

Interviewee: KENDALL DURANT RAMSAY
Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS
Participant: BILL RAMSAY
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[BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

MEH: [GIVES DETAILS OF IDENTIFICATION]. All right, so you were saying you came to Black Mountain when?

KDR: In the fall of 1947. I think Carol Singer and I came together, or met each other on the way down. For the life of me I can't recall if we came by bus or by train. I think by bus. It was a hellaciously long trip, and, of course, the last –

MEH: Where were you coming from?

KDR: New York. Because she was from New York, and I was from Long Island, or from New York, really.

MEH: Do you remember how you had heard about the college?

KDR: Yes, my stepmother, Peggy Ann Rohde was the widow of Gilbert Rohde, the industrial designer, and she was involved with industrial design. I think she brought up Black Mountain as a place that, since I was interested in art and more mature, she thought than most kids that age, that was the place for me. I'd profit from being around Albers. This was fine by me. I'd had I guess a traumatic couple of years because my mother had cancer, and I dropped out of high school to help take care of her. Then I was too mature to go into a junior-senior year, and so I went to a school in New York called the Barmore

School [PH], which was basically a finishing school, but a lot of the faculty taught at Hunter College. So, it was on a slightly more mature level. I graduated from there, and from there I went to Black Mountain. I immediately fell in love with the countryside. I loved the low mountains and the creek and the buildings. Everything was sort of comfortable as an old shoe, and people were basically friendly but students pretty well stayed within groups of the same interest. The people who were into drama congregated together, and they had their studies all located together. This sort of applied I guess for most of the students.

MEH: Do you recall your arrival at the college?

KDR: The physical arrival.

MEH: You took the bus or the train down and met Carol on the bus or train.

KDR: Into downtown Black Mountain, and somebody must have picked us up because I don't think there was a cab. It would have been too far to walk, but I have no memory of physically how we got there. I was assigned to a room in – now, what are the buildings called?

MEH: One of the lodges?

KDR: Yes, one of the lodges. I think there's a picture of the lodge here, and maybe it will tell me what it was called.

MEH: It was probably North or South Lodge. I could never –

KDR: North probably. That was more uphill. I don't even recall the names of all the roommates. Dorothy Albers was one, and she's not on the list.

MEH: She's not on the list of people we found. That means we haven't found her. Do you know where she is?

KDR: I'm trying to think of the relationship. Her sister's husband was Max Lerner, and he may still be alive. The writer in New York, for the New York Post. She married a guy named Bob Orr that I don't –

MEH: I did locate them, and then I lost them again. They were in Canada.

KDR: They were in British Columbia the last I heard, and that's well over thirty years ago.

MEH: This was more recently than that, but I then – The address that I have is no longer valid, so I don't know where they are.

KDR: At the time they went to British Columbia, she had developed lupus. She was older than I was. I don't think that's a very good prognosis.

MEH: People can live a very long time with it, but –

KDR: Maybe two little girls. But I had no other contact to triangulate it. But she was one of my roommates, and there were two rooms and a bath in between, and in the next room that shared a bath Delores Fullman, who had one of the most beautiful voices I've ever heard. She was a student of Mrs. Jalo. I kept up with her for several years after leaving Black Mountain, but then came back with No Forwarding Address in Chicago. She did have a little girl named Trudy, after Mrs. Jalo. I have no idea if she did anything professionally. Not being into the music world, I don't know. But she I think had a musical scholarship. I was trying to think if there were any other black students there at that time, but I can't recall. But she was very well accepted.

MEH: I actually spoke with her many years ago, maybe 23-24 years ago, and that's another person – She was in Chicago and her address is no longer valid. I have no way of finding her now.

KDR: Do you know if she was able to do anything with music?

MEH: I don't think she had done that much. I think she had reared a family, I think. It's hard to remember right now. So, you said that people really held together in groups at the college, according to their interest. Did you have a particular interest?

