

Interviewee: MARY 'MOLLY' GREGORY  
Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS  
Participant: Lanier Smythe  
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**ON HEARING ABOUT BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE**

It started while I was at school at Bennington College. I was brought up in Framingham. During the Depression we lived in Boston and I went to the Beaver School. John Dewey was influential at Beaver so I'd been "Deweyized" from the beginning. I was in the first class at Bennington so I didn't stray very far. Black Mountain started, I think, two years later. The girl that I roomed with, Ruth Bailey, her brother was a student at Rollins at the time that Black Mountain started. I think he was with the Dreiers and John Rice and Lounsbury and was in on the Blue Ridge starting.

I went straight from Bennington to teach art at the "Cambridge School of Weston." Ruth Bailey went down as kind of an apprentice instructor under Albers the year after we graduated from Bennington. Albers had just joined Black Mountain. Then she came back and joined me at the Cambridge School in Weston and was teaching art there. What was that famous article that came out? Adamic. We all read that were excited about it. She kept talking about this wonderful experience. In the meantime it happened that all sorts of people – it's just a very small world – had intermeshed. Ruth

came back. Nat French was one of the first students, and John French, who was running the Cambridge School in Weston was connected with Black Mountain because of his son. I was living with the Mac Forbes family, who knew the Dreiers. So, all this kind of worked out.

It was perfectly clear that the thing for me to do when I left Bennington was to get a teaching job in sculpture, because that's what I majored in. I was hired to teach at the Cambridge School, and I taught there five years. I had what I called a Five Year Plan, and I was not going to teach for more than five years. So, I decided I'd be a student. But I also decided – even before I knew Albers – that I didn't think sculpture was the way I was going to earn my living. It was clear that if I stayed in sculpture, I was going to be a teacher for the rest of my life because I wasn't a good enough sculptor. And I didn't want to be a teacher. However, I went to Black Mountain and became a teacher again. So, there you are!

But then I left BMC for the same itch not to be a teacher and went and ran a woodworking shop in Woodstock, Vermont for six years. Then I came down here and ran my own shop for the rest of my life. But I did teach, intermittently, afterwards. I had a wonderful job at Concord Academy working with the students in carving. We built a chapel and carved the altar and made the steeple. Then I taught there for, oh, I don't remember, eleven years, I guess, but never full time. I came in the afternoons and did my carving and left so that I could run the shop.

### **ON ARRIVING AT BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE:**

How did I get there? I drove. I had a 1935 V-8 Ford, which I drove down. Then things got tighter and tighter and tighter during the War. I bought the 1935 Ford for 350 dollars, and I sold it to Ben Snead, who was one of the handymen at Black Mountain, for 350 dollars. At the end of the War when it came time for me to come back up here, I bought it back from him for 350 dollars! (LAUGHTER)

Black Mountain had just moved to Lake Eden when I went. They'd left Blue Ridge. It was the first – I think it was the first winter that they were at Lake Eden that I was there.

### **ON TEACHING AT BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE:**

I think I was called an apprentice teacher. I don't know. Oh, well, isn't that what they do with graduate students? (LAUGHS) I was given a small stipend. Actually, I think I was better paid than the faculty because I was extra. I could take classes, which I did. I mean I did some sculpture stuff that was set up with Juppi – Albers. He didn't like clay. He's right, you see. I'm not being critical. He never believed in clay as it had no discipline. It was too flexible. So, we used bricks, but it didn't really work. If I had already worked with Albers for a year or two, I would have known better what he wanted. But I hadn't. I had rather a tough time. (LAUGHS) Actually, from my point of view, I had been rather an established sculptress, but that had to be rearranged. (LAUGHS) That was fine. That was all right with me because I'd more or less decided to scoop toward architecture anyway, and they were doing a lot of building. I was quite good at that. I already was quite a well-trained shop person, so I had all sorts of escape holes. I didn't

need to stick to bricks. I could come at a problem from another angle. I was more valuable in shop work and the sculpture just kind of disappeared.

