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Oral history interview with Miriam Hapgood
DeWitt, 1987-1988

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Miriam Hapgood DeWitt on June 23, 1987 and March 25, 1988. The interview took place in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and was conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The Archives of American Art has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

ROBERT BROWN: —interview with Miriam Hapgood DeWitt, Robert Brown the interviewer, in Provincetown, Massachusetts. This is June 23, 1987.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: —were, as I recall, born abroad, born in Italy, where your parents were. Perhaps you can describe some of your family, something of your family's background, some of your earlier memories, we could maybe begin with that.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I was born in Florence in 1906, my parents were there. They were both writers and therefore, they were free to live where they pleased. My father had been a journalist, a working journalist, for a number of years, but at that particular time they were both engaged in writing books. Of course, I don't remember anything about the first two years of my life, which were spent in Florence, but I like to think that perhaps it had an influence on my artistic feelings.

ROBERT BROWN: After those first two years, did you—did the family remain in Italy a bit more, or in Europe?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No. Then they came back and we lived—my father first went to Indianapolis for two years. My uncle had a business there and for some reason or other, they thought my father could help out with the business, which was failing. It was a canning company, which later became successful, but at any rate, my father was the worst businessman you can imagine and after two years of—they left. Mother remembers those two years as perhaps the most miserable of her life, because they came from this lovely artistic atmosphere of Florence, artistic and intellectual atmosphere to the Middle West, to Indianapolis, which at that time was extremely insular. [00:02:23] And then they went to New York and in—see, in 1911, we moved to Dobbs Ferry, New York, where we lived, where I grew up until I was 16 or almost 16.

ROBERT BROWN: So you do remember Dobbs Ferry quite well.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I remember Dobbs Ferry. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I don't remember any particular—we had a lot of Father's and Mother's friends visiting us there. I'm sure that Maurice Sterne was one of them, of course Mabel Dodge. I can't remember—I remember a lot of the people who came but I can't remember any particular artists who came at that time. The first clear memory I have, of meeting and talking to artists, well actually, before that in Provincetown, I do remember the Hawthorne classes on the beaches. And uh—

ROBERT BROWN: Had your family been coming—began coming to Provincetown?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: We started coming to Provincetown in 1912, so I do remember distinctly, the artistic atmosphere here and seeing these women in long dresses and big hats on the beach, painting in the sunlight, and at that time, I thought they looked very funny. [00:04:04]

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs.] You mean peculiar.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Peculiar. And then Ellen Vorse and I would start sketching and making these quick crayon drawings, which we then sold or tried to sell for a nickel on the street, so that I was somewhat influenced in the artistic direction back then. However, I do remember Maurice Sterne, but that was somewhat later.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, your father said that you had shown a continuous aesthetic interest, from when you were a small child.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I was always drawing things, yes that's true.

ROBERT BROWN: As a child in Dobbs Ferry, you did watercolors of the Palisades—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, that's right.

ROBERT BROWN: —across the Hudson.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: That's right, I did. I was thinking about that the other day. I think that that vista we have, because we were high up on the hills, overlooking the Palisades, with a great stretch before us, great open country. I think that's why I've always liked the open country, the long vista of the sea and of Taos, when I lived in Taos, of Taos Valley and then the mountains in the distance.

ROBERT BROWN: That's certainly one reason you like it here.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: That's why I like it, mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT BROWN: Right down on the water, with dune grass all around you.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I don't like being shut in by trees.

ROBERT BROWN: Dobbs Ferry then, you mentioned Mabel Dodge coming to visit.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh, there were many people, a lot of people from Greenwich Village, a lot of the radicals and conservatives too. I mean, my father and mother had many kinds of friends. [00:08:09] My grandmother lived with us, she was very conservative, and Hippolyte Havel was our cook for a while, he was [laughs] an anarchist of course, a violent one, and so we were exposed to all kinds. We went to rather progressive, but not radical, schools.

ROBERT BROWN: What did that mean then, a progressive school? What was it like?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well it meant it wasn't—for instance, there was a school in Dobbs Ferry called Miss Masters, which was a snobbish finishing school, we did not go there. We went to the Scarborough School up the Hudson a ways, which had been established by a businessman, Frank Vanderlip, a financier, but he had progressive ideas. His wife was the president of the League of Women Voters and a friend of Mrs. Roosevelt. So I mean progressive in that sense of the word. But uh—

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But as children, did your parents—was there considerable discipline in the household?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Yes, we were—we had our bedtimes. We were not supposed to talk at the table when we had company. In fact, my father sometimes put a dime on the table for the child who kept quiet the longest.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, I recall in his memoirs, *A Victorian in the Modern World*, that he railed several times against parents who allow their children complete liberties.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: [00:08:00] Yes. Well, we had fairly strict rules, although he was a very affectionate father. If we infringed some rule, for instance punctuality, that was a very important and honest thing, and if we infringed those rules, he would raise his bass voice and it was quite frightening.

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs.] Now where did you fit in among your siblings?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I was the third child and first girl. I have two brothers who are both dead, and a younger sister who is still living. She was just down here but she left last night.

ROBERT BROWN: Were the boys told to look after you as a younger sister, or what was your relation with them?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well my elder brother was a lot older and as I remember him, he was very nice to me. The younger brother was two and a half years older and we were quite companionable. They didn't torment me, as I recall. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: What about Provincetown, as compared with Dobbs Ferry, when you came down.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, we love Provincetown, we couldn't wait to get here, it was a very different town. I've described that though.

ROBERT BROWN: You have, you've described the thrill of coming over the hill on the train, and getting here.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, yes. So, I don't know if you want me to go into all of that or not but—

ROBERT BROWN: Was it essentially a vacation for you as children, when you got here?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you remember it?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: It was really an idyllic place, because it was not crowded, the beaches were wonderful, the flats were teeming with life of all kinds. [00:10:08] You could go out and catch fish very close to the shore, and there were all kinds of things on the flats, and no danger. There were no cars to speak of, just horse drawn jiggers that transported fish and nets, and very, very few cars. So we were free and then we used to walk across the dunes, through the woods and across the dunes to the ocean, we did that very frequently, where the old coast guard station was, at O'Neill, later occupied.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Who were some of your friends then as a child?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, my closest friends were Ellen Vorse, daughter of Mary Heaton Vorse and Nilla Cook, daughter of George Cram Cook. We children had a good time. We played—often played at Mary Heaton Vorse's house.

ROBERT BROWN: What was she like, as you recall as a young girl?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, she was very nice to us. Her children have a very different view of her than I have, because she was working and supporting the family. Both her husbands had died, leaving her with three children, so she had to keep very strict working hours and they had a governess whom they hated, but to us she seemed very amusing and she told stories and she seemed to like children. [00:12:00] Her first—she wrote a couple of books about children that are very funny called *Growing Up* and *The Prestons*, and she used to tell stories about a stuffed animal named Sylvia who laid chocolate eggs. So, we liked her.

ROBERT BROWN: What about George Cram Cook, did you—what was he like?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I remember him very well. He used to come and play chess with Father very frequently, they loved to play chess, and he was a very big, tall, handsome man with white hair, very friendly. His wife, Susan, of course I knew much longer because Jig died. She was quite reserved, very sweet, but quite reserved.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you aware of the organizing of the Provincetown Players, the theatrical—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Well, the first play was given in our house, mother's constancy and suppressed desires, and I remember the excitement. I was not present for the play because it was given after 10 o'clock, and that was way after my bedtime [laughs]. But I do remember being in a play the following year, 1916, called *Mother Carey's Chickens*, which was a play written for children, and a lot of children in the neighborhood participated. A lot of us were *Mother Carey's Chickens*, and we went around the stage and Heaton Vorse reminded me, just the other day, that we said, "aladdle, aladdle, aladdle," [ph] flapping our wings. [They laugh.] [00:14:00] And there were pirates and mermaids, and so forth.

ROBERT BROWN: What a wonderful, imaginative life you have.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, it was, it was a lovely environment. I remember Harry Kemp swimming down to our beach every morning with a poem held between his teeth [laughs], a new poem he had written, to show mother. I have snatches of memories of that kind, although the plays I remember very well indeed.

ROBERT BROWN: Where did you live?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well it's now—belongs to Anne Packard, who is the granddaughter of Max Bohm incidentally, who was one of the artists here at that time. It's at the east end of town, I've forgotten the number.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And most people lived down at the east end?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Most people lived at the east end.

ROBERT BROWN: There wasn't too much out this way, at the west end.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: There was nothing here.

ROBERT BROWN: Right. Going toward Truro.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: There was nothing on Beach Point, there was only—in Mayflower Heights, there was a development up that had been built around 1898, and it's still there on the hill, across Route 6A, there's some little houses going up the hill, and those are old, most of them. Father bought this property, it then had two

houses on it. One had been built in 1898, and that's the one that is still here, has been remodeled. The other one burned down, the Pinehurst, where we lived.

ROBERT BROWN: When you moved here, you were much more isolated than you were when you lived—
[00:16:02]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: We were very much more isolated. However, the accommodation did run down this far, so we could get into town. We didn't have a car at first.

ROBERT BROWN: The accommodation with what, a trolley or a bus?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, originally it had been horse-drawn, but I think by the time we came it was motorized, but it was very high and open, had a canvas top. In rainy weather, they'd put up isinglass sides and the man who collected the fares had to run along a dashboard that went the length of the bus. It was quite a—it was fun riding on it.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you aware of also—you mentioned the plays. What about the organization of the Artists Association about 1916 or so?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I wasn't—

ROBERT BROWN: Do you recall, were you there around that time?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh, I was here but I was still very young.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I wasn't involved.

ROBERT BROWN: You were 10 years old [laughs].

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I've met some of those people of course since then, but my recollections of that time are not very good. In fact, I think the first specific recollections of artists that I have were in the—when we went abroad in 1922. The L'Engles, William and Lucy L'Engle, were on the boat with us, they were friends with my parents. Have I skipped anything that you want?

ROBERT BROWN: No, no. [00:18:00]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Then when we got to Paris, I remember we went to the studio of Jo Davidson, who was doing a bust of Robert La Follette Sr., the first senator, he had a son who was also a senator, and that was very interesting because he talked. My brother was with me and he was interested in politics, and they talked politics, and Jo always liked to chat when he was modeling. He kept up a steady conversation while he was doing the modeling, and I remembered this later, when he did father's bust, though that was in 1928, I think. I went with father, to his—to Jo's chateau near Paris, and we stayed about a week and father did—I mean, Jo did father's bust, which I think is one of the best things he ever did. I tried to buy it a few years ago but never could seem to get together with Jean and Jacques, his sons, who were there at the time and whom I remember very well. I also remember his wife, who was a dressmaker, a *couturière*, a very good one. A nice chateau they had, old.

ROBERT BROWN: Davidson was a pretty good friend of your father. Jo.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He was a very old friend and father knew him in Paris. I remember his telling me that Jo, at that time was extremely poor, and that he used to—he had a huge dog, and the dog used to go out and come back with meat [laughs] for Jo to eat. [00:20:12] That's what Jo told father.

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs.] No questions were asked, where it came from.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No questions were asked. Of course, I don't know whether Jo met father at the same time, when father was doing the *Spirit of the Ghetto*, when he met Epstein or not. You know, Epstein did the illustrations for father's first book.

ROBERT BROWN: But you don't remember, that was before your time.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, I don't remember that, no, but I do remember Jo and his wife very well. I can't think of her name right now.

ROBERT BROWN: And Davidson, when you first met him, in the early '20s, was doing lots of busts wasn't he?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Before the peace conference.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He called his chateau after some rich man and I've forgotten, I mean, he referred to his various houses as the Rockefeller place or the—whatever it was.

ROBERT BROWN: But was he a very personable guy?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, he was very friendly and very amusing, and I liked him a lot.

ROBERT BROWN: When you went to the—in the early '20s, you went with your father, to your—in '22, you went to Lozanne.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: In '22, we went to—let me see. I would say that the next memory is in '23, when we spent the summer in Cavaliere, France, and the L'Engles were there and the Gleizes, Albert and his wife, and I remember them, not very well. [00:22:11] I don't think they were actually living there at the time, but Maddie L'Engle says they now have, or later had a place, in Cavaliere. I remember Mars and Squires coming to visit, to see us, and their faces painted in a sort of cubist fashion.

ROBERT BROWN: Mars?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Mars, Ethel Mars.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh yes.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: And Maud Squires.

ROBERT BROWN: Your father recalled that you were in an English boarding school in Switzerland, put in there in '22. What was that like?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I'm not sure how much you want me to go into my personal life and how much you want me to talk about—

ROBERT BROWN: No, that's good to say if you could, because I think he thought that it was a little constraining for you. It was a very strict school wasn't it?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh, well I enjoyed it [laughs]. I was entered to that just after my 16th birthday and there were a few Americans, mostly English, I guess they had Mistress [inaudible] who was rather strict, but I enjoyed it. We took lots of trips and we went to the opera. My sister, who went later, did not enjoy it. Of course, that's where I met Hemingway.

ROBERT BROWN: In Switzerland?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah. When we got there, we went and we stayed at a hotel, this was before I entered the school, and Lincoln Steffens was there, they were covering a conference, and Guy Hickok from the *Brooklyn Eagle*, and Hemingway. [00:24:13] So that's when I first met Hemingway, and he was very nice to me and in fact, walked me down to the school on the night that I entered, so I have very pleasant memories of that. And then we—well, let's see. I've written down only about the artists, so I don't know.

ROBERT BROWN: No, that's quite all right. As you mentioned, or your father has mentioned, the anecdote of your getting him to dance when you went to Paris with him. Then you went to school in Vaas, south of France. I gather you went there for your brother's health, according to your father's autobiography.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, we went to Cavaliere after that—first, after that school, that was early, and then we went to Cavaliere the following summer, and then after that, we lived in Paris for the winter, where my brother and I had to go to cramming school. I had not learned anything but French at this finishing school in Lozanne, so in order to enter college, I had to make up, and the same with my brother, who had been studying in England.

ROBERT BROWN: It was understood that you girls would be going on to college.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, that I would. My sister didn't want to but I was planning on. [00:26:00]

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think you have sort of an academic turn of mind at that point do you think?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, no. My father just thought it was important for women to be educated

[laughs]. I'm sure he would have sent my sister but she just refused.

ROBERT BROWN: So the tutoring school was hard work wasn't it [laughs]?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: It was all right. At some point, and I don't remember whether it was—I think it was the following spring or something, we were in Vaas, and I went to a boy's school. There happened to be a boy's school in Vaas, but they agreed, on father's insistence, that they would take me for lessons in geometry, and so I was ushered into this salon, where obviously, nobody ever pulled the curtains or drew the curtains, except when they had parents visiting, or when I was there. And I never saw any of the boys, but I learned geometry in two months, the whole years' worth I learned in two months, and got 98 on my college boards, which I think speaks pretty well for the teacher. [They laugh.]

