



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Margaret
Babcock, 1998 July 21

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Margaret Meras Babcock on July 21, 1998. The interview took place in Camden, Maine, and was conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The sound quality for this interview is poor throughout, leading to an abnormally high number of inaudible sections. Ms. Babcock's speech is impaired by a stroke and deafness. 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: It's picking up, but then we begin to get this feedback. How do you sound over there? Say anything.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Anything.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh yeah, so you're coming through all right.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: This is an interview with Margaret Meras Babcock at her home—sorry—in Camden, Main, July 21, 1998. Robert Brown, the interviewer, and with her grandson present, Jeffrey Pitman. I thought we'd just maybe follow sort of a biographical format, concentrating on the artists and writers you knew. But tell me, you were born in Exeter, New Hampshire?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: That's right.

ROBERT BROWN: And what was your family doing there? Had they lived there for a long time, or?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: My father was trying to make a living and attending Phillips Exeter Academy at the same time. He bought a 14-room house, which was built and owned by Daniel Chester French.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, he lived there too, huh? Or used to live there.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: [Laughs.] Yeah, that's right. And it was situated between Miss Sarah Smith's [ph] kindergarten, which I attended at age four already able to read and write, and was given my first book of poems, the Robert Louis Stevenson *Child's Garden of Verse*. [00:02:25]

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, *The Child's Garden of Verse*. Yes, I know that book. And you were reading by the time you were four?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. My father bought and sold books and furniture for the Susans [ph].

ROBERT BROWN: At Phillips Exeter.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: He bought and sold furniture and books.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: For their rooms and things. And I had all the books he could acquire. [Laughs.] So I learned to read by myself and be read to. And then when I finished kindergarten, I told my parents that I'd been graduated to the second grade, which was in the public school on the other side of our house. And they naively believed me, and so I went there. And after two weeks, Miss Smith went to see how I was doing and was surprised to see me in the second grade. [00:04:02] But the teacher said I was doing better than anybody else in the second grade, [they laugh] that he wouldn't put me back to the first grade.

ROBERT BROWN: Even though you were younger.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: So that's how I ended up graduating from Robinson Female Seminary at age fifteen and entered in Smith before my sixteenth birthday.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Robinson Female Seminary in Exeter?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: What sort of things did you study at Robinson?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: All sorts of things, including Latin.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes. Did you like Latin?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. I had already taught myself enough Greek with books I had at home so that I elected a course in Greek. I wanted to read Sappho in the original. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Really? And you were able to fairly soon?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. But at Phillips Exeter, I don't know whether you wish to have this kind of input—

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —I was squired to the June Ball by Francis Grover Cleveland, the son of the president. [00:06:07]

ROBERT BROWN: President Grover Cleveland, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. His mother, Mrs. Preston [inaudible], and I wrote a poem, which I can repeat to you. It's not very long.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: It might have been published in the *PEAN*, which is Phillips Exeter Academy—I don't know, but anyway. It was rather sweet and touching if you want to spare a few minutes.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure, we'll get it.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Well, while with my dress of silk and knit, I sit and dream about the happy hours, when in the arms of boys I've met I twirl. Life seems a mist of love and flowers, for I was then a June Ball girl.

ROBERT BROWN: Aha! Very nice. [They laugh.] [00:08:02]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Isn't that touching?

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, yes. [They laugh.] You were a June Ball girl. [They laugh.] Had you heard that?

JEFFREY PITMAN: Yes, I have, over the years.

ROBERT BROWN: Aha. [They laugh.]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: This is my first poem. [Laughs.] Before we finish, I will show you the poem I wrote which was a shorter version of the one you sent me in the correspondence [inaudible], which I never remember ever saying [ph] written or anything [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: Did you want to go to Smith College, or what did you know about—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I had no idea how I ended up going to Smith College. I've been trying to make notes for the Smith archive. But I have come to the conclusion that it must be through my mother. We always came to Camden.

ROBERT BROWN: Your mother was from Camden, or her family?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. Her name, Eloise Frye.

ROBERT BROWN: Frye, F-R-Y-E, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. [00:09:57] And she must have known that Betty Babb [ph] from Camden was

going to Smith, and so I thought that would be a fine place to be sent to. But it was the only student I knew the name of when I got to Smith.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, when you got there, you were a couple years younger than the other girls.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Did that make much of a difference to you, or—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. All my younger years, I was a couple years younger than everybody else, and later I was a decade older than anybody else. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Later, much later. [They laugh.] What were you particularly excited by at Smith College? Was there any particular things you did that you liked best?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: My whole intellectual development is due to Smith. There was a professor at Phillips Exeter Academy who went to the summer concerts [ph] or something, and I think it was Aspen, Colorado. There he met a teacher from Smith and said, "Please look out for this very young lady who's coming from Exeter, New Hampshire, to Smith, when she gets there." [00:12:15] This was the summer before I went. And her name was Lucille Marsh.

ROBERT BROWN: Lucille March, mm-hmm [affirmative].

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: M-A-R-S-H, Marsh. And she turned out to be the faculty resident of the house I was put in.

ROBERT BROWN: Very nice.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And so she promptly wrote me up. Her philosophy was, which she transferred to me, was if you believe in something, your belief should withstand any challenge to it. And she knew that I was a Christian Scientist, brought up. [Laughs.] She recommended that I elect a course in zoology.

