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Oral history interview with Flora Mace, 2005 August 17-18

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Flora Mace on 2005 August 17-18. The interview took place in Seattle, Washington, and was conducted by Lloyd E. Herman 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 funded by the William and Mildred Lasdon Foundation.

Flora Mace has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

LLOYD HERMAN: This is Lloyd Herman, interviewing Flora Mace at the artist's studio with Joey Kirkpatrick in Seattle, Washington, on August 17, 2005.

Now, to begin this, Flora, I want to get to the basic stuff. Would you tell me when and where you were born?

FLORA MACE: I was born in New England. Hampton Beach, right on the coast of New Hampshire. August 28, 1949. I was born at the hospital. Exeter Hospital. I was the first member of the family to be born in the hospital. And the only reason I say that is that my family, my generational family, my dad's side, landed on the coast of New Hampshire, actually on the Isles of Shoals, 355 years before I was born. And the house that I grew up in, my family lived in until I decided I was not going to take on the house. And I had moved to the West Coast. But every generation had lived, and I grew up in the house, but I was the first one to go to college, be born in a hospital, and went to the West Coast.

MR. HERMAN: Were you the first of several children, then? Do you have brothers and sisters?

MS. MACE: I have one sister. She is an art teacher in a small public school in New Hampshire. She teaches elementary and junior high school art.

MR. HERMAN: But she didn't take on the house.

MS. MACE: She did not take on the house either. Both of us felt it was time to move into our own lives. I was reluctant, but also, as an artist, I couldn't afford what it would cost to take on. Because families, even though I had the opportunity to acquire it, I had to buy out all my relatives and cousins who also went in all directions.

MR. HERMAN: Is it a large family, then? And mostly still—well, if they went in all directions, probably not all in New England?

MS. MACE: Yes they are. But there's very few left at this time. My sister and I, yeah, I have a few cousins and all. But not the extended families that maybe other areas of the country have.

MR. HERMAN: Tell me about your parents. What kind of work did they do? Or was there a family business or a continuity?

MS. MACE: I grew up on seven acres of property, about one mile from the Atlantic. Family history said that no farmer should ever have property for agriculture closer than one mile to the ocean, because the fog and cool ocean air would really deplete your agricultural rewards. So we had a little fish house. My family, my grandparents, we lived in the same house as our grandparents and my great grandmother. My dad, in high school, with his father, would clam. We used to shuck clams. We had a clam shucking business at the house. So every low tide, my dad and my grandfather, and then myself, would all go down to the marsh and dig clams that then were shucked and put into quarter-pint containers and then delivered to the restaurants at the beach. Because it was a resort area. And in the wintertime, we still used to send the clams, I guess, "down east," as they say. Or to Boston for restaurants.

MR. HERMAN: For restaurants, now, was it retail then? Were you really selling them direct to the restaurants?

MS. MACE: Yes, yes. And my family, of course, believed that electricity and telephones were possibly a passing phase. They were some of the last to get into it. I grew up with a wood stove. And I was terrified by fire and here I am a glass artist. But I grew up on a farm, and we used the woods. I used to have to log with my parents and grandparents to get enough wood for the fire during the winter.

MR. HERMAN: So that was all off your own land, then?

MS. MACE: Yes. The irony was that 99 percent of the rest of our community was based in going to Boston to work. I'm only one hour from Boston. But for my parents, it could have been a six-day trip. I only went to Boston, the first trip I was probably in elementary school to visit an aunt. But really in high school, was really the first time I went to Boston. I went to the museum—Boston Museum of Fine Arts—the first time I went to Boston, and that was in high school.

MR. HERMAN: Were you frustrated if other kids were getting out of town, and getting to Boston and other places?

MS. MACE: Yeah, I think I realized that, well—Hampton Beach, there must be 200 hotels, motels, restaurants. So you never lack of work. And I would see so many people come and go during the summertime. I mean, essence of baby oil, and suntan lotion, and beach umbrellas, bring back an incredible nostalgia. And I still have an incredible affinity for geraniums. Because every motel and hotel would have geraniums because they would bloom all summer during the peak tourist season. But I would see so many people from so many parts of the world that would come there, because it had 18 miles of beautiful white, sandy beach. And then they would leave and go on to their real lives. I mean, they would have a great time there, but then go off all over the world. And I would hear these great stories.

MR. HERMAN: Besides harvesting the clams and shucking them, did you have any summer jobs when you got to the age when you could work outside the family?

MS. MACE: Actually, my dad really tried to keep me away from becoming a clam shucker. He really tried to get me to do other things.

MR. HERMAN: So both your mother and your father worked in the clam shucking business?

MS. MACE: Actually my mom didn't. My mom was sick most of my life. She was manic depressive. She was committed much of my childhood, it seems, you know, reflecting back on it, to the state mental institution. She would come home possibly on weekends. Sometimes she was incredibly good and would be home for two or three years, then all of a sudden, she would be back. And so, she passed away when I was in high school. So when she came home, she was really into gardening and flowers and embroidery. And her parents were tailors. And they passed away when she was a child, but she remembers.

And probably a more interesting fact: my mom was French. She couldn't speak a word of English till she was in Junior High School, which was very difficult for her, because she grew up in Maine in a very small community with her parents. And it was all French. And when her parents died, her brother was in the Coast Guard, and he was assigned to the town where I lived. And when the parents died, he had to take his sister on, because there wasn't any other place for her to go. And so here she moved to a town that had never met anybody since they left Europe, French.

MR. HERMAN: So she was the foreigner, probably?

MS. MACE: She was very much the foreigner. And there was only one person in the entire school system who could speak a word of French, and that was the principal. And so by the time I came along, she was very reluctant to ever speak a word of French. When I found out that she could speak French, I would beg her to speak French, and she would say, "You wouldn't believe what it was like in a school, and how the kids teased and made fun of me."

MR. HERMAN: Well that must have been hard for her to make that adjustment. And I'm guessing that, being manic depressive, that that would even exacerbate that sense of isolation.

MS. MACE: Absolutely. Absolutely. So my grandmother was really probably the family support system for my dad, my sister, and I, who lived there.

MR. HERMAN: But they all lived in the house too?

MS. MACE: Yeah.

MR. HERMAN: So that you did have a fairly—how large a family would there be?

MS. MACE: There were seven of us there. And the unfortunate part, when my mom died, about four weeks later, my grandmother died. And three months later my grandfather died. And I was in high school and I was paralyzed. My sister and I. You know the only real adult left was my dad.

MR. HERMAN: You were the only two females.

MS. MACE: Yeah. So it was really a hard, hard go there.

MR. HERMAN: Tell me about the kinds of chores you may have had growing up, because I would guess that with your mother kind of in and out, you would have had a lot of women's work.

MS. MACE: Well that's the irony. I didn't, and I didn't because there was a wood stove. And it was a very small kitchen. And my grandmother felt like, get the kids out of the house. So I was assigned, as I think back on it, I was the hunter and gatherer. I was assigned to make things, go pick berries, go fishing, bring back, assist, and work on the boats, all the things that I probably enjoy now. But I grew up on a farm. I mean, we had some chickens and when I was probably just eleven, a person next door just got a sheep, and they were about to kill it, because they didn't know what to do with it. So I brought it home. And my family said, God, what are you going to do with a sheep? And I said I'll join the 4-H. [They laugh.]

MR. HERMAN: So you did?

MS. MACE: And I did. I joined the 4-H and we found somebody in town that had a few other sheep, which was very unusual. I mean, I didn't even know these people existed. And they kind of took me under their wing, and I got an award. I applied to the 4-H, because we didn't have a lot of money, at all. I mean we might have had seven acres of land, but, my mom being sick, a lot of the money was depleted because of that. My dad also worked as a plumber. But any of his paychecks really went to support my mom. So there wasn't really a lot left over.

So I applied to the 4-H to get a baby lamb that I could show, because I couldn't afford to buy one. So I applied. And I didn't just get the baby lamb. I got the mom that was due to lamb. And so I got the mom due to lamb, and she had a baby. Oh, it was the most beautiful little lamb I'd ever seen. And we had a barn, but, you know, the old wagon was in there and all the things that my dad grew up with, you know, horses and things. But when I came along, those four-legged creatures didn't exist anymore.

MR. HERMAN: But this ewe ready to lamb, was after you had the first sheep?

MS. MACE: Yes. You see, he was really old.

MR. HERMAN: Really an old ram, then?

MS. MACE: Yes, it was an old ram. And he ate grass. My dad said, well, we have a couple geese that eat more grass than he does. And I said, yeah, but this 4-H thing might be really wonderful.

MR. HERMAN: So you had the old ram when you went into 4-H and then you got the ewe?

MS. MACE: Yes. And she lambed. And it was the most beautiful lamb you've ever seen. But what I didn't know was, she was totally black. Totally black, wasn't one white hair on the thing. [They laugh.] Now the odds of a ewe having a black lamb were really astronomical.

MR. HERMAN: Sounds like a show-and-tell for school. [Laughs.]

MS. MACE: It was a black lamb. Well, the breeder who I got it from was one of the top breeders of sheep in the whole state. He was mortified that the sheep that I got gave birth to a black lamb. He said, oh my God! Why don't we do this? He said, I can't do anything with it, you can't show this because it isn't a purebred. So I will sell you, in fact you, I will give you a lamb when it's finished weaning, so that you can raise a really purebred—

MR. HERMAN: In addition to the black one? So you got to keep the black one?