KDR: I was more interested in art, I think, than anything else. I was disappointed to find that Albers wasn't going to be there the first semester – I'll use that for lack of a better word. Ilya Bolotowsky was there. He didn't impress me particularly. That was all right, and I took other courses. I took bookbinding with Mrs. Jalo, I took a course with Max Dehn in philosophy of some type, which was fascinating. I didn't have a classical background, and I don't think anybody in the group did. Of course, he'd give us things to write on, and we would read and write and then he'd say "Well that's not quite right. The Greek is – " and then he'd rattle off this long Greek passage. You knew you were at the feet of someone brilliant, and a very kind man. I took some sort of American Civ. course with Corkran, I think. During summer school I probably did a weaving – Of course, it convinced me I was not interested in weaving. My back gave out. I was really into the various work programs.

MEH: What did you do on the work program?

KDR: Oh, I cooled the milk. It was a very satisfying job, but very demanding because it happened every day. Cooling it and making butter. Then we took turns on firing the furnaces in cold weather, and the furnaces were monstrous things. I think most of us were scared of them, but somehow we kept them going. During the year I was there, at one point a freight car came into Black Mountain full of coal, and it had to be unloaded. So, volunteers were called for, and we all went and unloaded the coal car. Some time I guess during the summer – I can't be sure of the time frame because it was required that the silage – the silo had to be tamped down inside and this required getting into the silo and jumping around. It was very hot and extremely dusty, and I don't know if this was new silage or old silage that was compressed. My memory was that it was very claustrophobic. I liked to swim. There was a creek, which may not have been on college property. It seems to me we crossed the road to get to it. Several of us enjoyed doing that. This was before I knew there were water snakes. In Long Island we didn't have water snakes or, if we did, we didn't know about them. I enjoyed taking very long walks over the – you call them “mountains,” I call them “big hills.” Until late in the spring, I'd put my foot down and look down, and there were a nest of copperheads, and I didn't reali – I'd never been afraid of snakes before, but just the sound and the sight of them, I turned tail and started running and I think I ran for fifteen or twenty minutes to get back to the college. I stuck closer to home after that. I think part of the very good part of the Black Mountain experience was living with and being with people who were enthusiastic about their own particular field, to the point that you also got drawn

into it and some knowledge. During the summer school, for some reason we were living upstairs in North Lodge, probably a shift – maybe those downstairs rooms were being worked on for some reason. Plumbing may have been out. There was one gal who was down there for dance, and I had no understanding of dance notation being something you could look at and read. She was really into that. I think it may have just been – was just a field that was getting started. There were a number of different things like that that were fascinating, things that I never on my own would have really bumped into.

MEH: What do you remember about going back – You said you expected Albers to be there but he wasn't. Did you take art with Bolotowsky?

KDR: Yes. Took – I don't even recall what the course was called. It was not memorable. I had the feeling he was much busier socializing. That's probably unkind. I don't know. I did take design with Albers when he came for the second semester and that was fascinating. He had us spend endless time doing sketches of wire coat hangers and bending them on paper, and doing color studies showing the differences of size, just by the position, the placement of them. Occasionally, he got over my head technically because I don't have a science background, and that gets pretty technical. But it was fascinating. He got a lot of people really turned on.

MEH: Do you remember any other exercises that you did?

KDR: Any of what?

MEH: Other exercises that you did in his class, besides the coat hanger, the wire ones?

KDR: We created three-dimensional things on cardboard with arranging potato chips in various designs, creative things. It's really been too long ago to remember any great details on it.

MEH: How, how would you describe him as a teacher? Just his manner in class.

KDR: Oppression. (LAUGHTER).

MEH: In what respect?

KDR: He laughed – When he laughed, we could laugh. But he was all business, until he was in the mood for relaxing. But I think that Bauhaus training came through. He did not take well to being challenged on anything. I've forgotten what particular students did challenge him, on occasion. But he did not put up with that.

MEH: So, it was really a one-way class, in terms of information. There wasn't that much exchange, or was there?

KDR: There was exchange, but more in the student supplying what he wanted us to supply. He gave an assignment. We did it. He was pleased when we did what he wanted us to do or discovered what he wanted us to discover. I don't think he stayed at the college much after that period. I think he went off to – was it Yale? Wherever.

