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Oral history interview with Nan McKinnell,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Nan McKinnell on June 12 and 13, 2005. The interview took place in Fort Collins, Colorado, and was conducted by Kathy Holt 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.

Nan McKinnell and Kathy Holt 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

KATHY HOLT: This is Kathy Holt interviewing Nan McKinnell at the artist's home in Fort Collins, Colorado, on June 6, 2005, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc number one.

Nan, can you give us a little bit of information about where you and where Jim [husband, James Franklin McKinnell] were born?

NAN MCKINNELL: I was born in Stanton, Nebraska, July 1, 1913. My father [Clifford Elwin Bangs] was a dentist. And he'd gone to school at Creighton University in Omaha, and then he had come to Stanton and married my mother [Bertha Mayer Bangs]. And-[laughs]-she was a homemaker.

My brother, Charles, was born about eight years later. My mother lost a child in between times.

We lived in small towns. Well, my dad had a partner that was given morphine by our doctor, Dr. Peters, to help his stomach problems, and he got addicted to it. So he began to do strange things in the dental office-

MS. HOLT: Oh, no.

MS. MCKINNELL: -steal his own pencils and things like that, you know. And he would also steal the morphine out of the office. And so my father just about had a nervous breakdown. You know, everything rested on him.

And my grandfather had a farm up in-six miles north of Grand Forks, North Dakota, on the flat land up there. They used to raise wheat there. And then the wheat crops-I think there was wheat rust or something that spoiled the crops.

Well, anyway, we moved in the summer up to the farm when I was a very little girl. I think I must have been about three years old.

We lived in a cracker-box house, one of those big, tall two-story houses. No trees around except one big cottonwood tree in a pasture across the road, and lots of prairie grass, still, you know. And there were prairie fires. And my mother hated it. Of course, the house was not modern at all, you know. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: [Laughs] Right.

MS. MCKINNELL: I remember one night the wind was blowing very hard across this prairie, and my mother and I, with my little brother in her arms, were sitting huddled on my bed, and my Uncle Roy, my father's-a younger brother of my father's, was up there to help with the farm. And they were outside trying to keep things from blowing away. And there was corrugated metal roof on one of the buildings, and it blew off. If it had come a few inches closer to my Uncle Roy, it would have cut him in two. The house shook. It was that bad, you know.

There was one very nice thing about the prairie: the flowers, the wild flowers. I remember seeing some bluebells, and I thought, oh, those are fairy flowers. And the wild tiger lilies in the ditches-there were beautiful wild flowers.

And the night that there was a prairie fire not very far from home, the farmers all got together, and they had-people would run with water buckets, and they would fill gunny sacks with something and then wet the gunny sacks that were full of something, and try to stamp out the fire. And that was very scary, because there was so much prairie grass that it could have just swept with a strong wind.

MS. HOLT: When would this have been about, Nan?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, I was about three years old. I was born in 1913. So-

MS. HOLT: So 1916-

MS. MCKINNELL: I think I was, you know-I was-

MS. HOLT: Right.

MS. MCKINNELL: No, I was a little older than that, because I was eight years old when that happened-

MS. HOLT: Ah-ha.

MS. MCKINNELL: -because my brother had already been born, and he was eight years younger than I.

MS. HOLT: He was an infant, right.

MS. MCKINNELL: And that's when my mother had-

MS. HOLT: She was carrying him.

MS. MCKINNELL: Both of us were sitting there, yeah. So that was-

MS. HOLT: You are still using those same kind of flowers in your imagery, aren't you?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah.

MS. HOLT: Very much.

MS. MCKINNELL: What next?

MS. HOLT: Well, you were out there. Did you go back to Stanton after that?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. But there was another thing that was very pretty. They raised flax. After the wheat crop failed, they decided to try raising flax. And when that field of flax was in bloom, and the wind, you know, the breeze would come, it looked just like water, you know. It was beautiful.

MS. HOLT: The blossoms for flax are blue.

MS. MCKINNELL: Blue, blue, like water. It looked like a lake. I remember how thrilled I was with that.

And then these crows in a nest across the road and down the road a little bit, in this one cottonwood tree, and my dad took me over there, and we put a ladder up, and he got up and took me up so I could look into the crow's nest and see the baby crows.

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: [Laughs] Certain things I just don't forget, you know.

MS. HOLT: You just remember. Yeah.

MS. MCKINNELL: And the bluebells and the tiger lilies.

Then-we lived there several different summers. And when my dad had to get out of the dental office, he'd work for a dentist in town, in Grand Forks, in the-or else we'd go back to Nebraska.

And then the Red River of the North was about two miles away. And we had picnics along that Red River. And there were ferns that were taller than I, you know, huge ferns.

And the Baers, people that lived-I think it was about a mile away-their name was Baer. And Caroline and I, when we were visiting back and forth, we played together. And one day when we were a little older, one of their young calves, a bull calf, had gotten into another fence, and we were going up to get a younger calf, Caroline and I. Well, we went and got the younger calf and-on a halter, and started down the road, and this bull decided to chase us.

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, we ran as fast as we could to the gate that went into the Baerses' place. And the men saw us coming, and so they hurried out and got a hold of the bull so it didn't trample us or anything. But boy, were we scared!

MS. HOLT: They can be nasty, yeah?

MS. MCKINNELL: [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: They can be nasty.

Now is that where you found all the things in your-that you kept in your pockets?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes. We lived on the farm several times. And one time we raised Plymouth Rock chickens. They were white, beautiful chickens. And people would come out from Grand Forks to buy them. That's when people bought the whole chicken, you know, alive. And I had some pets. I fed the chickens. I had a little pail, and I called it my sand pail and I would go out and feed the chickens. Well, they liked me very much, and so these two chickens would always squat down for some reason, and I'd pick them up. And when people would come out to buy chickens, I'd rush out and grab my two pets, and every time people came to buy our Plymouth Rock chickens, so they could have a chicken dinner, I cried, because they were taking my chickens!

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: Mother was afraid of insects, certain insects. Well, she was kind of at the end of the Victorian era, and she didn't like snakes. She didn't like mice, and she didn't like lizards.

Well, Nan loved all those things when she was a little girl, and I would carry baby mice around in my pocket-

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: -and I thought they were so cute-and lizards and garter snakes. And there was nothing harmful, you know.

I think that my father and Uncle Roy borrowed a bull, you know. So we were afraid of that bull, and we always had to watch. When we went out to gather the eggs or feed the chickens or do anything, we kept our eyes on the bull, which was fenced. But that bull could jump the fence, so we were very frightened about that bull.

And then we had a rooster that used to jump up on us, you know, and we carried a stick so we could bat the rooster-

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: -because that rooster was dangerous, you know.

MS. HOLT: Yeah. You were messing around with his hens. [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: I guess so. [Laughs.]

Well, what else?

MS. HOLT: Tell me a little bit about Jim's background.

MS. MCKINNELL: He was born in Nitro, West Virginia. His dad was the head of a smokeless powder plant during World War I. And then World War I ended, but he-they stayed there for a while.

They lived close to a little stream. And Jimmy always was very curious about everything, and there was a blue racer, or a water moccasin snake, very poisonous, that was in this little stream. His twin brother and sister were born 20 months after he was born.

MS. HOLT: And he was born in '18?

MS. MCKINNELL: He was born in 190-what? March 8, 1919, I think. Yeah. I think that's right. And so Ouisie, his mother-we called her Ouisie, because I knew her later, you know-Eloise-had to keep track of Jimmy and take care of these twins. I think you met Jean.

MS. HOLT: Yes, I've met Jean.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. And so, you know, it was difficult.

And Jimmy was after this blue racer. And Ouisie, with the twins, was after him. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: He was always investigating things. I spent his-he spent his life investigating things. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: Yes, he's one of the most curious people, not curious "funny," but he was curious about everything. And they went from there to-

MS. MCKINNELL: And then, after the war was over and they lived there a little bit longer, and then his father, Frank, wanted to find a job. His job was ended, you know. So got in their touring car, Eloise with the twins and Jimmy, and headed west. They thought about going to Canada, but they didn't make it to Canada. They just kept going west until they hit Seattle. And they decided they'd stay there.

And so they found a place, a house rather close to the university at that time. And there was also a stream that went close to their house. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: Water is a running theme here.

MS. MCKINNELL: And so Jimmy grew up there with his twin brother and sister. And then when it was time to go to the university, John, who was younger, bought some sort of a car, a cheap car. And Jimmy would always try to hitch a ride with him when they were both going to the university. And I think the same thing had happened when they were going to high school, you know. And-

MS. HOLT: Now Jim was interested in a lot of things as a young man-

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes. All his life, he was very interested in everything. Well, one time his mother had just gone next door to the neighbors and was talking to the neighbor-woman. And Jim was just a little kid, and he couldn't find his mother, and I guess he wanted a peanut butter sandwich or something. And he was out in front of the house, "My mother is gone and left me!" [Laughs.] Yelling so all the neighbors could hear, and his mother was so upset.

MS. HOLT: And didn't the Boy Scouts play a big part in his life?

MS. MCKINNELL: And then, when he was older, he was-oh, he won more medals than anybody had ever won. He was an Eagle Scout with tons of medals. Everything he did, he did in excess, you know.

MS. HOLT: Right. He was an athlete, too.

MS. MCKINNELL: He was an athlete. He skied. He watched a skier from Switzerland or Norway ski jump, and he decided he would do that. And that's when he broke his leg in about 17 or 18 pieces. He was a senior in high school. Well, he never graduated with his class, because-[laughs]-he could study at home and pass his exams, but he was in plaster, from his foot up to his shoulder, for months.

MS. HOLT: Oh, boy.

MS. MCKINNELL: And he finally got out of that. And then he went skiing, and he broke his leg again.

MS. HOLT: Again?

MS. MCKINNELL: Just once. I think his parents had a little difficulty with him. [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, then he went to the university. And the people that lived in Littleton, that were-

MS. HOLT: Oh, yes. Yes. Oh, I can't remember their names.

MS. MCKINNELL: Can't think of their names, so, but I've got it in my address book.

MS. HOLT: That's fine. We'll look for it.

MS. MCKINNELL: This man-they were sitting on the front porch, discussing what Jimmy should take. He didn't know what to major in. And he said, "Well," this man said, "if you major in ceramic engineering, those people get jobs before they even graduate." So he took ceramic engineering, because this was during the Depression. Very hard for people to get jobs, you know.

MS. HOLT: Yes, right.

MS. MCKINNELL: So he took ceramic engineering. And then, the day he graduated from college-they had had to take NROTC or ROTC. Well, he was interested in the navy, and so he had taken NROTC. And the day that he graduated from college, he was called up to go to California, and then the Hawaiian Islands. And his dad-he had his thesis, his undergraduate thesis, you know-his senior thesis. And his dad actually had to bind it. It was all written and typed and everything, but his dad had to correct some mistakes in spelling and bind it, and get it to the university, because Jimmy was called to the navy.

MS. HOLT: How long was he in the navy?

MS. MCKINNELL: He was five years.

MS. HOLT: Five years?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah.

MS. HOLT: And he was at Pearl [Harbor]?

MS. MCKINNELL: He was-he went in as a lowly officer. What's the lowest?

MS. HOLT: Ensign? Should be.

MS. MCKINNELL: I can't remember. Something like that. And then he looked so young. He looked very, very young. And here he was, an officer. [Laughs.] So that was a little hard, you know. His ship sighted and sank the first two-man submarine.

They spied it and they sank it. And it was reported in, and they said, "Please verify." And nobody believed it until a few years ago; they hauled that thing up. And I saw it on TV.

MS. HOLT: Really?

MS. MCKINNELL: And then, they believed them.

But that day [December 7, 1941], he wasn't on his ship. He had hurt his shoulder skiing, and so he was getting a cortisone shot. So he saw all the Japanese planes come in, and they had the airplanes and all-everything sort of close together, organized, you know. Pffff! The Japanese just destroyed them, you know. And his ship was out at sea, so it didn't get destroyed. But from-

MS. HOLT: Did Jim serve most of his time in Pearl, or did he go elsewhere?

MS. MCKINNELL: He was in the Aleutians a great deal of the time.

MS. HOLT: Oh, really?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. After the Hawaiian Islands, then he was sent as the second officer. And it was his job, when the big waves-I think I told you that he made fun of me when we were going in March to Paris. I was so sick. And he said, "Oh, this is nothing." He didn't feel sorry for me, because up in the Aleutians, where he'd been stationed, the waves would come and push everything off of the top of the ship. And he was the man who could find things, secondhand things, anything to supply them to get by until they could-sometimes they were out 100 days looking for Japanese submarines before they could get into port. And so he had to improvise things on the ship that had been washed overboard, until they could come in to port and get refueled and get these things all fixed up.

MS. HOLT: Well, before we go on to after that, there were a few more questions I want to ask you about your own personal history, when you were in high school, when you were at teacher's college.

MS. MCKINNELL: I was-my dad, after he felt better and got-went back to Stanton. There were two other dentists that had taken over in Stanton, Nebraska. So we moved down the road, about 10, 12 miles, to Pilger, Nebraska, where he was a dentist. And it was even smaller than Stanton. And I was-think I went there when I was in the fifth or sixth grade.

MS. HOLT: So you went to Pilger-

MS. MCKINNELL: In Stanton, Nebraska, before we'd gone up there, Mrs. Hannel was the music teacher. Mrs. Hannel had a little boy named Dicky. Her husband had been killed in the First World War, and then they had given her the job as-to take care of all the music in Stanton. Stanton was full of music-a little town. Everybody sang or played at least one instrument, or did both. And I had Mrs. Hannel for a teacher.

And at that time, they taught the do-re-mis for syllables. And somehow, they got into my head, and stayed there. And ever since, if I hear two noises outside-mi do, fa re. Car horns, anything. And I sit downstairs now, turn on my classical music, and I know most of these classical pieces, you know, things that I hear. But my head is swarming with do-re-mis! All the instruments, you know, down here and up here. [Laughs.]

Well, I took piano lessons. No matter how poor we were, I had piano lessons. I wanted to play the violin, but my parents thought it would be better if I played the piano first. They didn't understand. To play the violin, you

needed to start early. So I took lessons from Sister Palestrina in the Catholic school three blocks down the road. And she was very, very nice. And then, they moved her to some other place. And so the superintendent of schools, Mr. Manney, his wife played the piano. And so, I started taking piano lessons from her. And she gave me all the classics, and she was a very good teacher.

And then, when I was in the junior high and high school, I played the piano for church and Sunday school, and, as I told you, sometimes when the movie theater silent picture, you know, when the regular pianist was gone for some reason, they asked me to play. And I couldn't read the music and I made it up. [Laughs.] For the cowboy-and-Indian moving pictures on Saturday night.

MS. HOLT: When you finished high school?

MS. MCKINNELL: I finished high school at Crofton, Nebraska. My dad, by that time-things were pretty bad, because there had been a drought, and this was during the Depression, and nobody had any money. And my mother could make things stretch, but it got to be the place where you couldn't stretch that far. So my dad thought, if we moved back to the Elkhorn River area-but there were already two dentists in Stanton, so we moved to Pilger, down the road.

And I had finished high school, and so it was time to go to college. And my dad said, "There's no way you can go to college. There's no money. But if you get a job, maybe that would help." Well, he didn't think I'd ever get a job. My mother couldn't drive the car, and I hadn't learned to drive the car. So we got our neighbor, who was principal of the high school, a woman, a very nice woman who lived across the alley with her mother, and she drove us to Wayne.

MS. HOLT: Wayne?

MS. MCKINNELL: Wayne [State] Teacher's College, Nebraska. In Nebraska. And it was only 17 miles away, a very small college. And luckily, I got there on the right day at the right time. We walked into the student supply store, which was off the campus. And the girl that was supposed to come and work for the woman called Deahn-D-E-A-H-N-Deahn Grove. She wasn't a dean of the college; that was her name. She was-she owned a third of the student supply store. Mr. Whittamore, he had two-thirds of it. And they sold books and all kinds of things.

So Deahn needed someone to clean her house and help her with the cooking. So I got the job, since this other girl had written that she couldn't come. And my dad was so surprised. "How can you do that? But your mother has never taught you anything." Because I was always playing the piano, you know. But I could do more than he thought. So I went to school a year and a summer. That's all I could afford. And I played the piano for the physical education class. I made ice cream dishes. For these things, I got 25 cents an hour, you know. That's what I earned. And my mother had helped me make over clothes that my aunts had sent, so-I didn't exactly like some of the clothes, but they were all I had. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: Tough times.

MS. MCKINNELL: I started taking music as well as education, of course. I had to take education classes.

[Audio break.]

The reason I didn't take art was because Miss Pierce-I think I mentioned this to you before.

MS. HOLT: I don't think so.

MS. MCKINNELL: Miss Pierce, I thought, was a very old woman. She probably was around 50. [Laughs.] But for a kid like, you know, 17, 18 years old, she seemed awfully old. And she brought these huge paintings back from the Black Hills, oil paintings, and showed everybody. And I thought, "Ooh! I don't want to do that!" [Laughs.] This isn't what I want in art.

So the music department was excellent, and I decided to take music, since I was sort of torn between the two anyway, you know. And so I took all the music classes-solfeggio, counterpoint, harmony-everything. And it was very easy for me because I had these do, re, mi in my head. And so when I'd go to music appreciation class, for instance, and the teacher, Mr. Keith, would put on a record, I would get the main theme of that record and write down the do, re, mi in my notebook. So I didn't have to listen to the records anymore, you know; I could just open my notebook and I'd get the main theme.

So then I got this job teaching in a country school. For four years I taught there, and I'd go to summer school.

MS. HOLT: Where was the country school?

MS. MCKINNELL: It was four miles outside of Pilger; three miles on a gravel road, and one mile on a dirt road,

which when it rained, was clay gumbo-I mean, really. And I'd never been in a country school in my life. I didn't know what I was doing. It was all surrounded by cornfields and bawling cattle. And I had to have the job, just absolutely had to have it. My dad wasn't getting any money, you know, for his dental work. We got some food, that's right, but-

MS. HOLT: Being paid in chickens?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, he was paid in vegetables and fruit and meat, chickens and sometimes half a beef or half a pork. You know, something. So we ate well. We rented a house right on the main street. And my dad's dental office was almost next door. And the middle-aged man that owned these places-we rented, you know-would like to have some homemade cooking. So he asked my mother if he could get some meals and she could give him the kinds of things that-make the kinds of things that he wanted. I think he was Danish.

So I got this job in the country school and I drove out to the country school. And I had to learn how to make a fire with cobs-corn cobs and wood and coal, but mostly corn cobs and coal, in this-it was just a big old metal stove with a metal thing around it that would help the heat-

MS. HOLT: Spread out.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. So I didn't know what to do. And I had eight grades-no, there were seven. One grade was missing. But you taught the first and the second grade separately, most of the time, and then the others were combined; the third and fourth was combined, the fifth and sixth was combined, the seventh and eighth. And I think I didn't have a seventh-grader that year. It didn't make any difference, you know. And I'd take these books home every night in my car and I'd cry, because I didn't know what to do!

Well, it took about a month before I kind of gathered my wits about me and began to learn to teach. And that is where I learned to teach, that first year.

I remember Mrs. Lawrenson, who had been a teacher, and I had four of her kids in school, and she asked Bobby, who was a friend of my brother's, how I got along the first day. And Bobby said, "I think she was a little nervous!" [Laughs.]

So, I began to learn how to teach, you know.

And-oh, here's something funny. It was a big old rolltop desk, and the mice would get in places during the summertime. And if there were sheets of paper or anything, the mice would tear them up and make a nice little nest. Well, the kids thought that I might be afraid of mice-and of course they didn't know I had carried mice and other things around when I was a child. So at first, Clyde-I remember his name was Clyde; he was in the second grade, and he brought a little field mouse. And they are the cutest little things! They have big ears and big eyes, and they're not like a house mouse, you know; they're just cute. And he brought it in and he thought, since the teacher the year before used to stand on her desk and scream, he would make me stand on the desk and scream.

I said, "Oh, isn't that the cutest little mouse!" [Laughs.] I said, "Why don't you take it outside and put it where it can get some food." So that didn't work!

