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Oral history interview with Dahlov
Ipcar, 1979 Nov. 13

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Dahlov Zorach Ipcar on November 13, 1979. The interview took place in Ipcar's home in Robin Hood, ME, and was conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

ROBERT BROWN: This is an interview in Robin Hood, Maine, right?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: Near Bath, Maine, November 13, 1979, with Dahlov Ipcar, Robert Brown the interviewer. And, Dahlov, I'd like to perhaps start out talking about some of your earliest memories. You were born in 1917. You were born in Vermont, I believe, is that right? Was that simply while your parents were briefly there?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: That was sort of an accident. Well, my parents had spent the summer at a farm in New Hampshire, out on the Eastern Fields farm, I think. And my mother was expecting this baby, me, in September. And it came October and no baby appeared. And my father had to go back to teach at the Art Students League, and my brother had to go back to school. And he was three. I guess he must have been starting nursery school.

Anyhow, so he left my mother behind on the doctor's doorstep. And for two weeks, my mother sort of boarded with the doctor in Vermont. This was in Windsor, Vermont, which is just right over the border. Finally, I appeared on November 11th. And my mother always said I was an 11-month baby. I weighed 11 pounds, I think. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: But that hardly makes me a native of Vermont. We were living in New York at the time on 10th Street, which was where my parents lived for about 20 years in an apartment, which was over the Cushman Bakery right opposite the women's—on the same little street, on the opposite side of the street. It's a little—there's a triangle. The street was quite a short street, West 10th Street, and the women's prison occupied the center of the triangle right opposite us.

And I thought it was the most gorgeous Gothic building. If you could imagine, it was a castle, a beautiful red-brick castle. And I never thought of it as, you know, being a prison or anything.

ROBERT BROWN: You were just taken by its appearance.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Well, everybody thought it was a dreadful neighborhood, but it was a very pleasant neighborhood, actually, to grow up in.

ROBERT BROWN: You found this why? Because of the buildings?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, just nothing ever bad ever happened to me there. It was a very nice place. I don't think I played in the street much. At the age of three, we started going to—both my brother and I started very early at what was the very first, one of the very first progressive schools in New York City and country, which started in McDougal Alley, took you from—kids from the age of three. And I started at the age of three and they then moved to 12th Street.

ROBERT BROWN: What was that school like? Did you remember?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: It was a marvelous school. A lot of people think, say, you know, have a low opinion of progressive education. But I think it was the most marvelous education anybody could have because it was—Caroline Pratt had started it with, I think, Lucy Sprigg

Mitchell, and Caroline Pratt was the principal, who was sort of an ogre to us all. But still, she was the guiding light behind it.

And her idea was that children come into this world full of enthusiasm for learning, full of eagerness about everything. And as soon as they get to school this is all killed dead. And they lose all this enthusiasm. And the idea of this, a progressive school, was to keep children enthusiastic about learning and make it exciting. And they certainly did. They certainly achieved this. It was all the completely new, experimental thing, which I suppose gave it a lot of vitality.

ROBERT BROWN: What were you particularly excited about? Do you recall? Everything or anything in particular?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, my earliest memories—I think I don't really remember much till around age seven. I remember, I guess, they had arts, crafts. I remember they had a staircase in which you learned to climb by alternating footsteps. They had alternating steps on left and right, so you had to alternate your foot as you go up. And this was sort of a fun kind of thing.

But at the age of seven, I remember almost everything happened to me. It's funny. I remember everything which happened to me the summer when I was five. But as far as school goes, it's sort of a blank. I mean, there are individual scenes, like running through a corridor at one moment or being up on the roof playing with toys another moment. They had a roof playground.

ROBERT BROWN: Such freedom.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. I think my earliest clear memories are of summers in Provincetown. There was one summer when I was—must have been three or four when they, my father and mother, were involved with the Provincetown Players. Eugene O'Neill was doing plays for them. They were doing stage sets and scenery.

And I remember the plays and the beautiful scenery. There was one with a sort of a Harlequin kind of thing with stars and moons strung across on strings across the top of the stage. And then I remember the playhouse burned that summer. I was out on the end of the wharf, and there was this terrible fire. And I was very concerned because my father was running out there fighting the flames. And we were all standing and watching it.

There were also marvelous puppet shows at the—there was a—now, what's his name? The Provincetown chap who put on puppet shows and also brought them to Greenwich Village, famous puppeteer.

And all these things were—you know, it was a lot of modern art. The thing that sort of my whole childhood was—brought up in a sort of an atmosphere of modern art, which was the, you know, bright colors, bright designs. And the house where we lived on at 10th Street, my mother had murals of the Garden of Eden painted on one wall, and she had all kinds of batiks that she had painted, with batik bedspreads and hangings. And her clothes were all designed with batiks and embroidered.

And I remember she sent us to school in these gorgeous embroidered garments. And the principal called her in and told her that wasn't suitable clothes for children to go to school in. She should send us in overalls. And my mother said, "I can't afford to buy overalls. If I'm going to make something, it's going to be beautiful." [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: So your parents, as you look back, were real aesthetes, were they?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Really, yes. And they—all the furniture was painted. There just was a marvelous atmosphere of color. And later on, I think, when I had a terrific resistance to something like academic art or even Renaissance art of the Rembrandt school because, to me, it was very dark, depressing stuff.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And I just didn't—you know, I hadn't been brought up—somehow, the color had gotten into my soul so that I felt that was, you know, the way art should be, which is quite different from most children's upbringing in art.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: They start with conservative art and then branch out into the unconservative.

ROBERT BROWN: Your whole environment and your parents, the way they'd even—the way they dressed you.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. The way they dressed—the way they dressed themselves, everything was like a complete work of art in itself, the whole house and I guess everything they did. They were very gay when they were young and had a lot of friends in. And then that sort of seemed to stop. I don't know whether they got too busy, or maybe as you get older you get less social.

I remember the Bozart [phonetic] Bowl's costumes were always a big event. They were always spending months designing these costumes. This was a very important thing. My mother did embroideries. And there was a great deal of art activity always, and it just seemed just like a natural kind of thing for me.

Now, my brother remembers it as being, you know, a hard life, poverty stricken. And he said he wasn't going to be an artist. This is why he claims he gave up art because he said he wasn't going to starve to death.

ROBERT BROWN: But you, for some reason, weren't aware of this.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I was completely unaware of this, yeah. And it seems to me, actually, by present-day standards, a lot of—you know, they may not have had a lot of material things. They had a lot of beauty in the home. And my mother had a black woman who came in and helped her with the housework and took us out to the parks and things. And it seems to me you don't have servants now, you know.

ROBERT BROWN: No.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: In those days, everybody had servants, you know, no matter how poor you were. And I suppose it was because my mother needed time to work, and if she could afford this. It didn't cost much, I suppose. I think she used to give Ella 50 cents, and she'd take us out, supposedly take us to the park, for car fare and what-have-you. And often, we'd end up in Mose [phonetic] Theater sitting through vaudeville because this is—we could get in free, and she'd pay 25 cents to get in. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And I hated vaudeville. I still hate it. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: You seldom got to the park with Ella?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Oh, we got there occasionally.

ROBERT BROWN: And what does your brother remember that struck him as impoverishment?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I don't really know. But he said—maybe my father was tearing his hair, you know, and worrying about bills and it came through to [inaudible] and didn't register on me.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Adolph says he grew up feeling that, you know, life was very hard and his father was struggling and always saying, you know, "How am I going to meet the bills?" and "I might as well shoot myself," and this kind of thing. And his sisters were completely—had no feeling of this. He always felt he had to help the family all the times he grew up, you know. Work—you know, when his father had a little store, he had to work in it. And the girls had no feeling of this.

Maybe boys are more responsible. Maybe the oldest gets this sense of, you know, for the family situation. Or maybe it was tougher when he was young and aware of it, and I wasn't aware.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you doted on by your parents?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Oh, I think my father loved me dearly. But my mother, I think, was better with older children than with younger ones. My only memory of my mother was, you know—being doting or concerned about me, which sort of startled me because my mother was very busy with what she was doing. And I think one day some friend came by of my mother's, and she wasn't home. And she took me out to buy a soda. And my mother came home, and whoever was there, the maid, had no idea who I'd gone out with. And my mother was frantic that someone had come and taken me away.

And she, you know, went rushing out the door. And I remember I was coming home, being brought back, you know. I saw my mother coming swooping down the street with this—she was wearing a cloak, sort of like a bat, you know, descending on me, you know, just frantic. [Laughs] And that sort of impressed me with, you know, her concern.

As I grew older, my mother became much more of a real companion to me than my father. To my father, I was always a little girl of three years old, no matter how old I got, whether I was 40 or 50.

ROBERT BROWN: He was always trying to—teasing you or—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No, no. Just to him I was always his little girl, you know. He didn't tease me, no. He was just very loving. Now, I got sidetracked from Provincetown, which I was going to—

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. Now, in Provincetown you started going when you were very small, didn't you?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. And I remember—

ROBERT BROWN: Do you remember some of the other people you knew that ran [inaudible]?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, there were many artists. And I don't remember who they all were. I remember Eugene O'Neill's family, there was a lot of turmoil there all the time. And there was a young couple called the Hartmans that had sort of dropped out of the art world, as far as I know. I never hear of them anymore—that my parents knew that were very good friends with. And there was a whole group in—

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, I've heard—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: —Woodstock that they used to go visit. But—

ROBERT BROWN: And this again was when you were very young?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: You'd be going to—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you around your parents much when they were working?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Yeah. They always were—my father for many years—both of them worked at home. I think it was when I was around 12 or 13 that my father got a studio. First he moved downstairs into a studio, into a—either the bottom floor of the building we were on became vacant, a store down there, and he moved into that as a studio. And then he finally got a studio over around several blocks away, I think on 13th Street, where he worked a good many years.

This was when he was, you know, doing big, bigger things. I remember he was doing The Embrace there in the studio on 13th Street.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And—but he did his first wood carvings and his first [inaudible] commissions for that silk man now. Names—I'm going to give you trouble because I can't

remember names right off the bat.

[OFF THE RECORD]

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Schwarzenbach. He was my father's—he was a silk manufacturer who gave my father his first big commissions. And these were done in the 10th Street studio. He did a series of panels of reliefs of workers in the silk factory. And he did a big Buddha. First he ordered—the first order was for a Buddha, which actually was not such an original work of art. But my father was happy to be earning money, and he did this big Buddha for this Schwarzenbach.

And then he got very enthusiastic about art and my father. And he did these panels for his—a building. And then—I think they were in windows. They were sort of reliefs that were set up in the windows. And he did a clock, which had just a spirit of silk coming out of the cocoon when the little dwarf struck the hammer, and the spirit of silk would rise out of the cocoon. For a long time, this clock was—it's still there, but I don't think it functions.

ROBERT BROWN: Where, the—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Somewhere—

ROBERT BROWN: At this silk—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Silk manufacturing building, wherever that is in New York. And he did those doors for this man's house. And they were beautiful, carved doors. And nobody knows who's got them now. I think somebody—a janitor or something walked off with them when somebody bought the building and didn't want them. So he walked off with them. They're still trying to find those doors.