ROBERT BROWN: Zoology?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yeah. Is this is the kind of thing you're interested in?

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, sure. Yeah. [00:14:00] We want to know who you are. [Laughs.]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I wish I could have a copy of this because I have not—

ROBERT BROWN: So did you like zoology?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: The first thing I did was to scrape some epithelial cells from the inside of my mouth and put them on the slide under a microscope.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, under the microscope.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: It blew my mind. I suddenly felt that I had been sold a bill of goods.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you mean?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Did you ever hear the Christian Science statement of being?

ROBERT BROWN: No.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Well, it's a remarkable [laughs] thing which just recently, a friend's husband helping me, went over to the reading room—

ROBERT BROWN: —of the Christian Scientists, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —and brought back copies. And Desmond, who was running [inaudible]—

ROBERT BROWN: —at the reading room.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —a paperback edition of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, and it's a remarkable document. [00:16:02] [Laughs.] So—

ROBERT BROWN: But how did the sight of your cells under the microscope change your—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Because the scientific statement of being says that there is no life, truth, or intelligence in matter. All is through the mind.

ROBERT BROWN: All is through the mind, huh? Nothing in matter, no life or intelligence in matter, but everything is in the mind.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And you just saw life in matter [laughs] when you—right, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yeah, it blew my mind. [Laughs.] So I [inaudible] like crazy, and that was the end of Christian Science for me.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh. You backed away from it pretty quickly.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Then I had a brother who had a nervous breakdown, and I was afraid that I must have a bad seed in my inheritance and I thought, Oh, dear, I should never be able to get married and have children, I could pass that on. And then I had a young psychology professor who saved my life by telling me that not all mental disease is all due to inheritance. [00:18:22] Some can be circumstances, and that's how.

ROBERT BROWN: Circumstances.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: But the thing that bothered me most—because I went to Smith having won first prize for composition [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: Where was this? You won first prize at—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: The Merrill Prize speaking contest. I still have the program. The subject was "My Nature Study Diary." [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: "My Nature Study Diary."

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And I thought that I was going to be a writer and illustrate my own books as an artist and had great hopes. And the first English teacher I was put in the class of turned out to be John Cheever's aunt, who worked for one dollar a year because she didn't need the money. [00:20:04] And she had her own ideas of what was—and she said—seated the students, and she began alphabetically, somebody's last name spelled with an A, and then B. I remember the B [ph], but it turned out to be C. And then she said, "Please leave an empty seat," and then this C, I thought it would be, "Please sit down." This one colored girl in the class sat down. And then she said, the teacher said, "Please leave an empty seat," and continued with the Cs. And this has bothered me all my life, that I didn't rise up and protest. Neither did anybody else.

ROBERT BROWN: So she said, "Leave an empty seat" next to the colored girl.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. I have since found in the archives, Karen Eberhart—

ROBERT BROWN: Karen Eberhart, Smith archives. [00:22:00]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. They have looked up the name of this student, and they think it turned out to be Clayton. I can't be sure. And she has since died. But I had written, telephoned the alumnae office, wanting to write a letter to the quarterly saying how far Smith has come since I was a freshman. Now they have elected a colored person.

ROBERT BROWN: What was the name of your teacher, the aunt of John Cheever? What was your teacher's name?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Miss Cheever. [They laugh.] And [inaudible]—

ROBERT BROWN: So you hoped to be a writer.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: You wrote quite a bit.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: But the only things that she [inaudible] assignment was [inaudible]. I have never [inaudible] in Boston. [00:24:02]

ROBERT BROWN: She asked what kind of education? She said a—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: A college education.

ROBERT BROWN: College is [inaudible].

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: So which did you write about, one or the other?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I [inaudible] anywhere except the Boston [inaudible] see any Shakespeare or any performance, I suppose, or [inaudible] in Camden. [Laughs.] I saw something [inaudible]. But the two things that she read as an example of what she thought fine was one, the president, the daughter of AT&T, the other, a girl who had been [inaudible] abroad the best [inaudible], this kind of thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Who'd lived abroad?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, had traveled with her family with these things.

ROBERT BROWN: So those were the two that Miss Cheever preferred.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. So I immediately assumed there's no use in my being a writer because I've never been anywhere, and I gave up the whole idea. [00:26:05] It severed my—at the end of the year, she had each student for tea, and she read one piece I'd written and said—I had the word *ennui* in it, and she corrected it, said that it's not a three-syllable word, it's only two syllables, *on-wee*. [Laughs.] But as I was leaving, she said, "You have a very nice little talent." [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Did this deflate you?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Anyway.

ROBERT BROWN: But did this disappoint you?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: What?

ROBERT BROWN: Did this disappoint you? She was rather harsh, was she, in her judgment?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: It ruined my life, [laughs] really. The other one helped me to my [inaudible] development. I honor her [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: And who was the one who helped you? [00:28:02]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Lucille Marsh.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, Lucille Marsh helped you, sure.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. She in the theater department taught dancing. We called it flitting. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Flitting? [They laugh.]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: It was in the ballroom over the [inaudible] House on Paradise Pond, where there were sketches by Walkowitz, whom I later used to have lunch at the—

ROBERT BROWN: Where, down in Greenwich Village?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: No, in the Museum of Modern Art. On the top floor.

