point of view of the rest of the faculty and the conflict, he aroused much more opposition in his stance from the people who saw him as disruptive.

She was fond of him. She defended his rights. She got identified with him, but she wasn't creating opposition the way he was. So it was – But I think from the point of view of the faculty, they wanted them both out. They knew he was going to leave. That's my feeling. They – But they didn't want to attack him directly. You know, they didn't want to move directly against him, so they moved against her. That's my feeling. Fran and I, we discussed it a lot and she'd talk about Eric. She also had very fond memories of Black Mountain, and she was so suitable there. She was truly an educator and she was truly a radical, but she was truly an educator and she wasn't just pursuing her own career in quite the same way that Bentley was. She continued to be an educator. She also was very very identified in lots of ways with the Soviet Union. I remember visiting her when Gorbachev was doing all this remarkable glasnost and so on, and she was thrilled. So she got to be – you know, you were either a communist or an anti-communist, and it was very hard, especially, you know, in America in the fifties and so on and during the Cold War, to be pro-Russian, and identified with the complexity of Russian history and – without being sort of extremely critical and damning of the Communist period. So, she did such things – She did a lot of translations of current Soviet literature – short stories. The retirement home where she lived, she was – she had to be very careful because it was full of very conservative Republicans. But she was kind of known as the lady who speaks five languages, and, of course, one of them was Russian, and she made a few, she made a few friends but she basically was very lonely. She was very lonely.

MEH: Let's go back to Black Mountain. A few other things. One thing that – I was reading your interview, the other part we did you had said that when you came to Black Mountain you really had no interest in the arts, but that in the community, you were doing dance and became very interested in music and whatever. What about the Black Mountain atmosphere – For example, if you had gone directly to Wayne, do you think that would have happened?

MBD: No.

MEH: So, what about the Black Mountain atmosphere contributed to that?

MBD: Well, so many, so many things contributed to that. The smallness of the community. The openness of the community. The fact that you didn't have to register as a music major or a dance major, right? [LAUGHS] The fact that walking around between the Studies Building and the Work Program, there'd be people practicing the piano in all these little huts. The fact that when you came down to the Dining Hall there was Fritz Cohen and Ruth Currier practicing a Bartok two piano sonata. Right? The fact that everybody took dance, and everybody went to the concerts, and, and – they were highlights, you know, they were sort of glorious events. Whatever would happen on Saturday night wasn't a date going off somewhere. It was a community event. Then, and then my relationship with Elsa, my dance – She, I would never, never in my wildest dreams had it been in New York that I could be a student of somebody as famous as Elsa Kahl, right? But everybody could be her student. Similarly, I took piano from Fritz Cohen. Here was this brilliant man who was trying to get me to relax my shoulders [LAUGHS] and get Elsa to help me relax my shoulders, you know. Then there was Jalowetz, with his work on opera. So, so

it was – Then you’d walk down this Studies Building and there were people doing these Werklehre projects with their study door open, and I’ll never forget watching students – One of the Albers exercises was to using little colored squares of different degrees of intensity, run a shaft of light through them, right? Change, right? I’d never had – The idea that this, that color could, could be this, that there could be a project that was called “Color” that would be, would change the way you looked at things, and that I could watch it develop and I could drop in on my way to and from classes – You know, it was the study next door. I think it was Jane – I think it Slats, in fact. But various people were doing it. I mean Ati Gropius was there, and she made a whole work of art out of her study, out of her study. With an egg on a piece of driftwood, you know [LAUGHS]. I mean it was – So that was for me unanticipated as an effect on my life. Just overwhelmingly important. And, you know, my previous – Sure, I mean my father listened to the opera, my mother was a very good pianist, and, you know, there was music in my home and I had studied some piano. But I was such an academic person, right. You know, I was so focused on reading and writing [LAUGHS] that I think at another college, I wouldn’t have – It wouldn’t have been part of my life the way it’s become part of my life because of Black Mountain. Right? You watched – You know, there were people sketching and painting and integrating the arts. So, so that I am deeply deeply grateful to my Black Mountain years. Again it was not something that I set out to experience. It was – That’s, for me I think that’s one of the extremely important things about it, because there were many people like me who would not otherwise have been awakened, in a way.

MEH: I think that’s a good word. [INAUDIBLE]

MBD: Yeah.

MEH: Okay, what did you do on the Work Program?