ROBERT BROWN: Then you were ready. When—this is 1924 or so.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Then we—well, we spent quite a lot of time, spent over two years, in Europe. We went to a lot of different places: Cannes, Blois, Monte Carlo, and we traveled through chateau country and we saw a lot, and went to a great many museums. [00:28:05] Father was very insistent on that, and theater and so forth, and so it was a very interesting experience.

ROBERT BROWN: Your father, when you went, say, to an art museum, would your father talk, lecture you a bit?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. He would—

ROBERT BROWN: Point things out to you?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, he'd point things out.

ROBERT BROWN: But all was in a kindly spirit.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, father—spirit at all in that respect, just informative. I remember particularly, vividly, I remember the Elgin Marbles, because we stayed in London for three weeks when we first got there, and that was something that he was keen on. Then, I remember the *Winged Victory*, that was my favorite thing at the Louvre, so I remember quite a bit from those days.

ROBERT BROWN: So you were being educated but much in the company of your family, except for crash courses, but through travel and visits.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Well, I think that was the idea, of course along with academic—I mean, I did learn at La Gaceta [ph] in Switzerland, but it was almost entirely—it was a finishing school really, and I learned French. We had to speak French all the time, except Sunday, and I learned to dance [laughs], and I learned how to peel an apple with a knife and fork, but that was about it. But we had these wonderful trips, skiing and going to all the romantic places, opera and all that. [00:30:07]

ROBERT BROWN: Were there many American girls there?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No. There were perhaps six or seven of us. There were a couple of ambassador's daughters, the Grew girls, Joseph Grew's girls, and Elizabeth Haughton, but most of them were English.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you return here in 1924?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah, it was mm-hmm [affirmative], I think it was 1924, yeah that's right, towards the end of 1924. And then I do remember quite a lot about Provincetown around 1925. I remember Edwin Dickinson very well, he came and taught me drawing or gave me criticisms, as my father called them. I remember one of the studies that he made me do was of a white egg in a white bowl, he thought that would be a challenging subject and I guess it was.

ROBERT BROWN: What was he like as a young man?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I remember going to a party with him, of course he was quite a lot older than I was, but we both knew a woman who lived in New Orleans, Marjorie White, and she gave a big party, and we went and a lot of our friends were there too, his friends. He had one very close friend who was there and I can't think of his name. And after—late in the evening, we took a walk over the moors and I remember that we came to a clump of bushes and he put his hands up in front of his eyes like this as we went through the bushes, which I thought was rather extraordinary. He explained that his eyes were his most precious possession and he didn't want to do anything to endanger them. Then of course I knew him very well later too, in New York. I spent the winter in New York in—was the 1950s some time, and saw a lot of him, and by that time he had a beard and he dressed in his—his uncle—he never liked anyone to refer to this, but his uncle was Chief Justice Charles Evans

Hughes, and apparently, he got a lot of either Justice Hughes's clothes or his father's clothes, because he wore them [laughs] at that time in New York. These Edwardian overcoats and hats, and capes, so he was quite an original figure.

ROBERT BROWN: Had he struck you that way years before, when you met him as a young girl?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, he as full of fun and perhaps a little bit, I wouldn't say odd, but a little different from most young men. I remember going to his studio with Jack Tworikov and his sister, whom I knew very well, Janice. [00:34:05] In fact Janice spent one summer with us here, on this place, and he was painting these enormous dark canvases that—with lots of large figures and lots of still life, pots and pans. I think it was 1925.

ROBERT BROWN: Who others of the younger artists that you got to know down here at that time?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well I knew them best, I suppose, that summer.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you meet—the Chaffees were still around then, Oliver and Ada?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah. Of course, I remember the Chaffees from later, Oliver especially was a great friend of father's, and he used to come and play chess with him too. Let's see. I'm sorry for these pauses, but I have to look at my notes.

[Audio Break.]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: All right. Dickinson, of course, at the time I'm describing, the '50s, he was teaching at the Art Students League, and I think he was beginning then to be recognized, but his early years, when he lived down here, he was extremely poor. He was married and had two children, and my husband, who was here during those years—I wasn't, see I was living out in New Mexico—said that he used to go out there sometimes, they'd invite him for dinner, and what they would have would be a hard-boiled egg and some herbs that they'd picked, wild herbs, and that was it. [00:36:08] And there were a lot of people here then, existing, during—this was during the Depression—on practically nothing. I had two friends here, the Yackerts [ph], who lived on cat food, Saul Yackert [ph], have you ever heard of him?

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. He was a painter too?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well he was more of a woodworker than a sculptor. There were a lot of artists here who were very poor, I guess Jack Tworikov was poor too. He was on the WPA, I'm quite sure. I don't remember whether Dick was or not.

ROBERT BROWN: In the '20s too, a lot of these people were poor, and I suppose people like Hawthorne and Ambrose Webster, the major teachers, were doing all right weren't they?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well Hawthorne, according to Moffett's book, was one of the big money—you know there were a few artists here who were making lots of money—Bohm.

ROBERT BROWN: Max Bohm.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Bohm, and a couple of others, two or three others, but that's in his book, but most of them—and I remember Zorach coming, also gave me drawing lessons once or twice. I think father probably was trying to help them out because they were so poor.

ROBERT BROWN: You had those lessons from him down here?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah, he'd come down to our house.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he a fairly effective teacher do you think?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I don't remember anything about it. I do remember Dickinson's teaching but not—but his son, Tessum was talking the other night, about how poor they were, just barely existing. [00:38:00] Maddie L'Engle's family, especially her aunt, who was very wealthy, was helping them, but otherwise, they probably couldn't have made the grade. And then I remember Fred Marvin. I don't know if you know his work but he was an impressionist who lived here for years, and a very nice man, and I—somewhere I have—he wrote me letters while I was little girl, he was perhaps my father's age, and I have those letters somewhere, very nice letters. One time, father joined the Beachcombers Club, which you probably know is an artists and writers club that was started here in I think 1914, and Richard Miller was a member, and he was a very macho guy, I guess, and he made some remark about Fred Marvin that father thought was insulting, and so father challenged him to a dual.

ROBERT BROWN: [They laugh.] Really?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: But friends intervened so it didn't actually come off. And then Richard Miller had one child, a daughter, Elsbeth, who died at about the age of 17 or 18, and after that, Richard—father and Richard Miller became reconciled to one another.

ROBERT BROWN: But you don't yourself remember Richard Miller very much.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No. I remember his daughter but I don't remember him.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. [00:40:00] What about another figure, Niles Spencer, do you remember him at all?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, I remember them very well.

ROBERT BROWN: Niles and Betty Spencer.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He was—I always liked Niles very much, he was quite—he was very friendly and charming, and she was full of life and very—gaiety, but then suddenly she up and left him for a fisherman and stayed married to him for the rest of her life here in Provincetown. And I don't remember seeing her after that. Of course I was away in Taos, but when I came back—she just died I think, a couple of years ago, but I guess that was a great blow to Niles, whose work I like a lot. And Chaffee, I remember being very handsome and very sweet, and he came, as I say, he used to come to our house a lot. I don't remember his wife as well. Father wrote an article about him after his death in 1944, which was published in the *Advocate*, it was an appreciation of his work, which I have, but I can't put my hand on it right now.

ROBERT BROWN: You liked his work as well.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: At that time I didn't know it so well, but as I've come to know it in later years, I do like it. I think it's very—

ROBERT BROWN: Would you, in the '20s, have met any of the printmakers down here, the colored woodblock print group? [00:42:00]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, of course I knew Knaths somewhat later, yeah I think he made some of them, and I don't remember Nordfeldt. I did know Voorhees, Hope Voorhees, who came in and did it later on.

ROBERT BROWN: What about Blanche Lazzell who was—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I don't remember her. Ada Gilmore was Chaffee's wife and actually, we had one of her woodblocks, a very good one, and we had one of Hope Voorhees, both of which we gave to the Heritage Museum.

ROBERT BROWN: In Provincetown?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: In Provincetown, so they're there and they're very good, I think, especially the Gilmores. Who else was in that group?

ROBERT BROWN: Well, Tod Lindenmuth was in it.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I didn't know him. See this was um—

ROBERT BROWN: You would be down mostly just summers, and less and less I guess, as you grew older.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you then go to college?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, I went to Smith.

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. To study what, or did you go with anything in particular in mind?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, I didn't go with anything particular in mind and when I got there, I decided on—I loved Paris so much, that I decided to major in French, just so I could go to Paris again in my junior year. I had no real ambition in mind. I did take one art—they didn't have any good art school there then, but I did take a theater design course there.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: With Oliver—

ROBERT BROWN: Oliver Larkin?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: —Larkin.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes. [00:44:00] Was that quite good, do you recall?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I remember designing a set. I remember, I think it was *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, or at least I was influenced by that, [laughs] I don't remember whether—what the set was. Do you remember that old movie?

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Smith, was that very pleasant or very challenging, or how would you characterize your years there?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I would say that I wasted my time. I didn't either really enjoy it or not enjoy it. I had a good time, but I think the '20s were very, at least in my experience, the main idea was to have fun, have nice clothes, go to dances, have lots of balls and get married, I mean that was the idea, the main idea, and so I didn't get much out of it. I enjoyed some of my courses. I took a course in astronomy that I've never forgotten.

ROBERT BROWN: Why is that, because it was so welled up top?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I just was fascinated by the subject, and also my English courses I enjoyed, oh and I think I took—oh yeah, I took—I had a course in Bible, which I found very interesting, because we mostly read the Book of Job, and [inaudible] bit mature, but I certainly wasn't—didn't have any career in mind at the time, and I think that was true of most of the people there. [00:46:02]

ROBERT BROWN: Well they have a new art museum.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I know, they have a very—now.

ROBERT BROWN: It's much larger, but they had a little beautiful one built in the '20s, I think.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, not when I was there.

ROBERT BROWN: No, it wasn't quite—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: If it was there, I didn't know about it [laughs]. Oh, incidentally though, I did meet Lincoln Kirstein there. You know?

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: His sister was a professor of literature at Smith, I've forgotten her married name, and he used to visit her. And he took me out several times, so I remember him quite well, but of course I lost touch with him when I went out to Taos.

ROBERT BROWN: What was he like as a young man?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I liked him. I remember he was tall and thin, that's about all I remember. I was living in Hatfield House, which later was converted into a classroom building and I remember his coming unexpectedly to see me, to invite me to a party or something, and there was the most terrific hubbub in the house, as all the girls rushed around, finding things for me to wear to that. [Laughs.] That was most important, that I would be properly dressed to go downstairs to see him. Well, maybe I'd better fix some lunch.

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ROBERT BROWN: You then were in Paris your junior year and after that, what did you do?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well do you want—well—

ROBERT BROWN: Were there people you met there were—that year in Paris?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: We first went to Grenoble, which was part of the curriculum, we studied at the University of Grenoble for a couple of months and then we went on to Paris, to the Sorbonne, and that Grenoble experience was very good, it's a very charming old town. We had some interesting experiences with attitudes toward women. I don't know if you're interested—

ROBERT BROWN: Can you explain, tell me.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well [laughs], the woman we were staying with was La Countess de St. Paul, she had a place in Grenoble and also one in Paris, and she took in girls from Smith to supplement her income. She had a son, La Count de St. Paul, who used to come and visit us, and he would sit there in madam's salon, with her present, and just stare fixedly at our legs or our bosoms. And this was a very elegant aristocrat. Then, we were riding on the streetcar one day—this was during the day and we were the only people in the car—and a group of men got in, drunk, and they sat down next to us and started fondling us. [00:02:08] I kicked one of them but it had no effect, and so we appealed to the conductor and he just laughed at us, so we had to get off the car. Then on the subway in Paris, we traveled second class because we didn't have much money, and we had to stop it and go first class because we were pressed into this crowd and all kinds of things happened to us. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Wow.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: So, for the contrast from American behavior to European to French, was quite astounding. Also, we learned a lot about French law and how it favored, how it discriminates or did then, against women, in almost every way, as far as property goes, everything else. So that was a revelation, but we enjoyed—I enjoyed it nevertheless, so.

ROBERT BROWN: What were you studying primarily?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: We were studying French civilization, which included law, literature and language, and history.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you think at that time, you might wish to stay on in Europe, after that year?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I had already—that's the reason I went, that's the reason I majored in French, was so that I could go back there. Yes, I loved it.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you think you might want to stay in France? [00:04:00]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I don't think I thought about it. I mean, I was supposed to stay a year and that's what I did, except of course I got sick in the middle of my term, my second term, and Father came, and I was diagnosed as having TB by the local doctor. Father came dashing over and I didn't have it at all, but he yanked me out and took me up to the mountains, where I had to stuff myself. And then we went to Loèche-les-Bains, which was a French watering place for the intestines. [They laugh.] I remember the first day we got there, father met a French woman and the first thing she did was show him an X-ray for intestinal tract. There was a book written about the place, called *Le Constipe* [ph]. [They laugh.] So I had a rather varied experience.

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs.] What did you do after that year abroad?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well then I came back and let's see, when was that, 1928. In the winter of '28, '29, we were in New York. Mother took an apartment in New York and Father was abroad most of that winter, I think. We had a good time. My sister was then—we were both going to parties and things like that.

ROBERT BROWN: But you didn't go back to Smith then. [00:06:00]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I did not go back to Smith. Father was perfectly willing to send me but I didn't want to go. Then—well in the summer of 1929, was when I went to Taos.

ROBERT BROWN: What led you to go there?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, Mabel invited mother and me, and my brother to come out, and so we did and we went out in July, I think it was.

ROBERT BROWN: Had your parents kept in touch with her or seen her regularly?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, they were very—

ROBERT BROWN: Mabel Dodge.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: They were very close friends. Mabel wasn't there when we got there, she had been out, she was away. When we got off the train in Lamy, after three days, it was a three-day train trip.

ROBERT BROWN: From the East.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: From the East. I fell in love with the place right then and there.

ROBERT BROWN: Really?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So I knew I wanted to live there.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you think it was that struck you?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I think it was the light. I don't know, but I just felt—I had not been well for a couple of years, since that thing in Paris, and I don't know what it was, never have figured it out. As I look back on it, I think I was depressed, but I have no idea why. Anyway, I came out of my depression then and there, and we went up to Mabel's and we were staying in her Saint Teresa house, which adjoins the big house, and it was a beautiful house. Mabel was a genius when it came to houses.

