

Interviewee: PETER JACK ROBBINS "PETE" HILL
Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS
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[BEGINNING OF SIDE 1 (This interview is only on Side 1)]

MEH: This is Peter Jack Robbins Hill.

PH: Holy Mackerel. With two B's. All the Robbinses with two B's in America are related to me, unless they're Russian Jews who changed their name from Rabinsky. That's a litany that I learned as a child.

MEH: Oh, really. So, that's a family name.

PH: Yes. Baskin-Robbins. Otherwise, you get a rate on the ice cream.

MEH: Does Baskin-Robbins have two B's?

PH: I think so.

MEH: Okay. You were at Black Mountain when?

PH: '40-'42. [FEEDBACK SOUND AND ADJUSTMENTS]

MEH: Now you were at Black Mountain—

PH: '40, Fall of '40 to the Winter of '42. I went into my third year, and then was drafted.

MEH: How did you come to be at Black Mountain?

PH: Well, I followed Barb. She, Barbara Hill Steinau went there by reading Louis Adamic's *Education on the Mountain*, and I read it but I didn't

make the crucial decision. She made the crucial decision. I made the decision to follow suit.

MEH: Were you a younger brother?

PH: Yeah.

MEH: Had she already left when you went? No, they stayed a long time. They were still there.

PH: Right. Yeah, in fact we left about the same time. She stayed on until early '83 (*sic*) until he got a job. We left about the same time. He went to find a job, and I went to wait and be drafted.

MEH: Did you go directly from high school?

PH: No. Well, I spent a year after high school kind of playing catch-up. I hadn't taken some math and so on, and so I waited a year. So, I was three years behind Barb.

MEH: Why did you decide to go to Black Mountain? I mean you knew about it from her, but you had other options, I'm sure.

PH: Well, I don't think I thought I had other options. I think it was one of those givens. I don't think I made a very conscious decision about going to college. It was—I came from a family, my parents had been to college, my older sister—so, I was going to go to college. I wasn't driven, I wasn't focused or anything like that. It was—I was floating along. I was in the flow.

MEH: In the flow. But you must have heard good things from her about the college, didn't you.

PH: Yeah, sure. Yes.

MEH: And you knew about the work program and—

PH: Yeah. Mort came out to marry her. It was I guess in the summer, August, I think, before I went, and so I got to know him.

PH: Did you have any real expectations when you went?

PH: I don't think so. My feeling now, and my emotions tend still—I'm working on this—but they tend to overwhelm my rationality and the memory traces.

MEH: Well, let them overwhelm.

PH: Yeah, okay, well, the overwhelming emotion thing is I was this callow kid who was as ready for college as a fly is to run a computer. I was light years away from this stuff. I went there, and I think I was a reasonably capable superficial fitter-inner, but I don't think that I—You know, there's some level, some intellectual level, at which it made sense and I appreciated it and so on. But I think at the deeper, deeper levels I was like somebody who'd had a lobotomy. There was some kind of a philosophical deep understanding lobotomy that, fortunately, those are reversible, and I've been progressively in the last few decades getting a replacement pituitary and whatnot. So, that's the way I feel about it, and I think of—(LAUGHS) The people whom I identify with as having been like me didn't come to this reunion. (LAUGHS).

MEH: (LAUGHTER) So, maybe you progressed a little bit.

PH: Well, I think I did, and it'd be fun to see some of those people and see did they, you know.

MEH: I bet they'll be at the next reunion.

PH: Well, you wonder and you hope, yeah.

MEH: So, you—

PH: I'm identifying myself as a late bloomer.

MEH: Did you have any idea what you wanted to study?

PH: Yeah, I knew. Yeah, I knew that. See that was a level at which I functioned fine.
Did I give you my historical letter?

MEH: No. Shit.

PH: Oh, well, I think I've given them all away. (OVERTALK) I'll send you one.

MEH: I'll give you my card.