### **ON BUILDING THE STUDIES BUILDING:**

One of the things that was fascinating was that when I first got there, they had Godfrey, who was the main contractor, and then there were about, I think, five full-time carpenters who were building the Studies Building. But nobody had stopped to kind of fix up the tools that they'd moved from Blue Ridge. So, there was a buzz saw, and there was a jointer, and there was a drill press and so on, but nobody had time to fix them up or get them going. I did that because I thought a buzz saw would be a help. (LAUGHS) It was terribly interesting because for me the idea of ripping boards by hand when you had a buzz saw was for the birds. But the North Carolinian carpenters thought nothing of ripping miles of boards, just by hand.

### **ON THE WOODWORKING SHOP:**

When I got there, there wasn't a woodworking shop. I think that next year we built the shop. That was built by Bob Bliss, not by me, and he was a student, an architectural student.

We made everything. (LAUGHS) That was what was exciting about it, and I think it also was what was significant about it. There was a parallel with what the Bauhaus taught. For instance, that there wasn't just a woodworking shop that did woodworking, and you did your work using different tools in different ways. I felt very strongly that people would come and solve their problems there, whatever their

problems were. We did what was needed. I did quite a lot of equipment for Hansgirg, for his magnesium thing. If there was going to be a party, we made special plates for the party. We did everything that was required of us – me. People would bring their ideas and their problems, and we'd solve them. We'd do them in different ways, and we had a good time.

When I taught later after Black Mountain and after Woodstock, I went to Belmont Day School to teach for a bit, and I found that I couldn't do what was being done, That is, you had a project that everybody did and then after they'd done that project, they'd graduate to the next project. You'd take it in stages. That would last about a week with me. Some child would be stuck, and I'd say, "Well, let's do something different." So, the next thing I knew I had 150 different projects going. I really think that's important. I like it when I go to a school and they have the metal shop and the wood shop and the pottery shop and the painting shop all together so you can go from one to the next. You really learn tools are designed to do a job.

I don't think we made things for sale. We made things for the community. For instance, I made quite a lot of furniture. I made the conference table for the Faculty Room in the Studies Building. I think we made tables for the Dining Room. Certainly, we rebuilt them. Some of them we built from scratch, and we made a lot of furniture for the Studies Building for the studies. The kids used to come up – students – and make a desk for their study and so on. They were all made in the shop, mostly. They were all different. But we didn't sell many. Albers made some things – had some things made. These chairs, for instance, he made, but I think he had them made in Asheville and sold. I don't think they were made in the shop.

**ON THE CHAIR WITH THE HALF-LOCK JOINT:**

I made these [referring to chairs at her home] when I was in Woodstock, Vermont, when I was running a professional shop up there. I don't think I made these at the college. No. I made them in Woodstock. They had been changed. There was a littler one than this, with a handle on the back that Albers had made in Asheville. No, actually, I think Chuck Forberg and I made a couple in the shop at Black Mountain. They were more upright and so on. Knoll, Hans Knoll. He was in New York. He had a furniture business. When I first moved up to Woodstock from Black Mountain, that first winter we made a lot of these chairs that were handled by Hans Knoll in New York. So, that's where I made most of the Albers chairs, when I was in Woodstock. These, I think, came from that time. Actually, Ted made quite a few when he worked for me in Woodstock. Ted Senior. He worked in Woodstock for about, I don't know, three or four months after he left Black Mountain.

**ON BENNINGTON AND BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE:**

That is quite an interesting comparison. Now, I don't want to be negative about Bennington because I think it was a terribly exciting place, and I had an awfully good time. I think what they're doing now is quite exciting. But I got awfully sick of myself at Bennington. I was asked what would develop me next. Absolutely ad nauseam it seemed to me. I was the focal point, and I got sick of it. I actually was mature enough to be sick of it. I used to think, "Isn't there something else!" The opposite was true at Black Mountain. You see, the community was important. Albers had us

looking at other people and other things and absolutely from the way go. We were supposed to respect what other people were doing. So, the whole emphasis was in the other direction. I found that tremendously exciting. That's the main difference I think. It's funny – oh, I think the main difference was that Bennington got almost their full endowment before they opened. You didn't move into a dormitory. It was perfectly appointed. You had the Victorian dormitory and the Colonial dormitory, and everything was really well-run and well-thought out and well-appointed. Black Mountain was the opposite. It was not very neat. We had to make things and make do. So, I think that was the main difference.