ROBERT BROWN: Was this work—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: There were several designs for doors. And one pair that Schwarzenbach didn't—he took the pair he preferred and my father carved the others, which we still have. They are beautiful carved panels of—they were—what were you going to ask?

ROBERT BROWN: Was he working, then, in a fairly stylized figural mode by then?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. I'd say they were fairly modern, stylized figures. And actually, the panels of workers, I think, were more like his latest work, more slightly realistic. I don't know if we were into social realism then, but they would have been in that category. But the—well, the clock and the doors were much more decorative.

Of course, "decorative" was a bad word in my parents' day. And they were always trying to avoid being called decorative, but my mother's art, definitely her talent was for decorative art. And very beautiful stuff.

ROBERT BROWN: Why was it considered a bad word?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I think—

ROBERT BROWN: It's like commercial art?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I think when art—not ever, though—I was going to say art nouveau came in. It was so—I mean, the decorative art became so fashionable that it became, you know, sort of suspect as art because everybody liked it.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm, Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: You know, as soon as something is accepted and then becomes liked by the whole population, and is commercialized, then all the fine artists pull back from it and try to, you know, downgrade that kind of thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Did your parents—from what you're saying, did they talk to you once in awhile about their attitude toward their work?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: My father talked a great deal about his work. And I guess my mother did, too. I think they talked about art all the time.

ROBERT BROWN: Are there some things that you remember from early on that you began to imbibe?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Oh, yeah, definitely, attitudes toward art.

ROBERT BROWN: What were some of them that you can recall that sunk in early?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, that copying was a crime.

ROBERT BROWN: Copying?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. You shouldn't ever copy. If you copied your art, work had no value if you copied it. It had to be original. And I think at school I did a lot of copying, which actually did me no harm. I mean, copying things like Greek vases, you know, for history. But I never—I knew this was, you know, something you didn't consider art. It might be a school project, but you weren't going to go out and do that kind of thing and call it a work of art.

There was one time, I remember, when I was 11. And we had a school project at my school on China. And I picked, oh, the invention—it wasn't the Chinese. It was the East Indian. And I gave—well, you wrote a report and you illustrated the report. And I illustrated this report on Indian art with copies of Mogul paintings, and very much enlarged, and just gorgeous, you know.

And when I brought these home—they were about two by three, you know, all kinds of animals and things—my parents were just flabbergasted, thought it was just marvelous, until I admitted that they were copies. And then, you know, that was—they just put them aside then.

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And I remember their disappointment and my chagrin, you know. [Laughs] This great praise wasn't for me, no way.

ROBERT BROWN: So that was something that they were fairly insistent upon, was don't copy.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Don't copy.

ROBERT BROWN: What about the use of color? Did they encourage fantasy there?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No. They were—they just did—I think just by example. They didn't say much about it. My father used to take me to the museums. And he'd always go and sort of look at the same things. And there were certain Greek things. There was one, like that Egyptian cat that everybody admired, and the Greek horse everybody admires. And then there was one pair of lips from an Egyptian statue that he'd just go and look at that.

And he'd pick out the best things in each period and look at them. And I remember the things that impressed me, aside from the, you know, early—I mean the Indian paintings, were the Renaissance marriage chests. I just loved those. And the Greek vases—and, you know, certain things—an Egyptian wall painting, those things—certain things appealed to me. And we'd just make a tour through the Metropolitan and look at the things we liked best.

ROBERT BROWN: Would he be talking to you about them, trying to—this is why it's best?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. He'd say, "I have to go back and look at this. It's sort of"—well, I don't remember the phrase he'd use, but it would be orients you, makes you, you know, realize whether you're on the right track or going astray. He'd go back and look at what is good art, and you sort of reevaluate what you're doing yourself.

ROBERT BROWN: Hm. Learn by example. By no means does he mean copying, but learn by —

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Just, these are standards to which you aspire. And you can see what—I don't know what the—he never said what the criteria was or had it formulated.

But he just felt certain things were very special and very beautiful. And this was a standard to which he aspired.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you find in your own schoolwork that some of this was beginning to creep in?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I suppose so. I think for a long time, I was very uninhibited when I was young. I did a whole series of imaginative fishes once, which disappeared. I mean, I think they were being saved and they got left down in a cellar till they rotted. And I never got to take them home. But they were, as I recall, you know, just fantastic fishes. And this was before the—around the age of 10 or earlier.

But it must have been earlier than 10 because by the time I reached 10 or 11, I was influenced by the world around me where—I don't know who influences you. But somehow, books, magazines, people, teachers—someone gives you the idea that you should do realism. And this is what happens to kids. They start trying to be realistic. And the joy goes out of it for you. You're no longer doing it for yourself. You're doing it to please other people. And while the things I did don't look realistic now, the intention was to be realistic.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And I sort of really almost gave up. A lot of kids stop doing art about then. And I almost did.

ROBERT BROWN: Why, because it became boring?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Yes. You know, it was just—

ROBERT BROWN: You were actually drawing things you'd see or from illustrations you would look at?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, not copying, but trying to, say, achieve like a realistic cowboy pictures or realistic horse pictures.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. Yeah.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Conventional kinds of things. And then somehow, when I was around 13, I got a whole new idea about art. I don't know where it came from. But I suddenly realized that it wasn't realism. Realism didn't matter. What was important was the emotion and color. And I sort of just went off like blue streak on all—a series of all kinds of fanciful pictures. And this carried me right through 14 and 15. And then—

ROBERT BROWN: And then you abandoned trying to be realistic?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. They were always, I think, maybe a little illustrational in that I had an idea of story or—but sometimes it was just an emotion. And emotion and the color were all tied up together. And when I go back and look at things from this age, I can remember the emotion. And the thing that comes through strongest is how you felt when you did it. And it isn't this, you know, sad or happy or anything that simple. It's just that there was a feeling went with it.

And I had a marvelous period of just doing art like crazy. But I did it, you know, as an adjunct, I mean, just sort of on the side all the time. Schoolwork went right ahead. It wasn't—I didn't think of myself as an artist. It was just what you did for fun on the side.

ROBERT BROWN: This you'd be doing at home?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I'd be doing it—well, mostly in school. There was—all through my grade school, there were always times when you had free time and you could do what you wanted. Or you stayed after school or you'd just put down a big piece of paper on the floor and started painting.

And the other kids, in the beginning, would be doing it with me. But by the time I was 13, I was about the only one in the class doing it anymore. They'd all—I don't know if I'd discourage them. I used to want them to do it. I'd just beg them to please, you know, do it with me. But nobody else felt they could do it as well, maybe, or they just didn't want to, weren't interested anymore.

ROBERT BROWN: But you didn't feel freakish because you were the only one? It didn't bother you?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I felt a little sad.

ROBERT BROWN: Sad?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. I felt that somehow I'd gotten out on a limb by myself. It was no longer, you know, part of the group. It was a very close-knit group of kids all through school. We started at age 3, and almost the same group followed right through to age 13. And there were a few dropped out and a few came in. The new ones that came in had a hard time until they were accepted. But we knew each other so well. It was almost, you know, like a—I suppose like a group that grows up in a kibbutz or a family.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you primarily children of the people who were in the arts? Or you can't say so?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: They were—no, they might have been intellectuals and wealthy people. Some of the kids were wealthy and some—well, there were the Van Dorns. That would definitely be art, intellectual kids. And there were a few working-class kids who were letting out scholarships. And they sort of didn't fit. Most of them, I'd say, were professional people's children.

Now, I think of some of the birthday parties that were thrown there and the money that went into those parties, and I'm just flabbergasted because I didn't—I wasn't aware.

ROBERT BROWN: At the school?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No. At home, always at home.

ROBERT BROWN: At homes, at their homes.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. But given for the class. You know, some of these fabulous kind of birthday parties that you would hear about back in the last century, you know, where they—God knows what they—don't bring in a four-piece band, but they bring in a magician and they bring in someone who caters the party with molded ice cream. And everybody gets presents, and there are endless games, and just a real—

ROBERT BROWN: But you were already—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: But I never—you know, I didn't give those kind of birthday parties. I'd have one child invited in.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: But it didn't matter, you know. We all knew each other so well that it—whether some of us were rich and some were poor, it didn't make any difference. We were all just friends with each other.

ROBERT BROWN: You accepted each other for what you were.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. We were all like brothers and sisters, I guess, it's almost—the whole group grew up that close.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you—were summers important to you then?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Oh, yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you go away? You mentioned Provincetown. I believe around that time you also began coming here to Maine.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: There had been summers. There were summers in New Hampshire, summers in Stonytown when I was, you know, one or two. And then I remembered Provincetown, three and four, I guess I was at Provincetown. And the summer when I was five, my parents had bought this house here. And from then on, we came here.

ROBERT BROWN: How had they heard about this? Did they just pick it out of the blue? Or

were others, friends of theirs not far away?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, the Madame LaShays [ph] and Gaston LaShays came here and bought a house. She had lived here with her first husband, sort of in poverty in Georgetown. And she wanted to come back, I think, and show that she was, you know—had established herself in life. And she bought this house that she had lived in here.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And my mother came up with her. And Madame LaShays said—loved antiques, and she was buying antiques for her house. And she came over to this house, which was owned by Kerry Baker [ph]. And—

ROBERT BROWN: Who was a local person?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. This had been the Baker farm. And the Riggs farm was—she was a Riggs daughter, and she had inherited the house down the hill that no one was using. They were—and it was for sale.

And my mother had just gotten the commission to do the Rockefeller tapestry, so she decided you should always put your money—not just live on it, put it into something important. So she bought this house down the hill with it.

ROBERT BROWN: Hm. And this was when, about 1920 or 1923?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Let's see. When I was five years old, it would have been—yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. What was this tapestry? Was this for a Rockefeller home?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: This was—well, my mother had been successful. I mean, her main success in selling was these tapestries, embroidered tapestries she did. And she had started with some very good commissions for wealthy people like the Lathrop Browns and the Longells [ph]. And she did just beautiful tapestries. And most of them were fairly—you know, not life-size figures, but they were big.

And this one was the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., family had commissioned a portrait, life-sized portrait of the whole family. Well, I don't know if they were quite life-sized, but it's about nine or ten feet. Nine or ten feet—it was big. It must have been about 10 feet square. I guess—I don't know who has it still. Nelson is who had it last. And the word is now we're trying to find it to borrow it for the [inaudible] show next summer at the Farnsworth.

ROBERT BROWN: But anyway, it was plenty to be able to buy this home?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. It was about a three—it was a three-year contract, and they paid her so much every year. She took her three years to do it, but she was paid in installments while she worked on it. Well, the house didn't cost much. [Laughs] I forget what it cost. This house—I think that house cost 2000, and this one cost 1200 when she bought it.

ROBERT BROWN: Was your mother fairly close with Madame LaShays?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. They were very good friends.

ROBERT BROWN: Had she known her before she married Gaston LaShays?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No. But Gaston and my father were very good friends for awhile. Now, somehow some kind of jealousy sprang up between them, and they were no longer friends. But my mother and the Madame—we always called her "Madame"—her name was Isabel, but nobody ever called her Isabel.

ROBERT BROWN: Why did they call her Madame, because she was the wife of a Frenchman?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I suppose so.