ROBERT BROWN: You mean in laying them out and the decoration? [00:08:02]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Mm-hmm [affirmative] and designing them, everything. We had our meals at the big house and I remember going over there for breakfast the morning after we arrived and there was Georgia O'Keeffe and Marin, and I've forgotten, maybe—oh, and Rebecca Strand. Georgia and Rebecca were sharing the pink house, which was another of Mabel's house, Paul Strand wasn't there, he was in New York. After a while, Ella Young came in, she was an Irish writer, and she wrote fairytales, and she was a friend of Yeats and the whole Irish gang there. She told me that in her youth, she used to drive a team of milk white mules. At any rate, she came in and Georgia said to her, "Why Ella, I hear you were—I saw you up very early this morning, you went past my window," and Ella said, "Oh no, Georgia, that was my astral body." So that was my introduction to Taos.

ROBERT BROWN: Had you met any of these people before, Marin or O'Keeffe?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I had met—no. I'd met Georgia O'Keeffe I'm sure, though I didn't really remember her, because Father and Stieglitz were very close friends, so I must have met her, because I had met Stieglitz but I didn't remember her. [00:10:02] But we became very friendly, she liked me and was very nice to me. She wasn't very nice to everybody, so. And we used to go on camping trips together in the mountains: my brother, Georgia, Charles Collier, who was the son of John Collier, who was Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and the Mirabal brothers, who were Indians, that would go as our guides, and we'd spend several days camping in the high mountains. When I saw Georgia O'Keeffe a few years ago, in her house in—what's the name?

ROBERT BROWN: Abiquiu.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Abiquiu. She reminded me that she and I had shared a sleeping bag because it was so cold. Of course, we rode horseback into the mountains, this was 30-40 miles, so we had a very good time that summer. Marin and his wife, and son were there, staying in another house—Mabel had several houses—and he was awfully nice to me and we used to go on sketching trips together. I remember he was particularly fascinated with the water, with the streams, the mountain streams. And he—

ROBERT BROWN: Was he very talkative, Marin, or what was he like?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I think he was, as I recall. He was extremely friendly and helpful. [00:12:02] I mean, I was painting, doing watercolors, and of course I was very much influenced by him. And in [laughs]—in one of, I think it's either Mabel's, or mother's letters, which I have here, they say that Marin joked that he thought he would include one of my watercolors in his next shipment to Stieglitz, and then see if he could pass it off as one of his [laughs]. Of course he didn't do it. Ah, she was nice, his wife, and the son I guess was about 14. I visited them once later on in New Jersey, at their house in New Jersey, which was a surprise to me because it was so drab. Marin's colors were so brilliant, but the house was just all brown it seemed to me. I remember he—Mabel had a tin can for what was called the tin can dance. There was a dump about a mile or two out of town, along the highway, of tin cans, and Mabel wanted to get this cleaned up. Believe it or not, it was the only thing along that highway, out of Taos, between Taos, and ranches, and now of course it's solid. So, she organized this dance and a lot of the artists made posters that were auctioned off at the dance, and Marin did one of them, and a lot of the other artists did posters. So enough money was raised to clean up the dump. [00:14:12] And the decorations were all made of tin cans, I mean, chandeliers and all kinds of things.

ROBERT BROWN: Was that a great event, that Mabel event?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: That was a great event, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Had you met Mabel before, before you went out to Taos?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. She had come out to our house from time to time, and then I went for a few months, to the downtown [ph] school in Croton.

ROBERT BROWN: This is when you were living nearby, at Hobbs Ferry.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: This was when I was seven, six or seven, something like that. Elizabeth Duncan had moved her school from Germany to Croton when the war broke out, and Mabel and she were great friends, and so of course were Isadora and Mabel, and father knew Isadora too. So I, for some reason or other, was entered in the Elizabeth Duncan School of the dance, which was right near Mabel's. And then Mabel adopted a little girl, who was about my age, and so we used to get together. So I saw her then. I didn't remember her awfully well from those days, but I got to know her very well of course, in Taos.

ROBERT BROWN: What was she like then, when you first met her in Taos, when she came back?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: She and I took to each other right away. Mother left in August, Mother didn't like—couldn't stand it there. [00:16:03] I think it was partly the altitude, partly that a nest of rattlesnakes was discovered in our yard, although that was the only rattlesnakes I ever saw in all the years I lived there, live ones, but they happened to be [laughs]. And partly that my brother died not far away, and also, I think Mabel, well Mabel could be very difficult, and I think she may have made Mother feel uncomfortable. But for some reason or other, she took to me and she persuaded me to stay, and I stayed on into November. Then—

ROBERT BROWN: Was she domineering?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, she could be, all right. A lot of people think she was domineering with her husband and I don't—that's not true. She couldn't be, he was a very strong man in his own right and he wouldn't tolerate anything like that.

ROBERT BROWN: So you got to know, this was Tony Luhan.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Tony.

ROBERT BROWN: You got to know him then very soon, as well.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh very well, yes very well. I don't know whether she tried to dominate me or not. Certainly, I saw a great deal of her, she was always coming over and saying, "Come, take a ride with us," horseback rides, which I did a lot with her and Tony, or "come and go to the Pueblo with me," we used to go out there a lot. She liked to go in the late afternoon and park on the bridge there and just listen to the sounds of the water, and the people moving around the Pueblo. [00:18:02] At any rate, Tony found this little house on the edge of the Indian land, this was in 1929, and I persuaded my father to buy it for \$1000 [laughs]. It didn't have any plumbing or anything in it, or wiring.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you move into it?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, the following year. I couldn't move into it as it was, no. The following year, my brother and I went out and we fixed it up, I mean, we hired people to do it, and neither of us knew anything at all about building or hiring, so I'm sure we were very much taken advantage of.

ROBERT BROWN: What were your brother's interests at this time? This is your younger—older but the younger of the two brothers, Charles.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he a writer at this time?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, no, he had—well, he had been, actually at the Scarborough School, he'd done a lot of writing and he wrote for the *Scarborough Review*, and he was quite a prominent figure in the school. Let's see, 1929, well he was still—he graduated from Harvard in 1930, I guess, or maybe it was later, because he took his master's degree and did his work for his PhD, though he never wrote his thesis, so he was still in school at that time. [00:20:00] History was his subject, and he later went on to teach history.

ROBERT BROWN: He shared with you, a lot of Taos, so he returns—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT BROWN: —with you in the spring, in 1930.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. He loved Taos.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you two accepted, so to speak, in the Pueblo, through Mabel, Mabel and Tony?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, we used to go out there a lot and yeah, we had friends there. I mean, yeah I felt at home there. I don't supposed I knew anyone really intimately, except Tony. Oh, I did know some of the

people who worked for Mabel, I knew them quite well, and also some of the Spanish Americans.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative] Did Tony, was he very communicative, or how was he, say, with you?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, he was a man of few words, but he had a sense of humor and when he did say something it usually had a point. I remember, I was—one year I was saying to him, "Oh Tony, isn't it nice, pretty soon so-and-so will be back." It was spring and you know, the summer people would be back. He said, "Yes, pretty soon flies will be back too." That was the kind of humor [laughs]. [00:22:00] The Indians have a tremendous sense of humor, it something people don't realize, you know they're portrayed as sort of ugh, ugh. I went with Mabel once, to a Twelfth Night celebration at the Pueblo and on that night, dancers and clowns visit various houses. We went to one house and we witnessed this—these groups of dancers, and clowns that are called Koshare, and they're satirical dances, mostly aimed at the Anglos, and they were terribly funny. They're not—most people don't really appreciate what they're like, and speaking of that, I think that Dorothy Brett—

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, who would come out there in the mid-'20s or so, hadn't she, or earlier.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: She came out with Lawrence, yes, and I think she's a much neglected painter.

ROBERT BROWN: Can you recall her painting these?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, the reason I say that is I think she caught the feeling and the life of the Indians much better, and she's not in that book, which surprised me.

ROBERT BROWN: This recent exhibition at the Smithsonian.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. She was an uneven painter but I think at her best, she was very good, and she certainly caught a feeling that nobody else did, except possibly—well, I think Marin's painting of an Indian dance in Santo Domingo catches that spirit.

ROBERT BROWN: [00:24:13] How would you describe that spirit?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, [laughs] it's hard.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you attempt to paint such things too?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, I did some paintings, some watercolors, of some of the fiesta. They have a fiesta in the fall, San Geronimo Day, which is their patron saint. Of course they're Catholics, nominally Catholics, but they don't—they keep right on with their pagan ceremonies as well, and they combine the two, and on San Geronimo Day, they have various festivities, including climbing a greased pole, and a beautiful race, which is not really a race at all, because nobody is supposed to win. They just run back and forth on a track, and the old men, clad in white, urge them on with aspen branches, they're gold, you know, at that season.

ROBERT BROWN: You were spending much of your time then, painting?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Painting with Marin. I think you mentioned also, that you studied with Emil Bisttram.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, I did.

ROBERT BROWN: How was he as a teacher?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh, I thought he was great. That was 19—well, I was married in 1930, in the fall of 1930, and I think it was 1932, that I studied with Bisttram, my husband and I both did, and he had just started. [00:26:04] He had just come to Taos, and he was teaching on the basis of dynamic symmetry, and I found that very interesting and I followed that for a while. I had a letter that I wrote about it, which I could find for you some time if you're interested, that I wrote to my parents about it. He was a very good teacher. I felt that he was an extremely accomplished craftsman, now whether he was a great painter or not, I really don't—I hadn't seen enough of his later work to tell, but he could paint in almost any style and he was certainly a good teacher.

ROBERT BROWN: Was your husband—had come out there to paint?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: My husband started painting after he came out there, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: So how did you meet him, he simply happened to come to Taos?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, I met him here, in Orleans, at a friend's house, and that was when I was 18. And

so I knew him five years before, and then he followed me out to Taos and we got married [laughs].

ROBERT BROWN: What was his name?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Edward Bright. We lived together there until 1941, and had two children, and then we separated.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think a lot of people went out to Taos for sort of romantic reasons, or do you think a great many like you were suddenly so struck by the light and the landscape, that—just as has been said of Provincetown of course, as well. [00:28:01]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I think Mabel had a lot to do with a lot of people going there.

ROBERT BROWN: Really?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah. Georgia O'Keeffe came because of Mabel, and Marin came because of Mabel. Andrew Dasburg came because of Mabel, Maurice Sterne did, Lawrence.

ROBERT BROWN: There was a human catalyst [laughs], it was Mabel.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. The poet from California, Robinson Jeffers, I mean, I can mention Edna Ferber.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I mean, just all kinds of people. So a lot of them—but of course when Mabel got there, there were already a lot of artists there, the old timers.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, you mentioned to me that there were a group that were considered rather old hat by the time you got there: Blumenschein, Ufer, Ward Lockwood.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well not Lockwood so much.

ROBERT BROWN: No? Irving Couse.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Couse and Berninghaus and Blumenschein, and Ufer, as you say.

ROBERT BROWN: Were they people—why were they considered old hat?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I think I have a list here. What?

ROBERT BROWN: Because they were somewhat older, and also painting in what by then, seemed very outmoded?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, it seemed very outmoded and frankly, I was quite astonished when I looked at that catalog [laughs], to see how good some of them were, because we didn't consider—I didn't consider them good at all. Young Hunter, Fechin. Fechin was more modern though. But to us then, and to the younger artists, they seemed outmoded. [00:30:02]

ROBERT BROWN: And the something—well, the dynamic symmetry principles, you were learning from Bisttram, for example, would have seemed—they were a more current technique.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I think they were, but according to something I read recently, it was a fairly recent development, or at least in this country.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. You found that a good way of structuring your work, the laying it out?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: A composition.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Of course, I forgot all about it later.

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs.] You knew Andrew Dasburg quite well.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I did and incidentally—I found something this morning, now what did I do with it?

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: So this is something you wrote to Dasburg on this 90th birthday?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. April 30, 1977 was when I wrote it. [Reads] "Dear Andrew. Hi, I wish I could be present at your birthday party. If wishes were horses or airplane tickets, wild broncos could not restrain me from saluting you in person on your 90th. As it is, I can only send you these lines. Seeing you, as I last did not so very long ago, laughing, your blue, blue eyes looking on life as always with mischievous humor, sharp and skeptical, yet fond, I think, of humankind. Working and enjoying serene, not as in an ivory tower above the struggle, but participating with a penetrating shaft, or gentle affection, as when you often called me 'lovable.' Seeing—" [00:32:00] I'm getting emotional.

[Audio Break.]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: [Reads] "Seeing you as a I did last, I say with old friendship and affection, to loveable, from loveable."

ROBERT BROWN: He was an instant friend was he, very pleasant?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, of course I knew him before that, because he was a friend of my father's. And he and Ida Rauh were married and they had both been—so I had known him before but not very well.

ROBERT BROWN: Dasburg would have been considered a pretty progressive painter.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, but he came out to Taos, I think it was in 1930, with his then-wife, Nancy. Nancy, what was her name? At any rate, she was very pretty, and they were just married and they spent their honeymoon in one of Mabel's houses, Saint Teresa House, and we became buddies. Andrew was, I remember his chief interest at the time was fishing, so he and Nancy would go out fishing a lot. So then he and—that marriage broke up and he married Marina Wister, who was the daughter of Owen Wister, the novelist, and I saw a great deal of them. We used to go out to their house very frequently, and so I knew him over a long period of years, and of course then that marriage broke up, and I think he lived alone from then on, but whenever I went out to Taos, I would see him. [00:34:01]

ROBERT BROWN: But he stayed on in Taos for a while.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He stayed on, he stayed on, and he continued painting, or at least drawing until he was very old.

ROBERT BROWN: Were there places to show your work out there, were there regular shows or anything that elaborate?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: There was the Harwood Foundation, that was the only place.

ROBERT BROWN: And that had been established by then?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Of course, I didn't—I showed my work, but I did a lot of decorative work too, painting things to make money, [laughs] make a little money, like trays and screens, and pianos, and things like that, with decorations.

ROBERT BROWN: And would these be shipped out for sale or were—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No.

ROBERT BROWN: —was there a tourist population that came through, or visitors, summer visitors at that time?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well I think most people bought them, they were ordered by people I knew mostly, friends. Mabel bought a lot of my decorative things.

ROBERT BROWN: Was the Depression a time of—very perceptible there or was there a lot of locally-grown food and the like, so that cushioned you a bit?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, it was perceptible, but the people that I saw mostly didn't feel it very much, I mean, they had some income, and of course a little income went a long way. But you saw it around you, among the Spanish Americans and the Indians, but especially Spanish Americans, who were living on just about nothing. [00:36:04] The going wage for a man was a dollar a day, so they lived mostly on beans.

