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Oral history interview with Peggie L. Hartwell, 2002 June 3 and July 10

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Peggie Hartwell on June 3 and 10, 2002. The interview took place in New York, New York and was conducted by Patricia Malarcher for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Peggie Hartwell and Patricia Malarcher have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written prose.

Interview

MALARCHER: This is Patricia Malarcher interviewing Peggie Hartwell for the Archives of American Art in her New York apartment on Central Park West.

Your name is Peggie spelled with an *ie* at the end. Is that your actual name?

PEGGIE HARTWELL: Yes it is, but it was spelled with a *y*. And then I changed it when I started dancing in the theater. But my birth certificate is P-E-G-G-Y.

MS. MALARCHER: Okay.

MS. HARTWELL: But everything after that, only the documents show P-E-G-G-I-E.

MS. MALARCHER: Okay, thank you.

MS. HARTWELL: You're welcome.

MS. MALARCHER: How do you define yourself as an artist?

MS. HARTWELL: That's a good question. I define myself as a folk artist, as an artist of today. Just as an artist who wears many hats.

MS. MALARCHER: Where and when were you born?

MS. HARTWELL: I was born in Springfield, South Carolina, January 9, 1939.

MS. MALARCHER: Could you say something about your childhood and your family background?

MS. HARTWELL: I was born into a family of farmers. My grandfather owned quite a bit of land, and so we all lived together, more or less, because it was all connecting land. As his children got married, they went to live on part of the land, or they married someone who was attached to that land. So the land turned into being something like 200 acres, which you already had, and it just was very large. And this was a very good childhood because all the women did some type of needlework or some type of craft. Most of the men were storytellers, so that my life was rich with oral history; it was rich with sewing and churchgoing and day-to-day existence on a farm.

MS. MALARCHER: What kind of needlework did the women do?

MS. HARTWELL: They did quilting. They made their own clothes, and they would take the feedbag and turn them into -- or flour sack, these huge sacks that flour came in, or grain -- and they would bleach it and make things like tablecloths and napkins and doilies and things like that. My mother [Rosie Lee Hartwell] was also a very good crochet artist, because she made some wonderful things, tablecloths and stuff like that.

MS. MALARCHER: When they made quilts, were they making them for beds, or were they making quilts to hang on the wall?

MS. HARTWELL: They were making them for utilitarian uses, but the interesting thing about that is that the quilt tops all had stories within themselves because no fabric was ever purchased for these quilts, so that the quilt was made from parts of fabric left over from sewing, or someone would donate a piece of a garment that was saved from a worn-out coat, dress, or whatever. So that's what was on top of the quilt, and so, no, they didn't hang them, but still they were sacred because they were -- one generation to another generation could look on there and see part of your great-grandmother down to the latest child being born, so it was a type of oral history on top of the quilt itself.

MS. MALARCHER: Were the quilts made for particular occasions like somebody's wedding or the birth of a child or something like that?

MS. HARTWELL: No, they were not. They were just made during the winter months. All that fabric that was saved during the summer and the winter when you couldn't farm, they would go from house to house, and they would make a quilt a day, which was very easy to do if you have 10 or 15 women working on a top. So they would complete the top in the morning. It was always on a frame that could go up to the ceiling, and they would pull it up to the ceiling around midday -- prepare dinner, they would eat. After dinner the frame would come down, and all these women would sit around the quilt. And at the end of the day the quilt was finished.

MS. MALARCHER: Did they use big pieces of fabric?

MS. HARTWELL: No, not necessarily. They used -- if they were using strip quilts, I would say the strips were about two-and-a-half to three inches in width and maybe five inches in length. So, no, they didn't work with extremely large pieces.

MS. MALARCHER: Were they doing this by hand?

MS. HARTWELL: By hand? Yes. And sometimes they would piece by machine, but for the most part the whole thing was to get together and do this as a collective. And my grandmother did some very nice quilts; she did traditional work like stepping stones. I was amazed to see that my mother still had this quilt, but I still have some of my grandmother's quilts. So it was very interesting.

MS. MALARCHER: You said how many generations of quilters?

MS. HARTWELL: Five.

MS. MALARCHER: And that would go back to your great-great --

MS. HARTWELL: My grandmother's mother. My grandmother's mother and my grandmother-in-law. Yeah, it would go back further, though.

MS. MALARCHER: And how did that woman in the first generation start?

MS. HARTWELL: Because you just -- it was -- you had no money to buy anything as far as blankets, and so you made what you wore, and you made what you used, and that's how it started. It was just -- it was just something that was always in the family that, to be honest, I couldn't tell you how it even started. I always knew that it was there.

MS. MALARCHER: So, in this environment of quiltmakers, did you learn quilt making as a very young child?

MS. HARTWELL: I learned the technique, but not to sit and actually make a quilt. We would help -- we would assist -- like, oh we'll match up this block --

[Paused for siren.]

MS. HARTWELL: Thread the needle for me. Pass me this block. Make a stitch here. We were so busy playing underneath with the frames, but we did assist -- in some small way we did assist. But I learned because I just watched, and then once I discovered that I could draw, I was more interested in putting these images that my grandfather had spoken of the night before on the sand.

MS. MALARCHER: Were you an only child?

MS. HARTWELL: No. There's no such thing as an only child in an extended family. But two -- a blood -- my blood -- my blood sisters, there are three of us and we're all seven years apart. I understand that there was one -- and I found that out like 10 years ago, that my mother miscarried. And in this house where we lived, I would say maybe six or seven other children lived there, my cousins -- all first cousins. So you had to answer to many women and many fathers, because in a situation like that, everyone is your mother and everyone is your brother and everyone is your father. And, as far as school -- going to school, if you went there, you got recommended or you caused the teacher to hit you, which was allowed, then you got another beating at home, in your home. So it was like a collective family, everyone raising these children. That's what it was.

MS. MALARCHER: You said that you started drawing; and how old were you when you did that?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, I was so young; I think maybe five or six. I just knew I could draw, and so that's how that started.

MS. MALARCHER: And so you would just always have a pad and pencil that you were working with?

MS. HARTWELL: Sand, because we didn't --

MS. MALARCHER: Sand?

MS. HARTWELL: I would draw in the sand outside the house because there was no extra paper to draw on, or maybe we had a Montgomery Ward catalogue; we would find a section where I could draw, but I would draw in the sand. The sand -- underneath some of the trees was a bit damp, or you would just brush away the top layer, and you could draw on it. That's how I learned that I could draw.

MS. MALARCHER: And it didn't bother you that you couldn't keep it?

MS. HARTWELL: No, because I think growing up everything -- there was nothing permanent. The crops -- you learned that in growing up that everything is in transit, and so, no, it didn't bother me because I could always make another one.

MS. MALARCHER: What about going to school? How old were you when you started going to school?

MS. HARTWELL: I think I was five or six because I remember I started school in a one-room schoolhouse, and in that one-room schoolhouse there were several grades. My sister, who was seven years older than I am, she was in that same one-room schoolhouse. My aunt was the cook for that one-room schoolhouse, so that you were surrounded by cousins and aunts, just family. And we had to walk, I think, about two miles or a-mile-and-half to get to this one-room schoolhouse. So I started school down there, and then I continued -- when my mother left, she left me with my grandmother, and I continued to go to school, and then we moved to Brooklyn, and my school started -- I think I was probably in the second or third grade, something like that.

MS. MALARCHER: Your mother left this big extended family?

MS. HARTWELL: She did.

MS. MALARCHER: Was that your father's family on the farm, or was that your mother's family?

MS. HARTWELL: My mother's.

MS. MALARCHER: That's a big step. What encouraged her to move?

MS. HARTWELL: Because she did not want to work in the fields for the rest of her life. It's backbreaking work. My grandfather had acres and acres and acres of cotton, and we would get up in the morning, or they would get up in the morning and before -- at the crack of dawn they would get up -- and before breakfast he would have already put in two or three hours of work. Then he would come and eat, and then he would collect us, and we would go back to work there until noon, when it was absolutely too hot.

So my mother decided that she did not want that type of life, and she came up to Brooklyn. She did day work, and my father [Lorenzer Hartwell] followed her, leaving us with my grandparents. He -- what did he do? He got a job in a bakery.

MS. MALARCHER: So, the whole family helped your grandfather with the cotton --

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, there was --

MS. MALARCHER: Including the children.

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, yes. It was a collective thing. You know, we had kneepads if you were too -- because you need to crawl on your knees to pick the cotton. The children were not that tall, so you could just go and do your bit.

MS. MALARCHER: Could I just stop a minute and make sure --

[Break in audio.]

MS. MALARCHER: Okay, you were talking about your mother going to Brooklyn and leaving this extended family and going all by herself.

MS. HARTWELL: She did.

MS. MALARCHER: Did she know anyone there?

MS. HARTWELL: I think there was a sister there, but I am not certain, because at one point she and maybe three other sisters were here. They came here to work because you could get much more work working at a factory or just being a housekeeper or something like that than working on the farm. And then sending money home for your children and eventually saving money to bring someone else up. So, yes, it was -- I don't think she ever liked the farm. There was a time when she married my dad, and he didn't have any land. So they rented land from someone else and -- not sharecropping, but they rented this land -- and she did not like that at all. And I remember that she went to work in one of the hotels in Aiken, which is now a nice town.

But I think she was very angry because my grandfather -- I don't know how he did it -- during the '20s had all of his children in a boarding school. She was the oldest one, and they're like born year after year, and because she was the oldest one, she could not finish the last year, and he took her home to work on the farm. And I don't think that she ever forgave anyone for that, because that was her way out of the fields. That was her way out of the South. And I'm sure she met someone there who was educated, and to come back and marry a farmer and work on the farm and dig peanuts and dig for potatoes, you know that -- that's devastating. And she never recovered -- I'm sure she didn't, because she never wanted to go home again.

MS. MALARCHER: So she came to Brooklyn and got work cleaning houses?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: And then your father came up and worked in a bakery.

MS. HARTWELL: Actually she stayed here, I think a full year, before she came back. Because my sister told me that when she came back and she got off the train, there to meet her in the middle of the night, my father and my sisters smelling like the farm, and she stepped off the train smelling like New York. So, you know, I think it was like a year that she stayed here, and then my father went with her back and left my sister there -- the both of us. And we joined her because she sent -- the next person to come up -- we were like cargo -- the next person to come up she said, "Bring my children." And I remember meeting her, but I really don't remember her before that. I remember my grandmother.

MS. MALARCHER: Really? You don't remember her on the farm?

MS. HARTWELL: No.

MS. MALARCHER: Was that because there were just so many people that they all kind of merged into one collective mother?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. Right. That's right. I remember her as part of a group, but not to say, This is my mom, or whatever. There were so many women in that house that they were all my mother. So when I say I don't remember her, I remember that this is my mother, but she is so blended in with all these other women and since they were all my mother does -- that make sense to you?

MS. MALARCHER: It does. It really does. I -- let's see -- so then when you came up here, how did it feel to leave this place with all of this cultural richness that you had grown up with?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, you know, I was devastated. I blacked out, and my sister said it's because I just -- the transition wasn't good for me.

MS. MALARCHER: How old were you at that time?

MS. HARTWELL: I think I was seven. I was seven going on eight. I think so. And I remember the train ride and the straw seats, and I remember it was so hot. But I remember getting off at Penn Station, because the Penn Station had a glass dome then, and it was like all the light beams coming down, and you could see all the energy and activity and the light beams. But it was beautiful, and I couldn't look where I was going because I was so busy looking up. And then I don't remember anything -- the next thing I remember sitting on a stool, and my mother said, "Hello, Peggy, I am your mother." So she had to make me remember so, you know, I'm thinking that --

MS. MALARCHER: Did you -- was it you and your two sisters came up on the train?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: All by yourselves?

MS. HARTWELL: With my aunt. I remember traveling with my aunt. I don't remember my sister on the train, but I just remember -- because I loved the South. I loved nature and trees and running in pine forests is just -- it's next to heaven.

MS. MALARCHER: So here you come into all this concrete.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, and I have a quilt called -- I showed that quilt -- *The Window* [December 1, 1999], because the window became like a television. It became like a foreboding place where you don't want to go outside because there's so many unfamiliar people, as opposed to on the farm I knew everyone, and in church I knew everyone because we were the church. And we still are. You know, the church is run by the families. And we have family reunions -- 200-plus people. And so it's -- even though I came here, my heart still remained there.

MS. MALARCHER: Did you start school right away when you came here?

MS. HARTWELL: I did.

MS. MALARCHER: Would you have gone then into a public school with a lot of children? Lots of different children?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: And you had been in this one-room schoolhouse.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes and they were all African American. They were all black.

MS. MALARCHER: All the children --

MS. HARTWELL: -- were black in that school.

MS. MALARCHER: In the little one?

MS. HARTWELL: In that little one.

MS. MALARCHER: So then you went to a Brooklyn public school.

MS. HARTWELL: And I remember that I felt so sorry for a girl, because she was like me. That was an Italian girl who came in the class the same day that I did, and she couldn't speak a word of English. And her mother was trying to console her, and she was crying, and she wanted to go with her mother. So this girl was acting out what I felt because she -- I didn't know what the word alienated was, but she felt alienated. She didn't want to stay there, and I was going through the same thing. You know I just -- you know I had to wear shoes now -- not that [in the South] you don't wear shoes in the winter, but it was okay to -- [laughs] -- if you went in the summer without shoes.

But everything changed drastically, and it made me become an introvert coming here. And it really -- it made me withdraw so deep within that I think I stopped talking. I didn't communicate. My mother always said to me, "You don't talk to anyone but your father." But my father -- the reason why was that my father was so Southern that you could not take the Southern man out of this man, so he -- when he came, he brought with him everything. But my mother hated the South so much that she left everything there. And she went to work and learned to make all these wonderful kosher foods, so we grew up on Southern and kosher foods. [Laughter.] So I was eating matzo balls and collard greens. [Laughter.] It was amazing. It was just hilarious. It was such an introduction. And we lived in this neighborhood in Williamsburg.

MS. MALARCHER: In Williamsburg.

MS. HARTWELL: In Williamsburg, so you had the Hasidic Jewish population; we had the Little Italy, almost, in back of where we were along with this -- these people who were part of the great migration from the South and the people from -- the Latin American people. So this is what I had in -- in Brooklyn.

MS. MALARCHER: And did you begin to like this after awhile?

MS. HARTWELL: It took me awhile because it was just so noisy, and it was -- the streets were so hard, and I missed seeing the trees --

MS. MALARCHER: So how did you -- how did you adjust yourself? How did you adapt yourself?

MS. HARTWELL: I don't think that I ever did. I really don't because I remember telling stories -- we lived in a two-family, cold-water railroad flat, and I remember that I would tell stories to the younger children. I would sit on the stoop. And my mother would always say to me, "Well I heard you down there telling those stories, and you know they're not true blah, blah, blah," because she didn't want anything to do with the South. But for me I was always talking about the South, and since I had heard all these stories from my grandmother, that was just a part of who I was. So I -- the adjustment wasn't good.

Did I answer your question, because I think I started talking about something? Another -- I wonder what your question was.

MS. MALARCHER: I asked about how you adapted to this.

MS. HARTWELL: No, I never did. I never did.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, now, did you keep on drawing?

MS. HARTWELL: I did. I really did. I kept straight -- then I had paper to draw on -- [laughs] -- you know, so I would draw everything in sight. And I remember there was this advertisement in the paper that said, Draw this and send it in.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, yes.

MS. HARTWELL: So I did that, but -- for about maybe three or four lessons, but there were no formal classes because you were just following something on a piece of paper. I did that for about four lessons, and then because that cost more money, I had to stop.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, what about school? Did you have art classes in school?

MS. HARTWELL: They were just the normal art classes. If they recognized that you could draw, then you got a chance to draw a turkey on the blackboard -- [laughs] -- for Thanksgiving or draw Santa on the blackboard. That's how they recognized the fact that you could draw. But no, they didn't push you.

MS. MALARCHER: So did you look at artwork by other people? Did you have a chance to do that when you got to Brooklyn?

MS. HARTWELL: At that point my introduction to art was not by other painters per se, but illustrations in magazines because I knew that they were drawn; they were not photographs. So I would try to copy what I saw, and I began to notice the proportions and things like that, and then I still had, in the back of my mind, like, still shots of the farm where I grew up.

MS. MALARCHER: So were you drawing from your memory of the farm?

MS. HARTWELL: I was drawing from my memory, and I was also drawing the fashion of that date -- drawing people in the fashion of that day, of cartoons. It just evolved slowly.

MS. MALARCHER: Did your mother continue sewing when she came to Brooklyn?

MS. HARTWELL: She -- not as much as crochet. She continued to crochet. The sewing -- my sister, my oldest sister, she continued doing that. There was always some kind of sewing going on in my family; that never ever really stopped. And I remember in, was it elementary, maybe junior high school, I made a quilted skating -- what do you call it?

MS. MALARCHER: Skirt?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, but it was short. I made it as short as possible. I did that. A quilted vest, a quilted skating -- so that was a part of that school, also. My introduction came to the arts because my father took me to -- someone came around to that neighborhood looking for children to join this dance studio called, "Star Time Allen" -- they also had a "Star Time Allen" TV show. So they were --

MS. MALARCHER: Allen?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. A-L-L --

MS. MALARCHER: E-N?

MS. HARTWELL: E-N. "Star Time Allen." Now it could be one *l* but I'm almost positive it was two. So during that time they had this type of show on TV, and they would send talent scouts into the neighborhood to look for potential people that they could teach singing and tap. So I was able to travel all the way to Times Square by myself to take these tap classes.

MS. MALARCHER: How old were you then?

MS. HARTWELL: You know, I think I was under 10. Maybe around 10, or was it under? But that didn't last because my mother said we don't have money for that. But then already I was bitten. Because once you've taken a

dance class or a voice class, and you feel the people dancing, and I realized that this was just an extension of what I was doing on paper and knew that this was what I wanted to do for the time being -- that somewhere in the arts that I would find myself, because I was able to go back to the farm, and I was able to be not what -- who I was.

MS. MALARCHER: Did you go all through elementary school in the same school in Brooklyn?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I did. But the summers I went home. You know I went --

MS. MALARCHER: What did you do at home? Did you go back to picking cotton?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. Back to picking cotton, shelling peas, all the farm work. Making butter, which we did, not with a churn but a glass bottle, just making it like that. It was just wonderful. You know, I enjoyed it. I think the first time I went down -- no, not the first time, it was either the second or the third time -- I wanted to come home because by then I realized that the arts -- that I had a deep affection for the arts. And so I didn't want to stay there, but I still had to stay so it didn't matter.

MS. MALARCHER: When you're saying, "going home," at this point, are you saying, "going home to Brooklyn"?

MS. HARTWELL: No, going home -- home was always South Carolina.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, okay. But now you're saying that to realize this deep connection to the arts you had to do that in Brooklyn?