ROBERT BROWN: Because she was a married woman.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yes, yes. She was the wife of a Frenchman, and she had a very grand manner.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: She dressed in very exotic clothes, and she was the Madame. Boy, she was very impressive. That was it, you know. She was always the Madame LaShays. Even my mother—my mother always referred to her as the Madame. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: So they were a much more formidable couple than your parents seem to have been.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: I mean, they were—your parents, by contrast, were informal and very—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yes, yes. She had style, I mean. That was it. And my mother remained very good friends with her. And I think she influenced my mother as far as decorating, the interior decorating of the house goes, because it was a style that she had established of using antiques and all kinds of knick-knacks. Very beautiful, you know, interior decorating, really.

ROBERT BROWN: You mean, was modern art ruled out? Or was it a mix, to be a mix?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: It was a mix? It was sort of a mix. And it was—I remember someone—when we were visiting the Laurents, my mother saying—and I was, you know, enjoying their house so much because it was full of art and it was full of antiques. My mother saying, "Well, one thing about artists, they all have beautiful homes."

And the home itself does become almost a work of art, too. Of course, my mother decorated the walls down there and painted—the whole living room is painted with designs of leaves and figures and animals. But she used to have her own art around, too.

ROBERT BROWN: This would have struck you as a bit different, this new taste of your mother's from what she had before?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Somehow it didn't. When she first came, I think the house was sort of empty and bare. And these things came in gradually, you know, the new furniture and the new things. And they just fit.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you take to Maine in summers right away?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you like it?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I loved it. And I still remember that my parents told me they were buying this house in Maine, and there were great rocks behind it. And I had this vision of, you know, a rock pile like one of these big conical sand heaps built up of great big round boulders.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And what she meant was these ledges, you know, with trees and things on them, which are gorgeous. But we took to it. We loved the water, we loved the shore and the woods. And I always had pets and animals.

ROBERT BROWN: Did your parents—formerly, when they went to stay at Provincetown, you were surrounded with people, right?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Here, did they by this want to be alone in the summers, do you think? Because there weren't too many people around here, were there?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yes, I think maybe they were getting less sociable as they got older.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: My father always said he stopped inviting people to the house in New York because we—my mother had this tomcat that sprayed the front door area, and he couldn't invite anybody in. So it may have been rather horrible, but it didn't bother any of us. I mean, I don't remember the smell. [Laughs] So I think he just sort of—they got more involved in their work and their commissions.

And then there were sort of conflicts and jealousy, and they'd worry about people—he said all these artists are worrying about whether you're going to take their customers away. They don't want to invite you over for fear you'll grab a customer from them, that kind of thing, you know? But I suppose certain friendships lasted.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you remember getting into the '30s and all, was the Depression a change in your lives?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: It was a terrific influence. I think that's why we've been here in Maine ever since.

ROBERT BROWN: Because the family's finances were changed?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Actually, my parents came through the Depression fairly well because it was at that period, really, that they had the Rockefeller commissions. My father did the big *Mother and Child*. I'm trying to think whether he—I don't think he got any—he got the Rockefeller Center *Spirit of the Dance* commission. He must have gotten a few good commissions then because, actually, we came through fairly well. We always had a cook, housekeeper—one person—a man at that time, who came up to—William, who came up to Maine.

And then my father started taking in students. That may have been a help to offset the expense of coming up to Maine in the summer. And he was teaching at the Art Students League. He didn't have money to lose, and he didn't have a job to lose. He didn't lose his job. So I guess they sort of got through very well.

But I remember it as, you know, a frightening time because everybody was out of work. And people were—not that we knew people that had committed suicide, but you had heard about it. And you knew that everybody was hard up and didn't have the money they had. And people were panhandling on the streets—and bread lines and Hoovervilles. And it was a very scary time, really.

I remember my mother traded a picture for a raccoon coat, and I was embarrassed. I wouldn't wear that raccoon coat. To me, this is a symbol of, you know, being wealthy. And I just wouldn't wear it, even though it would have been warm and comfortable. I was just too horrified at the idea of, you know, seeming to be an affluent person. Besides which, it was out of date, out of style. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs] Oh, probably more important. By then, what were you, a teenager by then?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. I hated that raccoon coat.

ROBERT BROWN: Did your mother have quite a lot of influence on your behavior, do you think? And did she try to—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: She had a lot of influence in that she was someone who didn't know all the feminine things about makeup or dress. Somehow, she had never learned any of these things, and I'd never learned them—how to dance, none of this, none of the social stuff.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I mean, whatever she did was her own individual exotic style. And when you become a teenager and want to conform, there's no way you know how to do it. I mean, any other parent would have sent me to dancing school and, I don't know, sent me to the hairdresser's and sent me to dressmakers. But not my mother, you know. I began to object to the kind of clothes she made for me and want the kind of clothes other kids had. And in a way, it didn't register.

I still remember—I guess that started when I was 10, actually. All the other little girls had sailor suits. This was the fashion. And I was just desperate to have a sailor suit. And my mother promised. She finally promised she'd get me one. It never showed up. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I guess once I got the promise, I sort of forgot about it. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs] That was enough. The other schools you went to, Walden School and Lincoln School, were they, either of them, memorable? These are the ones you went to—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Walden was more, was for art. And I hated my—we had a room—well, it was sort of a progressive school. I think it was actually an excellent school. You had a group, same as we had had at City and Country, where—with one teacher who was responsible for the group. And then you would go to art, and you would go to biology, and you would have another teacher come in to teach math.

Since this was high school, that one class teacher didn't teach everything. What he taught was English and history. And I didn't like him. But he was spending all his time psychoanalyzing us, and that was very embarrassing to me at that age.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you mean by this?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, he talked in psychoanalytical terms.

ROBERT BROWN: Ah.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I mean, the Gothic arch is a symbol of the vagina. And you know, tells the 14-year-olds this.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: It was just painful, painful, you know?

ROBERT BROWN: Sure.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: [Laughs] And you're doing this because you have an inferiority complex. You know, dah—just made me sick, anyhow. But the art was marvelous. They had a real art room with real materials. I just had had cheap paper and poster paints to work with before. They had every kind of art materials, and they had a nice, good dance teacher. And I took dancing. I mean, this was expressive dancing, not ballroom dancing, which I never did learn.

But I loved biology and I liked geometry. And I—but, you know, I evidently kicked so much that my parents thought I hated the school and they took me out of it. And then I didn't understand why. Somehow, they did it without my quite knowing it. They enrolled me in another school. And when it happened, I said, "Why did you do that?" You know, "Why am I going to another school?" I was going to the school my brother was going to, which was Lincoln. And they said, "Well, you were so miserable there." And I said, "No, I wasn't." But it was too late, you know. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. You were getting older, you were complaining more.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: They thought you were miserable.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I don't really know. I really—I sort of expected to go back. And maybe at one time, they told me, "Do you want to go to Lincoln?" And I'd said, "I don't care, you know, where I go," or something. I don't know. Anyhow, I ended up at Lincoln, which I didn't like half as much. But I didn't complain as much, I guess.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you continue your broad interests there, too?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Mathematics and art?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Mathematics, no.

ROBERT BROWN: No?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No, mathematics dropped. I kept on with languages I was never any good at. German—I guess, you know, I sort of was taking the college preparatory course. And I didn't worry about math because by the time I came to college, I found I didn't have the math. Adolph actually, who had appeared on the scene, then, he had come up to help with hang one summer. And he tutored me in algebra for something like six weeks. And they accepted that, and I went in and took second-year algebra on the basis of it. [Laughs] It was a bit of a struggle, but I managed to get through.

ROBERT BROWN: Right. But then you went on to—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: But anyhow, to go back to Lincoln, I was going to say the art department there was really very poor compared to Walden. But they left me alone. I mean, they let me do my own stuff. They had sort of a more formal, structured kind of teaching and not very inspired.

There weren't—you know, at Walden, it was an elective. And all the kids who were interested in art were there. What age they were, whether they were nine, ten, or sixteen, or eighteen, they were all in the same class and all working together, which was very exciting because, I mean, you could look at the young kids whose work was appreciated and the young kids could look at the older kids. It was like a one-room schoolhouse, only it was an art room.

And it had a lot of the virtues of the old one-room schoolhouse in that the younger kids see what the older ones are doing; the older ones are interested in what the younger ones are doing. And everybody is doing a lot—everybody is there because they're interested in art.

ROBERT BROWN: Was your teacher an artist?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, the teacher that I remember, I don't remember her name. She was there. And she was—I don't know. She was very good. She left me alone. And then Florence Kane [phonetic] came in, who terrified me. She was a large woman with very piercing eyes and had very definite ideas about how art should be taught. And she came in once a week or something. And I just retreated into a corner. She was the kind of teacher who would, you know, seize your arm and say, "No, make great circles. Free yourself," you know, or something.

And she later reappeared in my life. I don't know if I should—I'll get to that stage later. That was after I was married. I worked at a—she had reappeared and asked me if I'd teach at the school she was starting. So I taught a year, but I never got over being terrified of her. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: But basically, by and large, rather, the teachers at City and Country and at Walden weren't the sort that imposed themselves on you?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No, no. She was the only one. She definitely was the kind that imposes themselves on you. And at Lincoln, she didn't impose herself. She's a very nice woman. I can't remember her name either. But she had a sort of static curriculum set up, you know. You do this. This week you learn about composition. This week you learn about perspective. And this week you learn about something else, you know, color. And it was a structured course.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you find that wasn't particularly effective?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I felt it was very dull. And I always tried to do something original with the projects. And, you know, if she said, "Go make a picture of looking—of a window," I would make some kind of a fantastic scene with the bars across it, and that was my window, you know. But I mean, it was never—I never could—to me they were dull things that were being asked of us, you know, required—we were being asked to do. They weren't interesting projects.

And I did a lot—most of my artwork just on the side, as I had before. I'd go there, you know, after school.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm, Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: It used to be most of my time, all through school, I never—I always stayed after school. There were always things you could do after school, and I always stayed after school for—got home late. I stayed till the bitter end doing—working on my own ideas and projects and things.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I did a lot of clay work at City and Country. Got very good at that. And I did come to a dead end on that. I became—the stuff got quite realistic. And I just lost interest. I never picked it up again. And it's funny, you know. I had that show at the Modern Museum in 1939, and they showed all these things. My father was always so proud of them and admired them so much. After the show—I didn't go down to the show. After the show was over, they sent it all up to here. And it's all in a crate.

And a few—some years back, I thought, "Well, gee, there's all that beautiful stuff I did when I was a kid. I ought to get some of it out and put it around the house," you know. And it was packed like Chinese porcelains in a wooden crate, each with the little compartments for each piece packed in excelsior.

And I got it out, and it's the worst junk you ever saw. It's absolutely unbearable. It's absolutely awful stuff. It's just awful.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you mean?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: It's just—I don't know. It's just dreadful. All of it is just—there's just not any art quality in any of it. There's not one piece there that—

ROBERT BROWN: There's technical skill?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No. It's just dreadful stuff. And you know, it's very funny when you—it's sort of inept and it's squishy and it's bad color and it's bad form and it's everything terrible about it. It's just childish, and it's no good. There's not a good thing there. And even though I remember things in my head that I thought were good, well, I haven't found them.