The next day-shortly after that, one of the kids brought a garter snake, and I gave them a lesson on never killing snakes; they were very valuable to the farmer. So that was the end of that.

MS. HOLT: Yes.

MS. MCKINNELL: [Laughs] So we had two privies outside, you know. And so every night I had to check those privies and lock the door, because things would get in there-animals, you know, and other things. And actually, people would leave things.

MS. HOLT: People would leave things?

MS. MCKINNELL: I don't know who did, but sometimes they would leave things in the privies.

So-oh, what next?

MS. HOLT: How long did you teach there?

MS. MCKINNELL: I taught four years. And I went back to summer school every summer, you know, and worked at the student supply store and-

MS. HOLT: So you finished your terms there, then?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, then I quit teaching after four years and decided to go back to school full-time to finish my degree. And I did. And this man that owned the house where we lived loaned me \$250. And so he thought that I looked awfully thin and I shouldn't have to work so hard.

So I stayed in a dormitory for a whole semester. I had kind of wanted to have a dormitory experience, you know. Well, I found-I think I stayed a summer when it was very hot, and that wasn't such a good idea, because it used to get dreadfully hot. And this was long before any of these buildings were air-conditioned, you know.

And I remember we used to take our sheets and go to the showers and wet them up and wring them up and put them on the bed, and then we'd get up a couple of times during the night and do the same thing, it was so hot.

So, what next?

MS. HOLT: Well, do you want to take a break or are you doing okay?

MS. MCKINNELL: I'm all right. I'm just trying to think of what next.

I finally got my degree and I got-my first town school was Meadow Grove, Nebraska. It was on the other side of Stanton. Here was Pilger, here was Stanton, here was Meadow Grove. And I got a job teaching 42 first and second graders and all the music in the high school and junior high.

MS. HOLT: Oh my God! [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: And Margaret Wright, who became Margaret Hancock, later, my very good friend, she taught home ec and other things in the high school. And we boarded at Mrs. Crunch's. At noon-well, we got our breakfast, lunch, and dinner there. And we had 45 minutes to get the kids taken care of, walk the three blocks, eat her massive farm dinner-steak and potatoes and gravy and all those things-pie-and get back and start teaching. Well, by the time I got back, I was so stuffed with food that I would read a book to the children, you know, to get them quieted down-42 first and second graders-and I would be so sleepy I'd be reading with my eyes half shut! [They laugh.]

So Margaret and I decided we couldn't take this anymore. She was putting on weight, and she didn't want to put on weight. And so we decided to find another place, and we found a room, and the lady and man were very, very nice and they allowed us to have this room. And my dad bought some sort of a-it was an electric-funny electric stove thing-secondhand, of course. And we had that. And we got some dishes, and we had salad at noon and a very light breakfast, you know, and then we'd have our bigger meal at night. And so we were there that second semester.

And then Margaret was engaged to Eddie Hancock, and she-in those days man and wife couldn't both work, you know, because of the Depression.

So she asked permission from the school board if she could get married a few weeks early, because Eddie could come up-or we went to Missouri, to Columbia, Missouri, where they'd gone to school, and we went, I think, during spring vacation, and she and Eddie were married. I remember I played the piano for one of her sisters to sing, and then one of her sisters played the piano for the "Wedding March" and all that. And she had had-Margaret had permission, you know, to get married a little bit early.

And so we went back and finished off the semester. And I got a job-that was such a-I had to put on an operetta.

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: I had to put every-put on everything -

MS. HOLT: Every school event.

MS. MCKINNELL: -a chorus, a girl's club-glee club, boy's glee club, the operetta-I had to have music for everything that went on.

So at the end of the year, I had applied at Holdrege, Nebraska, where I could teach fourth grade, and I got the job. And so at the end of the year, I said to the principal and the superintendent, "Don't ever hire a first and second grade teacher to teach all that music. Good-bye. I'm leaving." [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: So-oh, by the way, for that operetta we built the trees and the whole forest for this operetta. It was wonderful. We had the kids helping, you know. But Margaret and I just worked like dogs. We had a little bit of help from some of the others, but not much.

So I went back to summer school, and then I went to Holdrege to teach, and I just had fourth grade, and that was a big help.

MS. HOLT: Yes. And you were there for how long?

MS. MCKINNELL: Just one year.

MS. HOLT: Just one year.

MS. MCKINNELL: And then things weren't good in Nebraska. And I said to my parents, I am going to Seattle, because my dad had had relatives both in Seattle and Bellingham. As long as they had relatives there and they would notify the relatives that I was coming, that was okay for me to go. Of course, I already taught school and had my degree, but then I was still their little girl, you know! [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: Right. [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: I forgot to tell you about the piano organ.

MS. HOLT: Oh! I don't think you've ever told me about that.

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh, boy, was this a wonderful instrument! My dad had bought it when the talking pictures came in. And the movie theatre, in Stanton, they wanted to get rid of this big piano organ. It had six pedals and six pipes and two keyboards. And we lived in this new house that this man had built, so the door was wider than most doors on older houses, and my dad arranged for that to be brought and put in our living room.

And my brother and I-he was taking lessons. I could play pretty well. And there was an old man who used to sit out on the steps, and he told my mother, "I just love to hear that. When they're playing that instrument, it sounds like thunder." [Laughs.] Well, you know the low notes and everything. So I had taken some organ lessons, you know, in Wayne-at Wayne.

I had walked-by that time they had a lunch room built onto the back of the student supply store. And I know one summer they had a cook that couldn't make pies. And Mr. Whittamore took the pie crust, he took the scoop, scooped the stuff out of it, and he said, "Take that back, and tell her to use it tomorrow."

MS. HOLT: Oh! [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: I was so tough-[laughs]-you know, just was-so I got up very early in the morning and made the pies. My dad said I couldn't do anything, but I can make very good pies.

Then, I would go down and practice the organ at the church, which was a mile-the Presbyterian Church.

And there was a young man who played the organ for Sunday, and I knew him. And he helped me learn to play the pipe organ a little bit, you know.

So-[laughs]-what else?

MS. HOLT: Let's take a stop here for a moment, Nan. And I'll start a new track on this.

[Audio break.]

MS. MCKINNELL: -wanted to take the children out to visit some relatives in California, and Mr. Barker ran the grocery store downtown, you know. And so it was arranged that he would take his meals or part of his meals-my mother would cook for him, and he'd come and eat there, and then they would take me to California to visit my grandmother and my relatives.

So my Aunt Helen and Uncle Otto Wildie lived in Hollywood. And my grandmother was-my mother's mother-was staying with them at that time. And she was getting pretty old by that time, you know, but-so I got to go to Hollywood, and my uncle took me all over to see everything.

And they were awfully nice, you know, to me. And I remember there was a letter-some friend of mine sent a letter to me, Nan Bangs, and it didn't arrive; and it went to another Nan Bangs-there in the Los Angeles area. And that Nan Bangs-

MS. HOLT: -sent it back to you?

MS. MCKINNELL: -wrote-yeah. And we've, you know, neither one of those names are common.

MS. HOLT: No.

MS. MCKINNELL: But that was the funniest thing, you know. [Laughs.] Well, I had my summer in Hollywood. And then I had my 16th birthday in Hollywood.

MS. HOLT: Well, let's get back to heading off to Washington, when you were going to Seattle. What-

MS. MCKINNELL: I was going to stay at the Phi Nu house, which was my cousin's sorority house, and she said, you can rent a room there and board there, because they didn't have their sorority working during that time. So this was just off the campus, and I started my classes. I had to take Washington history and all these things, you know, education.

MS. HOLT: And this was at the University of Washington?

MS. MCKINNELL: Mm-hmm [affirmative], in Seattle.

So I stayed there that summer, and then I went for a year. And Lila and Helen Morris, who had come from Nebraska, and their family had moved out there-I ran into Lila, and she said, "Nan, do you want a job in the fall?" and I said, "Yes!"

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: And she said, "Well, I'm leaving to teach at an Indian school, because I get more money." She said, "There's an opening out at Bryn Mawr," which was just at the end of Lake Washington and up on the hill, and so she said, "Here's the address. Go and see Mr. Money"-Ray-I mean, no, his-not Money-Ray-I'll tell you his name when I think of it [Mr. Ray].

MS. HOLT: That's all right.

MS. MCKINNELL: That's funny that I-

MS. HOLT: Did you see the principal?

MS. MCKINNELL: He was the principal and awfully nice guy. I wonder if I have his name down here some place.

MS. HOLT: I can ask you this later, too.

MS. MCKINNELL: I just can't remember.

MS. HOLT: [Laughs] You remember so much. That's okay.

MS. MCKINNELL: Can't think of it.

And he and his wife lived right down by the lake. And so I went out to see him, and I took my little resume from Wayne and some recommendations that I had gotten. And I got the job teaching fourth grade up on the hill. Well, I didn't know where to go to stay, so they said, "Adeline Fuzzy is the first grade teacher. Go and talk to her." So Adeline said I could stay with her and her mother. And it wasn't-you know, it was about three blocks away from the school. It was all small.

So I started teaching there in the fall. And this was when they were-Boeing was building their airplanes, and they tried out the motors. Didn't I tell you about that, down at the bottom of the lake-you know, right down the hill, three blocks? And that's when I had these blackboards with the cloakroom behind and they would-

MS. HOLT: -rattle-[laughs].

MS. MCKINNELL: -rattle. And I'd be yelling at the kids, you know, even after they shut off their motors. So I stayed there. I lived with Adeline and her mother that first year.

By that time, my parents-nothing was going on in Nebraska, and my dad was just really frantic. So I said, "Why don't you come out here?" And I found a little house at the top of the hill. The schoolhouse was there. The lake was down there. It was very handy, \$15 a month.

MS. HOLT: [Laughs] Gosh.

MS. MCKINNELL: It was a very small house, but we managed, you know.

MS. HOLT: This must have been in the mid- '30s then, about.

MS. MCKINNELL: This was-when did I start teaching at Bryn Mawr? Oh dear.

MS. HOLT: I can find out. I have-

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah-well, I'll think of it.

MS. HOLT: Okay.

MS. MCKINNELL: And so I said, "Why don't you come out here?" And so they-and I said, "Bring that piano organ."

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, I didn't measure the door in this house where we lived. So my dad arranged for getting that great, big, heavy pipe organ piano, and it wouldn't go through the door of the house that I had rented. What to do with it? So I suggested they put it in the church-the little church-and of course, the church didn't have any heat between Sunday mornings. And that organ just got damp and fell apart. If I had rented a house for \$25 up the hill on the other side of the school, it would have gone in the house. But, you know, I didn't have much money. I was getting \$85 a month, I think, maybe it was \$95. It wasn't very much, and I had to support my mother, father, and brother, and myself.

MS. HOLT: Right.

MS. MCKINNELL: -and try to go to school.

MS. HOLT: You were going to school while you were teaching, as well. Were you taking classes in the evening then?

MS. MCKINNELL: No, no. But summer.

MS. HOLT: Okay.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. It was too far to go in.

MS. HOLT: Okay.

MS. MCKINNELL: It-at that time there was really no very good transportation.

MS. HOLT: What were you studying at the university?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, that's where I started my art, and I went back to summer school. And then I started working on my master's degree, and I had been asked to teach these girls that I mentioned before.

MS. HOLT: Well, explain that one.

MS. MCKINNELL: Mr. Hill was the drawing teacher for the beginning architect drawing students, and there were some girls that were taking the class because there were some boys in the class.

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: Most of the guys were in-were still in the navy or the army or the air force. You know, and so Mr. Isaacs came along the hall, and he said, "Nan, has Mr."-has Mr.-what's the-

MS. HOLT: Hill?

MS. MCKINNELL: No. Can't think of his name now.

MS. HOLT: That's all right.

MS. MCKINNELL: Isn't that awful? I wonder if I have it here. No, I don't have this-

MS. HOLT: That's okay.

MS. MCKINNELL: -Patterson. Mr. Patterson. He was the-let's see, Mr. Isaacs was the head of the department, and he also taught drawing. Mr. Patterson taught art appreciation and other things.

And so Mr. Patterson came along, and he said, "Has Mr. Isaacs talked to you, Nan?" and I said, "No." And I was walking down the hall the next day, and Mr. Isaacs came along, and he says, "Mr. Patterson talked to you, Nan?" and I said, "No. What have I done?" And they finally got together, and said, "Would you please take these girls-these beginning drawing architect girls; Mr. Hill wants to get rid of them." [Laughs.] He knew why they were there. So I said, "Okay," and I didn't know what I was getting into. Well, those girls resented me terribly!

They were taken away from the man teacher, taken away from the boys, and given to this woman-this young woman. I looked about as young as they did, even though I was much older. So I had a tough time with them.

In the next semester-the next term, I think it was quarterly at that time-I was given a design class to teach. I was not ready to teach design. I was about crazy, and I would go to some of the professors that I knew, Pauline Johnson and Ruth Penington, and I'd say, "Please help me. I don't know what to do!" And they would coach me.

And so there were just girls in the class except for one-this little guy that sat all alone way back there in the corner.

[Audio break.]

And he was probably not able to be taken into the armed forces of any kind. And he sat there all alone, and I used to feel so sorry for him with all these gorgeous girls.

MS. HOLT: Now was this when you met Jack Lenor Larson?

MS. MCKINNELL: No.

MS. HOLT: That was later.

MS. MCKINNELL: Then, I was asked to teach the drawing classes, and that was pretty good. And then, Mrs. Hensley was a very good friend of Jimmy's mother, Eloise McKinnell. And Mrs. Hensley was teaching a little bit of-well, she taught a drawing class and she taught a little bit of pottery. But it was just a tiny little kiln and they did pinch pots, you know? So Jimmy's mother and I decided to go down to the Mines-see Jimmy wasn't back from the war yet, and so we decided to go and take a class from this woman who was teaching a beginning class at the Mines down the hill.

MS. HOLT: Mines is the School of Mines?

MS. MCKINNELL: That's where the ceramic engineering was.

MS. HOLT: Okay.

MS. MCKINNELL: So we took a class from her, and we agreed that we didn't learn very much of anything. So that's about the time that Mr. Isaacs [inaudible] Enfant had been hired to teach drawing and painting.

MS. HOLT: Who was this?

MS. MCKINNELL: [Inaudible]-Enfant, from France, from Paris. And he suggested to Mr. Isaacs that they get Paul Bonifas to teach the pottery. So Paul Bonifas came, and since I was working my way through, I got to be his assistant. He spoke very good English, but there were things that he didn't understand too well, so I helped him with that.

And there was no clay mixer or anything at that time, and so I think I told you, in this little room, I put the clays on this big sheet of paper and, you know, took care of everything, learned to fire this little electric kiln-cone 04. And then I would go clear out to Bryn Mawr at night after I-I'd call my mother and say, "I'm still firing. I won't be home until late. Save me some dinner."

And then the guys began to come back from the navy, the army, whatever, the air force. And I was teaching. I'd been asked to teach this beginning class in pottery with Mr. Bonifas as his assistant. And so I think I told you about the time that we were making-he didn't teach throwing.

MS. HOLT: Right, because-

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, he didn't know how to throw, because he had just-he had throwers, you know?

MS. HOLT: Right, throwers. He was more of a designer?

MS. MCKINNELL: So, yeah. He would design the pots over in Paris, and then he had the throwers that would throw the pots. He would often decorate them, but he had people that made up the glazes and glazed the pots, you know, did everything. So he didn't know how to throw, and so I learned how to make models in plaster on the lathe and the wheel, molds and master molds, and that's what Jimmy's mother and the other ladies, Mrs. Isaacs, Mrs. Patterson, the wives of the head of the art department and the head of the other departments, and they came to take the class. So I was the assistant, and I had to help them.

And I told you about the toilet paper, didn't I?

MS. HOLT: I don't think so.

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh. Well, we had to teach them how to make these models, molds, and master molds. And each one wanted to make a different kind, and Jimmy's mother made flower arrangements, so she wanted to make flower arranging shapes. And so I was showing them how to make duplicates from these models and molds, and we used a concoction of green soap and linseed oil cooked together. I think I told you that?

MS. HOLT: No.

MS. MCKINNELL: We cooked it together, because you couldn't buy stuff like that. For our mold release. So I was showing this class with Jimmy's mother how to sponge on this mixture and then wipe it off, and I said, "I use toilet paper because I think it's the best thing to wipe with." And so everybody sort of, they just laughed. I said, "What are they laughing at?" Here I was, so serious about everything. [Laughs.]

Well, anyway, I-

MS. HOLT: You were his assistant and then-

MS. MCKINNELL: What?

MS. HOLT: You were Paul Bonifas's assistant.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I learned a lot, but not the right kind of things.

Then Jimmy came back and he was trying to get his master's. See, I was working on my master's. He was trying to get his master's down at the Mines. Somebody told him to come up and take the class from Paul Bonifas. So that's how Jimmy and I got acquainted. I was still living out at Bryn Mawr with my parents, and Jim used to get- he had a funny old car-and he used to take me to the bus station. And then I'd get the bus out to Bryn Mawr. Well, then he asked me for a date to go to-

MS HOLT: An operetta?

MS. MCKINNELL: An operetta, yes. And so, I think I told you, I got all dressed up, was sitting there between my mother and father. He didn't come and he didn't come; he didn't come. And so, I thought, well, I've been stood up, and he finally got there and we got to the operetta, but it was about half over and he went to sleep on my shoulder, you know.

MS. HOLT: And he was late because?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, he wouldn't listen when I tried to tell him how to get to Bryn Mawr, to my house. I know how to get there, you know. But he didn't. So well, anyway, he used to come out. He liked my cookies, and I swore he liked the cookies better than he liked me. So he would come out, and I always had cookies and something to drink for him, tea and coffee and different things, whatever he liked.

Well, anyway, he finished his M.S., I think I told you that. And he went to New York and then down to Baltimore, and he got a job at Locke Insulators. And then he came back. He came up through Colorado, saw all the clays and everything, and went out to Seattle. And since he got a job, he asked me to marry him. But I had to finish my work, so it took me a lot longer than I thought to do my thesis. I showed you the thesis pots?

MS. HOLT: Yes, the tea set.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, yeah. And I was just working myself silly, you know, trying to teach and finish this tea set and get ready to get married, and I didn't even have time to buy clothes. And then I went to Baltimore on the train and got there and didn't have any wedding clothes or anything. So Jim's mother's cousin, Mrs. Hodges, took me in, and I stayed with them. And they took me to the store to buy clothes, and we were married in the-what was it, a Methodist church or a Presbyterian church? I can't remember which. A Methodist church, I think.

MS. HOLT: And that was June 1948?

MS. MCKINNELL: This was July, the middle of July, 1948. Yeah, hot, hot, hot.

MS. HOLT: Now, Nan, I have a question. You've explained why Jim went into ceramic engineering, but you haven't explained why you went from music to art?

MS. MCKINNELL: I wanted art, and I just sort of got involved in-when Mr. Bonifas came, I thought, well, here's my chance to get into pottery. I had made little marbles and things as a kid and fired them in my-I mean, warmed them up in my mother's oven. I told you about that, didn't I?

MS. HOLT: Yes.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. I was always kind of interested in clay, you know. And I had tried painting. No good. I had tried design. No good. I thought, what will I do? And the clay interested me more than anything else, so-

MS. HOLT: And what made Jim change from ceramic engineering to making pots?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, that's the long story that followed.

He got this job in Baltimore and then we were married, and I told you, when we went to Pittsfield-and what's the place next door where the Boston Symphony played? Tanglewood.

And he took me to hear the Boston Symphony. That was our long weekend honeymoon, you know? So then we moved into this little one-room apartment, and I think I told you about that. It had a back porch?

MS. HOLT: I don't think so.

MS. MCKINNELL: He was very clever about getting something that didn't cost very much in a good place. Jimmy was always very clever about things like that. So this had a little back porch and some green grass and a big mulberry tree that scattered mulberries all over, you know? But this little back porch was great, and then there was a little kitchenette and a bathroom and a closet along the hall. And then we were close-we were right by a little park with a stream running through it and the art museum right over there. Very, very good place and close to Johns Hopkins University. And how he ever found that. And it was just off of Charles Street. He could take the bus or the streetcar down to Locke Insulators at the other end of town.