ROBERT BROWN: Were they mostly subsistence farmers?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: The Spanish Americans?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Or they worked for people, you know, as laborers and maids. I remember that—oh, the thing that I remember very especially, I think it was the winter of 1932, it was a very, very hard winter and in New Mexico at that time, they took down all the fences in the winter, so the cattle—horses and cattle, just roamed and foraged wherever they could find anything to eat, and there was so much snow that many of them starved to death. It was terribly cold, and I can remember in the night, waking up and hearing horses breathing outside the window, they were taking shelter against the house, and many of them died.

ROBERT BROWN: But still, it's a place that held its charm or its compelling interest for you.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, oh yes, it was so beautiful. People—Mabel always had interesting people around, and then there were ones who lived there too.

ROBERT BROWN: What did you and she, as you look back, share most in common, what would you perhaps talk about or do together? I know you've mentioned riding, horseback riding, and visiting things. [00:38:00]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, we often took automobile trips in the surrounding country with Tony and other people. Spud Johnson was often along.

ROBERT BROWN: And he was—what was he?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He was a writer, and he published a newspaper out there called the *Laughing*—a magazine called the *Laughing Horse*, and then the *Horsefly*, which was a sort of off-chute [laughs]. He was my neighbor and we were very good friends. He had been there a long time. Brett, Brett was one of the close circle, Brett, Spud, I and Mabel, and Tony.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Brett quite likeable and lively?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, she was lots of fun. I don't know what we—I don't think we talked about anything very profound. I think we mainly sat around a wood fire in the winter or cool summer evenings and had a drink and had dinner, and played Mahjong or read detective stories, or sewed, and just chatted. I don't remember any profound conversations with Mabel. She was profound, but that wasn't—we would joke. Brett was very amusing and so was Spud, and we just had a good time [laughs].

ROBERT BROWN: And you put your serious side into your work, did you?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: That's very difficult for me to say.

ROBERT BROWN: Of course you had two small children coming along.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I did, yeah. [00:40:00] Well that was later, I was thinking—

ROBERT BROWN: When you first were there.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. I don't know, it's hard to analyze oneself that far and long ago. I'm sure it did have a serious side.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Georgia O'Keeffe part of your circle or did she begin to move on her own?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well she was there only—I think she left at the end of 1929 and began going to the Ghost Ranch, because she and Mabel had a falling out, and I think it was over Tony. While Mabel was away, ill, Tony and Georgia saw a great deal of each other and I think Mabel was jealous. I've read this, now whether it's true—I wasn't aware of it at the time, but I know that Georgia could be pretty tough and that my mother was angry at her too for some reason or other, but my relations with her were always pleasant.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you ever paint together or anything like that?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No. She painted in her studio. She had a big studio and she was painting *Ranchos Church* at that time, I remember that, and also, she was making shirts for Stieglitz, out of beautiful linen, and I remember her sewing was so beautiful. They were all handmade.

ROBERT BROWN: Would he come out?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, I don't think he ever came out.

ROBERT BROWN: No.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: She and Rebecca Strand, who, by the way, painted that painting on glass there, which is called *Miriam, 1929*. [Laughs.] [00:42:09]

ROBERT BROWN: As a flower.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. We shared a house and were very friendly and they both dressed the same. They both wore black skirts and white blouses and black Stetsons. At least Beck wore the Stetson, I'm not sure about Georgia now, but at any rate, they dressed very much alike, a very severe dress, and she was interesting—Becky was an interesting person. She was the daughter of Nate Salisbury, who ran the Wild West Show, and her mother was a Victorian lady, and she was a mixture of the two things, and I think the Victorian side came out in her paintings on glass and in her embroideries. She did these beautiful scenic embroideries. I don't know, I think they're in that museum, you know, that other woman founded [laughs]. Not Mabel but the other. What was her name? In Taos.

ROBERT BROWN: In Taos.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, you've been there haven't you?

ROBERT BROWN: Yes. I can't remember.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Anyway, there are quite a few of those embroideries there and they're very good, I mean I think she's kind of a neglected person too. And then of course her husband—well, this is later.

ROBERT BROWN: When did you get to know him? You did get to know him quite well later didn't you?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. [00:44:00]

ROBERT BROWN: That would have been after you were in Taos?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, no that was—his wife and he, and my husband and I went to Mexico together and spent a whole winter together in Mexico.

ROBERT BROWN: This would be in the '30s then.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: In the '30s, I think it was—it might have been 1932. No, it couldn't have been. It was later, it was a little later, but not much. And Paul, I remember we were in Oaxaca, Paul was doing photographs of churches and interiors of churches, and we saw a lot of interesting things around Oaxaca. I'm not so familiar with his work of that period. In the exhibitions I've seen, I don't think they—

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. They don't figure really.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. Was he an easy to get to know person or what was he?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, he seemed to me so, very friendly, very friendly indeed, to me. I would be sketching a church while he was photographing it, you know that sort of thing. But then, after he and Beck brock up, I called him up once in New York and he was very short with me, he didn't want to see me. I think he didn't want any connection with his Taos past.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, were some, like Strand, was he being exhibited quite a big in the East, by that time?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I think Stieglitz was exhibiting with him.

ROBERT BROWN: And O'Keeffe was being exhibited quite a bit.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: But this wasn't a matter of jealousy or concern among the artists out there, was it, that certain of them were being shown, say, in the East, in New York quite a lot, and others weren't? [00:46:12]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Not that I know of. Stieglitz gave Rebecca Strand an exhibit once. Not that I know of. I wasn't aware of anything like that.

ROBERT BROWN: The village of Taos wasn't—there weren't—was tourism fairly light in those days?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: There couldn't have been too much of that.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No.

ROBERT BROWN: So you didn't feel you were on exhibit [laughs] or something, come summer.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No. I think one felt that at the Pueblo, that the Indians were being already somewhat exploited by then. And the dances, you know, the summer dances, not in the winter. The winter was mostly—they had some beautiful dances around Christmas and that was just the people, the locals mostly.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Are you—

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MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Paul Strand fell in love with Gina Knee, I sort of heard reverberations of this later, but she had [inaudible]. I think that may have been one reason he was kind of bitter about—she lived in Santa Fe, but I'm talking about New Mexico, because Becky fell in love with somebody else too and married him.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, so he didn't care to remember that episode.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, I don't think he cared to remember. But I remember the time in Mexico as being very, very pleasant indeed. We saw a lot of—Mexico at that time, was fascinating, very, very different from what it is now.

ROBERT BROWN: And had very little resemblance to the New Mexico that you were getting to know, is that right, or were they, did you—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: It was very different.

ROBERT BROWN: Very different.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, in Oaxaca especially, that was really—well, I suppose it was the way it had been for hundreds of years. In order to get there, we took—my husband and I drove down in our Ford Roadster, and Becky and Paul went on the train, and we met there and when we got—and it took us, as I recall, three days to get there, from Mexico City, and the roads were—we had been told that the roads weren't good. But when we got there, we found that they were absolutely hair-raising and in some places, there wasn't any road at all. When we got to Oaxaca, there was a headline in the paper, "Americanos Drive From Mexico City in Powerful Car." That was our Ford. [00:02:04]

ROBERT BROWN: [They laugh.] You really had to be pretty adventurous then.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, if I had known what it was like—so, Beck and I came back on the train, and Paul and Edward [laughs] drove the car, I wouldn't drive it. But Oaxaca was, in the first place, there were all these beautiful markets with handmade things. Mexicans are extremely talented and make all sorts of very beautiful handcrafts, and there was nothing in the markets but that—now of course there's a lot of junk. And then, they were still conducting some of their old ceremonies and dances, one of them was a dance between the Indians and the invading Spanish. We were there at Easter time and we witnessed a man who had walked from a neighboring hill, quite a long distance away, sort of miles, on his knees, with a piece of organ cactus strapped across his back, and if you know what it's like, it has big thorns on it—he was streaming with blood—representing the crucifixion. The other thing that impressed me so much was a real medieval miracle play which they, in a small village outside Oaxaca, the three stages, with the hoi polloi on one, the clergy on another, and the king, whatever, on the third, and then at the end of the play, the heroine was hauled up to the top of the church steeple in a basket by pulley, representing heaven. [00:04:17] So it was just, it was almost—it was like the miracle plays that I had read about. Then, there was this enormous tree called the Tree of Tule, which is supposedly 4,000 years old, and almost 200 feet around. So all these memories, I have are very vivid.

ROBERT BROWN: It's extremely vivid then.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Even compared with Taos.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well no, I have a lot of vivid memories of Taos too, but this was something so foreign.

ROBERT BROWN: Still heavily Indian, Oaxaca?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, oh yes. I think Mexico still is.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were you doing a lot of drawing or painting while you were down there?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, I was doing a lot of drawing, yeah, and some painting. I remember my husband and I, part of that time were in Taxco, and we did a lot of painting there. We had a little Mexican boy come and posed for us and that was a nice village too, only much less primitive than Oaxaca.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you by any chance during that time in Mexico, see the work of the muralists?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you look any of them up?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I didn't look them up but incidentally, when we were in Taxco, before I forget it, Marsden Hartley came—appeared, suddenly appeared on the scene. We were staying in John Evans' house, we had rented it. [00:06:02] John Evans was Mabel Dodge's son.

ROBERT BROWN: Mabel's son.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Marsden Hartley suddenly appeared from the coast, where he had contracted turista, you know that—

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: —and so he was not feeling well at all, so he just showed up and he stayed with us a few days [laughs]. Of course I had met him before, because he was a friend of—did I share that letter?

ROBERT BROWN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he entertaining, or how would you describe him? He wasn't feeling well, but I mean was he fairly self-centered?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He seemed very nice to me. He was a rather strange looking man, as I recall, but very pleasant, not feeling very well though. Incidentally, my husband, my first husband and he were great friends later, in New York, not long before he died. What was I going to say about Taxco?

ROBERT BROWN: Well, I had asked whether you had looked up any of the muralists.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes. Well, I was fascinated by the murals, especially Rivera, and in this painting that I did down there, it was very clearly influenced by Rivera.

ROBERT BROWN: You could see his work in Mexico City.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, we saw it in Cuernavaca, I remember particularly.

ROBERT BROWN: What was it in their work, do you think, that attracted you?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I think maybe it was the simplification of the shapes, and all of the white, I remember particularly, the white, you know, the white hats and white shirts, which is what the Mexicans were wearing then. [00:08:18]

ROBERT BROWN: So you wouldn't have seen anything quite like that in Taos would you?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No.

ROBERT BROWN: No. What about the political and nationalistic message that they possessed, were you aware of that or interested in that?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, I don't think I particularly noticed it [laughs]. I read about it but I don't think I noticed it. However, I was aware of the anti-American feeling in Mexico at that time. In fact, it made me quite uncomfortable, not that we were subjected to it particularly, although I remember on that ride down to Oaxaca from Mexico City, we stopped overnight, at the little hotel, which probably hadn't ever seen an American before,

because they wrote us down as "senior and senora gringo." But I did feel it, I can remember little boys taunting and making sort of dirty remarks to me. After all, that wasn't too terribly long after Pancho Villa and everything.

ROBERT BROWN: Well after that one trip, did you basically stay in Taos then, until the early '40s, or did you—did you ever go to California, for instance? [00:10:02]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah, I went to California one summer and spent a summer in Carmel. Came East quite often, to see my parents.

ROBERT BROWN: Your father never did visit you?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No. He was afraid of the altitude, I think his doctor advised him against it. I was very sorry he never did, he never saw my young son, Tim. I used to come East quite often, particularly to visit them, and one winter, I went to Key West with them. That was before my younger son was born, I went with my elder son, who was about two and a half, and we saw quite a few—I saw Hemingway again.

ROBERT BROWN: He was by then at the height of his early fame wasn't he?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, he was in the—

ROBERT BROWN: Midst—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: —height of his fame, I'd say, yes, and he'd changed completely, although he was still nice to me. See, I've forgotten what artists were there then. Well of course Edward Bruce had been there a lot, and he was not there the winter I came though, but Mother and Father saw a great deal of the Bruces down there.

ROBERT BROWN: They liked them didn't they, they liked Edward Bruce?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, very much. Peggy Bruce became a great friend of ours, and my husband, John as well. We saw a lot of her in Washington after Ned Bruce died. [00:12:03] I never met Ned Bruce.

ROBERT BROWN: But he was an important figure at the time wasn't he?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, he was.

ROBERT BROWN: The New Deal.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes he was. I saw a lot of his paintings in Washington, which I thought were awfully good. He studied with Maurice Sterne. Of course, I knew a lot of—I met quite a few artists at Peggy Bruce's in Washington.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Was Key West still a fairly unpretentious—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes it was.

ROBERT BROWN: —but somewhat isolated place, wasn't it?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. It was sort of a—it had been rather a ghost town, very severely affected by the Depression, because it had been a cigar making place and for some reason, I've forgotten now why, that had moved to Cuba. Roosevelt made a special point, I think, of Key West, because it was in such bad shape, and so quite a few New Deal people came down there—Tugwell.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Rexford Tugwell.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: And Edward Bruce and others.

ROBERT BROWN: So your time down there with your parents and your small child was not exactly—you weren't that isolated, I mean, there were a number of people.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh, there were a lot of people there. I didn't meet those particular people that I mentioned, they weren't there then. They had been there earlier. Mother has letters about them, but when I was there, there were lots of people there. [00:14:00] There was Esther [Pecamby] Chambers and the Josephsons, Matthew Josephson and his wife. At the moment I can't recall, but there were plenty of—there were quite a few tourists, but it wasn't crowded the way it is now, it was still very simple. Simple houses, unpaved streets, and so on.

ROBERT BROWN: When you were in the East, are you were some of these other years during the '30s, when you

would come back here, did you chiefly come to New York, the New York area?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I would come to wherever my parents were, and sometimes they were down here.

ROBERT BROWN: In Provincetown.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: But usually, it was in New Hampshire, because they spent their summers mostly then in New Hampshire.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, they'd gotten a place in, was it Richmond, New Hampshire?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Southwestern New Hampshire, I think it is.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, southeastern New Hampshire.

ROBERT BROWN: Southeastern.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Let's see, well it's near—it's not too far from Boston, so it must be southeast. Keene, near Keene.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh yes, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: In 1938, my father contracted pneumonia very badly and they didn't expect him to live. This was in the winter, and so mother telegraphed me and I got on a plane in Albuquerque, this was the first time I had flown, and I was scared stiff [laughs]. It took 11 hours, from Albuquerque to New York, so on that occasion, I visited them in New York. [00:16:09] Mother was staying at the Brevoort Hotel, which was the hangout for a lot of artists and writers, and—for many years. And I saw quite a few friends then. And I think Leah—well, I'm trying to think if there are any special artists friends that I saw, but I'd have to think about it. But I visited them quite a lot.