MS. MACE: Because he didn't know what to do with it, other than kill it. And I, by that time, had fallen in love with it. So I learned to show sheep, and I got quite good at it, the first year. You know you have to wash it and trim it, the whole thing. And then go to the fairs. So my dad, you know, said, how are we going to get this thing to the fair? So our station wagon became the truck. So I had to build a little crate to put the thing in. And within the year, this little black lamb, the following year, when we sheared it, it started to have white hair, which was another very unusual thing. So after its first shearing, it lost—the new hair that grew in became white. So within two years, we brought the sheep over to the breeder, and said, you know, like—it was a very unusual circumstance. So by the time it was four years old, it was winning championships. It was the weirdest thing. And I brought it all over the state.

MR. HERMAN: Did you then show the wool, too, when you got to that point? Or what breed were they?

MS. MACE: A Hampshire.

MR. HERMAN: So they weren't particularly known for the wool as well as other breeds were.

MS. MACE: No. But by the time I finished high school, I had a flock of 50, and I was showing all over New

England. And I thought, possibly I should go into agriculture. I really enjoyed showing the sheep. But really, my sheep became the sculptures. Oh, I could really trim. I put myself partly through college by shearing sheep. But I could really trim and show a sheep. And I thought about becoming a professional shepherd.

MR. HERMAN: And this would have been what age? Before you graduated high school?

MS. MACE: Yeah. I was in high school. And I was doing really well, and because of 4-H, all of a sudden I really started to travel. I saw Vermont; I saw Maine; I saw Massachusetts; I went all over New England.

MR. HERMAN: Going to fairs to show the sheep.

MS. MACE: Yeah. I really started traveling. I thought possibly I should go into agriculture because I'd gotten quite good at shearing sheep, also. And I really enjoyed the life on a farm, you know. I could do that whole thing. But along the way, you know, you have to build so many things when you live on a farm. So many things break, and you can't afford to hire someone, so you end up building, or making, or improvising.

MR. HERMAN: And did your dad pretty much teach you how to do that stuff, or did you have to figure it out yourself?

MS. MACE: I watched him do a lot of stuff. I watched him improvise. I really—my dad wouldn't go to the hardware store and buy a pound of nails. He would go to a construction site and pick up all the bent nails on the site, and nights he would bang them straight. And then we would salvage this and that, and build things that we needed.

MR. HERMAN: And I bet baling wire was the big repairer.

MS. MACE: Oh, it was incredible. And to see what my family did with and without. And how they made do with things was just amazing.

MR. HERMAN: But what about what, you said you had some chickens. Did you have other chores around the house?

MS. MACE: The eggs, and I had to pick berries, and I went flounder fishing and clamming. I became quite a good fisher.

MR. HERMAN: Was that fish for the table, or did you sell them?

MS. MACE: As a youngster, we hardly went to the store for meat, eggs. We just went for a few essentials; sugar and salt. I mean, when you grow up with a wood stove and the entire community does not live that way, you can and you freeze and you make wine. It was a big joke when Joey and I won the Chateau Saint Michel award. And they made a bottle of wine and put our labels on it. My dad said to me, my dad's 86, said, boy have we come a long way from the basement. [They laugh.] Because as a kid, we used to make elderberry wine and many, many things like that.

So we hardly ever went to the store. So my chores were chopping wood, fixing things, gathering berries, making wreaths. I loved to make Christmas wreaths. I can't believe sometime that as small as our house was, even though it was a big farmhouse, but you know. You only have to heat one room. But the kitchen became art central. I mean, we used to bring pounds and baskets of boughs in; I'm surprised the kitchen did not ignite with all the stuff that ended up in the kitchen while we did our projects.

MR. HERMAN: Did you make any wreaths or things like that to sell, or were they just for you?

MS. MACE: Just for the neighborhood, we'd make them and give them away. Make them for the relatives. The clamming was about the only thing that we sold for wholesale or retail. Everything else was, my dad used to deer hunt. We always used to have deer, moose, elk. Every kind of duck you'd ever imagine. The first time Joey came to my house was in 1979. The fall of 1979.

MR. HERMAN: Back when you—after you'd met at Pilchuck [Pilchuck Glass School, Stanwood, WA].

MS. MACE: Yup. She flew out; we were going to go to Europe. She came to the house and we went into the garage. And she could not believe all the dangling carcasses of deer and ducks. I could just see it, it was like, get me out of there! And in the house, we had many mounted owls and ducks and pheasants. I grew up with that stuff, because—

MR. HERMAN: So you could identify different breeds as a kid?

MS. MACE: The things we hunted. I mean, you know robin and blackbird and stuff like that, but it was really to identify on the hunt, shooting. I used to shoot. I used to have a gun. I was a pretty good marksman. I used to

hunt pheasants. My dad did. And I did some duck hunting. He would not let me do big game. Because we would go away with all his hunting buddies, but he didn't think that was a good environment.

MR. HERMAN: Did your sister do some of this too?

MS. MACE: My sister did some of it, but not as much as I did. My sister was really, I want to say, more the intellectual. She read more, she thought more, she, maybe did more sewing and designing.

MR. HERMAN: How much younger?

MS. MACE: She's only 18 months [younger].

MR. HERMAN: So you're very close—

MS. MACE: We're very close in age. And I think because I was the oldest, and with my mom being sick, my grandmother said to my dad, that he should take me out of the house as much as possible. So on a good morning I would end up being on the clam flats or in the boat, with him, going over to clam. Even if I couldn't clam or carry the clam basket, I would be running in the mud pools at three years old, trying to capture the little fishes in the pond.

And when I was old enough to get a license to clam, I remember that I was too small to carry my basket full of clams. And so he'd have be help me carry. He was an incredible clammer. I mean, he was like a machine clamming. Even as a young person, I just was amazed at how, the precision of his wristwork to put the tongs in three places and flip over the mud, and be able to flip the clams out of the mud. It was a beautiful orchestration. I have photos of him doing this, because in high school I was just enamored of it. But not as a filmmaker. But the process of clamming is just a beautiful process.

MR. HERMAN: Is he still alive?

MS. MACE: Yes he is.

MR. HERMAN: How old is he now?

MS. MACE: He's almost 87. And he's due to come out and visit me in about three weeks. We go fishing together.

MR. HERMAN: That's great. So he's still active.

MS. MACE: He is. He is active. I wish I'd spent more time with him. But he's with my sister. Which I really love, that she has room, and adores his new hobbies of cooking and taking care of her while she's at school. I said, I need a chef out here.

MR. HERMAN: [Laughs.] That's great! So it sounds like she may have done more of the kind of, although it sounds like the grandmother—

MS. MACE: Yes, more of the female—

MR. HERMAN: Because you did all the things that, what we would have called a tomboy as a kid.

MS. MACE: Absolutely.

MR. HERMAN: And those things you learned from you dad, partly, I'm assuming, because your grandmother really didn't want you messing in the small kitchen, and your mother was not there a lot of the time.

MS. MACE: Absolutely, and because it was on a boat, very—I mean, I couldn't really fish, but they popped me into the boat, and I remember almost—I mean, I was chilly as a kid and I'd wrap up and sit in the bow of the boat, because in New England we didn't have huge boats. They were always wood boats, little dories. My family had an incredible collection of boats, because when you live in the same house, you don't have to keep moving, everything just kind of keeps going into the barn. And so there were all kinds of boats for duck hunting, and oystering. I used to go oystering, and it isn't—you'd stand on the rails of the boat with these huge tongs, and they were like 16 feet long, and pull the oysters up, and put them on a tray and pick through the oysters, you'd have baskets of them.

MR. HERMAN: So did you do that all the way up through high school, before you went away to college?

MS. MACE: Oh yeah.

MR. HERMAN: —and maybe even when you'd come back in the summers from college and kind of resume that?

MS. MACE: No, actually when my grandfather died, and my grandmother, my dad was pretty overwhelmed with all of the things to keep going.

MR. HERMAN: And tell me again what age you were.

MR. HERMAN: I was a junior in high school. And my sister was a sophomore in high school. So at that point, I continued the 4-H, but my dad was pretty overwhelmed with what was happening with the family. And Joey's just lost her mom just last month, after a year's illness. And to see what she and the family went through, emotionally, and still is working through. When you lose a parent at any age, the way that you reflect on your personal existence and your family existence. I still wear that. I still wear that loss. And so my dad, seeing from seven members down to three members within really three months, it was, it was very difficult for him. And the age I had my own burdens. So he felt like, if he did clamming or fishing or anything like that, that there was the other end, had to fillet the fish, hang the deer, package it. I mean it was a little small business.

One thing, besides the—the skills that my dad had to improvise and my grandfather improvise. When he went hunting, there was such a ritual of respect for the animals that we harvested. Not a religious service, but gratefulness for what we were acquiring. And to make sure that we didn't waste what we got, and to properly prepare, not just to kill for killing's sake. But to use everything that was given.

MR. HERMAN: So a sort of sense of what we think of New England economy.

MS. MACE: Absolutely. Absolutely. And he was so careful with all of that. Not to destroy something without respecting what he was getting, whether it was food, or timber, or the land. He always had an incredible respect, and still does, for all of those processes; that has affected me. My dad said, no matter where you live, or how you live, respect where you are, and try to make it better than when you came there.

MR. HERMAN: At the time you were going to high school, I'm thinking, well, first of all—with your mother kind of in and out of the hospital, when she was with you, was this a sort of nurturing relationship, or was there always a kind of a distance, because of the uncertainty how she was going to behave?