MEH: He went off soon after that. What do you remember about the summer session?

KDR: It was a particularly interesting one. Cage and Cunningham were there, the de Koonings were there. A young couple with small children in a hearse were there, and I –

MEH: The Lippolds.

KDR: And what was their field?

MEH: English. He was the sculptor, and she was a dancer.

KDR: Okay. I thought it had to do with dance. The sculpture didn't register. Then whoever the expert was on harpsichord and clavichord came.

MEH: Erwin Bodky.

KDR: Right.

MEH: So do you remember, did you take any classes with de Kooning, any art classes?

KDR: No. I'll be truthful: I don't like his work. I didn't like it then. (LAUGHS)

MEH: What about Buckminster Fuller? Were you at all interested in what he was doing?

KDR: I went to his lectures. I don't know that he had classes that summer. If he did, it was just a couple of people, but he did have one or more evening lectures that were fascinating. Of course, through the years, seeing his geodesics made it all the more memorable.

MEH: Right. What about Cage and Cunningham? Did you have any contact with them, do you remember?

KDR: No. I physically am very clumsy, and I was always clumsy. So, dance was not something I was into. I was very fond of Jim Herlihy and Pepe Zayas. Jim was very much into modern dance. Jim had the most wonderful feet. I don't know if you've ever seen pictures of his feet, but he had toes that looked like they belonged to a Roman statue. But they had a goodly group, and put on –

MEH: Do you remember the performance, the Satie "Ruse of Medusa" (?)

KDR: I remember Satie. I wouldn't have remembered the title.

MEH: Do you remember the performance?

KDR: Um-hm (AFFIRMATIVE). I think I do. Very hard on the ears! (LAUGHS)

MEH: Why did you leave Black Mountain?

KDR: I really don't know. I wanted to try seriously painting and working in New York, and there were several people leaving at that time. I went back to New York and got a cold water flat where the U.N. is now. Felix Krowinski also had one in that building, and it just – it was time.

MEH: Did you want to paint?

KDR: Yes, um-hm (AFFIRMATIVE). I did paint fairly seriously for several years. I took a job outside of New York in Rocky Mount. Bob Orr's parents had a motel there, and they were looking for an assistant manager.

MEH: This was Rocky Mount, outside of New York City?

KDR: No, North Carolina. It was work so many hours and be free so many hours, and the idea of the free time really appealed to me because it gave me lots of time to paint. So, I came to North Carolina and learned to manage a motel very nicely and painted. Then I met my husband (LAUGHS) a couple of years later. I don't think I had either talent enough or drive enough to really do anything in art. I wasn't willing to do anything in commercial art. I wanted a husband and children, and I just didn't feel I could do the two things.

MEH: So, why don't we talk a little bit about what you've done since you were at the college, and then we'll go back and look at some photos. I think they'll jog some memories. So, you married your husband. He was a North Carolinian?

KDR: He was a North Carolinian. He was in the service at the time. I met him at a rock quarry where I was swimming. Then we corresponded for months and months and months and were married about a year later. That was forty-three, forty-four years ago.

MEH: Have you lived in North Carolina since?

KDR: No. He got out of the service and decided against accepting a commission from OCS. Went back to school, finished his B.A., decided he wanted to teach, did a Master's at East Carolina.

MEH: In what field?

KDR: Then taught a year in Enfield. Then went to Atlantic Christian College to teach for several years. Then we went to Maryland for one year while he worked on his doctorate, and twenty-three years later we came back to North Carolina (LAUGHS). But the difference in salaries, academic salaries, was so staggering that we just couldn't leave. While his parents were in Rocky Mount, we were always coming back and forth.

MEH; Why did you come back to stay? Did you retire here?

KDR: Oh, we came back finally because we wanted to leave the Washington area, the Maryland suburbs. We always felt more drawn to North Carolina. Of course, our children are still more drawn to the Maryland area because most of their growing up was there. We picked Windsor, because we didn't like the way

Rocky Mount had grown and developed. It was very poorly developed. You could spend all day doing shopping, going from one side to the other. We wanted to be about halfway between the Washington suburbs and Ocracoke. We've had a cottage there for twenty-odd years. Twenty-five years. My husband took early retirement from Montgomery College in Maryland, and we came down here. It's almost fifteen years ago now. Yes. Since then, he's worked part-time. He worked in Williamston teaching, and then he took an administrator's job in Camden County schools. But now he's fully retired.