MS. HARTWELL: I did that in Brooklyn. Also, I need to backtrack. My father was an a capella singer. And so for me, even before any of this started, he had a quartet group [Five Singing Stars of Harlem], and he sang in all the churches locally. He was even on radio once. And it was wonderful because they used to rehearse every Friday night in our house.

MS. MALARCHER: In Brooklyn?

MS. HARTWELL: In Brooklyn. So we could not go into the living room, but we heard all of these wonderful sounds coming out the living room. And so my father did that, and my cousin was also very involved in that, so I was around music. And also in the churches in the South, this is a part of your culture that you hear this type of singing. It's just that everyone sings, and church is like one long concert when you go. It's amazing. Even to this day, one person will start a song, and before you know, by the time the other people realize what song is being presented, then they all join in and it's perfect harmony.

MS. MALARCHER: It sounds like a very rich childhood.

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, it was wonderful. We used to -- I love insects, and we used to catch them and let them crawl all over our hands. I remember once there was this huge pine forest, and all the needles had fallen on the ground, so walking on the ground was like walking on cotton. And I walked in there, and I wanted to cry. I was very young. I was really young, and I felt such a sense of oneness with the wind, with the pines in the tree; I just wanted to cry; I didn't know why, but I was so touched by the oneness of everything, so I've always had that. I don't know where it came from -- maybe my grandfather.

MS. MALARCHER: That's wonderful. This looks like it's almost used up --

[End of audio, change tape.]

MS. MALARCHER: When you went South in the summer, were the women still making quilts as they had been when you left?

MS. HARTWELL: They were mostly doing sewing, plain sewing, and they were not making quilts that -- the way they used to go from house to house, because now everything was changing. They were getting their telephones, and they were getting toilets inside. They did not have to go outside to take a bath. We didn't have to go to the outhouse. It was -- you know, they became exposed to -- they finally had a radio, and for goodness sakes, you know, when TV came, it was like everything stopped, but that was way later. When I went back, we were still listening to the stories of my grandfather, and they were still making lye soap -- they were still. My sister used to tell me of cooking the clothes with them, that they were boiling the clothes in these huge, like, pots with three legs -- the same pots that they made the lye soap in. So that's how we washed our clothes, and then we would hang them out. And all of that still happened during my visits, during my teens when I was going back and forth.

MS. MALARCHER: Did your perception of that change as you went away and then came back and saw it after not seeing it for awhile?

MS. HARTWELL: No, I remember -- there's the most -- it's a fragrance that is almost indescribable when you wash clothes and hang them up, and they are dried by the sun, and you go to collect them like this, and you smell them. No, it just really enriched what I saw, and I knew that that was going to be a part of my art form, you know, that my mind was making still shots. And so it was -- those were the things that I would draw. Those were the things that I would bring to -- I didn't know I was going to do narrative work then, but those were the things that I would capture.

MS. MALARCHER: So you had this sense of yourself as an artist from, like, seven --

MS. HARTWELL: As long as I can remember.

MS. MALARCHER: How did you even -- how did you know that it was possible to be an artist? Did you know anyone else who was an artist?

MS. HARTWELL: My cousin, but I didn't know him then. I met him, and I thought, oh, you can do what I can do. He was a fabulous artist. He wasn't trained, but he was wonderful. I just knew that I could draw, and I knew it would get better because I could see myself progressing. I would experiment not only with the sand, but with crayons, with cutting out pieces of fabric and gluing it down, whatever I could make art -- an art piece -- out of making dolls, paper dolls, cloth dolls. I just knew that that was so ingrained in me, that that was a part of my soul. There was just no question about it.

MS. MALARCHER: Were your parents encouraging you to do this?

MS. HARTWELL: My father was more encouraging because he was the singer, and he had, at one time, been a very excellent baseball? -- yes, baseball -- player. He was really quite good and there was some mention that he had been approached and could have joined the Negro league or something like that; he was very, very good. But my mother was very stern, and he had to give that up. And then he started singing, but then she could not take that away from him because that was a part of his religion, that's how he -- she was a very stern woman. I'm talking about you, Mother -- [laughs] -- but don't visit me tonight.

She was a very stern woman who believed in work, work, work because my grandmother was that way -- work, work. And my grandfather -- my father -- believed that if you had a gift that you could escape into this gift, so he allowed me -- he gave me that, so I'm eternally grateful. He introduced me to my first dance class, so for that -- he did his part. He did his part.

MS. MALARCHER: Yes, he showed you a world.

MS. HARTWELL: He said, "There's the door."

MS. MALARCHER: So, and all through grade school you took these standardized art classes --

MS. HARTWELL: Art school. Crafts -- arts and crafts.

MS. MALARCHER: But that was not really where you developed your skill.

MS. HARTWELL: No. I self-developed. Self-developed.

MS. MALARCHER: When you were, you know, expanding your ability to draw, did you try drawing with different materials, or were you doing painting as well as drawing?

MS. HARTWELL: I was doing everything I could get my hands on. Because we did not have much money, I could not go out and buy crayons or a piece of fabric or glue to glue things down to make a collage, so I took advantage of the supplies that they had at school, and I worked with cardboard and fabric just to make a collage. And, you know, unfortunately, when I finished that turkey that I told you about on the blackboard, the turkey looked like a quilt, you know, because no turkey's that color, but I saw -- that's what I saw. So all of what I did, the supplies that I got, that came from school. So I had to wait for that, you know. If I told my mother, I need a piece of fabric, or I need this or that for school, then I got it, but not just to do it. No, she didn't encourage me; she didn't discourage me. She knew that I was drawing on everything, including the walls and the refrigerator, so she knew that I had this.

MS. MALARCHER: Then when you went into high school, how was that? Did you go to high school in Brooklyn?

MS. HARTWELL: I started high school in Brooklyn, and then my mother purchased a house in Queens.

MS. MALARCHER: Which town in Queens?

MS. HARTWELL: In Jamaica, and I went -- I had to go and live with my sister because the people downstairs --

upstairs -- refused to move, and that's where we were going to move. Downstairs was already vacant, and my sister moved there. She was pregnant, and she had a young child. So I went to live with her. That was the most dramatic thing that ever happened because it took me so long to feel accepted in Brooklyn. You know, I had moved from the farm. It took me -- a slow, slow learner -- not slow learner but slow in getting social skills, that by the time I felt comfortable, we moved, and then I had to start all over again.

MS. MALARCHER: Now, did your mother stay in Brooklyn --

MS. HARTWELL: She did.

MS. MALARCHER: -- while you went to Queens to live with your sister.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, yes. And then she got the idea, she said, "You're old enough to work, so I'm going to get you a job." And she paid $50, and I went to work at a toy factory.

MS. MALARCHER: And didn't go to high school?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, during the summer. Because by then she said, "I'm not sending you home." When I say home, it's always Springfield. "I'm not going to send you home this summer because you're old enough to work, and you need to contribute to the house." So she went and got this job for me. But that was before I went to get a job at a pickle factory. I lied about my age.

MS. MALARCHER: Now the pickle factory was after the toy factory?

MS. HARTWELL: This was before the toy factory. I think I was 11 or 12, and I lied and got the Social Security card, and I went to work at a pickle factory. Now, that didn't last very long because I was eating so many pickles, I got sick, and then I decided I had -- [laughs] -- to stop working there. So then she said she was not very happy about that because --

MS. MALARCHER: Was that -- was that a job that she encouraged you to get?

MS. HARTWELL: No. I just told her I wanted to do it because the families living across the street were all in -- from in and around the town or the county where I lived down South and they were so poor. I mean, we were poor, too, but they were really poor, and their children had to work at eight or nine. And I would go with them to do this housework. That was my first introduction -- aside from the girl that I met in the first day of school -- that was my second introduction to the Italian language. I was working for these two elderly men; I think they were in their 90s, and they couldn't do anything so we would have to go there. We would leave the young -- we were young children, and eight or nine, and we went there to do shopping for them and to scrub their floors and to make their beds -- two or three of us, and we would go. And it was just, what, two or three dollars for that Saturday. But that was a lot of money, especially if you could go to the movies for eight cents.

So I started working -- on the farm you start working as soon as you can carry something. And in Brooklyn I started working as soon as my mother allowed me out of her sight for extra money because she wasn't going to give it to me. And then that one summer -- the summer after I got the job at the pickle factory -- she said, "You are too old to go South, and I need you here to work," and she purchased the job, and I went to work at a toy factory.

MS. MALARCHER: What do you mean she purchased the job?

MS. HARTWELL: She paid fifty dollars to an agent, and they placed me.

MS. MALARCHER: So how old were you then? About --

MS. HARTWELL: I was -- I think I had two or three years left of high school.

MS. MALARCHER: So say 15 or 16?

MS. HARTWELL: About that.

MS. MALARCHER: So how was high school going for you? Were you able to take art classes there?

MS. HARTWELL: Something happened to me in high school, and I don't know what it was, but they put me in a special-ed class. I had a very bad experience, and it just came back to haunt me. And I just -- I just closed up like a clam, and my mother didn't know it because she was so busy working. And so they thought that I was retarded, and they just put me in this class, and the teacher who got me out of that -- I really wish I could find him -- was my typing teacher. Because -- because typing was something so physical that I didn't have to think about it. I was a very fast typist, but with anything that required a lot of thought, my mind would go to sleep,

and I just could not do those things. So my typing teacher said, “What are you doing in this class? You don’t belong here,” and I shrugged my shoulders, and he got me out.

And then, getting out, I suddenly found out that we were going to move, because getting out meant that I had to just catch up with everyone else, which I really never did. But I was in Jamaica High School, which was *the* school to be in if you were in Queens. And swimming in the morning, and it just -- it was in Jamaica Estates, and I just clammed up. I just went so deep within, and then I discovered dance. I began to draw more and fantasize more in my mind about the theater and art, so that was my escape.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, weren’t there art classes in high school that you could take?

MS. HARTWELL: There was a class in high school that introduced me to pen and ink drawing, and one teacher taught me how to draw in contour without picking the pen up, just making the whole tree. And that was my introduction to pen-and-ink drawing. I was able to take the images that I had in my brain and put them on paper. And surprisingly they just went on paper like I had had training, so that was my escape. I would just escape into a world of art.

MS. MALARCHER: Did your art teacher recognize your talent?

MS. HARTWELL: Not to the point of -- yes, actually she did -- I must backtrack. They wanted me to go to fashion school at FIT [Fashion Institute of Technology, New York], and my mother said, “There’s no money for you to do that. You need to get a job.” So I -- the -- what do you call it? -- the advisor at school had already pointed me in the direction of General Electric. They were looking for chartists there, and since I was very good with line drawing, I got a job there. But I wasn’t good in math, so I got fired from that job. That job became a series of jobs in factories and cellars and, you know, all sorts of jobs. And then someone came over to the neighborhood where we were living, a dance teacher, and he taught dance, and all of a sudden I reconnected.

MS. MALARCHER: Where did he teach dance? Was this in a studio?

MS. HARTWELL: In a studio in Queens, in Jamaica.

MS. MALARCHER: And you were able at this point to initiate --

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I was 18 then.

MS. MALARCHER: -- and you were working, so you could go and --

MS. HARTWELL: Take classes.

MS. MALARCHER: -- and pay for your own dance classes.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, and so that’s what I did. I started out with this person who came to Queens, and then he told me about someone who used to dance with Katherine Dunham -- she’s a black pioneer. And I went to study with him, and then the drummers who were drumming for this man said, “You need to come and study with this ballet teacher,” who was the ballet mistress or master at the Katherine Dunham school, Syvilla Fort.

MS. MALARCHER: What was that person’s name?

MS. HARTWELL: Syvilla Fort, F-O-R-T. She was trained at the Cornish School in Seattle, Washington. The composer John Cage composed a piece for her -- I can’t remember the name, but I can get it for you. So she was well, well, well trained, and it was under her guidance that I was able to excel as a dancer. But also, she encouraged me to draw because she saw that I could draw, and I was able to make all the drawings all over the -- for the studio wall. And because she was from the old school, we had to sew our own costumes, thus my introduction or re-introduction to working with fiber and sequins. And she taught us how to put on make-up. It was a total thing that she taught us, how to live the -- total theater.

And so, I joined a theater group, and this theater group went to Europe and I had -- we had -- to make our own costumes and beading; we had to do our own beading and sequins and things like that. And when I got to Germany, I was able to do some set designs. So, all of that work -- I was still working with fiber, and I was able to do -- take the pen-and-ink drawing and make these huge African masks that underneath the lights I said, “This is the way I am going to take this. This is what I am going to do.” So I would sit in a dressing room in Germany and say, “Well, this is a long way from the cotton fields now, isn’t it?” You know, I felt very good about that.

MS. MALARCHER: That’s almost miraculous.

MS. HARTWELL: It is.

MS. MALARCHER: You found your way into that.

MS. HARTWELL: It is unbelievable when I think about it because -- but I knew when I was drawing on the sand and when I was standing in that pine forest, when I had that connection, I don't know what it was -- I just knew that it was going to be a good life. I had no doubts about it. None whatsoever.

MS. MALARCHER: So, now how was your mother seeing all this dance?

MS. HARTWELL: She passed, but before this she came to the concerts. She was so happy that I took quilting to this other level. My aunts -- there's still one generation younger than me, and I forgot to include her. She's a cousin. She's still quilting. And when I go home, I am supposed to go and see her because she has a quilting bee in this town where I was born. But before my mother passed, she was so proud. She came to see the performances that I did, and I showed her the quilts that I did. And I did one of her, like the one that I did of my aunt who died of AIDS, I did one of her -- her passing. And I'm going to do one called *A Capella Afternoon*, based upon my father, and of my uncle because still they live in a very folk way down South. Home. Some of my family have not moved more than maybe 10 miles from where they were born, and I have a lot of family.

MS. MALARCHER: Did your father stay in the north?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. He tried to get home. He had a stroke, and he disappeared for a day and a night, and we didn't know where he was until we got a call from the police. He said, "We have your husband here in New Jersey." He was trying to go home. Even in his broken-down condition he was trying to go back.

MS. MALARCHER: This was when he was older?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, he was -- this was 19 -- he died '79 -- about '78 or '77.

MS. MALARCHER: And he was ill at the time?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, because he had a stroke in 1979. So he had a stroke in '75, '74.

MS. MALARCHER: You mentioned Katherine Dunham who was an African-American dancer who developed her particular style, and the person that you studied with was influenced by her or had studied with her, so were you doing --

MS. HARTWELL: She was the teacher at the Katherine Dunham school.

MS. MALARCHER: Okay, okay. And she was part of the dance company --

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: -- or she led the dance company that you were with.

MS. HARTWELL: No, she was the -- she had her own studio. She left Katherine Dunham, and she had her own studio. I went there to study with her, and I joined her workshop. I was in her experimental workshop, but I didn't dance with her professional group. I simply went out and auditioned for other roles. And I auditioned for the Cotton Club when they were trying to revive that, and so I – we -- did the Cotton Club. And then I auditioned for a group that was going to Europe, and I thought that --

MS. MALARCHER: What was the name of that group?

MS. HARTWELL: That group was called Harlem Rhythm USA.

MS. MALARCHER: Were you doing a particular style of dance?

MS. HARTWELL: It was modern, primitive, and jazz.

MS. MALARCHER: And how was it to be doing all this traveling now? You who did not adapt well to moving around with your family to different places and was suddenly going to different countries. How was that?

MS. HARTWELL: I remember when we were looking out of the window, my mother and I, and there was this song called *Far Away Places with Strange Sounding Names* by Doris Day, and I said to my mother, "I am going to travel." It wasn't me -- it wasn't Peggie, the person from the farm; it *was* Peggie, the person from the farm, but her dream, if that makes any sense. I had become the dream that I had when I was on the farm. So it was fine. As a performer you have license to be someone else, so whenever I went on stage, I was just someone else.

And I got to hate it, to tell you the truth. I got to hate the traveling because we would get in a country like Iran,

and we couldn't get out. They would take the passports away, and then it was not fun. And I got sick because I was traveling, and I was living out of a suitcase.

MS. MALARCHER: How long did you do this traveling?

MS. HARTWELL: Eight-and-a-half years.

MS. MALARCHER: That's a long time!

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I went over there in 1965, and I came back in '72, so that's eight-and-a-half or seven-and-a-half.

MS. MALARCHER: And you were traveling that entire time?

MS. HARTWELL: It was terrible. [Laughs.] The one long job that we had was with an Italian company. It was really great because they collected all of these black dancers and performers from all these various places, like Ethiopia, so we had to find a language that we could all communicate in, and it happened to be Italian. So there we were, all of these black people -- black, brown, so completely different -- speaking Italian, which was wonderful. It took us one year to travel from Italy, from the northern part of Italy on the Adriatic coastline, all the way down to Sicily, coming back up on the Mediterranean side -- it took one year.

And what happens in a theater group like that, is that when that ends, from that group many other groups are born. And then you just pick who you want to go with. So then we went to the Middle East with one group. When I came back, I joined a Greek company, went back to the same hotel, the same place. It was amazing. It was fun.

MS. MALARCHER: So did you -- do you feel it changed you?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: In what way?

MS. HARTWELL: It changed me because I experienced so many other cultures, and I don't see color. I just see one big culture. I know that everyone has their culture, but I see it as one big piece of fabric, and the culture would be a piece of thread in a garment. But we're all a part of the whole. I always felt that way, but when I got to where I was going in Europe, it just confirmed. The segregation that was going on in South, I was completely untouched by it. It just didn't happen where we were living -- I don't know why. And when I got to Europe it was -- it was just -- I just felt like I was just a part of where we were. Maybe because it was the theater, and in the theater there is no such -- it's a different world. You are a dancer, you're an actor, you know, and that's what you are. You're an artist. So I think being in the theater, I saw things differently.

MS. MALARCHER: So then you came back to the United States.

MS. HARTWELL: Culture shock.

MS. MALARCHER: Had you not been back all of those eight years?

MS. HARTWELL: No, I came to visit. The first six months -- afterwards I came back, and I didn't tell my mother I was going to return. And she said, "Oh, this is so beautiful." And I said I'll get you one when I go back, and I said, oops.

But I was in Germany for one day, and I spent the next 29 days in a hospital in Stuttgart because I had an appendicitis attack. But it was just -- it was wonderful because every time I went back, I would come home for two weeks.

And then once I didn't come home for two years, and then I got homesick, and then it wasn't fun because they were taking the passports away. We got to Beirut, and the soldiers were already there with the tanks, and we would pass them and say, "Hello, how are you," and they would say, "Fine" -- with their machine guns – "hi". Oh, god. And then we would go -- we were in Iran and the Shah -- they took away our passports and we couldn't work, but then they came to the hotel and showed us -- told us -- that we were going to perform for the Shah. And we did, and so he said, "We love America, anything you want." And we said --

MS. MALARCHER: Now this was the Shah prior to Khomenei?

MS. HARTWELL: Uh-huh. We met him, very nice. He got us out of there. We told him -- my girlfriend said, "We love your country, but my mama misses me." She put on this whole act -- "I'm from Texas and my mama misses me." So we got back to the hotel at one o'clock in the morning, and the passports were there and the visas for a six o'clock flight. We got to Beirut -- the same thing happened. They took the passports away.