PH: And on it, let's write "Send historical letter." Well, it's a brief thing, of course, and touching on some of these. I went into biology. I knew I was going to be a biologist. From early on animals were the name of the game. I never did finally become a biologist.

MEH: But that's what you—Was biology being taught at Black Mountain?

PH: Dick Carpenter. Dick Carpenter, whose Ph.D. dissertation was The Grassland Biome. He was an animal ecologist, you know, one of the early breed, and he had been a Rhodes Scholar and was a scholar, a pedant, and so on, who did a wonderful Charleston. He danced—Oh, I'd love to have learned the Charleston as much as comparative anatomy.

MEH: So, you had someone to study with.

PH: Yeah, yeah. I don't think he thought too much of me, because I wasn't, I wasn't that focused. I was interested, but I wasn't, I didn't know what study meant, you know.

MEH: Had you not learned to study in high school?

PH: Not in high school, nooooo.

MEH: Did you go to a traditional high school?

PH: Yeah, just an ordinary one. I went to a couple of earlier schools. I went to the Marietta Johnson School of Organic Living in Fairhope, Alabama, single-tax Quaker, single-tax community. I had been to the Lincoln School in New York, in Manhattan, which was the junior part of a progressive school. It was part of the progressive school system. My father was a teacher in the Walden School in New York, an old-line progressive school.

MEH: So, you had a progressive school background.

PH: Yeah, right, right. My stepmother was Elizabeth Goldsmith, the principal of the school, and Anne Goldsmith, whom I met for the very first time out on the street here, walking to the Shindig, my cousin by way of Elizabeth—you know, step-cousin and so on. We'd known about each other through the decades—

MEH: But never met.

PH: Never met.

MEH: And you both were at Black Mountain?

PH: No, she wasn't, but her cousin Nell was, and Gerda was, and, you know, there were just slews of our—

MEH: So, the Hills and Goldsmiths were related.

PH: Yeah, yeah.

MEH: Like stepbrothers and sisters.

PH: By way of Elizabeth, my father's—

MEH: Step-cousins?

PH: Yeah.

MEH: So, you studied with Dick Carpenter, whom I assume was a fairly traditional teacher.

PH: He was very traditional. But, here's a thing. Comparative anatomy and embryology had—there were two or three of us. There was one who I want to get hold of, and it may be too late to ask those people. I'll have to write them letters, I guess. Renate Benfey was a student who was in that same program. Whatever happened to little Renate? I don't know. I should ask Nan Oldenburg, but I can write to her.

MEH: I may know. I may have information.

PH: Oh, I'd visit her.

MEH: Probably been displaced by some botanical information. So, you, but you studied something other than biology.

PH: Oh, yeah, the general things, but the thing that Dick did, untraditionally, because there was one of those comparative anatomy-embryology—one of them, there were two of us and one there were three of us—and we did drawings, embryological drawings, microscopic stuff, in four color India ink by stippling—the kind that are drawings for textbooks, that quality stuff. That was one of his excesses, you might say. Another was—in comparative anatomy I remember we took turns teaching the course. You know, we'd ahead of time take a lecture and prepare for it and then talk to the one or two others, and, god, that was a way to learn. Because these are just these—These are drudge courses that aspiring physicians and whatnot take. Nobody likes comparative

anatomy or embryology. You have to do it. He made it into something vital in, you know, not totally traditional ways but in a traditional frame.

MEH: But there was no problem with a teacher teaching in a fairly traditional manner at Black Mountain?

PH: Oh, no, no.

MEH: No supervision (OVERTALK)—

PH: No, it was up—You taught the way you wanted to. You attracted people or not. I expect he got all the people who cared about embryology and anatomy.

MEH: Did he die while you were still there?

PH: No, but he died relatively soon after—from testicular cancer. It was kind of real sad.

MEH: Scary. Very fast, I think.