ROBERT BROWN: On the top of it, okay.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: What do you call it?

ROBERT BROWN: I don't remember. Was it a roof terrace, or—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, the garden.

ROBERT BROWN: Roof garden café.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: [Inaudible.]

ROBERT BROWN: Abraham Walkowitz, but you saw his paintings in the ballroom at Smith.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Sketches of Isadora Duncan dancing—

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, Isadora Duncan.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —there at Smith there.

ROBERT BROWN: So you enjoyed the dancing, did you?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Oh, I was voted best dancer in my class, of a small number. [Laughs.] [00:30:01]

ROBERT BROWN: Nice.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I would rather dance than eat. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Did you know about this?

JEFFREY PITMAN: I've heard little bits and pieces here.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: What'd he say?

ROBERT BROWN: He said he's heard a bit about this, that you loved to dance. [They laugh.]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. Later on, in my sophomore year, my parents got divorced, and I took my mother's side, so I no longer had any income. I had to go on scholarship. But before this happened, I went to the sophomore prom, and there I was cut in on—you know what that means?

ROBERT BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —by a young man who was the date of a girl, Jewish girl, from Chicago, who knew all the rich Jewish circle this young man came from, and who ended up being my first husband. That is Ernest Mack [ph] Robson—

ROBERT BROWN: Robson, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —who there's still a few leftover nametags on the [inaudible] or something, Rosenblum. [00:32:03] His cousin Arthur had gone to England and made a little money and was native and became Sir Arthur.

ROBERT BROWN: Sir Arthur Robson?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And he asked all the Rosenblums in America to change their names to Robson, and they all did it except Aunt Gareth [ph], who was damned if she'd change his name. [They laugh.] So—

ROBERT BROWN: Ernest Robson, he was at Amherst College at that time, at Amherst?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. He was a senior, I think, because he was in the class of Robert Frost, and he graduated in 1924. Fifty years [inaudible] later, the girl whose date he was [laughs] was an officer in my class, our class, 50th reunion, and we laughed about the [laughs]—she married somebody Fisher I think, I don't know. [00:33:59] And anyway, in the spring of the year, Ernest was walking up toward Smith [inaudible] down through town in Northampton, and he was walking with a young man named Sheridan—can you understand?

ROBERT BROWN: Sheridan?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Sheridan—forgive me—a grandson of General Sheridan, whom I had known at Phillips Exeter.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, you'd known Sheridan Gibney at Phillips Exeter.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. He was the same class of Robert Frost with Ernest.

ROBERT BROWN: Right, they took classes from Frost.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And I was hoping that Sheridan would ask me for a date. I had a crush on him since way back, because I thought his lips were the shape of a seagull's wings. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, my, yes. [They laugh.] Did you tell him as much?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: No. [They laugh.] But Sheridan did not ask me on a date—

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, he didn't?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —but Ernest did. And he and Sheridan went, after their commencement, 1924, in Amherst, abroad, as people used to do, together. [00:36:05] And they had a cabin next door with a transom that connected with a first-class cabin occupied by the Pillsbury sisters—

ROBERT BROWN: The Pillsbury sisters, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —who had blackballed me in Smith from making French club because I had never been abroad.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, I see. So there was a caste system of some sort.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Oh, awful. And ensured my professor, who thought I was wonderful and put me up for it. But these same sisters, one of them became an official of the United Nations later in some field, human relations. The boys could overhear the girls over the [inaudible] talking about Ernest, whether they should dance with him or not, because they suspected he was Jewish. [Laughs.] [00:38:06] The highlights of my life at Smith College.

ROBERT BROWN: But you had a very developed sense of right and wrong from an early age, right? [Babcock laughs.] It seems obvious.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And so eventually I got put on [inaudible] scholarship and shipped off to the South Hope [ph] House, Tenney House.

ROBERT BROWN: The self-help [ph] house, Kennedy House.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Tenney House.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, Tenney House.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, Tenney House. Jeffrey, when I was talking with Eberhart over the phone, she wished that I could find pictures of me as an undergraduate, and Jeffrey went upstairs in his room and found [laughs] a remarkable picture that I told Eberhart that I remembered.

ROBERT BROWN: In all, it was a very enlarging time educationally, but it was also a time when you learned some hard lessons about society, huh?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Oh, yes. But I also had found two major—at that time, you could be [inaudible] from Smith to Johns Hopkins as a medical major. [00:40:11]

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, you could?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: At Smith.

ROBERT BROWN: What we call pre-med? You could do pre-med study.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, pre-med.

ROBERT BROWN: So you did continue with your science, your zoology and other things?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I wanted to be a psychiatrist [inaudible] connection with my brother having had a nervous breakdown. But then when Ernest came back from Europe at the end of that year, he came back to Amherst and Smith and looked me up again. And I must tell you something about his background. I [inaudible]. I'd have to check with Eberhart [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: Which year you were in? [00:42:00]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I went to be a camp counselor in [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: Virginia North?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: You went to be a camp counselor. Now, one of those years, one of those summers, didn't you, before you graduated, you went to Provincetown with a friend?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I'm coming to that. Ginny ended up being a district attorney of Milwaukee.

