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Oral history interview with Nancy Douglas
Bowditch, 1974 January 30

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Nancy Bowditch on January 30, 1974. The interview took place in Peterborough, New Hampshire, and was conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

NB: Nancy Bowditch

RB: Robert Brown

RB: I probably could begin by your, first, talking about some things of your childhood. Then we can discuss whatever we will. Could you tell, say, something about when you were really little, where you were and your family at that time.

NB: I was born in Paris, on July 4, 1890, and I can't tell you that I remember that but I do remember the studio on rue Boissennard [phon. sp.] where we lived when I was a very small child. In fact, we might have continued there after I was born. My father painted one of his first family groups and I was sitting on my mother's arm -- I was so little. Then there was the French maid in the distance, and he had a very nice looking model as the artist sitting before us on the floor with his pencil and paper. Then my brother stood at my mother's knee. That was a very vivid recollection of mine and one that I always look back at with a great deal of pleasure. I remember one day my mother carrying me on her arm to the front gate. We had an enclosed courtyard and a little door opened onto the street. As my mother was standing there watching my brother trying to learn to ride his bicycle -- he was quite a bit older than I, old enough to try and ride a bicycle -- and an old gentleman in an artist's linen smock came out and got into conversation with my mother and talked quite a long time in French. The scene that I always remembered -- I don't know how I could remember it but he looked at me a long time, then he said, "Ah Madame, c'est la Grecque, c'est la Grecque." And he was looking at my profile and that made a terrific impression on me as I grew older, because Greek art was always my favorite art and I felt so happy to be -- he proved to be an old sculptor and he had thought my profile was like a Greek statue. That was wonderful! (both laugh)

RB: You had a very auspicious beginning. **NB:** The reason I loved the Greeks so was because my father had brought from Paris when he was young a set of beautiful steel engravings of all the great classical Greek statues. And that was my picture book. I would thumb it over when I went into the studio, so I had this early impression of anything was Greek was very wonderful. And Mr. Charles P. Burlingham in New York, who was a very dear friend of my father's, said he remembered when I was a very small child I brought the Greek pictures to him to show him, I thought I'd entertain him. And as I took my hand and smoothed over the pictures back and forth and said, "Isn't it beautiful?? Itis beautiful."(she laughs)**RB:** Did your father encourage you in viewing these things, in seeing beauty in --

NB: Well, I think it was just the atmosphere. You see, in the artist's family, the artist's studio and the artist's home and everything was always more together more or less.**RB:** And the first one you knew was that in Paris, is that right? **NB:** I was born there. **RB:** And is that the first one you remember? **NB:** That's the first studio I remember, yes. **RB:** What was your father's regime there like, in Paris? **NB:** Well, I was so small I couldn't tell you anything about that but I recently unearthed a very lovely letter from the mother of the present new president of Ireland, Erskine Childers [sp?]. His mother was a cousin of my first husband, Robert Pearmain, and I knew all of them from childhood. But she wrote me a beautiful letter not too many years before she died, about 20 years ago, and she spoke of all my family and although she'd never been a great deal with them that all her life she considered them as special friends. And she said she remembered so well visiting my father and mother in Paris and wanted to know if I remembered it. Well, I'm sure I was much too young to remember that, I don't remember a thing about that. But she said she had such a lovely time with them and that my father went out and she went with him to try and find some antique brocade of some kind to paint in the picture. My father loved beautiful materials and in his studio he always had a screen somewhere there with all sorts of beautiful materials thrown over it -- combinations of chiffons and velvets and brocades and things that would give him ideas of how to dress his sitters. He hardly ever took a sitter and just put them in their ordinary evening clothes or something common. Some of the periods were very ugly -- women were tightly corseted and, oh, some of the periods were very ugly. I remember two young women, sisters, came to be painted together and he had them bring all their best evening dresses to the studio so he could pick out what he thought would be the most artistic. But he felt that the lines of a costume and things like that should be very interesting and rather classical because the fashions changed so, and the modern fashions were not always interesting, as I say. And that is why in so many of his pictures he has Greek drapery. So Molly [surname] remembered going and hunting in the stores for beautiful brocades that my father was looking for. I never heard of that, my family never told

me, so I was quite thrilled about that letter. She was always an invalid and in her last years when she was very old she had to type, she only could see with one eye and her typing was really queer. So I then sat down and deciphered the letter and I copied all this a few weeks ago so it wouldn't get completely lost. **RB:** You had as a small child a love of the Greek engravings after the Greek statues, your father admired Grecian dress -- was this an ideal of the time, would you say with your father and later with you children? **NB:** Well, I think he disliked the modern dresses all covered with lace and stiffly made, all bones, there was no flow of the drapery, and I think he tried to bring the grace of the Greek statues into his work, and did in many cases. Now, that picture called In the Garden that's in the Metropolitan in New York the dress is definitely very Greek. **RB:** Where did your family then go after Paris? **NB:** We came home again -- we went back and forth a great deal but when we came back to Paris again I was about 13 and we went to England, London, first. And then we went to Broadway, where Ellen Terry lived in summers, but my father went to see Jacques/Jack Millett [phon. sp.] -- I think he was English but he might have been partly American -- but he lived in Broadway and painted such beautiful pictures. My father was very fond of him and fond of his work and we went there and stayed a little while just so that he could visit with Jack Millett. **RB:** Where was home when as a small child you came back to the United States? **NB:** Always when we were in a city we were in New York, we were definitely New York people. My father had gone to school there, he'd gone to Art Students League, and then he came back as a teacher. **RB:** You have recollections of where you lived and people you knew then? **NB:** I remember he had a wonderful studio on Columbus Circle near the downtown entrance to the Park. It wasn't near Fifth Avenue but he did have a studio later quite near to Fifth Avenue, an old studio made entirely for art, just nothing but artists' studios. But on Columbus Circle I remember that very well because I was impressed by his sitter, who was Henry George, who at that time was running for mayor of the city. My father was very concerned about him because he was a very gentle intellectual type of person, he wasn't at all like a politician, and he felt that the politicians were pushing him so hard. And during that time -- it seems fabulous -- Henry George came to pose on a bicycle, he rode through New York on his bicycle. Imagine a politician nowadays riding a bicycle! But that was his way of getting around town (she laughs) and he pulled the bicycle up a whole flight of stairs and hid it the hall outside the door of the studio because my father said if he left it out on the sidewalk it would be taken by the boys. I wanted to go in -- I was always very inquisitive about my father's sitters and friends because they were always so interesting. I think I did and my brother took in a great many interesting things from the conversations that went on, and nobody said, "You must go out of the room now." They just let us stay around. Well, when Henry George was posing, I walked in and came and stood by him, and my father said, "Now, Nanny, you must go out because we're going to paint Mr. George." And I can just to this day hear this very deep, kind voice saying, "Oh, Mr. B, let Nancy stay, won't you??" So I thought he was wonderful to let me stay. (both laugh) And then he took me up on his knee, I was quite small because he sat me on his knee while he posed and I had a lovely visit with him.