MS. MALARCHER: So what year did you come back?

MS. HARTWELL: ‘72.

MS. MALARCHER: And you mentioned culture shock.

MS. HARTWELL: Culture shock and well addicted. I had a barbiturate habit of sleeping pills and tranquilizers, because working there, after awhile I knew that I couldn’t stay there, I didn’t want to stay there. But every time I came here, I didn’t belong, either, you know. And so I started having problems sleeping -- well, I was having that problem before I left, but there it was just so easy to get sleeping pills. And when I came back, I was taking, I think it was five sleeping pills and 6 tranquilizers a night. My mother was furious, and my husband that I later married, he said, “You have to do something about this.” So I went into North Shore Hospital and went into a detoxification program. And what did I do? More crafts. It was wonderful.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, right, yes.

MS. HARTWELL: I was always surrounded by crafts. It was like a godsend. No matter where I went, I was able to draw and work with a needle.

MS. MALARCHER: So what did you do -- did you stop dancing when you came back here?

MS. HARTWELL: I did because I wanted to get a degree in theater because I had had this exposure. I had worked as an extra on two of [Federico] Fellini’s pictures, and I saw then a quilt, because he would work so spontaneous and so visual that every time I went on stage you see everything as -- like a -- like in a frame.

MS. MALARCHER: In a frame.

MS. HARTWELL: You do. And there was one place we worked, and in front of us they had all these mirrors, so I was able to watch the show as we were performing it. And I knew that I was going to do something with it, but I was thinking maybe in pen and ink, but then I couldn’t capture the colors. Then I thought maybe fabric collage, but it ended up with quilt making, which is fine. But the craft always followed me. I was so lucky that way.

MS. MALARCHER: So, you’re back in the United States now, and you’ve had this hospital interlude, and are you wanting to get back into the – oh, you said you wanted to go into -- to study theater.

MS. HARTWELL: And I did. I have --

MS. MALARCHER: Where did you do that?

MS. HARTWELL: Queen’s College [New York City].

MS. MALARCHER: And you got a degree in theater?

MS. HARTWELL: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MS. MALARCHER: And what was your expectation of what would be possible for you when you got the degree?

MS. HARTWELL: I’ve always been interested in children’s theater because there’s a part of my mind which is still infantile. [Laughter.] It’s true. I still -- I work so well with children and they know it, you know, and I know that they know it, so I have a good communication with them. And so I saw myself eventually working with children, seeing what they see and putting it in the theater -- children’s theater, children’s costumes, let the children do the set, because children are -- their little minds are just so -- it’s like a frontier that hasn’t been tapped on yet until people tell them what to do and what not to do.

And so that’s what I saw happening. But then, I remembered quilting. I never really got away from it because it was always around me, you know. I always covered with quilts at night, so it never really got back really far, but I saw quilting in a different light. I said to myself, “Why don’t you take the images that you’re doing in pen-ink and the fabric -- the quilts that you know how to do -- and merge them.” And so that’s what I did.

MS. MALARCHER: So, that was while you were studying theater or after you finished?

MS. HARTWELL: It started there because I had to do a collage for a set design. I think we did *Hansel and Gretel* and I had to do a collage in frames. So that there were about six frames in this story, and I had to connect them all. That was really the beginning of my connection with narrative quilt making.

MS. MALARCHER: Was your collage made out of fabric?

MS. HARTWELL: Both fabric and -- no, it was made out of paper. Then I later did one -- the next one I did, which wasn't as good as the first one, I had added fabric. But that was a part of -- that was at the New School where I took that. But I was a full-term student at night -- I was carrying 12 to 18 credits at night.

MS. MALARCHER: And you were going to school at night, and what were you doing in the daytime?

MS. HARTWELL: I was working during the daytime because I had to support what I was doing.

MS. MALARCHER: What were you working at?

MS. HARTWELL: At an insurance company. They were like my fan club; they encouraged me to do everything. When I started doing my pen and inks that came to the shows, when I started doing my quilting, they said, "Listen, we know that you are doing this, so we will work with on this, and if you need time just save it up -- and just let me know." My supervisor was wonderful; he said, "You are going to pursue this, you know" --

[Audio break, tape change.]

MS. HARTWELL: They would come to the shows. The men would bring in ties for me -- fabric to use in my quilts -- and I found myself helping children I didn't know -- do -- what are those -- they're not lesson plans -- projects. There were two people that I helped their children with the art projects. I only met the child after she had graduated from high school. And I had been working with both her and her brother since they were in middle school on art projects.

MS. MALARCHER: How were you helping them and didn't know them?

MS. HARTWELL: I was working with their aunts. And the aunt would say, "My niece has this project," and then I would get all the information, and then I would say, Well, ask your niece this, and tell your nephew this, that they need to do this, and they need to do -- so I was giving these classes like this -- incredible.

MS. MALARCHER: That's like distance education.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes!

[Laughter.]

MS. MALARCHER: Was your degree in children's theater, or --

MS. HARTWELL: No. You know, it was just in theater because I had this background of all these years in the theater, and because I had -- I didn't work with Fellini in a big part, but I did do a walk-on with Mr. Fellini, and so that was a big plus. You know, I did satiric comedy with him in Rome, and -- it was just in theater, period.

MS. MALARCHER: So, when you finished your degree, did you continue working at the insurance company, or did you --

MS. HARTWELL: I did. I did because art supplies are very, very, very expensive, you know. And before I went to Europe, I tried that. I tried to be -- the artist without the family support. And there were days I didn't eat, and there were days -- there were two days I didn't eat because I had to take these classes. So it was a question between you take the dance class, or you eat. Well, it was more important to take the dance class, so that's what I did. So, when I came back, I knew that I wasn't going to do that, and so I said, "Well, I'll be a full-time artist, but this job is going to allow me to do it." Yesterday, I went to buy a fabric just for one section, and I paid $174, so that -- I considered that as supporting my art.

MS. MALARCHER: What kind of job did you have with the insurance company?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, it was just an assistant account executive. Started out as a clerk, but I would take all my drawings to work to enlarge them because they had a Xerox machine there. So I was always leaving my writings because I also write these folk stories, and I was always leaving things all over the place, and they finally found out and figured out that my attention was someplace else, and so they said, "Well, she really is a good worker, so why don't we try and work with her." So, that worked out to my favor. But I was so lucky.

MS. MALARCHER: What insurance company?

MS. HARTWELL: Tannenbaum Harber actually is one of the oldest insurance brokerage firms in New York; 1860 it was established. They have a logo of a fire truck being pulled by two horses, and the people in the back are in the smoke, and it's about this big. Well, I took that logo, and I blew it up the size of this mirror, and I made it. And they purchased it from me.

MS. MALARCHER: Was it a quilt that you made?

MS. HARTWELL: No, it was a black and white, pen and ink.

MS. MALARCHER: Are you a full-time quiltmaker now?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: And when did you become a full-time quiltmaker?

MS. HARTWELL: Even when I was working, I worked from six until four in the morning. That's when I worked on my quilts. And then I would just, especially if I was doing a show, I'd just -- I would work straight through the night, take a shower, and go to work. But as far as not having to go to a place and having a studio, I've had this for two years now.

MS. MALARCHER: This --

MS. HARTWELL: Where I'm not working, I'm a --

MS. MALARCHER: Okay, so, for the past two years, you've been a full-time --

MS. HARTWELL: Right.

MS. MALARCHER: -- quilter. Okay, so, let's go back to when you are out of school, and you are really taking quilting very seriously as something that you're going to do -- did you make a conscious decision that this is going to be your art form?

MS. HARTWELL: I did, but I had the pen and ink that was making money for me at the time when I came back from Europe after the theater. The pen and ink was making money for me.

MS. MALARCHER: How was it making money?

MS. HARTWELL: Because I was giving exhibitions, and they were buying them.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh.

MS. HARTWELL: So, that was the thing that was making money for me, and the quilt making and the textiles and the collages, I was still in the experimental stages. They were in experimental stages the way they were when I was growing up on the farm. I would still make them, and oh, I would just use them as a throw or just to experiment with color. It was only when I decided that I would take those pen-and-ink drawings and turn them into narrative works that I didn't turn pro with that because there were rough edges that I needed to -- I wanted -- my discipline as a pen-and-ink artist, it was difficult for me to do it in narrative quilt making because I still had the discipline of the pen and ink, and I couldn't get the fabric to do that.

MS. MALARCHER: You couldn't get the detail.

MS. HARTWELL: The detail. So, how I solved that problem, I did it with color. So, when people look at my quilts, they're very colorful. I love color, so the compensation was going from black and white to color, like from "Over the Rainbow" [*The Wizard of Oz*]; there's a house, and all of a sudden, there's color.

MS. MALARCHER: Were you making your whole living with the black and white for a while?

MS. HARTWELL: No.

MS. MALARCHER: Okay.

MS. HARTWELL: But I was making more money with the black and white than I was at work. But I was afraid to quit my job because then I had an apartment, and I couldn't rely upon the fact that -- you know. Artists, they can make a ton of money for let's say three months, and the next six months, they starve.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, where were you showing? What kind of galleries?

MS. HARTWELL: I had a big show at the Park Lane Hotel, and I sold everything except one, and I had like 20 pieces. So I was showing locally. Just --

MS. MALARCHER: Locally, meaning in New York.

MS. HARTWELL: In New York City. And I did some art work in Europe, but I didn't sell it because at that point, I

was giving stuff away. I think most artists, when they first start out, they're so unsure of themselves that they give away a lot of things, but they want to go and ask for it back. But you can't do that, so -- like many of the other artists, I was giving stuff away as with my earlier work in quilts. I would just -- I'm married to work. I would just give it away.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, say something about making this transition from the black and white to color. Was that a hard thing? Was that a struggle?

MS. HARTWELL: It was. It was a struggle because I love pen and ink because it's so exact. When you put down a line, it is there, and there is nothing you can do but build around that line and make that line look like it's a part of the overall design. So I liked the discipline that I had in black and white, and I still love black and white the way I love black-and-white photos. Sometimes it's more realistic than color because you can capture moods. So when I decided that the quilt making that I had I was going to take a step further, it was very hard to -- to have that feeling within, but then I noticed that the feeling that I had for pen and ink, I could get it if I really concentrated and became the colors that I was working with.

You know, there's a part -- when I'm working on a piece -- it's like now I'm working on this huge piece, and the reason why it's taking me so long is because I have not yet become this piece, and there's a part, when you're designing, that you're still Peggie, and you're making this design. And the next day, you're still Peggie, and maybe the week afterwards, you have some of the color up but you're still Peggie And then one day, you go in there, and you're no longer Peggie, but you're this piece that is demanding that you finish it. You know, so I haven't reached that part, that point in this piece, but I reached that point when I made that transition from black and white to color. But it took -- I would say it took a few years. It wasn't something that happened overnight, even though I was working with fabric, even though I was beading and had made costumes. I was very familiar with the touch of fabric. The transition was hard.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, did you look at color as it had been used by painters, or did you -- did you begin to look at color as other artists had used it?

MS. HARTWELL: No. I remember the color from the farm because for me -- we were the only house -- we were sitting on two acres of land, so we were the only house as far as you could see. So, when there was a sunset, there was a sunset. And when it rained, I remember once looking out of the screen, and it was like there was another screen outside because it was so misty. And I sat down. I cried because it was just so beautiful to see the muted colors of green through my screen and -- through the mist of outside. Because there were so many trees, it was like, not fog, but like mist. So I remember those colors, and when I am quilting, those are the colors that I try to recall, the colors from my childhood.

MS. MALARCHER: What do you do when you get to a problem, a color problem, that maybe your memory doesn't quite solve? Do you just jiggle things, or --

MS. HARTWELL: Then I look for batik fabrics because for some strange reason, batik fabrics are -- there is something about them that's so foreign, and it reminds me of being home down South, and I can relate because when I was small, things looked like that. They were very bright, but there were times when they were a bit muted. So, when I come to a problem where there's a color problem, and there's a bright red or a bright orange, then I get a batik because in that batik, you see everything because it's -- the colors are like a sunburst, and that sort of pulls me back to where I want to be.

MS. MALARCHER: Do you ever try painting or dyeing your own fabric?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh yes. I -- actually I took a course at FIT, painting on silk, batiking, wax resist -- [inaudible] -- resist. Very nice. I have done that, and when I go home, I'm setting up my backyard to do the dyeing. I tie-dyed in Europe and things like that. I haven't incorporated that into my quilt yet, but since I have the space now, this backyard, I can make a mess. I will be doing all those things, but my faces I paint in the quilts. I don't know if you've noticed, but the faces are with a pen, a Rapidograph pen I use for the eyes. You know those little lines in the eyes around the pupil? -- those. I actually put those in -- in all of my eyes you'll see them. So, I do incorporate my pen and ink in the faces and on some of the fingers.

MS. MALARCHER: So, you were quilting by yourself, and then did you come into contact with other people doing quilting?

MS. HARTWELL: I did. How did that happen? I was quilting by myself, and then someone said they were teaching a class. I heard about a class at Riverside, and so I went, but it was like three, four classes. And I made a piece that I later gave away to a priest. It was *The Annunciation* [1989], and it was small, stained glass, but not -- stained glass with -- [inaudible]. And then I joined a quilters' group. I heard about Empire [Empire Quilters Guild], and it was like all these quilters -- I was in quilters' heaven. It was 200 quilters. But then, they were doing mostly traditional work, and I had this art background. And in quilters' magazines, in the Pin Pals -- P-I-N Pals -- there

was someone by the name of Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi, who was the founder of the Women of Color Quilters Network [founded in 1985]. She said, “Is there anyone out there who would like to correspond with me?” And seven of us -- seven or nine -- of us answered her, and that was the beginning of the Women of Color Quilters Network.

MS. MALARCHER: So, you were one of the beginning members of that?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, yes.

MS. MALARCHER: When was that?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, gee. I can’t even remember. That was in the -- had to be the early ‘80s.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, you can -- you can look that up; we can check it that out, and that’s fine. So, now was that something where the people -- the seven people -- were from all different places?

MS. HARTWELL: Some of them I have never met. We would correspond by phone, and I knew Carolyn for, oh goodness, for like three or four years before I actually met her. We just communicated by letters because then it was -- I didn’t have a computer. And then she started forming all of these shows, and we joined the shows, and she became the nucleus. But then there was this support system because we were all basically doing the same thing.

MS. MALARCHER: Were you sharing pictures of what you were doing?

MS. HARTWELL: We would send pictures, but still we were all doing different things, but still the same thing. There was always a big market for contemporary African-American quilters. They were all out there. It’s just that we didn’t know where they were; so this group allowed us to know each other and encourage younger children and younger people.

MS. MALARCHER: So, did you leave the Empire Quilters when you joined this other group?

MS. HARTWELL: No, I still belong to them, and I belong to Women of Color and the AQS --

MS. MALARCHER: AQS, what is that?

MS. HARTWELL: American --

MS. MALARCHER: American Quilters Society --

MS. HARTWELL: -- Quilting Society out of Paducah, yeah. And I’m going to start a new guild -- I’m sorry --

MS. MALARCHER: So, how was it -- how was it a different experience to be working with these African-American quilters? Did you have common ideas that you were working with that were different from what the other group of quilters was doing?

MS. HARTWELL: It was because we were all doing things that had touched our lives, narratives. Everyone from the farm. I did a piece called *A Chinaberry Tree* [1994], and if I would mention the chinaberry tree in a room full of other Southern people, they would immediately know what that is. They would immediately know that people gathered to talk underneath it. That is part of African-American history, the chinaberry tree, as much a part of it as the magnolia tree is a part of the South. The experiences were the same.

MS. MALARCHER: Were they -- did they all have a background in the South?

MS. HARTWELL: At some point they did, either grandparent. Yes, I would say most of them did. But there were some who were born in Chicago or born in another place, but still their grandparents or great-grandparents came out of that.

MS. MALARCHER: So, there were family memories?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: So, when did the Women of Color begin to exhibit together?

MS. HARTWELL: When did we have our first exhibit? I would need to look that up. I think it was in the ‘80s. I did my first national show in ‘89.

MS. MALARCHER: What show was that?

MS. HARTWELL: In Houston, Texas.

MS. MALARCHER: Was it --

MS. HARTWELL: The -- the international --

MS. MALARCHER: Does it have a name?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, it's the international show that they have every fall [*International Quilt Show*].

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, that -- what do they call that?-- the *Houston Quilt Festival*.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, through Cuesta Benberry [quilt historian]. She had a section there, and I exhibited that same piece that I gave away, *The Annunciation*. It was on exhibit there, not a part of the big -- but it was still there.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, from these beginnings of Carolyn Mazloomi and the seven or eight people who responded to her little ad, how has that organization developed since then?

MS. HARTWELL: It is because of her that we all have a voice because, you see, she was the nucleus. She's also an aerospace engineer with -- with thinking like that, and so she -- she's able to just pull things together. She's remarkable. She retains all of this stuff in her brain, so she knows where all of us are, you know, like at one point. And I think even now, they're like 1,500 members, as far as Africa, and she's in communication with these people in Africa. And the most amazing thing is that when we were all in the infancy of the Women of Color Quilters Network, there were people doing magnificent work, you know, just really incredible work, and when they -- when Carolyn -- found us, or when we found her, they said, Oh finally, we can exhibit now. Because when people thought of African-American quilters, they thought of the strip quilters or just improvisational -- that's what they thought of. But they never knew that there were some people out there who were doing very fine work. And if you did have people doing improvisational work, that's what they wanted to do. And even if sometimes people are doing improvisational, it doesn't mean that they can't do fine work. It's that they have chosen to do that. So, there are so many of us, and she's putting together -- Dr. Mazloomi -- a show now. She's getting quilts from South Africa. She called me up, and she said, "You should see the work. It's just magnificent." Oh, she would get work in from India, or you know, from women all over, and she was saying the work is stupendous. And these are people who maybe don't exhibit art, do not get the chance to exhibit.

MS. MALARCHER: When you say women of color, what are the boundaries of that?

MS. HARTWELL: There really isn't, you know; I mean, Women of Color is mostly, of course, African American, but we have members of all races.

MS. MALARCHER: You mentioned India, and that's not African American.

MS. HARTWELL: I know! I know! But we -- listen -- what's her name -- Penny Sisto, she's one -- a member, and she's from Wales, I think.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh.

MS. HARTWELL: So, you know, that's just a name. It's predominantly black, African American, but anyone can join, anyone can join.

MS. MALARCHER: So, was *The Spirits of the Cloth* [catalogue from the exhibition: *Spirits of the Cloth: Contemporary African American Quilts*; Carolyn Mazloomi; preface by Faith Ringgold; foreword by Cuesta Benberry; New York: Clarkson Potter/Publishers, 1998] -- was that your most important emergence?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, that was it, because it was a brainchild of Dr. Mazloomi, and just to finally meet people you may have been talking to on the phone for years, and it was just wonderful. You know, quilters are very affectionate, so they hug everybody, so you can imagine seeing someone that you had not ever met, but you've spoken to that person, and you've exchanged ideas, and all of a sudden, it was a lot of hugging and crying. It was just really wonderful. This quilting community has given me the extended family back from my childhood, you know. That's what it has given me. Because that was the feeling when I was growing up.