PH: Yeah. So, I don't know where he was, or I don't know anybody (OVERTALK)

MEH: Apparently, it was a very tragic loss, because he had already published at that point, and—

PH: And I would like to have gotten to know him in a later frame. He didn't need to feel bad about my studying inadequately.

MEH: So, what other courses did you take? Are there any courses you particularly remember?

PH: Well, I remember taking drawing from Juppi, you know. I learned what foreshortening meant, and the whole way of looking at that, and perspective and holding a pencil up and getting a distance thing there, and—Oh, and there were interesting analogies from that later on in forestry, of all strange things. But the

sense that you could see things and that I, who felt I had no capacity for that, I just was cut off. But he helped me break through in the sense that that was possible. I could have gone in that direction if I had the inclination, I believe. And he was the one who made that a possible way. Another realm—breakthrough—was John Evarts in music appreciation, and the idea that you can hear parts of a symphony. You can hear a bunch of different instruments in there. I had no notion—It's like, you know, with *pointillisme* or, well like a newspaper photo, that you can get close enough and you can see the individual components. John showed me that that was part of the reality. John, gosh, one of the best courses was dancing. You know, we all learned to foxtrot and waltz, and I'm a hot Viennese waltzer now, and very seldom do I find somebody else who's a real Viennese waltzer.

MEH: And he taught you—He played the piano, but he taught you.

PH: Yeah. I don't know. I don't know that anybody—

MEH: Was Elsa Kahl there when you were there?

PH: Who?

MEH: Elsa Kahl

PH: That sounds familiar.

MEH: Fritz Cohen's wife, she was a dancer?

PH: Yeah, but I don't think that's—

MEH: You don't think that's who taught?

PH: I don't think that's who did it. I don't know how we learned. But God!

MEH: John Evarts was a (UNINTELL)

PH: Oh, fantast—

MEH: That's an example of how one person can control, you know, influence the spirit of the school.

PH: He would play as long as people would get down on their hands and knees and beg him. Long past reason, you know, and he would do it. Oh, he was so caring. I think he was so caring a person. That was magical.

MEH: And so when you went, the college was at Lee Hall, the first year?

PH: Yeah. Yeah.

MEH: So, you arrived the year of the great building.

PH: Right. So, we got in the truck, and we went over and we did the—I was a concrete person, you know, when it was at that stage. I was an oak floor blind nailer, and—

MEH: And you didn't feel this interfered with your quote "education"?

PH: Oh no, the work program was very important to me, because I could excel in that, and I didn't feel that confident in the intellectual domain. One thing I do remember in a psychology course with Jack French, which I don't know if anybody ever mentions Jack French—and John Stix was in the course, and Mary Ann Riegger?, Mary Jane Riegger? and a number of the other—the lights, you know. They were the big lights, I was one of the little lights, and a question was asked—We read T. C. Schneirla's paper on army ants in Guatemala, or someplace in Central America. We were given the information, what they turned up, and then we were to figure out how could we explain their behaviors. It made kinda sense to me, and I wrote it up and it was great. These other great

lights didn't think very well in those kind of mechanistic terms. I guess that was the first time I got a boost. There's more ways than one of doing these intellectual things. I was the one who figured it out best. That was important, because I think I didn't—I had a pretty shaky ego concept at that time. The work program really was good on that. The bad thing was that I was so good a worker that I got to be kind of a straw boss, and I didn't have much patience with other people. I was something of an autocrat. It was control stuff, so. Rrrrrrgh, that stuff that I—You know, that's a whole realm that I think a Black Mountain of today would be able to cope with a whole lot better than—The human potential movement—I got up yesterday and made a question-comment about that. That's—I guess I regret that, because I think that for my own growth I might have not stayed in neutral for several decades after Black Mountain in terms of my own emotional growth and liberation. So, would that there have been—

MEH: Would that had that been, Black Mountain might have had fewer explosions.