I have only recently discovered, by reading a remarkable diary of those days written by a young woman at that time who was campaigning for Henry George, and I found that he died before he was elected; he died right after my father painted him. So that makes me treasure all the more these photographs that I have of the picture. And the painting itself was ordered by Mr. Lewis in New York who thought a great deal of Mr. George. The Lewises became quite good friends of ours and used to bring the children beautiful presents when they came to see us. **RB:** You and your brother had free run of the studio at times? **NB:** My father was terribly calm about the children being in the studio. I think that the time he sent me out because he was going to paint Henry George, I think that was a very good idea, I think I should have gone out because Henry George's time was probably extremely precious. But he always said "Come in." [Interruption in taping] **RB:** The last thing you were saying was how your father did not mind you children being around him in the studio. **NB:** He was remarkable in that way. He seemed to be always ready to help us with projects or ideas or to teach us something. You see, we were unusual in that we never went to school. He didn't approve at all of the way children were taught in the schools and he was a radical person. People thought we'd all go dickens and all to pieces -- **RB:** Why did he disapprove? **NB:** Well, he didn't like the way they taught history or all kinds of things, but he was very happy to hire teachers for us. It isn't that we never studied but I think that my father and mother were sort of born teachers anyway. My father certainly was, and my mother was a great reader, you could ask her about almost anything and she could tell you something about it. We read a great deal. **RB:** Did they teach you regularly or was it just -- **NB:** We had teachers engaged to come in, especially in Italy where we spent most of our time studying. I used to study hours a day at drawing, and then I had studied Italian, and I did my everyday lessons in Italian. I was afraid that I had forgotten my Italian because I never went back to Italy again, the family all returned every few years. In fact, during the last part of my father's and mother's life they spent every winter in Florence and then they came home to Dublin. And if they stayed in America they always got an apartment in New York.

The last apartment they had in New York was on Washington Square and it was the Van Rensselaer, and it had been a great big old private house of the grand days of New York, turned into apartments; they were delightful. One of my sisters, Jane, was married there, married Shelby Coates [sp?] of Long Island. **RB:** You said that New York even when you were a small child was your father's chief base here in the United States. **NB:** Always, yes. We weren't Bostonians. I married twice in my life and both times in my life I married Bostonians, which (laughing) I think was rather strange. Quite an adventure. When I was young, I was limited, really, in going up

and down on the bus on Fifth Avenue and going to the theater and to the Park and that sort of thing. I didn't know the whole city very well -- **RB:** You have memories of the Park?**NB:** Memories of the Park are simply delightful, because the Park really was like a big garden when I was a child. As I remember the Mall was a great place -- they say it's still used quite a good deal, but there when we walked out on the Mall, which was like a great big sidewalk all shaded by trees bordered by long benches, and there you would see all the nurses and the baby carriages and some mothers, and mostly the nurses of the rich people taking the babies out. And you'd see very fancy baby carriages with the children all dressed up like dolls.

And then the donkeyboys would come and for ten cents you could have a ride on the donkeys, and the donkeyboy would run beside you and whack the donkey with his stick. And then they had miniature open barouches with ponies, and that cost more money of course. You could sit in and take a little drive. And that was very thrilling because in those days when I was a child you saw all the fine equestriennes going by on the bridle paths, and you saw on the carriage paths in the Park the magnificent equipages of the rich of New York with their footmen and coachmen and high-stepping horses and that sort of thing. And the best view was to go on the little overpasses, little bridges over the bridle trails, and we'd run up on those and watch the people coming from one side and then we'd run to the other side of the bridge and see them coming out from underneath. We saw such wonderful sights, you know, of beautiful horses and carriages and all sort of thing.

Then there were the summerhouses, which I understood were given by Japan to our country and they were always a little raised up on some little artificial rock hills, like a rock garden; little rustic summerhouses all made of black cedar trees that just had the bark taken off but still in sort of primitive form and heat inside. But the summerhouses were festooned with wisteria vines, white and purple and so forth.

Another feature of the Park was lovely and that was the sheep. They didn't have electric lawnmowers, they had vast areas of grass. In the spring as soon as the grass began to grow -- and spring came very quickly, it sort of came with a BOOM --the leaves started to come out at a great rush, and it was very hot. So all the dandelions came out and all the grass began to grow, and there you'd see flocks of sheep cutting the grass by eating it. (both laugh) They were being nourished and they were cutting the grass! That was a pretty sight.

As I remember, not far from the Museum there was an entrance from the Park, there was a big house -- I don't know whether it's still there or not, it was really a police station but it also was a monkeyhouse. Then outside were flowerbeds with always yellow and red Dutch tulips. **RB:** Did your father take you to the Museum very much? **NB:** Oh yes, we went all the time to the Museum. And we were shown everything and told about it. We were also taught never to touch anything or put our hands on the glass. I remember sometimes going into museums, especially at the world's fair, they had to have a special person with a cloth to wipe off the fingermarks on the glass cases. I thought what a wonderful thing that my father taught us we must never touch even the glass cases where the treasures were kept. **RB:** From this I gather your father was a very gentle teacher and disciplinarian. **NB:** Oh, very. He was very firm and he was a good disciplinarian but he wasn't ever unkind. My father and mother didn't believe in corporal punishment but they made us feel terribly ashamed when we did things that weren't right. My mother was a very quiet person, very opposite to my father, she was very quiet, inexpressive, and I can remember the worst thing she could say to me in a solemn voice, [slowly intoning] "That's ... not ... very nice." I'd feel crushed to the ground. (both laugh) **RB:** What effect do you think this gentleness had on you as children? **NB:** We quarreled very little. My brother as soon as he was old enough to recognize me as a human being, you might say, when he was very young he played with boys all the time, but when we got into our teens my brother was a marvellous companion to me. Because I was the oldest girl, I was next to him, and he did wonderful things for me and with me. I recall with great pleasure the nice things we did together.

For instance, in the summer in Dublin we had a club there that gave a very charming but informal Saturday night dance for the young people, and my brother and I would walk all the way from our farm where we lived, which I think it was at least three miles or more, and he would take me to the dance. In those days the girls carried a bag with their slippers in the bag. They put their shoes to go to the party in the bag unless they had a carriage that could take them. But we walked and I carried my slippers, then when I got to this club I went into the dressing room and put my slippers on, and I put my shoes back on when I started off.