But, you know, the funny thing is, if my father hadn't praised it, if he'd, you know, looked at it and felt the way I did and indicated that, I'd have been crushed. You know, because he thought what I was doing was so marvelous, I was full of exhilaration and enjoyed it for two years, three years. And I might have gone on to do something with it probably, you know.

Somehow it just—I did come to a dead end. I didn't know where to go. Now I could see where to go if I was ever to go back and do ceramics, you know. I'd be doing something like I'm doing with this sculptures, things that are—but I can see things to do now. But at that time, I couldn't see my way ahead. And I never got the inspiration that I did with the painting, of a new way of looking at it.

ROBERT BROWN: Perhaps your father's enthusiasms weren't the light you have to follow, were they? Your own inclinations—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, no. I don't know. I think maybe because it was three-dimensional and sculptural, he loved it, you know.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: He could talk beautifully about sculpture. And when he talked about painting, I never understood it because he'd talk in terms he'd learned in his academic schooling about, you know, Frans Hals. Well, they were taught, you know, to admire Frans Hals and the brushwork and put a touch of red in this, you know, otherwise-muddy picture because that will bring it to life and put blue in the skin tones. And none of this made any sense to me, you know? It was a different kind of thing.

And it's not the way he talked about sculpture, which he seemed to have a sense of form, design. He seemed to—he could express that marvelously. And I think it's because he didn't have the academic training which told him how to do it, you know.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm, these sort of technical shortcuts.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Or they—probably if he'd had a—he would have learned, he'd be talking about it, you know, and admiring the kind of stuff that was admired academically, and it would have been—I mean, to me, admiring Frans Hals is like—I don't know. [Laughs] Just foreign to me. I mean, this kind of, you know, squishy brushwork is not what I admire.

Yet he never showed any interest in that kind of artist, that kind of painting. Once in awhile he'd go and look at the Sargent and say, you know, "That's"—really, he'd say, "Sargent is—people admire Sargent, but he's really not very good." [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: Did you tend to agree?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. I tended to agree. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: Back in those days, what were some of the things you admired in painting?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: As I said, Renaissance marriage chests.

ROBERT BROWN: Contemporary painters—were there any that you were aware of? I mean, the ascent of modern art was underway in that day. You could see things.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, yes. Well, no. Well, yes. The Museum of Modern Art was marvelous. And the New School of Social Research—I liked all those things that were going on there. One of the first artists that really had an impact on me, I think, was Orozco and his—and then the New School of Social Research, his murals. I don't know quite why I liked them. I was just fascinated by them.

And then the Diego Rivera murals were being done in New York at that time. He did some that were shown at Rockefeller Center and then some that were shown at the—maybe it was a workers center or something. He was doing murals there. I remember going and watching him working on them. The others were brought in as already-finished things, frescos.

And Thomas Hart Benton—I didn't like Benton as much. Adolph says he's the first—that's the first artist—modern artist that got him inspired. But—well, let's see. There was surrealism came in then. And we all thought that was great fun. And of the artists before, my father's friends, there was George Alt and Kuniyoshi. You know, I just accepted these as being all good artists, you know, doing good things.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you get to know those people very much?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah, pretty well. I don't remember them much, but I mean, Max Weber was always—he's the one I remember the most. He was a really close friend of my parents through those years.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he quite interested in what you were going to do, do you recall?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No, I remember once when he came up here long after, and I was doing a cockfight like this one that's over here. And he looked at that, and he said, "Yes you know this is beautiful." He says, "That's going to live when everything we're doing is dead." [Laughs] And that really set me up. That really impressed me. And I felt good about that.

At that time, though, I was doing more genre-type—you know, the School of Social Realism really influenced me, and I started doing workers. When I was 14, I started doing workers doing—at work and scenes of people. But I had started trying to do people more. And I had always done animals up to then. The people, if anything, had been rather sort of rubber-boned sort of formalist people. They were in the figures, but they weren't—there was no attempt at realism.

I started getting to try to do more social realism, which I think now I'm not happy about that period of my art. But that's one reason we came up here to Maine, too. You see, it all merges together because from 14 to 18, there's only four years. And when I was 18, I was married and dropped out of college.

ROBERT BROWN: But you did go to college [inaudible]?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: One year at Oberlin.

ROBERT BROWN: Was that your choice? Or again, your parents?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, that was because I got a full scholarship. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I would have liked Bennington—I think I would have liked Bennington or Antioch better. But Oberlin—I actually wanted to go to Oberlin because I wanted to not go to a school that was all intellectuals and rich kids, like I'd been to. I thought I'd love to go with more ordinary, run-of-the-mill kids and see, you know—this is part of the—

ROBERT BROWN: Social realism?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: — social realism idea, yeah. I thought the ordinary masses were superior, by that time. That's sort of a—you know, you scorned the rich and you wanted to be with part of the masses. But I found them rather dull. They were nice kids, but the teaching was dull. The teaching was—you know, a kind of teaching I had never met before, where you had to memorize and to learn by rote. And the teacher would get up and lecture to 70 children and read from his notes that he had written six years ago. And then he'd say, "Are there any questions?" And no one would put up their hand, you know.

And you weren't supposed to think about anything. And you didn't have time to think about anything because you were supposed to read 40 pages of history every night. And I wasn't that fast a reader. I couldn't read 40 pages of history, so I didn't read it. So I wasn't prepared. So I'd just sit in these lectures. And if anything interested me, I didn't put up my hand and ask a question anyhow. It's just no—there's no incentive to ever, you know, participate in the classes.

And then at the end of the term, you'd get your test and you'd sit there and go through your book and memorize all the dates and somehow string them together, without thinking about it, what any of it meant. No, I just sort of felt that just wasn't education.

ROBERT BROWN: So it was a fairly numbing experience?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. It was. That's a good term for it, "numbing."

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And it wouldn't have anything to do with the art department. That was really academic and old fashioned, you know? But they did somehow—you know, they thought they were getting someone, I think, very original, very brilliant. I just didn't somehow blossom there. And they gave me a room on an upper floor of an old abandoned building, where I went and did great big chalk, mural-sized drawings on my own, which were interesting. I still find them interesting. But—

ROBERT BROWN: You mean they were kept? Or you took them?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I have them, yeah. But I never showed them to them, you know? I never showed them to anybody there.

ROBERT BROWN: You say that Oberlin itself was interested in you as the daughter of an artist?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I think so, yes. I suppose that's why they gave me a scholarship. I mean, I had a, you know, very good record at school as being someone very original. And they—I think they expected me to, you know, do big things and just get into the school, drama and the art and the literature and just be brilliant. And somehow, I just bogged down by all the academic part of it. I might have gotten going another year, but I just didn't, didn't launch. Like you say, I was numbed. [Laughs] Just stunned.

ROBERT BROWN: So you left then after the spring term in 1935?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. And then I stayed home a year with my mother. And this was a lovely experience because—well, she taught me to cook. I did all the cooking for her and my father. And we both painted in the studio and worked on our own projects.

And I really got to know her as a person, you know, rather than a mother. And she was never a dominating mother. She—my brother thought she was. He was always fighting with her. But to me, she—I mean, she wasn't. She was—I've always just enjoyed her as a person. And I sort of felt she was more of a friend than a—you know, mothers are sort of people who love you, but are always advising you. And she wasn't that kind of a person, to me.

I know where the friction started between my brother and my mother. It started when he was about 17 and he was up here one summer. And he had been hired the year before by my parents to do the—you know, they paid him to do chores around the place. And the next year he decided he wanted just to take the summer off and write. And my mother wasn't about to not have those chores done. So she kept nagging at him.

I'm sort of surprised that they couldn't—didn't think of the writing as being a, you know, real creative, important thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No, they didn't. My mother thought—well, she said later she thought a kid that age should either work around the home farm or get out and get a job, you know. He shouldn't just spend the summer loafing. Now, he wasn't spending the summer loafing any more than I was. He was working on this great project, a novel or something, whatever it was he was writing, short stories or novels and something. And he was going to be a writer. But they didn't somehow—there must have been some prejudice against writers in their mind.

ROBERT BROWN: Or maybe they had come to really enjoy his being the hired hand. [Laughs]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Oh, yeah. They enjoyed him being the hired hand.

ROBERT BROWN: They were spoiled by then.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah, that's it. Yeah, that was it, for sure. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs] But you and your mother had no such tension?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No, no.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible]?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I guess I was willing, you know, to do the chores, like—around the place. I'd, you know, make the beds and wash the dishes while the rest of the family went out to the hayfield, to begin with. And then I'd go out in the hayfield in the afternoon. We had quite a—you know, I was a good little worker, let's say.

ROBERT BROWN: When you were—did you have help here? Your father and your mother and your brother were keeping a farm going?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: We had—we were keeping a farm going in a ridiculous way because there were two cows and two horses. I had one with a saddle, horse for me. One was a workhorse. And they had a hired hand who stayed here, kept the place in the winter, which was necessary just to—you know. I don't know if their vandalism was as bad and the robbery as bad then, but it seemed to be necessary to have someone on the place.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, you had to take care of the animals.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. You see, if you had a cow, you had to have someone to take care of the cow. So you'd have a hired hand. And he was paid 50 a month. And—but we all had to get out and make a big production of this haymaking. And everybody worked in the hayfield. And supposedly, we worked in the garden. My mother did the gardening. I never was much on gardening. Now I am. But at that time, I must say I didn't take to the gardening. But I loved working in the hayfield, and I didn't mind doing the housework.

And when I stayed home in the city, I enjoyed doing the cooking. So you see, I guess there was—I could do both. My brother couldn't. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: But you were into sort of becoming quite domestic.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah, yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Actually, after I was first married, I was a lousy housekeeper. I hadn't really learned the whole, whole, whole scene.

ROBERT BROWN: How did you come to be married? When did you meet your husband?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Adolph came up here to help with the hay. My mother always was getting free help, too. We had endless people.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he somebody that your mother met in New York?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, no. He was a brother of—well, it's quite complex. Let's see. There was a friend of my mother's had a house across the cove. And she rented it one summer to this young couple who came up. And they came over and offered to weed my mother's vegetable garden in exchange for vegetables. And she was so impressed by this that she never got over it. [Laughs] And the first people that ever actually worked in the vegetable garden—and then she became very good friends with them.

And this was Iffy—Adolph's oldest sister, who—there were three girls in the family and Adolph. And Iffy was married to George Szlo [ph], who was a young doctor. Or I guess he wasn't a doctor at that time. He became a doctor later. He was a young instructor at NYU.

And then my mother invited Iffy and her sisters up. And then Adolph came up. And he was invited up one Christmas. He wouldn't come up. But the next summer, he came up to be a non—unpaid hay hand for a month. And he came back the second year. I guess he fell in love with me when I was about 14 or 15. And he always blames me for making him wait three years. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: So your parents approved of this?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No, my father found it very painful. He had great plans for his daughter. I don't know who he was going to marry me to. But no man was good enough for me. But the year before we got married, when the romance was an accepted fact, he just stayed away that whole—in the city that year, that summer. He didn't come up at all.