There was one thing about Bennington that I had thought was – in case I get the wrong smell of it – important. I think Lee, who was the first president at Bennington, was quite a remarkable fellow. We made all our own rules the first year. There were none when we first moved there. Of course, as I say, we were very different. The student body had just come and so and so forth [GESTURES]. The thing that Lee got across to us, I think, was that we could be independent and different and long-haired if we wanted to, but we had to respect the other people that we were rubbing elbows with. For instance, if we went down to the village, we behaved, and we behaved the way they expected us to. We may be doing kind of exciting experimental things that were against the tide, but we didn't flaunt it. I think that's a parallel to what Black Mountain also insisted on. By having a faculty owned and operated community, we had to test – we had to be responsible for what we did, so that we couldn't just be wide-eyed rebels. We had to relate it to the other community. I think both Bennington and Black Mountain succeeded in that, but very different ways.

Now, how about your heat at this point? Would it be unethical to mention the fact that it's getting colder and colder.

### **ON BLACK MOUNTAIN AS A DEMOCRATIC, FACULTY RUN COMMUNITY**

Oh, dear, I'm stuck. I think it worked. I think it was a good idea. I don't know quite what happened after I left, but up 'til that time I thought it worked. Now, we had to pay a price. In other words, it was a rocky business. It didn't work smoothly. But the reason it didn't work smoothly, oh, I think is legion. I think it was different people, different pressures. I'm not sure whether it ever would have – would work smoothly, but I think it was worth the try. When I heard that they were thinking of having an outside board and giving up, I was furious. A lot of what was exciting about the place and the way it was – the fact that we could go as far as we did in taking black students and so on – was because it was faculty owned and operated, and we were responsible for it, and we did have to do it. Now, actually I think it was a killer assignment. I mean, we really were worn out. We worked on all nine cylinders all the time, and we – But I think it was worth it, myself. I think – Have I answered your question? Well, probably not, but I can't.

Well, there were splits. (LAUGHS) Look at the world! It's lousy with splits. I do think that probably having an outside board and an outside manager and so on does funnel off the splits. I think it's insulation, and it makes it easier to operate without actual schisms. But on the whole, I think maybe it's the price you pay. Personally, I think it was worth it. I don't think the splits – They weren't that bad or were they? I don't know. I don't remember. I think the thing that was depressing was that people did want to take sides,



and they did get cliquy. But on the other hand, they do everywhere. Was I teaching at the Cambridge School in Weston? They had splits that were much worse. But they didn't tear the place apart. They just shoveled off somebody or liquidated them. In academia there are splits wherever you go, are there not? Now, the Black Mountain splits, they were more chaotic perhaps because so much was at stake. I don't think it was the way it was made up, I mean, the framework, the idea, the fact that it was faculty-owned and operated and so on that caused as much strain as the money – the fact that we didn't have any financial security.

The thing that was sad, I think, was that the young people that came back after the War were just gung-ho to change everything. They had all these bright ideas. Somehow we never managed to say to them, "Wait a minute. Just see what you've got, before you want to change it." If we could have gotten that point of view across, which I think we should have been able to – I think that's where particularly Juppi fell down. So, that the people who had invested a lot of energy and security and everything else in the college were just too uptight to accept this wave of bright ideas. And they were hurt. You see. Nobody said, "This is wonderful what you've done." I think that was the – I don't know. That's not very well said. Maybe you'll see what I was trying to say.

#### **ON THE EFFECT OF LOW SALARIES:**

I do think that – there was that insecurity. You could feel trapped. I don't think people did really very often, and it was perfectly clear that there would be a way out. But on the other hand, you didn't feel that you necessarily could do it in a dignified way. I think that was a problem. Also, if you had given – or not given, but, yes, given –

say ten years at that range and then had no security. Not that I'm in favor of tenure, but they – You had none. It was just a question of whether the Board liked you or not. That, I think, wore people down some. They couldn't trust the new people to see what they had put in, which was quite considerable. Now, I just don't know whether – See, I felt that it should have died before it did. Well, it did wiggle along for quite a while (LAUGHS). I think, "If they did it again, what would I change?" is the great question. I don't know. Certainly, I think it was worth doing. The thing that was amazing when you came away from there – it's kind of gone now, but the first few years – when I was working up at Woodstock, for instance, with a bunch of carpenters and workmen was that you suddenly – you realized quite soon that you knew people in a way that doesn't exist mostly [but] for having lived in that community. I mean, you looked at people as whole things. It wasn't just you had this connection and that connection and the other connection. You kind of knew what made them tick. I don't know whether I still use it – I think I somewhat do, but it really makes things quite exciting – is that you do see people much more wholly than you do just being a member of a community, I mean, a town or something.