But in my quilting world, we can still say to each other, you know, What you did was wrong. I don't agree with what you did, but I will accept it because that's your decision, but I don't agree with it, and it was wrong. So this is a part of my extended family, and this is what I like -- that we're very honest and open with each other. And that's healthy. It's really good.

MS. MALARCHER: Did you follow the show around at all?

MS. HARTWELL: I didn't; no, I didn't; I'm so sorry I didn't. I think I went -- did I go? I was at the Renwick. I went to Houston to see it this past year because there was a show down there -- international. I saw it there, but for the most part, everyone -- most of the people did.

MS. MALARCHER: Have other opportunities opened up to you as a result of that show?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, yes. Many opportunities, thanks to Dr. Mazloomi, just opened up, and also, in moving, a lot of things have opened up. The Craft Museum has been very generous to me every time. If they think that something is of interest to me, they will call me up and tell me about it. So -- but that show did a lot for me. It did a lot for all of us because we all existed all that time, and that shows that -- it presented us, the contemporary African-American quiltmakers. So that show did it -- out of everything, that show did it. I've had residencies out of that show. When people are looking for storytellers or people who work with children, I specifically work with children. When people want anyone from the network, they contact Dr. Mazloomi, and then whoever can do that job the best, she will say, "Get in touch with that person." So she's given me a lot of work.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, you said you've done some residencies?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, at Middlebury College of Art last year.

MS. MALARCHER: Where is that?

MS. HARTWELL: That's in Middlebury, Vermont.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh.

MS. HARTWELL: And it was wonderful. It was myself and Faith Ringgold, exhibited at the same time. That was wonderful, absolutely wonderful. I'm getting ready to do another one at Frost Lake. Have you ever heard of it?

MS. MALARCHER: No.

MS. HARTWELL: It's up in the Catskills.

MS. MALARCHER: And what does a residency mean?

MS. HARTWELL: Well, you go, and you stay there for a number of days, and you give workshops, and you give lectures, and you walk people through a piece, hopefully, that they will start, and they will finish. So --

MS. MALARCHER: So, it's like a teaching situation.

MS. HARTWELL: Yeah, it is. I did one at Asheville, North Carolina. That was very nice.

MS. MALARCHER: Where in Asheville?

MS. HARTWELL: At the YMI [Cultural Center, originally the Young Men's Institute].

MS. MALARCHER: Young?

MS. HARTWELL: No, I don't know what that -- all I've ever known it to be was the YMI. And that was very nice. They did a very nice write-up. So it's good, and I did one at a middle school this year, but I volunteered to do that because they wanted to make a quilt about the World Trade Center.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, that was the one -- no, that wasn't the one on the video.

MS. HARTWELL: No, that was the one in the paper.

MS. MALARCHER: Yes.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, and it was wonderful talking to them about the Trade Center because some of them had parents in Afghanistan during that time. But that was good. And they also did these six-feet banners based upon books that they had read. They created a book cover, and they came in second in the state. So that was very good.

MS. MALARCHER: Now you are spending part of your time in New York and part of your time in South Carolina.

MS. HARTWELL: Actually, it's more there -- I come here [New York] only when there's something for me to do.

MS. MALARCHER: When did you move back to South Carolina?

MS. HARTWELL: Last year.

MS. MALARCHER: Did you -- had you been working --

MS. HARTWELL: But I was going back and forth.

MS. MALARCHER: Yes, but were you working at the insurance company all that time, or working at other --

MS. HARTWELL: No, I was working there because they allowed me -- they told me that I could do what I wanted to do, so I wasn't going to --

MS. MALARCHER: So you were working there all that time. And you retired from there?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: And then --

MS. HARTWELL: They gave me an early retirement to follow my dream.

MS. MALARCHER: Isn't that wonderful.

MS. HARTWELL: I couldn't believe it! The -- the senior vice president came over to me. He said, "We know that you would like to be an artist instead of sitting at this desk." I said, "That's true." He said to me, "We'd like to present you with an early retirement. When would you like it?" I said, "Now."

[Laughter.]

MS. HARTWELL: He said, "Well, we can't do it now." That was in June. He said, "What about September?"

[Laughter.]

MS. HARTWELL: And this man contributed to -- I belong to Partners in Giving. I am the artistic director of Partners in Giving. We make toys for terminally and chronically ill children, and we go into Cassidy's Place and give out these toys and invite people in, like Peter Yarrow, to sing and give these toys out. He [senior vice president] donated money towards that -- I had a pregnant teen workshop going on at the New York Foundling Hospital; he donated money to that. But they said, You're free now. You don't have to come here. I thought that was wonderful. Plus, they pay my medical. They gave me a wonderful package to pursue my dreams.

MS. MALARCHER: That's wonderful.

MS. HARTWELL: I was blessed.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, before we talk about South Carolina in the present, I just want to pick up on one thing you said because I read about it in one of the articles you gave me, and that was the project with the teens at the foundling hospital.

MS. HARTWELL: Yeah, that was sad. It was very sad because when I was 13 years old, I was still playing with dolls, and I was drawing in the sand and playing with fabric, making all sorts of wonderful things, and these children are giving birth at 13. They have no outlook for their future. They're living in the moment of this child, and they stay more on the phone calling the baby's father or trying to find the baby's father than they were sewing. It was very interesting. But that was the second one that I did like that.

The first one I did was through the Folk Art Museum, and one little girl -- I wish I could find her, because she went beyond everyone -- and she gave birth to her child while I was giving the last couple of the classes, and she called me up, and she said, "I want to finish." And so she came here, and we sat at that table, and I gave her classes, and then I said, "Okay, you can embellish it and come back and show me what you've done." Well, when she brought this piece back, you could frame it because she had taken this -- it's like a plastic that you can draw -- she had drawn all over this teddy bear. It was wonderful, and I saw in her such a tremendous artist.

And then I did another project with these children from the Bronx Community School, which is supposed to be a school for mentally challenged -- in the neighborhood -- and this one little boy, he didn't want to talk, and he just sat like this. Refused to move. And everyone is doing their block, and he just sat like that. Then, he began to warm up, and so I knew not to talk to him because I -- that was me. So towards the end of this class, I said, "Listen, Maurice, you must participate in this because we can't finish this quilt without you." And he looked at me, I said, "Yes, you need to tell us where to tie these strings because if you don't tell us, all the work is going to go for nothing because we can't sandwich it." Well, what did I say that for? He suddenly said, "Okay, I want a string here, one here, one here." He became alive, and by the time the workshop was over, he was hugging and

kissing everyone and just saying, “Look at this thing, look at my contribution.” It was wonderful.

The other part of that -- these poor children had to have had a mother,
brother, sister -- someone had to have died from AIDS in their family, which, of course, was very personal to me because of my aunt. And the things that they wrote on these pieces of fabric -- and one little girl said, “My mother has AIDS, and I’m going to graduate next year, and I hope to God that she’s alive to see me walk down the aisle.” I would come home, and I’d cry my eyes out. But when I saw it finished, it was just so wonderful. So I’ve worked with children, and when I do that, I do it for gratis. I don’t -- no one could pay you for that experience. Money cheapens it, so I do it, and that’s my children’s theater.

MS. MALARCHER: So, what is it about quilting that gets these kids involved in a way that something else might not?

MS. HARTWELL: Because quilting is a living art. When you touch fabric, it’s like -- you can touch a piece of velvet, and that says one thing to you. And you can touch a piece of cotton, and that will say another thing to you. Fabric has a life of its own, has an energy of its own. All due respect to all the watercolorists and people with oils and acrylic, but there is something about the cloth that it has a soul. It sings to you -- even babies, you know. I saw a baby crying in her father’s arm, and she was just doing this: She was rubbing her hand up and down his shirt because it talks to you. It can be soothing if it’s smooth. It can be sensuous if it’s satin and smooth. It can be rough if it’s burlap. It can make a statement for you. If you take burlap, and you put it on a figure, well, you don’t like that figure. That’s a very harsh figure because you’ve made that figure out of burlap. I mean, I give you those figures in back of my aunt, you know. They did not deserve fine stitching, and so I put those people who were so mean to her when she had AIDS, I put them the way I saw them -- small, you know, and jagged ends. So, children, they feel that in fabric, and they play with dolls, so they -- they know it’s comforting. That’s why Linus in Peanuts had, as a security, his blanket because it talks to you.

MS. MALARCHER: Thank you. You got this wonderful retirement package.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: And, had you been thinking a lot about going back to South Carolina?

MS. HARTWELL: Couldn’t wait.

MS. MALARCHER: Was this a dream that you had?

MS. HARTWELL: Mm-hmm. Yes. Because what I’m doing now, there are customs and traditions that are no longer happening there, and I am researching them, talking to my uncle because he still lives as though he lived twenty or forty years ago on his farm. And I am capturing those things in images on fabric. I just haven’t given this a name yet. But there are so many things that are forgotten that they just don’t do because of the modernization of the South. But I’m doing that research.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, when you were showing slides of your quilts the other day, you showed some very interesting images from your family life when you were a child, like there was that image of the family all clustered in the hall during the thunderstorm --

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. And I’ll tell you a funny thing. They don’t do that any longer, and why, I don’t know. They watch TV like it’s nothing, but I still, when there’s a thunderstorm, I go into my hall, and I stay there, and I still sing. It’s like that’s ingrained in me. But that night, when we were in that hall, the lightning struck the chicken coop, and the chicken coop just went like this, and somehow the lightning struck the little chicken, knocked all of his feathers off, except a few around his neck and on his tail, and it opened his back up. When my grandmother did a cross-stitch on this chicken’s back, it was the first cross-stitches that I had seen. Just cross -- she closed up that gap so neatly. It was incredible.

MS. MALARCHER: While he was squirming?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, she used to perform surgery on the animals. Chickens have what they call -- I don’t know the real name -- a craw -- where all the sand and stuff gathers. Well, she would say they have a sour craw, and she would just gather this chicken in her arms, hold him between her legs, and cut open the craw, empty out the sand, and stitch it back up. That’s what she did. She was always operating on those animals. Isn’t that amazing? So, that was really the first cross-stitch that I remember seeing.

MS. MALARCHER: Mmm. That is amazing.

MS. HARTWELL: So, those are things that I want to capture. Her smoke house is there with all those things in it. I would love to go in there. I don’t know if I can, but my uncle, who lives -- he has, I think, one of the first barns --

you would go there, but you wouldn't find it unless you knew to go back in those woods. But I was thinking about writing to *National Geographic* because it's one of the stop-off points for the geese coming down from Canada. So, you can go there, and it's -- there's this big black pond, and you see all these geese all over the top of the trees, and the reflection underneath them is incredible. But only we know that the geese stop there. You know, no one else knows, and that's -- uncle, "Why don't you send in a letter or do something, say something to the Audubon Society. I'm sure they would love to know this." So, he's not going to do anything. The next time they're there, I'm going to document it.

MS. MALARCHER: Are you living on the same farm?

MS. HARTWELL: No. I'm living in Summerville. I am an hour and fifteen minutes from the house where I was born. I took a picture of the house where I was born, and it's falling down and all grown up.

MS. MALARCHER: So your family is not still there?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, yeah. They're living on the land.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh.

MS. HARTWELL: So I'm so lucky that I can go back there and kick off my shoes and walk where I used to run.

MS. MALARCHER: So, now, there were other pictures -- well, there was the picture of the window that you showed. That had to do with your life in New York.

MS. HARTWELL: Coming up. And the other one, *Night Flight* [1996], that was my aunt who died of AIDS.

MS. MALARCHER: Yes, that was a very moving piece.

MS. HARTWELL: That was just so sad. She was so full of life. I mean, she was like a strange copper color with green eyes and sandy hair, and she just had such an appetite for life. She -- her lemonade was too sweet. She would tell these jokes, and she would laugh, and she was like a child -- not in a bad sense -- she was just so lovable. And she would sit up in the front of the church, and then when she got that, people just -- and she was so ashamed that she would run and walk at night and hit her chest and cry and moan, and her weight just wasted away and wasted away. They were not treating her because they were ashamed of taking her to the doctor because they didn't want anyone to know, because if you live in the rural South, everybody knows your business. And especially in the rural South, you're all connected to those people. And it was just horrific, and when I found out that she had died and was buried, I just thought it was so terrible what they did. I made those people look as small as I could possibly look because I just thought that was horrible, really horrible. So I do quilts of -- consciousness or of conscience, whatever you like to call it.

That's one of them, and I met a homeless woman, and I did one on her as well because I think that as an artist, that is what I should do, too; that should be included in what I'm doing. So, that was a sad moment. But, those things happen.

MS. MALARCHER: So, what is this research that you're doing? How are you going about that?

MS. HARTWELL: I'm interviewing my sister because my sister is older than I am, and her memory is seven years older than I am. I am interviewing all of my aunts. They're in their nineties. My grandmother was 100 when she died. My biggest mistake was not talking to her. But my aunts are alive, and they're in their nineties and late eighties; and my uncle hasn't moved from that time mentally. So I go to his house -- and he goes fishing -- or he used to, he doesn't fish any longer. But he used to fish by methods of -- just insane methods -- not using a rod. He would take these black walnuts and make a powder out of them and throw it into the water. The fish would come up. They would get this powder. They would get intoxicated, and they would just scoop them up.

MS. MALARCHER: Is that an original method?

MS. HARTWELL: That was his original method. So how he discovered that -- that powder, by mashing up the hull from the black walnut has that type of substance in it. Oh, I must add this. My grandmother was an herbalist. I say herbalist because that's the way she cured all of the illnesses. They would just go into the woods. They knew what plants to get to do whatever, and on my father's side, the person -- they call them root doctors -- R-O-O-T -- so, you had these two people into herbs that would cure us of everything. I mean, really. I have a third degree burn on my back. I have no feeling at all. That was treated by my grandmother. And so, my uncle discovered that this powder would make the fish intoxicated, and they would lose their sense of bearing, and then he was able to just put the net down and pick them up. But if you ate that fish, it wouldn't hurt you in any way. So, I'm making a quilt called *Fishing on Edisto Island*; so that's how I'm documenting those things. The baptism and the big -- oh, they were horrible like black coals in water -- used to get baptized like that.

MS. MALARCHER: Was this an outdoor place?

MS. HARTWELL: It was an outdoor like --

MS. MALARCHER: Like a pond?

MS. HARTWELL: Almost like a lagoon. The water was so black. Almost like swampland. Some people got baptized there, and some people, they would have a baptism pool underneath the altar, and they were baptized that way, complete immersion.

MS. MALARCHER: What religion was this?

MS. HARTWELL: That was Baptist, but I'm Catholic because I never understood why there was so much shouting and screaming, because I didn't think God was deaf. So I said, well, "I need to find a religion where I could talk to God in a quiet way," because that's the way I spoke with Him when I was small and at night. I never forgot that, so I wanted to recapture that. So I joined the Catholic Church, and I began to study. So I study the scriptures now and get a lot of inspiration from them. They're full of vivid colors, too. Words are incredible.

MS. MALARCHER: So, do you have a studio in your house?

MS. HARTWELL: I do. And actually, I'm in the process of changing it to the front of the house. The front of the house, the sun comes up, and there's one little magnolia tree out there that I talk to that I love. I have such a love for trees, and so, I would love to be able to sew and look out at this magnolia tree. In the back where my studio is, it's a bit dark, and so when I go back, I'm just going to switch the two, and my dyeing of fabrics will take place in the yard because I'll tie-dye and do my batiks or whatever I'm going to do outside.

MS. MALARCHER: Sounds like a wonderful life.

MS. HARTWELL: It is a wonderful life.

MS. MALARCHER: How many quilts are you able to make in a year?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, I must say that within the last year, I made one, because I moved, I got married, and I had two surgeries on my foot because the first surgery, the doctor failed to put the pin in, and all the bones in my foot collapsed. So, September, October, November -- six months later, I had to have another surgery, and they put in all these pins. But normally, I can make about ten. It really depends on what my mindset is. My hold-up is that I do research, because when I put it down, it has to be right, because with each quilt is a story of about three or four pages. And I'm hoping eventually to turn it into a book, not for publishing but just for myself, for my records, to say, well, this is what we used to do in the old South; we used to do this.

You know, I have a quilt called *The Flower Pit* [1994], and when the first frost comes along, all the flowers that you keep on your porch -- you dig a big ditch, like a grave, really, and you put boxes or crates down there, and you put all those potted flowers down there in the earth in this pit, and you cover it up with boards and burlaps and twigs. You cover it up so it's hot. And then, on the warm days in the winter, because the sun is out, you want these plants to get air. Well, when you open up this pit, it's like a hot house, and the smell is just incredible, and the flowers have bloomed. It's just unbelievable. So, you take out these flowers -- I think I have a slide here of that, actually -- you take out the flowers, and you just put them there for the sun. The contrast is that people have on scarves, and then you have spring in the middle of January. They don't do that anymore, the flower pit. So, that's another thing. So, all of these things have died out. They don't make lye soap. Maybe someplace way, way out, they might do it, but I don't think so.

MS. MALARCHER: Maybe in Vermont.

MS. HARTWELL: You know, maybe, they probably do. But we made lye soap, and oh, I made so much butter before we ate. You know, my aunt said to me, "You need to come down and learn this canning," because she makes these canned peaches. She's the only one doing it in the family. When I go, there will not be any more, so come and get it. So, I need to go and learn that. So, all of these folk things of survival that I would love to know. I would love to know how to go out into the woods to pick the right herb to make the tea from, but I don't have that skill. There was not that need for me to go to Duane Reed or go to Wal-Mart and get something. But that was my background. So it's rich.

MS. MALARCHER: It's wonderful.

[Audio break.]

MS. HARTWELL: [In progress] -- the same thing. But it was like I was saying on Saturday, whenever I talk about quilts, it gives me a chance to revisit, to remember what it's like to wake up in the middle of the night and look

and say, oh, this grandma, my apron, this Uncle Ned's shirt. That gives you such a sense of belonging to a whole, a whole family. You know, it's just really wonderful. So, I love talking about it. I'm just sorry that --

MS. MALARCHER: I can tell.

[Laughter.]

MS. HARTWELL: I'm sorry that I don't have any of my grandmother's quilts here because I do have them. What I should do is take slides.

MS. MALARCHER: Do you have them at home?