PH: Yeah, it could have weathered things. For example, I remember we were supposed to do fundraising whenever we were on vacation, and I was scared to death to be fundraising. I don't think I raised a nickel for the place, and I wish I had. I think that maybe there would have been ways of dealing with my fear, especially if I had been able to acknowledge it, if there'd have been the kind of safety for me to acknowledge that. Because I've done fundraising since and been in workshops. You deal with the fear at the very beginning.

MEH: Are there particular things that you remember about the college that you think are significant? Anecdotal, or scenic, or—

PH: Well, it'll appear in the proceedings—I did an anecdote, which—We were all asked to do anecdotes and I did mine at the last, So, you can have this one. This is about the second time I took the junior-senior division exam, So, you don't need to read that now. But that was certainly an important event. I don't know how much I say about that, but—I took it in my second year for trial and I think I learned—I don't think I did very well in it. You know, if you take it for trial, you say, you announce that, then no matter how well you do you don't go into the senior division. So, this takes the terror out of it, intentionally. So, the second time, I guess I took it in the fall of '42, just a few months before I left. I don't know whether it was just before the end of the previous year. But in any event, I had figured out something about self-discipline, about how to study, and what I wanted in the world. You know, it was just beginning. It took more or less two years to figure that out, and one of the qualities about the college I admire, respect, and appreciate is their tolerance for my dithering around. You know, for my initial level of unreadiness and their putting up with me, you know, till I did in fact find a place, find my way. So—I heard some people yesterday talk about—Well, I came at seventeen, you know. I resonated to that. I was probably eighteen or something, but (LAUGHS)—

MEH: There's a big difference between going there directly out of high school and after you've been, say, in the army for a couple of years, or somewhere else for a couple of years.

PH: Yeah, right. So, that was a hallmark. I don't think another school would have allowed me to do that slow evolving.

MEH: I haven't read your anecdote, but when you took the senior division exam the second time, did you pass?

PH: Yeah.

MEH: But you left?

PH: Yeah, I was drafted. (LAUGHS)

MEH: I guess so.

PH: I got this all-expenses-paid tour by Uncle of the Western Pacific, et cetera.

MEH: Do you think if you hadn't been drafted you would have stayed to graduate?

Barbara had graduated, hadn't she?

PH: No, she never did graduate. Because family came along and sidetracked her. I think I was on that track. You don't know what events would have conspired, but that was the direction I was going, I think. I think I probably made a pretty good show of it, you know, that I would have—I was becoming productive.

MEH: And Uncle Sam helped you become more productive, in its own way.

PH: Well, in the life of the mind—?

MEH: What do you mean by "becoming productive"?

PH: Well, I think I was becoming internally organized enough that I was learning how to study, how to master ideas and information and how to relate things together. How to become a student. That was new in my life. I'd never done that before. So, I think I would have gone on and become some sort of competent biologist probably. You know, I look back at my life: would I like that? If all that happened robbed from me so I could have done that life?

MEH: What did you do instead?

PH: Well, instead I went on—I did the War, and came back to academia, first to the University of Connecticut and then the program wasn't as good as I thought it was going to be, and I went to Michigan, and studied wildlife management there, and then—before getting a bachelor's even—got swafted off to the tropical Pacific again, because—I loved it. The Pacific was great. Everybody else wanted to be in Paris [PRONONCED “PAREE”]. Not me. I wanted to be just where I was. It was magnificent.

MEH: Wafted off again, Was this through—

PH: Well there was a little foundation that wanted somebody to set up a scientific field station in Western Micronesia—Palau.

MEH: Had you finished your degree then?

PH: No, hadn't finished it. I had lots of credits, but I hadn't gotten a degree. Three institutions and no degree. And—Four, five institutions. So I went out for a couple of years in Western Micronesia and it was great, it was wonderful, and then came back to the same—to the University of Michigan and got my bachelor's, got a master's, got to be a candidate for a Ph.D. and, you know, all-but-dissertation and—Then I got the siren call again to go back to Micronesia and to go and be a teacher in Central Caroline Islands, and my wife and I had been in Palau together. That was it. I don't think we talked about it. I think we said—We looked at each other and we knew that was what we would do. So, I left. Baled all my baled hay, you know, plant specimens I'd stowed away, and I never went back. Spent—Went out for a two-year contract and stayed for twenty. So, that was my career.