## **ON JOSEF ALBERS**

He was great really. I mean he was uneven, of course, but he really made everybody look at things, and he was excited. Of course, as a teacher he was fantastic, and as a member of the community he was fine. He was rather uneven. But he was nice. I mean, he used to tidy up people a little. If their shirts were always out, he used to say, "Come on, pull in your shirt," and so on and so forth. He was scared politically, and

I've never been able to quite put my finger on what it came from – whether it had happened in the Bauhaus or – I don't know. But he was scared of a takeover. Therefore, he was a problem on the faculty every once in a while when we'd get stuck. Part of it was – Well, I don't remember. I don't. It took me a long time to realize that his use of the word "politic" and our use of the word "politic" is entirely different. It took a long, and I'm not sure I'm bright enough at the moment to tell you what the difference was. But he would come at it a different way. There was quite a lot of that tension between European and us that gradually emerged or didn't. But, I mean, I think that was a problem for him. I think the Bauhaus takeover was pretty hard for him.

I don't know what he was like at Yale. I know what he was like at Black Mountain. I have a sneaking suspicion that he was a better teacher at Black Mountain than he was at Yale. I think he was really, really primarily excited in making people look at things and see things, and he was terribly excited and he really did. Now, actually, I know what I learned, and I learned entirely different things than Ati did. Both of us would say that Albers changed our way of looking at things. I think that's a compliment to Albers, myself. I mean he not only made us look at little things and how they were put together and made us project how, so that when we designed, we looked at function and form. There was that side of him. But he also made us look independently, I think, and made us, made me feel that it was up to me to make up my mind. I wasn't supposed to be told what I was to see, ever. I find it's quite interesting what he – for instance, the fact that he taught me, without talking about it but by the way he made me look at things, to really respect what was out there, what the other person thought and what the other design was like. And to look at it from their point of view and not just my

point of view. You know, I think all of that was – to me – was what made him terribly exciting. I think in certain ways that came through to other people. I don't know, did I say that wrong? Is that all right? Is that at all clear?

There are certain areas that he apparently planted a bomb in me that I wasn't even aware of. For instance, when people talk about interpreting art or the critics and so on and so forth. I just say, "Ouch!" He verbalized it. He made us feel that the middleman was an absolutely superfluous item, that we shouldn't have them. We shouldn't have critics. We shouldn't have advertising. We shouldn't have interpretation. And sociologists, never! Not even almost.

He really, really made you look. Actually, as a designer, for me – For instance, I find it's interesting that when I do go into a house, and I have an assignment coming – this is when I was young – I could really look at the place. When I went away, I knew how it was put together, what it smelt like, and everything else. Then I could go on from there. I've worked with a lot of students or assistants since, and I find myself saying to them, "Well, where was the header of the windows?" "Oh, I don't know." They just don't see. I think that was his great contribution. Yeah. In everything. I mean he didn't stop at art or architecture or – He really made you look at things.

## **ON THE REFUGEES IN THE COMMUNITY**

On the whole they had an easier time than the Americans. For instance, Jalowetz and Juppi and Straus had come from a – I mean they were glad to be here, Obviously, they had to adjust to everything, but they had no preconceived notion of what they were having to adjust to. So, the fact that they happened to have to adjust to Black

Mountain, they didn't realize that that was pretty unlike the rest of this country. I mean, I think that happened for all of them. And the fact that they didn't have any money and so on. It was kind of all a joke. Not a joke, but it wasn't particularly threatening because they wouldn't have had any in New York. So, that way I think they were more easily excited and didn't have to adjust terribly hard.