MS. HOLT: This is in Baltimore?

MS. MCKINNELL: In Baltimore. So it worked out beautifully, and it was because Jim found the best place at the right time. You know, it really was.

But he had a bow and arrow. He had made bows and arrows when he was a kid. He knew what kind of wood. He had this wonderful bow and arrow that he had made-or arrows. And there were rats out in the alley, this long green grass out there, you know. And the rats used to play games out there.

So there was a young couple that lived upstairs. We lived on the first floor. The young couple lived upstairs, and this man came down and he said, "What are you going to do with that bow and arrow?" And Jimmy said, "I'm going to shoot those rats." And he did.

And then we built a little tiny electric kiln in the basement. And the people were very worried that lived in this apartment house-I think I told you that-that they were going to blow up. This tiny little thing made with insulating pyre bricks and grooves and cone-4 electric. So and stove-

MS. HOLT: Oh, the knobs?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes, yes. Electric stove, you know? 04. So we never blew up anything. I wanted to make pots, so I got some clay some place there in town, and I made some little pots and fired them in this little-and we could get a hold of materials. And then I was asked to teach as a substitute at the teacher's college just outside of Baltimore at that time. And as a substitute, because the regular teacher was sick or something. So I fired some things out there, too.

And then Jim had this grant, the GI grant. He had to use it or else he'd lose it. And we looked around the USA, and there was no place that we could both go to school. And so we decided to check on European schools and we did. We called Bernard Leach. I told you that, didn't I?

MS. HOLT: Yes, because he was there or something.

MS. MCKINNELL: He was in Washington, D.C., and so we happened to catch him just at the right moment, and he had just taken on Warren and Alex MacKenzie the day before. So where should we go? Well, he said you could go and work with Michael at Penzance in Cornwall. And so we planned to do that in the fall, when school started then.

And so we were headed for Paris in March on the *SS America*. And that's when the waves were so high that I got sick. And we arrived in Paris, and Clara-you met Clara [nee McPherson, Jim's cousin]-Clara and Lloyd [Reiss] were there. He was studying painting as a GI. And so they told us we could go and live in this little apartment that they had rented, because they were living in a house and their friends were coming back but not for a month. So we could have this apartment with Contessa de la Lange.

MS. HOLT: Yes.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes, I think Clara told you that. And so we had the one room and the bathroom, and we could cook on this board that we laid across this gigantic bathtub with our little-we finally got some French stoves. Our big American camping equipment was just much too big and heavy, so we got these little French things and we cooked there. And that's when-I think you were here when Madame had to take her-the Countess had to take her bath on Saturday night, so we had to clear everything out.

MS. HOLT: But the question is, I guess, for me, what made Jim choose to go toward pottery instead of more industrial kinds of things?

MS. MCKINNELL: He was trained in industry, and I think he just-I wanted to make pots, and I think he-see, his mother was kind of an artist. His uncle was an artist in New York. And I think he just-and he had done some art as a high school student in some school there. His mother had sent him to art class. And I think he wanted to do

MS. HOLT: He wanted to do art?

MS. MCKINNELL: Art, yeah.

MS. HOLT: That's a very big shift from engineer to artist.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes, but you see, this man whose name I can't remember whose daughter lives in Littleton had suggested ceramic engineering, because that's how he could get a job, and that's where he got his first job. But he really wanted to do art things. So where were we?

MS. HOLT: So you were now in Paris on the GI Bill.

MS. MCKINNELL: We lived initially in the apartment with Countess de la Lange for a month. Then we had to find another place to live. So we got this 10th-rate hotel down by the Bastille. We could manage that. I think it cost a dollar a day, and between us we could scrape that up, you know. And he had a little money from the GI Bill, and so we moved there.

MS. HOLT: And why Paris?

MS. MCKINNELL: I think he had-oh, he could go to Ecole Metier d'Arte [Ecole Nationale Superieure d'Arts et Metiers]. It was in Paris. He had to go to school in order to get his \$250 a month. So he could go to school and he could take painting and he could do all these things, and I could go with him, except that nobody paid any attention to me.

And that's when we decided-and he got a tandem bicycle because I'd never ridden a bicycle, and that's when we looked around Paris and found, what was his first name, [Michael] LaCoste? Didn't I show you his pot? And so we had traveled out to his place. It was outside of Paris. And he taught us to center the clay on his rickety kick wheel, and one of us would be on the kick wheel centering the clay and pulling up a cylinder, and the other would be tapping a pot on center. So we learned some of the basics.

And then summer came and we turned in that tandem bicycle, for a Durney with a one-horsepower motor. And that's when we traveled through France visiting potters and potteries everywhere.

MS. HOLT: Right, this was the summer of '49.

MS. MCKINNELL: And that's when we visited Picasso at Vallauris, because we'd had a tandem accident and we had to rest up at Vallauris. And Picasso had a big show in the museum there. See, I've got all the photos that Jimmy took. And that's when Picasso just lived in the white house right there, you know, and had this big show in the museum.

So after we got ourselves pulled together, we went on and we had another tandem accident outside of Marseille, and that's when I broke my nose again. And that's when the truck came up and drove in front of us and we went under the truck.

MS. HOLT: Was that when you stopped using the tandem for a while?

MS. MCKINNELL: We had to send it in for repairs. No, no, no, that was wrong. We were in Vallauris and we were going to go up the coast and we ran into a pile of gravel on a road that turned just like that, and that's when we got really damaged, and then, that's when we had this little pup tent. We put it up in a wide place beside the road, and we knew we had to almost carry the tandem, you know, and we had things to make a little dinner. We didn't have money enough to go to restaurants, you know. So I started to cook this dinner and then it started to

rain, and that's when I started to cry. And I said, "I wish we were in a hotel."

Well, then we went on up the road and visited, you know, the prince.

MS. HOLT: Rainier?

MS. MCKINNELL: Rainier, and his wife. He had married an American [Grace Kelly].

MS. HOLT: The actress.

MS. MCKINNELL: Actress, yes. And we had to investigate all this, you know, and then went on up the road and we had to travel by bus. Let's see, we went to Italy. That's when we got in the bedbugs. Did I tell you about that?

MS. HOLT: [Laughs] No.

MS. MCKINNELL: We had to stay-there was no place-we were staying at youth hostels and there was no place in Italy for women. No women could stay in hostels. That wasn't-oh, dear, no. So somebody told us where we could stay, and everything looked very, very nice. And we had our sleeping bags rolled up and there were wide windowsills, so we put the sleeping bags on the windowsills because the beds were made up, two single beds. Didn't I tell you this?

MS. HOLT: No.

MS. MCKINNELL: Jimmy had always asked me what a bedbug looked like, and I had known, because my mother used to sort the clothes from some farmer that had come to my dad's office for dental work to see if there were any bedbugs, and she showed me what a bedbug looked like, you know, because she found some. She did this outside on the porch, not in the house. And so Jimmy said, "What's a bedbug look like?" And I had said, "Well, we'll find out sometime."

So he said, "Something's itching my neck," Jimmy said. I said, "Well, I guess you're going to find out what a bedbug looks like." So we got up and we tried to get rid of the bedbugs. We didn't want them to get in our clothes. We washed the clothes and hung them on the slide that Jimmy always carried, you know. So all our clothes were up there and our sleeping bags were on the wide windowsill. So we managed to sleep, sort of.

MS. HOLT: Fitfully.

MS. MCKINNELL: We got up early. Jim said, "I want to get out of here. Otherwise I'm so mad, I might say something to these people." So we got up very early and we checked everything, you know, our nightclothes, everything. And we got out early, because we were headed for Amsterdam to stay with Mary Van Hessen's Dutch mother and father and we didn't want to take bedbugs.

Well, we had to go through Switzerland on the train, because our tandem had to be sent back to Paris to be repaired, of course, and we didn't have that, so we had to go through Switzerland on the train. That wasn't so nice. And we were going to take a boat from some place in Austria across to Amsterdam. I've forgotten what that was now. But we were going to work our way. But that was impossible. They'd changed all that. So we didn't. And then we went to Amsterdam on the train, and we had very carefully checked everything for bedbugs. We didn't think we were taking any bedbugs.

So Mary Van Hessen's mother and father treated us very, very well. And we stayed there for a week while our tandem was getting repaired in Paris, and then it was shipped back to us.

MS. HOLT: In Amsterdam.

MS. MCKINNELL: And that's when I told-didn't I tell you about Mary's-Jimmy was going to take Mary's father on a ride on the tandem. I told you about that?

MS. HOLT: No.

MS. MCKINNELL: Jimmy was talking, you know. And he thought Mr. Sachs had gotten on the back where I sat, you know. Well, he hadn't. So Jimmy went off, talking away, looked back, and Mr. Sachs wasn't there. And he thought he'd fallen off. So he came back, Mr. Sachs was standing there and everybody was laughing.

Well, we got fed very well at the Sachs's; they had such good food. I guess, during the war, when the Germans were in Holland, that they had almost starved. And Mrs. Sachs showed us some photos of what they looked like. They were so terribly thin, you know, just wasting away. They just didn't have enough to eat. And so anyway, then we got on our tandem and we went on our way.

And the Rembrandt Museum was not then in Amsterdam. It was off someplace. So we went to see the museum, and then on up through Denmark. And Jimmy had to deliver a message to some man in the ceramic engineering in Copenhagen. So we went there and we got to see them, the whole work of this place: how they made these pots, and how they decorated them, and how they trimmed them and all. And it was just like other places in Europe where one person did this, one person did this, one person did this, you know, the whole factory. It was kind of a factory.

So then we went on up to Sweden on a boat, and we had to have deck passes because we didn't have enough money to pay for bunks, you know, and things. So I remember I was lying on the deck the next morning and-

[Audio break.]

When Jimmy came over, he was lying close by in our sleeping bags. And we were just covered with-

MS. HOLT: Dew? Spray?

MS. MCKINNELL: From the-

MS. HOLT: Soot?

MS. MCKINNELL: Soot. We were covered with soot, you know. Well, we washed up the best we could. And I remember, we sat on a bank and Jimmy wanted to go to Norway. Well, we were due at Penzance to work with Michael Leach, and I think I told you this. Being the teacher that I was, I thought we should get there on time, and I've been sorry ever since that we didn't go to Norway.

So we went and worked with Michael Leach and we learned how to make repeat things, you know, matching things. And this little electric kiln, I think I told you, that we get there early and Michael didn't come until afternoon, and we would open this little door of this little electric kiln and take things out and look at them and put them back in, then pretend we'd never looked at them at all. And we learned to make matching things, which was good, you know.

MS. HOLT: And was this-tell me a little bit about Penzance. This was a pottery?

MS. MCKINNELL: This was a school, the Penzance School of Art in Penzance, Cornwall. And it was right on the edge of Cornwall. In fact, we could go-Land's End was right there, and I've got pictures of Jimmy at Land's End looking across the Atlantic to where we came from in Baltimore. [Laughs.]

So what's next?

MS. HOLT: How long did you stay with Michael Leach?

MS. MCKINNELL: One term, which was probably September, October, November, part of December.

MS. HOLT: As students.

MS. MCKINNELL: Then we had taken a trip at Thanksgiving time up to Edinburgh to see what they were doing at the Edinburgh College of Art, because we wanted to do something more than Michael Leach was teaching us. So we left our gear and our tandem and everything with our landlady in-

MS. HOLT: So you were in Edinburgh?

MS. MCKINNELL: Then we headed for Edinburgh. And Jimmy had a gigantic pack on his back. I was carrying a suitcase, because I couldn't have anything on my back. It bothered me. I was carrying a little suitcase, and we left a lot of stuff in Penzance with our landlady, Rose, whatever her name was, Rose something. And she was going to send that later when we got settled.

So we had some friends that were living in Edinburgh. He was a student at the college for people training to be ministers. And so his wife had had to go back to the U.S. to take care of her mother, who was sick, and he was living with this woman who was a single woman, and she lived alone and she rented out rooms. And so he said, "You can come and stay here, and I will just get myself a little room someplace, because I am going to finish up my work and get back to the U.S." So we did.

We moved in with this woman, and there was a bathroom, but like in a lot of other places, you could only take a bath, you know, on Saturday nights. And there was a toilet and everything. And then we had a little bedroom, and then we could do some cooking in the fireplace, which we did. We stayed there for one term and we learned to make teapots.

MS. HOLT: Now, I thought you were going there just for a holiday.

MS. MCKINNELL: We went up and checked on the place, and then we came back and got our gear and went up and decided to work with Katie [Kathleen] Horsman, because we could learn to make teapots and coffee pots and cups and saucers and things that we hadn't learned with Michael Leach.

So we stayed there until the term was over.

MS. HOLT: Are we talking into the spring or-

MS. MCKINNELL: That was into early June, I think.

MS. HOLT: Oh, okay. You were there for quite a while then.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, you know, it was-

MS. HOLT: Four or five months.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. But we had to get back a little early, so we didn't stay the full term. Why did we have to get back a little early? I don't remember. Maybe Jimmy's GI money was running out or something. I can't remember. [Laughs.] I don't know.

And so we were going back to Baltimore, and there wasn't anything for us in Baltimore. So Jimmy had explored Colorado and he thought it was a good place. And so he bought this silly delivery truck. I told you about that.

MS. HOLT: That's okay. Tell me again.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, it had a governor on the motor, so it would only go 25 miles an hour, had a leaky radiator. It had a place in back where we could sleep and store our small amount of gear. So we headed west-

MS. HOLT: At 25 miles an hour.

MS. MCKINNELL: We had investigated Boulder the summer we came out for the first festival at Aspen. I told you that.

MS. HOLT: Yes, that was right after you were married.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. And we thought Boulder was a nice place, a small university, a small town of retired people. And so we came out and we camped where the library is now.

And, oh, we stopped in Nebraska. My parents had gone back to Nebraska so my dad could practice dentistry there, because he had a license there. So they got in their car. My brother was living in the house out at Bryn Mawr and he wanted to get back to California. So we got in their car-I got in their car, and Adeline had come, my friend Adeline had come to visit them. So we all were all in their car and Jimmy was driving this silly delivery truck. Well, we had stopped in Cincinnati, Ohio, or Cleveland, to visit these friends, and they had fixed up-this man who had worked at Locke Insulator knew a good garage, and they got the leak taken care of and took off the governor so Jimmy could drive faster. But he was driving the truck with our gear in it and I was riding with Adeline and my parents, and we were headed for Boulder.

And so, we got to Boulder and we found out we could rent this furnished house and we did for nine months. And the people that lived in Kansas and taught there came out every summer and lived in their house. Well, then we all got in the car. And I think I told you about the overdrive.

MS. HOLT: No.

MS. MCKINNELL: In this old car of my dad's, you pulled out a thing to go when you were going along and you just wanted to go along steadily, you know, called an overdrive. And it was halfway out. Well, my dad was having an awful time driving, so he asked Jimmy if he would drive. So Jimmy got in and this overdrive was still halfway out and we were going around these mountain roads, you know, and Jimmy drove just like he skied. So we were all hanging on for dear life. But he drove very well.

Finally he discovered what was the matter and pushed this thing, in and then we-we drove at a little more of a reasonable pace.

[Audio break.]

MS. HOLT: Okay, so you were in the mountains with the car with your parents and Adelaide, and Jim driving -

MS. MCKINNELL: Adeline, yeah. And we got to Seattle and visited our parents, and we picked up whatever we needed, we thought we needed, you know, for pottery, and came back to Boulder. And we moved into the rented, furnished house, and in order to pay-

MS. HOLT: This would have been fall. Fall of 1950?

MS. MCKINNELL: This was 1951. And we had these university boys staying upstairs to help pay for the rent, and I also gave them meals, part of the meals for them to help.

And I became pregnant immediately. And I had a job teaching half-time at the sixth grade at one of the schools. And then when I became pregnant, I told the principal and the superintendent of schools that the doctors said I could teach until I was, what, three, four months along, when I began to show. And at that time, you know, it was-you shouldn't teach if you are pregnant. So I taught half-time, sixth grade. I didn't like sixth grade. But some of these little Spanish girls, didn't I tell you that? They knew when somebody was pregnant. So the little Spanish girls went and told the principal that I was pregnant. Well, I'd already told her, and I told the superintendent. But the little Spanish girls didn't think I should be teaching.

So I taught for a little while, and I talked it over with the principal and the superintendent and said, well, what about-how long do you think I should teach? Well, until, so and so and so. And so, I kept wearing the same clothes. They began to get a little tight, you know.

So anyway, we had this house rented for a certain length of time. There was the hospital bill that we had to think about coming up and taking care of a baby and all of that, and it cost money. And I think I told you we were teaching the evening classes?

MS. HOLT: At?

MS. MCKINNELL: The university evening classes, they had asked us to teach in our house.

MS. HOLT: University of Colorado.

MS. MCKINNELL: And I told you that Jimmy taught the wheel-he had two wheels in the basement-and I taught glazing and decorating and all that stuff up in the dining room and kitchen. Then, the ladies that were taking the class decided to give me a shower. "What do you need, Nan?" I said, "I need everything. I know nothing about babies." So they gave me diapers and everything, all the basics, you know. And so-

MS. HOLT: This was the beginning of the Arts Ceramics Program at the University of Colorado.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, right. And so-oh we had the ceramics teacher, you know. And several of the faculty-you know, I told you about the red coat.

MS. HOLT: Yes.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, and so, what were we going to do? Jimmy got the paper. He got interviewed for the U.S. Geological Survey. He got hired, and so we bought a trailer. Well, used the old truck as a down payment.

MS. HOLT: For the new trailer.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, and a 24-foot trailer, not modern. And so I think it was just a week before Katie was born, we moved into the trailer. And Jimmy had this job with the U.S. Geological Survey, and he was working in the office until the doctor had given our baby a six weeks checkup. And then I said, I would be willing to get into the-you know, to move. But we were living in the trailer.

So we started out and Lander, Wyoming, was the first place. I told you that?

MS. HOLT: Right.

MS. MCKINNELL: And that's-we had the dog, and then another dog came along and liked our dog. So Jimmy insisted we take the dog with us, and pretty soon we had six puppies.

MS. HOLT: Two dogs, a baby, six puppies.

MS. MCKINNELL: Two dogs, six puppies, and a baby in a 24-foot trailer. And my potter's wheel. And a glaze cupboard.

MS. HOLT: All in the trailer.

MS. MCKINNELL: All in the trailer. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: Oh no. [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: So Lander, Wyoming, was first and then Laramie. And then back to Boulder, and then Lamar, Colorado, and then Amarillo, Texas.

But I think I told you about the spider?

MS. HOLT: No.

MS. MCKINNELL: In Lamar?

MS. HOLT: No.

MS. MCKINNELL: We were the only trailer in Lamar, Colorado, and I went to the restroom one morning and there was this big black widow that had a beautiful web right over the round mirror in this restroom. And I thought of my baby and-[laughs]-and I told Jimmy and he came and he brought a glass-

MS. HOLT: Jar? Like a jar or a pane?

MS. MCKINNELL: A jar and a piece of cardboard or paper, you know. And this was the biggest spider of that kind I'd ever seen. Because I'd had seen a lot of them in Holdrege, Nebraska, all around the outside. I think I told you about the time that they were-the janitor had brought in the mother? And I had little spiders all over my desk? Yes, well, anyway, we told the woman and the man who ran the trailer court about it. She says, "Oh yes, we have a lot of those around here." [Laughs.]

So then we went onto-oh, at Thanksgiving time, we wanted to come to Denver. And so we just-everything was frozen. Terrible cold weather came on, and everything in the trailer got frozen, even though-well, you know, I mean we had the little heater, but it just wasn't enough. And so we wanted to get out of there. So we got in the car and I had Katie in my arms and we had the dogs in the back and I think the puppies had all died. They had something that probably was carried by that-

MS. HOLT: The stray.