ROBERT BROWN: What prompted you finally, to leave Taos, would you say?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, my husband had—we had separated in 1941 and our income was not—you know, the cost of living was going up, and I needed to get a job. Now, I could have gotten a job in Taos, I was offered a job teaching school. I had absolutely no qualifications for it but apparently, they thought I'd be better than what they had [laughs], but it didn't appeal to me and I thought I would try going to Washington, where my brother was and where they were hiring people, because it was during the war.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. And your brother was in government?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He was—at that time I think he was with the Red Cross. He had been in government. So, that's what I did, I went to work in Washington and was there for some time, and I met my second husband there. [00:18:11] So I went to work as an—in an economics agency, something that I knew absolutely nothing about [laughs]. So that was a big change, writing about it.

[END OF TRACK AAA_dewitt87_3430_r.]

ROBERT BROWN: —March 25, 1988.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: You were in New Mexico, in Taos, until about 1943, and I think we talked quite a lot about that, but perhaps there's some other things you would like to stress or elaborate on, I know—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, of course I've forgotten what I said, so. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Yes. We don't know all the details.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No.

ROBERT BROWN: But you left there having loved the place, right?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And you'd known Mabel Dodge very closely.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Very well, and Dorothy Brett and Frieda Lawrence, and many of the artists that I think I have mentioned those in the past probably.

ROBERT BROWN: Would you say Mabel Dodge was sort of like another mother to you in a sense, or was she that close?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah, she was. Oh yes, we were very close indeed. She seemed to feel rather maternal toward me, which she hadn't toward her own child, but we had a very good relationship for many years. It was a very fruitful relationship for me, I think, because she was a very interesting woman and her surroundings and her friends, she always had interesting people around, you know, Robinson Jeffers and Lawrence.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you remember, was Lawrence there by the time you got to Taos?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Lawrence died the year I got there, unfortunately, in France, so I never met him, but of course I knew Frieda very well.

ROBERT BROWN: What would you say she was like? Can you characterize her? [00:02:00]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh, she was a great big blonde, sort of Viking-looking woman, and rather blasé, you would—but attractive. She was very attractive to men, I think. She had a way of making them feel at home and important. I liked Frieda.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Mabel Dodge sort of a dominating figure, or not?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Mabel was a dominating figure, there's no doubt about it. She could be quite devastating, and she did try to dominate people, but that was her bad side. She also had a very good side, a very generous side, and I saw more of that than I did of the bad, although sometimes she would invite—quite often, she would invite people to come and visit and then she would change her mind [laughs] and sort of ease them out very rapidly. I think I probably told you the story about the time that a friend called and asked if they could bring over an important man to meet Mabel, and Mabel said yes and then she got cold feet. I was there for dinner, and she suddenly left the living room, went into an adjoining room which had no egress and said, "Miriam, you cope." And so I coped and had a very interesting conversation with this man who had just come from Russia, this was in the '30s or early '40s. And when I went into the room, the neighboring room, which was called the Rainbow Room, to look for Mabel, she wasn't there. [00:04:11] She had jumped out the window [they laugh], six to eight feet to the ground, to escape.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you suppose came over her?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: She was that way. One time she went for a permanent wave and they hadn't finished, and she got impatient and she just got up and left with her hair limp. She was very—she acted on impulse. But I'd like to say something about her relationship with Tony, which I think has been very much misunderstood. It was a very good relationship, and a very deep relationship, and it lasted after all, from 1917 to when Mabel died, I don't remember just how—when that was but it was a long time. Mabel, I think one reason—of course Mabel was attracted by the Indian culture, which was—it appealed to something in her that nothing else had. She'd lived in Europe and in New York, in a very sophisticated environment and there had always been something lacking. And Tony had that rather deep and close relationship with nature, and with the earth, which she apparently needed, and although they didn't—Tony couldn't read or write because he was brought up before they had schools in the Indian land, but they communicated on another level and Mabel could not dominate Tony. [00:06:10] Tony was a very strong man [laughs] and when he felt like doing something, he would say, "Now I go," [laughs] and that was that.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you ever converse with him?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yeah, sure, Tony and I were good friends. So—and that seems to have been very much misunderstood. I run across it so often in writings, the idea that Mabel got Tony because of her money and that she dominated him, and it simply wasn't true.

ROBERT BROWN: What did you see, from your observation, Tony offered to you or possibly to her?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, in the first place he was very handsome, big, well-built, a very masculine man. He offered stability, was like a rock, and that's what Mabel needed I think. She'd never really had—she'd been able to manipulate her environment and she couldn't Tony, and also, she was very much attracted by the Indian culture. She and I used to go out to the Pueblo frequently, together, in the late afternoon, and just sit in the car on the bridge there over the river, and watch the life, and listen to the sounds. The whole thing—and of course their ceremonies were very interesting. [00:08:00] One time we went to a celebration of, I think it was Twelfth

Night, where they all hold, the Indians hold open house and troupes of dancers go from house to house. That was fascinating, because these were not ceremonial dances, these were satirical dances, mostly takeoffs of the tourists, and extremely funny. You don't think of the Indians, or at least most people don't, as having a sense of humor, but they definitely had a very keen sense of the ridiculous.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you feel fairly close to the Indians from time to time?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I knew a few of them but no, I wouldn't say that I felt really close to them, but they are—not even to Tony. Well, I felt close to Tony in a way, but there's something that they withhold from whites. I think Mabel perhaps got close, but I don't think most people do. I mean, there are a few Indians who are more westernized, even though they're part of the tradition there, and you can talk to them on a certain level, but they will never talk, they won't—you cannot know their names for one thing, their Indian names.

ROBERT BROWN: They only use what, Spanish names or Anglo names.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And their ceremony at Blue Lake, which is their initiation ceremony, very private, no one—no white man ever goes to that, and the kiva, you know, that's sacred, no white man enters there. [00:10:07] So you don't really get close to them, at least that's my feeling.

ROBERT BROWN: Back to Mabel. Did she advise you on various things, or did you come to her with questions?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I came to her with all my problems, yes [laughs]. Sort of like going to your mother.

ROBERT BROWN: What about in matters of art, because you were pretty actively painting then weren't you?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: She bought quite a few of my things.

ROBERT BROWN: But she didn't discuss—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No. I think I told you the story about her suggesting passing off one of my paintings as that—or at least Marin suggested passing off one of my watercolors, that was in 1929, sending it to Stieglitz and passing it off as one of his [they laugh], because of course I was painting just like him. But I don't think he did that.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you admire Marin at the time?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Very much, yes, I liked him, and I not only admired his work, I liked him personally, very much. He was a delightful person. He had a sense of humor. I used to go on painting trips with him. I remember particularly, his painting water, mountain streams, he was fascinated by the streams.

ROBERT BROWN: How would he approach it, do you recall? Very quickly?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, well yes. [00:12:00] He had this sort of palette which looked—at a glance seemed absolutely muddy and filthy, and then these beautiful pristine colors would come out of it. Of course, Georgia O'Keeffe was there. I'm sure I've talked about this before, but Georgia O'Keeffe was there that first summer, 1929, had a studio at Mabel's. And she was painting *Ranchos Church*, is one of the things she was painting, I remember. Of course, I admired her work too, very much.

ROBERT BROWN: Was she fairly sociable?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: She was very sociable to me; she could be very unsociable. I was much younger and for some reason she liked me, and we went on camping trips together— Georgia and Tony, Mirabal, an Indian, and his brother, Jim, and Charles Collier, and my brother. That was probably all. And we went on a couple of camping trips up in the mountains lasting several days, and so we got to know—well, I knew her before that. She and Rebecca Strand were living in the Pink House that summer and I used to go over there and see them quite a lot, so that she always—we maintained our good relations always. I don't think—she and Mabel quarreled at the end of that summer, and I don't think my mother's impression of her was particularly favorably—oh she had known, mother had known her. [00:14:03]

ROBERT BROWN: Georgia.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: In New York, because of the connection with Stieglitz. I don't think mother particularly cottoned to her [laughs]. She was a difficult person, I'm sure.

ROBERT BROWN: Pretty strong-minded.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: A very strong person. I guess she had to be to accomplish what she did. I know she

felt that being the only woman in the Stieglitz group, I know she felt that, that the men rather patronized her. She did tell me, or she wrote to somebody, that she talked to my father about it, who was a very sympathetic person, and he said—well, it's not a new thought—but he said, "That's their deficiency, not yours." She liked that. But after all, she was you know, she was in there with Dove and Marin, and Hartley, and I think she was influenced by some of them and they were influenced by her, it seems to me.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But at that time, women would feel patronized if they were being competitive themselves.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah, I think she did and I think that's one reason she was a little—got rather prickly, although she was probably that way to start with.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Hartley out there the years you were in New Mexico?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, no he wasn't. [00:16:00] The only time I saw him—well, I had met him in the East, with my parents, and then he came to visit us in Mexico. I think I—I know I mentioned that.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, did you feel, starting out as a painter in the late '20s? Did you feel, in New Mexico, the men were somewhat patronizing of you or—not? After all, you weren't among a tremendous number of people.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I was not considered, you know, I was not important, so there was no question.

ROBERT BROWN: They didn't bother.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: They didn't bother, they were just friendly that's all.

ROBERT BROWN: [They laugh.] Did you—you liked those years there didn't you? You didn't feel cut off from anything to speak of.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh no, I loved it, I'm sorry I left actually. Taos was a fascinating place at that time and of course, being close to Mabel's household, I met all kinds of interesting people. I mean, Leopold Stokowski and Robinson Jeffers, and countless others and I can't summon up the names at the moment. They'll come to me. You know, it was a very interesting crowd, Frieda Lawrence and Dorothy Brett was a lot of fun.

ROBERT BROWN: What did she do out there?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: She was a painter and I think—I feel, a very much neglected one. She was very uneven in her work, some of it was pretty corny, but her best work, I think is very good and I felt that she got, captured the spirit of the Indians much better than anyone else. [00:18:12]

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think some of the people painted rather romanticized notions of the Indians that were preconceived?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, and conventional.

ROBERT BROWN: Conventional.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah. Marin did one painting that I remember, of an Indian dance, which I consider very good, but most of them—well, the old ones of course, were very realistic and rather conventionalized, I think, or romanticized, so that really, that was about all there was, except for Brett's and Marin's one that I can remember. I don't think he did any others of the Indians.

ROBERT BROWN: Well you started a family then out there. Did that remove you a little bit from—did it affect your life at all or not particularly, right? I mean, you would still see the other painters and Mabel's circle of friends.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, yeah. No, it didn't take me away from the group. In those days, one could get babysitters or—[laughs] very easily. It was during the Depression and people needed jobs.

ROBERT BROWN: Because it was the Depression, I suppose tourism wasn't really very prevalent was it?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, we did have tourists, especially in the later years that I was there, and especially from Texas. We always dreaded the Texan incursion, I don't know why, except I guess they were rather, the ones who happened to come—[00:20:09]—you know tourists are not the best or they don't show up the best as tourists, and the Texans were rather crude, we thought.

ROBERT BROWN: [They laugh.] Where would they stay? There was an old hotel wasn't there?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, there were several hotels by then. When I first went there, there was only one, the Don Fernando, which burned down unfortunately, it was a nice hotel. Later, there were a couple of others.

ROBERT BROWN: What led you to leave finally? You left New Mexico then, in '43. You said your—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. My first marriage broke up and we needed to earn money. The cost of living had skyrocketed of course by then, from the Depression years, and so I went to Washington, where my brother was, and he told me that they were hiring people there, so that's—I went there. I got a job there, in government, in the Board of Economic Warfare, where I was in the Economic Intelligence Division [laughs].

ROBERT BROWN: You analyzed—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: It's amusing to me, to read now, the precautions they take, because at that time, I was—I began as an intercept reader, which means you read these intercepted telegrams, they were mostly from Japan to Germany, this is during the war, and then we routed them to the proper people. [00:22:21] But we also made—I did a little compilation of the ones from IG Farben to Japan, chemicals, the big chemical company. I had access to the secret room, and I saw a lot of secret, very secret documents, stamped "secret." Many of them were newspaper articles, and there was no particular clearance. I mean, anybody could—not anybody could go to the secret room I guess, but practically anyone could go. Now, I mean they consider intercepts the most secret of all [laughs] and it's rather—it was very casual then. You could walk into any government building without identification, except I think you needed—except the White House perhaps.

ROBERT BROWN: Your job was then to get these telegrams and digest what they were all about, and pass them on?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, at the beginning, I was just supposed to route them to the proper person, but then I did do some compilations of particular types, as I said, from IG Farben, to the chemical industries in Japan. And then later, I went to another job in the same agency, where I edited a report on the separation of the Ruhr and Rhineland from Germany, that was one of the proposals at that time. [00:24:09]

ROBERT BROWN: That they'd deprive Germany of—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Of the Ruhr and the Rhineland.

ROBERT BROWN: —and the Rhineland.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: The industrial, which they did not do. So that was a very interesting job, and then I went to—that agency folded, so I got a job with the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, where I was in charge of answering the president's mail— President Truman it was then—the so-called junk mail, because the mail from senators and representatives and important people was answered by somebody else, but I answered the mail from the average person [laughs], and that was very interesting. We had our staff meetings at the White House, so one felt quite important.

ROBERT BROWN: In a sense you were lucky, coming east and taking jobs like that.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I was very lucky, I just sort of fell into them.

ROBERT BROWN: Was your brother in government as well?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No. At that time, I think he was working—he had been at the OWI, but I think he was with the Red Cross at that time, and he didn't stay long after I got there. I don't know how I managed to get these jobs. I really—it took me quite a while to get a job at all, because I didn't have any qualifications at all. I didn't have a college degree, because I dropped out of Smith in my junior year from—because of illness, and I went around and went around, and began to feel that I was completely worthless, and then suddenly, somebody thought well, at least she seems intelligent [laughs]. I'll give her a chance. [00:26:24] So that's how it started.

ROBERT BROWN: You worked with the government then, until what, through the end of the war?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, I worked there until 1948.

ROBERT BROWN: And then you were married for a time.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Then I was married, I was married to Vaso Trivanovitch, whom I had met at one of the agencies, he was an economist. We moved first, to Armonk, New York, because he had a job then after the war in New York, but that, he didn't like that, it didn't turn out well. So then we moved to Springfield, where he

was professor of economics at Springfield College, and he died of a heart attack very suddenly at the age of 50.

ROBERT BROWN: Hmm. So you hadn't lived there very long at all.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No we hadn't, was there just over a year. And then I went back to Washington and got the job with the Office of War Mobilization, I mean, the Office of Price Stabilization. This was in the '50s.

ROBERT BROWN: That was set up as a regulatory agency.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes. After the war there was a great deal of trouble with inflation, and then that was abolished by Eisenhower in 1952, I believe it was.