MEH: That was your career, right. So what were you doing there?

PH: Well I went out as a teacher, and then became an acting principal. Not through plan. I wasn't on a track, but the principal left and so it was me, and then I became a supervisor and then I became an administrator.

MEH: And the school was—?

PH: Well, it was a bunch of schools. The first was a central school for all of the kids in the trust territory to come to a boarding high school. But they were in their twenties and some in their thirties. They were grown-ups. But educationally, in our American terms, they were behind. We had this wonderful thing with no holds barred. It had some Black Mountainesque things that—the lit teacher would—They read the great American novels, these kids from the Stone Age, you know, and they did well. I taught navigation and agriculture and social studies and math and science and taught them how—We derived, inferred things from our work with pendulums.

MEH: And then when your career was over, did you come back to the States then?

PH: Yeah, I stayed a year-and-a-half and was doing a variety of things.

MEH: You really reared your family there.

PH: Well, except my wife and I split up, and she took the kids and went to Guam, and so she raised the family there. I was in the background. So I came back and my reentry pad was Yellow Springs, Ohio, where Antioch College is and where a little outfit called Community Service is. Somebody mentioned the TVA yesterday. Well, the architect of the TVA was Arthur Morgan, the first Chief Commissioner. And he also was the person who took Antioch and raised it from

being a dying little church-related thing into a pretty dynamic, exciting, experimental place, and he popularized cooperative education. You'd go off and work, and come back and study, and so on. So, in his dotage, he founded a little thing called Community Service, which was a little teeny pipsqueak nonprofit, educating, advocating, for face-to-face communities expansions. And I'd gotten his writings when I was out in Micronesia. So, I settled there and worked in Community Service. I took Arthur Morgan on his last walk, because he was doddering.

MEH: And what did you mean by community service?

PH: Well, providing the public with information about community, the values of community. One of his writings was the community's need for an economy.

[Momentary Technical Problem]

MEH: I had asked you what you meant by community service.

PH: Well, one of his writings was the community's need for an economy. And his position at Antioch, he did fertilizations between Town and Gown, and helped a bunch of little industries develop in Yellow Springs. Although it's a satellite of Dayton, it's a net importer of labor because of all these things that didn't cave in to a big city but built its own strength locally. So he was into all those kinds of approaches and was a great catalyst, getting other people to do things like that. So, I got that idea into my head of the possibilities for community. I liked the idea. I'd lived rurally in small (INAUDIBLE), so now I live in an intentional community.

MEH: Now you live in one.

PH: Yeah.

MEH: And so you mentioned that you teach non-violent protest now, whatever. Now, how did you get involved in this?

PH: Well, after Yellow Springs for a couple of years—Also on my list from the vantage point of Micronesia was the name Movement for a New Society. I got involved in some of their regional activities. [IRRELEVANT REMARKS ABOUT ANOTHER PERSON IN THE VICINITY] So, I went after a couple of years in Yellow Springs to the training center of Movement for a New Society in Philly (PH)—moved into a thing called the Light Center, a bunch of cooperative houses in a neighborhood and entered their long-term training program for radical feminist nonviolent activist. Became one. So, that's how I got involved. I think from the vantage point of Micronesia, I wasn't sure whether I could hack that. Something about coming back, by the way—When I came back, I thought here I've had this incredible career in Micronesia and everybody will eat me up, they'll just want to know about this, you know, and get my information. You want to know what happened? Nobody wanted to know nothing no-how about what happened in Micronesia or its existence, nil. I suppose in 1974, the eighteen years since I've been back, not more than a half a dozen people have wanted seriously to know anything about Micronesia or about me in Micronesia.

MEH: Really amazing.