MS. HARTWELL: Mm-hmm. I have them at home, and it's just incredible when I think about it. And I really wish I -- I mean, I've thought about it, the fact that I was so small standing in that pine forest. I wonder how did that happen, or how did I get to that consciousness to know that that was a special moment? And I have gotten that moment when I've gone on retreats. I've gone on silent retreats to work out certain situations in my life, and I work out a lot when I'm quilting because I will touch something, or when I'm adjusting the straw hat on a figure, then all of a sudden, I'm touching my grandfather's hat. I'll be tearing down a hornets' nest, and he's saying, "Come on, girl, let's run," or whatever. You know, every time I touch a piece of fabric, it reminds me of another time. And then it takes me back. It transports me back. That's a good feeling. It's like when I go out to the graveyard, and I look, and I see my grandmother, going way back into the 1800s, and it's -- it's just a good feeling. I feel very connected to the earth and to the lifestyle. I guess I'm still a folk person at heart; that's what it is.

[Audio break.]

MS. MALARCHER: When you're in New York now, do you visit museums and -- and do things like that?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, absolutely. If I don't visit a museum, I get with another quilter, and we work, or we talk about techniques. There's a wonderful exhibition I'm going to see on Wednesday. It's on tapestries, and I haven't seen it yet, but I can feel it.

MS. MALARCHER: Is that the one at the Met [*Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence*, March 12 - June 19, 2002]?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. My girlfriend said you have -- you must go see this -- this tapestry exhibition. And when I think of tapestry, I think about living in Persia and in Greece and in Beirut -- all those rugs, you know, and the people who make those rugs over there. And also in Italy, they have a lot of Persian rugs or rugs coming over from India. And when you look at those handmade rugs, it's just unbelievable. And when I look at that, I just think of it as another form of quilt or a craft that is made by a woman, and instead of -- she's living in a hot climate, so she's not going to make quilts, but she's making a rug; that for me, I live in a cold climate, so I don't make rugs. We don't have looms here; it's not a part of the culture that I come from, but we do make quilts, and so it's really one and the same. It's almost like it's a thread fiber, you know. Fiber is just incredible.

Last year, I went to visit my uncle's farm. He is doing a collective, a co-op, with these other farmers, and they have all this cotton, and he has this cotton picker. The thing is so funny because when you're driving up to his house, you see all the cotton all over the road because when they take the cotton off, and they put it on the truck to take it to the mill and gin, the cotton falls off. So it looks like it's snowing in July on the road. But I was looking at the cotton, and I picked it up, and I said to this one little cotton ball, I said, "One day, you're going to be a piece of fabric." And it's just amazing, this white substance, this white fiber -- this plant grew this white fiber that is going to be a part of a blouse. That is awesome. It really is when I think about it. It's really just awesome. It's just really wonderful.

So I don't mind all those days I crawled on my knees and cut my fingers when I was pulling off the cotton, because you cut your fingers when you're picking cotton because of the case that holds the -- it has a name -- holds the cotton has already turned dry, and it opens, and that's how the cotton comes out. But I don't mind those days. I'm so grateful for all the cotton I picked -- really, really, really grateful, and I'm not ashamed to say that I picked it.

MS. MALARCHER: That's great.

[Audio break.]

PATRICIA MALARCHER: This is Patricia Malarcher, interviewing Peggie Hartwell for the second time [June 10, 2002] in the apartment on Central Park West in Manhattan where she is staying.

Peggie, I think today we should take a look at some of your quilts and talk about the stories and how you

decided to tell them in the way that you did. But first, I'd like to ask you something about your technique. Do you make a full-size sketch and then use that as a pattern for the pieces, or do you cut directly into the cloth?

MS. HARTWELL: I make a full-size sketch, and I blow it up to be the actual size that is going to be on the quilt.

MS. MALARCHER: And then do you cut that up and use that as pattern, or do you use patterns for individual pieces, or do you trace it?

MS. HARTWELL: I trace it onto freezer paper, and I use the freezer paper method of appliqué onto the background fabric, which I have already made in a patchwork-type situation.

MS. MALARCHER: What do you mean?

MS. HARTWELL: Well, the background -- most of the time it's not appliquéd. I usually work with a sky and, let's say, grass, and I appliqué trees on top of that or a house on top of that, but the background quite often is pieced together to get the different degrees of a color; let's say, green. So that's pieced in a strip fashion -- strip -- quilt -- going across.

MS. MALARCHER: So, you then appliqué on top of this pieced background.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I do.

MS. MALARCHER: Say something about the freezer-paper method.

MS. HARTWELL: The freezer-paper method is really a great way to appliqué. One side is sticky, so that's the part that is your seam allowance, and you simply put the freezer paper on top of the back of the fabric and turn it over and iron it on, and it sticks and it forms the actual template that you're going to work with, which is wonderful because when it cools, then you can pull that off and you have a perfect shape.

MS. MALARCHER: Sometimes you turn the edges under. Do you have problems with all those curves in your shapes?

MS. HARTWELL: No, because I think, after so many quilts, you just make it work. And if you're dealing with curves, you always work on a bias of the fabric. So that that's the part of the fabric that stretches, and then you don't have a problem that way.

MS. MALARCHER: Were there any technical problems that you ran into that you had to figure out how to solve?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, quite often you're working on something, and you don't particularly like the shape after you stand back from it -- or what I do is I take a picture of what I'm working on, and I will look at it the next day after I get it developed, or later on that day, and you might not like that shape, so then you need to take it out. I've taken out a whole section of a quilt just to get to an image or a design that's only maybe two inches in width.

MS. MALARCHER: Let's talk about this quilt that's called *The Ode to Harriet Powers* [1995], that pays tribute to the Bible quilt. I think she made a few Bible quilts, didn't she?

MS. HARTWELL: Well, yes.

MS. MALARCHER: Has she been an important inspiration to you?

MS. HARTWELL: She really was. When I first started noticing the narrative quilts, I studied her technique. She only had two, and of course one is in the Smithsonian [Harriet Powers, *Adam & Eve Naming the Animals*, National Museum of American History], and the other is in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston [Harriet Powers, *Pictorial Quilt*, 1895-98]. And Cuesta Benberry knew that I was doing this research, and she sent me all of the works -- all of the writings that she had on Harriet Powers, along with the pattern book to one of her quilts.

So, she was very inspirational to me because I saw that telling stories could be an old-fashioned -- it didn't necessarily need to look like a painting, because her pictures are not -- her quilts are not -- but you know what the story's about.

MS. MALARCHER: What do you mean she showed you the pattern book? Is this a book that Harriet Powers herself had made, or something that people who studied her quilts made, based on the shapes that she used?

MS. HARTWELL: Someone had taken these patterns and made a pattern book out of them, but I don't know who the publisher was. It was actually a pattern book, but the patterns were small, and of course I enlarged them.

MS. MALARCHER: And -- this image of Harriet Powers that's in the middle of that quilt, is that based on an actual

picture of her?

MS. HARTWELL: That is based upon the only picture that exists. It's a black-and-white, not very good picture of Harriet Powers, but I studied it. I studied the face and how she was standing, and I imagined that she would look like that. And in researching her, I met her great-great-granddaughter -- great-great-great-granddaughter -- and her niece, who looks exactly like Harriet Powers in the book. It's amazing.

MS. MALARCHER: Did you take a picture of her?

MS. HARTWELL: I did. I have a picture of this niece.

MS. MALARCHER: Now, these colors -- in this quilt you have -- on each side of Harriet Powers you have, like, a column of squares, and in each of them is an image that looks like an image from one of her quilts, and these colors remind me of the quilt that I saw in the Smithsonian that she had made. Was that an intentional thing that you did?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. I was trying to pay homage to this woman, and I didn't want to bring those images into a modern world of using today's fabrics, so I used those fabrics that I used, and where I could not find fabrics, I simply created them by drawing on the fabric.

MS. MALARCHER: Now, this other quilt, called *The Window*, is an interesting piece because you talked about it the other day when you mentioned how when you first came to Brooklyn, you and your family would look out the window and look at the street with all the awesome activity going on. Who are the people in this quilt?

MS. HARTWELL: If you notice, there's one in the back that has the same face as Harriet Powers, and so she represents my great-great-great-grandmother. And there I tried to get the five generations that existed in my family at one time -- five living generations -- although they were not all together. But since we always felt like we were all together within our hearts, and we were always talking about them, and stories were always passed on to children, they represent all the women in my family.

MS. MALARCHER: Of those generations going back.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, mm-hmm.

MS. MALARCHER: How do the fabrics represent them?

MS. HARTWELL: Well, I just chose fabrics that I thought that person would like, and fabrics that would represent a passion and a commitment to life.

MS. MALARCHER: One interesting thing about this quilt is that it has this row of people, and they're in sort of a yellow shape, but there's no sense of a background or a foreground. It's almost like they're in the light of a spotlight. And I'm just wondering why you chose to show them in that way without anything else besides themselves.

MS. HARTWELL: I wanted the concentration to be on the people. They are in the spotlight of life. I wanted to connect the generations, and I did not want any distractions in the back, houses and trees. I wanted them to focus on the people, their eyes, you know, the expressions on their faces, and to make it look like a family portrait.

MS. MALARCHER: So you didn't even make an image of an actual window.

MS. HARTWELL: No, no, I didn't. But I wanted to suggest that they were looking out, and even though they might have been looking into the lens of a camera, they were looking out of this window, which of course, windows are not oval, but --

MS. MALARCHER: Well, that's why I thought a spotlight. I was looking at that and thinking what would make people look like that. [Pause.]

Now, in this other piece -- you're not looking in the viewer, but I think you know these pieces. In *The Hall*, it's a very -- *The Storm in the Hall* [1994] -- you have a very different kind of space, because with very simple shapes you have indicated that sense of a hallway going back and also the sense of it being a tightly enclosed space, and the colors -- the deep blues -- also give a very strong impression of it being at night.

Now, do these people in this cluster in the foreground also represent specific people, or general members of your family?

MS. HARTWELL: Specific people, because my grandmother's next-to-the-oldest boy was living there, so are his

wife and children -- the house was always full of people, but at one point, she had, let's say, two of her children living there, and those children were married, and their children were there, and children from the other daughters. So whenever there was a storm at night, we all clustered into this hall. It was not that large, but it was long; but for some reason we stayed in one tight spot, seeking protection from each other.

MS. MALARCHER: And who are these figures in the upper-left and right corners?

MS. HARTWELL: They represent the great-grandparents or the great-great-grandparents, who were not there, but were there in spirit.

MS. MALARCHER: I was wondering if this sense of family protecting each other -- it almost seems like something that speaks of more than one event. I was wondering if you have a sense of this as sort of a metaphor for the family protecting itself from, sort of, the damage or the danger in the outside world.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, exactly so, because we had that protection, even in school -- I think I mentioned last week that my aunt worked in school, so that there was always a protection, a sense of protection or community with people. And there are two angels in the background; I don't know if you can see the two angels that are separating --

MS. MALARCHER: I missed those. Maybe I couldn't see them in the --

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, they have blue wings. And they're there because we were singing the spiritual songs, so I just put them in the back to show that we were being protected.

MS. MALARCHER: Okay, now, this next piece I want to talk about is what you call *The Chinaberry Tree*.

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, yes.

MS. MALARCHER: It looks like China, but you said Chinna [ph].

MS. HARTWELL: It depends upon what part of the South you're from. Some people say Chinaberry; some people say Chinna [ph]. Yes, it's a tree that has a lot of stories told about it in the South, and when you say that to a Southern person, they know exactly what you're talking about.

And we used to play in this tree. It was right outside of my mother's porch. It was underneath the Chinaberry tree in the sun where I learned that I could draw. So that tree held a lot of significance. So, we were playing in it. We were supposed to make brooms, but we did not. We were making -- just having fun. And the broomsticks are at my grandmother's feet, and she's in the background yelling for us to come down and make these brooms.

MS. MALARCHER: How would you make brooms from this tree?

MS. HARTWELL: She made brooms to sweep the yard, from twigs and switches that she gathered, the same switches that she used to give us a beating. She would just get the young switches and tie them together, and you had this broom with these thick, thick branches -- not branches, but twigs, and they swept the yard because the yard was very sandy.

MS. MALARCHER: And you could just pick them off of this tree?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, and tie them together on a long pole or a longer branch.

MS. MALARCHER: Now, this, what looks like a boy and girl, are they -- are you actually -- did you actually climb that tree?

MS. HARTWELL: We did. That's me and my cousin.

MS. MALARCHER: This has a very interesting composition because it really goes far back in space, and you have a horizon line, with trees in it, and you've used some really interesting fabrics to interpret the landscape. This looks like sort of a Bargello pattern --

MS. HARTWELL: Right, it's upholstery.

MS. MALARCHER: And this also has a texture on it that looks like a road.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. That's what I'm getting back into now. This latest piece that I'm doing has a perspective of going back.

MS. MALARCHER: Where did you learn how to show, to give that impression of deep space in a two-dimensional

format?

MS. HARTWELL: It just happened. Well, I think when you grow up on a farm, and there's so much space, that you take that in as a natural surrounding, and so that's what you internalize. That's what you take out of yourself because that's what you see. I grew up seeing that.

MS. MALARCHER: But still, getting it out there on this flat shape is a different thing.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, it is, and -- and later years I read books -- and I'm reading books now on perspective as well, so it's just developed over years through the eyes of a child, through the eyes of the theater, through the eyes what I'm doing now. So you just see things. If they're far away, they're smaller, and the road is smaller, and as it comes towards you then it gets larger and larger.

MS. MALARCHER: Now, this next one seems to be a little bit different in feeling because it's called *The Dance Master* [1996]. Is that also related to your personal experience? In the theater?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, but that's meant to be almost like a poster. I wanted that to look flat even though the figures on the side of that big figure are smaller; but they're smaller because they go back in time, at least two of them -- three of them -- two of them. And so it was just paying homage to the dance pioneers, the black dance -- male pioneers.

MS. MALARCHER: And you have such a variety of positions in these figures. Did your own experience with dance help you to know what those figures should look like?

MS. HARTWELL: No, actually I did research on them and just found out what step or what dance they were best known for, and I used one of those steps.

MS. MALARCHER: You said that you had really intended it to look sort of like a poster. Was that for a particular occasion?

MS. HARTWELL: No. No, I just wanted to give that image. I didn't want to go into the perspective of that -- these people were -- Asadata Dafora [native of Sierra Leone, came to New York in 1929, great influence on American Negro concert dance of that era], I think he lived in the 1800s. That's the first upper left. And so -- oh, Juba [Master Juba, William Henry Lane, developed a rhythmic, stamping, clapping, patting type of dance. Juba was noted for his jig dancing.]. You know, they were all, like, in the 1800s -- yes. And then Arthur Mitchell [first black dancer to become a principal dancer in the New York Ballet Company. One of his most famous roles was created specifically for him by George Balanchine. Mitchell is the founder of Dance Theatre of Harlem.] and -- Arthur Mitchell, of course, he's still alive, and Geoffrey Holder [extensive theater career, which includes becoming a lead dancer with the Metropolitan Opera Ballet in 1956] also -- he's still alive, so they're on the right hand side.

MS. MALARCHER: Okay. Was this done earlier than some of these other quilts, or do you sometimes depart from your narrative theme and go off and do something else?

MS. HARTWELL: I do.

MS. MALARCHER: This next piece is called *The Home-Going of Rosie Lee Hartwell* [April 20, 2000], and that is your mother.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: And how did you come to know how to describe her in this quilt?

MS. HARTWELL: I remember meeting my mother -- I think I mentioned that to you -- and when I met her, she was bigger than life. And so, after she died, I wanted to do a piece to her; I wanted her to take up the whole piece. I didn't want her image to share with any other thing, but I wanted the images to be within her. So that is why I have -- her body really is made up of hearts because she was much loved, and we four children that are in there represent the three living children and of course the one that she lost, that we didn't know that she had lost, and he's facing or she's facing another way. And the "home-going" is what we call funerals in the South. It's not called a funeral -- or, it's called a funeral, but it's really called the "home-going"; that person is going home. And everything is sewn down except her feet, which are detached.

MS. MALARCHER: Really?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: Just flopping there?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, her feet are just flapping there.

MS. MALARCHER: And that means -- what does that mean?

MS. HARTWELL: That she's still --

MS. MALARCHER: That she's not attached to the Earth any longer?

MS. HARTWELL: No, she's -- but she's -- and she's in our hearts. We can take her into the heart, so she's -- she can do this.

MS. MALARCHER: You've used a really interesting fabric for her hair.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. It's made up of clocks. It's millennium fabric.

MS. MALARCHER: Clocks?

MS. HARTWELL: Clocks, yes. There's some clocks in there in 2000, despite the white. And I used black and white in most of my -- even if it's just a little piece, I use it. But I remember telling her three weeks before she died, I said, "Mom, do you know that in a couple of months it's going to be 2000?" And she just looked at me as though she couldn't even begin to understand the passage of time, so that's why I used that fabric.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, is this -- this other fabric is also her hair that is kind of like a --

MS. HARTWELL: Black and white?

MS. MALARCHER: Yes, sort of like patterns on a TV screen.

MS. HARTWELL: Like, just -- yeah. All the black and white, that's her hair, yes. That was just to get a visual effect, also of just -- it doesn't confine you. When I use that type of fabric with that design, it takes your mind out of being confined to where, let's say, color would keep it --

MS. MALARCHER: This looks like a very happy quilt.

MS. HARTWELL: It is.

MS. MALARCHER: And from what you've said about your mother, with all of her hard work and focus on work and everything, it almost looks like a different side of this woman than you've described.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. She was happy in that she wasn't in the South any longer, because she hated farming. She did not want to return home. And she, in the end, was in so much pain or discomfort. I don't think -- she never complained about pain. I just think of her soul as being free, so that within itself is a blessing.

MS. MALARCHER: She doesn't look like she's wearing city clothes.

MS. HARTWELL: No, one thing that's bothering me about this piece that I'm doing is very few of my women and men have on modern or city clothes.

MS. MALARCHER: Okay, now here's another one that is sort of a departure from your family narrative. It's called *Hagar and Her Children* [October 20, 2000].

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, because I do, also, crazy quilts. When I need a complete break from my narrative, I'm not thinking; I will do a crazy quilt.

MS. MALARCHER: It's really the borders of that that are a crazy quilt.

MS. HARTWELL: That's a crazy quilt.

MS. MALARCHER: And that suggests a Biblical theme.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, yes, and it's a woman's issue of -- it's dedicated -- [pause for siren] -- it's dedicated to single moms who raise their children. So that's why -- well, Hagar was only supposed to have one child, Ishmael, but I thought perhaps that she had others. I couldn't imagine during that time that she would have only one -- [laughs] -- so I gave her two. And I used a rich fabric, and you can't really see this, like a little blue down here to represent the water that was given to her in the desert when she needed it.

MS. MALARCHER: Is this something you made for a particular occasion or just for your own refreshment?

MS. HARTWELL: I made it for that, for my own refreshment.

MS. MALARCHER: And this one is called *Eve's Garden* [January 3, 2001]. And is that supposed to represent the Eve in the Bible, or is it somebody that you knew called Eve, or --

MS. HARTWELL: I think of every woman as being an Eve, not necessarily doing things bad. That's why I put the garden in the back -- I don't know if you can see, the garden's right in the back where she stepped out of the garden. The decisions that women make -- that can change a life, her life or the family, whatever. So, that's another -- that's the continuation of Hagar, because I wanted to do some of the women in the Bible, but associate them with women of today and the struggles of women of today. And in both of those cases, Hagar and Eve, they made choices, or choices were made for them, but it involved a choice. So, in this *Eve's Garden*, you can't really see it, but the serpent is on -- like down one side of her head, on her arm, and the serpent's head is inside of her arm where she's holding an armful of fruit. So it's a matter of choices.