I remember long moonlit walks with my brother -- three miles to get home after the dance. Of course, the dance had to end at twelve, that was the limit for all of us. And our music to dance to was the local violinist and his daughter who played the piano. He was a real old-time fiddler. Afterwards it became much more sophisticated and they hired outside musicians to come. **RB:** Was this quite a contrast with your social life in New York when you weren't in Dublin? Or did you have any social life when you were in New York? **NB:** The social life in New York I didn't have much until I grew up. When I was first married I went to live in New York, but that life there only lasted about two years of my own grown-up life. And we had lots of old friends who came to see us and we used to give little supper parties. In our house we had open fireplaces -- **RB:** You've mentioned your father's artist friends. Could you perhaps describe and discuss them a bit? **NB:** Well, I remember Miss Grimes. She wasn't exactly a friend of my father's but she knew him. She was St. Gaudens' wonderful assistant and a

talented sculptress. There's quite a lot about her in the new book by Barry Faulkner. I used to go at during my second winter there when I had my first child, Polly Marlow, Miss Grimes wanted to make a bust of her and I would take Polly all the way from 72nd Street to Washington Square to Macdougall Alley to pose the baby. And he gave me a cast of the head. **RB:** You knew the St. Gaudens also, didn't you?? **NB:** Well, I knew Mr. St. Gaudens when I was a very little girl up in ____ . Also, he used to come to see us. When he came to France we were living there and he came to see us. And we were in Boulogne. We had gone there to have____ and I don't think I was more than seven years old but Mr. St. Gaudens arrived because he and my father were great friends. And it happened that while he was there there was a magnificent pageant and parade down the streets of Boulogne, it was a very famous occasion with great costumes and great effigies and all kinds of things, and I'll never forget that because Mr. St. Gaudens and Papa were so wrapped up in it.

It's so popular at the time that most all apartments had been rented, so the only place that we could find was a little bit of an apartment over a chocolate store on the street where the parade was going to take place. So we had the wonderful joy of having Mr. St. Gaudens with us at that time, and I can remember the little window overlooking the street with just about room for my father and Mr. St. Gaudens to stand in the window and peer out. I was squashed in between them against the windowsill, but I looked out and I saw a gold angel coming down the street. Of course I was so small I thought it was a real angel.

And they were carrying all these gorgeous church things, all these wonderful robes and people with crowns -- oh, the angel held her hand up pointing two fingers to the heavens. And she had long gold hair and tremendous wings that looked as if they were really made of fabric; they might have been white quills. But it was something gorgeous. And I wasn't the only person that thought it was gorgeous -- (laughing) I looked up at Mr. St. Gaudens and tears were coming down in his eyes and overflowing, he was so carried away by it. You know I might see those angels, those beautiful angels he made. Perhaps that angel was some inspiration to all of us. Mr. Thayer was an angel lover also. **RB:** It comes out in his paintings certainly. There's evidence in his paintings. **NB:** Yes. He was an ornithologist. He knew exactly how to do wings. He always put the wings where the shoulder blades would come. (laughing) But then he gave them arms. But Mr. St. Gaudens was awfully nice, kind, and Papa was happy when he was with him, they had a lovely time together. But that was the only time I saw him. When we at the Cornish to spend the summer I saw him then. And as I say, we were always aroundwith my father's and mother's friends and taking in, just drinking in all the interesting things we heard said .Especially the art criticism was very valuable. **RB:** They would discuss that quite a lot, your father and his friends? **NB:** They would discuss all these things, and they were always criticizing each other. Mr. Thayer, for instance, would be invited to the farm at Dublin -- my father perhaps had just finished a picture and he wanted to see it before it was sent away. So he would come down and we would go into the studio -- sometimes my little younger sisters with me, but I would go in and hear what Mr. Thayer said about my father's pictures. **RB:** Was it pretty frank what they said to each other? **NB:** Well, they all admired each other terrifically but they were helpful, don't you know. And there's a lovely story which is told in the new book of Barry Faulkner about my father -- this is true. My father's technique was just the opposite from Mr. Thayer's. Mr. Thayer used tremendous brushes and loads of paint and painted very large pictures, and his technique was just the opposite because my father's was always a polished, delicate technique. Well, Mr. Thayer was looking at this picture and he said, "George, I think that there's a certain place on that picture where it would be much better if you lowered the tone of it a little bit." And I want to say here that it there was anything that Mr. Thayer understood it was values. His values were so marvellous, and he wanted to show my father that that place should be lower. So he leaned down and was rubbing his thumb on the studio floor, and I could see my father cringing, he was going to have a dab of dirt put on his beautiful picture. If he'd found a hair on it he would have taken a needle and removed it. Abbott Thayer was approaching the picture with a dirty thumb to tone down a part of it, and my father sprang at him and stopped him -- "Oh, Abbott, don't do that, DON'T!!" It was really an awful moment. (laughter) **RB:** And yet they remained good friends, didn't they. **NB:** Oh heavens, they were always good friends. I think the only time they ever felt a little bit estranged was on account of the children. Mr. Thayer had two girls and a boy. He had his ideas of bringing up children and my father had his ideas. They didn't always agree on that. I don't think they ever quarreled over it, I don't remember Abbott and my father ever quarreling, but they did have a sort of a feeling that they didn't always approve of the way -- in the first place, they thought that the____ was too worldly and (laughing) extravagant. If everybody knew, we were extravagant in that we went to Europe a lot but we'd have spent just as much money if we'd stayed at home, because it was very easy to live in Europe. But we were looked upon as hurtling toward the precipice of failure and financial troubles. **RB:** And this was the main difference that Abbott Thayer had with your father. **NB:** But you see my family were essentially sociable. The house was always full of our friends and they were always welcome. A lot of my mother's friends came to the house and we saw a lot of them. But the Thayers thought we were frivolous and extravagant, and we thought they were too exclusive, that they drew away from the world and we drew into it. But they couldn't see that we could be in the world and not be worldly, not be unsettled by it. **RB:** Well, they removed themselves. **NB:** They became so removed from the world and they became, after a while -- I hate to say this in a way -- they really became very critical of other people. They would think people were very worldly and they weren't worldly at all, they were lovely people. But that made the poor children not have half enough sociability, it made them odd. **RB:** They were educated by their parents, as you were? **NB:** Yes, and they were very well educated. I