PH: Yeah. So, anyhow, I went to Philadelphia for two-and-a-half-years and met Marty, whom I married (INAUDIBLE) rural, social change focus for me.

MEH: Did the work that you were doing in Micronesia [TECHNOLOGICAL PROBLEMS]

PH: Well "nesô's" means island—

MEH: So, small island. What was the school—Was this basically a traditional school that you were teaching in, structure-wise? Other than the fact that students apparently came at different ages.

PH: Yeah, with different ages and with a lot of stuff, but not much in the way of our formal Western education. Well, it was different in that the principal was an art school graduate from this area, from San Francisco area, and had never been a traditional educator, and read avariciously, just everything in sight and knew a lot about the world, and didn't want a traditional—The system was traditional, but he was the principal and his boss was a guy who knew about progressive—was a progressive educator, again I think from the Bay Area. Walnut Creek? Was that his school? I don't know. He ran a pretty loose ship. The system was formally conventional, but he ran it kinda loose and gave a lot of lead to people. So this school was pretty wild, pretty unconventional. When this guy left and I took over just briefly, and then I went on to other things and then it became a totally conventional school, one of those sad stories.

MEH: When you were there, did you—you were teaching—were you involved in the biology of the area?

PH: Yes. Yeah. In agriculture teaching, we went out and did a lot of things (INAUDIBLE). I was very much into fire succession, interested in the, well the whole situation of those islands has been fascinating.

MEH: So, what is the nature of the community you live in now?

PH: Well, it's a dozen adults and a half-a-dozen kids, and the adults, there's a physician who works in a poor neighboring county. He's the only physician in the county. There are a couple of people who were key in developing a nonprofit, the focus of which is creating employment, building jobs, by helping the formation of worker-owned, worker self-managed entities, and also networks of small enterprises that can't do a thing by themselves but if they network, they can—helping them do the networking. We've got a paralegal in the most progressive law firm in town, and a social worker and a couple of schoolteachers, one of whom was the lead teacher in our progressive school. So, there's a diversity of people and interests in things. There's an incredible cabinetmaker and house designer, housebuilder.

MEH: So, this community—is it like a community of houses, living on the same property? What defines the community is being something of an interested group of people living together.

PH: Well, we own—We formed a nonprofit to do it, and so we all own memberships in the nonprofit. We meet regularly and we plan regularly and we do work, we share work, and we share a common pantry—not everything, but dry stores, the kinds of things that are in bottles and jars. Mostly we buy in bulk and you just use from that as you need them. We share a lot of values in common. The most basic thing is holding land and houses together. The houses are owned by the community.

MEH: By the community. Looking back, how do you think your—looking back on your life since you left Black Mountain is affected what you did there, if at all. I mean if you had gone to a conventional school, how would things have been different?

PH: It's hard to say, because a lot of things are clearly harmonious [FIDDLING WITH EQUIPMENT]. A lot of things are clearly harmonious in logical evolutions from Black Mountain, but it's not—they're not unique, you know, a lot of them. And Movement for a New Society, I don't know of any MNS people who had Black Mountain connections, but they're the kinds of cats you'd expect to grow from those—

**[END OF INTERVIEW AS TRANSCRIBED BY DISSANAYAKE.
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—litters. So, it's hard to say these are any cause-and-effect things, but I think the pattern of my life was one that Black Mountain supported, for sure. And it seems to me that there's so much latency there. That I grew up emotionally so late that—you don't know how long was that stuff when it was in the deep freeze. Did it tend to die off or was it just waiting for the morn, for the sun. Do you know? I'd be hard put to say for sure

MEH: You had a fairly progressive background before you went to Black Mountain.

PH: Yeah, yeah.

MEH: Thinking and—

PH: Yeah, I'd like to say that it was a profound influence, and I want to be careful about that. It's like when the draft came up. I thought maybe I was a CO, but I wasn't convinced enough so I accepted the draft. And, you know, my kind of

integrity kind of balks at making that claim now, you know. It seems a little presumptuous. But I'd sure like to.