Hansgirg, on the other hand, he found it quite difficult. He came from the West Coast and he'd been in this country for quite a while, working with his magnesium and light metals and so on. Then he went to a concentration camp. We got him out and he came to us. He had a harder time adjusting. He didn't see why he shouldn't have more (LAUGHS) than some people and so on. Perfectly so. Whether that was what he was like or whether it was because he had been through a different, came a different route, I just don't know. I don't know what happened. Is he dead?

### **ON THE QUIET HOUSE**

I did a lot with Reed. We worked on the Quiet House. We got the stone out and stuff. I did the benches with him, and the doors, and so on. And the rafters. (LAUGHS) The beams, the woodwork. It was fun. He was a nice guy.

### **ON THE COLLEGE FARM**

I mean, this farm was quite good fun. There was a guy named Penley. He was the farmer. Roscoe Penley, and he had four kids and a wife, Stella. The boys. They were all boys. He finally just went down the road and got a job at Morgan Manufacturing. Then there was the question of what to do so I ran the farm for a while,

and – quite a while. But it was a great godsend because I didn't have to go to faculty meetings. I mean, I'd almost had enough of the world. So, I had a good time. It was very hard work. I don't know whether we decided to have two people. I'm not even sure it was a conscious decision. I don't remember what happened, but we appointed Ray Trayer, and then he wanted us to take on Cliff Moles. And so we did.

### **ON RAISING THE ROOF ON THE FARM HOUSE**

I made the one lung farmhouse into a two-lunger. It was very tight and it had no dormers, so that the upstairs was nothing, just two rooms. I've always thought it was really rather exciting. Here was a tin roof, and so it would bend. What I did was to free the rafters up at the ridgepole and just raised them, and by so doing I gave headroom upstairs everywhere and also I increased the floor plan by – I don't know – was twenty inches “per side,” I think. The rafter went here to here and if you plumbed down from there, you see [DEMONSTRATING]. I was terribly proud of myself. We did that so they had two apartments, the Moles downstairs and the Trayers up, or vice versa.

### **ON THE SUMMER SESSIONS AND THE REGULAR SCHOOL YEAR**

I think actually the mistake was to compare them. They were not the same. I mean the summer sessions were exciting opportunities. I mean both Jalowetz and Juppi had this vision. They saw that we were in a perfect situation, that it was lovely country, it was cool at night. We had people here. So, that's the way it was, and I think that's the way it should have been left.

There's been a lot of yak about the fact that they took the role away from the college. In a way they did, but they didn't. The college was still able to function. They weren't interested in it, particularly, in functioning during the summer, so I think it was a great idea. It certainly lifted the place up and made a tremendous difference, but it didn't really have anything to do with the college, I don't think. When they didn't have the summer sessions, when you were there in the community and you weren't able to go away for the summer vacation, you discovered that there were darn few people that were willing to milk a cow or keep the place going. So, it was fine that they had this. They were terribly exciting, but I don't think they should have been put into competition. I don't think we felt that they were. I think that was after, don't you think? I mean there's quite a few soreheads who say, "People don't realize how important the college was, and the art has taken away from everything." And we didn't bother about that, I don't think.

### **ON HEINRICH JALOWETZ**

Just wonderful. (LAUGHS) How do you mean? He was marvelous. I think he was important – I mean, for instance, he was the opposite of Juppi. For instance, he really, really tried to understand different points of view and fit them together He was much more – He was very tolerant, sensitive. He was a pretty rare person, actually.

## **ON THE EFFECT OF THE LANDSCAPE AND RURAL LOCATION ON THE COLLEGE**

Well, I think the main thing – there are two things to think about. One is the difference between the college at Lee Hall and the college at Lake Eden. I think that the fact that it was a small community in one building and Rice was the head and so on. It was much more intellectual and much more – I expect – kind of rarified. I'm not sure because I wasn't there in the Lee Hall years. But I'm perfectly sure the fact that they were housebound in one building, and that they didn't do much work program business – there was some – had a tremendous effect on them.