ROBERT BROWN: [00:28:04] What had your job with them been?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I was a conference writer. I would go to these conferences—all of my jobs were sort of writing or editorial type. I would go to these conferences, take notes, and then write up a report. The conferences were with businesses, and we had business advisory committees and they would discuss their problems with the government representative, in the process of working out a program for that particular industry, so we dealt with all kinds of industries.

ROBERT BROWN: So that was reasonably interesting then.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And that was abolished [laughs] and I was out of a job. By that time, it was not easy to get jobs in Washington, they were cutting down on everything.

ROBERT BROWN: You've mentioned that in the '50s, you were, for some reason or another, investigated.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, I was.

ROBERT BROWN: Was that at this time?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: It was under Eisenhower, it was at the height of the McCarthy scare, and the atmosphere in Washington was really awful, I mean, people were afraid to read *The Nation* or the *New Republic* or anything that might—anything that might have a liberal tinge.

ROBERT BROWN: And you shared that fear to a degree.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, it was in the air, and then suddenly, I got this notice, they called it an interrogatory, and it said answer three questions: [00:30:05] How do you account for your changes of name? Well, I had been Hapgood, then Bright, and then Trivanovitch, and then my supervisor wanted me called Hapgood at the conferences because Trivanovitch was too hard to pronounce. So they wanted to know about that, was my aliases. [Laughs.] That was one question. The other question was about a relative of mine who was—is she or was she, a member of the Communist Party, and was your late husband, Vaso Trivanovitch, a communist? Now, what the distinction was, I don't know. Of course, Vaso Trivanovitch was not a communist. So, I had to go to a lawyer and it took me six months. I had to write out a whole history of my entire life and get affidavits from countless friends, to prove that my husband was not a communist [laughs]. It was just a terrific process, and I was cleared. I was sent for the—under the Freedom of Information Act, I sent for the reports, and one from the—there were two: one from the Civil Service Commission, which is fairly complete, just consisted of letters from people in my support and things like that, and one from the FBI that really is funny. [00:32:05] Practically every page is black, it's just black, they've blacked out everything you want to know, only people who informed against me and all this—every source, or anything that might remotely be connected with national security. I've been thinking of having them all framed and having an exhibition, it would really [laughs] sort of, be kind of like Rothko.

ROBERT BROWN: Your very own, I mean what's more personal?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Were you kind of sickened by all that, or were a number of people you knew undergoing the same kind of business?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: It was very frightening, you know, because I could have lost my job, and a lot people did lose their jobs, people I knew. It was a really viscous time.

ROBERT BROWN: And I suppose there were people informing on others, who you thought had been friends, or at least you'd respected till then.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I did not suspect anyone that I knew, but I know, I'm pretty positive I know who informed on my late husband, and they were good friends [laughs], and they had turned against him when he got mixed—he was Yugoslav—Tito and Mihailovic, I don't know if you remember that. It was a very bitter—there were very bitter factions, pro-Mihailovic and pro-Tito. My husband was pro-Tito, because he felt that only Tito could unite the country, which was split a thousand ways. [00:34:09] Well, they considered that, they considered him a traitor, you know?

ROBERT BROWN: Even though Tito, by then had broken with Stalin.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No that was later.

ROBERT BROWN: That was a little later.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: That was later.

ROBERT BROWN: He'd supported him.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He had written a pamphlet, my husband had written a pamphlet, in which he produced evidence that Mihailovic had collaborated with the Germans, and that was one of the main reasons he was for Tito, because he felt he was fighting for Yugoslavia.

ROBERT BROWN: And you were associated with that through your marriage to him—to a degree you were.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, just associated because I married him. This happened before we [laughs] were married.

ROBERT BROWN: So Washington wasn't particularly pleasant at that particular time was it?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, that was a very difficult period for me.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, yeah. And Mr. DeWitt, likewise, had been investigated.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, I don't think he was. No, it was Trivanovitch. I met John later, I met him much later. In 1956 we were married.

ROBERT BROWN: He had been a publicist, a writer, right, for the radio?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he a publicist at the time you met him?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No. Well, I actually did meet him down here briefly. He used to spend summers here, you know, and I met him here briefly two or three years before.

ROBERT BROWN: [00:36:02] You were continuing to come here in the summer.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. I owned a house here. And so—after he left the radio business and got out of the navy—he volunteered for the navy—he did not want to go back to the soap operas, so he came down here and sort of tried to be a fisherman, and then a carpenter, and so he was making ends meet, and I did meet him briefly during that period. But then in 1956, I saw him again, and he was then working for the Potomac River Commission in Washington, and so when we were married, I went there.

ROBERT BROWN: Was that commission a federal agency?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, it was a state, interstate.

ROBERT BROWN: Interstate, Maryland, Virginia.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Maryland, Virginia, the District.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it a fairly new thing?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I'm not sure, I don't think so. I think it had been going quite a while. They were trying to clean up the Potomac, and I think he did do—he was quite instrumental in putting in some reforms there.

ROBERT BROWN: What was his job with them?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Publicity, newsletter and—

ROBERT BROWN: A writer.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: —yeah, a writer.

ROBERT BROWN: Not unlike the work you had been doing for several federal agencies as a writer, editor.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, his was more publicity, mine was more sort of editorial. Well, the letters of course, but it wasn't quite the same, but we both write [laughs]. [00:38:00]

ROBERT BROWN: Did you continue to work too, after you were married?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No. Well, I did work for the Phillips Collection briefly, sort of organizing some of their slides, but I tried to get a job, because we really needed the money, he wasn't being paid much at that time, but I was either overqualified or underqualified for everything, so I did not succeed. So we just lived on his small salary.

ROBERT BROWN: Now you say you did work for a bit in the Phillips Collection. Does that indicate that you continued interest in art circles, I mean, you moved a little bit in local art circles in Washington at that time?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Well, I used to go to the Phillips Collection to see—it was very near us then, yes, and then I went to the National Gallery and so forth. Of course I continued being interested. I did know a few artists. I knew Bernice Cross and the ones connected with the Phillips, Arthur Smith and John Gernand and the one who headed the Phillips, I can't think of his name now, afterwards. Mc-something.

ROBERT BROWN: And then Karl Knaths had taught there.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Karl Knaths was not there, but of course a lot of his work was.

ROBERT BROWN: Had you known him up here, in Provincetown?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I knew him slightly, I never knew him well, and I might tell you that story. I think I probably told you before but I'll tell it again. Bernice Cross used to come up here. By the way, she's a—I think a very good painter. [00:40:02] Do you know her, Robert?

ROBERT BROWN: No.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: That's one of her things, that head up there. She did a lot of landscapes, flowers. Well, she was here in Provincetown in the summer, and she went with Knaths. I think she suggested that they go and see Hofmann's work, so she went with Knaths, and they went all around the house and looked at everything, and Knaths would look at a painting and say, "Yeah, yeah." He had a very heavy accent, so did Hofmann. And "Yeah, yeah." Well, when they got outside, Bernice said, "Well, what did you think of it?" Knaths said, "Oh, he's just messing around." [They laugh.]

ROBERT BROWN: That's funny. When you'd come up here summers in the '50s, were there some other artists you particularly knew?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I used to see a lot of Al Bing [ph] who was a New York—he had been, I think it's the Bing real estate, a very wealthy man. He rented Charles Hawthorne's house on the hill and I saw a lot of him, and he had artist friends—Biala, Janice Biala was here then. Of course, I had known here in the past, she was Jack Tworokov's sister, and the Tworokovs. Milton Avery was here then, I didn't know him well, but I used to see him around. [00:42:00]

ROBERT BROWN: That was quite a busy time in Provincetown, the 1950s, wasn't it?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes it was. There were a lot of artists here, a lot of good artists. Al Bing's house was rather—it was a gathering place. He used to give parties. It was a very nice period. That was in the middle '50s.

ROBERT BROWN: He was something of a focal point or at least his gatherings.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, he was. He was a director of art and he painted himself. He had come to painting late in life but he was very interesting, and he bought other people's work, and had quite a collection in New York.

ROBERT BROWN: Did quite a few, in those years quite a few collectors come up during the summer and look at things here?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes they did, yes they did. The Halper's.

ROBERT BROWN: The downtown gallery?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Nat Halper's gallery [Kootz Gallery]—

ROBERT BROWN: Nat Halper's.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: —as it was called.

ROBERT BROWN: Well it had various names, HCE Gallery.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: HCE Gallery, yes, that was going strong, showing Milton Avery and a lot of good people.

ROBERT BROWN: So, the commercial galleries and collectors played a large role in those days.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Collectors came up, especially after the season, this was a place where they came.

ROBERT BROWN: After the season.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, especially after the season. I think probably during the season too, but it was one of the places that people came to buy really top work. Hofmann and Avery and there are a lot of others that I can't—that don't readily come to mind. If you mentioned their names I could—[00:44:12]

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ROBERT BROWN: So, you, then after your marriage to Mr. DeWitt, you continued coming back here for part of the summer, you would come up here.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. We each owned a house here. I owned this house on the hill, which had been in my family, my father bought this place in 1919, and Johnny owned a house that he had bought some years before, more in town. We used to come down to fix up the places to rent and then we'd have our vacation here too, so we came down every summer.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you get involved with art activities during the summers or just very casually?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah, well, we'd go to exhibitions, especially of people we knew, and we knew a lot of artists. Johnny knew more than I did then, because he'd been here more, and so we would—certainly, we'd see a lot of artists, and we were in close touch with the art scene.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you say it began to change, the summer art colony in Provincetown, say, in the 1960s, did it? Or did it continue pretty well?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I know that I noticed and other people noticed, and I can't remember just when it was, that many of the better galleries closed and also, people did not come, collectors did not come as much, and I don't remember just when that started but we used to talk about it. [00:02:05] And I think the reason, one of the reasons—of course partly because some of the better galleries had closed and people, they really recognized artists weren't exhibiting here much, and also because of the increase in the difficulty of parking and difficulty coming here.

ROBERT BROWN: Hmm. It was, by the 1960s, beginning to get pretty congested was it?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: After the war, it started after the war in the '50s and it got worse and worse. Before the—until the war, until the early '50s, it was a different place.

ROBERT BROWN: Still not unlike what you remembered from your girlhood.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah, well, of course it didn't change quite a bit but it's nothing like it is now. I don't think the highway had been completed for one thing, that happened after the war, and the big building, the building boom, had not happened.

ROBERT BROWN: Well did you—in the '60s then, Mr. DeWitt began working as a public affairs officer with the Bureau of Reclamation.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: Of the Department of the Interior.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Excuse me just one moment.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: Well before we get going into your and Mr. DeWitt's activities, you wanted to say something further about Mabel Dodge Luhan's collection in her house in New Mexico. [00:04:04]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Well Mabel collected local painters and she was a patron of the artists there, and so she had work by most of the—well, she had works by Facion, another Russian painter there, whose name I can't think of, a very good painter, Lockwood, of course Marin, and Brett, and several others—Black, and she also had a lot of Indian work, which I thought I'd mention, that she had a great deal of work done by an Indian carver who was wonderful. He carved all the doors with different designs in each door, and he painted a mural in the portal, and he carved the front doors. She also had quite a collection of Indian paintings, you know, in the formal style.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were these oil paintings some of them, or were tempera?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Tempera. Also, the posts, she had some beautiful curved posts on the portal and other places in the house, a good deal of carving, and then she had some very beautiful blankets of course, Indian blankets. [00:06:05] So she made Indian pots, so she had a really fine selection of Indian things there, as well as the Anglo paintings, and she had many things that she had brought over from Italy, from her famous villa in Italy, so it was a very interesting house. Unfortunately, all those things have been disbursed.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, they after were just—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh. So she was the—she was the focal point in the art community.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes she was, she was the focal point in the intellectual world of Taos at that time, and that was for quite a while, I think ever since she came, until certainly as long as I was there.

ROBERT BROWN: It was into the 1940s, she died in the '40s.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, and then she died. I've forgotten, I think she died in the '50s. Yeah, it was after I was married to Johnny, so it must have been the late '50s, early '60s.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you stay in touch to a degree, with her?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, until she got—she had eye trouble, and so the last couple of years, I didn't hear from her much. I used to hear about her through Spud Johnson, who was a very good friend of mine. He was a writer and a publisher of a small magazine. Have you—do—

ROBERT BROWN: I've heard of him.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: An interesting personality. He printed his own magazine, he had a little hand printing press. He had been a writer for the *New Yorker*. [00:08:00]

ROBERT BROWN: He stayed on out there.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He stayed on until his death, yes, I can't remember when that was. There were a lot of interesting people in Taos.

ROBERT BROWN: And you've kept up your connections with some of them.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes.

ROBERT BROWN: As long as they were there.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I have still, my connections [laughs]. In fact, I correspond with a man and at Christmas he was still alive, he's about 95, [laughs] who was a good friend when I was there. I have—his daughter, I correspond with, but most of the people I knew of course are gone.

ROBERT BROWN: Were they mostly—a number of them artists or writers?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well yes, I knew quite a few artists, and Spud was a writer. Most of the writers I think I knew didn't live there, they visited. Well, I knew Frank Waters of course, he was a southwestern writer who wrote a lot about the Indians.

ROBERT BROWN: Well this project that Mr. DeWitt undertook, to a large extent took you back out to the Southwest didn't it?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, it did.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it in a sense for you, kind of like going home or going back to a previous time?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes it was. At one point, we did actually go back to Taos with some artists, because we were not directly concerned with Taos. These of course were Bureau of Reclamation areas that we went to, but there was one nearby, around Chaves, I've forgotten which area it's called. [00:10:11] I think it's the, maybe the national—no, that would be forest service. I don't remember. At any rate, we went out there with Herman Maril and somebody, I think Jack—

ROBERT BROWN: Tworkov.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: —Tworkov. I'm not sure.

ROBERT BROWN: Well this, you began doing this in the '60s, I think, was that right, the time?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I have some notes here about the start of the program.

ROBERT BROWN: How did it get underway? Here's a bureau that theretofore, hadn't associated with art.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: You should turn it off while I get that.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: Maybe you can kind of give us a chronicle of the involvement with the Bureau of Reclamation.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah. Is it on?

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, Johnny had been out to Glen Canyon, which is one of the Bureau of Reclamation's dam sites, and he had taken a trip down the Colorado before it was flooded, before the dam was completed, and he had also seen Eliot Porter's book, *The Canyon Nobody Knew*, or *Nobody Knows [The Place No One Knows]*, a beautiful book. So he had a feeling about that country. Across his desk, in the course of business one day, came a proposal from a sculptor who had worked for the Bureau of Reclamation before, to do a sculpture at the visitor center at Glen Canyon. [00:12:11] So he—this sparked an idea in his mind and he suggested that instead of just commissioning this sculptor, who was obviously not terribly exciting, that they get together a board to choose—a board of people who knew, artists and museum directors and so forth, to choose a sculptor, and this idea he was able to sell this idea to the engineers at the Bureau of Reclamation, surprisingly.