MS. MACE: There were times that there was incredible nurturing. When my mom could at times be home and be away from all the medication and what we would think as normal: carrying on daily activities, gardening, making breakfast, socializing—she was incredible. I mean, she would do gifting to neighbors, and make things. And be really incredibly involved in wanting to be part of our lives and activities and teach us things and show us things. But I think from my point of view, even though I was incredibly nurtured, I was incredibly nervous about how long is she going to be here.

MR. HERMAN: Once you realized that there were these cycles.

MS. MACE: Yes. Yes. And I think the entire family felt a little bit of that nervous—you know like, when you live in a house with just a small family, everybody has their chores. And all of a sudden if my mom came home, you wanted to make her part of the family. So who was giving up chores, and how did she fit in? And to make her feel part of the family unit. And as a small child, I think I felt abandoned a lot of the time. And I think in some ways that maybe gave me the opportunity to find salvation in private time. I enjoy being by myself, maybe because as a kid, I heard the words, "We can't have your friends over," repeatedly. "It wouldn't be appropriate for them to be at the house."

MR. HERMAN: And why?

MS. MACE: Because if my mom was home, you didn't know what she would do. You just didn't know.

MR. HERMAN: And it wasn't because your house was maybe kind of behind, with the wood stove—

MS. MACE: No, because my grandmother really believed, if there was room enough for us to eat, there was room enough for any guest. Every day could be Thanksgiving. She would just, you know, go out, and clip one more chicken and put it on. And take one more thing out of the freezer; go down to the root cellar. There was always room for anyone. Anyone. But as a child growing up, there was kind of this thing we need to be careful of who comes over. Because I think I remember, and I can't prove this, that I remember hearing a number of the doctors over the years say, you know, you should be very careful with her, when she's home, with the children.

MR. HERMAN: When you started school, did you still have kind of, chores at home?

MS. MACE: Always! Always.

MR. HERMAN: I was thinking about 4-H because I'm remembering my own childhood. My sister was involved with 4-H, sewing and cooking. Were you involved in all of that, or was all this sort of animal husbandry?

MS. MACE: It was pretty much—I remember, earlier on, you know, at schools, the Brownies. Girl Scout Brownies. I was in the Brownies. I remember—I never went away to camp. But I would go to the meetings and we'd make little projects and stuff down the street. And I remember there was a time that, where you fly up to be, there might be an intermediate before you're a Girl Scout, an honorary banquet, to fly up. And I was supposed to fly up to go to this banquet, and be dressed up, and do this thing. I think was so embarrassed that I didn't have the clothes or the family or the support, that I just couldn't do it. I just do it. I was totally embarrassed about the way that I would be dressed, or not have the family support of mom and dad.

MR. HERMAN: How did that affect your socialization when you started going to school as somebody who has spent a lot of time by yourself?

MS. MACE: I think the 4-H was the one thing that really helped me. Because I could be who I had become, and I wasn't at home—

MR. HERMAN: It was your strength.

MS. MACE: And I had this new persona. And it wasn't really about me, it was about the object that I had raised. The sheep, as I said, became my sculptures. And I could raise them and show them. And because of my skills at being able to trim them, I did really well. But they became the centerpiece. So then, going into school, I did okay at school. But my dad, my mom, and my grandparents, really believed that I could be anything I wanted to be. But there was absolutely no pressure. They didn't say your grades are a little shaky, or you should really work on this. Because they were so consumed with their own, trying to exist. You know, my dad with my mom. The dynamics in the household. So they let me do whatever I needed to do, and there was no home pressure. But I wanted to do well, because I would hear, "You know, your life doesn't have to be on the farm. You can be whatever you want."

MR. HERMAN: You're hearing that from them, or—

MS. MACE: Yeah. Yeah. From my grandmother. She really believed that a woman—she said, "you know, Flora, when you get old enough, you should enroll to vote." She said, "I was on the front lines to get women to vote." She said, "you know, when I was your age, women couldn't vote." She said, "It's very important that you take an active role—you can do anything you want as a woman! But don't neglect what I've been out there, and other women my age to do." And when you think about that, when she was my age, about 16, 17, they couldn't vote. [In New Hampshire, women were not granted the right to vote until August 26, 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was passed.] So she was on the lines, trying to—

MR. HERMAN: And this was in New Hampshire.

MS. MACE: Yes. Yeah.

MR. HERMAN: How far from school were you, and how big—how many kids in your class? For example, when you started first grade. Probably didn't go to kindergarten?

MS. MACE: No. Actually, I was supposed to probably go to kindergarten. I could have gone to kindergarten. But I remember my mom was home at the time. And I had always worn jeans. Well, when you grow up on a farm, you don't go around with a skirt and stuff. I was pretty perplexed that I would have to give up the jeans to go to school, because you know there was a skirt law. But my mom really flipped out, on the thought that I would be leaving home for school. I mean, she broke down. She couldn't visualize me—

MR. HERMAN: Just going away for the day, and coming back?

MS. MACE: Oh yeah. Oh no. But you have to understand her stability. So I remember her just losing it. And I didn't go. The family couldn't cope with her and me and the whole thing. So I didn't end up going to kindergarten. Because by that time, I—there was, it was really a mess.

MR. HERMAN: So when you started first grade, was she in the hospital?

MS. MACE: I don't really remember, but I remember that particular, when I was supposed to go to school. Yeah, it was like I was going away and never coming home.

MR. HERMAN: How did that make you feel, with her demonstration of concern?

MS. MACE: I was a little concerned of what school was. And at that moment, I thought it'd be great to stay home. But you have to understand that I enjoy making things at home. I was pretty, I mean, if I was busy, my grandparents and Dad were really happy that I was on my own.

MR. HERMAN: What sort of things were you making?

MS. MACE: Oh, I loved to build things! Oh, I loved to build things. You know, there's always tons of old lumber. We used to cut the trees down. If it was really good tree, then we would let it dry, and then we would plank it. So there were always ends. And my grandfather, in fact, that—it really affects how I do my work now, and how I started some series. Because when my grandfather, I would go out with him. And he, he used to have a sled and he'd put his chain saw on it, and all his tools, and he'd pull it to the back 40. And he'd look at a tree, and he'd decided whether it should be saved for lumber, or whether it should be used for wood for the fire. And I remember him sort of plotting, you know, if we save this one, and this one, and thin here and thin there. And then he would saw the tree down. And then he would start with the branches.

MR. HERMAN: How old would have been when you became aware of that sort of evaluation of the trees?

MS. MACE: Oh, really young. Really, five, six years old I used to go with him. Oh, I thought it was great fun to ride in his sled out there. He would be worried that I would be in the way of a dropping tree. We did have a little tractor, but the tractor was basically a truck that had been—[laughs]—well-defined into a pulling machine. So I remember my grandfather—because my dad went away to work. If there were clams to be dug, we'd dig the clams, then he would rush home, go to work, come home, and if there were two tides, like in the morning?

MR. HERMAN: You'd do it twice.

MS. MACE: Oh, we'd do it twice.

MR. HERMAN: Sounds like long hours.

MS. MACE: Really long hours. Nothing less than what an artist does now. You know, just, one thing leads to another. So my grandfather would trim the branches off the trees. And then he'd look at them, and decide whether they should be kindling, or whether they should be starter wood and he'd make little piles. Or he'd go through the woods, and he'd say, well, this tree would grow better if this limb was limbed, and he would make all the woods that we owned like park. He would look at the little tree, and go, well, if we let you grow here, I'm going to be taking her in about 10 years. And he –

MR. HERMAN: Really thinking ahead.

MS. MACE: Oh, yeah! It was a whole thing.

MR. HERMAN: Forestry, without realizing that's what he was doing.

MS. MACE: And he really loved the land and the trees. So, when my dad came home from work, my dad didn't just jump on the couch, you know? It would be, you know, what's the next chore? And I would just go from grandpa to dad, and we'd be off on some project.

MR. HERMAN: What sort of things did you build?

MS. MACE: Oh, I'd build, uh—well, my big thing was tree houses. Oh, I loved tree houses. Anything to get you off the ground. I enjoyed doing needlep [embroidery]—we used to do flounder fishing. Flounders on the East Coast were really incredible. Filet of sole, oh, great food! Looked down on here on the West Coast, but on the East Coast, cod fish and halibut. But we'd go fishing, and when we came home from fishing, we'd filet the fish.

Well, I used to start drawing the fish carcasses, but I knew that the paper I had would disintegrate. So then I would get old sheets, and start embroidering the portraits of the fish. And I started making calculations of how many fish and calendars of fish. So if we go fishing two or three times a week, I would be working on the portrait of the fish, but I would also keep calculations of how many we caught and what specie.

MR. HERMAN: Very organized for a child.

MS. MACE: It was really cool, and I don't have those. And I remember one day, when we were at the beach, I don't remember exactly where I found it, but I found a doll. It had no clothes. And I thought it would be really cool, not to have the doll, but to make clothes for it. Because I felt, maybe I felt bad for it. But I thought, oh, maybe I can make some clothes. So I came home, and I said to my grandma, can you help me make some clothes? And she said, I don't have time to do this. And I said, please show me! And she was cooking, and it was like, how many sticks to cook the chickens. And I could never figure that out as a kid. And I made her mad, and she went to the rack that was holding the dish towels, and she grabbed the dish towel. She plopped it on the table, and took my doll and put it down. Grabbed some scissors, and [makes sound] zzzzzz! And then, within 10 minutes, had made this whole dress!