Then, I think Lake Eden and the fact that they had all the building had a tremendous effect, too. That was when it became more of a diversified community, and there was more emphasis on the manual stuff which came partly because of the terrain and also the fact that they had to do something. They added the architecture and so on. I think it was a very fatuitous transition for the college because I think it paralleled what Albers was talking about. And opened it up. I'm not sure that the Lee Hall thing might not have become rather precious. I think that's just a prejudice of mine.

Then, the other thing, of course, I think that the country is absolutely fantastic. I didn't realize how great it was until I came away. I mean, those springs that went on and on and on. The woods, the variety of trees. The whole mountain, the whole thing is just amazing. I don't think we ever exploited it particularly. But it got into us. There's no doubt about it.



## ON THE LOCAL AREA

You felt as though the people had been pretty much the same since they got there. They hadn't changed a hell of a lot, and that was one of the things that made them nice. I've been reading rather junky books – the Mitford Books. They're called At Home in Mitford and Light in the Window or something. They're rather sentimental, they're not significant, they're funny. But they're about a small town. She never says where the small town is but she describes it, and the thing that begins to bite you is the difference between the kind of the gentry and the local-yocals. I began thinking, god, this must be North Carolina. It can't be anything else. But she never tells you. I think it was probably Montreat is the way I feel about it. It took me a long time to discover in Black Mountain that when you went into the coves – you'd go to get something when you were farming – that the people that you'd meet there were completely landlocked and that they were just exactly the way that they'd been. There was one guy that I used to go up to see about getting soapstone from, and I'd say, "What can I pay you for this." And he'd say, "Well, I don't know. I get dollar for horses. But don't know for soapstone."

Ben Sneed, for instance. He worked for the college. He bought the car from me and he was one of the maintenance people. I don't quite remember why but I was in charge of the help for a while. So, I was telling them what to do and so on. I went to Ben Sneed, and I gave him a piece of paper. I said, "Will you take the dump truck to Asheville and do these errands." He said, "I want to talk about it." I gave him the note and he got quite mad. He insisted that he wanted to talk to me about it. I got rid of him somehow. Then Bas Allen, who was one of the guys, came up, and I said, "What the hell's the matter with Ben Sneed?" He said, "You know, he can't read." He hadn't been

able to tell me he couldn't read. I couldn't give him a list. To all intents and purposes – he bought my car, he voted and everything – he got along perfectly well without reading. Some parent had died so he'd not gone to school. He'd stayed home and raised his brothers and sisters.

### **ON THE EFFECT OF HAVING THE SCHOOL IN THE SOUTH**

I think it's sort of like my feeling about Ray Trayer – his saying I was so awful about the farm. I think I have a tendency to take what I found and adapt to what it was. I find it difficult to say, "If you put it in Vermont, how would it be different?" It would be different, of course, but what the differences would be, I just don't know how significant. I think the race – black and white business – we did something with that. I think what we did was very, very good, but I don't think it shook us up much. I don't think it was terribly significant, but I think that was all to the credit of the college rather than the discredit. I think the fact that we were kind of careful to take what we did in stride and not say, "Look at us" was good. Whether we had moved it up to New England or something, I think probably we would have found something similar to do but – I don't really feel – Now, we're not starting another. But if you did, I think you could start it wherever you wanted. I don't think it has to be there. I don't feel that. I mean, I think the ideas that go with Black Mountain could work in New York State or Iowa or anything. They'd be different because the place is different. I think essentially they'd have the same quality. One of the things that I always thought was interesting was the fact that when we were busted and didn't have any money and were kind of on our mettle, in lots of ways the standards stayed higher. Then when it got a little bit easier and we had

enough, then I thought it got pretty sloppy. Now, that's probably partly a prejudice of mine – or not only me but a lot of other people, too. I've always thought it was a terribly good example of how privation made us better rather than worse.

### **ON GRADUATION**

We really didn't graduate students unless they were really good. We didn't shuffle them along. Now, I don't know enough about the Olson period to – I just thought that from the things I had heard about it, that they were kind of [huffily?]. They weren't gung-ho to be excellent all the time. But maybe that's not fair.

### **ON LEAVING THE COLLEGE**

Well, I'd had it, I guess. I didn't think they were going to stick to their knitting. I didn't think the old people were being fair to the new ones, and in retrospect, I think the new ones were being less fair to the old ones. I also felt that I represented a balance and I really didn't want to be in that position. I was ready to leave. I mean, I'd had enough of people. I wanted to work and I wanted to really work myself and not tell other people how to work.