MBD: Oh, I meant to get back to the Work Program. I had the role of being the plumber’s helper. There was Bas Allen – I’d forgotten his name until just now – who was the plumber, who needed an apprentice plumber and an assistant. So, I would follow him around and help him, and then I learned how to change washers and do minor plumbing. I also learned how to diagnose things. But the funniest aspect of my Bas Allen apprenticeship – I don’t know how I happened to do that, I think nobody else wanted to do it and I liked Bas Allen and decided I would do it. He was a very interesting kind of North Carolina character, you know. So one of the things I did was replace old toilet seats. You know, you can get a kit and you just have to do a couple bolts and it’s a very easy job to do. Various faculty members – So I would go into the faculty members’ apartments and so on and change their toilet seats, and various faculty members in their quite discreet, quite German bourgeois discretion manner despite all their other characteristics, would thank me very much for their new comforts, you know. It was very funny, and it became my role. So that was – Actually my knowledge became very useful when I was a nursery school teacher because when Reverend Fant was repairing the toilets in our basement of our cooperative nursery school, I could explain the whole thing to the four year old boys, who were fascinated. [LAUGHS] Anyway. So then I cleared the pasture. I used to go out and clear the pasture, and it was dramatic, you know, the whole process of

figuring out how to, you know – where to cut and which tree to clear, and dragging it, and piling up the brush, and so on. I remember that went on for a full semester, I'm sure. Those are the two things I remember and then I participated in other – I always went to the Work Program. Now that's another area that Bentley refused to participate, and some of his disciples became influenced by that. I remember people coming to me who were torn which to follow, the community or the dissident. People coming to me in my study saying, you know, "Why do you participate?" and it was kind of – There were two sides of it, you know. If you had time to do that, you obviously weren't being a scholar, right? So I wanted to be a scholar. But I also felt very strongly about the community. So I remember it being sort of – There was a period in which I was kind of in conflict about it and kind of wondering, sort of – kind of flirted with going along with the dissident factions and so on. I remember discussing it with Fran, and she helped me a lot in terms of, you know, this is the community, the community depends upon – Eric really attacked it in terms of it's not economic – it's economically romantic. You can imagine, right?

MEH: Who would you describe as being Eric's disciples? Who was in that group?

MBD: Maja. Of course. People – Jeanne Wacker. Barbara. I don't know. I think those are the three that I most remember. There are other people that kind went in and out of it. Ruthie never did, although she was kind of interested, but Ruthie was so disciplined.

MEH: Did you consider yourself to be a disciple?

MBD: For awhile. I certainly, you know, was – He was fascinating. He was an extremely brilliant, charismatic, charismatic person, who also, you know, was a very fine pianist, who was learning German, who knew a lot about drama, an enormous amount about drama, who could well have, you know, been an actor. Then he was this erudite Englishman, you know. So I was – But I also, you know, at that point I, you know, I was too fond of Fran, I was too fond of Elsa, I had too many other poles to tie me, and my relationship with my sister and my sister's friends, and – right?

MEH: So how do you remember Elsa Kahl?

MBD: I adored Elsa Kahl. [LAUGHS] I remember her as a kind of goddess. She was beautiful. She was absolutely beautiful. White hair, and she always wore little crocheted things on top. Then these beautiful blue eyes. I used to – in concerts, I used to watch her. I've never seen anyone listen the way she listened, you know. She'd be almost motionless and just following the music, her whole being. I'd get distracted [LAUGHS]. I'd watch Elsa, because I – I mean I didn't know when they were shifting from a major key to a minor key. I learned, but then I – Then I – I asked her to be my advisor. My brother, Bill, visited on his way to Camp Campbell, Kentucky, and he fell in love with Elsa. He'd ask me about her in his army letters. "How's the goddess, Elsa?" or something like that. She had a way of – She was extremely perceptive. She knew what was going on. She I think also was a lot of the time very sad. I think she – she had had a – you know she'd had such a successful life in Germany and then she left and she'd gone to Dartington Hall and she was so worried about Fritz and his career and what would happen to him and the disruption in his career. I remember her saying when they came to America and discovered that there