ROBERT BROWN: Ginny, a district attorney of Milwaukee.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, but she only stayed at Smith one or two years and transferred to Wisconsin. She had come out the year before we came to Smith, and so I think it must have been freshman year [inaudible]. She got me this job as camp counselor and to [ph] stay with her family in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

ROBERT BROWN: Was the camp in Michigan or Wisconsin?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Michigan, Michigan. [Inaudible.]

ROBERT BROWN: Right nearby. How did you like being a camp counselor?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Well, [laughs] [inaudible]. [00:44:10] I don't [inaudible] boy-crazy than anything else at that time.

ROBERT BROWN: Boy-crazy. And this of course was a girls' camp, I suppose.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I don't remember. [Laughs.] I have a picture [inaudible] somewhere. Anyway, that was my first gainful employment. I don't know whether I did it for free or not. But the first job I ever had was given to me by Smith College, [inaudible] and ended up being a chauffeur and nanny for the children of the deGray Vanderbilts in East Hampton, Long Island.

ROBERT BROWN: This is while you were still at Smith?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, probably the summer of my sophomore year.

ROBERT BROWN: And how did you find that job?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Smith College employment.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, but how did you—did you like that work or not, being a nanny? [00:45:57]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: [Laughs.] Well, I insisted on being a member of the family. I don't think they ever wanted me back [laughs] a second year. [Laughs.] But—

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MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —I was telling you about the fast-forward [ph] of the deGray Vanderbilts. Two children, Lefreda and Ollie [ph], and Ollie turns up in my life when I was working in Wall Street. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Yes?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: With the [inaudible] company in applied research and development.

ROBERT BROWN: What was the name of the company?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Shell Mold.

ROBERT BROWN: Shell Mold? And this was late, somewhat later.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: This was 50 years later or something.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, wow. And you ran into Ollie Vanderbilt.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: As one of the clients of this firm that I was advertising and public relations director of and had a [inaudible] about in *Fortune* magazine.

ROBERT BROWN: You did? You were written up in *Fortune* magazine? Is that right?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: [Laughs.] Yes. [Inaudible] associates [inaudible] very high up and I was offered a job with Monsanto because of the work I did. [00:02:23]

ROBERT BROWN: You were offered a job with Monsanto, the chemical company—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: —because of the fine work you'd done for this foundry.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, this material that they'd manufactured as a [inaudible] agent [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: An agent.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yeah, [inaudible]. And then in my junior year, still at Smith, Ernest came back to Amherst and Northampton to see me, and at the end of my junior year, I came back to Camden to be with my family here, and Ernest followed me up here. And we told my mother a great cock-and-bull story about how we were going to visit Sheridan Gibney, who was summering in Boothbay Harbor. [00:04:15] Instead of which, we set up north to follow in the steps of Thoreau. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Really? [They laugh.] You were really a nature buff then, huh?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And there was very little traffic at that time. I waited [ph] right beside the road just waiting for his car [ph] and reading *Cyrano de Bergerac* in French. [They laugh.] And we got up to Moosehead Lake, [inaudible] mountain, where we left the first edition of T.S. Eliot's book [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: You lost it.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Huh?

ROBERT BROWN: You lost it, you said?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: We left it there and—

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, you left it.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —at the thing. And then one afternoon [inaudible] classmate opened the door [inaudible] [laughs]—very embarrassing. [00:06:13] [Inaudible.] But we hired Long John [ph], the famous guide—

ROBERT BROWN: At Moosehead Lake?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. To carry our equipment in one canoe, and Ernest and I had another canoe, and we paddled out to the end of where we had to put [ph] portage—

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, portages.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And then I had to quit because the blackflies were so bad. I couldn't. So we went in the steamer going up and down Mount Kineo there.

ROBERT BROWN: You flagged down the steamer.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yeah, and they stopped and picked us up with our two canoes [laughs] and brought back to shore. And then we set forth—I don't remember whether we stopped to stay hello to Sheridan or not—but we headed for Provincetown. [00:08:01] You had something about Provincetown?

ROBERT BROWN: No, I wanted you to tell about going.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: You didn't hear anything about Provincetown?

ROBERT BROWN: Not from you.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: From Smith? No? By the way, [inaudible]—

ROBERT BROWN: So then you head for Provincetown.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: We head to Provincetown.

ROBERT BROWN: What was of interest in Provincetown?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Oh, the artists and [inaudible], you know, migrated to—

ROBERT BROWN: [Inaudible] and writers, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: But first I have to tell you the background of Ernest Robson.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: His mother's maiden name was Frank, Sadie Frank [ph]. His uncle, Jules [ph] Frank, her brother, was the father of the writer [inaudible], you know him, I know [ph]. Waldo—

ROBERT BROWN: —Waldo Frank.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —Frank. And he was very [inaudible], and you know.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And Charlie Chaplin and T.S. Eliot, whose copy we lost.

ROBERT BROWN: Waldo [inaudible].

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And Waldo had a summer place in I think it was Cummington, a suburb of Northampton.

ROBERT BROWN: Northampton, yes, up in the Berkshire foothills. [00:10:01]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, where he had kept his caretakers living there year-round.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you go up there?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: So when Ernest came to see me during my junior year—

ROBERT BROWN: At Smith, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —he would stay at Cummington, at Waldo's place. The other parents and uncle [ph] were members of the Oaks [inaudible] *New York Times*, and Burnsey [ph] [inaudible]. And father was deceased, was a cousin of the Stanley [ph] [inaudible] brothers.