MEH: Did you ever work? You raised your family – Did you ever get your high school degree? Diploma?

KDR: No. I graduated from Barmore, and then I had a wonderful year at Black Mountain. When the children, when the youngest one was in fifth grade – we have three children – I took a part-time job in Maryland at the Hecht Company, which is part of the May Company department stores. Somehow, that grew into, within about a year-and-a-half, managing twelve departments. I did this for maybe eight years before my husband's mother got very frail, and I had to spend a lot of time in Rocky Mount with her. But I really did nothing career-wise. I'm a good house painter, though. Every house we've lived in, I've done all the painting, including this one which has sixteen rooms and four baths and the house next door!

MEH: Apparently you're a good pickle maker, too.

KDR: Oh, yeah, I'm very, very kitchen-conscious.

MEH: Right. Why don't we [INTERRUPTION?]

KDR: [LOOKING AT PHOTGRAPHS] Many of them were in their early twenties to mid-twenties –

MEH: Especially in the post-War years. A lot of GIs or people who had postponed their education because of the War.

KDR: These are a couple of me taken – Somewhere there. Some other –

MEH: Do you know who took the pictures?

KDR: Probably Pepe or Jim or Carol. I don't think Pepe had ever seen ice.

MEH: Where was he from?

KDR: Cuba. Now maybe all Cubans say their father had a fortune in sugar. I don't know. But most of these were taken at the same time – This is Mrs. Jalo.

MEH: Were you at all interested in photography?

KDR: No. (LAUGHS) Can't you tell by the snapshots? I don't know why, but there were two pictures taken inside my study, which was on the upper level of the Studies Building. Most of these are just not very good pictures. The Quiet House through the trees. The bridge back to the Quiet House. The path leading up a mountain. Knute leaving the Eye. I can't remember who Knute is at the moment, but I think he was a theater type.

MEH: Knute Stiles. He was an artist, a painter.

KDR: Right. Okay. Jake is the dog. (LAUGHS) And Dining Hall as seen from the Studies Building. That was Bruce Berndt (?) who has the stables, and Dorothy Albers was one study and the one next to it was Harry Holl. Farm is in the background. Quiet House in the afternoon. Studies Building. North Lodge. A shot of the creek after a heavy storm. And more creek. Creek ducks.

MEH: Important place. Ducks on creek.

KDR: This was a picture of Dorothy Albers right after Black Mountain. She was a qualified nursery school teacher before we met at Black Mountain, and that was one of, a Christmas card.

MEH: Now is this you?

KDR: No, that's Dorothy. Dorothy and a head she was carving. I don't know if she ever finished that head. It went on for a long time. This was Gary Clements. He was GI Bill. That was one of Pepe with a head he had sculpted. He went off to New York (OVERTALK) long before summer school.

MEH: He may still be there. I have never spoken with him. I tried a couple of times to reach him.

KDR: Knowing that he was an active homosexual, I didn't want to write him and find he had AIDS. These were a couple of sketches that Gus Falk gave me that somehow have survived.

MEH: Are these things he did?

KDR: Uh-huh (AFFIRMATIVE). I noticed he was listed in France. He seemed very talented.

MEH: What influence – Do you think the year at Black Mountain had any real impact on your life?

KDR: (LONG PAUSE) I'm not really sure.

MEH: I mean obviously it was because of Black Mountain indirectly you met your husband.

KDR: I was very much a tomboy as a child, basically an only child. I had a half-sister by a different father. She was sixteen years older than I was, so she was out of the home –

[END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1; SIDE 2 BEGINS]

MEH: You said you had been in public school and then a day student.