ROBERT BROWN: You've mentioned another time, that he had the support in this, of Mrs. Stewart Udall, I believe.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I think that was later. I'm not sure about the chronology there. At any rate, they did organize what was at first called the Board of Artistic Consultants. He went, I believe first, he went to a friend of his in New York, whom he had known in Provincetown, who was in the art world, and the friend, I can't think of his name right now, suggested that he consult the head of the—Lloyd—

ROBERT BROWN: Lloyd Goodrich.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: —Lloyd Goodrich. [00:14:00] So he did go to Lloyd Goodrich. No, I think first he went to—no, he went to Lloyd Goodrich, I believe first, and Lloyd Goodrich suggested a number of people to get on the board, including the head of the Museum of Modern Art, Rene—

ROBERT BROWN: D'Harnoncourt.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: —D'Harnoncourt. So he got Rene D'Harnoncourt. These people were glad, in fact they were quite excited—

ROBERT BROWN: Were they?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: —to feel that the government was interested [laughs] in what they had to say. So he got some, you know, top-notch people, including Lloyd Goodrich and—

ROBERT BROWN: Rene D'Harnoncourt.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: —Rene D'Harnoncourt. I'll have to go back into my notes again, to give you the names of all of the others.

ROBERT BROWN: That's all right.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: One of them was Mitchell Wilder.

ROBERT BROWN: Mitchell Wilder.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Friedman, Milton Friedman.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And they were very excited by the government's indication that they were willing to have—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes they were.

ROBERT BROWN: —art, very good art.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah. So they went out to—their first assignment was to go out to Glen Canyon.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you go out there as well?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: And I went with them.

ROBERT BROWN: This would have been in the late 1960s or so?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: This was in, I believe this was, yeah, 1965, and we went out there, Mitchell Wilder, I think Milton Friedman, Paolo Soleri, and another—well, I can fill that in later. [00:16:09] To view the scene of the crime, and it was the scene of a crime.

ROBERT BROWN: In what sense, you mean what had been done already?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, they had messed up the whole place. They'd built the dam, which was fine, the dam was quite handsome, but then they built a company town all around, just messing up the desert, and they'd cut away part of a beautiful natural formation called the beehive, that was sacred to the Indians. This was very upsetting to the Navajos and well, I shall never forget their reaction when they saw this mess. This very beautiful canyon, the dam quite handsome, but they had built a bridge across which interfered with the view of the dam, and they had built this perfectly frightful, sprawling, typical town of ugly houses. The desert is very easily spoiled, as you probably know, it's not like the East, where you can conceal things in trees. So their reaction was they go ahead and they do something, and then they ask us in to put a Band-Aid on it, a postage stamp. So, they did not feel that there was any suggestion they could make that would pull the thing together. [00:18:04] However, they did make a couple, a few suggestions for a visitor center. Paolo Soleri drew up some marvelous plans for hollowing out the beehive and having views; you go around in this sandstone formation and there would be views in different directions. It probably would have been very beautiful, but it was pretty far out [laughs] for—

ROBERT BROWN: That was rejected?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, he drew up the plans for it and he went to the office of the head of the Bureau of Reclamation, who agreed to see him, and they unrolled all these plans and apparently, I wasn't there, but Johnny said it was really funny. There were these enormous rolls of plans about 20-30 feet long, which he unrolled all over the floor of the office, and of course Floyd Dominy, the commissioner, was absolutely [laughs] taken aback, and of course he thought it was crazy, so that—that died.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he also—you said he also, the commissioner said it was too expensive, is that right?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I don't know whether the cost came into it at that point. It was just that it was too far out. He just couldn't visualize anything of the sort.

ROBERT BROWN: So this whole visitor center thing then kind of died down.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, they still continued talking about a visitor center, different sorts of visitor centers, and I believe that they finally did arrive at a design for a visitor center that was better than the one that they had at that time. [00:20:16] But then the Board of Artistic Consultants was called in on other projects, I think they changed the name, because they felt that was not a very popular-sounding name, and as a result, Johnny managed to get one of the foremost sculptors in the country to do the face of the third power plant at Grand Coulee—that's the largest dam, largest cement structure in the world and it's very impressive. But they

had built a third power plant and it was, the face design was very pedestrian, and so Johnny was able to persuade them to hire Milton Breuer to—not Milton, but it's Breuer anyway, to do the face of the—

ROBERT BROWN: Marcel Breuer.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: —Marcel Breuer, and then he did, so that was done, it was accomplished. There were other facets of this which I made notes on and can't find at the moment, but that led into the reclamation program.

ROBERT BROWN: A more comprehensive program.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Johnny got interested in starting a program for artists. [00:22:07] He was somewhat—he was influenced and got many suggestions, from the art program that had been run for the space agency. He talked to Lester Cooke, who was very involved in that. He was the curator of painting at the National Gallery. The Lester Cooke Foundation, by the way, was founded in his name after he died, and that's going in Washington.

ROBERT BROWN: Which exists for?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: For artists over 40.

ROBERT BROWN: Hmm. So simulated by the NASA Art Program. Did he talk about this a good deal with Lester Cooke?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, he consulted with Lester Cooke and other people who had worked on that program, and we were actually invited down to one of the launches and saw it at Cape Canaveral, as a result of that, it was fascinating.

ROBERT BROWN: You've also said that Lloyd Goodrich advised on—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He advised on the selection of artists and all—I think nearly all the artists in the reclamation program were suggested by Lloyd Goodrich. A few of them Johnny suggested, like—well, I've forgotten. Tworkov is in that first one, isn't he, and Goodrich suggested most of them. Now who suggested Norman Rockwell, I don't know, but that was—he got Norman Rockwell first, that was a great coup. [00:24:10]

ROBERT BROWN: Why?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Because everybody in the world knew who Norman Rockwell was, all the engineers knew Norman Rockwell. We got out to Glen Canyon, the Indians knew who he was, I mean it was—he was just a household word [laughs].

ROBERT BROWN: So that was politically, a very happy time.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh, that was wonderful, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Did Rockwell enjoy doing this?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes. And I was on the trip with Rockwell, we had a great time, and I've got a lot of respect for him.

ROBERT BROWN: Really? In what ways would you say?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, in the first place he was very liberal [laughs] and had a wonderful sense of humor. He was very funny and very pleasant, and also, I got a great deal of—a good deal of respect for him as a painter, after seeing some of his serious work. I mean, he wasn't just a popular illustrator. Also, I saw a show on Norman Rockwell on the television a few months ago, and it was really a history of a certain period in American life, so I think he's valuable historically.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, as a chronicler, right?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT BROWN: So he was secured, he was sort of a coup that he'd gotten that.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah, he was a coup.

ROBERT BROWN: The Bureau of Reclamation can go along with this. [00:26:01]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Yeah, that, I think sold—it helped a lot to sell the idea.

ROBERT BROWN: So by then they had money in their budget now, to undertake this. The terms were that the art would be made for the bureau and would become their property, is that right?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: It would become their property, that was true in the first exhibition. So they have all these things, and that's one thing Johnny wanted to do after he left the government, was to crack down and make sure that all these things were where they were supposed to be. They're supposed to be for visitor centers. Now the Norman Rockwell painting is in the Glen Canyon Visitor Center, but that's the only one I know about.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. His criteria for selection was very liberal wasn't it, because—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. The artist was not told what to do at all. Is that what you mean?

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But also, quite a variety of artists were selected too.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Yeah, and the artist was simply told to do something relating to the particular area of reclamation. It could be abstract, and of course Ralston Crawford and some of the others were.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you get to know—why don't I ask you about a few of these people, you have commented on them. Ralston Crawford, you mentioned that he did become a good friend after a rather slow start. Was he—what was he?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah, well, let me just finish a little bit about Norman Rockwell and his wife, who was his photographer and also extremely nice. We went on a trip by boat, on the lake, that by that time it was partly flooded, and went on an overnight trip, on this Bureau of Reclamation boat, and that was very, very interesting, going into all the little canyons that were still—they're still there, Rainbow Bridge. [00:28:24] There was another artist aboard, who was not—I don't think a very good artist but he had been recommended and I can't think of his name. He came along with his supposed secretary, who was really his boyfriend [laughs], and this created a kind of amusing situation, because it was very obvious, and I don't think Rockwell was used to this kind of thing [laughs], but he was very funny about it. I guess that was all I wanted to say, was about that. Oh, no, it was interesting, the way Rockwell went about his painting. He hired Indians there, at Glen Canyon, and posed them where they were going to be in the painting, on the edge of a cliff, and then photographed them, he and his wife, and that, he did his painting from that. I think that was his custom, to photograph things first and pose, always had the model posing. I found that—there are lots of pictures of Rockwell in those I gave you.

ROBERT BROWN: Did that shock you a little bit, that he was working in that fashion, taking photographs and then painting elsewhere?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No.

ROBERT BROWN: You weren't that much a purist about those matters [laughs].

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, just accepted it as his way. [00:30:04] A lot of them did photographs. Ralston Crawford took thousands, so did Diebenkorn and some of the others. Many of them did. Some of them did sketches too, I think Rockwell did do some sketches.

ROBERT BROWN: So Rockwell was the key figure, I mean, in terms of political—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: At the beginning.

ROBERT BROWN: —beginning.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: At the beginning, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And then you picked people like, well, well like Ralston Crawford.

[Audio quality gets worse through the rest of the track.]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Ralston Crawford came on, into it fairly early as I recall, and went to Grand Coulee, and I was there when he first—on his first trip. He went several times, to Grand Coulee and did a number of paintings for both shows. I remember when we met him at the airport and went with him to the hotel where he was staying, he expected Johnny to—he thought Johnny was kind of a flunky, you know he just took it for granted that Johnny was going to carry his bags [laughs] and that kind of thing, and I took an immediate dislike to him because I felt he was snooty. I think a number of the artists expected us to be typical bureaucrats, whatever they are, and were very much surprised when we turned out to know something about art and the

artist life [laughs]. [00:32:00] At any rate, I was so disgusted with Ralston Crawford that I decided not to join them for dinner, and Johnny says he thinks that's what changed Ralston's mind [laughs], because from then on he was just as nice as he could be, and we became very close friends. He was really a wonderful man. I think he was a fine artist, but he was also a very interesting and many-sided person. He traveled a great deal and collected fascinating artifacts from many countries, New Guinea, and Africa, all over the place. His apartment was full of very interesting objects. He was a jazz fan, who used to go down to New Orleans, and when he died, they gave him a jazz funeral in New Orleans. We were invited but we couldn't go, I was very sorry. He had been—he was also a very good cook. We went there for dinner a couple times and he cooked a meal, and it was delicious. And a connoisseur of wine and so forth. So he was very rewarding.

ROBERT BROWN: So you kept up that friendship until his death.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes we did, until he died. When he first knew us, he told Johnny that a few years before, he had been suddenly stricken with cancer, very suddenly, and was told he had two weeks to live, and he said "They wrote a script for me," and he said, "I decided to write a different script," and he lived, he fought it and he lived on for about how many years, six or seven years. [00:34:11] He did a lot of traveling, did a tremendous amount of work, but it finally got him of course in the end.

ROBERT BROWN: So, you visited him at his home.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: In New York.

ROBERT BROWN: In New York.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Several times. When we first saw him he was married, but then he and his wife were separated, and the last few times we saw him, he was a bachelor. He had two sons whom we met, who are handling his work now, I believe, one of them is anyway.

ROBERT BROWN: He was about the most senior—I mean in age—figure, was he, or he and Rockwell?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He and Rockwell, yes I suppose so. We had Bill Palmer, William Palmer, who was not very young. I have funny stuff to tell about him too.

ROBERT BROWN: He said he had a wonderful sense of humor.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes he did, and he was a great gardener and a cook [laughs]. Did I tell you about the hotdogs?

ROBERT BROWN: No.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, he made a joke one time, when we were out West, I think I went with him a couple of times, and then he came to see us in Washington too, but he made a joke about crown roast of hotdogs, I don't know in reference to what. Well this stuck in my mind, so when he and his wife came to visit us, we had them for dinner, I prepared a crown roast of hotdogs, you know arranged as they do, in the shape of a crown, full of mashed potatoes. [00:36:01] That's what they did with lamb chops. So I brought out this crown of roasted hotdogs, there was a lot of fun about that, and then I brought out a crown of lamb. [They laugh.] So they had a lot of fun. We had an awful lot of fun with him.

ROBERT BROWN: And he is quite picky wasn't he, on his trip, he did a lot of sketching?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He did a lot, yes. There's some wonderful photographs of him which I think I gave you, of him looking at flowers. He was always very interested in vegetation.

ROBERT BROWN: He went right into this project with enthusiasm.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: As far as I know, all the ones I taught [ph] were very enthusiastic. [Coughs.] Sorry. They thought that not only they'd given them opportunities to see things that they wouldn't have had otherwise, because a lot of Bureau of Reclamation pieces tend to be of the interior. [Coughs.] And they wouldn't have access to otherwise. And they wouldn't have had the facilities.

ROBERT BROWN: Well first of all, Richard Diebenkorn was flown—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: Well, Diebenkorn, you've said, was flown around by helicopter, because he did sort of aerial, marvelous geographical, in the field.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I was on that trip too and I went in the helicopter with Diebenkorn and Ralston Crawford, both of them taking photographs like mad, and we spent a whole day going down the Colorado River in a helicopter. And at one point we landed on an island in the middle of the river and took off again. [00:38:04] It was a fascinating panorama.

ROBERT BROWN: In a sense they were sketching through their cameras weren't they, would you say that?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Diebenkorn afterwards, and I have heard this from Johnny and I think others, that his *Ocean Park* series grew from that trip. Did you know the squares, looking down you saw this converted various colors and shapes, so it must have been the river winding through. It must have come out of his photograph of that.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he a fairly becoming person?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Very pleasant. I never knew him long enough to be really friendly, but he was extremely pleasant.

ROBERT BROWN: You probably have known Maril from the day because he was [inaudible].

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I knew the Marils here and I think it's with the Marils, yes it was with the Marils, we went up to, we went to Taos. And I think it was Chaves we went for [inaudible] near some reclamation enclaves. Taos was very close, so then I showed—I took them through Mabel's house.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he seem to thrive at this project?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, he liked it.

ROBERT BROWN: Or if he didn't.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: [Inaudible] he did, but let's see.

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible] Maril was New Mexico.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: It's in [inaudible] New Mexico. [Inaudible.]