ROBERT BROWN: Who, your father?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah, my father. He just didn't come up. [Laughs] I don't know if that was—I think it was definitely—

ROBERT BROWN: Some [inaudible] relation there.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. I don't know. Maybe he was working on some project. But anyhow, he really couldn't stand to be around while all this romance was going on.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, Adolph was there? He was helping?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Yeah. And that fall, we went back and got married in New York at City Hall. And I was very indignant, because they would give us a license, but they wouldn't marry us in the City Hall Chapel, which only cost two dollars. So we had to find a judge to marry us. And the judge didn't want to—get any pay. But his two scheister lawyers that were arranging it wanted 10 dollars. And I was absolutely outraged. And I said, "No. No way. I'd rather not get married." And Adolph was very upset about that.

So he called up his uncle, who was a lawyer. And his uncle said, "What are you, crazy? You can't get married anywhere for less than 10 dollars." So he finally convinced me that this was what we had to pay up. So we paid 10 dollars and got married. And then we—he didn't have a ring. And the judge wouldn't marry us without a ring. So he ran down to Woolworth's and bought a silver wedding ring for a dollar. [Laughs] We had very little money, though, you know.

ROBERT BROWN: I see.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And we lived in a—

ROBERT BROWN: So you just had a civil ceremony? That's all you needed, anyway.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. And the judge's name was John J. Sullivan. That always impressed me because it was—wasn't that the name of a famous prizefighter?

ROBERT BROWN: I think so.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: [Laughs]

[END OF DISC ONE.]

ROBERT BROWN: The second side.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Pull this over if you like.

ROBERT BROWN: Fine. You were married in September of '36. And then the next year, '37, you lived on 14th Street?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: That's right. Adolph started, as soon as we were married, looking for a job. We had no money.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he a painter? Or what was his—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Adolph had been—he was trained as an accountant. He took a—majored in accountancy and philosophy. And the accounting was to be a practical thing, and I guess the philosophy was nearer to his heart. He worked as an accountant for about five years and hated it so much he quit and did nothing for about a year. And the Depression—he thought he'd be able to go out and get another job. And he couldn't find anything.

And then being up here one summer, I guess helping with the haying, he met Elsie Clapp, who was starting a new school for a miners resettlement project that Mrs. Roosevelt and John Dewey and Bernard Baruch had cooked up for West Virginia.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And it was near Morgantown, West Virginia. And she was to run the progressive school there. And she invited Adolph down to be her bookkeeper and for a very low salary. And when he got down there, he found that she didn't need a bookkeeper. She needed teachers. And so he taught at the high school level. He started teaching English, history, math—very informal structured school, unstructured school.

And it was—he was there for two years. And this is when I was in Oberlin, and on vacations I'd go down. So he'd come up to visit me in Oberlin; I'd go down to visit him.

ROBERT BROWN: What was the purpose of that community? To help miners have a new start in life?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: It was to—yeah. And the people who had lost—and the mine had closed down. And they would—they built each one a small house. And they were to be subsistence farms, about two to five acres; I forget which. And they were to have a cow and a garden. And there was to be some industry that would get started. I think it was a vacuum cleaner factory that they would work in part time.

And after about two years, Bernard Baruch decided that it was never going to be economically viable. And he pulled out. And then the whole thing sort of collapsed. And the school, the new building that they had just built, was turned over to the state. And the farmers—I guess the miners were allowed to buy their—they were buying their homes, I imagine, on time. They were allowed to keep their homes.

And what happened to the community after that, I don't know. We went back and visited it once. But it was a brave new world. They had town meeting once a week, which was enough to kill anything dead. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Adolph—yeah. Adolph really was impressed with the—I think he must have been a natural teacher because he'd never—you know, he just moved right into

this kind of progressive teaching and did very well. And Caroline Pratt thought he was marvelous and gave him the highest recommendations.

And when we were first married, he was out of a job. And we were in New York. And he tried to get work, finally got a job with an accounting firm. And he said the first job they were sent on was to reconcile a checking account for A&P chain. And they—you know what reconciling a checking account is. You—canceled checks are reconciled against the books.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And they brought in something like 10 cartons of canceled checks, just loose in these cartons. And he said he spent the first two weeks just going through these cartons, and he couldn't stand it. And he quit that—he got—he quit that job and just—because he was at that same time offered a job at City and Country as an assistant, which paid—well, he had been getting 35 a week as an accountant, and it was 25 a week as this assistant teacher.

And we—I worked at Greenwich, Connecticut, one day a week teaching at my—at the Rosemary School where my father had taught. I got that job. So I made 10 a week, he made 25 a week, so we came out about the same.

And I also worked at this school that Florence Kane had started at Rockefeller Center. She started out paying me 15 a week, and then somehow it—she decided I didn't need it or something. I think I was unpaid for most of the year. And what I did is—

ROBERT BROWN: What was this all about?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: What I did is, I hung around and helped with the children's classes and learned lithography.

ROBERT BROWN: Really? From whom?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, there was—is it Jean Charlot the Mexican? And not Orozco. Who's the other one?

ROBERT BROWN: Rivera?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No. There's another one.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible]?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No. Who else?

ROBERT BROWN: Maraden? Charles Maraden?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No. It begins with an "O" or an "A." "O." It may come to me. I've seen his name since. And they were both there, and they were very good lithographers. And I didn't actually take the courses. But I was working on a little offset press and listening out of the corner of my ear and playing around with the idea of doing a children's book on this offset press because Charlot had done a book on the offset press.

ROBERT BROWN: They were connected with her school as well?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yes. They were teaching there.

ROBERT BROWN: When was this?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And they were doing frescos. They had—this was up in Rockefeller Center. It was a very fancy, fancy school. But I guess it sort of folded finally after about a year or so.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it an art school or general?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Art school, yeah. I've never really been proud of my connection with it because I thought Florence Kane was such a—I don't know. I don't know. Just a kind of a teacher you didn't—that I didn't really want to be associated with. And yet she had good people working there. And she had Vasalay [ph] come in and give lectures. And I'd take

classes. I think he taught a life class there. It was actually a good school.

ROBERT BROWN: Vasalay—you mean—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: What's his name?

ROBERT BROWN: Vilishul [ph]?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: The abstractionist.

ROBERT BROWN: Vasarely?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: How do you spell it? Must be. Yeah. He just had a show at the Guggenheim.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. How do you spell that?

ROBERT BROWN: Vasarely?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Vasarely.

ROBERT BROWN: What was her background, Florence Kane, that she could bring in such people?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: It's a mystery to me. I don't really know much about her anymore. I think—I don't know if anybody knows about her. Maybe they do. But for awhile people—you know, I felt it was a connection I wasn't happy about. But just because of her personality. I thought she was a poor teacher. And yet she did bring in some very good other teachers.

You know, she was the kind of person, as I said—I remember one little kid there, 10 years old, who was doing all these cowboys and Indians and having the most marvelous stuff you ever saw. And she'd just descend on him, you know, and grab him by the shoulders and say, "No. You don't do it that way. Do it this way. Make big things," you know, which may be great. But she was sort of a terrifying person to children. I still had that feeling about her, always.

ROBERT BROWN: Some of these other colleagues there, did you get to know them at all?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Pretty well at the time, yeah. I've forgotten now. I mean, never kept with the connection.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm. Well, about this time, in '37—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I went on to do lithographs on my own. And I got some printed by Carl Miller there in New York at that time for—and several years later, I'd send through the mail. And then he once somehow stopped printing, I guess. And I haven't done lithographs. And this year I started doing them again—found somebody who will print them. It's taken me that long to find somebody who will print them. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: Not really? I mean—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yes, literally. I mean, every artist here in Maine—I suppose I could have gone to Boston, like my friends. But every artist here in Maine who has a lithograph press is so busy doing their own work that they don't want to take in anybody else's work and have it printed. And—or I could go to the Maine print shop and do it—you know, use their facilities. I didn't know how to do it. You know, it's a very technical process. And I didn't want to learn it. So I'm having someone who knows how to do it—is willing to print it now, so.

ROBERT BROWN: You came up here in 1937 for good, right? That's when you got the house near your parents?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Adolph taught at City and Country that year. And that summer we came up here. And the hired man had just quit. And so we did the work. And then we thought, well, it would be nice to see what one winter is like. So we said, you know, we'll take his salary, which was 50 a month, and stay for a winter.

And in the spring we applied for teaching jobs, and nothing happened. So we stayed another winter. And then we kept applying for jobs and going down for interviews. And this was the height of the Depression, I guess, and it just wasn't that easy to get jobs. And we were getting along pretty nicely here. And then I had a child.

And then he got a—Adolph did get a job. And by then, we had sort of gotten so well entrenched, and we just bought a flock of pigeons, and we'd bought more cows, and we'd—I just—we didn't want to leave.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you fairly productive during those early years there?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. I kept right on painting, even when I had children. And I had my first child when I was 21 and the next one about three years later. And somehow, I don't know why, two seemed like a sensible family. That's what my parents had had. Nobody was going in for big families. It wasn't until after World War II they started going for three, four, and six children, you know.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm, Mm-hmm. Then '39, then, is the year that your father, I think, arranged that show at the Museum of Modern Art?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Of your work?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Up to about age 21, I guess, 21. They said 22; I think it was 21.

ROBERT BROWN: There was a good deal of emphasis in that show on your work when you were fairly small, a young child.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Yeah. And it was mostly that. I think it was misunderstood in some of the newspaper reports of it. They thought it was, you know, to push me as a prodigy, which my father had never done. He never had any such idea. And it was actually just—Jurmeco [ph] was interested in this complete record of a child's creative growth. And this was the whole purpose of the show, to show that, you know, you should start from just the same kind of beginnings that any child—kind of stuff any child does. And if you're given encouragement, you go through it to become an artist.

ROBERT BROWN: You're saying that this was the curator, Jurmeco.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: The idea was just to show you as an example?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yes. Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Which there could conceivably be many?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: That's the idea. But my father had saved this whole record of my—

ROBERT BROWN: Did you go down for an opening or go to see the show?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No, I didn't. I was—it was just as hard to get out of—uproot then as I am now. I think I went to Maine occasionally—I don't know why I didn't go for that show. I went down for the openings of my other shows. I guess I didn't really realize its importance at the time.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And—

ROBERT BROWN: But did your parents keep you abreast of what was going on in New York?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Pretty much, yes, they did. Definitely as I read those letters I got from—

ROBERT BROWN: That's right.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: They kept me abreast of everything. And I didn't realize how much

they worried about me up here and how much they worried about, you know, my career and how hard they were working trying to get shows for me. And I sort of just presumed it was all merit. I'd hope it was.

The only thing is that I did find, after having had, you know, shows about every two or three years in New York and taking art down to them and—nothing spectacular. One show, I think, did sell fairly well. I mean three or four pieces. That was the ACA show. Most of them, I didn't sell very much.

And I don't think that the dealers either—maybe if they had taken off and sold well, they would have been enthusiastic. But they never seemed to really like what I was doing or understand what I was doing, and that discouraged me.

ROBERT BROWN: And what were you doing at that time, genre paintings?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah, more. Genre, farm pictures, big heavy workhorses, men plowing fields and making hay. And also still lifes and pictures of animals. But fairly—they were always—the animals, actually, you know, if I did—I did one of a fox and one of a coon that Laurence Rockefeller bought. He bought four paintings of mine of that period.