ROBERT BROWN: The Standard what works? The Standard—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: [Inaudible.] Varnish.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, varnish, okay.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Varnish works.

ROBERT BROWN: In Chicago.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And Coch, C-O-C-H brothers. And he was on the board of [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, famous department store. [00:11:58]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And there's a historical society [ph] that was very important, the history of the country. When Ernest went home [inaudible] his senior year, Dickie Lowe [ph] carried his buddies [ph] home, conversation [ph] with him. And named Leopold, and it may be said [ph] his sister-in-law's baby had that same name. It was named before it was discovered who had murdered [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, famous murder.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yeah. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Wow. He was related, then, to the [inaudible].

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: [Inaudible.] Anyhow.

ROBERT BROWN: We'll try to clarify that in the—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: What?

ROBERT BROWN: So this—did you go up to Cummington yourself?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: While you were still a student.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I don't remember. I know when we were in Provincetown.

ROBERT BROWN: And that was the summer before your senior year, right?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. [00:13:57]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: We hooked up with the Provincetown Follies.

ROBERT BROWN: The Provincetown Follies.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Eugene O'Neill was living next door [inaudible], and one of his plays was being put on there.

ROBERT BROWN: What was the Provincetown Follies?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: It was an offshoot from the Provincetown Theater [inaudible]. And Cleon Throckmorton was associated with—

ROBERT BROWN: The follies? No.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —the Provincetown Theater. And he was [inaudible]. They [inaudible] went to [inaudible] was a classmate of [inaudible] at Harvard. I can't remember his name. But anyway—

ROBERT BROWN: President Mendenhall [ph], later president.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. They took on college students for free if they had enough talent to be in the chorus. And I ended up—it is [inaudible] summer thing to do, especially when you have to pay [inaudible]. I ended up [inaudible] girls' chorus of the Provincetown Follies. [00:16:35] And Throckmorton asked me back to New York with him. He would pay me \$60 a week. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: To be in what, a chorus?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you tempted?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I was quite a dancer. I said, "Thank you very much. I have to go back to Smith and get my diploma." Meantime, Ernest was in a boys' chorus, and so was Peter Boone [ph]. That is where he met Peter Boone and where Peter Boone met him, and everybody soon found out that Ernest was the son of a millionaire. And one girl who later became a well-known publisher's agent and had an illegitimate child by Shrader Brown [ph]—[00:18:07]

ROBERT BROWN: An illegitimate child, you said?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. Rachel [ph]. He—Bill Brown acknowledged the paternity, at least, of the child. Oh, by the way—

ROBERT BROWN: But she was—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —do you know the author Paul Morand, M-O-R-A-N-D?

ROBERT BROWN: No.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: He wrote a book about the artist [inaudible] of the time, of the 26th Street Speakeasy, where everybody congregated.

ROBERT BROWN: No, I don't know that.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I've been trying to track down that book. Anyway, this girl—

ROBERT BROWN: She was also in Provincetown that summer?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Rachel something was her name?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: No.

ROBERT BROWN: No.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Rachel was the child—

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, they had.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —that she produced many years later.

ROBERT BROWN: Later, yeah. And what did she do with Ernest? She was—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: She borrowed \$500 for an abortion from him. I don't know who she had an affair with [ph]. [00:20:01] But she was very light-fingered, stole things. She gave a copy to me of John Donne's poetry [inaudible] elegant edition. I don't know whether [ph]—

ROBERT BROWN: You don't know where she—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —she stole it from. I was scared of her.

ROBERT BROWN: That summer in Provincetown, you enjoyed very much?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Oh, it was wildly exciting. I wrote to my mother and told her, "Please send my steamer trunk."

ROBERT BROWN: Your trunk, your sea—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Steamer trunk.

ROBERT BROWN: Your steamer trunk, yes, to Provincetown.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Because I decided to spend the rest of the summer there, and address it to Mrs. Ernest Robson, because the Portuguese threw us out from one place we were staying when they found out we were not married. [Laughs.] We had to move somewhere else. They found out he was in [ph] the same bathroom sink somewhere, and we were thrown [inaudible] out. Anyway, this is when my brother was recovering from his [inaudible] back with my mother here. [00:22:04]

ROBERT BROWN: He was here in Camden with your mother.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. And my brother sent a telegram to me: "Come home at once. Mother is dying of a heart attack." [Laughs.] And I said, "If she dies of a heart attack from thinking I am married, she'd die twice over if she'd known I'm living without being married." [They laugh.] I think she would—[laughs].

ROBERT BROWN: Was it true? Was your mother very ill?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: No!

ROBERT BROWN: This was just—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: She survived it very well. [Laughs.] Anyway.

ROBERT BROWN: But she wanted to bring you home.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I don't know. Anyway. At the end of summer vacation in Provincetown, I went back to Smith, and Peter followed Ernest, from [ph] then on.

ROBERT BROWN: He what? He followed Ernest and—? [00:24:03]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And was supported by him.