MS. MCKINNELL: The stray. And they all died. And so we had our dog, and I don't know what happened to the other dog, maybe we still had it, and I had Katie in my arms, and we headed for Denver. Well, the heaters in the car weren't so great, and Jimmy had this little tiny space, and the snow was blowing. It was so cold, and I had taken all the diapers and brought them up, and we found this motel outside of Denver, right close to Denver. And it was two rooms, painted pink, and I brought all these diapers so that we could wash them and get them dry. And Katie cried and cried and cried and cried. I don't know whether it was the pink walls or something, but we just couldn't get her to go to sleep. So we stayed there at least one night, and then it began to clear up. And so we could-I don't remember what we did in Denver, but then we started to go back south.

And then in Texas, in Amarillo, Texas, we were close to the Mexican border, and I told you that Jimmy wanted to go and visit Mexico and see these corn cribs made of ceramics, you know, and other things. So we took-no, we had the two dogs. Yeah, we still had the two dogs and the baby and this old car, and we went to Mexico.

MS. HOLT: Where was the trailer?

MS. MCKINNELL: We must have left the trailer.

MS. HOLT: In Amarillo?

MS. MCKINNELL: I don't remember now. But we were camping. And that's funny I can't remember that, because we were living in the trailer in Amarillo.

MS. HOLT: Well, maybe you left the trailer there.

MS. MCKINNELL: We must have left the trailer there.

MS. HOLT: And went down to Mexico.

MS. MCKINNELL: Jimmy was very interested in these skove kilns, you know what a skove kiln is? So he took pictures everywhere, and one reason we went to Mexico was because we'd seen this ad in the paper where a man wanted a man and wife, that the man would know something about building kilns, firing, and all of that stuff, you know, all the technical stuff. And he wanted someone to come there and make pots, copies of these

ancient Mexican pots. And he showed us this big book; I think I told you about that.

MS. HOLT: No, you didn't.

MS. MCKINNELL: It was a great big book and it had handmade, painted illustrations. They were wonderful. And we were sitting on a kind of Davenport thing, and he'd turn the pages, you know, and we'd see these wonderful things. But we decided maybe it wouldn't be a good idea to stay in Mexico with Katie. She'd had some digestive problems, and I just couldn't see a Mexican woman taking care of our baby while I worked for this man.

MS. HOLT: Yeah, a little too foreign for you?

MS. MCKINNELL: So we decided, no, and so we came back, and then where did we go?

MS. HOLT: From there, I think-did you go to Seattle again?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, we went out to Seattle, and we did take the trailer. And Jim's dad and Jim's brother John had built this little house out at Lake City, outside of Seattle. And so we moved into that little house, and I used the trailer as my studio. And that's when Pete Voulkos and his wife Peggy, who had been my student in drawing at the university, came over and gave a workshop.

And so they asked us to come over for the Marguerite Wildenhain workshop. She was invited to give a seven-day workshop, and so we went over there. And my mother came and took care of Katie. So we thought it was a wonderful place, and we were trying to think of what we could do. And Jimmy had gotten a job back at Boeing while we were in Seattle, and we decided to take the trailer and go over there and learn more about pottery.

MS. HOLT: At the Archie Bray Foundation [Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts, Helena, MT].

MS. MCKINNELL: At the Archie Bray Foundation while Pete was there and Rudy [Autio]. And that's, I think I told you, Jimmy's mother just had a fit.

MS. HOLT: [Laughs] Giving up a good job.

MS. MCKINNELL: A paying job. But we did. We moved back there and lived in the trailer. And Pete was there for all that summer, and we learned a lot watching him. He was fantastic.

MS. HOLT: That must have been '53. The Bray then was just a couple of years old at the time.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, wasn't very old. And Rudy was there, of course, and he was making murals-and wonderful murals. So Pete was hired at the Los Angeles County Institute. It became something else; I don't know what it was called.

MS. HOLT: Otis [Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, CA]?

MS. MCKINNELL: Otis, yeah. So he was leaving, and so Archie, Jr., asked us to stay on, and Muriel Guest from Canada was hired. And she was supposed to know a lot, and she didn't know very much of anything. She was supposed to know a lot about glazes, and Pete had wanted us to get our own glazes, so Jimmy and I had worked hard and we had worked up a lot of new glazes before Pete left, and afterwards too. And so Muriel was living in the house, where Pete and Peggy had made this house out of a chicken house, you know. And it was nice. And so she was living there and then-

MS. HOLT: You were in the trailer.

MS. MCKINNELL: We were living in the trailer and then some place along the way-oh this was later-anyway, Muriel left. And we moved into the house, the little house. And that's when the skunks came around to eat-I told you about that. Oh.

I fed the dogs outside when it was nice, and, you know, there was a little residue left in the dog pans, and this was only-there was one bedroom and a kind of main room and a little kitchenette and a little bathroom, tiny, you know, this wasn't a very big chicken coop that they had built a house out of. [Laughs.] And I had fed the dogs outside, and then we'd come inside and I think that the dogs were in the little entryway, or maybe they were inside, and they started to bark.

MS. HOLT: Uh-oh.

MS. MCKINNELL: A skunk had come around the corner and it was licking the dishes and the dogs started to bark. And the skunk let it go just under our bedroom window.

MS. HOLT: Oh no, no. [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: It was awful. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: I bet for a while, too.

MS. MCKINNELL: It swept the whole house, was just awful, you know, everything. Oh dear. So what was next?

MS. HOLT: What were you doing at the Bray? What kinds of things were you making, or what were you working on?

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh, just sort of basic forms, you know, plates and cups and saucers and teapots and things like that.

MS. HOLT: And glazes?

MS. MCKINNELL: And glazes. We were trying to teach the students after Pete left, you know, and teach them to throw.

MS. HOLT: Was Frances Senska there?

MS. MCKINNELL: Frances lived in Bozeman. She only came over when there was something going on. That's how we got acquainted with her. If there was a workshop or anything, Frances always came over. So we knew her, and she was testing all these clays, you know, and everything. She was very good at that. Well, we did that for a while, and then we decided we wanted to move and be on our own.

MS. HOLT: Now, wait a minute, weren't you doing the summer program in Washington?

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh, that's right, yeah. Ruth Penington asked us to teach six weeks. Glad you remember these things, since I don't. And so that's when we-Jimmy started to work on this loose-brick kiln that we could carry with us. And he had watched them burning the weeds with the weed burners, so that solved that problem. And then we went over to an island in Puget Sound and taught, set up everything, taught the six weeks, tore it all down, put it in the truck and car, and went back to Helena.

MS. HOLT: Now this was the first loose-brick gas kiln that he had done.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, because we had to have something portable, you know. And he built that that winter in this empty room. This room had just been built and it wasn't used very much yet, so he spent that winter working, and he-three-

MS. HOLT: Three chambers.

MS. MCKINNELL: Three chambers, and I said, no, let's have just two-glaze and bisque. And so, come summer, we packed everything, the bricks back in the boxes, took everything with us, pails of glaze, everything, dogs and Katie-[laughs]-and took the ferry and went over to the island and set it all up and taught the six weeks, undid it, and went back to Helena. That actually-[audio break]-I told you about the cherry-pie jellyfish.

MS. HOLT: No.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, this first summer that we taught there for Ruth, this pottery area was sitting out over the water, and everything was very damp. We had to use heat lamps to dry the pots and everything, in order to get them so we could fire them. You know, six weeks isn't very long. And right down there were these cherry-pie jellyfish about this big. And Katie was fascinated-[laughs]-so I had to tie her with a rope to keep her from going down there and investigating.

You know, she's like her dad; she wants to investigate everything. She could just go part way, but she couldn't get all the way down because those things are terribly poisonous, you know, especially for children.

MS. HOLT: Children, yeah.

MS. MCKINNELL: So we taught the six weeks, and that's when Clayton James came over. He lived in La Conner, and he was an artist, sculptor and painter. And he wanted to learn more about pottery, so he came over and watched. And he was quite fascinated with everything.

MS. MCKINNELL: So the next summer we went back to Helena, and we taught the next summer, but a different place. We taught-it was a place where they had had crabs or-I don't know. I know it smelled awfully fishy-[laughs]-and jutted out into the water. And the dogs-I think one of our dogs had been killed by that time, run

over with a car or something, someplace. Something had happened. And so we just had the one dog. And we used to throw sticks out for the dog to retrieve. Well, there were a lot of fallen trees here, and that dog wanted to push the whole, you know, tree back on the-like a stick. People used to just stand there and laugh. Well-

[Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: He was retrieving the tree.

MS. MCKINNELL: Retrieving the tree. And it would try to get another tree, and people would just stand there and just laugh and laugh.

MS. MCKINNELL: And anyway, we taught that six weeks, and Clayton James came over and took the class. So he found out how to build a kiln. Jimmy had the plans and everything, you know.

And so Clayton went back and built a kiln and started making pots.

MS. HOLT: And this is a remarkable shift in ceramics. You have the concept of someone building a loose-brick, gas-fired kiln in multiple chambers that could be packed up, put on a trailer and hauled around.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah.

MS. HOLT: That's just not something that existed before that. Is that correct?

MS. MCKINNELL: That's correct.

And so we went back to Helena, and then we thought, it's time we got on our own. And we had seen this ad for Old Deerfield. And Jimmy had got a ride with some student going back to, probably, Harvard or someplace. And he had gone to Deerfield and checked out this place and thought it might be a good place for us to go. And so we got ready-[laughs]-and we had to fire a lot of pots, because we wanted to take pots with us so we'd have something to sell soon, you know.

And that's when I had-we had a big pot, and I had dried it on-it was one that Jimmy had made, I think, or it was a big hand-built of mine, but I know it was kind of tall. And I had dried it on a stove in this empty room, this room where Jimmy had been working on the kiln. And I thought it was dry. And when the kiln was built-I told you that Pete could reach in-

MS. HOLT: Uh-huh, and just put things in.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, Jimmy's shoulders were too wide for this narrow door. Rudy had never learned to stack the kiln. He didn't know how to fire. You see, his stuff was fired in the brickyard. So Nan stacked the kiln on her knees on a pillow, and I told you about -

MS. HOLT: -the brick that-

MS. MCKINNELL: -the brick that was pointed that was in the arch, so I had a sore head all the time. Well, Doris Strawn came over from Bozeman, and she had her whole set of dishes for her thesis, for her master's degree. She used to come and work at Archie Bray. I told you about the time her dress-

MS. HOLT: Her dress got caught up in the wheel, yeah.

MCKINNELL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, anyway. This kiln got stacked, and I had put this supposedly dry pot in-somehow, in the front at the last minute. And Jim-they got the kiln started, and it sort of went up by itself during the night. And then I got up early and came around to see how it looked in the morning, and I looked in the spy hole. Nothing there. And I went back and I said, "What happened to the coals?" And there was no thermometer or anything, you know; couldn't see the coals anyplace. I said, "Something has blown." So we cooled the kiln-and it was only part way up anyway. We cooled it and we took the bricks out-all these bricks that we had to pack in-and this one pot had exploded. And Doris Strawn's dinner set-

MS. HOLT: Her thesis-

MS. MCKINNELL: -was covered with shards. It was awful.

MS. HOLT: Oh, no.

MS. MCKINNELL: So-[laughs]-we had to unstack everything, reglaze everything and -

MS. HOLT: Grind them, too, probably.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, grind off all the bits, pieces, you know, all kinds of things and restack it. And it took a long time, you know. And what did we do that time? We were very, very, very careful that everything was very dry. And so it fired okay, and Doris's thesis came out okay. But we were trying to fire things to take with us.

MS. HOLT: Right, now, you were going to Massachusetts, to Deerfield, because you had seen an ad for what?

MS. MCKINNELL: This house where they wanted a potter with a wife, because they'd had a man and a wife team there. And so Jimmy had gone back to look at it, and it was-the front part was a log cabin, and you had to take visitors through and tell them a story, you know. And what we used for our display room was hand-made bricks. And out beyond were two more additions. One was used for an office, and I used it for my wheel. And I think Jimmy had an electric wheel, and then there beyond that was space for the kiln to be built.

MS. HOLT: So you boxed up the bricks once again?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes, and we had to get more bricks when we got there. And that is a story I have to tell you about. Anyway, we loaded up the truck and the trailer. I pulled a luggage trailer. And we didn't have to take the house trailer. So Jimmy loaded up the truck. It was really loaded. No, he was pulling a trailer with all his stuff, because he couldn't get it all in the truck. And we got as far as Greenfield, which was five miles from Deerfield.

And I had a feeling that we were just going to make it. I had this feeling from the beginning, you know. [Laughs.] And we had tried to prepare everything so we could make it, but just going through Greenfield, I think the trailer-something happened to the trailer. It just started to sag.

MS. HOLT: Something with the axle.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, that's right. And I drove up and we shouted to Jimmy, "Go in there," into the filling station. "The trailer's down, broken." [Laughs.] So, I think they heard me all over Greenfield. [They laugh.] So we unloaded the things we had to have and went on out to Deerfield. And it was summer. And it was hot. And I went up into this-where we were supposed to live.

MS. HOLT: In the attic?

MS. MCKINNELL: It was really an attic, you know, because these historical rooms were down below.

MS. HOLT: This is the Bloody Brook Tavern.

MS. MCKINNELL: This is Bloody Brook Tavern. And I thought, oh no. Jimmy had had them build a little window so we could see out on that one side, and it gave a tiny bit of ventilation. And there was a window at that end and then a living room, dining room, kitchen here and then a little, tiny half-bathroom and then the bedroom. And there was a window at each end. But that's all the ventilation there was, except this little, tiny window that Jimmy had had them build. Well, that wasn't very good either. It was so hot and humid. And, of course, Helena was maybe hot, but it wasn't humid.

MS. HOLT: It was dry, yes.

MS. MCKINNELL: I remember getting meals with perspiration just dripping off of me.

I told you about the heating stove, didn't I?

MS. HOLT: I don't think so.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, there was no furnace at that time. And so the first year there was this heating stove that was above the stair steps vent like that. And this-the first set of steps over there was a landing, kind of landing. And that's where the heating stove was. And there was a very narrow way to walk out on that board to pour oil in the oil heating stove. And guess who had to do that? [Laughs.] Jimmy couldn't.

MS. HOLT: No, he was too big.

MS. MCKINNELL: He was too big. And so Nan took the can of oil, had to put it in there. The ceiling was low enough that we hung white rags, pieces of rags so that Jimmy wouldn't knock himself out. [They laugh.]

Well, we didn't think anybody would know us back there; we wouldn't have any visitors. Believe me, we had visitors. They used to come down from New Hampshire, headed for New York, and guess where they stayed? And Jean and Bob and their two kids, their two boys, came to visit us.

MS. HOLT: Jim's sister and brother-in-law.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, and everybody else: Mary Van Hessen and her husband and their kids. And most of them stayed in hotels or motels, but I remember bedding down 10 people one night in the display room. We had air mattresses and sleeping bags, and some of them had things with us. And these were people from over in the college where Frans Wildenhain taught [Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY].

And so a bunch of students came over to see what we were doing. And they had to stay all night.

MS. HOLT: And they didn't have money for a hotel.

MS. MCKINNELL: We were so desperate that we got a cot and put it in the kitchen, the old kitchen downstairs where people would come through. And I remembered having-my mother having a handmade blue-and-white bed spread that my father's grandmother had made, all-

MS. HOLT: Hand-stitched.

MS. MCKINNELL: Everything was-she sheared the sheep.

MS. HOLT: Spun the yarn?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, and-

MS. HOLT: Wove it?

MS. MCKINNELL: -wove the whole thing. And I sent for that and put it over this cot. It was one of those with the springs. You know, you could see the springs, but it was-you could open it up if you had to, but you don't-

MS. HOLT: Right.

MS. MCKINNELL: -lay it down. And I put this thing over it with a mattress kind of thing. And once and a while a visitor would come in, "Oh, what a lovely bedspread." Now I suppose this is that old, wooden-and they'd lift up the bedspread and here were these springs. I'd have to explain. [Laughs.] They'd expected it would be one of those old wood things, you know.

MS. HOLT: Oh, right, because it was in the museum part.

MS. MCKINNELL: It was in the kitchen.

MS. HOLT: In the kitchen in the museum part. Oh, I see, yes.

Just for the record, Nan, I want to make sure that we understand what Bloody Brook Tavern was. It had been an old building.

MS. MCKINNELL: It had been moved from Bloody Brook, where there had been a massacre, and they had taken it all apart, brick by brick.

MS. HOLT: Log by log.

MS. MCKINNELL: And then, of course, the front part of it was hand-hewn logs, you know. And they had brought that over and built it, because Deerfield was a historical village. And Mrs. Flower and somebody else had taken care of this, because a man from New York owned the rest of the stuff, the historical buildings. So these people took care of this, Bloody Brook Tavern. And there was a painter in town, and it was on this board. And Mrs. Flower and what was his name, I don't remember; his wife was Katie's third-grade teacher. I can't remember that. And so this had been all built up, and it had a sign in front, "Bloody Brook Tavern," and in front of that on the street was a replica of a house that had been burned by the Indians. They called it Indian House. And it was a replica, but people would come through.

MS. HOLT: Yeah, because I want this for this record. Okay, so across this road was the Indian House.

MS. MCKINNELL: No, it was right in front, on the same side of the road. It was a replica. So people would come and go through there, and then they would come to Bloody Brook Tavern. And they had to pay, you know, to see all these places; didn't have to pay very much, but a little bit.

MS. HOLT: And you had to give a tour.

MS. MCKINNELL: And I had to take off my apron. I had been throwing pots, you know-and look in-I kept a mirror there and a comb-and I would run in to the front room and open the front door: "Oh, how do you do? Come in." Be nice, you know. And I'd take them through and tell of the story. [They laugh.] Then they would come in to the

big room, the display room, and look at our pots, and we hoped they would buy some.

And I think Clara may have told you the story about when she was visiting us-

MS. HOLT: Yes.

MS. MCKINNELL: -about the people that came and said, "Are these Indian pots or Persian pots?" You know, she told you that. So we used to get lots of stories, because people hadn't been doing stoneware. We did a little porcelain, but most of it was stoneware at that time. And they didn't know what stoneware was, you know.

MS. HOLT: The first time you did stoneware was up at the Bray, wasn't it?

MS. MCKINNELL: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. HOLT: Yeah, it's what I thought. Before then it was all earthenware. How long were you at Bloody Brook?

MS. MCKINNELL: We were there altogether about four years, but one of those years we were asked to teach at New Hampshire University [University of New Hampshire, Durham]. And I had to stay-see, we had to keep the place open for visitors six months of the year. And Jimmy was-the Scheiers were on a sabbatical and-well, Ed Scheier was the one who did the teaching. Mary just made pots to sell in New York at America House.

So they asked Jimmy to come up and teach. And I had to wait six weeks till the Bloody Brook was closed before Katie and I could go up and work up there and help with the teaching and the firing and everything. And that's when we had all those 23 girls that were not potters, but they were taking home economics courses. They didn't call it that. They called it something else, you know. And they were good, very good. They paid attention. Our students don't always pay attention. You know.

MS. HOLT: I know.

MS. MCKINNELL: So we built a very tall, loose-brick kiln in an empty area. Jimmy got permission. And then they had propane, and this area wasn't used for anything. So he built this very tall two-chamber. And we decided to do salt glazing in the second chamber instead of bisque. And these people all made pots. And one girl who took woodwork, and she had made a table. And she made all these little pieces that fit together-

MS. HOLT: Oh, like a mosaic.

MS. MCKINNELL: -yeah, to put on her table. And I can remember, we took Katie up there, put her on a cot to sleep. And I was trying to find places to put all these little tiles.

MS. HOLT: Tiles! Tiny little, tiny tiles. Oh, small tiles, I see.

MS. MCKINNELL: They were tiny little tiles that she had made very, very carefully. And we had to get everything in, because this was the last firing.

MS. HOLT: Now, this was at New Hampshire?

MS. MCKINNELL: This was at the University of New Hampshire. And see, we weren't there so long. And we had to get everything finished off. The Scheiers did electric firing in cone 04. We built the tall, loose-brick, high-fire kiln. And we did salt glazing, like I said, in the second chamber. That wasn't so successful.