They were very much like the kind of way I do animals now. There was always a certain, you know, simplification, stylization. But on the farm-working scenes, there was a kind of a softness. It wasn't a sharp edge. And it was to me a little sentimental. And as I look at it now, it embarrasses me as I look at them now. Maybe they are a good record.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think they were social realism [inaudible]?

[Crosstalk.]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That was the influence running in there.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And I think you have to get far away from a period like that. To me, that period, as I look back on it now, there was a lot of—it influenced my mother, too. And it wasn't natural to her. It wasn't natural to me, that kind of art. And it wasn't natural to my mother.

ROBERT BROWN: In what way not natural, would you say?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I mean—

ROBERT BROWN: Was it heavy? Not—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, it was heavy storytelling. Or realistic in a way that my mother's art was always—had been light and fanciful and decorative, but, you know, beautiful. And this was getting it down to, you know—she did one picture. I think it's lost, fortunately, of the death of the coal miner, you know, lying on his—a pallid figure lying on his pallet with the family standing around mourning, you know, this kind of junk. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I mean, this is not—it was not natural to the kind of art she was best at and the kind of—you're always influenced more than you think by what is in vogue in art. I don't know if I'm influenced now. I hope not.

ROBERT BROWN: And this continued even after you'd settled in here, as you look back?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Well, of course, it related to our life here. And I was enchanted by the farm. And I looked at things. And because I was looking at them, you know, with—I saw them as both realistic and decorative. I mean, I would see the design qualities in things. But I also was—it was the genre kind of social realism kind of storytelling, or whatever it is. I don't know how you define that period. It was the noble working man.

And yet this was the life we were leading. And I loved the life. And—so I could interpret it that way. Some of the pictures from that period hold up. I think there are still very good pictures. And others, I just, you know, don't care for.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you perhaps fairly smug about the life, the fact you were living off the land?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, I think it was—gave you a sense of achievement that you could do it, you know. I don't know if we were smug. It was too much of a struggle to be smug. You could be swatted down awfully easy by circumstances.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure. Both of you were urban.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: And to be able to do this must have been amazing.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, it was a challenge. You know, I think it's probably the way people feel when they go to the war and meet the challenge. You just feel you've done something that you'll never forget. You've gone back and lived as your ancestors did. And you could—and succeeded in doing it.

And you know, that we had no running water. We cut ice for—on the pond and stored it away. We had no electricity. We used—we did have one oil-burning stove in the living room. But we cooked with wood, and then later with coal. We had outdoor plumbing, no indoor. It was a very different kind of life.

Of course, when you came up here in the summers in those days, you had outdoor privies and no running water and kerosene lamps.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And you just—this is country living. You accepted it. So you were sort of used to it. But, you know, to learn to farm, to learn to cut wood, to learn to—

ROBERT BROWN: How did you do that, by asking locals?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. I remember we—Adolph and I got out with this two-man saw and we cut down 70 trees. And then we looked at the trees all lying there, one after another. We had spent a week or two cutting these trees down. We didn't know what to do with them, you know. So we called in this local guy who was a woodcutter. And he looked at those trees, and he just laughed. [Laughs] He said, "You don't just cut down the trees. You trim each one as you do it."

And he showed Adolph how to make the right kind of a—it's not a sawhorse. It's a little long, slanting thing that you roll the log up on, and you put a peg behind it to hold it, and then you saw it off. First you trim the trees. And we'd cut them down like jackstraws, you know. They were just flying all over each other. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Anyhow, we learned how to cut wood and the proper length, trim it, and cut it down, split it and chop it up for firewood—I mean chop it up for the stove length, and all these things. And everything—learning how to cut ice. We called in a local guy, and he worked with Adolph. That's a whole science in itself. Each of these things is a terrific thing to learn.

ROBERT BROWN: But you delighted in them?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. And I don't think Adolph really liked farming. I did. He sort of did it because I liked living here and maybe the challenge. But—

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And I think also because he'd always been miserable whenever he worked for a boss. He never liked anybody he worked for. And I thought, well, you know, the only thing is to work for himself.

ROBERT BROWN: Which he did.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And this was the only kind of life when you, you know, could be

your own boss, short of starting a business or something. We had no capital of any kind to do anything like that. But we could sort of ease into farming. And you know, the cows produce a calf, and you've got two cows, and that kind of thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And we lived on very little. And I think also, we came up with the idea, you know, that if you—there was this Depression. And you could always live off the land. And if you were in the city, you were thrown out of your job and you were thrown out of your apartment, and you were destitute, you know? Nothing to—you were just—starve to death, become a bum, end up in Hooverville, on welfare. And here you could dig clams and fish and grow a garden.

And it was a nice place to bring up kids. We didn't think about that when we came up. But there was sort of a—the idea that, you know, here you'd have a subsistence. And I think we've been sitting here ever since, for the next 40 years, waiting for the next Depression so we could survive. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: Well, I was going to get to that. But in fact, right after World War—'46 or so you had your first book published. And you were into doing the book illustration, weren't you?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: You were beginning to have some success. In the '40s, you have quite a series of shows in New York City.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Mm-hmm. And there's always sort of something going on, hopefully. And yet—

ROBERT BROWN: There was something that you could anticipate as possibly giving you a better welcome?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. And also, you know, there were two murals I did then, one in 41 and one 39, that were—I think I was paid 600 for one, 700 for the other, which was the equivalent of a year's living for us. And you know, you could get along on 600 a year. And yet, you know, if you had a car bill, it was just too bad. What were you going to do? You didn't have 40 dollars or something to repair your car. And you'd be hard up.

And yet we never—in all that time, did we ever borrow money. I think we once borrowed 100 dollars from my mother and paid it back. It never occurred to me my parents had any money. And I think they were fairly well off. But I never asked for help. They did pay our salary there for a long time—until we—I forget just when we eased into—

ROBERT BROWN: You mean they paid your salary to take care of their place.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Which was 50 a month. And this is what we lived on until we worked up the milk crew. We started to get cows and worked up into a milk business. And then we dropped the salary, survived on our own and, I suppose, with occasional art sales.

It was all very small potatoes, which is why I wonder at the young people now. They want instant success, you know. They want instant big money. And it's a long, slow hole, things like showing in shops, you know, store fronts, and showing to women's clubs and—there aren't many places in Maine to show then. There are more galleries now. There were no galleries, to speak of, in Maine.

New York was—I think the thing that really drove me out of New York was the—when abstract expressionism took over completely and I didn't want to follow that trend. It just had no meaning to me. It had no—

ROBERT BROWN: Really -

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And you couldn't get into any of the major—you know, all the

major group shows I used to send to and get into. And then all of a sudden, nothing. You know, it was an expense. You'd pay for the shipping and the entrance fee, and you just never got accepted anymore. All of a sudden, it was no longer—they weren't interested in the kind of thing I was doing.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And I think if it had been some other trend in art, I might have been able to follow it. But that trend, I couldn't follow.

ROBERT BROWN: I know your father wrote letters to you condemning the abstract expressionism.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: He too was [inaudible].

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: He was—he felt very upset about it. And he tried to perhaps make his things a little more abstract. But it wasn't natural to him, either.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm, Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Someone like Mildred Berge just took to it like duck to water, you know. She had always done figurative painting. And she had had a natural inclination, say, to do all-over patterning over her stuff so that, you know, the figures just sort of fade into a background of wriggly lines. And when abstract expressionism came in, she could go completely abstract, drop all the figurative part of it, and she was very happy. I mean, it just was natural to her.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, is she someone you had gotten to know pretty well here?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, she was a very good friend of my mother's. And I guess after my mother died, she entered our life. I used to go visit her with my mother once in awhile. And my mother was interested in the Maine art gallery. And I guess I showed there. But we weren't involved with it at all until—Mildred had started all these things.

And I don't know how my mother got acquainted with—I guess she—no, I think—I know. Mildred came around here, looked us up. And she looked me up first, I think, one winter because she was putting on a show at the Portland Museum, and she wanted to get some of my mother's and father's work in it. And it was actually, I think, more of a crafts show than an art show, fine arts show. But it was sort of mixed. I mean, it was fine—the height of craftsmanship, you know, like the finest jewelry and the finest kind of decorative stuff.

And Morris Lavine—he got a piece of his in there of a rooster, metalwork. And she—one of my father's sculptures, which actually, now, I wouldn't have put it in that kind of a show. I'd be snobbish. But then I didn't know enough not to be snobbish, and also it was a chance to—I showed some of my things and my mother's things that she had done. And that was where we first met Mildred.

And I was very impressed with her sister's jewelry that she did. And Mildred was working on just getting the jail and starting it as a museum then.

ROBERT BROWN: You got to know—got more and more involved then with things here, up here in Maine, hadn't you?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Adolph—well, you know, he got to know all the local people because he peddled milk door to door and he got to be very much accepted as—you know, you're never like summer people. Once you go around and peddle milk door to door, you're no longer just a summer person.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, yeah. Sure. But you were here. You weren't as accessible, or did you have local people in quite a bit?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No. I've never been accessible, really, to them. I just—I think he's the one who related us to the community. I did get involved—I got him involved, I guess, in the art gallery in Wiscasset because, first of all, Adolph got onto the school board in town. He was on the school board for nine years. That's because our kids, you know, needed a better

school and better schooling. And that got him involved in town affairs.

And he was moderating it for something like 15 years. He could have been a selectman. He could still, but he doesn't want to. It's just too much headache. But he's into a million other things, conservation commission and God knows what all.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, you were—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: But—

ROBERT BROWN: When did you begin writing and illustrating children's books?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Oh.

ROBERT BROWN: Because this—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, you know, this idea came to me back when I was around 18, or when I first married, I—or before. The year before, one of my mother's friends, father's friends, had written a little book about a horse. And so it was—the idea was to teach children French and write about a horse in Brittany. And she thought—you know, asked me if I'd try illustrations.

And I tried illustrations for this, and then I thought—I didn't know what—whether—I went back and asked my librarian at Lincoln, who was the children's book reviewer of the New York Times, Ann Thaxter Eaton, what I should do with it. And she got me—said—called up various publishers and told them, you know, got appointments for me. And then I went to them for this book. And they looked at it and said it's very nice, you know, but—nothing came of it. And I started working on other ideas of my own and trying taking them around to publishers, and nothing came of it. And I sort of abandoned the whole idea.

And then when we were up here in 1945—'44, I suppose; the book was published in '45. Ellen Steel, who had taught me when I was 11 at City and Country, was working for Young Scot Books, which was a new publisher of children's books who had—was doing very modern books. He did a lot of Margaret Wise Brown's *The Noisy Books*, which are very popular now—still. And they were very, you know, sort of sharp, abstract, modern kind of art. And I thought this was—these were great books.

And this—I didn't know they were great books until they contacted me. But this teacher, Ellen Steel, contacted me and asked me if I'd like to try illustrating one of these books. And of course, I was very happy to try. And they were very enthusiastic about the illustrations that I did. Actually, I hit it just right. It was *The Little Fisherman*, was the first book.