MS. MALARCHER: And here, I think that your composition is really interesting. In several of your quilts, you have this wonderful row of trees at the top of the quilt that looks -- it kind of gives that sense of space, but it also makes a wonderful pattern of vertical lines.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I like working -- I think in my series to come that I will use that technique, which is reversed appliqué, you know, which I really love. It gives you such freedom to put a piece of fabric underneath, and instead of working from the fabric that's applied to the top, you just cut out. It just gives you such freedom to connect all of these things. It's reversed and regular appliqué.

MS. MALARCHER: And here you have her within a rectangle that looks like a different space than the actual garden.

MS. HARTWELL: It is. It really is, because once you make a choice, then you really do step out of wherever you are, that wherever you need to be to be away from the choice that you need to make. So that was just a matter of putting her in another space, to create two spaces.

MS. MALARCHER: So, I think one thing that I realize or appreciate in talking to you is that nothing in your quilt seems to be accidental, that everything has a reason for being there.

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, absolutely. You know, I was thinking, when they asked at *SOFA* [*Annual International Exposition of Sculpture Objects and Functional Art*, May 2002] how we made our images, most people said they just cut them out. But I need to know where my images are going, because if I don't know, then when I finish the piece, I might find that some of those figures or colors don't go together; they don't want to be together, and then I would have to take it out. So with me it's agonizing to start a piece because I need to see it finished, and I need to -- even though I'm still choosing my colors -- in the back of my mind I know what I want to achieve; I know the feeling that I need. So for me, I need to have it all done that way. I can't have accidents.

MS. MALARCHER: So, have you selected all your fabrics before you begin to work on a quilt?

MS. HARTWELL: Ninety percent of them have been selected, but I always leave room -- there's always one piece of fabric that I will use, and I won't use it anywhere else. And so, I will save a special piece of fabric that I've purchased, and I won't use that on anything; there won't be a repeat of anything. But most of the time I have my fabric, yes.

MS. MALARCHER: You talked about using fabric that had belonged to people from clothes that they had worn and things. Do you also go out and buy fabric by the yard?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, 10 and 12 yards sometimes at a time. Let's say I'm going into a store, and I like the fabric. The best thing to do is to just buy at least eight yards because it might go out of print, and they may no longer have that fabric that you love.

MS. MALARCHER: And do you always use cotton?

MS. HARTWELL: Most of the time. If I'm doing my narratives, they are all cotton, unless I add silk. My mother has a piece of silk, a locust flower, just in her heart over here, and if I'm doing a crazy-quilt pattern, of course then the sky's the limit.

MS. MALARCHER: In your mother's quilt, were any of the fabrics from her clothes?

MS. HARTWELL: No, but there's another quilt in there -- I think you should have [a slide of] *Wild Horses and Dragonflies* [January 2, 2000]. The dress that she has on belonged to her, the black-and-white dress.

MS. MALARCHER: Why don't we talk about that one next, then? This one looks like a mother and two little girls,

or at least a woman and two little girls.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. At dusk we used to go walking in the watermelon patches or just walking in the fields, and the trees were always in the back, and the trees always looked one big tree that had several trunks. And so that's what I put in the background to show that the sun was going down. And so that represents that the children were always taken for walks -- even though we lived on this spacious farm -- and they would just talk about a bunch of stuff. The dragonflies are encircled to show that that's really what's contained within the child's mind, and the parent, or if there was more than one parent, they were usually just looking over the fields, saying to themselves, I hope it rains tomorrow; it doesn't look like rain; the crops needs this and that. But it was just a very good down time for the family.

MS. MALARCHER: And so, one of these fabrics is from your mother's --

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, the figure in the center, which would represent my mother or my grandmother, that belongs to my mother, and those people who commissioned me to do this very big piece that I'm working on now, they purchased that piece.

MS. MALARCHER: You look very dressed up to be walking in the fields.

MS. HARTWELL: I know, but children always felt dressed up. We felt very dressed up no matter what we had on. We put on those straw hats, and we just felt very dressed up. And since walking in the fields was such a rich time of the evening, everything looked like it was golden, so I made it like that.

MS. MALARCHER: Well -- [audio break]. Let's see. Well, we finished --

[audio break.]

MS. MALARCHER: The next quilt I want to talk about is the one called *Night Flight*. You had said that that represents your aunt who had AIDS, and that just looks like such a symbolic piece. There's so much anguish in that figure, even though she is very, very simple in shape, but then you have that blackbird in the left-hand corner – upper-left corner -- and then you have what looks like a sun or a moon in the right corner, and then you have these very small figures. Say something about that. I mean, what for instance does the bird represent?

MS. HARTWELL: The raven, the bird of death, he has a cross, a red cross there. The raven is carrying that ribbon that started out to be the AIDS ribbon, but now it's used for everything. And that's my aunt, my father's brother's wife, who, as a senior citizen, got AIDS. And so I just wanted to do a silhouette-type figure, although it's not a silhouette because that fabric has all of those little circles in it. If you look at it, you can -- it almost looks like cells. And so, the anguish was that she was walking in the woods that night, beating her chest, and that's why I have the moon, and she's holding palms -- because, you know, she felt crucified by those townspeople. And I made them small because I didn't think they deserved to be as large as she, and I made them cruel because they were so cruel to her. I made them like folk figures, and I made their hands a different color because they -- just did not deserve to be sewn in a very fine fashion. And I wanted that to be as simple as possible because, as complex as AIDS could be; in the end it's just very simple. You have it, and that's it.

MS. MALARCHER: And that all -- well, what looks like an all-black background in this, at least looking at it in this little viewer -- is so striking.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I think there are two or three leaves.

MS. MALARCHER: There's some green leaves here. Were those on the fabric or did you put them there?

MS. HARTWELL: No, I put them there to show that she was walking through the woods. I didn't want anything to take away from her anguish, so I didn't want to put any trees in there. I wanted this to be about her and the townspeople, and so that's why I made it like that.

MS. MALARCHER: I think you had said something about the kind of fabrics that you used in that.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, it's -- it's all 100 percent cotton, and the leaves are a cut out from an African fabric, and everything is cotton. And actually, the top raven is based upon an African military flag, and I don't know of which -- which country, to show that she was going through a battle. You know, it was a terrible battle to be such a lively, outgoing person who loved life and loved children, to walk in the woods at night because now she's no longer accepted, you know. It was devastating. It was devastating for me because she was such a gracious person, and she loved to laugh. She would grab all the children and hug them and kiss them, and, you know, it was just awful. But the townspeople reacted out of ignorance, so -- I didn't want to offend them in my art, but ignorance can hurt, and usually hurts people, so that's *Night Flight One*, and I'm doing another one.

MS. MALARCHER: The next slide I have here is called *The Flower Pit*. You had talked about how people dug a

hole and put their flowers in it for the winter, and they covered them with dirt?

MS. HARTWELL: With boards. They dug this pit so that if I stood in it, it was, let's say, four feet or five feet, and they put the flowers down -- usually on a piece of board they would put the flowers there, and then they would cover it up with other pieces of board and burlap and twigs, and it acted as an incubator. And these were all the potted flowers that you would have on your porch that you would want -- I don't know why they never thought to bring them in, but the houses were really cold inside in the winter, so they would put them in this pit, and then on nice, sunny days they would go to take them out to get the sun. And when they went there, it was spring in the middle of January. It was incredible that all of these wonderful colors were there. I didn't realize I had showed that at *SOFA*.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, I don't remember seeing it at *SOFA*.

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, okay.

MS. MALARCHER: These were not just the ones that were from *SOFA*.

And here I think there's also an interesting composition, because in some of the others, when you were focusing on a particular person or scene, you put things, the important things, in the center of the composition. Here you have this pit and the people around it in the lower right-hand part of the composition. Did you think when you were doing that that you were doing something a little different from what you did at other times?

MS. HARTWELL: No, usually there's just one center, and there's usually one figure. But I wanted the center to be oval in that it would capture the woman and the reaction of the children to the reaction of the boy to the flowers and the reaction of the girl to the boy reacting to the flowers. So I wanted to have like a triangle, and that would be the center.

MS. MALARCHER: And then you do sort of communicate the idea of the season with the people wearing what look like warm hats and scarves and the bare branches on the trees --

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, and the smoke.

MS. MALARCHER: -- and the smoke coming out of the chimneys, but it's really amazing because I don't think that custom is well known at all --

MS. HARTWELL: No.

MS. MALARCHER: -- outside of, you know, where it was happening.

MS. HARTWELL: Right, you're right, and so that's why I want to document all of these things in fabric because that was something that just happened there, the way we had certain foods. I guess they improvised them in the mixture of certain foods or the cooking of certain things or certain wild things that my grandmother would cook. And I think it was just of that region that those people did that. I often said to myself, How did they know, or Who told them to dig this hole and put these flowers down there? You know, where did that come from?

MS. MALARCHER: It's amazing.

MS. HARTWELL: It is amazing. Now, how did they know to do that? Unfortunately, my grandmother took a lot of that with her, but my aunts I am going to interview this summer.

MS. MALARCHER: Let's see, I have one piece here that was in a print here.

MS. HARTWELL: A calendar.

MS. MALARCHER: It's a picture of a group of people standing under what looks like an umbrella.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, that's the one that the American Craft Museum purchased from me. That's a very big quilt. It's a huge quilt.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, how big?

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, goodness, I think --

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, it says here: 95 inches high?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. I don't know; I can't calculate that into feet.

MS. MALARCHER: That must be almost life-size.

MS. HARTWELL: Oh, it's more than that. It's very long. It's about 12 inches from the ceiling. I remember working on that. I stayed up all night because it was going into a show and I -- oh, an all-nighter for me.

MS. MALARCHER: Was this in *Spirits of the Cloth*?

MS. HARTWELL: Mm-hmm.

MS. MALARCHER: So, tell me about this. This is one that I haven't really seen. You didn't show this at *SOFA*, and I didn't have a slide of it, so I didn't get a chance to think about it.

MS. HARTWELL: Okay, that's called *African Skies and Southern Soil* [1994], since this took place in the South and the legacy -- or our ancestors were considered to be from Africa. This umbrella is African print, and it was done on Southern soil. My grandfather was the center of our universe, so that's why I made him the handle to this umbrella under which we were all protected and nurtured, and stories were passed down.

So that's me, and those are -- not only me, but just every child within the family. And all of these boys, because in my grandfather's house there was -- there was always a lot of people. You know, after his children got married, the thing was that we needed to continue this extended family, so they were never alone, even though they were quite active. My grandmother was still picking cotton when I was growing up, and they ran a farm, but I had to show that this extended family still existed. And it still exists, in my family anyway.

MS. MALARCHER: Now, it looks like -- are all of these fabrics African or --

MS. HARTWELL: This one is African.

MS. MALARCHER: The umbrella.

MS. HARTWELL: And this one is African.

MS. MALARCHER: That -- is that a dress?

MS. HARTWELL: This is like a dress, and they all have on long dresses. Most of my women have on long dresses.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, that's a really interesting piece. What calendar was this in?

MS. HARTWELL: The Crafts -- Craft -- I think it was a calendar that they gave away if you purchased so many --

MS. MALARCHER: Was it all quilts?

MS. HARTWELL: No, it wasn't. I think I was the only textile artist in that one.

MS. MALARCHER: Was it all African Americans?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, it was the Black History.

MS. MALARCHER: Okay, now, the other slides I have here -- they look like religious pieces. One is called *Meditations* [September 1, 2000], and the other is called *Redemption* [1997]. And it says here on the frame that this was made by a Sunday-school group?

MS. HARTWELL: Right. I approached the church because I want to do a ministry in religious work with children. And so I approached them, and I said, Easter's coming up and I would like to work with the Sunday-school children for the Passion.

MS. MALARCHER: What church was this?

MS. HARTWELL: St. Paul the Apostle. And that church -- that quilt is hanging there, you see.

MS. MALARCHER: Here in New York?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, you can see it at any time.

MS. MALARCHER: On 59th Street?

MS. HARTWELL: Mm-hmm.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, all the time?

MS. HARTWELL: All the time.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, that's wonderful.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, it's there.

So they said, fine, and I went in, and the children already had the images there because it was a part of their Sunday school. And they cut and they pasted, and I came home and I sewed. And it was amazing that I did it -- you know. I didn't have anyone to help me sew those pieces together, and it was great. So, it was a ministry that I wanted to start that I actually started with that.

MS. MALARCHER: So, is this like a series, a sequence, like a comic strip series of images?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. In fact, when I teach, I usually tell them that you can do narrative quilts at a glance like mine, or you could do them in comic-strip type so that you actually see the story as a whole, but you can read it. It's easier to read that way.

MS. MALARCHER: Did individual children do the different rectangles?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, each rectangle represents a class. And some of them were so tiny, but they were in there.

MS. MALARCHER: And then you sewed it all together?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: How big is it?

MS. HARTWELL: I think it's 10 by 14 --

MS. MALARCHER: Feet?

MS. HARTWELL: It was huge -- I put it on this floor here. I couldn't believe -- it's in that book, *Spirits of the Cloth*. But I think it's 10 by 14 or something like that. It's just huge.

That's another quilt that's based upon my mother, *Meditations*, because she always seemed like -- she didn't talk very much, but when she did, it was such wisdom that came out of her mouth. She always seemed to be meditating on something, or just a very quiet woman.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, this almost looks like she's wearing a kimono.

MS. HARTWELL: Because when I was doing that, the Guild said, "We're going to do a quilt, and you're going to be given a piece of fabric that you must use in your work, and it's going to be the ugliest fabric, and it's up to you to make it look pretty." So they gave me that, and I said, "Well, I think I'll put it in my mother's quilt."

MS. MALARCHER: Which fabric here was the ugly one?

MS. HARTWELL: I didn't think it was ugly at all. It was just the darkest one that you see in there.

MS. MALARCHER: That one that's kind of purple, or --

MS. HARTWELL: Not her hair. I think there's some in her legs. Oh, in the arms, in the arms.

MS. MALARCHER: Just one of those patches.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. Actually, it's more -- her arms are made out of that fabric. It was more or less like a challenge quilt. And if you notice, now, that was a great departure because the background is patched with batik fabric.

MS. MALARCHER: Is she in, like, a lotus position?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, because she always seemed like she was in a position that was not on this Earth. She always seemed just very at peace with herself. So I just thought, well, I meditate, and that's supposed to be a very peaceful kind of position.

MS. MALARCHER: Did she see that quilt?

MS. HARTWELL: No, unfortunately my mother saw very little of my work, of these latest ones. She never saw anything dedicated to her. It was unfortunate.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, last week we talked about this commission that you're doing, and --

[Audio break.]

MS. MALARCHER: Okay, so, you are now working on a really huge project.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, it is a very big project --10 feet by eight feet, that's very big -- with a very unusual background in that you have trees proceeding from the front going back, you know. Usually I have them running across.

So this was a piece that we sort of collaborated and did together, because they told me to submit many designs, and I did, and so they said, "Well, I want this woman and that man and this woman and that man and so on and so forth." And I arranged them in a setting, and I sent it to them, and they kept changing figures. And finally we came up with one, and it's really, really, really big. It made me change my studio space because it's just -- it's so big I -- I've always worked on a wall, except for when I did the Bible quilt -- the *Redemption* quilt -- and I worked on the floor. I am able to work better on the wall because I need to be able to walk into the work and to be able to see it -- to stand back and be a person in a museum or a gallery looking at the work. So it's very large, and because it's so large and I'm dealing with images that I would never put it in my quilt, you know, and so it's just very difficult, and then I need to switch gears.

MS. MALARCHER: You talked about them, selecting this and that. Who's "them"?

MS. HARTWELL: Mr. and Mrs. Stanley and Peggy Chodorow [Team Chodorow, La Jolla, California].

MS. MALARCHER: Okay, and they're private clients, not a corporation.

MS. HARTWELL: No, they're private clients, although she owns -- if you go online, I think it's C-H-O-H-R-O-W [sic] [Chodorow], Stanley and Peggy. He's a professor at the -- I think the University of California [at San Diego]. They live in San Jose, and she and her son own a very big real estate company there. So, when I went to look online, I saw that they had quite a big company. But this is for their house. So they purchased that *Wild Horses and Dragonflies*, and they wanted me to do this quilt. They told me about it when they had purchased that one.

MS. MALARCHER: Does that quilt, the one you're working on for them, does that have some kind of subject that is meaningful to them? Is it about a place that they know?

MS. HARTWELL: They told me they wanted an outdoor scene and happy people -- [laughs] -- so the first design, I think I had about a hundred people on this one design, and when I thought about it, I was glad that they did not select that because that would have been murder. That would have taken me a long time to do. So then they said, no, we want something that's smaller with the biggest maybe two or three feet, which was excellent for me. And so, I gave them the design, and they said, "This is fine; let's go with it."

MS. MALARCHER: Did they have any choice with the fabrics?

MS. HARTWELL: No. I thought about that. They told me they wanted something nice, bright and lively, so I'm hoping that it's bright enough. But I noticed that when I'm doing these trees, the other piece they have purchased from me, the trees are going this way, and these trees are going, like, off into the horizon. But, I mean, you can't have a pink tree. I mean, you can, but I don't make pink trees, so I'm hoping that the color will come in when I'm doing the clothing and the border, that I can pull it all together in the border. But it would have been impossible to do if they had to select the fabric. I don't even think I would want to do that because I did a commission piece for Schumacher [F. Schumacher & Co.], you know, in New York City, and I had to use their fabrics. That was one of the hardest quilts that I had ever made in my life because I had to go into their showroom and select this fabric that was almost like upholstery fabric, and it was just very difficult to do.

MS. MALARCHER: So, let's see, what does that piece look like?

MS. HARTWELL: Well, I didn't even get a slide. It's terrible, you know. I don't --

MS. MALARCHER: What did -- do they have it hanging up, or --

MS. HARTWELL: I don't even know -- someone else purchased it. There was a time when I was making work, and I wasn't taking any pictures or any slides because I was just making them. I was a little uncertain as to the direction in which I would go. And so, I would just make the piece and give it away and not keep any documentation.

MS. MALARCHER: Have you done a lot of commissions besides those two?

MS. HARTWELL: I did commission pieces in pen and ink, and, let's see, did I do -- I think I've done about maybe three or four, but they were just private people.

MS. MALARCHER: Do you like doing commissions?

MS. HARTWELL: This particular commission I am very grateful for because it has taken me out of an area and put me into another area where the pieces -- the designs that I'm doing -- should be that large. I'm more stressful when I'm doing a commission piece. I'm not as free as I should be because I'm thinking about, well, how's this going to work in their house, and suppose they don't like this color, you know? So I don't think I am as free as I am.