have a great many letters from the children and they're beautifully written, well expressed. I've treasured them all these years, I've always kept them. It was very sad that the Thayer family sort of petered out so early, and all of them died long ago. We have outlived them and we have not -- our "worldliness" hasn't ruined our lives. **RB:** How would you characterize your worldliness, as Abbott Thayer called it? As your parents brought you up, what were the leading features of it? **NB:** Well, sociability, and trying to be normal in our lives, you know; dress like other people more or less. **RB:** Where the Thayers went in for Norwegian boots -- **NB:** The Thayers always wore big Norwegian boots and queer-looking clothes. But then they looked on somebody who was well dressed. _____ rough boys out West, if a silly boy came to see him he'd snatch off his necktie and call him a sissy when he wasn't a sissy at all, he was just dressed the way people dressed in the city. **RB:** Why do you suppose your father took you so regularly to Europe, to France or to Italy? **NB:** We lived in France at first. **RB:** Was this part of his routine, it was necessary for his -- **NB:** It was his work, he really benefited thereby, you see. He'd go to Italy and he had very great success in all the pictures that he painted there. The circumstances were very pleasant. He was able to find a very fine studio and a nice house for the family, servants for my mother, who was a little person and had seven children to take care of. She loved it. I often used to think, when I was young, that my father was dragging my mother all over Europe everywhere, but (she laughs) I found it was more the other way, that she wanted to. He made it very nice for all of us but we didn't get into any financial trouble. **RB:** I can see that your mother might have wanted to move around more than he because from Barry Faulkner's description your father followed a rather demanding regime, at least when he was in Florence. **NB:** He was working all the time. I never knew -- if my father was crossing the ocean, which took quite a long time, we always went by water and we went in small steamers, we didn't go on Lusitanias and that kind of thing, we took little steamers. He liked them better. We had six-cabin steamers [brief inaudible phrase] and he would take a cabin and fix it up and work all the way over. **RB:** His technique was meticulous. **NB:** Oh yes, he used the finest brushes, and he was a great student of the chemistry of paint. A lot of Mr. Thayer's pictures turned terribly black because he didn't know anything about the chemistry of paint. He just bought any old paint and in those days paints had a lot of _____ in them, dark paint, and that's why so many of his paintings suddenly began losing oils, the paintings turned so black. That was [name of the substance just mentioned] But they changed the paint and the paints for the artists in this country were through Mr. Hatfield. He was an artist who realized that he could see his own pictures and those of his contemporaries turning black in their lifetime. So he made a specialty of grinding pure colors without any _____ in, and he made a great success. He had a marvellous color shop, we always used to go there to get paint. **RB:** Your father, then, was always very careful about his materials. **NB:** Oh yes. When I studied with him in Italy I was his apprentice for quite a while and I went to the studio every day and ground his paints. He had a great big table with all the minerals laid out -- malachis and all kinds of things. I ground them on a slab of ground glass, with a little ground glass pestle. Then he had all the little new tubes laid out. We filled them from the bottom, not the screw end. We picked them up and when we got enough paint we scraped them in, all of these home-made pure paints.

He was very interested in that. In fact, he had a great deal to do with a famous chemist, helped him study that. And he used to read the old books of the Old Masters. My father brought him in to read a very old Italian book -- of course he read it in English. [name of book, can't decipher] I still have a copy at my studio. **RB:** Were you a very willing apprentice? Did he -- **NB:** Oh yes, I couldn't think of anything but wanting to be an artist. I worked long and hard and was very interested in it. **RB:** Your father had groups of people coming in to be his students, didn't he, those years in Italy. **NB:** He had small classes in Florence, and he had the Ball studio -- Thomas Ball had been a sculptor. It had beautiful grounds around it and was in back of the Ball villa. In back of that as you went through the gardens were all the little rooms, about the size of that room, where Ball's marbles, his statues in marble. And my father rented one of those studios and had classes there. **RB:** Small rooms 8x10, that's very small. **NB:** Maybe as big as these two rooms together but not that shape. **RB:** His pupils were mainly Americans? **NB:** Mostly English and Scots people came. Very charming people. We had one American native, and it was just at the time when Queen Victoria died, so all these English people were terribly upset. She lived to be so old.

[Interruption in tape]

NB: (resuming) and they _____ the Queen a great deal, and she was a wonderful woman of course. Some of them came to class in mourning, all dressed in black. **RB:** Did some of them, then, become considerable artists? **NB:** I never heard how they came out in after years. They were delightful people. There were very distinguished artist ladies that came to study, and my brother came into the class with me. It was awfully good for us because they were all older, so we didn't feel (laughing) that we were the only people my father was training. **RB:** You always had various generations around you, didn't you, or older people? **NB:** Oh very much. Oh yes but we had lots of younger friends. **RB:** There were some younger American artists who at least for some time studied with him? **NB:** Of course Barry Faulkner was with us a great deal. **RB:** What was he like? **NB:** Oh he was very jolly. He was older. When I first knew him I was just a little girl. I'll never forget: he and Homer St. Gaudens, the son of the sculptor, came to call on my father in Dublin. I suppose Barry might have been in college then, anyway he was in school and I was just a small girl. And here this young man came to call and I was the only one there to entertain him, and I didn't know what to do with him. So I thought the most

beautiful thing would be to take him for a lo-o-ong walk (laughing) through a pasture that we had where there a lot of horses throughout the pasture, and colts. I don't know what they thought -- I think that was an awfully long walk, we walked for many miles. I took Homer and Barry on this long walk and showed them the horses, then we walked back again. **RB:** Were they grateful?? **NB:** I remember Barry asking me how old I was and I said I was 13. I felt very, you know, quite a big girl for 13, I thought that was simply marvellous! (hearty laughter) But we all knew each other. And then I married very young my father's pupil, Robert Fairmain [phon.sp.] and he became Barry Faulkner's assistant in New York for two winters. After that he died, he was only 24.**RB:** What did he study with your father in Italy? He'd been in Italy too.**NB:** Also, he went to Paris and studied with some of the best teachers there. He didn't stay all the time with my father.

RB: Well, your father had studied in Paris also.**NB:** Oh yes. He thought it was a good experience for Mother to go to Paris, and live there, get acquainted with the Paris life, and work there and go on to some other besides this. And he explained in one of his letters -- I wonder if I gave you that? -- why it was good for him to stay there. **RB:** While we're talking about artist friends of yours and of your family and your father particularly, perhaps first you could talk about Douglas Volk, one of your father's oldest friends. **NB:** Well, Douglas Volk and my father and Abbott Thayer were in Paris studying together. I know that Abbott Thayer and my father were under Gerome -- Jean Leon Gerome, the great French artist. I think Douglas Volk was; I know Swas at that time, and I think Whistler was. But my father and Mr. Thayer and Douglas Volk were more like New England boys, and of course Whistler was very Anglicized and he said he sort of "went over" to England and sort of became English and sort of forgot America.