MS. HOLT: No, in the soft-brick kiln.

MS. MCKINNELL: No, well we had other bricks, but it-we had K26s and some hard bricks. Well, the K26s even suffered.

MS. HOLT: Yeah.

MS. MCKINNELL: And even in-around the edge-the K23s didn't do so very well. But we learned a lot.

So that last firing we were just scared to death. It was just beautiful-

MS. HOLT: Oh.

MS. MCKINNELL: -just gorgeous. And everybody was thrilled to death with it.

MS. HOLT: Wow, that's great.

MS. MCKINNELL: So, then-

MS. HOLT: I have a question that I haven't asked you before, just a question about the kilns. Now, these loose-brick, two-chamber kilns, were these flat tops or these were arch kilns?

MS. MCKINNELL: No, they were flat tops. He had built the car kiln after we had taught at Alfred [Alfred University, Alfred, NY]. And they had that big, big car kiln, you know. And Jimmy had gone back to help them build it, and it was a flat top. And then this guy built this kiln and took credit for it-and Nils Lou-and sold a lot of copies. [Laughs.] I think that's what it was. But it was just the same, you know.

But it was a car kiln, and we'd had that big car kiln at Alfred, and I think he'd probably gone to Alfred or seen it either as student or just looked at it. And then he built a small car kiln and sold plans and helped people build. He would go and help them and charge them, you know, so much for helping them build a kiln. So where are we now?

MS. HOLT: Okay, we're at Bloody Brook.

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh, I have to tell you about the time the propane-did I tell you about that?

We had to use propane tanks. We kept them outside. And Jimmy had these long, rubber-I guess they were rubber, or something like that-tubes that came from the propane tank to the burners.

And I was upstairs in Bloody Brook, and we did have that little window, you know. And I heard this *shhhhhhhhhhh*. And I thought, "Oh, my gosh." And I tore down the steps and out through all the buildings and slammed the door shut and slammed the window shut. One of these tanks-see, we kept the tanks outside the windows and doors.

And when Jimmy went to unscrew the top, it took off the whole top.

MS. HOLT: Oh, no.

MS. MCKINNELL: So this stuff was spewing all over, and he just knocked it over and rolled it out in this long, long grass, I mean long yard, as far as he could go. And it was going *shhhhhhhhh*, you know.

MS. HOLT: It was just venting, the whole-

MS. MCKINNELL: And it froze the grass.

There was a gray path, you know. Just froze it. And so I called the propane people. It took them several hours to get there.

MS. HOLT: While you were firing.

MS. MCKINNELL: We just turned off everything, you know. And they finally came. And we got another propane tank and finished the firing. [They laugh.]

And then we were to have shows. We were asked to have a show in New York at America House, and we were asked to have a show in New Hampshire-someplace in New Hampshire, Sharon, New Hampshire-and someplace else. There was one place at one time when we were at Deerfield. Deerfield Academy wanted one, one show. Greenwich Village in New York wanted a show.

MS. HOLT: America House.

MS. MCKINNELL: America House.

MS. HOLT: Which then became-

MS. MCKINNELL: I don't know what-where it was. We had so many shows we ran out of pots. I think I told you.

MS. HOLT: [Laughs] No.

MS. MCKINNELL: We went into the display room. We took all the seconds, the things that weren't good enough to show, in these other shows. And we took them out into the pottery, and Jimmy decorated more. I sprayed glazes on. We did everything we could, and we fired. In fact, we had such a kilnload that we had to add on to the front of the kiln, or add up these taller pots. We had-[laughs]-several levels on the top of this kiln. That was one advantage for this type of kiln.

MS. HOLT: Yeah, of course. This is flexible.

MS. MCKINNELL: So-and we did have a good firing. So we had some pretty good shows, after all.

MS. HOLT: Yeah. You were sending pots back to Colorado at the time, too, right?

MS. MCKINNEL: Yes, the Osiers in Lakewood. And we sent to Seattle, somebody in Florida.

MS. HOLT: Aspen. Isn't that where the Tom Thumb Gallery was?

MS. MCKINNEL: Oh, the Tom Thumb Gallery in Aspen. Yeah, she used to send this postcard-and say, I need so and so and so; you know, I've got plenty of such and such-on a pre-penny postal card. Yeah, that's right.

So we were shipping to several places, you know. We were working very hard, both of us, as hard as we could. And we wanted to make nice pots.

And I remember when there was a woman coming over in the summertime from someplace in Massachusetts. And I had laid out for different places-Seattle-these pots are to go to Seattle; these pots are to go to Aspen; these pots are to go to Boston. You know, I had them all ready to pack up, and Jimmy used to go-

[Audio break.]

-to Greenfield and get these big, heavy cartons. And then he had the metal strapping tools. And we packed in straw and newspapers. And maybe one pot out of 100 would get broken, which wasn't too bad.

I knew how to pack pots. And the truck would drive up to our porch and pick them up, you know. So a lot of them went cross-country by truck or different places.

So this woman called from the other part of Massachusetts, the western part of Massachusetts. "I'm coming over to get some pots." And I said, Oh my gosh! I can't give her those. I can't give her those. I can't give her those. They're already, you know-

MS. HOLT: Accounted for.

MS. MCKINNEL: Well, they were-I set out different sizes, different shapes, different colors, different kinds, so that they'd have a mixed variety. And we used to say, there's a person for every pot. [Laughs.] So, I said, what will I do? And we grabbed everything and took it someplace, in the back room or someplace, where we wouldn't allow anybody to go. And I tried to keep them in, you know, groups. And then Jimmy had-I think I told you this, he had dropped some pots on a board.

And they had kind of glued themselves together. They were green, you know, wet, not sopping wet, but-

MS. HOLT: Soft-leather hard.

MS. MCKINNEL: Yeah, and so they-and we had made a very interesting centerpiece for this big, long table out of these pots that had glued themselves together, you know. And this woman came: "I want that centerpiece." I said, "No, no, I'm not selling that." "Oh, but you could make another one." [Laughs.] Well, I didn't sell it to her, no.

MS. HOLT: Yeah.

MS. MCKINNEL: Oh, you know some people, "You can make another one. After all, these pots have been dropped."

MS. HOLT: Yes, Jim can trip right in the right place when the pots are just the right-yeah, oh boy.

Nan, let's take a break.

[Audio break.]

MS. HOLT: So while you were at Bloody Brook, you went to Haystack [Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, ME]?

MS. MCKINNEL: No. We were at the University of Iowa [Iowa City].

MS. HOLT: Oh, you were, okay. Well then let's finish up-

MS. MCKINNEL: This was much later.

MS. HOLT: Let's finish up with Massachusetts.

MS. MCKINNEL: Okay.

MS. HOLT: So what made you leave?

MS. MCKINNELL: Jimmy got a letter from the University of Iowa, asking him if he would apply. [Laughs.] And we looked at the letter, and I looked at the spindle with all these orders for pots. The spindle was full. And he said, "I don't know whether to apply for that or not." I said, "Yes, go ahead and apply." I said, "We'll never be able to make all those pots-[laughs]-that people want."

I told you about Mrs. Aileen Webb, didn't I?

MS. HOLT: Aileen Webb, I don't know.

MS. MCKINNELL: Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb.

MS. HOLT: Oh, tell me about it again.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, you know, that's when we were at Deerfield, and she wanted us to come up and move all of our-everything up there and work at her place in New York-upper-state New York, someplace, wherever she lived. And we said, no, because we didn't want to be tied down to a place, you know. And it was-of course, it was very lucky that we didn't go, because that was about the time that Jimmy was asked to apply at Iowa, I think. And I think we turned her down okay. I mean, we were very nice about it. She was-what's his name that I had the picture of over there-the boy-the boy that's 75 or older?

MS. HOLT: Oh, Jack Lenor Larson.

MS. MCKINNELL: Jack, see Jack was a drawing student of mine at the University of Washington. And then that's when Jimmy's mother said and Mrs.-her friend that taught at the university-they said, Jack is going to go someplace; you watch that young man. They had him all figured out, you know. And then-we had our first show at America House.

MS. HOLT: And America House became the American Craft Museum [now called the Museum of Art and Design, New York, NY].

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, eventually, but Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb and Mrs. Eastman were running it. And they asked us to have a show with this woman from South Africa-I told you about that, didn't I-

MS. HOLT: Tell me about it again.

MS. MCKINNELL: -who did thread paintings. And we got there with our pots. And our pots were all decorated, and her thread paintings were decorated. And Mrs. Webb and Mrs. Eastman and we were trying to set up this show. And we just couldn't make it look good. So we-Jack was just a young man there-had just come there, and he was just kind of the boy that did everything, you know. And so we said, "Let's have Jack come in, see what he can do." And Jack came in and he pulled that show together.

He just knew what to do, yeah. So I have to remind him when I write the letter about that. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: Yeah, I think that would be great. I'm sure he would be very happy about that.

So Jim got a letter from Iowa, and he applied.

MS. MCKINNELL: And he said, "Well, shall I apply?" And I said, yes. And so he did. And then they asked him to come out and be interviewed. And this man that finally ended up at the University of Washington was the other man that had been asked. What's his name? I can't remember.

MS. HOLT: When was this about, '62?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, we had been at Deerfield four years, with one year at the University of New Hampshire, so '61?

MS. HOLT: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] I think that's about right. I was trying to think about how old Kate was at the time.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, I think when we went to Iowa, she was in the third grade, I think. So-

MS. HOLT: Yeah, '61 then.

So, you moved to Iowa, another move.

MS. MCKINNELL: And we had taught at CU 10 weeks, and we had to go back to Deerfield, load up everything we

could, and get to Iowa. And that's when we couldn't find a place to live. And we got the lower floor of this old house. And that's when I had the big kitchen, and where I made my first big hand-built that went to the Smithsonian.

MS. HOLT: Yes. Tell me about that piece.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, I had this huge kitchen, so I just blocked off half of it, and I used half of it for potting. And Jimmy was teaching at the university, and so it could be fired there. And I made this big hand-built pot. And so he took it to the university and fired it. And I had a glaze that Frances Senska-she had sent some clay that she had dug outside of Bozeman, and we used it at Helena. It made a very good glaze. At a low temperature it was a very good clay, but for a high temperature-and I added a quarter or a half of percent of cobalt to it. We had taken some of that with us, you know. And so I glazed the pot in that. And then I-it came out very nice. It was a big hand-built.

MS. HOLT: Now how did it end up at the Smithsonian?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, there was a show in Washington, D.C., and I-Jimmy and I talked it over. Why don't I send that pot to Washington, D.C., to that show? So I packed it up and sent it. And somebody bought it and thought it should be in the Smithsonian. And Jimmy's mother's cousin lived in Washington, D.C., and she knew everybody and everything there. So we called her, or wrote her or something, I don't remember what, to find out what was going on. So somehow this thing got-

MS. HOLT: That's how it-[laughs].

MS. MCKINNELL: It's probably buried way downstairs someplace now. But that's my first Smithsonian pot [laughs].

MS. HOLT: So at Iowa, Jim was teaching.

MS. MCKINNELL: And I had the wives of the president of the university-the head dean of the university and some other faculty wives-that came to our studio in the basement of our rented house. And we used to have a great time. I told you what we talked about.

MS. HOLT: Hair color.

MS. MCKINNELL: Our hair color and everything else, you know. But they had a wonderful time.

MS. HOLT: What was Jim doing at the university besides teaching?

MS. MCKINNELL: He had charge with the whole pottery, and he had one helper, one assistant. And that was [Karl] Christiansen-those two pots out there. He gave a workshop at Laredo.

MS. HOLT: He used to teach down South, didn't he?

MS. MCKINNELL: He taught-when he got through at Iowa, he taught at-in the corner of where Iowa and Illinois-there were-you know, way down there.

MS. HOLT: Missouri.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah.

MS. HOLT: Now, but he was really starting a program there, wasn't he?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes, uh-huh. So, then what?

MS. HOLT: Well, who were some of your students at Iowa? How about that?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, Karl Christiansen was the-Jimmy's assistant. He was a second-year grad. Oh gosh, who else, I can't remember.

MS. HOLT: Clary was one of your students.

MS. MCKINNELL: Clary Illian.

MS. HOLT: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. MCKINNELL: The guy that was the head of the pottery at CU.

MS. HOLT: Tom Potter?

MS. MCKINNELL: Tom Potter. He used to wash windows for me. He was very good at that.

Who else that you would know? I don't remember now.

MS. HOLT: And it was during the summers that you were teaching-before Iowa you were teaching the summers at CU in Boulder-that you met [Paul] Soldner, or was that later?

MS. MCKINNELL: The first summer, Karl Christiansen-I remember that very well, because they had several kids. And they came up and lived in our house. And we had just bought a new mattress for our big, queen-sized bed, and the kids jumped on it and just about ruined the new mattress. [Laughs.] We had paid quite a bit for it, too.

And then the next summer we had Paul, because we had gotten acquainted with him when we were teaching at CU.

And so we asked Paul and his wife and family to come. And by that time he had learned a lot, and he was, you know, teaching in California and other places.

But he went back and forth from Scripps [Scripps College, Claremont, CA] to Iowa. And so Ron Brown was there, wasn't he?

And Ron Brown wanted to be the head. And he's the one that kind of said nasty things.

MS. HOLT: Oh, dear.

MS. MCKINNELL: And then after we came back from Japan-I don't know, Dr. Seiberling wrote a letter when we were in Japan and wanted to know if we were coming back to Iowa. And I said to Jimmy, "You know, I don't think we should go back." I had a feeling. You know how women get feelings-that maybe things weren't too good there; that Ron-I didn't know what it was, but I kind of wondered, you know. So I said, "Let's go out on our Colorado Coal Creek Canyon property and build a house and pot there."

Well, Jimmy didn't really want to. And he was pretty upset. But when we got back to Iowa, we moved, and we lived up in a cabin. And we got the well dug. And we were going to build-we had the house plans all made.

MS. HOLT: You're talking about here in Colorado?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, up in Coal Creek Canyon. And we had the house plan made. Cab Childress had made beautiful house plans with a small-very small-up above would be the house to live in and down below would be the pottery-on our five acres. And so we got the well dug, and then we got a letter from Katie Horsman in Edinburgh. It had been following us around, and it finally got to us. And she invited us to come and teach there. So I was awfully glad that we hadn't decided to go back and stay at Iowa.

MS. HOLT: Now before we go past that, tell me a little about the experience in Japan.

MS. MCKINNELL: We worked, at Dan Rhodes's suggestion-he thought we should go out into the Tajimi-Seto area. He'd been there, you know, and knew what was going on. And he thought that might be the best place for us to work. So when we got to Kyoto, we got Katie in school in Kobe. She was a 10th grader. And then we went to Kyoto to find a place to live. And that's the first time that Katie had been left alone. And one of the mothers of the students-she was a missionary person, you know, and she came and took over until they got this woman from the U.S. that was going to be the-

MS. HOLT: The headmistress or something.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, the housemother or whatever you call it-at this, whatever it is called.

MS. HOLT: International school?

MS. MCKINNELL: It was a missionary school.

So we found a place to live, a little tiny three-room apartment above a house in Kyoto, and we finally got back to Kobe to tell Katie about it, and she was so glad to see us. She was sure that we had gone and left her. [Laughs.] You know kids that age have ideas.

Well, this missionary woman that had sort of taken charge had told her that we'd only be gone one day.

Well, she lived there, and she thought we could find a place in no time. Well, we couldn't, you know. And we had

to find some place where somebody would speak English. And so the daughter of this couple taught-she could speak very good English, because she had gone to school in Ohio and studied music. She taught music at Doshisha University [Kyoto, Kyoto Prefecture], and so she spoke English. Her father was the head of Kobe Women's College, and he spoke very good English. And the mother didn't speak English.

And so we got this little apartment, and Katie would come back with either other missionary children with their parents driving back and forth or on the train. She had to take three trains.

MS. HOLT: She was about 12, wasn't she?

MS. MCKINNELL: She was in the 10th grade. She probably was 13.

Yeah, and then we were told by Dan Rhodes to look into working with somebody in Tajimi-Seto area. And somebody told us about Kenji Kato. Oh, I think it was Dr. Horiyuchi. Dr. Horiyuchi was a retired dentist, and he spoke very good English. And he was very good friend of-he knew Bernard Leach. And he collected pots. And I think he had gone around when Bernard was there-and they'd done things together, you know. And he showed us his collection; he had a wonderful collection of pots. He even had a Scheier pot. Isn't that something?

And then we went out to Tajimi and got acquainted with Kenji Kato. And he was wonderful. He spoke quite good English that he had learned during the Second World War from the GIs. And he drove us all around, showed us the clay pits, showed us everything. And so we went out there several days a week. While Katie was in school in Kobe, we would go out to Tajimi. And they lived with his mother and father. His father had had some strokes and couldn't work anymore. And so they had moved in with them. So they let us have part of their little house up on the hill. And we could cook on a one-burner-

And Kenji showed us how he threw the other way around, you know. And he was very nice about showing us everything. And we lived in their house. And then we'd take the train-several trains back-to Kyoto.

MS. HOLT: Right.

MS. MCKINNELL: And be with Katie on the weekend.

MS. HOLT: And you did this on a foundation grant, didn't you?

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh, this was on the-yes, through Iowa, through the University of Iowa. What was that? Let's see if I put that down. I can almost say it. We had to go and visit the schools that were teaching English that this foundation-Hill Family Foundation Grant-so that was nice, because we did get to travel a lot.

Then Katie had her spring vacation from her school, and we went to Korea-South Korea-to see the pots and to visit the museums. And we got to go to a couple of potteries that some-what was the name of the guy that-American that was over there for quite a while. And he built American-type kilns and noborigama. He was comparing the firings-Doug something or other.

So that's how we found out about things like that, through, you know, this and that and the other. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: So were you making things in Tajimi or-

MS. MCKINNELL: Not very much, but a little bit. And then we got to work in the pottery where-who was the man, the famous potter that died?

MS. HOLT: Hamada?

MS. MCKINNELL: No, not Hamada.

MS. HOLT: You did visit, though, yes?

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh, yeah, we knew Hamada. We knew Hamada before that.

MS. HOLT: Oh, Kanjiro Kawai.

MS. MCKINNELL: And he had died, and his nephew had taken over. And so his nephew was rebuilding a kiln, a noborigama.

And I think we got-this guy from Australia-New Zealand. We had hoped to go to New Zealand and exchange places with this man-oh, Sue Howell knows him, and they correspond all the time. And I heard from him rather recently. What's his name? He's in-we were going to exchange places and have him come in and teach. And that didn't work out because he got this job in Australia-

Anyway, he was there working, and I'll think of his name pretty soon. And he had a little tiny place to work. And it was near Kawai's kiln that had just been rebuilt. And this young man asked us if we wanted to work one at a time in his little studio. We had gone to Korea and brought him back a Korean pot. He wanted one, a certain kind that was made at a certain place. And so we brought him back that one. And then we would take turns working in his tiny little studio. And we fired in this first rebuilt kiln of Kawai's. Our things went in the last chamber, I think. The firing was pretty bad. It was the first firing that they had done in this brand-new kiln.

MS. HOLT: Oh, dear. Yeah.

MS. MCKINNELL: And it was not very good.

MS. HOLT: How long were you in Japan then, the whole year?

MS. MCKINNELL: No, all together, with all our work and travels, nine months. It was almost 10. So then we came back.

MS. HOLT: Then you came back and decided not to stay at Iowa.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah.

MS. HOLT: And to build something here in Colorado.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, after Ron Brown had made things difficult. By the way, his wife laid down on the railroad track and let the train run over her.

MS. HOLT: Oh, no.

MS. MCKINNELL: So I think when Marilyn Scaff was here-did you meet Marilyn?

MS. HOLT: Oh, yeah, of course. I know Marilyn.

MS. MCKINNELL: Marilyn Scaff Humple. She said, "Ron Brown was crazy." [Laughs.] He may have been, slightly, you know.

MS. HOLT: Well, who knows.

MS. MCKINNELL: I don't know. Something was the matter with him. But he was very ambitious.

MS. HOLT: So you came back here to Colorado.