ROBERT BROWN: And that was written by someone else?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: By Margaret Wise Brown.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: We did *The Noisy Books*, and she did *A Little Farmer* and *A Little Fireman*. I don't think she liked my illustrations as much. She likes Lubba Keena's [ph], who is slightly more flattened. I can't say they were abstract, but they were flat paper tearouts, actually.

ROBERT BROWN: So this got you very interested in continuing to do this?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: You've done what, some 30?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: And you've written most of them, or many of them yourself?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, I—then, you see, I was—when I first read her book, I thought, you know, this is not much good. And then as I worked with it, I began to realize, you know, the flow of the language and how simple it was, and yet how beautiful it was written—beautifully. And then I sort of woke up with an idea going through my head of a sort of a

rhythmic kind of thing. And then I sent that in to them. And that turned into an art book.

I think I did one other, illustrated one other in between the next one for them, which they paid me the magnificent royalty of one percent, which they said was a basic royalty. And it sure was basic. [Laughs] Because I know the advance was 350, and I never made a cent more.

ROBERT BROWN: Wow.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And then this other book, though, they did give me a proper contract. I think it was five percent, which wasn't—and I made something on that one. That was *Animal Hide and Seek*. And then I did another—wrote another book, which they said they wanted to rewrite. And I let them rewrite it. And I illustrated it, and that was good work. I don't think that—I don't like the rewriting, but that's—somebody else got his name on it [inaudible].

And then I wrote—sent other stories to them, and they—one was *One Horse Farm*, which they rejected because they said it didn't have enough feeling. And I thought it was—I put a little more feeling in it, and I thought it was downright sentimental. And I sent that to Doubleday with a sample illustration and a rough dummy. And they took it. And that was when the—that was a big deal because the Junior Literary Guild took it. This was 1950, it came out.

That was the biggest thing that ever happened. I remember Adolph came down. We got the check for something like over 2000 dollars. But he came down through the orchard, and I was working in the garden waving this check. And that was the biggest thrill I've ever had. [Laughs] Money hasn't meant as much since.

ROBERT BROWN: Aha.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: But then, you see—but then I went on to do lots of other ideas with sample illustrations and dummies and Doubleday turned them all down. For five years I didn't get another book published. And I was getting very discouraged. And I didn't have any use for Scot because—I forget what they did. They did some—oh, the next book they wanted to take of mine, they wanted to give me even less than they'd paid me on the one before, and that turned me off on them.

They were really—you know, they were into exploiting young artists, which is all very well when you're beginning. But they didn't ever want to keep them. I mean, they didn't want to let you build up your—and keep you. As soon as you needed, wanted more money, they'd drop you and get another young artist.

ROBERT BROWN: They just wanted something cheap.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Something cheap to—somebody—they were willing to start you, which is fine. I mean, this is fine. But as soon as you became a—I think it was short-sighted on their part, because as soon as you became a well-known author, I mean, someone that was in demand or could expect to be paid, they dropped you.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure. Because if you were better known, it would have ensured sales.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. I mean, they would have done as well with me as Doubleday has done. I would have stuck with them, probably, you know?

ROBERT BROWN: But Doubleday then did eventually get back to you?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yes, yes, I got an agent. A friend of mine, Becky Ryer, who had been with this agency recommended I go talk to them. And I was in New York, and I went and talked to them. And I had five books, I think, I had done by then. And nothing happening for five years. And they said, you know, "All these books have sold well. Certainly we'll take you on." And I said, "What's the arrangement?" And they said, "We get 10 percent." And that was all we ever said about it. You know, no signed contract of any kind.

And they sold the next book just like that, bang. Maybe it would have sold, but I don't think so. I think Doubleday wanted a son of *One Horse Farm*. You know, I mean, they wanted—this was the success and nothing else, no.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: At least since then they have put a variety of books, and all the books they turned down have since been published, except one. And they've all done well. So I figure, you know, it's just they just couldn't see anything except that one success. And they wanted a duplicate of it. But the book that—the one that they accepted in '55 was—of course, it was *A World Full of Horses*.

And then my agent started selling the books that they had refused to Knopf. And so I had two publishers for a long time. Now I've branched out to a couple more.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, these were all—many of these were for children, but many of them have animals as the chief actors?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, I like doing animals best.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you already beginning doing animal paintings by the '50s?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I think—I don't know when I began to go back completely to animals. I'd say yeah, around about the '50s, probably it started. Between the '50s and '60s I really started going back completely to animals.

And when I started going—I'm trying to think when I did the first big, really complex jungle pictures. I think maybe the—you know, I started getting into the self-sculpture in around '56. So I found that was an art form and saleable.

ROBERT BROWN: What did you think it was before?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I thought it was something that I enjoyed doing and could give my friends, but no one would ever pay for.

ROBERT BROWN: Mmm-hm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And then a friend of mine, Priscilla Berry, organized this big show of mine, work which showed illustrations and these animals and, you know, the paintings. It was at a church in Brunswick, St. Paul's.

This was sort of a turning point, really, because this show was on for a month, and people, you know, were so interested in self-sculpture. And she said, "Wouldn't you"—I said that, you know, I don't want to sell them. And she said, "Wouldn't you sell them if they'd pay you 75 dollars?" And I said, "Sure." And she got me 12 orders at, you know, around 75 dollars each.

And so then, since then, of course, the prices have gone up. But that was kind of a revelation to me that people really would accept it as art because no one was doing—there was no such thing as self-sculpture then. I called it cloth sculpture. I didn't know what to call it, you know.

ROBERT BROWN: Right, right. And these are mainly animal shapes at that time? Or are they quite different from what we—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah, yeah. No, this centaur over here was one of the very old ones. And they were animals. They've gotten more complex since. I mean, the fishes, for instance, are much more ornate, and the birds, than they were, you know. They're much more complicated than they were. They were fairly simple, to begin with. I didn't put hoofs on the antelopes. They just—you know, and things like that. I've got more details and more intricacies. [Laughs] I like the challenge of them. Really, I don't know that I'm making money on them. But I enjoy the challenge of them.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you work up drawings or anything like that? Or do you just—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I sort of—I work out a drawing, and then I make a paper pattern. And I don't stick to the patterns very close. But it gives me an idea of how the construction is going to, you know, pan out, how it will work out.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, these are—they strike me as being, to some extent, based on real species of fish or birds or whatever.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Some are; some aren't.

ROBERT BROWN: But that's simply a point of departure, isn't it?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: You're back to where you were as a little girl, where you were working—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, I was starting to say about the animals, yeah. This kind of thing got me interested in fabrics. And I did a book of—that I was going to do in collage, fabric collages, which was *The Calico Jungle*. And I think this had a great influence on my oils because once I did the book—I didn't do it in collage. I did it actually in watercolor because the publisher said it would be much too expensive to reproduce. It would have been beautiful done in oils, but it would have killed me to do it. I mean, I would have absolutely killed myself doing it.

But that kind of decorative jungle picture began to carry over into the oils. I began to make the animals more decorative and designed and less realistic than they had been. I still—one like this cat picture reverts back to the more—less stylized. I go between the two. This is—well, these are actually between the—but every once in awhile I get completely stylized, like these fish up here.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: On the wall there.

ROBERT BROWN: Some seen in prisms. I mean, at least there are sectors of the canvas that are [inaudible].

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, that sort of breaking it up into the different triangular, almost cubist, prismatic shapes has been something I've sort of been developing, which gets rid of the three-dimensional quality. And you can have a lot going on in one scene without a sense of distance, which makes it look too crowded.

You know, like these National Geographic panoramas, where you have all the animals in it and it doesn't look normal. But if you break it up, it has the same effect that cubism does of things going on in the same—different spaces, different areas of space and different parts of time, and yet all in the same picture without—

ROBERT BROWN: They don't crowd or interfere with each other.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No, they don't interfere in a realistic way. Your brain doesn't say, "That couldn't all be happening at once," you know, and feel it's wrong.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm, Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: At least it strikes me that that's the way it works anyhow. And I sort of like—I like the design effects and the way it sort of gives almost the effect of light in a jungle, light coming to the forest, without being realistic light patterns.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you like these to be lyrical or happy? Or how do you expect like people to react to them?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I don't know. I think my art is very happy. It's funny. When I write—when I write short stories for adults or books, there's a very macabre, gloomy streak running through them. And none of that comes into the art. I don't understand why that is.

ROBERT BROWN: No.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And some people like—

ROBERT BROWN: Although they are these animals.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: People like Baskin can't do art that isn't macabre.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: This is their art, you know?

ROBERT BROWN: All of these animals are exotic to us, these African animals. They are sort of a—there is some feeling of mystery in some of them, simply because they are not familiar in everyday. Or if you take these cats, which are everyday, domestic animals—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I try to, you know, avoid getting too realistic. I find myself—you know, because I know them so well, I can get them photographic if I want to. And yet I pull back from that. I try to pull back from that to keep from—

ROBERT BROWN: But these cats, none of them are intimate with us. They are all patterned.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: But I mean, there seems to be a bit of distance. The one in the upper right here is paying us almost a—it's not quite a sinister quality, but he's certainly—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, I don't think cats are pretty sweet animals, you know. They all have a—they have a sort of a wild—not a wild, but a fierceness in them that you—I try to capture. I think, you know, it's sort of—I have a very strong feeling with the nature of each animal. I sort of feel him, you know. I can visualize them sort of the way they would be leaping through the jungle, whatever they are. Or the nature of the jaguars or the leopard is different from the nature of the antelope and how they—you find yourself expressing that.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I do it all—I improvise it all. I mean, a picture as complicated as *Blue Savannah* is—basically starts with an abstract color scheme. And then you start putting in things, just improvising what seems right. And as you build it up—as you're going along, you think, how's it ever going to all pull together? And then as you begin to get to the end of it, it all does, if all things being equal; I've had failures. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: Well, a good many of these animal forms overlap from one color zone to another in *Blue Savannah*.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I like that.

ROBERT BROWN: That links it, too, doesn't it? Helps to link it.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT BROWN: Some of the animals seem to be quite naturalistic in terms of their posture and what they're doing. Others, like in *Blue Savannah*, the lion, right middle, seems to be in a posture that's much more stylized. See the lion with the mane?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. This jaguar—I mean, he is a leopard down here—is almost very abstract. And I've enlarged him over here because I really like that.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: The way he—the pattern breaks up, and he merges into the lilies. And then the lilies merge into him and into the background.

ROBERT BROWN: So you're not particularly interested in the story or the naturalistic depiction of an animal or its posture?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: [Inaudible]

ROBERT BROWN: You are to an extent. But otherwise, the decorativeness and composition and color.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. I think that's why I like the African animals because there are so many spotted ones, striped ones.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, such variety.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: You know, there's such variety. I found it very hard, you know, to

do a Maine woodland scene. It's just somehow, when you get too close to home, it becomes corny or something in your mind, you know. I feel that—it's not that it's commonplace. But if I start to do deers in the wood, I think, well, gee, it's going to look like an L.L. Bean cover. Even though I wouldn't do it that way, I still have that feeling that, you know, somehow it's just too close to home. Maybe if I lived in Africa, I'd paint Maine.