But these boys were passionately fond of their homes and their families and America, but they were studying in Paris. They were all quite young, and they'd never been away from their sheltered New England homes, so when they got to Paris they found a great many things that were very shocking. They were very moral people, in the first place, brought up in nice homes, they didn't have any of that rocky side of bohemia, you know? **RB:** What were some of the tawdry things that shocked them? **NB:** Well, the careless mores of people morally and so forth. Mostly that, I guess, but they grew together, and so they were like the Three Musketeers -- always together but still they went to things together and. They were great friends. **RB:** Did they get along, work well with Gerome? **NB:** Oh yes, they all had the highest respect for Gerome. Well, Douglas Volk married a perfectly delightful person. I think she was a Westerner and we called them "Aunt Marian" and "Uncle Douglas" all our lives. They were so friendly and kind. Then they had three nice children, and one was named Gerome, like my brother, after the master; he was the youngest. And then there was Wendell, the oldest; and there was a lovely daughter called Marian, who was a great friend of mine. Now, they all went to Maine when they had their family. They went to Maine and they bought a little old farmhouse and they built another one, a perfectly wonderful house, when the boys grew up and they helped their father and built the whole thing themselves. A marvellous house, I saw it and admired it very much.

Well, Uncle Douglas and Aunt Marian and the daughter Marian were people that I saw quite a lot when I worked for two years and lived in New York and we were all friends. They used to come and have supper with us and so forth. And by the way, I have some of their lovely letters they wrote, I set quite a few things out there to show you at this time. **RB:** What was Douglas Volk like as you recall him? **NB:** He was a small, jolly little man; rather plump. He was what you'd call a very ___ person but terribly nice. Very warm, very kind, full of love -- that was one of the things about the Volk family, and Mrs. Volk, they were full of love and kindness. And if they liked you and they were your friends, they were always warm. ___ wanting to be with you, and they were lovely to me when I was first married. We used to have a supper party for them and they would come I didn't know how to cook very well (laughing) but anyway they were used to that from young people. **RB:** Hadn't he and your father done some trips together in America? **NB:** No, they didn't, they were so busy, both busy with their work and their family. They always saw each other when they were in New York, and the last time I saw them both they were living on Gramercy Park, in the Three Arts Club, I think. I don't know what's happened to the children. I sent to New York for a photograph of the portrait of Marian because I didn't have any pictures of her and he sent me a most beautiful picture that he painted of her, it's gorgeous. **RB:** Was his technique something like your father's? **NB:** Yes, very much. **RB:** Did they discuss that quite a lot? **NB:** Oh, yes. They always talked art together. I was too young at that time when they were together talking, I don't think I took in a great deal; but they were always talking about those things. They always loved to get together and talk about their work. And that's where we learned a lot, you see, by listening to these talk. And I think Barry mentioned that in his book that my brother knew so much because he got a lot of his knowledge, he had a wonderful memory, and saw these ideas that he heard in the studio talks. **RB:** And you heard a lot of these, too. **NB:** I did too, yes. **RB:** Could you characterize those a bit? **NB:** Well, you'd see it in discussing each others' pictures like the values and the composition and whether the frame was a good frame for the picture and why it was or wasn't a good frame, and so on. I used to take in all those things. **RB:** Did they ever talk about ideals or anything of that kind of intellectualizing about art at all? Or was it mainly, as you just said -- **NB:** Mainly rather technical. And then they would discuss the masterpieces that they liked and thought were wonderful. **RB:** What was the attitude toward others of their contemporaries? **NB:** It was very friendly and nice. A great admiration for people that did work well. My father, when he went to London, going all the way out to Broadway to see Millet, because he thought

he was such a great artist for one thing. And I went to London with my husband not too long ago and I was simply taken by the Millets that I saw in the England museums. I'd never seen the originals; they were just beautiful. **RB:** Your first husband, Robert Pearmain, would you just say something of what his intention was as a painter? You knew him perhaps first as your father's student. **NB:** Well, first of all I knew him very well just as a friend. His sister was a little younger and she was a friend of mine that I admired very much. She was very beautiful and she was a beautiful dancer. She was the kind of girl that another girl would admire very much, and she's been a very dear friend of mine ever since. She's just had a big 80th birthday and people thought so much of her that a young man flew from London just to play the piano at the birthday party! (she laughs) They had a wonderful time, it's been on Louisburg Square. She was Robert's sister. **RB:** Robert himself was fun-loving too, wasn't he? **NB:** He was, in a way. The more I look at the letters, the more I think about him, I think he was a very turbulent character. He had longings and aspirations and problems that his family didn't understand at all. And he said in one letter, "You must remember, Nellie, that my father and mother are practical people." His mother was a graduate of Wellesley but she came from Jaffrey up here. She was a New Hampshire girl who'd made good. She'd married well, and she'd become so clever that all her life she worked for Wellesley College. She helped raise the money for all their big buildings. She was very bright. She majored in math and German when she was in college. She was a very spirited person, and I was looking at some of my old letters: I've got lots and lots I want to go through, I'll talk about those later with you. But I realize that I was very devoted to her. But she became a very sad, disillusioned person and she seemed to go downhill terribly after Robert's death. **RB:** Did they give encourage to him beyond ? **NB:** No. They discouraged him at every turn. This practical, hard-headed business sense that both had. His father was a doctor, and his grandfather before him was a banker, and they wanted him to be that sort of thing -- his father wanted him to be a stockbroker. And Robert said in his last letter -- I found something in back of a back of a book that I read last night that I haven't seen for years and years and years. It was about what his ambition had finally become. Well, he never lived to follow it out. He found out what he wanted to do but they used to discourage him so and he'd always write to me when he was discouraged, and then I'd write to encourage him. **RB:** The _____, it seems, are very medieval in their subject matter. **NB:** Yes. He loved the very old masters, he loved the old ones. He tells about all the pictures that he loved and how wonderful the things were in that letter from Rome in a trip to Rome with my brother. And my brother and Robert became great friends, they were very fond of each other and they did all kinds of things together. But he had the most agonizing adolescent years I've ever heard of. I mean, we didn't seem to go through the throes that he did. You see, it was a conflict between his practical New England parents, who were very fond of him, and everything they wanted to do they thought was to his benefit, but it was nothing that he wanted to do. And they couldn't understand that. They thought they had to tell him what to do and he would do it, you see, and be a successful businessman or whatever. A very difficult position for a young and sensitive person. **RB:** How had he been when he was your father's pupil in Florence? **NB:** Then he began to get happier, he began to clear up his mind. My brother was a good friend, Barry was very nice -- Barry took him in and had him work for him, you know. It was the first job he ever had with _____. And of course he didn't _____, he only had two years in New York. Barry didn't mention in the book that he worked for him for two winters, but he did. And he worked for him a lot during the summer. The summer that Barry had a big barn studio right near our farm Robert was working a good part of every day for him there, but Barry seems to have forgotten to about that -- but he can't mention everything. You know, he had a long life, you'd have a book so thick. (both laugh) **RB:** Well, when he came back when you were married, did his painting change? He was working for Barry Faulkner on a mural project. **NB:** Well, you see, he was working for Barry and building a house for us to live in, and-- I'm putting all these things in a little biography -- Alan Seeger came along and helped him build the house. Well, both those boys went off and died almost right after that. We never lived in the house together. I have built now on the site of that house, I've built a beautiful log cabin, it's going to be a sort of memorial to Alan Seeger and Robert. **RB:** Well, Robert, then, became increasingly involved in labor? **NB:** Oh, that was a terrific thing in his life, because he had grown up, as he said, he'd never known want, he'd always been protected. He was sent to Milton Academy. He was elected chairman of the science club and did all their drawings for them. I've got the little yearbook of Milton with a good picture of it. In his classes he was in the middle and he was chairman of the science class, there were headings though he never studied then, they were very scrupulously done in pen and ink. You see, all his life things were done for him. He was always supported, his bills were paid and everything, he didn't even have an ordinary average family like, black man in the family goes out and does gardening for people. He didn't know anything about that. Then he got interested, he met people who told him about the conditions of the great strikes that were going on, he got more and more curious about it -- what was it all about? **RB:** Where did this happen? When he was in Boston or after you'd married? **NB:** After he was married to me. He went away a lot. I'm the only person that didn't oppose him. All his relatives got up in arms opposing him, his mother and father were having fits. It was really terrible because he was too sensitive to that. And besides, he was sick and didn't know it but he had leukemia. And my sister's dying of that now. [Transcriber's note: last sentence not entirely clear; check.] I realized that Robert was a very sick boy. His experience of walking through Pennsylvania and going to Pittsburgh and going to the radical papers, and hardly had enough money to eat, and walked miles and miles. Then he'd take a trolley car to save money -- as he said, to save his shoes because he only had one pair of shoes. But he just decided he was going to throw in his lot with the unfortunate people of the world. It was almost like a religion with him. **RB:** Did he work with a particular group of similarly committed people? **NB:** Oh yes. He went to all the great rallies that were