MS. MCKINNELL: And then we came here. And we were going to build our house up in Coal Creek Canyon and pot there. And then-who was the head of the art department at Loretto [Teikyo Loretto Heights University, Denver, CO]? Oh, what was his name? He and his wife Barbara, we talk all the time on the phone or-

MS. HOLT: That's okay. You've remembered a lot of names.

MS. MCKINNELL: -and he's dead. He died.

MS. HOLT: But his son is a sculptor.

MS. MCKINNELL: Tim-Joseph.

MS. HOLT: Joseph.

MS. MCKINNELL: Bill Joseph. And Bill Joseph had talked to Jimmy before we went to-where?

MS. HOLT: Japan?

MS. MCKINNELL: Scotland?-and asked him if he would come back and teach at Loretto, you know. So we came back-let's see, we came back from Glasgow this time, didn't we? No, this was Edinburgh.

MS. HOLT: Let's go back to-wait, before this. When you first came back from Japan, you were trying to build something in Coal Creek Canyon. You decided not to go to Iowa. You got a call from Loretto Heights?

MS. MCKINNELL: No, not then.

MS. HOLT: Okay.

MS. MCKINNELL: Or was it?

MS. HOLT: Was it Loretto Heights, or was it Colorado Women's College [Denver, CO]?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, we taught one summer in Colorado Women's College, but that was when we already had-that was later.

MS. HOLT: Okay.

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh, gosh.

MS. HOLT: Well, when you got back here, you got a letter from Katie Horsman.

MS. MCKINNELL: And she wanted us to come and teach at Edinburgh.

MS. HOLT: Right.

MS. MCKINNELL: And we were living in that cabin and getting the well dug on our property. So she wrote, and this letter followed us and it finally got to us. Well, of course Jimmy was feeling pretty low, but this picked him up. We started sorting slides and getting ready, you know, and we had to do some firing, because we had to pay our way, and that's when-the man on Washington Street in Denver that made pots-he's getting old now-he also had a place up in the mountains where he made pots. What's his name?

MS. HOLT: Zamantakis-Mark Zamantakis.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. So Mark said we had to make some pots. And we had some guy make up the clay for us. And he was using the same formula, according to what he said, that had been used at Helena. So that was fine. So we threw all these pots and took them down for Mark to fire. And he fired them, and they were taken out of the kiln and there were already people there. They'd heard about this and they were going to buy the pots. And they took the pots out; they started to shatter. The guy that had made up the clay for us had forgotten to put the feldspar in.

MS. HOLT: No wonder Jim was always so strong about feldspar.

MS. MCKINNELL: So that was a disappointment, you know. I think in order to pay our way for the three of us, we had to borrow money from Jimmy's mother.

MS. HOLT: I understand.

MS. MCKINNELL: We got it someplace. And so anyway-

MS. HOLT: You got to Edinburgh.

MS. MCKINNELL: We got to Edinburgh. And Katie was in high school at a girls' school, and Katie had found us at our-Katie Horsman had found us a little apartment that was close-halfway between-well, the girls' school was right up there on the hill. There was a little park and then the girls' school, and then we had to go three blocks to the art college-Edinburgh College of Art. So that worked out very well. But we had-I keep saying housemother-we had a-the woman we rented from was an old maid.

MS. HOLT: The landlady?

MS. MCKINNELL: Miss Hume-Lord Hume's daughter. She was in her 50s, I think, and she was always inspecting everything. I would come home from school-didn't I tell you this?-I'd come home from school and she'd have the silverware out and she was counting it.

MS. HOLT: Oh dear. [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: This little apartment was nice, it was handy, but it was right above a bar and a restaurant, and the pipes from our kitchen went right down into the restaurant. And Miss Hume-I came home from-Miss Hume was there one other time when I came home and she said, "You have mice in your kitchen." Well, why not? There was this restaurant right there and they could just-

MS. HOLT: Shimmy up the pipe.

MS. MCKINNELL: I don't know what they did, but they got in the house, and I never liked to have mice, you know?

MS. HOLT: No, of course not.

MS. MCKINNELL: But she was very upset. Miss Hume got upset about lots of things. Otherwise it was fine, because it was right by the King's Theater, and the women who lived in an apartment in front called us; she said, "Come on in; the queen is coming to the theater." And she says, "Maybe you can see the queen." So we went and saw the queen.

But the steps-looking out of our dining room window, the steps to the balcony were right there, you know, a stone's throw out of our dining room window, and Jimmy would have looked at the bulletins and he'd say, "I think I'll go over and see the first half of this play. If it's any good, I'll give you the ticket for the second half." [Laughs.] Or it might have been music, you know? Or whatever-symphony, whatever. So he would go over; then he'd bring the ticket back and I would get Katie to bed and I would go over and see the other half. [Laughs.]

Well, this had a long, long staircase up to the apartment, and I was coming back one time, very late. Now, Jimmy usually stayed late at school. For some reason I had stayed late that night and he was home with Katie. We never left her alone. And so I-the pubs were just out. It was 10:00 or something and the pubs were out. And so I could feel this guy following me and I opened the door to this long staircase and started up the stairs, and I yelled, "Jimmy"-bloody murder. [Laughs.] You know, I just yelled my loudest voice: "There's somebody following me! Come quickly." They didn't hear me, but the guy did, so he went out the door. But he was following me.

MS. HOLT: Oh, scary.

MS. MCKINNELL: Most of the time, you see, I didn't go out at night at all, but-and then they had the art festival. We were there in the summer. You see, our time there went over through the summer, and we left here at Christmastime and started teaching in January, and then stayed over the summer and then taught the fall.

MS. HOLT: Oh, you did? That long?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. But there was the art festival and that was wonderful, you know. And one time we were part of it. When we were teaching at Edinburgh later, you know, why, we had an exhibit. So we got in on all those wonderful things. It was very nice.

MS. HOLT: You were teaching the beginning students, the first-year students?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, and Jimmy was teaching the juniors.

MS. HOLT: You were teaching the second-year-

MS. MCKINNELL: I was teaching the first-they were sophomores. They'd had a year of basic art, and I was teaching the first-year potters and he was teaching the second-year potters, and then the third year was taught by the head of the department. And so I think that's when Jimmy started making tramp pots to help this one girl.

MS. HOLT: Yes, do you want to describe that?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, he was trying to figure out-because these adjudicators came from London and if they didn't pass somebody, they had to repeat that year. And this girl wasn't learning how to throw. And so Jimmy thought, how am I going to get her to pass? So he would go up there at night and work, and he-what was the name of the American who taught there? He was from Michigan.

MS. HOLT: Not Stevenson?

MS. MCKINNELL: No. He made up-oh, no. They taught for us one summer at Iowa, by the way, the Stevensons.

I can't think of his name. He was an American, Jewish young man, and he made up the clay. And of course at that almost sea-level, the clay got pugged. It was so tough, not like it is up here, a mile high. And so Jimmy was wracking his brain about how to get this girl fixed up, and he started tramping on this tough clay, and he saw a bisque pot up there that somebody had discarded long ago, and he brought it down and laid the clay in there and started putting things around the edge, you know, and that's what started his tramp pots. Well, he showed the girl. She wasn't interested at all. So I think she transferred to painting or something, but she was not interested in the clay.

I had arrived in the middle of the year, and the guy that had been teaching before me, the first half-we couldn't go when we were supposed to because we were teaching at Colorado Women's College and-well, we had commitments; we just couldn't manage it. So we said, would it be all right if we came over after Christmas?

Oh, and another thing, our work permits hadn't arrived. And so we started teaching at Colorado Women's College, and we had arranged it so we could go down [to Denver] Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and Katie was going to the university up here, and I had girls in some bedrooms downstairs so that she wouldn't be alone.

MS. HOLT: Were you in this house by then?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah.

MS. MCKINNELL: So we bought this house in '73, I think.

Henry Mead had taught there, and it was his clay that we had used when we were going back to-it was his formula that he had gotten from Archie Bray when he was out there, and that's why we thought it would be a good clay, and then the guy left out the feldspar. Now we're getting it all straightened out.

MS. HOLT: I see.

MS. MCKINNELL: So we called and asked if we could come after Christmas and they said yes, and this other guy managed to get one of the students in trouble, so they booted him out. So not only Jimmy was teaching, but they asked me to teach, and that's how I-I had the beginners in pottery, the second-year people. And I taught them everything. By the time they were through that year-well, I went in the middle of the year so I didn't have as good luck the first winter, but I did a pretty good job. The next year I taught the whole thing, and they could make every form, including coffee pots, tea pots, everything-handles, feet. They knew how to fire the kiln. I told you about this old man who fired the kilns for me.

MS. HOLT: No.

MS. MCKINNELL: He was called-what did they call him? He'd been in the armed forces-and what did they call him? Something from the armed forces. Anyway, he was firing the kiln-my kiln, where I taught, and he did the lousiest job of firing. And I said to the head of the department, I said, "I've got to get a hold of the kiln." I said, "I can't stand the way he fires." And he said, "Okay, I'll tell him that you're going to teach the students how to fire." So I did, and I did teach them how. And this kiln wasn't very big. It was very narrow, kind of deep. It had been-what are those kilns that have pipes all-what are they called?

Anyway, they'd removed those and made it an updraft. The burners were underneath. And how to get that thing to reduce properly. And Jimmy helped me. We figured out how to get that crazy kiln to reduce properly, and then I taught the students, and they could fire anything. I said, "If you can fire this kiln, you can fire anything." And I taught then how to keep a graph and everything. And Old Chief-Chief, they called him; chief petty officer was what he was-so Old Chief would come around; he'd be looking at things that I had left when he didn't know that I was looking. But you know what he used to do? Over Christmas vacation or any kind of thing-Thanksgiving, any type of vacation, when no teachers or students were there, he would swipe the students' work and put it in a closet.

And of course I knew everything that my students were making, you know, and this one boy had made these mugs, and I knew everything about everything. And so I got back-Alec Lecky was the name of the head, and I called Alec and I said, "You know what? Somebody is stealing my students' work." I said, "I know exactly what they have made; I know where everything was when I left, and it's gone now." He said, "Oh." Chief Petty Officer stole it, put it in a cupboard, and then during vacation he'd fire it up and sell it to the faculty or other people.

So anyway, I knew everything that everybody made, and that was the end of that, you know. He was pretty mad at me, I think.

MS. HOLT: Oh, I bet. [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: But we learned how to fire that updraft kiln.

MS. HOLT: Like a bottle kiln?

MS. MCKINNELL: It was-yeah, yeah. And it was a crazy kiln-just crazy, and I said, "If you can fire this, you can fire anything." And I taught them how to fire, you know, anything. They kept notes, they kept graphs, they did everything.

And so-then where do we go from there? Oh, in the summer we traveled with Katie, as far north as we could go. Jimmy wanted to see some of the places that were famous during World War II that he'd read about, because he was in the Pacific.

So we traveled up the coast and saw everything, you know.

MS. HOLT: Oh, north in Scotland, you mean.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. And we went as far north as we could go in Scotland, and there were no trees. It was beautiful, but no trees anyplace. Trees couldn't grow there; the growing season was so short.

And so we came back and we taught the next semester and Katie was still in school. She was taking sculpture and some other classes. And then we would go by the bakery in the morning. Jimmy left-well, no, we left early. We were living on this hill, this time, in Glasgow. We had gone over there after teaching in Edinburgh; then we'd come back here and we taught-Bill Alexander asked us to teach here, and that was when John Nickerson went to Blenko [Blenko Glass, Milton, WV] to blow glass and Bill Alexander was on sabbatical. So we taught here. And they asked me to teach, because they needed two people.

MS. HOLT: At Colorado State University [Fort Collins, CO].

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, at CSU. So we lived on the other side of town and we had Jimmy's mother. She had been down in California-in Southern California living with Jimmy's brother and sister-in-law and family. Well, they'd had her for quite a while and they were getting a little tired.

So they wanted us to take her. So Katie was in school full-time, Jim and I were teaching both full-time, because we were taking over the whole department, and we had his mother. So I would make sandwiches for Jim and then-for his noon lunch-and he would stay at the university, and then Katie and I, she would come to class-go to her classes and then she'd come over to the pottery; we'd jump in the car and quick run home and get lunch for Ouisie. She was getting pretty senile by that time and she would take walks, and I had all the neighbors alerted. I said, "If you see her and she gets lost, bring her back." [Laughs.]

And I had to help her dress sometimes and everything. And she'd been such a capable person, a very, very capable person, you know, and then it was pretty sad to see this go down-to see her go downhill like this. But we had to look after her, so Katie and I would run home, we'd get lunch for the three of us, and then we'd rush back to school. Then I would rush home with Katie after school, and Jimmy would stay and look after things. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: You taught at Colorado State University for a year. Then you were trying to decide what you were going to do next? Is that right?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah.

MS. HOLT: Jim was looking at Seattle?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, so that's when we bought this house. And we had looked at it and I had looked at the front and I thought, oh, it's so small. It didn't have a solar unit, of course, and it didn't have the workshop on behind. So it looked pretty small. And the realtor was a woman about 50, 60 years old, and she said, "Oh, that house has more space in it than you think. You've got to look at it." We passed it and we passed it and we passed it. She says, "I want you to look at that house." And sure enough, it had this light basement, and so this was the house we bought.

And I had-we had money because we'd been teaching up here, so we could make the down payment. But Mrs. Southard, who lived next door with her husband at that time-they were very old-and she said, "Now, what are you going to do?" She said, "The man who lived here before you stole bicycles and repainted them and resold them." [Laughs.] So she was glad to see a family come in.

MS. HOLT: I'm sure.

MS. MCKINNELL: So we had a little bit of furniture stored up in Coal Creek Canyon, in a barn, and Jimmy's mother wanted to go back to Seattle to her house. So Jimmy went out there to get her straightened out and try to find someone to come and live with her, some nurses. She had to be taken care of 24 hours a day, and that was taking him quite a bit of time. And this house was available all of a sudden. So I called Jimmy out there. Well, yes, go ahead and buy the house, because we've got to have a place to put our stuff. So-and then I'd called-but they want us to teach at Colorado Women's College. Well, you have to have the house anyway, you know. So we telephoned back and forth, and that is the same day that I got the letter in the mail asking us to go to Glasgow. All those three things happened at once. So I called him again.

Well, we wanted to go back to Scotland, all three of us, and so I said, "What'll we do?" And he said, "Call them and ask them if we can come at Christmastime instead of now."

MS. HOLT: Right. Now, this is-I'm just trying to make sure. This was Glasgow, not Edinburgh.

MS. MCKINNELL: This was Glasgow School of Art [UK].

See, we had taught at Edinburgh, and then-this was Alec Lecky now, not Katie Horsman. Alec Lecky was the head, you know, and he asked us to come and teach, and so we called and asked if we could come after Christmas, and Jimmy went over ahead of us. He flew over ahead of us, because I had to get the house-we had to buy some more furniture if we rented the house furnished, and I had to find some people who would rent it,

and at Christmastime it wasn't so easy. So Katie and I were here trying to get everything taken care of, and Jimmy went ahead, and he was supposed to try to find a place for us to live. And at Christmastime and New Year's time it's impossible to do anything over there-impossible.

So he just wasn't getting anyplace, and so we got the renters to come here. It was supposed to be a nice family. He worked at Safeway up here. Safeway was right over here on College Avenue at that time. And this woman seemed very nice, and they had a small child and they were expecting a baby. So Katie and I thought that they were very nice and they were going to take over and rent, you know, and-so that was taken care of. And then we went to Denver, got on an airplane, and flew to New York. Jimmy was over there already, trying to find a place for us to live. And I don't know, crazy things happened; I can't remember what they were, but we went-we stayed with Clara, and we finally got over there, and some student-a grad student or a senior student-picked us up at Prescott in northern Scotland, where our plane-I think we flew to London and then another plane took us to this other place. Somehow we got there. And then he took us-this student took us in a car, and I remember we went to that-what's the name of that bridge-there's an operetta written about it [*Lucia di Lammamoor*].

MS. HOLT: Oh, yes. Oh, I know the opera.

MS. MCKINNELL: And he took us there to see it, the real bridge. It wasn't much of a bridge. [Laughs.] But we did a lot of exploring on the way back. And Jimmy was supposed to have some place for us to live. He hadn't been able to find any place. And so we went to the YWCA, and he was staying at the YMCA, and when things began to settle down, then we heard about this man who was single-I called him an old maid; he was, he really was-in a row house, four stories high, very narrow, and then there was this big park and the university over there and the art college over there. So we made arrangements to live there, but the people upstairs, that had the apartment upstairs, were going to stay another month, so we couldn't go up there. So we lived in a kind of living room. Well, his big sitting room with his grand piano was over here, but then this was up a couple of steps and it was a kind of living room.

And I had these little stoves that I could use, and I think our kitchen was sort of haphazard on some steps and things for about a month, until the people upstairs moved out and we could move up there. It was great up there, because we could see everything.

MS. HOLT: You were at the top of the hill, I think you told me.

MS. MCKINNELL: At the top of the hill at the top of this row house, and we could see everything, so it was very nice.

MS. HOLT: So when you were there, what were you teaching-first-level students?

MS. MCKINNELL: I was teaching the first-year students, uh-huh.

MS. HOLT: And Jim again the second-year students.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. [Audio break.]

The juniors. And that's when Alec Lecky was the head, yeah. And that's when-now, when were we asked to make this-to have this show at the Scottish Craft Center? We were the first foreigners to have a show at the Scottish Craft Center. So we had this show, and I think it's partly because McKinnell was a sort of Scottish name.

MS. HOLT: Well, yes it was.

MS. MCKINNELL: We were foreigners, but we were pretty Scottish.

MS. HOLT: How long were you there in Glasgow?

MS. MCKINNELL: Another year and a half.

MS. HOLT: A year and a half? Wow.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, see, we went over at Christmastime again, and then in the summer we traveled-we had this apartment and then everybody came to visit us. Clara's daughter, Bebe, came to visit us. Some other Americans came to visit us. We couldn't get-buy our ticket or a place to sit on the train because people kept coming, you know, to see us.

MS. HOLT: Yes, I know. [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: So finally everybody left, and, like, we said, let's get out of here. And we wanted to do to Athens and Florence and up to-well, it used to be Constantinople, you know, when-

MS. HOLT: Istanbul.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. And we knew that there was going to be a World Crafts Council meeting there, so we decided to use that as an excuse.

We finally got on a train, but there were no seats. You couldn't get a couchette. It was jam-packed. Some Greeks from Germany had just taken a hold of two cars. They were half-empty with these Greeks, but they had a wonderful time. And Jimmy was lying on the floor by the toilet. Katie and I were sleeping on each other's-you know, we finally got a seat like this -

MS. HOLT: And you were laying on each other.

MS. MCKINNELL: -and then somebody got off at some city and we got one couchette. So Katie and I slept head-to-toe, you know, like this for a little while. We were so glad when we got to Athens. Whew. We needed a bed-a good bed, and we got off at Athens to look around and stay for a few days.

And we were eating dinner someplace and a young man came along and he wanted to show Katie around. Well, we were a little-didn't know what to think, but somebody said, "Oh, he's all right." So he took Katie around and was very nice to her and showed her some of the things around there in Athens. And of course we went to the museum and different places. It was very nice.

And then we went up to-

MS. HOLT: Istanbul?

MS. MCKINNELL: Istanbul, and we went over to where they were having the World Crafts Council meeting, and Paul Soldner met us at the door. And we said, "Hi, Paul, how's everything going?"

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: And they were having meetings and meetings and meetings, and Jimmy and I said, "We don't want to go to any more of those meetings; we want to see what's going on here." And that's when Kenji Kato and his wife and two boys were living there, because he'd been asked to teach there at the art college.

So we went to see them, and we stayed with them a couple nights, and then we decided we were being-we'd better get out of there. You know, we didn't want to be there forever. So we found a kind of second-rate hotel that we could pay for, for the three of us. And they were having some sort of a strike, so that a lot of the things we wanted to see were closed up, because there were no guards or anybody to watch anything. But we did see a lot.

So what next?

MS. HOLT: So, back to-did you go back to Glasgow after that?