KDR: A day student at a Catholic academy at Syosset, Long Island, until I dropped out to take care of my mother. So, I'd never really been away from home. I'd been involved in day camps on a couple of occasions. So, I think it was very good for me, the close interaction of all living together, I think perhaps more closely there than you'd find at most schools or campuses. The insights into lots of different disciplines. The easygoing relationship with faculty members. Not all of them, because some of them just retired to their own quarters and didn't come out, but many of them were very forthcoming and that gave us input. Things like we voted to have mush – I've forgotten what we called this. Instead of having normal meals, we would save the dining hall money and send the money to a good cause. Which good cause I've forgotten. But we had cornmeal mush and muesli, and I don't know about the Kellogg's cereal, but the muesli that was created was supposed to be perfect and legitimate and you'd have to feed it to pigs. It was the most dreadful stuff, but we did this once a week, I think, for months and months and months. A significant amount of money was sent somewhere. The somewhere is gone from my memory, and I didn't keep a diary so that's not much help.

MEH: Did you take these things very seriously, like Mush Day?

KDR: Oh, yes. We took the work of the college very seriously, because if it wasn't done the group couldn't function. I think most people did.

MEH: Do you recall community meetings?

KDR: We may have had a few, but it seems to me things were usually announced. I think Bill Levi was in charge that year. I'm not sure. But he declared there would be an interlude, if it was called that, which was great because we were able to catch up with some of the academic work we had. But I don't think we voted on the school calendar or anything like that.

MEH: Right. Where were Albers' classes held?

KDR: Downstairs in the Studies Building, at the end away from the weaving. Does that help?

MEH: Yes, that helps.

KDR: Sometimes outside under the roofed area, if there was something that was going to be particularly messy.

MEH: Did you have a study in the Studies Building?

KDR: I spent a whole lot of time there.

MEH: But you had your own study there.

KDR: Oh, yes. Everyone had a study. If it wasn't in the Studies Building it was in some of these surplus buildings – the Eye, and I think one called The Stables. It was nice that the library was never locked, so if at 2 a.m. you wanted to go look something up, you could go down, turn the lights – all they asked was turn the lights off when you leave. That was great – of course, right by the Studies

Building. Did you know that – what happened to much of the library from Black Mountain? It ended up at North Carolina Wesleyan.

MEH: North Carolina Wesleyan in Rocky Mount. Yes.

KDR: A friend of ours, Walter Gray, who is no longer alive, bought it for Wesleyan's library.

MEH: Right. That I did know.

KDR: I think there was a good deal of theft from the library, because notes were left: "This is missing" or "That is missing."

MEH: You mean here at Wesleyan or Black Mountain?

KDR: No, at Black Mountain. Just as in divinity schools students steal Bibles and other precious materials, I think students at Black Mountain occasionally lifted books.

MEH: What do you remember about Pepé Gonzales? You said he had come from Cuba?

KDR: As I recall, he said his family was wealthy in Cuba, and he was either the black sheep of the family or the family had to leave Cuba. I don't remember when the change in government happened. It seems to me this is long before Castro.

MEH: It definitely would have been.

KDR: Pepe's – Pepe and Jim Herlihy were together pretty much the whole time I was there. Pepe left first, went to New York, and got some sort of a dreary job. He wanted to write, and he was interested in art and sculpture. I saw Jim and his friend several years after we were married. I think his friend at that time was Dick Duane (SP). I could be wrong. It was someone who was a singer,

professional singer – not opera, but you know, Frank Sinatra type singer, nightclub singer. He said that Pepe had gone to Italy and gotten very sick and he didn't know if he'd ever make it back. But obviously he did, because he is listed.

MEH: Right.

KDR: There was one student there whose name, I think, first name was Alex – I think he was Russian – who I heard committed suicide just as year or two after we were at Black Mountain. But I can't dredge his name up. Sorry about that. I don't think I've been able to fill any gaps in for you.

MEH: No, you have. I'm very – sit here very quietly, because I know – I've learned that if you sit, memories sort of flow. It's not like something that happened yesterday. The more you talk, the more memories you'll have. Were you aware of any of the conflicts among faculty members, or any of that stuff?