surrounded by police. He took great chances. He'd write me a letter and say: "I'm going to a big rally and the police are all going to be there, and I don't know whether what's going to happen to me." And he said, "I'm in a terrible state of mind because I don't know whether I've got the courage to do this thing." He'd write to me, you see. And he wouldn't say that to anybody else but me. His letters are full of love. He left me this little baby, she was only a year old when he died. And then his final decision was that he was going to learn a trade so that he could be closer to working people and help them with their problems. Well, their problems were colossal. I copied a letter before you came today about -- there was a man who was helping the tobacco workers to strike, and he said they showed him a picture of some of the tobacco workers and they were little girls, I think he said from 11 to 14 years, who worked 14 hours a day and got \$1.50 a week. And he had thought that was so ghastly... And it was. **RB:** Did you meet any of his fellow -- **NB:** Oh yes, I met some of the big labor leaders. And Margaret Sanger, who was put in prison. I was feeling terrible. **RB:** Margaret Sanger was a lovely person, but you see she wrote a book, "What Every Girl Should Know." And because of that book, all the goody-goodies, these church people, got after her because it was on care of their bodies. And she said about these poor hard-working little girls couldn't live on their wages possibly, and they'd get into trouble, and she wanted to help them. I had her book. I had to hide it. If my mother or Robert's mother had seen me with that book! I thought it was a wonderful book. I was glad she wrote it. (she laughs) She had three children and she was a trained nurse, that's why she knew so much about them, she'd taken care of these girls who were coming every day and had no place to go, no money and everything. She knew it was a terrible, terrible thing that went on. And she did have a great influence on Robert. But she wasn't a bad person. She was the daughter of an Irish poet and she had a good deal of cultivation and she was a very hard-working nurse. And I was very fond of her, and so was Robert. She had a great influence and managed to get him interested in conditions. And her husband, too. But you see, Robert was so upset, and not being well anyway, I don't think people had a reasonable fact that he was tipping toward being very extreme and being very fanatical. But that was cut right off by his death at 24 years of age. But when I think of the things that that boy went through... One thing that he did was to take a course in forestry and I have the letters from the forestry school. **RB:** What he did he do that for? **NB:** So he could find out about how people work -- he thought it was a useful thing, too. He felt that he wanted to get at the basics, not just live in sort of an ivory tower. And obviously he was right. I felt very sympathetic. I got sympathetic with what Margaret Sanger said because during that last year in New York, there was a terrible fire in a sweatshop where all girls worked. And there was a fire and the girls tried to go out on the fire escape and the fire escapes had not been inspected and they fell off the building with the girls on them. And a lot of them were killed and most of them were injured. **RB:** Did you then get involved directly with Sanger? **NB:** Not directly with it but when I heard about it I thought, well, that's no way for human beings to treat young girls. They're underpaid but they might even see that they have safety on the fire escape in a New York business, and that got me very hot, you know. **RB:** Well, both you and Robert were unprepared for this sort of thing, were you? **NB:** I was much more aware of things than he was. He had much more luxury and much more protection in his life. You see, my father was very radical -- he was for the Indians, and he was for the colored people, all his life, and I'd heard that side of life more. But I knew that Robert was horribly shocked by it and upset. If I had known that he was really ill, of course I'd have had him in the hospital near a doctor. **RB:** Were there other artists involved, with similar interests in Socialism or in labor at this time? I know after his death he received a letter from Rockwell Kent -- had he been something of an acquaintance? **NB:** Rockwell Kent had a great interest too but Rockwell Kent was a radical in clearing everything up but he wasn't what I'd call a really sympathetic, warm-hearted person, because he used to **RB:** Did you get to know Emma Goldman, or -- **NB:** Yes. I met her one night. They had a gathering of very radical people at the Sangers' and they invited us to dinner one night. I was very frightened, it was so radical. There was a bomb-throwing. There was too much hate there. **RB:** And Robert -- **NB:** No, he wouldn't have done anything like that. But he told about the various labor leaders, like _____ who was going to help these poor little girls who got \$1.50 a week and he helped put them on strike because they didn't know what to do, you see; too weak and too helpless. Robert admired that man, he wrote a wonderful letter about it, admired it, because he knew he was going to help these poor little girls. Oh, he describes the way the workers lived, because he went on foot and saw all these things. He slept in the corn fields, and rode on the -- we used to be able to ride all around on trolley cars, from town to town. **RB:** The interurban system. **NB:** Yes. **RB:** Now, getting away briefly from Robert and these other things, you were strictly in Dublin in the summers; close friends of Mark Twain's daughter -- could you characterize -- **NB:** Oh yes, yes. Robert was there too. We were all young people, we were invited there to dinners. Mark Twain would have dinner parties and invite a lot of young people. **RB:** Where was his place? **RB:** Well, it was up on Dictabunga [phon.sp.] Lake the first summer. He spent two summers. The first summer he lived in what was called the The Green House [?] on Long Hill, Long Time Hill. That was a lovely house and we had lots of fun up there. **RB:** Had he known your father before? **NB:** Oh yes. He knew Mr. Thayer, too. **RB:** Were they pretty close? Or at least they were compatible? **NB:** My father went to call on him. Oh, my father admired and liked him very much, and before they left Florence my father and my brother called on Mark Twain there, but I never met Jean there, I only met her when she came here. **RB:** Did she have any of the same qualities as her father? **NB:** She had a good sense of humor. She was rather small because she'd been an invalid all her life but she was bright and she spoke beautiful Italian, knew yards of Italian poetry by heart, which (she laughs) which I enjoyed listening to. I went home and learned an Italian poem by _____, which I still remember. **RB:** So that you could match her. (he laughs) **NB:** She was much older than I was anyway. But