MEH: The patterns of our lives are so complex.

PH: Yeah, yeah.

MEH: [UNINTEL WORD] Is there anything we haven't discussed that comes to mind that you—people, events.

PH: Events that come to mind are kind of trivial. Like, I remember playing touch football outside the dining room or some place on December 7 of 1941, and somebody said, "Hey, the war's on!" or something or other. And we went in and listened for a few minutes. But then we went back out. We didn't listen to all that momentous stuff. We went back to our touch football game. Just as I was madly in love with Cynthia Carr, whom I think was less madly in love with me, but we went off for a bike trip—bike ride—a substantial one on the day that Albert Einstein spoke. So, we rode through Albert's talk and happened to meet him with I think Ted Dreier showing him around the grounds. We were pushing our bikes down the path, and so, I shook his hand. And that was my connection with the great man because I was in love.

MEH: I'm sure he would have understood.

PH: Yeah, right. So, those kind of trivial things. I remember, several people mention the coal. Well, I remember getting it sometimes from Black Mountain. But we'd get it from Marion, I think, down below the mountain. We had this switchback and this substantial ride. And they did chunk coal, and we did at least some of the time. We did big shovel coal and we shoveled it. And by that I got to be—I

think Rudy Haase and I were two really good coal buddies. And maybe Ike and I don't know who else. And we—that was great. And were slaying dragons then. We came in and we had the dragon's ears as we rode with the coal into school. Well, that was great.

MEH: Everybody talks about the black—especially the girls—the dark circles around the eyes. They'd take a shower and just leave it.

PH: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So, that kind of thing. The work program. Charlie Godfrey, the construction foreman, a wonderful guy, who knew how to deal with us. I mean, here we were. We were really *auslander*. He did wonderfully well. And I remember one day—I must have been sawing something—he says, “You know how to sharpen a saw, Pete.” I said, “No.” He said, “You shouldn't get to be a day older before you learn. Come on over here.” He taught me how to sharpen a saw, and I treasure that. I sharpen saws from that day to this. And I teach people how to sharpen saws whenever I get a chance because it feels like that's a good thing to pass on. And I remember learning running sets—not square sets. Running sets where you just have one big circle of couples. And there'd be a hundred—fifty or a hundred—two hundred people. And is our time running out?

MEH: No, no.

PH: Okay. [UNINTEL] [PEOPLE SHOWING ASAWA STUDIO]

MEH: It's okay. No problem.

PH: And then you'd say—instead of first couple—do you square dance?

MEH: When I was a kid.

PH: “The first couple out to the couple on the right” Well, so that’s “Odd couple out, couple on the right.” So everybody is dancing. Nobody stands there waiting to dance. And we learned to do that in Swannanoa.

MEH: You went down to dance in Swannanoa.

PH: Yeah, yeah. And I learned and loved it.

MEH: Where did people dance there?

PH: Well, there was a barn. And I guess a barn dance—some big hall—and it was very barnlike, as I recall. Then I became a square dancer at Black Mountain. Tommy Brooks and I tried it. He was a little more hesitant, so I went out and I became an accomplished square dance caller and called for dances at Black Mountain. That was fun. And I called—also something took to Micronesia—I called square dances for [SOUNDS LIKE: Polynesians]. They were wonderful and they loved it. We had fun. We’d go way out in the boondocks, you know, and square dance. Get people going. We square danced before the king. It was great. So, a couple of things I wanted to tell you.

MEH: That’s a Black Mountain legacy.

PH: Yeah, yeah. Right. And, see this is a long tradition of alien dancers coming in. The Germans marched in line. So all through Micronesia, Micronesians developed dances out of the marching of German soldiers [UNINTEL]. But a buddy of mine in education in Black Mountain, a guy named William Vitarelli—“Vit”—he’s living in Maui now.

MEH: Was he at Black Mountain?