KDR: Not really. We were all too busy having fun and drinking beer and doing our own thing (LAUGHS). I think a few things were said, but not many. It didn't really seem that big. I don't think financial worries had gotten horrendous at that point. Ken Noland was pretty much just out of service, I think, so he was probably there on GI Bill, and he had some sketches in his study – sketches of airplanes or something, very realistic and very pedestrian (LAUGHS). He did a lot of growing there. Where has he ended up?

MEH: He lives in Vermont now. In Vermont.

KDR: Is he still married to a senator's daughter or something?

MEH: I'm not sure who he's married to now. Or if he's married now.

KDR: Not following the art world, I wouldn't run across anything like that.

MEH: Was Rauschen – No, he was there the next year. He wasn't there the year you were there. Do you remember other students in particular, besides the ones that you've mention? Did you take M.C. Richards' class in writing?

KDR: No. I liked her little girl, though. Estelle was eight or ten and precocious, and very bright. We took long walks and talked. M.C. was definitely one that pretty well stuck with her students, and they were their own little – I don't want to say "clique," but I didn't see much of them. I was dating Howard Rondthaler, so I did get to see both Alice and Theodore, his parents. Then later got to know them both very well at Okracoke. I think you've run me dry, unless you can come up with some questions.

MEH: Do you remember any of the parties? [INTERRUPTION ABOUT PREPARING SUPPER] You were saying that Black Mountain did not have a comfortable relationship with the town?

KDR: No.

MEH: Be more specific.

KDR: Well, the students didn't have much money, so they weren't spending money in the town. I think most things were imported, bypassing the town. As many college towns, Town and Gown do not get along, and I think in Black Mountain that was very much the case, because if you went in to buy something in the town, you got dirty looks. (LAUGHS) It was much better to arrange to go to Asheville.

MEH: Do you think that that was more so, say, than if a student from Warren Wilson had gone into town? Warren Wilson was a small college nearby.

KDR: I think they felt it was totally sinful, totally profligate – is that a word? Probably Communist. Anything you could think of negative, they thought went on there. Cannibalism (LAUGHS), I don't know. But I think it was strained. If the students sensed it, then it must have been. Faculty would have more insights there. Because that's still Bible Belt. There were all sorts of church retreats in the general area. There was almost no contact with the town. Very few of the students had cars. It was too far to walk. At the time – I don't know about later, but at the time I was there, I don't think there was any real drug use. Beer was the drug of use. There was a good deal of beer consumed. But, as you pointed out, the GI Bill, there were an awful lot of people who had been in the service, who were there – I have no idea what they were there for.

MEH: You mean just what –

KDR: The students, I just don't – I think of Black Mountain as more the arts interest. I can't imagine if you were interested in American history going to Black Mountain. Sure, it can be taught there. But that's not where you would expect it. Or physics, for that matter, because the equipment wouldn't be as good as a lot of places. What was that Natasha Somebody –

MEH: Goldowski?

KDR: Yeah, that sounds right.

MEH: Do you remember the photo lab burning? The science room burning? Did that happen when you were there? Maybe the next (OVERTALK)

KDR: There was a small fire somewhere, but it wasn't a place that I had anything to do with so I don't really remember it. It could have been there. I had my first moonshine at Black Mountain. Actually, not at Black Mountain. It was a relative's, a cook in the kitchen named Mallory, who assured me that this was perfectly wholesome to drink. I didn't die from it! (LAUGHS).

MEH: You lived to tell the tale!

KDR: But it was powerful. It seems to me there were some students who attempted to make their own hard liquor – not with stills, but just with fruits and yeast and stuff like that, but I don't remember the details.

MEH: One – The science lab burned, apparently I think it was the fall of '48, after you left, and one rumor was that Natasha Goldowski was trying to make vodka in the lab and that's what caused it –

KDR: Trying to do what?

MEH: To make vodka.

KDR: I can believe it. She was a wild woman, or seemed that way.

MEH: What do you remember about Jim Herlihy?