Mark Twain used to invite me there. He had to go to Boston. He had a great deal of business to attend to. He had a very up-and-down career, you know -- trouble with his publishers and that sort of thing. He was always sending telegrams, and calling people on the long distance phone was quite a to-do in those days!**RB:** Certainly. Well, Dublin was a tiny place too, wasn't it?

NB: It was a very popular summer place. **RB:** And you could go to the St. Gaudens's because they weren't so far away. **NB:** Well, I never went up there until one time my husband to take me up there so I could see___ there. And Mrs. St. Gaudens -- we went to call on her. She took us for a drive around to see some old stamping grounds. **RB:** Was she a rather difficult person -- **NB:** Yes. **RB:** -- as Barry Faulkner characterizes her. **NB:** Yes, I thought so. **RB:** Did you ever meet Daniel Chester French? Did he come around at all? **NB:** No, I never met him. I read his life by his daughter. To go back to the Thayers and Dublin, I have a great deal to thank Mr. Thayer for in getting me tremendously interested -- I always loved nature but he was very scientific about birds and natural things, and when I was quite young he'd let me and his daughter Gladys go birding with him with Luis Fuertes, who was one of our great bird artists; artist and birder; ornithologist, actually.. **RB:** (overlap, partly inaudible) And they would go with a gun. **NB:** But they never would come home with more than one bird. They only wanted something they didn't have. If they had a lot of grosbeaks or something, they wouldn't kill any, they just observed them. But I remember a delightful day I wandered up to the Thayers' in the summer and I found Mr. Thayer out under his pine trees back of the house. And there were a tremendous lot of great big trays, trays about half as big as this sofa -- **RB:** Three or four feet long. **NB:** Yes, three or four feet long, great big trays all lined with cotton batting, and covered with the most beautiful bird skins. You see, he kept them for their skins, he did not mount them, he didn't have them all sitting around, but he knew how to skin them and I watched him skin the birds; with cornstarch and salt to cure them, and rub a lot of salt into the skin, very carefully fix the feathers, take a little pin or needle or something and lift the feathers and let them down. This led from all over the world, that he'd go to Trinidad and he'd go to Italy; he'd get birds all over. **RB:** For what purpose? Did he explain the reason he was doing all this? **NB:** Well, he was studying protective coloration, studying all the birds, and I have his books that are illustrated by his son. **RB:** Did you become quite involved in this yourself? **NB:** I got involved in watching him and watching birds, that sort of thing. So after all I got so -- I was always more interested in wildflowers than birds, and trees, too. If I found a tree I didn't know, I hadn't seen before, I still want to find out what it is, you see. I've just written about a bush I found on my place that has the most amazing berries on it and I wrote t, who asked a friend who was a botanist there and he wrote me all about it. But I was always interested in nature; so was Robert, who was tremendously an entomologist. **RB:** Well, it seems as though you and your circle of friends and family were interested in virtually anything around you -- at least, in nature. **NB:** Well, I was terribly interested in nature, but you know my father who always adored nature and everything, I don't think he ever learned about the flowers or the birds or anything, he was so concentrated on his painting and taking care of his big family.**RB:** Even when you were on the farm in Dublin, he (laughing) was inside, working. **NB:** Well, he'd go in the woods and he thought it was all wonderful and he was interested in it, and he was very good at taking care of animals and all that kind of thing. He was very well in Connecticut when he was a boy and lived in the country, and his father was a very practical person. Oh, that was another practical father. My grandfather was like the Pearmains. He -- all going to the dickens because one was a writer of historical plays, one was an actress, and one wanted to be an artist, and he just thought they were all lost! (she laughs) **RB:** Did they carry guilt feelings with them in later life? **NB:** I don't think so .I think, in the end, he was very proud of them all, because they were all very successful. Well, not my uncle because he died quite young, but I wish I had his plays. I used to see them, I read a little bit in the manuscript. But Mr. Thayer was back of this great tray and he told me about all of these, you know. That's where the people were then, you know. "Oh, hello, Nancy, isn't this a beautiful grosbeak?" "Oh, isn't this beautiful?" "Look at this, look at this one. I got that in Florida," and so forth "and it's [so-and-so]." "Well, look at this!" and he'd turn it. And he'd really teach me, he'd stop and teach me about birds. I really loved him, I always felt as though he was my real uncle; Uncle Abbott. (she laughs) **RB:** He was very warm, then. **NB:** Very lovely and friendly. But if you did something he didn't like, he could be quite cross. I know that my father did that. But he scolded me once and I was so hurt that I went home crying. (she laughs heartily) **RB:** These men all knew pretty much what they were and what they wanted to do -- **NB:** Yes. **RB:** -- and a pretty clear idea of -- their lives were pretty focused. **NB:** Oh, very. I was very surprised in one of the letters I read lately: Robert had been up to the Thayers' and he made the most marvelous description of what fun it was to be in the Thayer family. You see, he came of this practical New England background, and here he came into the artist's family where they were all busy painting and stuffing birds and all this sort of thing, and he absolutely rejoiced to be there, he was so happy.He said, "I was so happy I wanted that I did this, and nobody cares whether was around or not. And I saw all the things they were doing and I helped them with their work and so on."