MS. MALARCHER: Last week you mentioned that you were going to the Metropolitan Museum to see the tapestry show, and that you were particularly interested in seeing large pieces because you were working on this large piece. And did you find that looking at those huge tapestries was helpful?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I wish I had gone to see that before I started this, because I think my design would have been different -- it would have been the same design, but the composition would have been a little different. And I know, from looking at those tapestries -- of course, I purchased the book -- that my designs hereafter will be a combination of those trees that I make in the back and what I saw at the Met, because I was very inspired by it. I was very inspired by the religious art and just the way they had so much going on in one piece that you could stay for hours in front of one piece and look at it. It was unbelievable. What was even more fascinating was the loom. Coming in, you saw this loom, and I couldn't even imagine. So I went with a friend of mine, who is a knitter, and she knows everything about yarn and everything, and she called it to my attention that those tapestries were made in panels, and she was able to show me where they were sewn together. So I didn't know that, and that was very good to know. I mean, I would never work in panels, but it was just unbelievable. It was absolutely exquisite; just a wonderful -- I think everyone should go see it. I was drunk when I came out of there.

MS. MALARCHER: Now, I think we should talk a little bit about how your work fits into, say, a larger picture. The last time we spoke you mentioned the Women of Color Quilters organization, and you said that there were about seven or eight people who responded to this ad that Carolyn Mazloomi put in -- in a magazine, was it?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I think it was about nine. Yes, Quilters Newsletter.

MS. MALARCHER: Quilters Newsletter. Do you remember -- you mentioned a couple of people. You mentioned Carolyn Mazloomi and Cuesta Benberry. Do you remember any of the other people who responded?

MS. HARTWELL: Well, actually, Cuesta Benberry is Carolyn's -- that's the mentor for Cuesta Benberry. She wasn't a part of the network. She was a part of the board and always advised us what to do, because Carolyn --

MS. MALARCHER: Is she a scholar or a quiltmaker?

MS. HARTWELL: No, she made one quilt, but she is a historian, a quilt historian. Yes, the people who responded: myself, Michael Cummings was one, Marie Wilson, who has later died. I know most of the people who responded. Some of them I have met and some I have not.
And then, in turn, I said to Carolyn Mazloomi that I wanted to start a New York chapter of the Women of Color. I have met some people at the -- the Quilt Festival when it was at the -- [inaudible] -- was at the pier. And so I met a lady there, and so there were, I think, about six of us. We formed the New York Chapter of the Women of Color Quilters Network.

MS. MALARCHER: And has that grown?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, we are still doing wonderful things, and from time to time we invite the national members to participate. We're going to be doing an exhibition at the New York Bible Association, and that's a humongous space.

MS. MALARCHER: I know that space.

MS. HARTWELL: It's -- it's huge. So --

MS. MALARCHER: So, you're going to do Bible-related quilts.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, it's called *Threads of Faith*, but that's just in the planning stages now. I need to give them a letter of intent, which I'll do.

MS. MALARCHER: Are you the president of this organization?

MS. HARTWELL: I was up until two years ago, when I moved.

MS. MALARCHER: Will you stay connected to it?

MS. HARTWELL: I'm on the board. I will always be connected to the New York Chapter and the National Chapter, yes.

MS. MALARCHER: So you -- it sounds like you do exhibitions?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, we do exhibitions. The last exhibition we did together was at the Donnell Library; I think that was two years ago. And next year we will have one at the -- if everything goes well -- at the Bible Association, and there's another place that's just being talked about right now. But, yes, we will always show. And we hope to get to the point that we can invite other people to show.

MS. MALARCHER: Do you have meetings, or do you communicate by email, or how do you --

MS. HARTWELL: No, there are meetings.

MS. MALARCHER: How do you get together with these people?

MS. HARTWELL: When I come in -- and I'm here quite often -- but they have meetings without me -- I think it's like twice a year. Because everyone has their own career, and the president now of the New York chapter is the founder of a school in Brooklyn, so --

MS. MALARCHER: Who is that?

MS. HARTWELL: That's Myrah Brown Green. She is the chairperson. So she's working on her doctorate, and she's been very busy; so we met earlier this year, and we'll meet in the fall. So, twice a year at least.

MS. MALARCHER: Are there some people in this group who are full-time quilters, or are they people generally who have jobs and quilt when they have time to do it?

MS. HARTWELL: Well, Myrah runs a school, and she's – quilt making is a part of what she is teaching her children. Dindga is a full-time artist -- Dindga McCannon, she is an artist who's been around for ages; she's always worked as an artist, quiltmaker, textiles, oils, whatever. And so, I would say quite a few of them are full-time artists. And then, some of them work. It's just that they work -- when I was working, I just thought my job was to support my quilting, because quilting is a very expensive art form, you know, so that's what I would do.

MS. MALARCHER: So, how do you decide? Do you approach potential places for exhibitions with an idea, or do you -- how do you do that?

MS. HARTWELL: It can be both ways; sometimes we're approached. And in this case, when I came up -- before I came up -- I sent a letter to the Donnell Library -- because when we exhibited there two years ago for Black History, the director said, "I hope we can do it again," and I said, "Fine." So I wrote her and I said, "Well, would 'again' be okay for 2004?" So she said, "That would be wonderful." So we're going to do 2004. So that was an approach.

And when I came up, someone had said to us before, asked us to go into the Bible Association, and that person, I think, got pregnant and she left. So I had called, knowing that I was coming in to speak to the curator; and then we met, and it was a wonderful idea for both of us. So, yes, it's both ways, and then sometimes we get invitations to just exhibit, and that's what we do. So it really works out well.

MS. MALARCHER: Do you find that when people invite you, they're particularly interested in you because you're African American?

MS. HARTWELL: I would say maybe and maybe not. There was an exhibition that came out of the New England Quilt Museum [Lowell, Massachusetts], and it was just quilts about women, so it was a show that had all kinds of people in there. No, I think it's -- if we get a call from -- like we got a call from the Civil Rights -- that's also integrated. *Spirits of the Cloth* was a show on contemporary African-American quilters, so that was something that we put together and the museum did for us -- [inaudible].

MS. MALARCHER: Now, when you say we put that together, was that the national group?

MS. HARTWELL: Dr. Mazloomi put that together.

MS. MALARCHER: So, that would include all of the different chapters in different places? How many chapters are there?

MS. HARTWELL: You know, I really don't know, but what has happened is that even though there might --

[Audio break, tape change.]

MS. HARTWELL: [In progress] -- well some of them might have -- just like in every guild people drop out, people join, and what happens is that even if they drop out they're still a part of the Women of Color. They are still quiltmakers that we can call upon to say, Are you interested?, because they might drop out because they are very busy pursuing their own careers.

MS. MALARCHER: Are many of these people doing narrative work, or do you see a great variety of work being done?

MS. HARTWELL: I think there's a variety of work. I would say maybe 60 percent of it is narrative, but there definitely is a big variety. Edjohnetta Miller, who is one of our members in Connecticut -- Hartford, Connecticut -- she doesn't do any narrative at all, and she works with fabric from all over the world. Her quilts are rich, rich, rich, you know, just really rich. But still, when I look at her work, because she's working from fabrics all over the world, that says -- that makes a statement to me. And anyone who is familiar with molas [fabrics made by the Kuna Indian women of the San Blas Islands off the coast of Panama] from South America or Panama or whatever and something -- some other fabric from Japan, you know, that speaks of a culture -- of a people.

MS. MALARCHER: When *Spirits of the Cloth* was on at the Craft Museum, I went to a panel that was held, and Dr. Mazloomi and several other quilters were on it, and in that conversation it came out that there were a lot of differences of opinions about what African-American quilts are. For example, there seemed to be an issue that some people always think of African-American quilts as having that improvisational character to them. Is this a discussion that comes up in your quilt groups?

MS. HARTWELL: It used to come up a lot, but I think *Spirits of the Cloth* defined, not redefined, but it defined that you have contemporary African-American quiltmakers out here -- you have quite a lot really -- then you have people who do improvisational. But the improvisational quilts were done, let's say, by my mother and my grandmother, and not that they were not art quilts, but they were quilts that were utilitarian. I think that during that discussion that was during a time when maybe people were not aware of contemporary African-American quiltmakers.

On the hand, Edjohnetta Miller is doing improvisational, and if you would take her work and put it next to someone from, let's say, 30 years ago or someone who was doing improvisational with cottons or just plain fabric, you really would not think they are the same. Edjohnetta, even though she's doing improvisational, she chooses each fabric, and each fabric is rich in color and comes from all of these different cultures; whereas the improvisational from the American South is really done with just what they have at hand. So *Spirits of the Cloth* was trying to erase the ignorance of, well, we don't all do improvisational, and we can do very fine needlework. I think that's what that panel was trying to say and did say.

MS. MALARCHER: Were you there?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I was. I was there.

MS. MALARCHER: What were some of the other issues that came up in those early discussions?

MS. HARTWELL: Besides improvisation?

MS. MALARCHER: Yes.

MS. HARTWELL: Well, you know, it was that -- the biggest problem was that they were -- I'm getting tongue-tied -- contemporary quiltmakers that weren't known about, and so that was one thing. It took us so long to get to this point that we had a voice in this community. That was one thing. And the other thing [was] that we wanted to teach and promote this form of quiltmaking. We wanted to take, let's say, what Harriet Powers did and just grow on it -- just grow on it. And so some people are doing political -- very, very political – quilts, and some people like myself might be doing something from a cultural point of view.

But it always went back to loud colors and raw edges and very large stitches. And so, nowadays if someone is going to put very large stitches that maybe that's what they want it to do. That's fine to do that. And after that a lot of books were made on how to make an improvisational quilt.

MS. MALARCHER: Which sort of defeats the purpose.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, absolutely.

MS. MALARCHER: You mentioned that you are going to start a guild, is that in South Carolina?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I would like to start --

MS. MALARCHER: Will that be a branch of the Women of Color?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I already told Dr. Mazloomi that's what I want to do. She said fine. And I just need to figure out how I can do it with my -- the children from the church will probably be separate; I know it is. But I have people who are waiting to join down there, and that's going to be very, very interesting -- very interesting because these teenagers want to do the heritage; they want to do research. Some of these students, they might become a Gullah culture and so -- a background rather -- and this is going to very interesting -- very, very. I can't wait to start that in September.

MS. MALARCHER: So you said that you have to separate this from your work with the children in the church?

MS. HARTWELL: I don't know if I need to, but for me to be in two places at the same time -- I think at one point maybe we could all get together and work together and maybe on the show together or something like that. But the religious or sacred quilts that I want to work with the children is really to help them with their catechism and also to help me develop this ministry that I want to do of working with sacred things or basic things.

MS. MALARCHER: How did you learn to work with children?

MS. HARTWELL: I never grew up.

MS. MALARCHER: [Laughter.]

MS. HARTWELL: I'm a child. I am. I'm serious. I'm a child at heart and in my mind, and I never try to bring the child where I am. I always try to go where the child is, because children are -- they are so free, and they still can read body language. We have gotten away from that. A child knows when to ask their mother what to do or don't ask because she is in a bad mood or wait until she's done this or wait until she's doing this and then you ask her. Children are so free, you know, so I go where they are and we're fine.

MS. MALARCHER: And how did you retain that connection to yourself as child?

MS. HARTWELL: I have no idea. I just never, ever grew up. I've tried to question myself on how that happened, and I don't know how that happened, it just happened. Maybe I live in the past a lot about my childhood, but it just happens.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, that brings me to this other question that is really a far piece away from your quilts, but last week you were referring to something that had been said by somebody who became your husband, and you didn't say anything more about that person. But then you said later that you had recently been married. Was that the same person?

MS. HARTWELL: But I don't know what I said. Do you remember what it was?

MS. MALARCHER: Well, I don't remember what it was -- I'd have to go back and listen to it on the tape again -- but you just said somehow that he was on the scene at a fairly early stage of your life.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, he was. He was very supportive when I started dancing -- when my father took me to this first tap and voice class. My mother ended that, and so I had to wait until I was out of school -- 18.

MS. MALARCHER: Paying for your own lessons.

MS. HARTWELL: Paying for my own classes, right. And so I met him two years later when I was 20, studying at Syvilla Fort. I met him at an insurance company, and he was with this boxing. He was training --

MS. MALARCHER: Is this the place where you were working?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, we both met there. He was newly out of the service, and he had just come from doing the Olympics. He had this boxer, who had boxed with Cassius Clay, who later became Muhammad Ali, and so he was in that part of entertainment -- that's what I think of it as. And I was dancing, so it was -- we were both in something that was very physical, and so we became very good friends. And he came to take a couple of classes, and then he couldn't walk because dance classes are completely different from training in a gym because you use all of your muscles.

And so he started out being very, very supportive, and he waited all those years that I was going back and forth to Europe, and so he was always there. He was very good to my dad. He was a very good friend of my father's. So when I went home one year to visit my parents' grave, and he was suddenly standing beside me -- had someone told me in 1960 that this person would be standing next to me, I would never have believed it. Never. But he was there.

MS. MALARCHER: That sounds very romantic.

MS. HARTWELL: It is. And I had some concerns of moving South because he's Irish.

MS. MALARCHER: And he was in the Olympics?

MS. HARTWELL: He was -- he had a boxer in the Olympics.

MS. MALARCHER: He?

MS. HARTWELL: Had a boxer -- he's a trainer.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, I see.

MS. HARTWELL: So he had a boxer in the Olympics. He was in the Air Force. He was eight years in the Air Force as a PT instructor -- physical training. And people still know him. They still call him Mr. PT. And he was asked to be the trainer of the 1964, I believe it was, boxing team of the Olympics, and he turned it down because I was in Europe and he didn't -- I don't know where it was -- and he didn't want to do it. And I said, that wasn't very smart. So anyway, he's been in my life for a very long time.

MS. MALARCHER: And he's Irish?

MS. HARTWELL: Mm-hmm.

MS. MALARCHER: Not African American?

MS. HARTWELL: He is Irish, and he gets his Irish up, and I say okay, you go over there and I'll stay over here. Yes, he's Irish. I mean, he is really Irish. He's from Lockport, New York. He's a New Yorker.

MS. MALARCHER: And he's going to move to South Carolina with you?

MS. HARTWELL: He's there.

MS. MALARCHER: He's there?

MS. HARTWELL: Yeah, he's there. He allows me to spread my wings and fly.

MS. MALARCHER: Is he still involved with boxing?

MS. HARTWELL: Indirectly. He is a member of the veterans -- VV -- the Veterans Association ranked eighth here in New York City. And he is supposed to write a book, or someone wants to write a book about him because he has a very interesting life in that world, but I told him I didn't want to hear about that world.

MS. MALARCHER: Maybe you can do a quilt about it.

MS. HARTWELL: I am supposed to do a quilt. There's a boxer -- she was the first female boxer who was licensed to box in the state of New York. She has a picture with Muhammad Ali, and Muhammad Ali has encouraged her or did encourage her when she was very young. Her name was Jackie Tonawanda, something like that, and I told her, I said, I'm going to do a quilt on you, and I should do it, because someone is writing a book about her now. And Whoopi Goldberg had wanted to make a film about this woman because she made it possible for all these other female boxers to box, this one woman who took it all the way to the civil court to get this license. She is to the female boxing world what Carolyn Mazloomi is to the contemporary quilters. If it wasn't for Carolyn, we would not exist. We would exist, but on such a small level. You know, she is such a fighter, and she just had this idea, and it just mushroomed, and now the idea is bigger than she is. So, but anyway, that's my husband's life -- a boxer and trainer.

[Audio break.]

MS. MALARCHER: Okay, last week you had said that while you were living in the South as a child that you never really felt touched by the segregation in the South, and would you say something about that?

MS. HARTWELL: I think the reason why we were not is because we were very isolated. We had this farm, and my grandfather was able to get this farm because of a white gentleman who helped him get a lot of this land, which came up to this almost 200 acres of land. And they became very good friends, and they used to sit underneath the Chinaberry tree and have these wonderful conversations. You know, they would visit each other. But we were not touched by this because we lived in a total black community. We went to a total black church. But when I came up here, when we came north, the first time that it hit me was when we had to ride in an all-black car.

MS. MALARCHER: In the South.

MS. HARTWELL: No, on the train. We took the Silver Meteor.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, so this was before the Civil Rights --

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. This is -- I was -- when I came up I was --

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, this was when you were a young child.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: When you came to Brooklyn to live with your mother there.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. That was the only time that I can remember -- and even then, since I was sitting in an all-black car, it didn't faze me because I had been around all black people, and if we saw white people, they were in town, and there was no animosity. It was just -- it was like a Brigadoon almost. It was just an incredible place. So I got it mostly up here when we were going back -- we would go back in the car, and of course then you had the white or the black restrooms. That's when it became more known to me -- in the travels back and forth, but not there in the South. I'm sure it was going on. Maybe my youth or my being always forever in a child's state of mind, I just didn't see.

MS. MALARCHER: But there was no -- you didn't hear talk in your family about these white people that they would see in town or -- there was not a sense of hostility between the black people and the white people?

MS. HARTWELL: No. I didn't -- it was such a small town. I don't know why. I need to ask my aunt why that happened. I would like to know because for that time, for someone of another race to come and visit your grandfather and sit underneath a Chinaberry tree and talk and just lean back on the tree and then have conversations for hours on end -- and whenever my grandfather had any kind of a problem, a tax problem or any kind of a problem, he went to this particular man.

MS. MALARCHER: Was this man a farmer also?

MS. HARTWELL: I don't know. I think he was just someone with the courts or with the -- not the court -- they didn't call it court then -- but with the -- yes, maybe the court. Someone -- if he did own a farm, he didn't work it.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, that's interesting. It sort of challenges all the stereotypes about small towns in South Carolina.

MS. HARTWELL: Yeah, I guess so because when my father and mother got married, my mother didn't want to live on her land. Well, it wasn't her land then. They went to rent land -- it wasn't sharecropping -- and they rented land from Mr. Morgan, who was a white man, and the family. We played with their children. It was -- I don't know how that happened because that is not normal coming from the South.

MS. MALARCHER: And their children would have gone to a different school?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, but my experience is really -- that's not the average I'm sure. I'm positive that it's not.

MS. MALARCHER: And how was it when you came up here to live with this great mix of people in Brooklyn?

MS. HARTWELL: I had no problem because it was such a mix of Latin people, Puerto Rican people, Italian people, and Hasidics, Hasidic Jewish people, and black people. I did babysitting, and I went over to Williamsburg -- well, we were living in Williamsburg -- but the family was Hasidic. I had my first gefilte fish warm from the pot, came home and ate collard greens afterwards. [Laughter.]

MS. MALARCHER: Well, what about when you went to Europe? Did you have a different sense of, sort of, the climate of relationships among people there?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, in Europe it was -- I remember this woman in Germany said in German, "Where did you come from that you're so brown?" And I thought it was so funny, but she -- I guess she had never seen any brown people. The experience was very favorable. It was really good, you know, really, really, really good. In fact, when we were in Iran, we were just another -- to them we were just another dark-skinned people, because there were so many Africans there and in Greece, too. But in Italy it was very good, you know, it was really good. So I can say that my experiences with that issue were quite unusual.