ROBERT BROWN: That's when—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I never knew where he got the money to go to Provincetown and live, but—

ROBERT BROWN: I can find out. But Ernest supported him. Peter then went to Northampton area, right, and lived?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: He went to live at Cummington and Waldo [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: Waldo Frank's place, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Place. And my roommate Elizabeth Saunders [ph] used to go with me to visit Peter and Ernest at Cummington. And at that time, Smith had a form you wrote out—

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, you wrote out a form.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —saying who the chaperone was going to be, and we used Waldo's caretakers' names where we were going for the weekends. In the meantime, during the fall, I discovered I was pregnant, and I went to a Dr. Brown [ph] [laughs]—[00:26:02]

ROBERT BROWN: Ubiquitous.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —who the husband of Elsa Brown, daughter Elsa Parshley [ph], Professor Parshley of Smith College—

ROBERT BROWN: Professor Parshley?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Parshley. And he told me I'd better head for New York as soon as I could. I was three months pregnant. [Laughs.] And I headed for New York. Peter—I don't know whether [inaudible] ever heard this story or not, whether he should be told or not. In this picture here—

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, that picture. Well, I don't care if you want to do it or hear it or—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: You see—

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, this *Maine Coast* [inaudible] Peter Blume.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, you see this character?

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, the big face in the window.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: In the window. This is Sidney Peak, P-E-A-K, Crawford, who was also a student at —[00:28:01]

ROBERT BROWN: Where, at Amherst?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. Robert Frost. But I never knew him at Phillips Exeter, but I knew him by reputation because he made a name for himself as a teenager writing an essay on Schopenhauer. [Laughs.] And his father was literary advisor to President Coolidge and literary editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*.

ROBERT BROWN: I see. His father?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: His father was Marion Crawford, by any chance? No, but it was somebody Crawford.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Crawford.

ROBERT BROWN: Okay. Go ahead now.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: So what is the relation of this painting by Blume to what you're going to tell us?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: That when I had the abortion, I went to New York and stayed at the Hotel Pennsylvania, and Peak was there during and after the thing. Peter was not present at all. [00:30:04]

ROBERT BROWN: Peter Blume?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: No.

ROBERT BROWN: What about Ernest? Was Ernest still up in Cummington?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: No, Ernest had a job in New York and would commute back and forth. I don't know how long Peter stayed in Cummington, but this one [inaudible] to Peter from Ernest saying he was thinking of coming to Northampton for the end of the year. I don't know where he wrote it to Peter from.

ROBERT BROWN: So you went back, then, to Smith—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: —and finished your last year.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And then were you married to Ernest at some point, then?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I married Ernest on April the sixth—the seventh—1926.

ROBERT BROWN: Just before your graduation.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: During Easter vacation. I finally broke down and told Eberhart this, because she had my marriage date as 1927, and I must have told them afterwards that, because she agreed [ph] over the—I hesitated to tell her this. She doesn't [inaudible] at all, and she says, "Yes, of course. You'd have been kicked out if they knew it." [They laugh.]

ROBERT BROWN: Seventy-some years have passed.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I didn't know whether she would—

ROBERT BROWN: Hold it.

JEFFREY PITMAN: That's me.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: You married then, April 7, 1926, and then what did you—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: During my Easter vacation.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, in your senior year at Smith.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: So then what did you do once you had finished at Smith?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I don't know whether Peter was still in Cummington or not, where he was living, but—

ROBERT BROWN: But did you stay in Cummington that next summer, or what did you do?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: No, I [inaudible]. My mother and father and grandmother all came to my graduation. [00:34:07] And then my mother and grandmother came back to Camden, and I believe that Ernest and I stopped off at Exeter, New Hampshire, [inaudible]. Basically my father [inaudible]. But in any event, it had been preplanned that Peter and Peak and Little Peak the dog and I would be spending the summer on my great-uncle Ed's [ph] private [ph] island. You can see it from in there.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, an island off Camden that was owned by your great-uncle.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: What did you say?

ROBERT BROWN: Your great-uncle's island.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. Lime Island.

ROBERT BROWN: Lime Island.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Peter was on his way up from wherever he was staying. He stopped off at [inaudible], where [inaudible] and—what is his—? [00:36:05]

ROBERT BROWN: Bernard Carfio [ph] was there, Yasuo Kuniyoshi.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: [Inaudible] name of Kuniyoshi [inaudible]. They were all at the artist's colony there. Anyway, he arrived in Camden before we did. And [inaudible] my mother refused to receive him, let him in. She knew nothing about who he was, [inaudible] obviously a Jewish boy, something. And so he proceeded to sleep on the front lawn. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: Where were you and Ernest? You hadn't arrived?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: As I said, we perhaps had stopped off, seeing my father, because Ernest had taken a job in Epping, New Hampshire, for the academic year, starting in September, teaching English.

[00:38:04]

ROBERT BROWN: In a school in Epping, New Hampshire.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, right.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, now Peter's coming up here, as you've just said, Sidney Peak Crawford and the little dog were going to this island here, and you were going to meet them there.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And Ernest and I were going here, of course. It was the second year [ph].

ROBERT BROWN: Had your mother met him by now? Ernest. Had your mother met Ernest?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I can't tell you whether he was there at graduation or not.