ROBERT BROWN: You think Maine—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I have to detach—you know, it has to be something that's unfamiliar or exotic that you can think about. You know, you don't—you research these animals. The best thing, though, is to, you know, look them up, look at them, walk away and forget them, and then do what you remember. And it won't be realistic. It will be different. But it will have the essence of your knowledge of it in there.

ROBERT BROWN: Is Maine possibly too—you're too self-conscious about Maine?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I think so. I think maybe. I love living here. I love the beauty of it.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: But I don't want to paint it. I did paint one October last year because it was such an October I couldn't believe it. The colors were so brilliant. And that was a pretty successful painting. People say, "Why don't you do more?" But you know, I find it hard to—snow scenes I think I might do a little more of, but not so often. I haven't done them for a long time.

ROBERT BROWN: This barn scene here, the barnyard.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah, that's—these two are Maine. It's the nearest thing I've done for a long time to Maine.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: And then I go over to Arizona in this one.

ROBERT BROWN: But these are far simpler than the prismatic ones in the African element.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: A lot of that's—maybe a little—I did one farm garden, which it will be in the Farnsworth Show, which is as complex as one of these. It's one of the few I've done that's of a, you know, barnyard animals, and yet, you know, completely complex. It was sort of rows. They're almost in rows. And they're, you know, horses and cows at the top, and then there are pigs going through there, goodness knows, each animal going through the different part of the garden.

ROBERT BROWN: And you did that in situ at the library in Bath. You did right in there in one of the rooms there.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: You did paintings, and they were broken up by openings in the wall and all.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT BROWN: Was that a particular challenge there, just how you were going to link them together?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I don't think I worried about it. [Laughs]

ROBERT BROWN: Do you enjoy doing things, say, as the large mural that was just installed in the bank at Auburn—in Auburn, Maine? Do you enjoy doing things for Maine buildings? Or do you feel quite rooted here?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I do. And well, I was pleased with that because they—someone says, "Do you want to do a mural for a bank?" and your heart sort of sinks. And then I said, "What's the name of the bank?" And they said, "Sun Savings and Loan." And I saw an electric light, I guess, or a sun went off in my head. And I said, "How about African animals?" And

they said, "Fine." And this is a natural.

But I've heard about another commission—not that it was offered to me—for the customs—no, not the customs house.

ROBERT BROWN: In what?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: In Bangor, the federal building in Bangor, I guess, they wanted a mural there. I said, "What on earth subject could you do?" you know. I mean, if you're going to do—

ROBERT BROWN: So would you do something at all related with Bangor's history or—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, that's just it. You get into—

ROBERT BROWN: Lumber.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: You get into the historical or the abstract. And there's no way to do the historical that isn't like the old-fashioned realistic kind of painting, that I know of, on Maine. Or it would look like an advertising art or something. I mean, I don't know how you could handle the subject. I mean, I can't visualize a way of doing it that would—so they probably have something abstract because this is what—there's almost no mural style now that can handle any—I can think of different kinds of buildings.

And I'm going to probably do one at a school. But I could do one in libraries or schools or hospitals. But it has to be something, a subject I'm compatible with. And if I have to get into history—one time I would have done, you know, Maine farming and shipbuilding and goodness knows. All those things would have been compatible subjects; they aren't anymore today.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm. But that would have been when, back in the '30s and '40s?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Around the '40s and '50s, I could have done that kind of a subject.

ROBERT BROWN: Why do you think you can't now?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Because I don't want to—I don't see art in those terms anymore, you know? In that—I still remember I had a vision of doing a series of the seasons. And they would have been, you know, old-fashioned farming, horses in the spring and all. But I wouldn't paint that kind of a mural now. I don't know.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you see your art as now? What pleasures does it give you to do?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I love doing it. I don't—I just—I don't know. There's no way I can identify what it is. But I do enjoy it. I enjoy doing these complex—well, I enjoy complexities, for one thing. And then once in awhile, you know, I'll simplify it down. But I enjoy the challenge of fitting a lot of things together into a whole pattern. I like patterns in nature. I don't know why.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you design the pattern overall, sort of conceptualize it? Or do you start at one point and then just elaborate on that?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Sort of. That's more like it. More like starting at one point and elaborating, almost, I should say, in a way, like doodling, except you're doing it with paint. One thing builds out from another. And you see another area that you get—it's improvising. And this is one reason I liked this mural, is they didn't—you know, I did give them an outline sketch. But I left all the intricacies to be just done as I worked it out, as I do it. And this makes it all fresh. Even this is a little less fresh because I'm doing something I've done before. And this is—I was afraid if I just had it all worked out, it would be an awful chore to do the whole thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you like to have people share this with you?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, that's always—

ROBERT BROWN: Or do you sometimes have things you want to keep to yourself?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Oh, I suppose one always likes to share. It's a little ego building. That's the only trouble with writing as compared to art, is you can never show it to anybody. If it isn't published, it never gets shown. Nobody sees it. You know, you really need—you need the response of other people.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned writing several times now. Is this a considerable—has this for a long time been a considerable activity for you, writing?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: It's gotten to be more so.

ROBERT BROWN: And what are you writing, essays, fiction?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, I started around 1958 writing adult short stories. All of a sudden, I went on a binge of writing them and wrote about 14 in two months, and sold 3, but never been able to sell any since. And I really haven't written many since. And I guess I've cannibalized a few of them into my young adult novels and expanded into novels. But, you know, that's very obsessive when you do write. You can get—it really is much more time consuming than painting and almost more exciting. But it's an entirely different kind of thing. And I sort of wait for inspiration. I don't sort of just plug away at it. I don't do it. I get suddenly—get involved, caught up with an idea.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, are your novels at all set in Maine? Are they localized?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, they're fantasies. And they do have Maine-ish backgrounds, even when they're supposed to be somewhere else.

ROBERT BROWN: The adult work you've done, have you been—that's been published only fairly recently; is that right?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. The one -

ROBERT BROWN: The novel.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: The last novel was put on the adult list. Actually, I wrote it with the young in mind. But the short stories were definitely adult, that I wrote the whole series. I haven't got them published. Maybe I will someday. Unfortunately, they're getting dated.

ROBERT BROWN: But this, the novel *The Dark Horn Blowing*, that was published by Viking?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah, yeah. That's coming out in paperback this year. They didn't—I don't know how it's done because they didn't publicize it at all. And that was the only advantage of having an adult list was, they were supposed to advertise it. And they didn't. They never advertised it. So it sort of sinks or swims on its own. It hasn't been spectacular. And I hope they'll publicize it as a paperback, to a certain extent. And maybe it will sell well. Who knows? But I had great fun doing it. [Laughs] And you do like to get reactions from people on things like that, and art.

ROBERT BROWN: But you probably wouldn't be writing unless the publishers arrange to get things publicized?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: You can't hang it on your wall.

ROBERT BROWN: No, you can't hang it. And it doesn't become known -

[Crosstalk.]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: No. And there are just so many people you can hand it to and say, "Read this," you know. So I suppose what you need is other people's reaction just to know how you're affecting them. And once in awhile, someone will come through with some really interesting insight into what you're doing that you don't get, yourself.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Or I suppose we all need a pat on the back, need success. I feel pretty—maybe I'm smug, but I feel pretty happy about it right now. Some of my friends that were just visiting, some friends of ours, who have been struggling and struggling all these years, and they're getting very discouraged because they've never really—they excel well,

but they've never gotten their art accepted. I think they're both good artists. They've never gotten accepted as, you know, being of art of stature in this state.

And it really—it hurts them. They feel badly about, you know—and somehow, they just sort of—well, the man said, "I don't know if I want to keep on doing this anymore." You know, he's really feeling—and his stuff is too good to stop, you know? I mean, it's—but everybody—I don't know. Maybe I've just been lucky.

When I see all these young artists, they want—they really crave success, which we all crave. But they want it instantly. And this bothers me, you know? They just can't understand why they're not the top of the heap instantly.

ROBERT BROWN: Even in Maine—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: — where it's difficult to get a showing that too many, very many people would see here?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. It's very difficult. And this they resent, you see, the fact that it's difficult. And they want to be shown, and they want it now. I suppose it's natural. But you just take the sort of slow way up, I know.

ROBERT BROWN: And you've gradually developed your following here.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: But you've always had—or often, one in New York as well, haven't you?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Not too much anymore, really. I don't think New York knows I exist anymore.

ROBERT BROWN: No, but your publication now.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: In that way—sure.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: That has, I suppose, given me—

ROBERT BROWN: Well, isn't the Maine art world—

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: That's given me security, the children's books.

ROBERT BROWN: But the art scene here in Maine is split, isn't it, between those who migrate in?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: And some of whom are celebrity names?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: They are definitely. They have a—yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible]

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: We tend to fight for the maybe provincial—I don't know if it is or not—but to fight for the year-rounders, round, resident artists. And try to give them a fair shake, just because they're—that's pretty stiff competition when people come in who are known in New York from New York galleries. And they want to hog the Maine art scene, too, which somehow doesn't seem fair. They've got the New York's art scene. Why do they have to come up here and hog ours?

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. They actually have no outlet sometimes when they're here, do they, the New Yorkers?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, they get into the—whatever art show, big art shows there are and that kind of thing, or something like the Maine Art Coast Artist Gallery in Camden will show more, you know, New Yorkers than it will local artists. They had one resident artist show here for the first time, open show. Usually, it's invited and pretty—there were about maybe five, ten artists. Five artists started, and about ten artists would show there.

And the idea of starting the gallery is really to show their own work. And they are all out-of-state, you know, well-known artists. And you wonder why they had to insist on taking over that gallery just to promote themselves in the Maine scene. I don't know.

ROBERT BROWN: And yet these people from the outside might be good for art, generally, couldn't they be?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Oh, sure.

ROBERT BROWN: They'd call increased attention to it?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: Well, I think—yeah. This is one thing Mildred insisted on in her—in the art—Maine Art Gallery when she ran it, was that in getting as many of these big names as you could in because it made for an interesting show. It made for, you know, a high-caliber performance. And I think since she's, you know, let out—were out, they really tend to be sort of a—they struck a lower mean. Not a lower quality, but just a lower level of—they don't want those artists in.

And so it's too bad because I think there are good resident artists. But you've got to go after them, too. They get snobbish.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: [Laughs] Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you see yourself doing in the future, continuing letting your pleasure lead you where it may?

DAHLOV ZORACH IPCAR: I think so. At one time I used to always sit here and think, maybe some great gallery is going to come after me and take me under their wings. But I don't know if I really want it anymore because that's a lot of pressure, too. And right now I'd really just rather stay here and do my own art. And if it gets forgotten in the future, that's too bad, you know.

You're a little jealous. One tends to be a little jealous of those artists who get great fame. But I don't want what goes with great fame, you know, the celebrity and the—I mean, a guy like Wyeth is practically hounded to death. And even people, lesser people—I remember Bucky Langley saying when he was in New York, he just—there was such pressure on to produce and produce and to socialize and so—you know, go to this—he hardly had time to do his work. And he got out of that. It was just too high-powered a scene.

And I think I'm very much—the phrase now is "a very private person," which I think stinks. But I'm a recluse or a hermit or something, or I'm just happy in my own little world which I create around me. [Laughs]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]