KDR: Oh, I don't think of Jim really separately. I think of him with Pepe, because they were together all the time. For some reason, they liked me and I liked them. We had fun together and we laughed a lot, and we talked a lot. We talked about what we were reading, what Jim was writing, what Pepe was doing. Jim was interested in acting too, at that time. He had several theatrical portraits, you know, dark studies to go in with various resumés and things. He came from Detroit, as I recall, and had a strong Catholic family upbringing and must have

felt all kinds of guilt (LAUGHS). Never had any contact with him after he went to Florida. I was very sorry to hear he had AIDS, and I think you told me he had committed suicide? I don't fault anybody doing that.

MEH: I don't either.

KDR: But I think he was pretty monogamous with Pepe the whole time I was at Black Mountain, and I don't recall if he left at that time. I know Pepe left before that summer session. I think.

MEH: Do you remember Arthur Penn?

KDR: Art Penn, yeah. I remember seeing him, hearing him, but had no contact with him because he was very busy with the art and dram – Not art, but the drama group. Was Irving Penn his brother, or – ?

MEH: His brother.

KDR: I couldn't remember if it was father or brother. I just remembered a relationship.

MEH: Which group was the part of the group? Penn group?

KDR: Penn and that crowd. I'd have to go through the whole list to pick out some names. There were a couple of gals in there, and – Can't recall the girls' names. There was a student named Levy.

MEH: A boy?

KDR; Not Bill Levi, the faculty. He was a very neat person, and he had an interesting family background of – divorced parents, Quakers on one side. He went on to Reed College. I don't really know – Maybe I could spot him on the list. (MOVES PAPERS) Yeah, Jerry Levy. Jerrold Edgar. He's living up in Arizona.

MEH: He's an anthropologist, Indian anthropologist.

KDR: That's perfect because he had a very inquiring mind and a nice sense of humor.

MEH: It's really too bad – [INTERRUPTION] You were saying that you were remember the library from Black Mountain? (LAUGHTER – BILL RAMSEY).

BR: My goodness. There was the one time that Kendall and I went to Black Mountain. She took me to Black Mountain to show me where she'd gone to school. We got there and the library was open, unoccupied, the wind was sort of blowing through it, and there was a little lady sitting on the walkway leading to the library, tending flowers. She was gardening. When we went in the library, there was a woman who was operating the book press. She was binding a book.

MEH: When would that have been?

BR: Oh, 1954, maybe? '54-'55. She was binding a book, and I had never seen anyone operating a book press, binding a book. I thought, well, now here's Black Mountain, practically abandoned – there was a building that had caught fire and burned, and the people who had gone to fight the fire had sort of given up on fighting the fire and decided to have a weenie roast instead. (LAUGHS) The firefighting equipment was still left sort of derelict in place. This was a very eerie scene for me. I'd never seen anything like it. The lady who was binding the books – I thought about the ruin and decay around me that I saw and here she was busily at work all by herself in this almost abandoned building with the wind sort of blowing through it. I asked her why she was binding a book. She said, "Because it needs doing." It was just so obvious to her: this was what she

did. She bound books. The fact that the library didn't have people to come to it didn't matter. Her job was binding books, and she was binding a book.

MEH: (UNINTELL)

KDR: I didn't recognize anybody who was there.

MEH: Do you remember Nell Rice? She was librarian? Was this an elderly woman?

BR: I honestly don't recall.

MEH: The library was very used up until the end.

BR: Up until the end.

MEH: It definitely was. Many things were taken from it in the later years.

BR: I understood that. I understood that people went in and took what they wanted and didn't come back with it.

KDR: Sometimes. Sometimes they did.

MEH: Yeah, people often took things back, but especially in the later years there was a lot of very serious usage of books that were taken and just never returned.

BR: I understand that one person of our acquaintance availed himself of the architectural books in the library. He furnished his own library from the architectural collection and figured that he might as well have it as anybody else. I found it a very interesting experience to go and see what the place might have been. I was very much impressed with the study hall, where Kendall explained to me that every student had sort of an office or a study in the study hall, where they could go and be alone or get together and talk and –

MEH: It was a wonderful idea.

BR: I think it was a wonderful idea.

KDR: There really were very few classrooms, when you come right down to it.

Classes were so small, they fell just here and there

[END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]