MS. MCKINNELL: And then we went back to Glasgow after we traveled around and seen what we could see. And Katie was at the [Glasgow] School of Art and-

MS. HOLT: She finished school there, didn't she? Oh, no, I'm sorry.

MS. MCKINNELL: No, she finished high school when we were teaching at Edinburgh.

MS. HOLT: At Edinburgh, that's right.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, but she'd had some art up here at CSU. So by the time we got back here, she'd had three and a half years of art altogether, and has never done anything with it. "I will, Mother, when I"-

MS. HOLT: When she's ready.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, when I retire. Yes. So then we went back and we finished our teaching and we had this show. And Jimmy had made this one tramp pot, and so he decided to make some more tramp pots. And he threw pots and I threw pots, and they said it was the best show that they'd ever had at the Scottish Craft Center. So that's okay.

And that's where-we lived in this tall house, you know, and that's where the bagpiper played every Sunday morning, "Amazing Grace."

MS. HOLT: How nice.

MS. MCKINNELL: And that's why I told them, when Jimmy had that memorial-the memorial service for Jimmy, I said, don't have anybody play anything. "Amazing Grace" is forbidden. We heard it every Sunday morning with the bagpipes-every Sunday morning.

But it was a nice place, because we were up high and we could see everything, you know, and Katie and I would always go to school early, and then Jimmy, he liked these kippers, and he would buy them in cans. They were already cooked, but he'd heat them up in the fireplace, and it made a terrible smell. [Laughs.]

Well, by this time we were living on the top floor, you know. But I told you about my kitchen, didn't I?

MS. HOLT: I don't think so.

MS. MCKINNELL: This had been the nursery for a man that we knew who was a poet and a writer, and he said, that top floor was my nursery when I was a little boy. And my kitchen-half of the kitchen was on this side of a barrier and half of it over here, so I would go around the circular staircase and I would think, now, what do I need-

MS. HOLT: From this side of the kitchen?

MS. MCKINNELL: From here to there. And I'd always forget something. It never failed. So I'd have to go around the other way. I couldn't climb over. It was just too high for me to climb over. Anyway, we had a good time there. It was really good.

MS. HOLT: Yeah, it sounds like you had a lot of good times there.

So you left Glasgow; came back. After Glasgow-

MS. MCKINNELL: I think that's when we started teaching at Loretto.

MS. HOLT: Bill Joseph.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. And that had sort of been half-arranged before we left. Bob LeDonne had taught there. Do you know Bob?

MS. HOLT: I met him at Jim's memorial.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, Bob was a very talented potter that we had tried to talk into getting his degree up here at CSU. He never did get his degree. He said he couldn't read well enough. He was married at the time, and I said, "Have your wife read to you." He wasn't about to do that. And then they got divorced later.

So Bill Joseph asked-he'd asked Jimmy to come and teach there before, and so he said, well, "Who shall I have teach?" And Jim said, "Bob would be a good teacher." Well, when we came back, he had left everything in a total mess.

MS. HOLT: Oh, dear.

MS. MCKINNELL: We had arranged to stay down there for three days, and we'd come up here for Katie and then go back. And we had this little apartment-two rooms with a bathroom in between, a living room and a bedroom and this bath in between.

MS. HOLT: Because you took your meals there, too.

MS. MCKINNELL: And we were going to eat at the cafeteria. That was part of our wages. And we got a very small salary and had place to work and had our meals-our board and room, you might say.

So we hadn't even had a chance to move in, and they didn't have enough furniture in this little apartment, and Jim's brother and sister-in-law and three kids arrived from California. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: At Loretto?

MS. MCKINNELL: At Loretto. What to do with them? Well, the woman who took care of the dormitory said, "I'll take care of it." She was awfully nice. And she somehow fixed everybody up for the night, you know, and then they ate at the cafeteria, and so it was okay; it worked out. They were there for about three days. But when we had to face that mess and we had to start teaching in a very, very short time-you know, just a few days to clean up everything-boy, we dug in and we did what we could, and there weren't enough wheels and there weren't enough kilns, so we went to Mile Hi Ceramics and we knew-

MS. HOLT: E.Z.

MS. MCKINNELL: E.Z. Poole. And so Jimmy and E.Z. Poole got their heads together and we managed-we bought a kiln-the one I have downstairs now.

MS. HOLT: Really?

MS. MCKINNELL: In fact, both of them. And there was just the hard brick kiln that Bob LaDonne had built, and were you at the memorial?

MS. HOLT: Yes.

MS. MCKINNELL: Remember when -

MS. HOLT: Yes-when they were talking about it and Bob gets up there and says, "Well, I built that kiln."

MS. MCKINNELL: I built that kiln. [Laughs.] It was a hard brick, and it took forever to fire. Anyway, we started cleaning up the place, getting ready, and we made a spot in the hallway for Bob so he could keep working, but he didn't want to do that. And then Nancy D'Estang made a place for him to work, and he didn't want to work there. I guess he just didn't want to work. [Laughs.]

So anyway, we finally got going, and we had more students than we could-

MS. HOLT: Fit in.

MS. MCKINNELL: -know what to do with. So we'd have to take turns. I taught hand-building and Jimmy taught throwing, and then we'd exchange, so that part of the class period they'd do one thing and part of the class period they'd do the other thing.

MS. HOLT: That was a pretty good-sized room, as I recall.

MS. MCKINNELL: It was a pretty good-sized room, but there wasn't enough equipment. And then we finally got more kilns and more wheels. We paid for a lot of that stuff ourselves.

MS. HOLT: Oh, my goodness.

MS. MCKINNELL: And then we had sales, and we'd have every student make and donate a pot or two, and up in the dining room in front of the cafeteria we'd have sales, and we'd save all that money and buy equipment for the pottery, because there wasn't much-you know.

MS. HOLT: And how long were you there at Loretto?

MS. MCKINNELL: Twelve years.

MS. HOLT: Yeah. And Jim was there a little longer.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, I left about when I was 70 years old. I decided when I was 70, it was time to retire.

MS. HOLT: So, like 22 years?

MS. MCKINNELL: And I came up here. And I had been coming up now and then on weekends anyway. And by this time I think Katie and Steve were married, and they lived across on the other side of town, and I would help them-they were trying to fix up this old house. I'd go over there and help them in the summertime or vacation time. And so-

And I had a wheel downstairs-an electric wheel, an old Denver Fire clay wheel that had belonged to Jimmy's mother.

MS. HOLT: Did it have a brass wheel head?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah.

MS. HOLT: I had one of those.

MS. MCKINNELL: And I had that down in a hallway when we had rented this part. And I'd come up here, and we kept a bedroom and a half-bath down there, so we could, you know, sleep up here and see how Katie and Steve were doing and do whatever we needed to take care of up here-business and so on. And the rest of the house was rented. I rented it to some girls, and they took very good care of everything and left it clean when they left

at the end of the term and everything.

MS. HOLT: That's great.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. Some fellows had wanted it, and I said, no, I only rent to girls.

MS. HOLT: They'd probably send the police after you now. You can't do that. [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, I just said, it's rented.

MS. HOLT: And Jim was there at Loretto for, what, three or four more years after you left?

MS. MCKINNELL: No, just a short time.

MS. HOLT: Oh, really?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. And I used to go back and forth and see how things were going. And then he got Bob Smith and-what was her name-a girl, a woman, young woman that came, and they sort of began to take over, and gradually Jimmy just looked after certain things and then-so he could kind of get away. And he was getting a little bit forgetful at that time-you know, already.

MS. HOLT: How long did you both work in this house then together?

MS. MCKINNELL: I think it was eight years.

MS. HOLT: Wow, I didn't realize it was that long.

MS. MCKINNELL: We made a lot of pots because we had a lot of shows. And we gave workshops. I used to kind of have to take over certain things.

MS. HOLT: So after you both moved back up here to Fort Collins, you were saying you did a lot of workshops?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. We did workshops at Alamosa, at the college there [Adams State College, CO]. Let's see, we did something up at Laramie, at the university [University of Wyoming].

MS. HOLT: Well, I know you did them in Boulder and at Arvada.

MS. MCKINNELL: Boulder and Arvada. I can't think of them all. We were kind of busy with shows and workshops, and I began to kind of take over the talking a little bit, because Jimmy would get slightly mixed up already.

MS. HOLT: Right. But you did have some time here in the house-in this house-to work, too.

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh, yeah. And we built-we had this solar built on the porch and we had that workshop added, because we needed more space and lighter space.

MS. HOLT: And with the two of you in the same space you needed-

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. So we worked together for quite a while. You know, he was on one side, I was on the other side, and we'd talk about the forms and different things that we should do. And then he began to go-slip down slowly, and I just had him making cylinders finally. And then I would press stamps into the cylinders and do things with them, and fire them and glaze them. He was still keeping charts on the firing for quite a long time, but I was kind of gradually taking over the firing and everything.

MS. HOLT: Well, I think we're going to stop here and we'll continue tomorrow with the questions that the Smithsonian has asked us, but we've given them a really good history, and now they have a series of questions that are in addition to the history. So we'll talk about those tomorrow, yes?

MS. MCKINNELL: Okay.

MS. HOLT: Okay.

[Audio break.]

MS. HOLT: This is Kathy Holt interviewing Nan McKinnell at her home in Fort Collins, Colorado, on June 13, 2005, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number two, and we're starting our second day of interviewing.

So, Nan, talk to us a little bit about-you've talked about having gone to the Bray and the different places you've

taught, but you also taught at Haystack, didn't you?

MS. MCKINNELL: It was a three-week summer session.

MS. HOLT: Right. What kind of-the ability to work in such places as the Bray, as Haystack, that are nonacademic kinds of places, what kind of-what did that mean to you, to the two of you?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, first of all, we enjoyed it. We had all kinds of students, and that made it more interesting, from right beginners sometimes to quite advanced professors, you know, people who were teaching and running departments. And so sometimes it was difficult because of that, but it was interesting, and I think the people who were less experienced learned a lot. And some of them asked, well, what you would call maybe rather stupid questions, because they were inexperienced, but we'd call on these advanced people to give answers, and there were many different kinds of answers. So it was interesting.

MS. HOLT: You've taught so many different places and in so many different forums, everything from years at Loretto Heights to a semester or year as a sabbatical replacement, like here at CSU or the University of New Hampshire. What kind of teaching situation did you like the best? What was the most exciting for you?

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh dear. [Laughs.] We liked some things about each of those places.

MS. HOLT: You did more workshops as you got older.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes. I don't know how to answer that question. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: That's okay. Another thing that you and Jim did quite often was bring visiting artists to your students.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes. In fact, if any friend who was a potter stopped by to say hello, Jimmy had a way of grabbing that person and saying, oh, would you please hop on this wheel and-so it helped the students to get acquainted with these people.

MS. HOLT: Who were some of the people?

MS. MCKINNELL: Wayne Higby was one.

MS. HOLT: Wayne was a student of yours in-

MS. MCKINNELL: In Boulder.

MS. HOLT: -in Boulder.

MS. MCKINNELL: When he was a very beginner. But then, of course, he went to teach at Alfred.

MS. HOLT: Of course.

MS. MCKINNELL: He did all kinds of things. And so when we were teaching up here at CSU, he came by to say hello, and of course Jimmy grabbed him and said, "Come on, Wayne, do your thing." Or answer questions-if they didn't want to get on the wheel and throw, they would answer questions from the students and from us.

MS. HOLT: Some of the others included-I know Jim was the first to bring Michael Cardew here.

MS. MCKINNELL: Michael Cardew, we knew him, of course, for a long, long time, and Jimmy had him give a lecture at Arvada Center [Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities, Arvada, CO], and-well, in Iowa, of course, he stayed with us. And so he taught the students a lot. I remember, it was a hot summer day and Michael had just a kind of T-shirt on, and he was showing them how to pull a long handle.

MS. HOLT: Yes, he used to hold his arms up like that.

MS. MCKINNELL: And he would hold his arm up-and this T-shirt was all covered with wet clay and it just wrapped around his thin body. You know, it was so funny, and I'm trying to find a picture of that. I can't find one.

MS. HOLT: I have a slide of him holding his arms up like that.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, I have a slide, but he had on a shirt. But I'm trying to find one that Jimmy-I'm quite sure Jimmy would have taken one-with this T-shirt just wrapped around, this wet, gooey, covered-with-clay T-shirt wrapped around his thin body.

MS. HOLT: Now, you brought other people to Loretto, I know because we shared a couple of them-Richard Zakin, for example.

MS. MCKINNELL: Again, any time that they would come to visit, we would grab them and just say, would you please either answer questions or get on the wheel, or both? And then, of course, you had Richard.

MS. HOLT: Yes, we shared him. That was really fun.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah.

MS. HOLT: And how did you know him?

MS. MCKINNELL: He was a graduate student of Jimmy's at Alfred.

MS. HOLT: He was?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, second-year grad. Having taught at so many places-

MS. HOLT: I know. It's hard to keep track.

MS. MCKINNELL: -I can't keep track.

MS. HOLT: There are a number of questions that we'd like to ask, and they're in less of an order, let's say, but they are things that they would like you to talk about so that they can fill in the gaps in the whole picture among other people. Now, did you have-one of the people I know that was here, that I know from looking at the papers that you've given me, was Ruth Duckworth.

MS. MCKINNELL: We had known Ruth Duckworth for quite a while.

MS. HOLT: How did you come to know her?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, when we were traveling west, we stopped to visit her and see her studio, and when we-

MS. HOLT: In Chicago?

MS. MCKINNELL: -were teaching at Alfred, she came-I think I told you the other day-she came with her big, big sculpture that was going to go to Syracuse show, and she stayed with us and we went camping together. And I can't think of anything else right now except for Ruth.

MS. HOLT: Okay. I can remember going through your papers and seeing letters from Ruth to the two of you.

MS. MCKINNELL: It was quite a bit of correspondence.

MS. HOLT: Yes, there was. Okay. And another thing that has me curious is the involvement the two of you had with NCECA [National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts]. I know you're honorary members.

MS. MCKINNELL: I think Jimmy went to the very first meeting, and there weren't many people there, you know, but-and then we went to other meetings. He went to many more than I did, because I had to stay home with Katie as she was growing up.

MS. HOLT: Well, I think Jim was there at the founding of NCECA.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes, he was at the very first meeting. In fact, he helped, I think, with suggestions.

MS. HOLT: Because it was an offshoot of the American Ceramics Society, I believe. Is that correct?

MS. MCKINNELL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. HOLT: Right. And Jim was a member of that.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah.

MS. HOLT: Okay. So we talked about all your travels yesterday. Do you think about your work as being part of an international scene, or is it much more national? It's one of the questions that they have for you.

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh, dear. All we did was make pots. We made our own pots. Jimmy made his; I made mine.

MS. HOLT: Were your pieces influenced at all by some of the international places that you went and worked, or did it have much effect at all on that?

MS. MCKINNELL: I don't think we were too much affected. I think we just made our own pots.

MS. HOLT: You made your own work.

MS. MCKINNELL: And I told you about the tramp pot, what brought that on.

MS. HOLT: Right.

MS. MCKINNELL: We just made our own pots.

MS. HOLT: So where are the influences from-where do they come from in your work? What do you think?

[Audio break.]

Hard questions. I mean, I can draw some conclusions just from the natural things that you bring to those forms, like the egg form.

MS. MCKINNELL: We wanted functional pots, that was the main thing, and so we were always looking wherever we traveled and wherever there were exhibitions and photographs and magazines. We looked at functional pots and thought about the function, and sort of taught that way.

MS. HOLT: Well, perhaps in some of the decoration. Where does all of that come from?

MS. MCKINNELL: I think mainly from nature, and of course we both made stamps that we could stamp decoration in, you know. And like I said, Jimmy liked color, and he liked bright colors. So we developed bright-colored glazes-[laughs]-you know, especially for decorative results. An example is how iron can produce such a variety of colors: reds, browns, yellow, greens, and blues. It can be very surprising and is something that does not happen in painting or many other media.

MS. HOLT: And you used a lot of copper reds, a lot of-

MS. MCKINNELL: Bright blues. Some greens, not too many greens. And-

MS. HOLT: Lusters.

MS. MCKINNELL: Lusters, a lot of luster. How did we come by that? Hmm.

MS. HOLT: Is that something in the later pieces?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, mm-hmm. Yes, in the early days I don't think we used any lusters at all.

MS. HOLT: Because as I look at all of your work, you seemed to have touched on pretty much everything from earthenware and raku, through stoneware and porcelain, luster glazes.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, having taught so many places, we felt that we should know these things, and if students wanted some of this, you know, we had a little experience in everything. I think a lot of it came from teaching so many different places, and traveling.

MS. HOLT: Right, and traveling, okay. Does religion or spirituality or anything along those lines play a role in the work that you have made?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, I think so. I still do a lot of praying when I'm working on a pot.

MS. HOLT: [Laughs] Really? I didn't know that.

MS. MCKINNELL: I don't know how to finish this pot: God, you have got to help me. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: That is something new. I had no idea. [Laughs.] I have been in that position-what the heck am I going to do now-but I have never thought of it as a spiritual dilemma.

MS. MCKINNELL: So I asked God to help.

MS. HOLT: Well, what is the ideal sort of working environment for you? You have worked in so many places. Do you want to describe what you have now?

MS. MCKINNELL: I am trying to think of all of the different places. I think it was most difficult in Boulder, in the early days when Jimmy had to teach throwing downstairs in the basement, and I had to teach hand-building and glazing and decorating in the kitchen and dining room of this furnished house. That wasn't so great. I think Edinburgh and Glasgow School of Art, we had the best environment.

MS. HOLT: Really. How so?

MS. MCKINNELL: Lots of space, lots of equipment, several different kinds of kilns, help, assistance when we needed it, a variety of students, you know.

MS. HOLT: Okay. Another question to ask is how have things changed? I mean, you have had such a long continuous working life. How have things changed in the field over that much time?

MS. MCKINNELL: How has the field changed? Oh, well, about every eight or 10 years, there is another trend-[laughs]-that lasts a little while, and then it kind of disappears and another one comes along. And I think through it all, we just kept making our own pots. I don't think we have been terribly influenced by any of these trends. We look at the magazines, we go to shows, exhibitions, and we talk to people, but we just go home and make our own thing, you know.

MS. HOLT: Right. One of the things I was thinking about in terms of when you were first studying and learning about clay-what the situation was, for example, in the U.S. then, to find a place to study, compared to now.

MS. MCKINNELL: There wasn't a tremendous amount going on for a long time. After the war, the GIs, they were looking for a way to learn more about all kinds of art and crafts, because they had GI schooling coming to them. I think that opened things up, a lot, and they took advantage, because I had quite a few of those GIs as a student teacher.

MS. HOLT: Who do you think of as your contemporaries? I mean, there are so many, because you have had such a long career. But when you think about, who do you think of being your contemporaries?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, Peter Voulkos-we learned a lot from him. We learned some things about-from Frances Senska in Bozeman.

MS. HOLT: I can't remember if it was you or Jim who introduced me to the Heinos [Otto and Vivika].

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh, yeah. But we knew the Heinos when we were teaching at the University of New Hampshire. And they were just doing their own thing. They really hadn't done too much at that time. But they were beginning to, and we were invited to their house for dinner and discussing things. And then they moved to California. And Vivika was asked to teach at-what was the name of the place? I can't remember. And she began opening up, and then Otto kind of took over, too, you know, and he began doing interesting things.

Everybody was slightly influenced by the oriental, I think, couldn't help but be, you know. We had to draw from someplace. And people went to Japan to learn; they went to Europe to learn. And it was the kind of conglomerate of everything.

MS. HOLT: You have mentioned the Scheiers before.

MS. MCKINNELL: We were asked-well, Jimmy was asked to teach when Ed Scheier had a sabbatical. And we went up to visit Ed and Mary. Mary was making certain shapes that she sold at America House. Ed was doing the teaching. And Jimmy went up ahead of me, because I had to keep Bloody Brook Tavern open for six weeks in the fall and six weeks in the spring, so I wasn't there the whole time. They used electric kilns, cone 04 firings. They had several of these little, small electric kilns.