MR. HERMAN: Cut out the shape of the—

MS. MACE: Oh, and sewed it like a machine, so quick. And she said, here! And I was amazed that—here, you

know, like I had watched my grandfather and dad improvise. But I could not believe my grandmother, just grabbed a dish towel, and all of a sudden there was a dress. And so, all of a sudden I thought, my gosh! I could make lots of different clothing out of the objects within the house. Well, what I didn't realize—I mean, I was pretty—I was in elementary school. Here I still had this doll, and I'm—it was getting to be wintertime, and I thought, oh my God, it needs a hat. I thought, what out of my clothing could I make a hat with?

So I took my brand new socks, and I cut the toes off. You know, just the tip of the sock. And I made a stocking cap. And I thought that was the greatest thing. Well, did I catch it later when I was supposed to take these socks and go to school, cause there were no toes. But then I realized that I could use the other part of the sock for sort of a turtleneck. Then, later—I still did that, but it wasn't about making the doll's clothes for the doll to, have the interactions with the—it was to design clothes.

MR. HERMAN: It wasn't playing with dolls.

MS. MACE: No, it was really about making clothes. And my grandmother had a button box, so I'd used the buttons to decorate the clothing and stuff that I made. But then I had to watch out what I was using out of the family clothing allotment.

MR. HERMAN: Did you have hand-me-down clothes as a kid?

MS. MACE: Oh, yeah. Hand-me-down, hand-me-down.

MR. HERMAN: And then your sister would get them after you, after you outgrew them?

MS. MACE: Yes, yes. My mom's parents being tailors, my mom did know how to sew. So when she came home, she started when my sister and I seemed organized enough, she started teaching us to sew using a sewing machine.

[Audio break.]

And then my grandmother realized this was a great way for us to explore clothing for ourselves. So she started driving us and my mom to a place that was about 15 to 20 minutes away, which was a material remnants store. And my grandmother would give my sister and I a financial allotment, and we could buy material to make things for ourselves or our dolls or anything we wanted to. Later on. And my mom showed us how to sew, and we got a little sewing machine, a little Singer sewing machine. And my mom started making, helping us make clothes.

MR. HERMAN: What sort of clothes did you make?

MS. MACE: Oh, I made some—oh, I thought they were wonderful, but looking in hindsight, they were really, skirts and blouses and jackets. My mom knew really how to sew and she was quite good, but I don't think—my tastes might have been a mite progressive. Because I thought combinations were just stunning. And reflecting on them, I'm not sure that even progressively they were as wonderful as I thought. But as a young kid, before we were really into the allotment of going and getting the material, my dad started a hobby he used to have with a neighbor. My neighbor was working for the department of wildlife. My dad in high school used to trap animals, and skin them. And sell the pelts.

MR. HERMAN: What kind of animals would those be?

MS. MACE: Oh, muskrats.

MR. HERMAN: Fur-bearing animals.

MS. MACE: Yes, foxes. Well I think, one, my dad used to do this in high school. And one day, before he went to high school, he caught a skunk. Now on the west coast, most kids don't know what skunks are. But he was not cherished at school, because it took a week to get rid of the skunk scent. And he tells me how humiliated he was. Of course, he wasn't the only kid in the school that did trap. But here, you know, 20 years later, here comes an opportunity, the department of wildlife got some, had a problem with some animals, and they needed someone to trap. And he was just down the street, and they were good friends, so he started trapping with them, to alleviate some animal problems. And then instead of just killing the animal, my dad felt like he needed to preserve the skins, or pelts, as you would, and not just destroy the animal. But to—

MR. HERMAN: To use it—yeah, the same—

MS. MACE: Yes, and also to do what he believed was not just destroy the animal, but to take and preserve the qualities of the animal, if that was possible. Well, as a young kid, I thought that was so cool, that he would trap an animal, and then he would skin the hide, whether it was a fox or a beaver. So I'm a young kid and I see him do this. And the Department of Wildlife guy had a son that was a little younger than I was. And we'd go and the

two of us used to watch them skin these animals. Well he and I thought it would be great fun to do our own trapping.

So we started; we used your everyday mousetrap. We started trapping mice of all sorts. You know, there's field mice, and there's lots of different kinds of mice. And we started stretching the pelts of these mice. I thought it was just amazing how beautiful they were. There's deer mice that had little spots. And there's dark mice and light mice and white. So in the fields, between the houses, there were all these different kind of mice that I didn't know were there, but here we were getting this incredible bounty of mice and we weren't just killing them, we were stretching and tanning their little hides. Well, what do you do with these little hides? I started decorating, or using them as accent points on all the clothing that I was making for my dolls.

MR. HERMAN: [Laughs.] Barbie's first fur coat, today.

MS. MACE: Absolutely. I never had a Barbie. But that's what we started doing. I started making, designing, mouse pelt clothing for my collection.

MR. HERMAN: How did you get your ideas for clothing designs? Cause you're not in a 4-H sewing thing. This was on your own with your mother's—

MS. MACE: I was really young. I was, you know, elementary school, junior high; I think I gave it up before I got to high school.

MR. HERMAN: But these were aesthetic decisions you were making, they weren't just practical ones.

MS. MACE: No, it was the toe of the sock then was fur-trimmed, or the jacket that I made for the doll was fur-trimmed, or all, or pelts of different sorts coming together.

MR. HERMAN: Was this before you started grade school?

MS. MACE: Um, no, it was probably in grade school, but I didn't want to tell—oh, God, I couldn't tell any of my friends.

MR. HERMAN: Well, yeah, and that leads me to—we've got about eight minutes left on this tape—did you find it easy to make friends when you did start school? How many kids—

MS. MACE: Yeah, I don't really remember that, because in school I probably felt a little self-conscious about the way I was dressed. Because we didn't go and buy school clothes. I had hand-me-downs, or then I started to make them. And let's see, in junior high, I was good friends with some of the really cool kids. Let me backtrack. The neighborhood that I grew up with had a number of different kinds of kids. We had the kids that were handicapped. And we had kids that were older and kids that were younger.

Our house was the only house that had a field. And we built a softball field, and all the kids played. But we also lived one mile from the ocean. So we would bike to the sea to swim, which of course my parents thought we would all drown, so periodically one parent had to go to make sure that we all came home. But I was always self-conscious about what I wore. Many of the kids that I went to school with had labeled clothes. You know, it was before Nike and Reebok. But everybody was very conscious of labeling.

MR. HERMAN: What labels?

MS. MACE: Villager. Oh, I remember, Villager clothes was very—and I thought, God, I could have—I thought, I could make that, but I could also embroider the label to look just like the label. I never did. And actually, a friend of mine, I remember one time, I went—that doesn't look like a Villager! She said, don't say anything, I went to the store and I cut the label out, sewed it on this. And I thought, huh! She also couldn't afford it, doesn't really look like a Villager. But it was just the label that mattered. Huh. And I thought, it really doesn't matter anyway. But I still am, even at this point in my life, conscientious about clothing. I'm still uncomfortable about clothing. Still.

MR. HERMAN: Uncomfortable—what do you mean?

MS. MACE: Wearing the right thing. The right color. Fitting in. And maybe that's why I can be an artist. I can say, oh, well so what if it doesn't match? But I have both sides. I wish that I fit in smoother. I wish that I had more of a sense of clothing. But that's always been one of those pieces of baggage.

MR. HERMAN: And I think that's something that probably all kids can identify with. Particularly if you've grown up in a rural area, and there are kids from different backgrounds and economic strata. There are always going to be those differences. It's really how you perceived it from your own childhood that I think is particularly interesting. And what's unique and certainly, learning to sew, and beginning to make your own clothes, would set you apart

from other kids in grade school, certainly.

MS. MACE: Yes. And when I was in grade school then, we started to learn sewing in Junior High School. And I was actually beamed on because I could even replace a needle. I could sew. So all of a sudden, for once I was beamed on, that all girls had to take Home Ec in Junior High School. That was the beginning of sewing for all girls. Well, I had always learned. So I all of a sudden, for the first time in my life, went to the front of the class with, I was starting to help all of the other students to sew. Because I knew. Well, the ironic thing is, when my sister, being only 18 months behind me, I went into high school, when she got into Junior High, was the first time women were able to take shop class.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, but you hadn't been able to.

MS. MACE: No. But she was a year behind me. And when she—a year and a half behind me. She was the first woman ever, she said, I want to take shop. And she was the first girl in our school ever to take shop. And then she went to high school and took shop. So it was kind of interesting, that she did that. In my class at school, there were 200 kids. We had quite a large school.

MR. HERMAN: In all classes, how many grades would that be?

MS. MACE: Four.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, in high school.

MS. MACE: Yeah. So I think there were 800 kids in school. Two hundred in mine, you know, juniors, seniors, so about 800 kids. Two hundred graduated. Is that right? Actually, I can't remember. But it was actually a small school, for the area. Because Portsmouth, which was you know, 15 minutes north, had two or three times that. And we always had to play them at basketball, and you know, we'd always get crushed. Sports became a really important other project for me. Because I grew up with a baseball, softball field in our back yard, I became quite a good softball player when you play with many different kids that are older and younger than you. So because after school, between my chores, I would play softball. And I got quite good at that. When I went to high school and junior high, my freshman year of high school, they didn't have enough guys on the baseball team. And so I was actually on the baseball team, I think, for two weeks.

MR. HERMAN: Wow. This is the end of tape one, and let's go back and talk more about high school and sports on the next tape.

[Audio break.]

MR. HERMAN: This is tape two with Flora Mace, on the 17th of August 2005. Flora, go back to what you were saying about sports in high school, and talk about your other activities, and how you found yourself kind of learning socialization with other kids your age, and how that might have been different from grade school.