ROBERT BROWN: But they didn't know you were married, is that right? Your parents.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I don't know whether they knew or not. An announcement was made from Europe. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: From Europe?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Anyway. Mother was [inaudible] with Mrs. Bernard Gimbel [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: With Mrs. Bernard Gimbel, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Anyway, I know that Peter got here before Ernest and I did. [Laughs.] [Inaudible] on the front lawn because my mother wouldn't let him in. [Laughs.] [00:40:00] Anyway. And we hired Hugh Harris [ph] [inaudible] to take us out to the island and bring us all our mail and any supplies once a week. And that was where Peter painted that—

ROBERT BROWN: —the painting.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —that picture—

ROBERT BROWN: —*Maine Coast*, right.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. And he stayed on at the island when Ernest and I went back to my father's in Exeter, New Hampshire, and set up—he made an apartment what used to be called servants' quarters. Off the family kitchen and through the hallway, there were three rooms down the end of it, two halls, the servants' bathroom. [Laughs.] [00:42:00] We loved—it had another entrance/exit beside the house.

ROBERT BROWN: Separate exit.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, for them to go in and out, and we [inaudible] this place, 20 [inaudible], Freedom Alley. [Laughs.] That appears on the post. We had a terrible time [inaudible] the way that [inaudible] cottages, the beach, anything you wanted to go [ph]. And you have to go [inaudible]. We had such a [inaudible]. [They laugh.] Anyway, Peter stayed on as long as he could stand it in the house on the island. When it got to be too cold, he moved to an apartment in Atlantic Avenue in Camden.

ROBERT BROWN: Which avenue?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Atlantic.

ROBERT BROWN: Atlantic Avenue.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. To finish the painting.

ROBERT BROWN: *Maine Coast*.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: *Maine Coast*. And when it was finished, he invited my mother and grandmother to come and see it. So they drove over, and they went with the [inaudible] and drivers and calling cards and went to view what [inaudible]. [00:44:12] And they saw their daughter and granddaughter topless in here [inaudible]. Oh, such a shock [inaudible]. [They laugh.] Anyway. Then Peter moved to Exeter, New Hampshire.

ROBERT BROWN: Where you were.

JEFFREY PITMAN: Probably quickly.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: What?

ROBERT BROWN: Quickly. I would say he left pretty quickly, yep. [They laugh.]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And then my father [inaudible]. Oh, after this is finished, this episode at Smith, Smith finally [inaudible] people telling tale, finally realized that I had a source of income, and so being able to go back and forth to New York and—they kicked me out of the Tenney House, self-help. [00:46:00]

ROBERT BROWN: You were kicked out of Tenney House, the self-help house, huh?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. And I'm trying to get Eberhart to sleuth how this happened.

ROBERT BROWN: She can work that out.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I was moved to Lawrence House, and I suppose Ernest [inaudible] money to pay.

ROBERT BROWN: And were there some interesting people there?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And I think—

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ROBERT BROWN: —Saunders [ph] may have been there as well.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And she must have been there.

ROBERT BROWN: She's the girl you were in Provincetown with.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. Wait, no. She never went to Provincetown. She went to Cummington with me to visit Peter and Ernest, from Smith. She must have been maybe kicked out from Tenney House along with me, I don't know. But we were certainly both at the end of senior year at Lawrence House, where it must have been a farewell dinner for the seniors or something, where the girls made up verses about everybody about [inaudible]. And I remember only the last two lines, but they concerned Elizabeth Saunders and me. And these two lines are: "With your pipes and tames [ph] and Peters, you sure are bohemian." [00:02:07] Because Peter was a very colorful figure on Smith campus, going to the art museum and galleries, and his hair, you know. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: He was quite a sight for that time, huh?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: [Inaudible] be recorded.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, sure. Yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: So then back to Exeter, New Hampshire. And my father financing a [inaudible] apartment. And the limerick that Ernest made up.

ROBERT BROWN: A limerick, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Oh artist, Peter Blume / in your over-the-post-office room [laughs] / with your textures so variant—

ROBERT BROWN: Your textures? Yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —and ladies so bare-iant [they laugh] / you scatter away our gloom. [00:04:05]

ROBERT BROWN: So Peter lived up there too, for a bit, did he?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: What?

ROBERT BROWN: Peter lived in Exeter in this time, too, is that right?

JEFFREY PITMAN: This was his apartment.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: He moved from Camden—

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, the apartment that you and Ernest went to was Peter's apartment in Exeter.

JEFFREY PITMAN: Actually—

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: No.

JEFFREY PITMAN: —clarify that.

ROBERT BROWN: Let me stop a minute.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT BROWN: —Ernest supported Peter during this whole period.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: So far as I know.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, how long was it before you went—didn't you go to New York, then, from Exeter eventually? Did you?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, yes. Peak visited us at [inaudible] also.

ROBERT BROWN: Peak the poet visited you in Exeter.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Peak Crawford. He was another poet.

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, this is another person, okay, named Coffen.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: He was the person that—

ROBERT BROWN: Well anyway, this man Coffen, his name was Coffen.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Crawford.

ROBERT BROWN: Crawford. Wait a minute, I—okay.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: He had been there all—he visited us there. Then Ernest lost his job at Epping with [inaudible]. He was framed by having somebody put a condom in his desk drawer to frame him. [00:06:18] They had a faculty meeting without any females there. Ernest never understood why he was being canned until I understood, questioning him. They were required to give mamoretos [ph] to the students to learn poems by heart, and [inaudible]—

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah, so poems.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —poetry to choose from, and Ernest had chosen a poem, I think by Shelley—maybe Keats—"Clouds." Maybe you know the poem. And in this poem were these two lines about the formation of clouds, "like a ghost from the tomb, like a babe from the womb" [sic]. [00:08:22]

ROBERT BROWN: And that was enough to offend somebody?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. So it was—

ROBERT BROWN: —run out of town.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: So he went back to New York.