Well, Jim felt that these people should have some experience with high-fire reduction. And that is where we built that tall kiln, loose-brick kiln, and fired with propane. And just kind of introduced him to things that they hadn't had.

MS. HOLT: It's very interesting for me to hear that because I have only been working in clay since the late '70s, and by the time I got into clay, almost everything was high-fire. It was unusual to be working in earthenware at the time. So it is surprising to me to hear that Scheiers and you and Jim early on were working pretty much strictly at the low-fire until you got to the Bray.

MS. MCKINNELL: I think the influence of Peter Voulkos was tremendous. And then Black Mountain College [Black Mountain, NC], and-

MS. HOLT: At Black Mountain, who was there?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, MacKenzie started there and another-you know, some very well-known potters were there. I couldn't name them now off of the top of my head, but we knew most of them, you know. But they influenced a lot.

MS. HOLT: They came out of-for example, Warren MacKenzie came out of the Leach sort of school. And very

strongly influenced by Hamada and the people from-

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, I think we were influenced that way, too.

MS. HOLT: Do you think Warren MacKenzie is a contemporary of yours?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes.

Oh, excuse me. I told you we had Warren-Jimmy had Warren come down to Iowa to demonstrate-

MS. HOLT: I think you told me, but we didn't talk about that yesterday.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, when we moved to Iowa, he was the first potter that Jimmy had come to demonstrate and give a workshop.

MS. HOLT: Had he been back from England very long at that time?

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh, dear, let's see.

MS. HOLT: Was he teaching?

MS. MCKINNELL: Was he teaching? Oh, yeah. He was teaching. And we had known him, of course, and his wife over there. So it was just a natural thing to do to invite him to come down and demonstrate.

MS. HOLT: I'm trying to think of other key people, people either who influenced you or that you and Jim had a strong influence on. One of the ones I can think of is Ken Ferguson. I think Jim-

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, Ken was much younger. And when we left Archie Bray, they had another guy come and he stayed about a year, but I can't even remember his name. But the place just kind of went downhill. So Archie Bray, Junior, said to Jimmy, "Do you have somebody-do you know of somebody that can take over?" And Jim had visited Ken at Alfred when he was finishing up his graduate work at Alfred. And he was very impressed with what Ken was doing and the fact that he was there on a weekend working and nobody else was there. And so he suggested Ken go to Archie Bray and apply.

And then after Ken left-Ken was there seven years and he had a great influence. Then-

MS. HOLT: I know, I'm trying to remember as well, and I should, because-Dave Shaner.

MS. MCKINNELL: Dave Shaner came and he stayed several years. Then he went away and who was next?

MS. HOLT: The fellow who is teaching at Arizona State [Kurt Weiser]. He was there when I was there. [Laughs.] I'm sorry. I will think of it. Are there any others? I am thinking of the people that I have heard you talk about in the past. You seem to have a close relationship to Gerry Williams, for example, of *The Studio Potter* [non-profit potters' organization and magazine, Goffstown, NH].

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, of course Gerry, when we were in Massachusetts, we taught at New Hampshire and got acquainted with Gerry. Then Jimmy was asked to demonstrate how to make small test kilns. And he did that. And so Gerry was, you know, interested. And then when we had the loose-brick kiln in Deerfield, Gerry came down. He was one of our very first visitors. And he looked over the kiln and went home and built one, you know, because he had been doing electric firing.

So we just stayed in contact with Gerry, you know. This was even before he was married. [Laughs.] And we remember when he was married and all, you know, all since. We just stayed in contact.

MS. HOLT: It is quite a network of people that you have lived with.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, we taught here and there, so we picked up good potter friends every place.

MS. HOLT: It seems to me, when we have talked, that you and Jim took advantage of all the things that became available in your lifetime. For example, the ability to travel so freely, the ability to read and write for publications, the many publications that have developed over the course of your lifetime, and built that kind of a network for yourselves so that you are always in contact with these people.

MS. MCKINNELL: We didn't intend-[laughs]-it to be that way. It just got that way.

MS. HOLT: It did.

MS. MCKINNELL: We traveled because we were asked to teach here and there in the U.S. and abroad. And we

were asked to give workshops.

MS. HOLT: In addition to those kinds of things, though, Jim's understanding of the materials and the technology also capitalized on what was new, or at least what was known. Things like the shift from hard brick to insulating firebrick. That pretty much happened during -

MS. MCKINNELL: Jimmy was always exploring things, always questioning things, always wanting to improve things, you know. And since we did-since we were asked to travel and teach here and there, we had to sort of think of easy ways to do it, just like the times that we were asked to teach on the islands and the Puget Sound.

MS. HOLT: And the loose-brick portable double-chamber-

MS. MCKINNELL: What were we going to do? [Laughs.] So Jimmy explored all of the possibilities and thought up these things.

MS. HOLT: He seemed to be at the edge of that his whole life, just looking for new burners, as you have talked about. Even as early as when he was younger and his mother was working in the studio. I have never heard of anybody just making a small electric kiln. I have seen people make a small raku kiln and a small gas kiln, but to just make a small electric kiln.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, his mother had to have something, you know. [Laughs.] And he, having been an engineer in ceramics and also having had experienced in the art side of it, he just kind of combined everything and got his imagination working.

MS. HOLT: And he seemed to know materials so well.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, I think that came from his engineering background.

MS. HOLT: That, and he was a great record keeper, wasn't her?

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh. [They laugh.] He wrote everything down in his little notebooks.

MS. HOLT: Tell us about the little notebooks. When you say everything-

MS. MCKINNELL: The weather. [Laughs.] How he felt, what he was going to do that day or intended to do, you know. Any incident along with all of the things that went along with the pottery. Little tiny, tiny writing. And I have this big box of these pocket notebooks-little, little notebooks that fit in his shirt pocket. And he would write everybody's names and addresses and telephone numbers, his students or anybody else-

MS. HOLT: That he met.

MS. MCKINNELL: The guy that came over to visit from up the hill here. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: I remember the notebooks, and I remember him startling me once at an NCECA. As we stood in line, he turned around and he asked me how I was, and he opened this notebook and said, "And how is your son? Let's see here-oh, Ted. Now he must be about 13 by now." [Laughs.] He kept everything there. He had the sort of original electronic pocket notebook, only it wasn't electronic.

MS. MCKINNELL: Right.

MS. HOLT: Again, ahead of his time.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes, I have this whole box of notebooks downstairs.

MS. HOLT: And he was a great record keeper as well. I saw last week-at the workshop, I saw his kiln log.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, wow.

MS. HOLT: My goodness, yes. What it included. It included things-what sort of things did he include in that?

MS. MCKINNELL: Just everything that would work, to make this firing work. You know, the weather was very important. The gas pressure-well, everything, you know. A visitor coming in at the wrong time or the right time, you know. If a visitor who was a potter had a suggestion, down it went in the notebook.

MS. HOLT: Amazing. I was really quite astonished at the detail of those-and he logged every kiln.

MS. MCKINNELL: Very carefully.

MS. HOLT: That explains a lot why he was so very good at firing kilns, that understanding.

MS. MCKINNELL: I suppose the engineering background, but I think just Jimmy in general. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: Well, talk to me a little bit about your relationship with dealers, with gallery owners, with people who have sold your work, people who have had your exhibitions. What kind of role have they played in your careers?

MS. MCKINNELL: I think if somebody asks us for an exhibition, we put on our thinking caps, and we said, now, look, we have got to have a variety. We have got to have interesting pots. They still are supposed to be functional, or we want them to be functional, but, you know, maybe we should explore or write down, make a list of all the things we should show in this certain exhibition, you know.

MS. HOLT: And how did the list come to be? I mean, what kinds of things made it to the list?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, just-well, of course we wanted some bowls, different kinds of bowls with different feet, and different lips, and different sizes, and different glazes, and different decorations so they would be interesting. And then plates, and the same thing, and then mugs, things with handles, and then teapots and coffee pots, and casseroles, and sometimes the people who were buying our things would ask for certain things. And we would have to get busy and figure out how to make certain things or improve them.

MS. HOLT: And so an exhibition of yours and Jim's would include a really broad range of work in each exhibition.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah. Like we said, there was a person for every pot.

MS. HOLT: Yes. [Laughs.] I noticed in the later pots, there is-while there is always still a concern for the form and the idea of function, for example, in your miniatures or in your large pieces, those were about something other than function, don't you think?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, yes. Sometimes the miniatures were cute. [Laughs.] People don't use miniatures, so they put them on the shelf to gather dust-

MS. HOLT: For contemplation. [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: So we had to have a little fun, you know.

MS. HOLT: Well, I think you had a lot of fun, which sort of leads to the next question. Is there an element of play in the process of making things?

MS. MCKINNELL: I think we enjoyed making things. We just had fun doing it. We liked to do it, that is all, you know.

MS. HOLT: What possessed you to all of the-I mean, you have done very small precious little objects, and then I have seen these very large forms, some almost as big as you are. That is a big range for someone to be working in.

MS. MCKINNELL: Jimmy worked in that range, too, you know. There are some little pots.

MS. HOLT: Little thrown-

MS. MCKINNELL: Very tiny things. And I don't know how he did it. There is that very, very tiny bottle in there. How did he do that? And then he jumped from that to a great big pot.

MS. HOLT: Why? Why move from one to another like that?

MS. MCKINNELL: I think just having fun and thinking of filling the kiln space with-you know, right now I am making miniatures so that I can put them in between the other pots and fill up the space. It's a shame to waste that space. [Laughs.] It costs a lot to fire.

MS. HOLT: I'm actually used to school, where there are so many people firing that there is always little things to put in between. You would have to think about that if you are working on your own. Your work is very diverse, always has been.

MS. MCKINNELL: Another reason: Jimmy hurt his back twice. Out in Helena he fell on the ice, and that started things. And then he fell when we were teaching here at CSU. We were living in a house across town and he was running in the schoolyard and he fell on the ice. Well, there was a time when he just couldn't make anything but something very, very small. I wedged the clay for him, and he would just manage to throw tiny little things. So we could have had a whole exhibition of very small things, you know.

I made things for Katie when she was a little girl that were small like that. A little tea set in there, you know, but not quite as small as those little ones that Jimmy made.

MS. HOLT: No. I understand. When you looked at other people's work, or historical work, what were the kinds of things that you were particularly drawn to?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, I think we looked at everything. But we still considered ourselves functional potters. So, of course, I suppose we looked a little harder at the functional stuff. [They laugh.] Handles and lids and feet and spouts were very important.

MS. HOLT: Are there any historical or contemporary types of work, in terms of a person or a period, that appealed to you especially? They all do?

MS. MCKINNELL: I don't know. I think we were, of course, influenced by everything we saw, but we didn't always know what influenced us. Something would get stuck up in our minds and get worked up around in there, and then we would maybe get the clay and try to make something. It didn't turn out that way; it turned out some other way.

MS. HOLT: Okay. Where do you think American clay ranks, or where it fits in, on the international scale?

MS. MCKINNELL: Now it is very important, I think.

MS. HOLT: From-let's just say, how has that developed over your lifetime?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, I think after World War II, artists, craftsmen, potters, woodworkers all got influenced by things abroad, because the soldiers had been abroad. The armed forces people had looked at things, and then people began to travel and look at things, you know. So I think potters got influenced by just everything. You know, historical things, things in every country.

MS. HOLT: And that is what has led to its importance?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, well, there is-[confers offside].

[Audio break.]

MS. HOLT: What was that for, do you remember?

MS. MCKINNELL: We had to get up on the stage, I remember. Well, we were teaching at Loretto at the time and we were asked to come to-where was it? Downtown. And we had to stand up and talk, and we both did bad jobs.

MS. HOLT: [Laughs] I can't believe it.

MS. MCKINNELL: It was bad. There were so many people out there, and we got this governor's award for our teaching and our potting-mainly for our teaching, you know.

MS. HOLT: But didn't you make some to be awarded to other people?

MS. MCKINNELL: That was for the business community for the arts. And some other person, a younger potter, had wrote to me or called me later and said, "Well, they asked me first, but I turned it down." I don't know who that was. But I think it was kind of an honor. And so I worked very hard making these forms, and they were put in a glass case in the museum, and then the guy that is on channel four, he auctioned those off to businesses in different places. And I think I told you about them-Mrs. Everetts-was a very-a lumberyard here.

And Mrs. Everetts was there to collect-I guess her husband was someplace else at the time or couldn't come. And so she went to represent the Everetts lumberyard. And she received one of my pots, and on the way out from the museum, she said, "Oh, I'm so glad I got this pot. It matches my carpets."

MS. HOLT: [Laughs.]

MS. MCKINNELL: It was a very nice pot. And I thought, okay, lady. No, Jimmy was going to Kansas City for NCECA meeting.

[Audio break.]

MS. HOLT: I am not sure where we left off there, but I have another question for you. You were very much a woman in basically a man's field for quite a long time. Potters were not generally women in the middle of the 20th century.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, there have been some comments about that-[laughs]-but why not? There were wonderful potters. Think of-well, I have a whole lot of them right here. You know, Frances Senska, Marguerite Wildenhain. It is awful not to be able to say something you want to say.

MS. HOLT: Ruth Duckworth.

MS. MCKINNELL: Ruth Duckworth, the Scheiers, Mary Scheier.

MS. HOLT: Vivika.

MS. MCKINNELL: Vivika Heino. Well, lots of woman potters. And their-

MS. HOLT: Have you seen a change?

MS. MCKINNELL: I guess-Wildenhain-she-I think I was younger than she was, but, yeah, I have been doing it for a long time, yeah.

MS. HOLT: Have you seen a change in that gender percentage over the time?

MS. MCKINNELL: Yes, very much so, yeah.

MS. HOLT: Do you have any thoughts on that?

MS. MCKINNELL: I think in all the arts, women have done better in the-you know, some of the women were in the armed forces during the Second World War and the Vietnam War, and other wars. And it is just like in the wars, the women begin to be more important. They weren't considered important at first, but they found out that woman can do some things that men can't do. [Laughs.]

Women often get-help to get people in exhibitions, just like Ms. Vanderbilt Webb-you know, Aileen Webb. She was very influential. And there were other women that organized these exhibitions that were very influential in getting things going.

MS. HOLT: Did you have any particular role models or mentors?

MS. MCKINNELL: Just a kind of combination of everybody, but not really. I wished I could do the things that Ruth Duckworth did. I wished I could do some things that some of the women did. But then I just said, Nan, you just do your own things.

MS. HOLT: What keeps you working, Nan? Because you work every day in the studio at this point.

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah, I try to work every day. I just love to work in clay, period.

MS. HOLT: It has never gotten tiresome?

MS. MCKINNELL: Mm-hmm [in disagreement]. There is always other things to make and there are other ways to decorate. And you get ideas from everything, you know-a flower that you pick in the garden, a picture that you see some place that has nothing to do with pottery, you know. Oh, yeah, I can use that. A butterfly. A bird flying past, a bird perched out on your-oh, look at that blue jay. He is a kind of nasty bird, but how beautiful. That blue is very nice with the black, you know. I wonder if I can get that blue in a glaze.

MS. HOLT: And what are you working on now?

MS. MCKINNELL: I am trying to fill the kiln with various things. [Laughs.] Right now I am making a kind of flat bowl. And I have got it decorated around the inside of the rim and I have it turned it upside down and I have to throw a foot on it. And I am saying to myself, shall I make five feet or shall I throw a foot? What do I do with this bowl? What is going to go with this rim that I have already decorated? Maybe I shouldn't have decorated that until I have got the feet on. [Laughs.] But I have done it, so now I have got to have feet or a foot to go with it. And if I throw a foot in, throw a foot on it, should I decorate it sort of like the rim?

MS. HOLT: You're even-

MS. MCKINNELL: There is always something to keep you going.

MS. HOLT: You're working mostly in porcelain now-

MS. MCKINNELL: Yeah.

MS. HOLT: But the other day you were telling me you were going to be trying out some low-fire things again.

MS. MCKINNELL: I have a lot of low-fire stuff to glaze, a lot that Jimmy made many years ago and some things that I made many years ago. And I have to do some glaze testing in low temperature, electric.

MS. HOLT: Is that exciting or is that a chore?

MS. MCKINNELL: That is a chore. It is exciting when you see the results, maybe. Or it's saddening when you see the results and you think, oh, I have got to do better than this.

MS. HOLT: Yeah. The last couple of questions I have for you are not really on this list. But I want to make sure that they are on the record. For example, because Jim is not here to speak for himself, I would like you tell me a little bit about what Jim was like, what kind of personality was Jim. We know he was a very curious and intelligent person, but what else can you tell me about Jim?

MS. MCKINNELL: Interested in so many things, so many, many, many things. And he was always busy thinking of some place to go, some book to read, something to do. I told you, my life would have been quite different if I had not married Jim. I don't know why he married me, because I think I'm a pretty dull person compared with Jimmy, you know. I don't know how to answer that. [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: Well, I'm just trying to get an idea so that people who look into this material, at some point, have an idea about Jim, too.

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, now, he used to come and visit me at Bryn Mawr before we were married because he liked my cookies.

MS. HOLT: [Laughs] So you think that is why he married you?

MS. MCKINNELL: So it was-I had often wondered, how come you got interested in me, Jimmy? [Laughs.]

MS. HOLT: I think there were some things that I have just learned about him. He was a very determined person.

MS. MCKINNELL: Oh, was he. Well, he was Scottish on both sides, and the Scots are determined people. They have had to be determined people because they were a part of the British Islands, and if they weren't determined, they wouldn't have gotten anyplace. You know, those old wars from long ago, and of course, they were always fighters, the Scots.

MS. HOLT: Okay, I think we have covered most of their questions, and most of mine. We know some new things are happening with your work, with the American Museum of Ceramic Art in [Pomona] California, the new museum. Do you want to talk about that a little bit and how you feel about that?

MS. MCKINNELL: It scares me to death.

MS. HOLT: Why? [Laughs.] Well, they are acquiring such a large body of your work, so-

MS. MCKINNELL: And the fact that he wants more of my work, since Jimmy isn't around, and I have to keep thinking of things-well, what will I make that he will like? You know, I do have that running through my head.

MS. HOLT: Yeah, you have mentioned it to me a couple of times. Your work is in collections all over the world. Are you-

MS. MCKINNELL: Not exactly, but here and there.

MS. HOLT: And another commission I know about is the one in Japan. There were two pieces that were sent to Japan from the-*Princess Pot* and something else.

MS. MCKINNELL: And then Carol Hansen. He sent one of Jimmy's pieces to an exhibition. He had a big piece of Jimmy's and he sent it to an exhibition in Japan. And how did the *Princess Pot* come about? That was from Dr. Robert McKinnell, and I think you have that information already, haven't you.

MS. HOLT: Yes, but the Smithsonian doesn't.

MS. MCKINNELL: The second prince and princess. The prince was interested in cloning frogs and other things. Dr. Robert McKinnell, who is no close relation of Jimmy's, was cloning frogs. So they compared notes, and then the McKinnells went to Japan, because the prince invited him to see what he was doing in cloning. Then the prince and princess were invited over here.

Well, when they came over here, Dr. Robert McKinnell was going to give the prince a book, and they wanted something for the princess, so they asked me to make a princess pot and that is when-I had made some pots

that were very fancy around the top-porcelain, you know. And so Meryl Sabeff came up. So we talked about what to do, and she said, well, this looks like a princess pot. And so we sent this little porcelain bowl that was pretty fancy on the top part to the princess.

MS. HOLT: Is there anything else you wanted to add to this? Anything that you can think of that you would like people to know about you, about your work, about your lives together?

MS. MCKINNELL: Well, I have told you that I don't think my life would have been so very interesting if I hadn't married Jimmy, because he was always wanting to explore something else, and we did a lot of exploring.

MS. HOLT: Yes, you were quite the vagabonds.

MS. MCKINNELL: The tandem bicycle. I suppose not too many women would have gotten on the back end of the tandem bicycle to explore Europe, a great deal of it, especially France, you know.

MS. HOLT: Well, thank you, Nan. I really appreciate you doing this, and I'm sure that the folks at the Archives will appreciate you taking the time to do this.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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