MS. MACE: When I was growing up, I mean, I'm in a town where we have a farm, and the rest of the community is, you know, your little house, planter box out front, the kids go to school, but when they come home from school they have the TV set and no chores. And it was very different, because when I came home, it was like, where do I fit in any kind of homework, with chores, room in the house, grandparents—I mean, they lived such a different life.

MR. HERMAN: A lot of activity, it sounds like, at all times.

MS. MACE: A lot of activity. We did eventually—I think, by the time I was just—maybe it was junior high school, a TV set came to the house. I just thought, like any kid, how fascinating to have a TV set. But it wasn't on that much at all.

MR. HERMAN: Was that because there weren't that many programs, the reception was bad, or you just had too much other stuff to do?

MS. MACE: There were too many other things, and it seemed that my grandparents and parents thought, if I was watching TV, the chores were not getting done. There was only two weeks in my life when I did not have chores. And I had the mumps. And I couldn't even bring wood up from the basement. I had, every day of my life, that I was able to lift anything. I had to go get wood in the basement to put in the wood box. And the older and stronger I got, I didn't have to make as many trips up those creaky stairs. But when I got the mumps, I couldn't do anything. And that was the only time in my life that I didn't have a chore to do. And all my friends, it's like they got home, and turned on the TV set, and had their snacks, and went to the store, and played croquet.

MR. HERMAN: And what typically did you have to do when you got home from school?

MS. MACE: Gather the eggs, pick the chickens, clean up out back, hoe the vegetables. When I was old enough, then I would go and work at a restaurant. Because then I could have a little bit of cash.

MR. HERMAN: How old were you then when you did that?

MS. MACE: I was in junior high school when I started. Because my dad, when he was a plumber, he was always called from one restaurant to another to do some work. And you know, I'd tag along with him, and they'd say, you know, could you come in and do this or that.

MR. HERMAN: And what kind of work did you do?

MS. MACE: Not much. You know, cleaning up tables. It was real low, low key.

MR. HERMAN: It was like a busgirl job, or washing dishes.

MS. MACE: Yeah, but it wasn't anything full time, because I wasn't really old enough.

MR. HERMAN: It was kind of pickup work, when they needed extra help—

MS. MACE: Yeah. And, where I lived was so close to all the hubbub, I mean not even a mile away. But you don't even—where I lived it was like this little island. Even though it wasn't. I mean, my dad would say, when he was a boy, he'd sit on the front porch and there were no trees between there and the ocean. It was all just a sloping land right down to the ocean. And he said he, as a young, young man would watch the sailboats from Boston going Down East, or to Portsmouth, he would see 'em off the coast. When I was a kid and the trees had grown up, so I really couldn't see—I could see the fireworks every weekend, because they always had fireworks at the beach. Because the resort people would always want fireworks. So we'd stand out in the yard and watch fireworks. A really big display, actually.

MR. HERMAN: Every week?

MS. MACE: Every week during the summer they had a firework display. It wasn't very long; it was probably 15 or 20 minutes. But it was part of my childhood that there were always these fireworks. And so close, and here I lived on this farm in the middle of all this other stuff. So we had some of the only undeveloped land in our entire town. Which became a burden because the town that I lived in wanted to all of a sudden put the school, the new school expansion, on our seven acres. So that the school district came to my family, and said, we are condemning your property to build a school. My grandfather was outraged. Outraged that they would think—well, it was the only flat land in town that wasn't developed, you know, from a little tiny house.

MR. HERMAN: So you were surrounded at that time by houses on—

MS. MACE: Yeah, there were, when I first grew up, there were a house, there was a field across the street with one house. And a woods. And as I went through elementary school, the houses were then dispersed within the forest. Quite close together.

MR. HERMAN: It still sounded like it was primarily rural.

MS. MACE: Residential. It's like, would be like Ballard. Early on, when there were houses. But now, those lots have now gotten down to 30 feet wide. That they start off maybe half an acre, and now they divided. Well that was happening to my community. But we had the only large parcel that wasn't developed. So the school district thought, ah, we'll put the school right there. My grandfather, I mean, it was not big, but it was a working farm. We raised all our vegetables, and we had chickens, and ducks, and rabbits.

MR. HERMAN: How much of that land of the seven acres were they going to take?

MS. MACE: All of it.

MR. HERMAN: All of it. Even your house?

MS. MACE: Well, right to the house. And my grandfather, oh, I remember around the kitchen table there was heated discussions about how something like this could happen. But my grandfather decided that he knew a parcel that would be more a propos, and he went to the owner of the property and said what was happening to him. And an older gentleman owned the property which was right on the edge of the marsh. And my grandfather used to hunt there, I think. So we knew how beautiful this piece of property was. Of course he was doing everything he could to get the school not to build, and he proposed that. He had to go to court, and I couldn't believe—he seemed such a quiet guy, that he would take the city to task, and he went to court to get that overturned.

MR. HERMAN: And he did?

MS. MACE: He did. He actually pleaded his case that in what he could see was happening with society, that his property wasn't going to fit the bill in the long run. And so this piece of property that actually the school has been now built on, in fact I went to high school there, is absolutely beautiful and looks out across the marsh, this, which is area that can never be developed. And there were, there was room for ball fields, and the school was kind of terraced with this beautiful, pastoral—so you were not in an environment that was ever going to be cramped by a housing development. You had this wide open—

MR. HERMAN: But then there's the full seven acres still intact? Or was that gradually—

MS. MACE: It was. So for the next 15 years, it still stayed as a park. But every year, the city threatened to tax us for house lots. And my grandfather and father had to go plead our case, that it's still a working farm. And my dad being a plumber, and in the water business, in a way, you know, piping water into houses, and getting rid of waste, said that the city had to realize as much property as you turn into housing development, the more services you must provide. And that it eventually becomes a no-win.

MR. HERMAN: The increased taxes don't really cover the increased cost.

MS. MACE: Yes. And so he kept pleading this. Which was true, but also, we didn't have the money for what it was going to cost us on taxes. And we pleaded that we still had a working farm. By then, we had 50 sheep, a couple cows, and vegetables. I mean, we're working the whole. I mean that was one seven acres rectangle that wasn't developed.

MR. HERMAN: Before you had all the animals, when you were younger, what was the farm used for?

MS. MACE: We had apple trees and we had rabbits and ducks and chickens and before I was born, but when my dad was a boy, they had horses. Because you had to plow the fields.

MR. HERMAN: That's what I was getting at. You had crops planted there. It wasn't all just—

MS. MACE: Oh, no. We always planted crops and out of those crops we used to can, freeze—

MR. HERMAN: All for your own use.

MS. MACE: All for our own use. As I said earlier, we hardly went to the store. I remember standing—you know, as a little kid, riding in the back seat, like kids do today, asking, Dad! What are those? What are those? We didn't go that much.

MR. HERMAN: So when you had the baseball diamond in your yard, did that take that land away?

MS. MACE: That became all open field. And my dad and grandfather were doing more hunting. So we had deer, moose, elk. So there was no need to have cows. And the horses had—word has it—some member of our family was a policeman. A horsed policeman. And somebody poisoned our horses, to get back at him. So at that point, we didn't have any more horses. So this baseball field was a way for us to have like a pick-up game.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah. And let's go back to sports. I'm interested in playing sports and what other things that you did as pastimes and things that you remember you excelled at, both in grade school and in high school.

MS. MACE: My mom also loved photography. She always had one of those Brownie Instamatic cameras. Oh, she thought it was fabulous!

MR. HERMAN: Instamatic? Well, I know what you mean. Not Polaroid, but—

MS. MACE: Well, one of those little boxed cameras. But she always took photographs. So I have lots of photographs of when she was home. And it was a way for her to capture family life. And then when she went away, she had the photographs.

MR. HERMAN: So she understood that she would go back through a depression again.

MS. MACE: You know, that's the first that kind of dawned on me when you said that. Maybe so, because she always—you know, she never really put them in books. Well, she did put some in books, but she had them; you know, she could hold on to them.

MR. HERMAN: That was really important, I would think.

MS. MACE: But she was so passionate about the photographs. You know, taking photographs of just everyday

things, and everyday people. My dad didn't like being photographed, or he was a clown on it, which probably most men were, but—so I was captured a bit when I was a kid, from mom, like any kid probably was. But I really noticed how much my mom really was passionate about the photograph. She always had a camera. Always had a camera. And when I was probably in high school, had a chance to take a photo class, I thought that was so cool that I could develop my own film.

MR. HERMAN: Was there a photo club in high school too?

MS. MACE: No club. It was just kind of a class. So I learned to develop photographs, I learned to print, and I really think in some ways I really excelled in the art class. I wasn't—there were kids much better than I was. At least the art teacher felt they were much better. Because I remember, we got a potter's wheel, we had two potter's wheels that all of a sudden arrived at school, and I thought, ah! What great fun! Ceramics, because the teacher showed it, and I said, I want to do that. And she said, you know, your tendency isn't—she like stereotyped me, and I hadn't even tried it. I mean, she stereotyped a number of the students in class. But it was like only a few students got the chance to do it. I don't know what they're doing with their career now, but I was never given the opportunity in high school to experience the potter's wheel.

MR. HERMAN: So what did you do primarily in art?

MS. MACE: I did photography. I built small sculptures. I remember one of the first things I ever got was an award from the art class; I built a papier mâché deer. I won't say it was realistic, but it really did have some scale to it.

MR. HERMAN: How big?

MS. MACE: Oh, it was probably four feet. But for only having art class one day a week, I think I might even drug it home for a while, you know, went back and forth with this thing. But now you see the parallel? We used to kill deer for meat, and here I am making a papier mâché one. So I made three-dimensional, I really liked three-dimensional forms. And when I was a kid, I loved to take grass that was out in the field and make baskets or mats. I don't even remember if I was taught how to do that. Cause I never went away to summer camp. But I just intuitively started making things.