### **ON THE EFFECT OF THE WAR ON THE COLLEGE**

Gravely. This has been documented before. Do you want the original interpretation? You see, the European population got bigger. Or if they didn't get bigger, they were more important because the young men like Babcock and – I can't remember the names – Steinau and so on were siphoned off into the army – the Americans.

Anyway, that made quite a difference. Then there was rationing which made quite a difference. We had very few students at one stage of the game.

### **ON THE POST WAR TRANSITION**

I think the thing that was sad was the transition after the war was. That was because I suppose we didn't anticipate what was going to happen. People came back and then we added quite a few to the faculty. They had had their war experience, and they had their ideals that they were going to bring. But they kind of never meshed. Wasn't there a lot of Communists around? It seems to me there was. We had Niebyl. There was quite a lot of post-war tension. Political that made things hard. So, it was not a cohesive group teaching. And that was pretty rough.

### **ON COLLEGE ENTERTAINMENT**

There was Saturday night, famous Saturday night. And that was famous, and it was very important and it was extremely well – good idea. We got clean. We were different, we were polite, we went to dancing, we did all those things. In the evenings, by and large, I think we studied. I don't remember reading, it's funny, the way I do now, but I don't know what I did. I'd go to the shop sometimes and do things. You'd drop in on your pals in the Studies, and yak. You know, it was a community. Then we did have concerts. We went to the movies sometimes. Sometimes we had rather pompous, not-very-good concerts in Asheville. No, I think Asheville culture came to us rather. (LAUGHTER). I guess we didn't go to the movies. There was Roy's. You've heard about Roy's.

Roy's was a joint. Steve Forbes inaugurated it. He was a student, and he thought it was important for the college to have a place where they could go off campus and (SOUNDS LIKE see-gashway). So they did. And that was at Roy's.

## **ON BLACK MOUNTAIN DURING THE WAR**

I almost drowned in the carrot pressure cooker at Warren Wilson College. (LAUGHTER). It was the worst experience I'd had in my life. During the War, you know, we were supposed to grow food for the starving Armenians or whatever they were. I had a terrible time. I dumped one dump load of cabbages into one of the ravines outside of Asheville once, because I couldn't get rid of it on the Farmers' Market. The market was gutted with cabbages. They'd say, "Well, how are you going to get them all out of here?" And I'd say, "Well they need them in the Middle West." "Well how are we going to get them to the Middle West?" (LAUGHS) Anyway, so I dumped one load.

Oh, the carrots. I grew too many carrots. I had millions of carrots. It was terrible. Then I conceived of the idea: of course, we should can them for the community." Ha Ha. So, I took a dump load, dump truck full of carrots to Warren Wilson Junior College, because they had a canning device, an arrangement and everything, plus the pressure cooker. You'd put them in the cans and then you'd put them in the pressure cooker. Well, that was fun, and I was producing them hand over fist, thousands of them. We'd diced them up and everything. Suddenly, I opened it up one time, and looked down in the bottom. Two cans had busted. And there were millions of carrots. It was deep. It was about four feet deep. I had to get onto a chair to look down at them. Then I decided I'd climb in. Well, I don't know why I did what I did. Oh, I think I

thought I could reach. That was it. I mean I was hung over it with my stomach, and I thought I could reach down there and get the carrots. I couldn't quite get the carrots so I went a little further, a little further, and then I braced it with my elbows. The next thing I knew, I was down there upside-down, and there was nobody within miles! (LAUGHTER) I really didn't think I was going to be able to get the lower half down and twisted around and come up again, but I finally did.

### **ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE**

That's a terrible question! Parboiled. What do I think is the sine qua non of – ? [LONG PAUSE] I've actually spent quite a lot of MY time thinking that we've spent too much time remembering, but that's not fair either. I don't know. I'm sure there are hundreds of experiments one way or another that have the same kind of or slightly different vitality and uniqueness that should be remembered. But I don't necessarily think that Black Mountain has any completely unique – I'm not sure! I think it's unique in the lives of us that were there.