were lots of people named Fritz Cohen – She adored him. Then I worked very closely with her for the first music institute, and we were actually setting up rooms for the Kolisch Quartet, and I knew how to – She was sort of – she was just sort of – I knew how to make extension cords [LAUGHS] and, you know, things like that. She was – She said, “Oh Mary, that’s –”, you know, she was so appreciative. But we got – So we worked together because, you know, the Kolisches would be arriving, we had to improvise in terms of Black Mountain resources for these wonderful artists and she was very anxious that they would be, you know, comfortable and able to work and do whatever they needed to do. Somehow it just – What happened in the community, it fell to Elsa to make sure they had sheets and bed lights and right? So she and I worked together, very hard, and very closely. So I got to know her in a different way, and part of – one of the most, my most vivid experiences from those weeks in which we were preparing for the music institute was Cohen being exhausted. We came to the end of a long day, and he was exhausted and anxious about, you know, and trying to keep all the details together. We were – somehow or other we were in the Dining Hall and it was late and she said to him, okay now – He said, “I haven’t touched the piano,” and she said, “Play!” She said, “Go ahead. Play!” At first he wasn’t, you know, he was sort of just kind of plump and kind of perspiring and she just stood beside him. It was sort of – it was really such a loving, loyal determination. It makes me cry to think about it. But she just said “Play!” She and I sat there and he played an entire Bach fugue, just through the whole thing. And, you know, it makes me cry because it was so intimate, and it was such a privilege to have seen that relationship, because they didn’t, they were – you know, you didn’t see it, except under very particular circumstances. Of course, as I knew more about their history and then I visited them in New York when she was painting tiles and living on Fourth Street over that restaurant just off Sixth Avenue, and just, you know, you know, the fact that they had to leave and the music institute had to leave – and he had such hopes for that. We didn’t figure in that, you know, because we didn’t – We weren’t going to lose. See. We weren’t going to lose. We didn’t say to each other, you know, “We’re risking, we’re risking so much.” Elsa and Fritz never said it, and Fran never said it. So, of course, they went to New York and they were together, trying to survive and then they finally connected with Juilliard and then they had some good years. Then Fritz died, and I went up to see her when they did the *Soldat*, the Stravinsky. Then after he died I went to see her. I have long notes on her – I looked at the other day, they’re not too, she was not too coherent then. She was living alone, and she was crippled. So, leaving her was, was very, was truly – You know, she was my advisor, so-called, and I had a boyfriend. This was the army. I had a boyfriend who was going to be over in Tennessee, he was in the Marines, he was on his way overseas and I was – so he wanted me to come over and see him. I don’t know where it was, Knoxville or something. So, I said to Elsa, “I’m going over and see my boyfriend and I’ll be back,” and she said “Are you all right?” I said, “Oh sure.” That was the extent of my advisor. [LAUGHS] I was all right. But Elsa – Then Elsa and Fran were very close, so those three people. When Elsa was so ill and so alone in New York, Fran and I both went to see her, and Fran set up, located some social

services for her, and we tried very hard to – But that was very shortly before she died. So that's Elsa. She was a great dance teacher, as well.

MEH: Go ahead.

MBD: Well, she was a great dance teacher because she knew that what you had to do was get centered in your body and free it up [LAUGHS], you know, and, you know, recognize that your head belonged to the rest of your body. So she just did very kind of loving, persistent, interesting movements, right? Of course, Ruthie, Ruth Currier – Ruth Currier was really the disciple of both Elsa and Fritz, one in piano and one in dance. There was truly – I remember, because I used to talk to Ruthie a lot, and she was someone I followed up with and saw over the years as I've mentioned. I remember her trying to decide whether to concentrate more on the piano or more on the dance, and it was truly an agonizing decision because – both because she was so fond of Fritz and so fond of Elsa, and because she herself was so – such a remarkable performer in both areas, right? She decided on dance.

MEH: What do you think really mattered about Black Mountain? What do you think worked about it? Then what do you think didn't work about it?

MBD: What worked about it is what I've said. That is, it was a community that introduced and nourished students awakening in culture and history and science and intellectuality. Right? So – That was especially important for American students, for whom European history usually ends with the discovery of America. So as an education, it was extraordinary. What didn't work about it is that it was so fragile. It was on the defensive in the rest of American education, too much of the time. It had no economic support, so it became mysteriously dependent on some benefactors, among them Dreier. I remember I tried to raise – Swackhamer and I came to New York one Christmas and went around to his father's wealthy friends trying to raise money for Black Mountain, you know, in our espadrilles and blue jeans and so on, and we didn't know anything about grant writing, any things like that. We just tried to get five hundred dollars personal check. But we worked hard on it. We would have done anything to help it sustain. I think it was moving a long way toward becoming part of the South, and this, of course, was the influence of Clark Foreman and recognition that segregation was an issue that Black Mountain should stand for. It had a mixed success in presenting itself as a democratic community. Partly because it didn't have enough structure, right? I mean other communes – You know, it had some of the fate of a commune that depends a great deal on personality and loyalty and dedication and sacrifice and can also – is vulnerable to factionalism, right? So it didn't have enough structure. Then, as an educator, I mean who has taught students and counseled students and been a psychologist and so on, it didn't have a strong enough *in loco parentis* – what I said. You know, it didn't recognize that students came there at eighteen and were lost, overwhelmed, scared, depressed, and couldn't – There wasn't – you know, at University of Penn, I have a good friend, she's head of counseling. Students knock on her door with their stuffed animals and they're freshmen and you know, and she'd said "In this case I'm glad they have their stuffed animals. They're better off than the ones without." So Black Mountain didn't have – it didn't have a recognition of the social-emotional needs of the eighteen,