ROBERT BROWN: With you?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: No, not with me. Left there, and pretty shook up, I guess. And Elizabeth Saunders was there in New York at the time, and he fell in love with her briefly and wrote poems calling her [inaudible] lingerie [inaudible]. In the meantime, Peter was still in Exeter, and he had an automobile, which he called A Net to Catch the Goddamn Wind [ph]. That was the name of the automobile. And he took me out for a ride in it, and suddenly he felt—he had never thought of me in that way before, but he wanted to make a pass at me, and I succumbed. It was very unpleasant for me. All I remember was [inaudible] [laughs] [inaudible] from the incident, the only thing. Anything I ever had to do with Peter [ph] at the time. And eventually Peter also went back to New York, I suppose at Ernest's expense. [00:12:10] I don't know. This must have been about the time Ernest wrote to [inaudible] and he sent me a copy of, ending up no six dollars, which I think is a reference to a handout [ph] Peter was asking Ernest for.

ROBERT BROWN: For money.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, how long did you stay on in Exeter? A few more months, or?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I don't remember.

ROBERT BROWN: But you eventually then go to New York. Yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Eventually I went back to New York with Ernest. And this was at the time Peter's first one-man show at the Daniel Gallery. You know—what?

ROBERT BROWN: Do you remember—did you ever meet Charles Daniel?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Why, I was very close with the entire [inaudible]. Did you ever meet Alison Hartpence?

ROBERT BROWN: No, I never did. He was his gallery manager, wasn't he, Alison Hartpence? [00:14:03]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I knew them very intimately. They were very close friends of mine. Did you know Alison was colorblind?

ROBERT BROWN: No. I may have heard that. [They laugh.]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Isn't that funny?

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And all these people—Charles, you know, Stuart Davis.

ROBERT BROWN: Stuart Davis, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: The whole stable of Charles Daniel, when he got too old, he sold out to Edith Halpert.

ROBERT BROWN: Edith Halpert.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: No, I know—so did you—you knew—and what was Daniel like? Can you describe Charles Daniel?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I mean—

ROBERT BROWN: Was he a—what kind of personality?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I thought of him [inaudible] zero [inaudible]. [Laughs.] And he always had artists' lives [ph] his heart, not like Stieglitz did.

ROBERT BROWN: Not like Stieglitz.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yeah.

ROBERT BROWN: So you say Daniel had the artists in his interest, whereas Stieglitz didn't, huh? What did you think of Stieglitz? What was he like?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I have a picture I want you to [inaudible] by Charles Junglin [ph] that you probably—

ROBERT BROWN: No, I know.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: —have never heard of him. Anyway. I saw this drawing when I came back, and when I was put out to pasture [ph] by Smith.

ROBERT BROWN: Sure, and came back here. But did you meet Stieglitz? You got to know him a bit?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: I never got to know him. I used to see him with his cape over these—I remember Angna Enters's dancing performances and seeing him there.

ROBERT BROWN: Angna Enters dancing.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. I have a visual memory of him prancing down the aisle [inaudible].

ROBERT BROWN: Was it also now—you were living in New York. Was this the time where you meet Malcolm

Cowley and Peggy, his first wife? Did you know them first in New York?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: When Peter went back to New York, he took up quarters [ph] on the East Side, in what was—you ever heard of Tony Saleme [ph]? [00:18:05]

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah. Tony Saleme. Yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: He and Malcolm had apartments in this run-down old East Side tenement house that later became a posh address in New York. [Laughs.]

ROBERT BROWN: But you met Cowley through other people, through Peter, in New York?

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes. Malcolm was living there, and Peter had taken up with Elaine Mason [ph], who later did the color film I made for Bambergers [ph].

ROBERT BROWN: Oh, when you later worked at Bambergers, yeah.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Elaine was a very talented commercial artist who worked at night, and Peter wanted to work by day, right, to paint. And she fell very much in love with Peter, but it didn't suit him. She married somebody else and had a child. [00:20:05] She wanted to name him Peter, [laughs] but the guy protested, and the boy was named Leo, I think, or Lionel [ph]—Lionel. And Elaine was a great fan of Peggy Rosenheim [ph], and [inaudible] a girl called Evie [ph] who had some moneyed background, and later Peter married Evie. And—

ROBERT BROWN: Well, who else at this time in New York—now, you're living—you also knew and worked closely for a time with Hart Crane. You helped him. That's the way it's been told. You've told how you helped type a manuscript of *The Bridge*.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, I have [ph] everything about him. You saw the biography by—

ROBERT BROWN: —John Unterecker.

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: Yes, yes. I had a—

JEFFREY PITMAN: [Inaudible.]

ROBERT BROWN: We'll talk about your affair with Malcolm Cowley and how—I've turned—how you introduced him to his wife. [00:22:02]

MARGARET MERAS BABCOCK: And Hart Crane and Peter Blume. You [inaudible]—

JEFFREY PITMAN: Granny, can I interrupt for a second?

ROBERT BROWN: Yeah.

[END OF TRACK AAA_babcoc98_2371_r.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]