MR. HERMAN: Figure it out.

MS. MACE: Yeah. So I always loved making things. I loved building tree houses. And part of the forest had some big trees. So I used to—oh, I got into such trouble for using my dad's hammer and saw. So tools have always been a thing that is a joke now in my life. That I always want two of them. Because if I'm working and one disappears or breaks, I'm incensed that I can't work. And then, so—I would borrow my dad's hammer. I mean, we had more than one hammer. But he knew all his tools. What tools he had. And if one was gone, he was just so upset, and I would get into such trouble. So then I would go and collect my own nails. Cause there were all these housing developments close by. And I learned that you go pick up all the nails, straighten them, and then you could build things. So I'd build tree houses. Which, I got in terrible trouble using my dad's hammer and saw. Cause he never gave me one. I'd have to use them and bring them back.

MR. HERMAN: Did you get scraps of lumber from these building sites too?

MS. MACE: I might have. I only remember—thinking of it now, I'm thinking how foolish that I couldn't go and buy a pound of nails. That I'd go collect nails and spend hours straightening them.

MR. HERMAN: Did things ever get better during the time you were growing up, when you could afford to buy more things, or was it always pretty much—

MS. MACE: By that time it was pretty ingrained. I did. In high school, I started going to the hardware store. I'd start going with my dad. Because he would get projects on the weekend to help all the guys build their houses. You know, he would start working, moonlighting. And my dad was a pretty good builder, and he would know all these guys who were building a little cottage. Or down on the beach, there was always work to be done on someone's little hotel. So I would always go, when we didn't have our chores to do, we'd go to the lumber store, or the hardware store. Which I find very easy, even as a woman, to go in there and deal with these guys, they're always—if Joey goes to the hardware store now, the lumber store, she is incensed with these guys she has to deal with. They tell her what she needs, what it should look like. And it's always been a comfortable—

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, because you'd always done it. Always been there.

MS. MACE: Yeah. And if the guys hassle me, I just pretend I'm a really—you know, woman—oh, God—I mean, I've even lied and said my husband wanted me to get this. Just to get some of these guys off my back. You know? And also at home, my dad gave me the chicken house that that could then be my studio. So in high school I had a little building where I made wreaths and could sew. This way I didn't have to use and mess up the family

kitchen.

So they gave me a little building that was kind of moved around that I could use as my project center. But I built tree houses, and I got in trouble, because I didn't realize that when you put nails in trees and the tree house kind of falls apart, that when my grandfather had to mill the trees, that he would have to cut through these nails. So boy, I caught it in the end.

MR. HERMAN: When did you first have any spending money that you could actually—

MS. MACE: When I got in the 4-H.

MR. HERMAN: When you got in the 4-H.

MS. MACE: Oh, I couldn't believe how much money. Because I really didn't have that much. Back to money. I think my dad might have given us, or my grandmother might have given us a little allowance. You know, she let us buy some material and stuff. But I used to really save my quarters. I remember geraniums were a quarter. I coveted saving quarters so I could buy geranium plants. And if you look around, I have geraniums—Joey is incensed at how many geraniums I have. I love geraniums. But as a kid, I used to buy, with a quarter, a geranium, and I used to plant everywhere. And then in my new studio, I had a window box; I had geraniums, the whole thing. But I never had that much money until I started showing my sheep. And I would win prizes. And I thought, this is so cool. I love doing my sheep. And I can't believe they're giving me money along with the ribbons.

MR. HERMAN: Do you remember what you particularly looked forward to having money to spend on? Would it be name brand label clothes? Would it be art supplies?

MS. MACE: It was tools. I realized that if I could buy a hammer or a saw or paper, that it would just keep me so happy that I could—It was like, they could never take the creative things away from me. So I would always buy tools. I have more than enough tools probably, but I just covet my tools.

MR. HERMAN: If the teacher really, you know, didn't think your skills or your art was good enough, for whatever reason, to not let you use the potter's wheel, how did she direct you? Did you do a lot more painting of more conventional things for art classes?

MS. MACE: Art classes, even then, were really—the art room wasn't that big. So I probably made things, but I'm not sure that I did more than just a project at school. I did more of it at home.

MR. HERMAN: Then that's where you really thought that your creativity blossomed—and part of it was just making do, having limited resources that you really became creative in using what you had.

MS. MACE: And maybe too that I—the things that I made that I really enjoyed. I didn't have to get graded on. I made them for me. And no one ever saw them. In fact, when my parents or grandparents saw them, it was, oh cute? And it was just, pfft, overlooked. I remember I built, when I first got that first sheep, my dad said, you have to take care of it, you have to do everything, you have to build a pen. And I went, God, build a pen. You know, it had to stand. You know, lumber, you had to build walls; it had to have a gate, the whole thing. So I went in the barn, and he said, you can use any place you want. And he just walked out. And here was the sheep tied up with a rope. And I have to make a pen, and I had no idea how to make one.

MR. HERMAN: So did he tell you the requirements for a gate and all that?

MS. MACE: No!

MR. HERMAN: You figured that all out.

MS. MACE: Oh, so I built a pen. I didn't know how the darn door was going to open. I mean, I never even gave it a thought, you know. I gotta put a door on it, a gate. So I got the whole thing finished, put the sheep in it, in fact I might have even nailed it shut. And I went in and I said, Dad! I got it done. Come look. And he came in and it looked just like a pen. And he leaned on it. And the whole thing fell down. And there were so many nails holding each board in, it was like a porcupine. And my dad just ridiculed me of how many nails I had to use. But I didn't know what this ram would do. I mean, the ram buts. And I figured if I used a lot of nails, it wouldn't fall apart. And he really teased the dickens—I was really mortified.

MR. HERMAN: So did he turn that into a learning experience and tell you how it should have been done?

MS. MACE: He said I can't believe you haven't observed. He said, you did better on your tree house. And then he just walked out. And he was just disgusted that I did such a tottery job. And he didn't have time to really show me. I was so embarrassed. So from that point on, I was a little bit more observant for the practical side.

MR. HERMAN: That would have been about what age?

MS. MACE: I was like 11.

MR. HERMAN: How did you do with the conventional things like English and arithmetic?

MS. MACE: I want to say at this point in my life that I was probably a little dyslexic. I didn't have probably as much time to sit and read. I loved to be read to.

MR. HERMAN: Did you listen to the radio?

MS. MACE: No. I remember that when I was a really little kid, I couldn't figure out how they could get that many people in the studio to keep singing different songs. We did have a radio, it was one radio, and it was in the shucking house. And it didn't play music, it only played baseball games. And my grandfather loved to listen to the baseball games. But because my dad didn't really want me to learn how to shuck, he said, you have those blueberries to pick, or don't you have that chore to do? Because he felt when he was a kid, it was really frowned on to be a clam shucker. And he was probably carrying the burden of that home industry, because even his friends at school—he was protecting me, so that's how that went.

[Audio break.]

MR. HERMAN: We're recording again.

MS. MACE: It was in high school, and I was saying that I did my homework as best as I could under the circumstances of home life. But I really really enjoyed making objects more than I enjoy dealing with books. I did fine in high school. I hadn't traveled very much. I went to New York once, I think, when I was a kid, or Boston. But not very much, you know. When you live on a farm, your life is pretty much on the farm. And going to school, I came home and had chores. But I realized there was something more.

MR. HERMAN: When did you begin to think about going to college? And was it your idea, your parents?

MS. MACE: All of a sudden, I realized that there was something after high school other than working possibly in a restaurant or working in a resort area. And I wanted to go to college, but I really thought about it and thought, God, we have absolutely no money. I mean there wasn't any money around. I mean, I had 4-H and the show flock. Some people I had helped with some sheep said, you know, there's probably some money out there because of what you've done in 4-H to go to agricultural school, and you have an incredible resume.

MR. HERMAN: Scholarship money—

MS. MACE: Yeah. And I thought, God, I don't know if I really look at this as a lifelong career, though I really enjoy it. And there was an opportunity after high school to work as a shepherd for professional showing around the Northeast. And I thought, God, if I could only afford to go to college and really focus on that. And when my mom died, my grandmother died, a woman that my grandmother worked for came to my dad and offered to give me a scholarship. Now the interesting part of this, the woman—her name was Mrs. Young—she had been blind for the 10, 15 years I knew her. My grandmother would work for her. She would come to the beach every summer, and my grandmother would go, and make meals for her, and visit with her.

MR. HERMAN: So she lived somewhere else.

MS. MACE: In the winter she lived somewhere else, I believe down south. She had no family. And my grandmother basically answered an ad, maybe 10 years prior to this point. And she would sit with her and make her meals, and on Sunday my dad would go over and have dinner with her and my grandmother at this woman's home. My grandmother used to bathe her, and they used to chat. When my grandmother died, Mrs. Young called my dad and asked him to come over to Sunday dinner. And she was very depressed that my grandmother had died. Even though she couldn't visually see my sister Nancy and I (we would come and visit periodically), and she would grab our faces, and put her hands on our face and ask about school.

So she had heard about us growing up. And probably my grandmother's expectations of what we might do as girls. And she knew what was happening with my real mom, and she went to my dad and said that she had no family. And it was my grandmother's wish Nancy and I have an opportunity to go to college. And she realized that our family did not have the finances for this. So she gave Nancy and I full scholarships, for four years, to go to a state school, if we could get in. And I couldn't believe it. My dad couldn't believe it. But I got into college, and—

MR. HERMAN: Did you know what you wanted to study, initially?