nineteen, twenty, twenty-one year old student somewhere or other. And, you know, that of course was also “my” period – when I was there. I remember over and over again being very glad that I had worked two years before I came, because being twenty made me so much less vulnerable than being eighteen. It wasn’t that I wasn’t vulnerable as a twenty-year-old, but at least I wasn’t eighteen. You know? So I think that was where it could have used somebody like, more people like Fran, more people who recognized that this is part of growing up in those years, and that they may not need rules but they certainly need counseling. Right? So I think that’s –

MEH: One other topic I want to cover, and then I think if you’re going to get your hair cut we should – [OVERTALK] What time is it?

MBD: It’s twenty of one. We’re okay. It’s very interesting for me to formulate this.

MEH: I have more than one question. Tell me about your sister.

MBD: All right. My sister was –

MEH: This is Betty Brett.

MBD: Elizabeth. Betty Brett. Betty Brett Hamlin. She was just less than two years older than I. You know, we were just twenty, twenty-one months apart or something. June and September. In my childhood, she was always an invalid. She had very bad asthma at a time when they didn’t understand allergies and they didn’t have cortisone and, you know, they didn’t have treatment for asthma. So, she was an invalid and – in many ways. She would hate to have been called an invalid, but – Our family in many ways revolved around her care, and because we were very poor, it wasn’t good care.

MEH: What did your father do?

MBD: He was – Well, he was an inventor. He was very much interested in land development. He was very much interested in city planning, when there wasn’t city planning. He was a pioneer in the use of concrete for buildings, when they, when the buildings with concrete were falling down. Was someone who couldn’t work within a structure, so we had a very very enormous amount of economic insecurity.

MEH: And so you were taking care of Betty in this situation.

MBD: Yeah. But there was a wealthy aunt. My mother would ask her for money. Oh, there were times when we, you know, were really, were very very impoverished, in so many ways. So, my sister’s health was always precarious, and we left Cleveland – We lived in Cleveland and went to Arizona to save her life, essentially. They said she won’t live through another winter in Cleveland, so we were in Arizona four years, whereupon my mother got TB. So, anyway, that’s my – So – But my sister was also very smart and a poet and a reader, and very determined. She got through high school. I mean I spent a lot of time taking her books and taking her assignments and so on and so on. She missed weeks and days of school. She read about Black Mountain in the Louis Adamic book. She was determined to go there, and she did. She had a hard time there. She was sick quite a bit, but she wrote a lot of poetry. She took physics. She worked in the print shop. She adored Black Mountain, and she was part of the move from the Inn to the new Studies Building. I have pictures of her working on the Studies Building. She was there three years, left for a little while because of illness, came back and graduated. She was one of the few people that ever

graduated from Black Mountain. Barzun was her examiner, and she studied American literature and American history, and her exam was a community event. Then we were there because – Because I worked two years, I didn't get there until her last year, and so we did share – my first year was her last, but it wasn't even a full year somehow. Then she left Black Mountain as a teacher and taught at Dalton School. Lived in New York City and taught at Dalton School, and had pneumonia a couple of times. You know, she would be – Then married Will Hamlin and moved up to Goddard College, and that was the time when – So for awhile we were in New York together. That's when I was living with her instead of Neil, ha ha. She had a party for me after we went down to City Hall and got married. She wrote beautiful poetry, and there is a little book of her poetry. She has a very interesting son. She lived until he was sixteen. I'm still in touch with him. She's a Black Mountain graduate, which is a very distinguished thing to be. I wish you could interview her. She died in 1969, at forty-nine.

MEH: Forty-nine. I can't remember but there was something I had heard about her but I've lost it now.

MBD: She was a close friend of [OVERTALK] Janie Stone, Fred Stone and Janie, and when they came to New York, she and Will, they were close to Fred and Janie, and she was a close friend of Emil's and Jane Mayhall and Claude Stoller, Lucian – right? So that, for me, I kind of bridged, you know – I knew those people from her, so it makes me feel as though I was there longer than I actually really was.