PH: Well, not as a student. He and somebody else did one of those things during the—when was it—during the 50s?—in the 40s, I guess. Things about rural community development and education in the South, and there were really exciting things that happened. Kind of like Highlander. I don't think he ever went to Highlander. But he visited Black Mountain, and in the McCarthy era he was too "pinko" for the powers that be, and so he got called as a security risk. And he didn't go easily. He fought and he fought right up to the Supreme Court. And every step people tried to buy him off. And the Supreme Court, it was all or nothing. If he lost, he had nothing. All his expenses—legal, his career. And he had the guts to go ahead for it. And he won at the Supreme Court level. And he's in a book about the McCarthy era. One of the classic cases. And he said—I think he told me and/or I saw it in that book—a headline in the *Washington Post* one day—his having visited Black Mountain, surely impugned his loyalty. And the headline said, "What is Black Mountain Existentialism?"

MEH: I've seen that. Did George Zabriskie—I've heard something about that.

PH: So, he's a chapter in this book on McCarthyism. So, that was one thing—I wish I'd said something about that in the thing. And there was one other big or little [MUMBLES. UNINTEL] I'll have to write you.

MEH: Things will start to surface. For everybody things start floating.

PH: Yeah. Do you have a computer? Do you have a modem?

MEH: You asked met that last night.

PH: So, I can't send you email.

MEH: I have to update my computer. It's very out of date right now.

PH: And for you, get a laptop. Get a 286 or 386sx laptop.

MEH: Before I start doing any more serious research, I definitely, unquestionably will.

PH: And you can come here and—

MEH: You were talking about computers last night, but you also heat your house with a wood stove.

PH: Yeah, and the house we're going to build we want to keep minimally. It's going to be passive-solar; it's going to be super-insulated and all those good things.

MEH: There's something else I was going to ask you. Oh, do you remember Molly Gregory?

PH: Oh, yes, yes. She was a wonderful person.

MEH: What do you remember about her?

PH: Well, I remember her walk. She didn't have a rolling walk of a sailor, but she had a characteristic walk that was—it was [UNINTEL WORD]. It wasn't just walking. She moved—her presence came by. And I remember in the work program—she was in some craft area or art area I think and I didn't ever take a course from her, but I remember her as a very warm, positive force with good solid thinking. Common sense, I guess I recall.

MEH: What about Ted Dreier?

PH: Well, he taught [INTERRUPTION IN TAPING] Ted Dreier was a tiger on the work program.

MEH: Worse than you?

PH: Yeah, well, in a way. He was kind of wild. He wasn't very well coordinated. He had a lot of muscles and a lot of energy, but he—he didn't handle wheelbarrows too well. I was a critic of that kind of thing. [LAUGHTER]

MEH: He had a lot of enthusiasm.

PH: Oh, yes, yes. And he thought about the big picture too. I was just a peon.

MEH: Right.

PH: And he was great. And I certainly enjoyed him with that. He was always thinking way ahead of where I was. He was thinking about the big show and what needed to be done.

MEH: Right.

PH: I took one course from him. It was a terrible mistake. I took calculus.

MEH: Oh, dear.

PH: And somebody reported, that if you want to take calculus, you have to take this beforehand. Well, I needed to take something. I think he was a crummy teacher. And I got the notion of the "limit." Do you know the notion of the "limit" of a curve? If you have a couple of things like this, and you have a curve going up, it gets over and over and it gets closer and closer to this "limit," this limiting line. And you can carry it on infinitely, and it keeps infinitesimally approaching but never quite gets to that line. You designed it that way. And I got the notion, and it's been an intriguing notion to me. It's one of those things I like that airplanes can fly. That's my cosmology, that there's molecules and it's happening and it's crazy. And so, that's a notion that—I flunked calculus with Ted Dreier. It's the only college course that I flunked.

MEH: Flunk happens.

PH: Yeah, because it—

[END OF INTERVIEW. END OF TRANSCRIPT.]