MS. MALARCHER: You've had a charmed life.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I have, I guess -- sheltered, charmed, because, on the contrary, my good friend who lives in Texas, her father was lynched, you see, and so we were in the same dance company. We went to Europe together. So her experience was different, but for some reason in rural South Carolina where I lived I wasn't exposed to that, and if -- if that did happen, then if it was talk between adult people, maybe it was that they didn't let us know about it as children. They said, They're going to have enough problems when they grow up, let them have their childhood. So what we talked about on the porch was something that happened maybe a long time ago. We just joked amongst ourselves.

MS. MALARCHER: Did your family have any memories or family references to Africa?

MS. HARTWELL: No. They were even ashamed to even talk about the American Indian part of their family, so I don't even know what that was all about, you know. It was just -- it was -- when I think about it, it was really, really sheltered. We worked, we sewed, we canned, we butchered, we went to church, and we sat on the porch at night, and we listened to my grandfather tell stories, or we talked about things that happened when they were smaller. It was just very confined. I don't know if that was good or bad, but I guess it was good.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, when you went to school in this little schoolhouse, I guess you must have been pretty young when you left that.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes.

MS. MALARCHER: But do you remember learning about the world outside of South Carolina in that little room?

MS. HARTWELL: I must ask my sister because she would remember. She's seven years older. I don't remember. I just remember playing, and that's all I remember -- drawing. Once I discovered that I could draw, you know, nothing else mattered. When I think about it, I was really a dreamer, and I see that in my work today because sometimes I would just sit and daydream, just look a sunset or look out at the rain, and just go someplace where I'd never been before. So I was really a dreamer, and that just took -- it kept me there, but it also took me out of there and put me someplace else. So I guess it freed me up.

MS. MALARCHER: Well, do you find -- now that you're spending most of your time in South Carolina -- do you find images of your life in New York creeping in as memories?

MS. HARTWELL: You know, no, because in New York the whole time I created here, it was always memories of the South.

MS. MALARCHER: I just wondered if there might be a reversal there.

MS. HARTWELL: No, there was nothing of New York in my drawing. And even the drawings that I made -- it's like I never saw my grandmother's legs. I never saw them because she always wore long dresses, so most of my women have these long dresses. And the South was always deep in my soul. Even in Europe it was deep in my soul.

I was telling you about this series that I'm working on.

MS. MALARCHER: Yes.

MS. HARTWELL: When we came up on the Amtrak, the seats were made out of straw, and whenever you rode on a train from down South during that time, they would give you fried chicken in a bag that by the time you got on the train station the grease had already saturated the bag, a big box of chocolate, and a basket of biscuits.

MS. MALARCHER: This was from your family?

MS. HARTWELL: From the family. They would come to the train station, and they would see you off and everything. So I'm doing a series because I have been riding this Amtrak all of my life. I need to write Amtrak to ask them if I can -- I guess I don't need to ask them -- to name this quilt Silver Meteor, but that's what I'm going to name it, you know -- *Journeys on the Silver Meteor* because, you know, we were going back and forth. And then my father started driving this green-and-white Plymouth back and forth, and it was -- if you drive, it's something like 17 hours. And then when we would come up on these hot trains, and everyone came from the South, they had these big hats on, and they all had the fried chicken and the biscuits, and it was in this hot straw -- [laughter] -- straw seats that by the time you got to Penn Station you got off smelling like you had just stepped out of a deep frying pan of fried chicken. [Laughter.]

MS. MALARCHER: So you're going to do a series of quilts about these journeys from --

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. From the South --

MS. MALARCHER: - South to North

MS. HARTWELL: -- at that time. So I need to do research -- see I'm doing research on the traditions and cultures -- customs of the South during the '30s and the '40s. I took a picture of the house where I was born. It's still standing, believe it or not.

MS. MALARCHER: Is someone living in it?

MS. HARTWELL: No, it's practically -- it's falling down.

MS. MALARCHER: So what happened to all that land?

MS. HARTWELL: It's still there. I would love to put a quilters' retreat there, but I don't think people would go because it's so isolated, but it's still there. We all own a piece of the land. Yes, my grandfather was very clever for someone who could not read nor write. He tied it up so tightly that you cannot sell it unless you have everyone's signature.

MS. MALARCHER: So it's just sitting there?

MS. HARTWELL: No, people are living on it.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, but not in that house.

MS. HARTWELL: No, that particular house that I was born into did not belong to my grandfather. But I remember that house, and it's amazing to go back there and see, and to see this town, Springfield. See, I have so much work to do and so many images to do that once I finish this big quilt, I can do it now, because they should have been on a large quilt. So, hoping that there's the strength.

[Audio break.]

MS. MALARCHER: Well, now we're looking at the *Spirits of the Cloth* book, the one that was published in conjunction with the Craft Museum exhibition, and you're seeing here some of the work of the founders of both the national organization and also some people from the New York organization.

MS. HARTWELL: Now this work is Marie Wilson's, and her work is very fine. Her research is just incredible. She would make maybe one or two pieces a year, but that was because she had to research her piece, much like me. People who research, they work much slower than people who don't. So this was her *Shield of the Father*, and we drew Adinkra symbols [symbols from Ghana] spun all the way around, just really a special artist.

MS. MALARCHER: So she's researching African art history?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, that's what's she doing here on Ghana.

MS. MALARCHER: Or textile history particularly.

MS. HARTWELL: Well the Adinkra symbols from Ghana -- you know, representing ideas and emotions and things like that. It took her a long time to do that. And this is another one of --

MS. MALARCHER: So she was one of the original members of the national group.

MS. HARTWELL: National and the New York group.

MS. MALARCHER: And the New York, okay. And this you had mentioned --

MS. HARTWELL: Francelise Dawkins.

MS. MALARCHER: Yes. Is she part of the New York group or --

MS. HARTWELL: She's part of the New York group and the national group.

MS. MALARCHER: Was she one of the beginners of the national group?

MS. HARTWELL: No. Not to my knowledge she wasn't. She is from France, of West Indian decent. She was born there. But she teaches this method of being very free and doing things -- like she also was a dancer, and so everything for her is in motion, you know. This is like going around and around and around. So she's a very good artist as well.

MS. MALARCHER: Okay, and then you were showing me the art --

MS. HARTWELL: I was showing you Edjohnetta.

MS. MALARCHER: Who takes fabrics from all over the world.

MS. HARTWELL: Right. And now this is improvisational. She will make these and just put them anywhere or, not really anywhere, but she will make an improvisational piece and then cut it up. She would not cut up, of course, the mola or something that has a -- [cross talk].

MS. MALARCHER: So she's taking not just raw fabrics but fabrics that are actually like art pieces from other countries, like molas. And is that a whole mola, or is it just a piece that she --

MS. HARTWELL: No, it's a whole mola.

MS. MALARCHER: It's a whole mola? That must be a huge quilt.

MS. HARTWELL: This is a very large quilt. This is -- how big is it? 55 by 54 inches. And there's another piece in there. She works very well in improvisational, which of course when you see her working, you know it right away.

[Audio break.]

MS. MALARCHER: This is Dindga McCannon's work?

MS. HARTWELL: Right, you can -- her works looks a lot like Faith Ringgold if you're familiar with Faith --

MS. MALARCHER: Yes, I am.

MS. HARTWELL: Yeah, because they are friends and -- sometimes friends inspire each other unintentionally. Dindga is a very fine artist, and so she brings to quilt making her own art.

MS. MALARCHER: Does she also paint?

MS. HARTWELL: Yes. Oh, she's been doing this for eons.

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, that's better color --

MS. HARTWELL: That is a better color. Oh, this tells you -- this is 95 by 55 inches.

MS. MALARCHER: Are there characteristics in African-American quilts so that if you saw a group of quilts, you would be able to pick some that were African American? Are there any kind of identifiable characteristics that --

MS. HARTWELL: No. Only if it's narrative. It's like this work by Gwen Magee [Gwendolyn A. Magee]. You couldn't tell who did this.

MS. MALARCHER: No.

[Audio break.]

MS. MALARCHER: This one by Sandra --

MS. HARTWELL: Right, you couldn't tell who did that.

MS. MALARCHER: [Sandra K.] German, is it?

MS. HARTWELL: German.

MS. MALARCHER: German.

[Audio break.]

MS. HARTWELL: This is a beautiful piece. It's really beautiful, the colors; it's just absolutely beautiful. These jellyfish were just shimmering; it's absolutely beautiful. She's a technician. There's another -- I think her name is Carole Harris -- you couldn't tell either -- like this work, you can't tell that work -- this work you can't tell. I think in the narrative work you can, but in the traditional work -- this is Marie Wilson's piece. She did a lot of research on this -- on women. Who did all things -- achieved all of these things. Marian Anderson singing at the White House; Josephine Baker -- I'm looking for this one piece of Carole Harris.

MS. MALARCHER: Have you been influenced by any contemporary art?

MS. HARTWELL: You mean contemporary quilters?

MS. MALARCHER: Yes, like you said that Harriet Powers was a big inspiration to you.

MS. HARTWELL: I think I'm inspired by all the people I come in contact with. I look at their work. I also am inspired by Rembrandt, the way he uses dark. You know, a lot of his stuff is dark and, of course, Michelangelo and his wonderful tapestry. I think it would be almost impossible not to be influenced by some of those pieces, but not only as an artist, as an individual. I can't find Carole Harris's piece.

MS. MALARCHER: Okay.

MS. HARTWELL: But anyway, you see what I'm saying. If it's a narrative work you can; if it's a traditional work it's almost impossible; unless it's of African fabric, it's hard to say. And this you can't really tell who did that. This is wonderful machine embroidery that Marie did. This is a schoolteacher, James Smoot, and he uses a lot of -- he paints a lot. He used to airbrush a lot, but he's a wonderful painter and quiltmaker. So you know, quilting has just expanded out. So I think that *Spirits of the Cloth* really did a lot for us because it showed the diversity in all of our work -- in all of our work.

MS. MALARCHER: When you really settle into being in South Carolina and are not staying here for long periods of time, where are you going to find the kind of inspiration that you found in people like Rembrandt?

MS. HARTWELL: The museums -- Charleston is one big museum.

MS. MALARCHER: And how close to Charleston are you?

MS. HARTWELL: Twenty minutes, plus one of the biggest quilt guilds belongs to South Carolina -- these are serious quiltmakers down there, and they go to like quilt nationals and retreats. Just when I came up, they were going to Myrtle Beach -- had a big festival -- and we have a fabulous store that is in the top 10 in the country -- quilt store called People, Places. and Quilts [store in both Charleston and Summerville, South Carolina]. And quilting is a very big thing there. I'm not too far from North Carolina, and so there you have -- I think it's the Black Hills or Asheville. It's full of artists, all kinds of artists, so the inspiration is there. And since I was always doing things about the South anyway, this will enable me to work faster because I can go now to those sources faster. It will take me two hours to get where I was going -- hour-and-a-half. That's going to be good. I can concentrate and work faster. So when I come up in July, I won't be coming back for a while. I have a residency in October in Frost Lake in the Catskills, and that's about it. I've been doing a flier for that.

MS. MALARCHER: Will you be teaching, or is that where you just go and do your work?

MS. HARTWELL: No, no I have -- for teaching -- teaching and lectures. So my students are supposed to finish. What I've done, I've taken Picasso and -- Romare Bearden -- and I've used the two. And I made two drawings. One is Picasso, I think it's someone at the window, *Lady by the Window*, and -- [inaudible] -- a lady standing by a table with flowers. And I want to introduce students to Wonder Under, the double-sided, fusible adhesive sheet, to free them up. I will still show them the stitching and everything, but this is their introduction to narrative quilt making. And so it's a two-day class. It starts on Saturday, it ends on Sunday, and in fact, Saturday night I will do a lecture and slide presentation, question and answers, and sort of encourage people to get up and talk about what it is that they're doing.

MS. MALARCHER: Where did you learn your teaching techniques?

MS. HARTWELL: Dr. Mazloomi in, oh, god, I think it was in the early '80s or maybe before that, they were looking for someone to teach quilt making at the museum, the Trenton State Museum [New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, New Jersey], and she gave that to me and for four years I went back and forth there. And so they were like the children that I first tried out my skills. But since I never grew up, it was just a matter of my sitting and working with them or working out an internal idea that they had on fabric. So I think of everything as a gift, you know, because it's really a gift to work with children -- it really is -- so that they won't feel intimidated.

MS. MALARCHER: But still, teaching involves knowing how to present material in a way that will catch their attention and inspire them.

MS. HARTWELL: And I have Dr. Mazloomi to help -- I mean to think because she helped me in those first classes when I first started out. It was because she said, You can do it, and I said, I don't know if I can do it. And she said, Yes, you can do it. And so I did. And she would send me stencils or samples of lesson plans. And so that's why I say without her so many of us would not be where we are. Because working in Trenton, and it was a long way to go there from here, to be there at ten o'clock in the morning was really -- really a labor of love for me.

MS. MALARCHER: That was the New Jersey State Museum?

MS. HARTWELL: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Kaleidoscope Kids -- they had a program called Kaleidoscope Kids, and I did it for three, I think it was like three years -- three or four years. [New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, New Jersey. Hartwell taught “History through Quiltmaking,” 1993 - 1995.]

MS. MALARCHER: Was that the one near the State House, or was that Trenton City Museum?

MS. HARTWELL: I think it was near the State House.

MS. MALARCHER: It was the State Museum, and this is part of their education program.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, because I remember once that they told me that they were learning in school about the cranberry farms and about -- oh, there was a village there, I forgot the name of this village. I had to do research on that village, and I had to do -- Bisto --

MS. MALARCHER: Oh, Batsto.

MS. HARTWELL: Yes, I had to do research on Batsto, and I had to do research on the cranberry farms there because I had to present this inclusive material. So I did, and the children were just wonderful. And some of the children came from a long way. They lived out near the cranberry farms, or there’s a particular area there and it’s called the something -- the pine --

MS. MALARCHER: The Pine Barrens.

MS. HARTWELL: The Pine Barrens. I had to do a quilt dealing with the Pine Barrens, and so for me it was a learning experience because I had -- I didn’t even know that part of New Jersey, but in order to do it, I had to go there. So Rollie [Laverne Roland Hackmer], my husband-to-be nowadays, he drove me to that village, Batsto, and we went to the Pine Barrens. And everywhere that I had to use that in a quilt I visited because there was no way that I could talk about it. I had to go there, take a deep breath, and just really feel it in order to say, If you close your eyes, you can be there through your art. So that’s how I teach.

And this year, I took Visual Understanding in Education, VUE, and they teach --

MS. MALARCHER: Where?

MS. HARTWELL: It’s called Visual Understanding in Education. It’s out of New York City, and it’s thinking strategies. It’s thinking strategies on art. It’s teaching children how to look at art. So I took their lesson plans -- and *The Chinaberry Tree*, I think I mentioned to you, they put that into a lesson plan in Middlebury College of Art. So I have taken their lesson plan and just reversed it to tell the child, just do what you want people to see rather than what do you see in this piece. Because if I were showing them art, I would say, well, what do you see in this Rembrandt? And what else do you see? Then I say, well, create what you want people to see.

MS. MALARCHER: Have you also taught adults?

MS. HARTWELL: I have. I taught at the elder class -- Elder Craftsmen here in New York City. I’ve taught a lot of adult classes.

MS. MALARCHER: And how do you translate your knowledge of teaching children into teaching adults?

MS. HARTWELL: With adults it’s about technique, it’s about the technique of appliqués, various appliqués, and it still -- I told them to tap into the child within them and to be free and not to be rigid, to just be free, and it’s okay if you have a polka dot tree. I can’t fit a polka dot tree in that piece that I’m doing now, but who said I can’t? My clients say that I can’t, they don’t want a polka dot tree, but when I teach adults, I try to tell them, You can be like a child again.

In fact, Nancy Crow, when she was teaching those improvisational pieces, this woman came -- I belong to Empire -- she came back and she said, I never felt so free before to not be saddled with -- you must have this point meeting this -- [inaudible]. Well, improvisational will do that, but improvisational that’s planned, there is still a method that you want your color scheme to go, like Edjohnetta Miller. But when I’m teaching adults, it’s about technique and also to be free and experience that. But, you know, I try to bring that.

There is the Make a Wish Foundation, and they have -- these children made ties. There’s a foundation that made ties out of the artwork of the children from the Make a Wish Foundation, and I have these ties, and I’m going to make a quilt, crazy quilt, out of these Make a Wish Foundation ties. And these quilts from these pictures are so free. They are so colorful because, I think, when you’re sick -- when you’re not feeling well, and you visualize the sun, it is brighter than it could ever be, and the skies bluer than it could ever be. So I try -- when I’m teaching my adult or children classes, I mix them all up, and they seem to be happy with it.

[Audio break.]

MS. HARTWELL: I am the artistic director of Partners in Giving; actually I helped start this organization.

MS. MALARCHER: What is the organization?

MS. HARTWELL: We make toys and -- but we go into a school, and we get children who are well, and we teach them how to give and how to give without being selfish, because imagine that we teach them how to make toys, these lovable folk toys, but they must let go of them at the end of the class, and at the end of the class we give them a medal. And these toys go to Ronald McDonald, Cassidy's Place, the Bounty Hospital, and Stacy Scheinberg [Founder and President of Partners in Giving], who is the founder -- she came to the museum looking for someone, and the museum -- the American Folk Art Museum -- referred her to me, so I helped her -- I told her what she needed to do. And so that's what we do. We make these toys.

So all these experiences that I have with children, I bring to my classes when working with children, you know, because to be free enough to make a toy, to give it away to another child who's in need, that takes a nice -- a nice child to do.

MS. MALARCHER: Now what kind of toys do you make?

MS. HARTWELL: They are -- one of our founding members of the New York organization gave me --

MS. MALARCHER: You mean the New York Quilting --

MS. HARTWELL: The Women of --

MS. MALARCHER: Women of Color.

MS. HARTWELL: New York organization gave me patterns that date from the '50s of stuffed animals made by McCall -- M-c-C-A-L-L -- and they no longer make these toys because these toys -- they had for a long time. These are toys from the '30s, the '40s, maybe the '50s, and so we make these feel like pancake toys so we can -- just two size camels, cats, dogs, and these are the toys that we make, and we stuff them. We did a very big, huge project at the American Craft Museum where we set it up into little groups. The child came to me to get a pattern, and then I sent him over to someone, and there we had machines set up, and they sewed them. Then that person sent them to another person, where they sat on the floor, and they stuffed them. Then they went to another place where they sewed them together, and then they went to another place where they turned them in, and at the end you had a medal ceremony where we gave them medals. Well, over 200 children showed up for that. It was wonderful.

MS. MALARCHER: That's wonderful.

MS. HARTWELL: That's all related in the spirit of giving and the spirit of art.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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