MEH: Do you think – Well, one thing, are there anecdotes or things that you remember from Black Mountain that we haven't covered that you particularly would like to record?

MBD: [LAUGHS] Oh, there probably are. I hope people have talked about the dancing. The Saturday night dancing?

MEH: Yeah, but go ahead and tell me.

MBD: Well, again, again, as part of a community. In other colleges you had a date Saturday night or you were with the women Saturday night or you were home studying, you know, so Saturday night is an important moment in the week. Saturday night at Black Mountain was a community event. There would always be a performance or concert of some kind, and there would always be dancing. Those of us who watched each other in, you know, shabby old blue jeans all week, you had an evening gown. Right? You were suddenly glamorous. I still have my Black Mountain evening gowns. I can't bear to part with them. It was my sister Betty who said to me, "You have to have evening gowns," and in fact she helped me prepare and take an evening gown. Then you danced, and I'd waltz with Ted Dreier and, you know – I love to dance, so somehow or other that was – that was a time in the community when we were all together and it was – John Evarts would get up and play the piano, and there were the Black Mountain songs that Jane wrote and the tango and – right? So I, I have just enormously fond memories of that, and I would not have – That would never have happened to me without that. So that's one anecdote. Then there's helping – Who are the wonderful – Rubye and Jack, in the kitchen. There were – You know, Ruby and Jack, they came as close to being counselors as

anybody, right? [LAUGHS] They knew if you appeared at breakfast that you had been up all night and things like that, right, and they'd say, "Didn't you go to bed?", you know, things like that as they served you these corn pancakes or what have you. I was often awake at night. I worked very hard. I always worked one night a week and I sometimes worked two. So they'd know and say "When are you going to sleep, child?" and things like that. They were – I remember one of my jobs was taking all the silver out of the dishwasher and polishing it and sorting it and working with them. I was very proud of the fact that I thought I did a good job. You know, it was really important. So they were – And then, of course, they knew Bas Allen, so I had a little bit of an in with Bas Allen. But I hope people have mentioned those things, because they were essentials in the community experience.

MEH: What about the landscape?

MBD: Oh, it was beautiful. When the honeysuckle, the smell of honeysuckle walking down from the Study Hall. Lots of people did – Well, that was another piece of the – Lots of people did a lot of hiking and walking and climbing the mountain, and I didn't. I think I didn't – I felt my time was so precious that I didn't do that. I didn't even get in the car and go to Asheville. I didn't leave the campus from the time I arrived until, you know, till December. I didn't have a car, I didn't have any money, and I didn't have any reason – which was more important. But the other very important custom that I think Black Mountain established was you'd come down – Let's see, how did it work? You'd come down to breakfast on Sunday and there would be sandwich makings, and then there would be no Sunday night supper.

MEH: There would be a Sunday lunch-supper.

MBD: There would be a Sunday lunch.

MEH: But no Sunday night.

MBD: Maybe the sandwiches were at lunch, but I'm not quite sure. Then people would – Somebody, you should check this out, but I'm quite sure that then people would take their sandwiches and go hiking and so on, and I always felt – I'm sorry I didn't do more of that. I'm sorry I didn't – I was so preoccupied about getting my textbook read [LAUGHS] for the psychologist – what was his name? I remembered it – Straus. Straus. Yeah, Straus. Or so preoccupied by getting my paper done for Bentley, or what-have-you that I didn't – I didn't do that. I didn't take part in that. But I think it was a very – I'd stuck my – "Oh, I don't even have to go to supper, I can work till midnight without stopping", right? So that was more my, more my mode.

MEH: Okay.

MBD: But I think they were – they were qualities of the community, the Saturday night, the Sunday night, the Work Program.

MEH: Do you remember afternoon tea?

MBD: No. I don't think we ever had – Did we have afternoon tea?

MEH: Some periods they did.

MBD: Oh. I didn't make that. [LAUGHS]

MEH: Too busy working.

MBD: I don't think they had at the Inn where there was a lobby. I remember there's a passage in my sister's journal after Ted Dreier's son was killed – I'm sure that's

in the archives somewhere – in which she said people just gathered in the lobby and kind of waited for the reports, you know, it was a car accident. Then just sat there in silence listening to music and being together. I think for her that the lobby and the verandah of the Inn, they were very central to her memories of Black Mountain. I went to the reunion and I stayed – At the reunion I went to the Inn. Of course, when Betty was there, I visited her there and I lived there for, you know, three days or something.

MEH: [CLOSING REMARKS]

[END OF RECORDING ON DV CASSETTE 2]

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]