MS. MACE: I thought, if I could get into art, I'd just be happy.

MR. HERMAN: But was there not an idea of how you could make a living at that?

MS. MACE: I had no idea, but I thought, maybe if I could just be practical, and maybe I could teach art. But I really liked making things anyway. So with the great gift of this woman that I should go to college, I did go to college. And the first year was really hard; it was really the first time I had really been away from home. And I had baseboard heating, and someone else cooked for you. It was really a shocking experience. I didn't do well my first year. I did not do very well at all. I went to Plymouth State College. If I was going to go away, I was really going to go away.

MR. HERMAN: How far away is Plymouth State?

MS. MACE: Two hours north. I loved to ski. That became my new passion in high school. When I was a junior—maybe a sophomore—I used to ski on a little hill between school and my home. When softball was over, then I'd have a few hours. There were some old skis in the garage and I'd strap them on. I used to enjoy going down the hill. It was pretty flat. So, it had a win-win. So, I thought if I could get into college, it'd be really fun to go up where the mountains are. So, I went away. It was really a shock to be away. I didn't do very well my first year. The first year at any school is pretty typical. You have all the classes that have no passion in them.

MR. HERMAN: All the requirements.

MS. MACE: Yeah.

MR. HERMAN: Were there other kids that you had gone to high school that went to Plymouth State?

MS. MACE: There were probably some kids there, but I didn't—

MR. HERMAN: So you really started out with a clean slate—

MS. MACE: Clean slate. Kids smoked and drank and I had never been around any of that. I didn't drink in high school. I didn't smoke and I didn't do any of those things. There wasn't time and I was afraid to be messing up with all the problems we had at home, I didn't want to do that.

MR. HERMAN: Well, that reminds me because we really didn't talk about what kind of social activities you did in high school.

MS. MACE: I dated. Not a lot because there wasn't a lot of time. I went to senior prom and junior prom.

MR. HERMAN: Was there anybody serious? Did you ever contemplate just getting married and not going to college?

MS. MACE: You know, I thought about that and I thought, God, what a dead end.

MR. HERMAN: You know, I think that, though you're younger than I am, there used to be a lot of pressure to get married.

MS. MACE: There was. There was. Kids were dropping out of school, bearing children. This was right at the point of *Roe v. Wade.*

MR. HERMAN: Yeah. You were in your early maturity at a very pivotal time, the '60s with all the social unrest and the sexual revolution and feminism and all that.

MS. MACE: Absolutely. All of the above. You know there were girlfriends of mine that got pregnant and they would go and get illegal abortions. This was before *Roe v. Wade*. I had some girlfriends that almost didn't make it because of the medical situation. There were kids, girlfriends and boyfriends that I knew that had to drop out of school and had to get married and couldn't finish school. It was like, "Oh, God, I have to be so careful because my family can't take much more." I can't sexually mess around because if anything happened, I don't know what my family would do. They were—

MR. HERMAN: Kind of stretched to the limit at that point.

MS. MACE: They were totally stretched to the limit. I was probably the good kid. My younger sister, she was a little bit—right then they were just passing *Roe v. Wade* and she had girlfriends that were going getting legal abortions. She would say, "If anything happens, I don't have to worry about that." I was like, oh, God. It was right at a point also that women were then given the opportunity to go to college, but it was before women could get any scholarships in sports, Title IX. There wasn't really any money available for women to go to college. If the family didn't have it, you had to be really incredibly competent.

MR. HERMAN: When you were starting college then, what sort of—were there demonstrations and things of that sort?

MS. MACE: Oh, yeah. Vietnam.

MR. HERMAN: What year would you have started college?

MS. MACE: When I was in high school. I mean, growing up in a small town some of my classmates enrolled, were killed in Vietnam. Kids were thinking about going to Canada. I mean, we only lived probably four, six hours from Canada. I lost a number of school buddies, guys, because I used to hang around with a lot of guys. We used to go fishing and clamming together.

MR. HERMAN: I'm guessing you probably enjoyed that more than the more kind of girly—

MS. MACE: Oh, actually the girls were mad at me that I could hang out with their boyfriends so much. We had a great relationship because the guys in town would fish and hunt. I could do that.

MR. HERMAN: And you were as good as they were at it, probably.

MS. MACE: Yeah. I was as good as they were. Most of the girls didn't do that. But I didn't flaunt that with the girlfriends, and I didn't flaunt that with the guys, but I would go with them. I had access to them. I would see them out in my dory with my dad. I would see the boys out clamming or getting bait or at the clam shacks.

MR. HERMAN: Because that would be part of the usual pastime in a seashore community.

MS. MACE: Oh, absolutely.

MR. HERMAN: That must have changed quite a lot then when you went off to college then. A totally different environment.

MS. MACE: Oh, totally, totally different environment. The biggest shocker was baseboard heating. I had never experienced baseboard heating before. When I grew up, the bedroom was so cold that we had to bring a brick to bed to warm the sheets. The kids on my floor just thought that was hysterical.

MR. HERMAN: Was that kind of embarrassing?

MS. MACE: It was. I realized really in short order that I should keep quiet on that front. But I went to my classes and I really missed my sister and she desperately missed me. She said my dad was really sad because there were just my sister and her at home.

MR. HERMAN: Well, then did she have to take over the chores that you had done? That must have been a bit hard too.

MS. MACE: Yeah. But my dad, when I left, decided he best put in some baseboard heating at home. I came home and it's like, God, when did this go in?

MR. HERMAN: So, at least the carrying the wood for the fire—

MS. MACE: Yeah. It all slowed down. So, college was really wonderful time, but a really scary time because it felt so different for me. But I started taking some art classes and photography.

MR. HERMAN: What I'm really interested in is how you then progressed to further identify yourself with art, and what other sort of diversions there were and what a new life this was in college.

MS. MACE: Well, I took the classes. I was pretty responsible, but I won't say that I was a great studier. Living in the dorm where there were a lot of parties and a lot of people. I needed more quiet than I was getting to go to college. In my home life, it was very disruptive and I was an okay student; I wasn't a great student, but when it came to my art projects in high school, I could emotionally tune out. Or if I needed a place to work, I'd build a place. I built my little place out back. In college I didn't have that opportunity.

MR. HERMAN: There's no retreat place.

MS. MACE: No retreat. But I did discover the art department. It wasn't long before I was working in there, kind of volunteering to make clay. I kept remembering, "Flora, remember you're not going to be a ceramicist." I'd remember that from high school.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, from that first high school experience.

MS. MACE: Oh, yeah. It still haunts me. So I started making clay and cleaning up the lab.

MR. HERMAN: Just for time by yourself, not necessarily for—

MS. MACE: Yeah. Projects, because I wasn't really taking any art classes.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, true.

MS. MACE: A couple of professors that were there said, "Boy, I can't wait to get you next year." So I ended up taking a summer class. I don't remember what it was.

MR. HERMAN: You didn't have to go back home and work in the summer then. You were able to stay on for summer school?

MS. MACE: Yeah. I stayed on for summer school because I think the point was that if I didn't stay on for summer school, I wouldn't be enrolled in the fall because I wasn't doing very well. So I went from the Dean's warning list for my first two semesters, and I graduated four years later on the Dean's list.

MR. HERMAN: Wow. What were the subjects that you did the least well in when you started college? What were the warnings?

MS. MACE: Probably English and history. None of them were great. But part of it was that I didn't know how to focus with all new people. I'm living with peers.

MR. HERMAN: With roommates or roommate.

MS. MACE: Roommates. And they drank, and they smoked, and they partied. They maybe went to class or maybe didn't. I didn't have any place to go. It was a whole new environment. So it was totally switching. It was like I was in a foreign country. I can't say that there was one thing that felt comfortable in the whole experience. Even the food, all the food in college was all that dorm food. It was like where are my clam cakes and all the things I had grown up with.

MR. HERMAN: Because yours probably wasn't a so-called meat and potatoes. It would have been seafood and potatoes and that kind of basic meal.

MS. MACE: Oh, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: So you were having Mac and Cheese and casserole type stuff.

MS. MACE: Oh, yeah. So everything. The people and the place and no studio space is all different. But then I found my way into the art department. The first year at college probably what saved me was that I started to play some sports, which kept me focused. They gave me a structure. I had to be there and then I had to be there, which most students that go to college, they give you and you could show up or not show up. But sports were the only thing that, if you're not there, boy, there's like eight other people wondering where you are—

MR. HERMAN: What sports did you play?

MS. MACE: I played field hockey, I played softball and lacrosse and I ended up on the ski team. So I played four sports in college.

MR. HERMAN: Talking about the other kids who were smoking and drinking and partying—I didn't ask you what role, if any, religion played in your upbringing because you certainly don't strike me, even what you've said about being kind of straight-laced or church going or ruled by religion—

MS. MACE: No. My family was never ruled by religion and my great grandfather was just really upset because he was very religious. My great grandfather was very religious and my dad had chores to do and he couldn't get them all done during the week and he had to do them on Sunday. My great grandfather was just very upset with him of working on Sunday.

MR. HERMAN: What church was that?

MS. MACE: I don't remember. But my dad told my grandfather that he didn't ignore the church, but that he couldn't get his real world stuff done in the time allotted. So, there was a Bible available all the time, but the chores came first.

MR. HERMAN: It wasn't something then that really was an integrated part of your upbringing?

MS. MACE: No. I did go to church when I was a kid on Sundays, and then I came home and had to do chores the rest of the day.