What did we learn? I don't know. I don't even know what we learned. I mean, I think there are certain things that you can check off the list. For instance, I approve of the fact, personally, that they had no outside board, that they were self-owned and self-operated. I think it almost killed us, but I think that was significant. I'm not sure, but I think in a way it's the most significant thing about it. Actually, that's not new, because that's the University of Virginia and lots of other places. But I think if I was going to start an institution, I would do that.

There was no tenure, but they wanted tenure. The fact that they didn't have it was not a question of philosophy. (LAUGHS) They didn't get it. They never gave me a chance to fight on that one. I think a lot of it was coincidence. Not – is it coincidence? Yes, I suppose it is. I mean the stage just happened to be set right for a lot of these things. How they happened to get to North Carolina? It's funny.

DISCUSSION OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF WORK BY MARY GREGORY

**MG:** All right, this is a bird feeder and that's a chicken house (OVERTALK).

**MEH:** That's a bird feeder, okay. And what is this down here?

**MG:** That's a pigeon house. That was quite exciting – These panels are placed – It's an octagon, and then this is a strip window that goes from there to there. It makes it very – Joinery is very easy. Okay, you got the picture? (UNINTELL) pictures. Some of these have been robbed because I gave some photographs to Black Mountain College.

**MEH:** Those were the ones for the exhibition.

**MG:** Yes. This is the house next door that you interviewed me in. It was one that I built for Mrs. Amory.

**MEH:** Now is that on Weston Road?

**MG:** Yes, right next door here. Now these, I think you've seen some of these. These are the chairs in my kitchen downstairs, and that's a table that belongs – that was – And then that's downstairs, and then that's a coffee table, and this is this table, extended. And that's a –

**MEH:** Now was that for the Amory House? The table?

**MG:** No. This was – Actually, this was built for a guy named Thomas in Woodstock, Vermont including the chairs, but then Eli and Fernando have a table like that. This was Charlie (?) only. Okay, take it away. This is the (UNINTELL) – No it's not. That's the '50s. This was a house in Boston, one of those brownstones, and they wanted to move the kitchen upstairs, but I had to put it between the two rather formal living rooms. And so I



didn't disturb the – We let the ceiling go all the way through. Very exciting. This is a dining room in Cambridge, and this is – This was in Woodstock. And this is, this was kind of a tour de force. I wouldn't do it again, but then that's the way the guy was. These are different. That, I was kind of interested in how I used the inside of the doors. And this was kind of a nasty assignment, because I felt there was an awful lot of cabinetmaking, cabinet work, and I didn't really think to have that many doorknobs, didn't think doorknobs would be very good, so I – This, you can open these and shut them without any hardware. I thought it was kind of fun. This house was a little tiny two-family house, and the person who owned wanted it to be open and free inside, so I took out all the partitions and she made trusses down like this from the ceiling. So if you lay on your back, you could see where all the partitions went, but because I just trussed them, I mean it was a cheapy job. And then I did these arches. And then that's the stairway that I built going up, and those are the French doors. And I liked those. I think they were (UNINTELL). That's – did. (UNINTELL) More of the group, solo. It's kind of fun. I dug it into the side of the hill, so that the ups-, the north wall, was just one story and then the kitchen and stuff is all below grade. And this is the front of it. You can see what happened. And that's a house in Vermont.

**MEH:** Now were you doing these when you were at Woodstock, or later?

**MG:** No, that's – The Ithaca one was – Well, I don't know. That's quite recent. This was late 70s maybe? This was mid-late 70s, maybe.

**LS:** That's a beautiful railing.

**MG:** Don't you think that's kind of a neat idea, those – going all the way down?

I thought that was kinda fun. And one year we made this thing. That's the 15th Corinthians, and one student did that angel and another student did that angel, and the kids – I had 24 people working on it – and they did different letters, so that it didn't have one word that was too heavy. So kind of play around. And then the next year they did the alter, and another year we did the pulpit, and still another year we did the steeple. And that's the steeple going on. There it is, on.

**MEH:** So this was very much Black Mountain in that you weren't just doing little exercises, you were doing real stuff.

**[END OF INTERVIEW. END OF TRANSCRIPT.]**