And he was so happy he wrote to me -- he wrote to me about every thought that ever came into his head. Oh, he wanted me to write every thought I ever had, too, and I just wouldn't see, at first, that I should do that. I didn't feel that I wanted to. (she laughs) **RB:** You'd only say something significant? You didn't think you should write -- **NB:** I didn't go through the throes he went through -- of my family not understanding me and all that. It was a terrible thing. (she laughs) **RB:** Artists' families had this rather unplanned, informal life style, as we say today. **NB:** Yes, in a way we were rather formal because my mother always had a cook and we had to be on

time to meals and all that sort of thing. And she wanted us always to dress nicely. We had very little clothing but if I was going somewhere I would need to be in Washington ironing my dress, don't you know, so I wouldn't be sloppy. (she laughs) She gave a very good example that way. **RB:** You were not bohemians. **NB:** Oh, not at all. And we were awfully well chaperoned. She never let us wander around with anybody that came along. She was very fussy about whom we knew. **RB:** You didn't, then, feel that as artists' families you were something special, set apart from other people? **NB:** Not at all, we were "in" with all the high society people, (laughing) what we'd call "high society." We went to the dinners, we went to the dances, we were invited to meet the President Taft when they came to Dublin. You see, we had the Embassy from Washington here in Dublin, the English Embassy. Lord Braggs (sp?) was here, and Lady Braggs. They came here to spend the summer because the Secretary was here -- what was he called, Secretary of the Interior? He was a very important man, and he had a HUGE house. It had a German butler and everything. You'd think the contrast to our farm there was funny, but we all went to those, we were invited to everything. Of course, I wasn't invited to formal dinner parties of the Embassy but I wouldn't have any reason to be there. But they were lovely people, had lots of money, and gave gorgeous dinner parties and we were all invited, I was always invited to these dinners. And lots of tea parties that at the club and on Saturday afternoon they had a lecture. I lectured on Mark Twain there with Barry Faulkner (she laughs) but that was after we became old. **RB:** As of an artist's family, say, the Ambassador or President or these other important people, got along easily with you? Or they didn't have you at their parties sort or for your entertainment value? It wasn't anything like that? **NB:** Not yet; social life. And my mother and father were always ___ their turn ___ I used to say sometimes when I was invited to a grand dinner party, I'd say, " ___ anything to wear. "And she'd say, "Oh, don't worry about that, just wear the best thing you can and go and be (laughing) entertaining!" She was so good about that, she made us feel -- you know, there was none of that business -- I was talking with somebody from out West and she eventually came to , she was so happy because she'd grown up in an atmosphere, you just couldn't be in social life if you didn't have just the right kind of a car and the latest clothing and all. We didn't know anything about that. I would make a dress, maybe, if I was going to a party, and go and have the time of my life, I didn't have any trouble, I had a good time. **RB:** So you were known, among others, as a fun-loving family. **NB:** Oh yes, we were full of fun. We hardly had a gloomy house, ever. Gerome was a great humorist and so was Papa. **RB:** In fact, you had dramatics, didn't you? You put on little skits and things. **NB:** Oh yes, Gerome wrote a play and the town loaned us the town hall to give it in. We all acted in it. I've even got pictures of it. **RB:** Your father had a close friend in Burlingham, [sp?] right? **NB:** I think, among our best friends in New York, Mr. Burlingham was a real friend of my father. He wrote lovely things about us. The thing that I'd like very much to show you this afternoon is what Carl [?] [proper name] wrote, such a wonderful art critic, he wrote the most beautiful thing about my father in memorials of the Century Club, "Century Memorials." And I showed it to ___ because that certainly is a marvelous short thing, you know. He wrote something about all the different men that had died that year. **RB:** What was your father's career like, say, in the 20s and 30s, down to his death? **NB:** He always painted. **RB:** And was he mainly in Dublin in his old age? **NB:** Well, he did live for a couple of years in Hanover because two of my sisters lived there, and the husband, Mary's. My sister Mary in Cambridge was Mrs. Pierce [sp?]. He has since died. She had a little factory, he invented the ball bearing. It's gone into a big business there now, and he died and never got any great benefit from it. But they went up there to live because two of their families were there. And then Billy had a factory up there and they thought for a change they'd go and live in Hanover. So they rented a nice big house, it was the president's house and it has enough rooms for two or three families to live in it. While they were up there one year I went up to visit them. **RB:** Did your father keep a work routine throughout his life? **NB:** Almost. Toward the end he slowed down a little, but he did a lot of awfully cunning little portraits of his grandchildren, and we have a lot of those. Fortunately, some of the grandchildren's portraits were ordered by Mr. Pierced Senior, who was a lawyer on Long Island. That was the father of Mary's husband. He had quite a lot of money, so that he wanted to order my father to paint -- they were their "common" grandchildren but still he bought them from my father and has them in his house. Well, when he died, you see, they came back to the family. That's why my sister Mary has beautiful portraits, because they belonged to the Pierce family and then came back to her. **RB:** Did your father very much enjoy doing this? **NB:** Oh, very much. [Interruption in tape] **RB:** Even as commissioned portraits he enjoyed this? **NB:** Oh, he loved that. **RB:** He was probably going to do it anyway, wasn't he? **NB:** Oh, maybe he -- he did quite a few of the little ___ my younger sister. **RB:** Did he work in the same meticulous manner? **NB:** Oh, [inaudible phrase] **RB:** By this time were you painting regularly yourself? **NB:** Yes. I went through quite a long period of doing professional portraiture. I've always done it. I did professional portraits summer before last and last summer. Right here. Well, I did do one picture down in Massachusetts. I painted the wife of my lawyer who tends to all my business. That was very difficult. I had to drive down [?], doing her, but I had to do it practically all over again. I was determined not to leave it. It wasn't quite satisfactory and I could see why, it wasn't a very good job. **RB:** Perhaps it's unconscious, but do you feel that your painting is fairly much in the way your father painted? **NB:** I'm more like him than my brother. He had a very different technique, very different. **RB:** After your first husband died, did you stay in New York, or -- ? **NB:** I stayed with my family one winter in New York. I stayed another winter in Keene with them. That's when Polly was about a year old; and stayed in Framingham quite a lot with his parents. I wasn't very happy there because they were both very busy and away all day every day and I was awfully lonely, because it was a great big house on a hill, and hardly anybody to talk to. (pause) And then, after about five years I met Dr. Bowditch. I never thought I wanted to marry again, but I found life pretty

lonely. I was only 25 years old when I married Dr. Bowditch, and we were married almost 50 years. That was pretty good for a second marriage! (both laugh) We got lots of 50 years, too. He was awfully talented. I seem to have run into these talented people. He was a good doctor. But besides that, he was terribly interested in nature. Robert studied butterflies, mostly, but Harold knew every bird. He'd say, "Oh, there's a so-and-so" and I wouldn't hear a thing, you know. He really was very good, he had lots of bird books, he kept glasses and a bird book right by the table. They're still there. Every bird that came in the yard he'd want to see what it was. But he was bent when he was in college -- he graduated from Harvard in ____, I didn't know him then at all, I didn't know him until much later, only a month before I married him, (laughing) I knew some of his family but I never knew him -- at Harvard he used to keep his glasses there and watch the birds. And he was a very excellent student of heraldry. He belonged to the Swiss Heraldic Society, and belonged in London, and he did genealogy and heraldry when he was. And some time I wish I could show you his heraldic work. **RB:** Did you share this interest with him? **NB:** Oh, very much. I was doing it but he was always running to me. [at this point, dialogue ceases, loud static for an interval, then tape is silent to end of this side]

[End of Interview]