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible] did a painting.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He probably did, so many of the artists did. [Inaudible.] [00:40:02] It looks like a good painting. I don't remember it very good. Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: But he had a rather delicate touch, while others were doing much bolder things. I noticed [inaudible] with a kind of cowhand.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. I met him too. That was on the West Coast, I think it was in Oregon. [Inaudible.]

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible] Hilda [inaudible].

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Hilda was not [inaudible]. She came along. We became very good friends. [Inaudible.] I think [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: So he had trips with [inaudible]?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Also [inaudible]. Yes, we got to know the [inaudible] very well. I went on two trips with [inaudible]. At any rate, Johnny did and [inaudible]. And in the course of that time, [inaudible] the river. [Inaudible] and I think [inaudible].

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: Palmer, not William Powell. What was Morris's approach, as you recall?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well of course everything he does is very abstract, and these paintings in here are very—

ROBERT BROWN: Would he make sketches and studies?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He made many sketches and he gave many sketches to the bureau. Some of the artists gave countless sketches and he was one of them, not only sketches but he gave—Diebenkorn gave six or seven large gouaches to the bureau.

ROBERT BROWN: [00:42:05] So in your opinion, the artists were pretty generous.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: They were very generous, many, some of them were not, but a great many of them were, and I would like—I wish you would try to find out what's happened to those things. The last I knew, the Diebenkorns were in the office, Johnny's office. [Inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: At least in—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I just hope they're being cared for. Well, of course we got to know the Morrises. We visited them out in Oregon and also, we saw Hilda in Italy, she was then in Pietrasanta. I don't know if I told you about that.

ROBERT BROWN: No, no.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: We went to Pietrasanta, which is a fascinating place where they have all sorts of stone yards, they do sculpture. they do both browns and marble and others, and while we were there, Henry Moore was doing one of his sculptures, and he wasn't there, they were just doing a huge marble from a little tiny model of his. And Hilda told us—and we saw them casting, which is an interesting and very dangerous operation. Hilda told us that the men who do the big sculptures from the maquettes are very highly-skilled and they're artists themselves. [00:44:00] Quite often, the large sculpture will be better than the model. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: [Laughs.] I've heard that their skill is so good and they're so highly trained.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. I guess they can see flaws that—

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ROBERT BROWN: Others that you have mentioned knowing, Jack Tworokov was on the project, you'd known him for many years, probably from Provincetown.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, I knew him from about 1920, I guess, in the early '20s, and his family and his sister, Biala, Janice Biala, is also a painter who lives in Paris and exhibits in New York. I don't think you know her.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you go on any of the trips with him?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, I went on a trip with Jack. I can't remember where we went now, I'd have to look it up. Do want you to—

[Audio Break.]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I don't remember who we went with.

ROBERT BROWN: You said Peter Hurd, you had—there's a rather funny story about him.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I can tell a story about him. Maybe I should look at—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: There are other artists that were involved in the reclamation project, what about Fletcher Martin, did you go around with him?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes, we also got to know Fletcher Martin and his wife very well and in fact, we saw them—they moved to Mexico and we saw them down there. There's one of his paintings in the catalog of the reclamation show, shows the huge pipe, I've forgotten what it was called, that was one of the—the Grand Coulee Dam, I visited there a couple of times, once with Ralston Crawford, and I think some others. [00:02:07] At any rate, it was—it's a huge dam and it's very fascinating. This is called the, the inside of a turbine at Grand Coulee. Fletcher Martin did a painting of it, showing a man standing inside the opening of it, and it's about three times as tall as a man, and that was just the water going to one turbine. I have talked about Marcel Breuer designing the façade for the third power plant, but they were still working on it of course, when we were there. Ralston Crawford did some very interesting paintings of that, including the penstock leaves.

ROBERT BROWN: These great leaves that the water hits. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, yes. I remember going into the engine room, I believe it was Grand Coulee or not Glen Canyon, and it was absolutely beautiful, it was really a work of art. The huge machines were beautifully designed and they were painted in very brilliant colors, just surprising. I feel that industrial design in this country is so—very, very superior, or at least in the things that I saw, in these big dams, to domestic, to architectural

design. [00:04:00] I mean, it's —perhaps that's been true for some time.

ROBERT BROWN: For some time. Did you ever talk to these engineering—or the engineers and so forth?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, I didn't. Of course John did, but I didn't.

ROBERT BROWN: As you've said earlier, they had little sense of design and art.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, that's the strange thing.

ROBERT BROWN: And yet, they were producing these—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: They had no sense of what ordinary so-called art was about and yet, when they came to designing things, they did beautiful work.

ROBERT BROWN: It is a curious thing.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: But Martin captures the scale quite well, the immense scale of it.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes he does. I think Crawford does too.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. They both do. Their styles are so different, Crawford is so much sparer and more geometrical.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, oh they're very different, yes. Lamar Dodd, I remember him very well. He was the head of the art department at the University of Georgia.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He came on several trips.

ROBERT BROWN: Had Mr. DeWitt known him at all beforehand?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No. He was connected, closely connected with the NASA program, that's how we happened to meet him and how he happened to be on this. I think he was probably very helpful in getting it started.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What was he like on these trips?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well he was a very genial, handsome man, and I remember [laughs] one amusing incident, when at the opening at the National Gallery, they had said that they were going to hang the exhibition in a certain room, and for some reason at the last moment, Carter Brown decided that wasn't going to happen, and he moved it to a sort of corridor. [00:06:25] Well, Johnny was terribly upset and I was too, and so Lamar Dodd wanted to introduce me to Carter Brown and I refused [they laugh], and Dodd was shocked.

ROBERT BROWN: That must have affected the impact the show made, if it were in a corridor.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, it was. It was—they had a nice spread of food and stuff, but—

ROBERT BROWN: Well, it was another gala opening, if I recall.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: It was a put down, it was a put down. Yeah, it was a gala opening but it was kind of a put down. I never cared for Carter Brown [they laugh] after that. Well, Javier Gonzalez, of course I knew here and went to his place in New York, and he was a very genial person, so was Ethel, his wife, both painters and both on the program. I was not—at long—I don't think, when they were there but at any rate, I don't have any real striking memories.

ROBERT BROWN: How would he have been selected by this board of artistic—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He must have been selected, I think. I don't think Johnny selected him.

ROBERT BROWN: He did select some though, they were his. [00:08:00]

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He selected a few I think, he selected Jack.

ROBERT BROWN: Jack Tworkov.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: And Herman Maril, I believe, and then later, for the interior program, he suggested Dickinson, Edwin Dickinson. That is—

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's this one here.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh, Edward Laning. I have some memories of meeting Edward Laning in either Washington or New York, and of course he went way back to the New Deal. I don't remember, I wasn't on the trip with him, but it seems to me that he talked a good deal about a mural of his that was being restored. It had been painted over or plastered over, or something. Do you know it?

ROBERT BROWN: No, I don't know the details but it's possible.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Well, he had a rather interesting history. He was on the WPA, or the—

ROBERT BROWN: PWA, Public Works of Art.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: PWA, I think it was on the PWA, and did murals for some of the public buildings in Washington.

ROBERT BROWN: So he would have been one of the older figures in on this program.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. And he would have gone back—perhaps the only one that—no, Jack Tworkov was on the WPA too.

ROBERT BROWN: I think you wanted to say something about Fritz Scholder.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Fritz Scholder. Yes, well I don't remember being on a trip with him, but I did meet him in Washington. Around that time, Mrs. Udall had instituted a gallery in the Department of Interior, on the top floor, for Indian artists and Indian artifacts. [00:10:08] It was very nice, and Fritz Scholder was one of the artists, then unknown, who was exhibiting in the gallery, and I was quite struck with his early work. In fact, I bought one and then something happened and I didn't get it, I don't remember what. They had works by other Indian artists, and I think including Yeffe Kimball, who was sort of a professional Indian [laughs].

ROBERT BROWN: What do you mean?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Well, I mean she really didn't—I don't think she had a great deal of Indian blood. She traded on the fact that she was part Indian. Scholder I think was very genuine at the beginning, but he suddenly became famous and I think he sort of prostituted himself, that's my impression. Perhaps I'm being unfair.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, he certainly is almost an enterprise unto himself.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, yeah. I think he turned out too much work in too short a period, but his early things were good. It seems to me there was somebody else at that gallery. Dong Kingman.

ROBERT BROWN: You wanted to say something about Dong Kingman.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He and his wife were on one of the trips where we stayed in a cottage that belonged to the Bureau of Reclamation, in one of the parks. [00:12:00] I guess it was Flaming Gorge, a group of us stayed there, and that was very—and the Kingmans were two of them—she was Helena Kingman, I remember particularly as being a very lovely lady. I just wanted to mention them.

ROBERT BROWN: You've mentioned also, another person who liked Dodd and had something to do with the NASA Art Program.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: That was James Dean, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: James Dean.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He was one of the artists on the NASA Program, and he later ran the gallery at the National Aeronautics Space Museum. I don't think he's still there, but he was a younger man and did quite nice, rather realistic things.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Now you say you remember the day he went—there's a huge meadow, with the ducks rising off it, do you remember that day?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: No, that was not James Dean, that was—

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, McCoy?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: McCoy.

ROBERT BROWN: John McCoy, oh yes.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: John McCoy, yes. We flew—we took a little tiny plane, a two seater or three seater, to this wildlife refuge, and it happened to be an extremely windy day, and we landed there and John McCoy was doing watercolors of the birds, there were hundreds, thousands of birds of all kinds in this refuge, and they were flying and circling, and that's what he painted. I remember that he was doing watercolor and the wind was so strong that it blew dust all over this watercolor, but that sort of improved it, it was—or at least it didn't damage it. [00:14:00] [They laugh.]

ROBERT BROWN: Well now McCoy, well he's Andrew Wyeth's brother in-law, but he paints in that tradition.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. Well, not quite as detailed, but it was a very nice painting actually. Then, on the way back, we took this little plane and the wind had risen even more and there were huge black clouds in the sky, and we had to fly over the mountains. When we got up, of course we could hear what the pilot was hearing from the ground when we got up a little way. There was some discussion of whether or not to turn back and it seems that a similar plane had turned back, but our pilot went right ahead and plowed over the mountain in this tremendous storm. It was quite exciting.

ROBERT BROWN: But you by and large enjoyed going on these trips.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh, it was fascinating, we saw so much.

ROBERT BROWN: Mr. DeWitt, it was part of his wasn't it, to make sure he was—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: It was his job to make all the arrangements to welcome the artists, to see that they got what they needed to make them feel at home and comfortable.

ROBERT BROWN: You would usually meet them near the place where they were going to paint.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: We would meet them, yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I was unofficial hostess and I think it helped, for me to go along. I didn't go on all the trips by any means, but I think it was helpful to the artists, to have me along. It made it sort of more homey atmosphere.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned also, Peter Hurd.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yes. Well, Peter Hurd was extremely funny, he was really droll humor. [00:16:00] We went to his house incidentally, in—was it New Mexico?

ROBERT BROWN: I think so.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: It's interesting. He has a big ranch there. Well, he was telling us about painting President Johnson, and he did a portrait of Johnson just the way he looks, and he has very long—he had very long ears, and so Peter had painted these ears in, and Johnson took one look at it and turned it down, and then got Norman Rockwell to do it. Norman Rockwell did a very good portrait, but it was more flattering. So, but this—I think Johnson said that's the ugliest thing I ever saw in my life, but it was exhibited, never the less, at the National Portrait Gallery, and Peter Hurd said, at the opening, he went and stood in the doorway and he would comment to people who were looking at it, "Isn't that the ugliest thing you ever saw in your life." [They laugh.]

ROBERT BROWN: And what would people say?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: [They laugh.] He didn't repeat that.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh dear.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: That just gives you an idea of what he was like.

ROBERT BROWN: So Hurd was a nice man to be around.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Oh yeah, he was very friendly, with a western openness you know, but he had this—he was always cracking jokes.

ROBERT BROWN: There are a number selected for show, were several things by Ethel Magafan, and you went on a trip with her.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: She was one of the nicest people on the whole—in the whole trip, and a tremendous

worker, and she's done, since then, she's done several big murals, very big jobs. [00:18:05] I talked to her a few months ago, she had just was starting another one. She painted, was particularly interested in mountains and did a great deal. She used to go out every summer, to the West, and draw the mountains. She was a Siamese twin.

ROBERT BROWN: Was she?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes. They both survived but her sister died later, a few years later. She would come with her husband, Bruce Currie, who was also a painter, and her daughter, Jenny, who is now a painter. A nice family. They live in Woodstock.

ROBERT BROWN: You've also finally mentioned one of the other painters, Mitchell Jamieson, you've known him, he's from Washington, right, I think?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: He was from Washington and I think the work he did for that show was beautiful. He later killed himself, he was moody—I don't know. He was an interesting and very gifted person, I think.

ROBERT BROWN: So the work was done, let's say, I think the opening was 1972 or so, in the spring wasn't it, in Washington? And the work was—

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah, it must have been in '72.

ROBERT BROWN: When the work was—the paintings started coming in, were you and Mr. DeWitt very pleased by what you were seeing?

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: With a lot of them, yes, especially Crawford, Diebenkorn, Tworkov, and several others, I could do through the list but I won't. [00:20:03] Johnny was very excited about some of them and then I would go in and look at them, and especially the artists were so generous, I mean, they were giving these things and all they got in return was a small honorarium, plus the expenses of the trip.

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. How about the impact of the exhibition? I know it opened at the National Gallery.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: It opened at the National Gallery. I don't think it got—as I recall, it didn't get awfully good reviews. It was a rather uneven show, as could be expected, sort of a casual selection, I think, probably was part of it.

ROBERT BROWN: But that was not particularly discouraging.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: To the artists, no.

ROBERT BROWN: Nor to you or to Mr. DeWitt.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: I don't think he was discouraged, he just charged ahead and did another one, which got much better reviews [laughs]. I think one thing that was disappointing was the catalog, you know, it's not a very good catalog. Whereas he went to great pains to get a really fine catalog for the other one. It was a big job and a big promotion scheme too, to get to the money for it. It was very expensive.

ROBERT BROWN: Well that other project got going then, within well, 1974, so that began, the bicentennial project.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yeah, because it was exhibited in 1976, so it must have started in '74. But I think well, he learned a lot from the reclamation project, to which he applied to the bicentennial. [00:22:09]

ROBERT BROWN: One thing that seems a difference, before we talk about the bicentennial, is that the reclamation project, there was a great range of styles. It's more of a focused group of various shades of realists in the bicentennial show.

MIRIAM HAPGOOD DEWITT: Yes, because—well, one of the things he learned on the reclamation show, was that it's not possible to get—it's sometimes possible, and he did get some top notch artists, but generally speaking, there are a lot of big name artists who won't do that for nothing, they won't give their work. So in this show, he changed his policy and they kept their work, but they loaned it for a period of time. And the—

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