MR. HERMAN: Was your reaction to these kids who were drinking and partying and everything, what was that like?

MS. MACE: It wasn't a religious reaction. It was like—

MR. HERMAN: Were you moralistic?

MS. MACE: No. I was very allergic to the smoke.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, yeah.

MS. MACE: Oh, it was just—and growing up, we had wine but it was the elderberry wine we had made in the basement. But, that the kids were so drunk so much. It was like they didn't go to class. I was struggling trying to do the book work, but it was like they—I mean, I might not have been grounded, but they were really over the edge to me.

MR. HERMAN: So, you didn't find when you got to college, whole other opportunities for study, or a professional life that you hadn't known about before, other than art?

MS. MACE: No. There wasn't maybe any professor that—

MR. HERMAN: Although, if you were involved in sports, did you ever think of physical education as another opportunity?

MS. MACE: No. I think because—and it kind of goes into today's society—I didn't like being around that many people. It was fun for a couple of hours, but I really liked being by myself. That's really where I found my contentment is by myself. Even though Joey and I work together here, a lot of the time I'm by myself. I find that very nice.

MR. HERMAN: That is something I want to come back to when I talk to both of you together. Because you do have different backgrounds and I would think different kind of working situations.

MS. MACE: Totally different, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: It's very tough when you live and work together to not have any private time.

MS. MACE: Yeah. Oh, you're absolutely right. But in college the department that I worked in they had a print maker and they had a painting instructor, an art historian. So, I was pretty well versed, but I decided that I needed to make sure that when I came out of college I had some kind of a career. So I did develop my art education.

MR. HERMAN: So, let's move on with college.

MS. MACE: I did really enjoy the professors that I had in college. They were incredible role models and they were really very good artists. They were artists that didn't want to show their work at galleries, necessarily. They enjoyed being professors and doing their work on the weekends.

MR. HERMAN: I didn't talk to you about when you were a child. Did you have art in the home or were your parents interested in art or was there simply no time or no interest?

MS. MACE: My mom did a little bit of drawing probably. But most of her stuff was three-dimensional, the embroidery, the three-dimensional objects.

MR. HERMAN: But was what she did things that most women of her generation did, knitting, crocheting, that kind of thing, too?

MS. MACE: Yes. Mostly embroidery, embroidery or doing clothes. My grandmother did not do—she made clothes, as I told you, and repaired things. But there wasn't really any crocheting in the house to speak of.

MR. HERMAN: Were there pictures on the walls? Did you grow up with pictures?

MS. MACE: Only family photos. Mostly stuffed animals. Mounted birds and ducks and pheasants. When we disassembled the house, when we sold the home, I asked Joey if she would like to have some of those to come with us. She said no way. Here we are now in this phase of our work that to get a mounted animal would just be

absolutely incredible.

MR. HERMAN: I'm just looking at all your tin decoys and thinking about that kind of relationship to wildlife. So, the stuffed animals doesn't seem like a stretch to me.

MS. MACE: Yes. I grew up with a lot of the decoys and I had some of the first ones. Now Joey has really taken akin to them, and is really into it.

MR. HERMAN: What about your knowledge of art and the outside world. Were you aware of contemporary artists or even historical artists?

MS. MACE: In high school I remember one class that we had to research an artist. She gave us like four or five artists that she had information about. It was right, for me, it was [Alexander] Calder. He was still alive and a working, producing artist. He was kind of a handyman and made jewelry and made machines and he reminded me—

MR. HERMAN: Stuff out of tin cans.

MS. MACE: And he reminded me physically of my grandfather because of his shape.

MR. HERMAN: How did you go about researching that? Did you correspond with him or anything or just—

MS. MACE: No. Just the library and books and stuff. Then our class eventually went to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and I saw some of his work.

MR. HERMAN: Can you think what drew you to him as opposed to Picasso or somebody else?

MS. MACE: Probably the way that he used raw and found materials. I had all that stuff at home. I had the wire and the string and the nails and cardboard.

MR. HERMAN: So, you could identify a little bit with the way he approached making things.

MS. MACE: Oh, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: So you knew enough about him to choose him, but you had a list of artists that you selected from. So you'd learn a little bit about each of them and then decide which you were going to focus on.

MS. MACE: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

MR. HERMAN: Did you look at art books in libraries or anything like that?

MS. MACE: No.

MR. HERMAN: What kind of exposure to contemporary art in the community would you have had?

MS. MACE: In my community, and I hadn't thought about this before, being in a resort area, think about what kind of art is in a resort area. Here I lived on the coast. I remember a couple of my high school buddies were really good at painting boat landscapes.

MR. HERMAN: [Laughs.] Lighthouses.

MS. MACE: Lighthouses and fish traps and water and anything you'd see at a resort area—things you see now.

MR. HERMAN: Sure.

MS. MACE: And I remember my art teacher just thought they were just amazing that they could capture the spirit of our beach and marsh and all that. I thought, oh, how boring. I'd rather take a photograph of it and actually I did. I got quite interested in capturing—see for me it was the time period, all the old wooden boats. As a kid, we had so many boats at my house. I mean, just wood boats. My dad wanted a little boat that we could go clamming just on the other side of the harbor. But I wasn't strong enough to pick up the big boats with him. So, he decided that he was going to one weekend just go down and get the pattern of a little boat and build it. So, we went down and we took paper and pencil and he drew out on a piece of paper a boat and we went home and built it. I thought that was the greatest thing to be able to make something that floated. I mean, there were guys in town that built wooden boats, but that we could do it.

MR. HERMAN: You did it yourself.

MS. MACE: So, I thought it was interesting to record. It was right at the point that fiberglass was becoming

popular. He was saying, "Oh, wood will be out. None of these boats are worth anything anymore." Here I have all these old boats and every spring we washed the boats. It was like a ritual. You would wash the boats and you would paint them and get them ready for the season. I mean, it was such a—I won't say a religious experience, but it was of such importance.

Then we built a boat and it worked and I was part of it. You could really build things. So, that was that building. So, in high school, the idea of making a painting, a recording, a visual didn't seem as exciting to me as to be—

MR. HERMAN: As making something.

MS. MACE: Oh, God, just to build something. And then to have it functional. And then to paint it. It was an incredible experience.

MR. HERMAN: How did you kind of progress as you started taking art courses in college then. Was it always towards sculpture or did you?

MS. MACE: Almost everything I did ended up to be 3-D. I took a painting course. I was painting. Everything was flat. We might have studied any of the great painters at the time—so still life painting. It just didn't do anything for me. A photograph did more. I would rather do a photograph and overlay photographs and build up three dimensional forms. If I did a painting, before it was done, all of a sudden I realized one day that you could make paint thick. That's what I did.

MR. HERMAN: It's interesting you got a B.S. degree. Was there not a B.A.?

MS. MACE: No. No. Because it wasn't a—

MR. HERMAN: It wasn't a liberal arts school.

MS. MACE: Correct. It was mostly teacher education, but the reason I was so lucky is that the art department, even though they were training students to teach art, painting and print making and sculpture, the teachers were artists themselves first before they were just mechanically teaching for the sake of teaching. So, they were say, let's say, professional painters or sculptors or print makers who couldn't quite make it. So, they ended up getting a job where they could survive because they couldn't sell enough of their own work.

MR. HERMAN: And did you take education courses too, so you could teach?

MS. MACE: Yes. I got my teaching degree and I even applied to teach. All of a sudden I applied and I didn't get my first job. I was so relieved. All of a sudden, I thought, that is the craziest thing to just sit in this high school or a junior high and try and teach these kids, when really, I want to make this stuff myself.

MR. HERMAN: So, this was after you had graduated—

MS. MACE: From college.

MR. HERMAN: Then you applied for teaching jobs. But you must have gone to—if you had education courses, too. You'd have to be pretty adept, I'd think, at teaching all disciplines. So, you did it with everything.

MS. MACE: I was a very good print maker. See, as a teacher, you need to know the skills. You didn't have to make the art.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah. You didn't have to be good at—

MS. MACE: Making art.

MR. HERMAN: The skills, the techniques were more important.

MS. MACE: I could print make. I could do photography. I knew all the skills in any media. That's what I got graded on. So, I could make my art and I didn't—I mean, they looked at some of it, but it was really about technique and teaching other people to do the technique. So, I could do my own stuff and never show it. Never was graded on my stuff. I was very happy. I didn't have to show my stuff at a gallery to be judged and I didn't have to show it at the university to be judged. I did work, but it was really about the technical aptitude of the skills.

MR. HERMAN: While you were in college, did you continue to produce art just on your own, not as part of what you were supposed to do for classes? Did you have any time?

MS. MACE: I did. There wasn't a lot of time to do it because I became the studio technician.

MR. HERMAN: That was another thing I wanted to ask. What other things sort of filled your time besides classes?

MS. MACE: I really enjoyed being in the labs. Besides doing my own work, I always gravitated to be able to help people do what they were doing, besides my own. I always kept my work, even though I had to show my work and do work for the classes. I enjoyed working with other students on the problems that they had.

MR. HERMAN: Which is the sound of a good teacher, it seems to me.

MS. MACE: I was a pretty adept teacher. That's the difference between Joey and I. I enjoy working with people maybe that's why I created this little island that I don't have people around. And when I was at Pilchuck maybe that was my drawback because I found working with anybody on their project easy for me. I could see an end, a way to finish, a way to make.

MR. HERMAN: But wasn't necessarily getting them out of a creative block, but rather knowing technically or what needed to be done.

MS. MACE: I could help funnel them toward a direction, which I have enjoyed working for many artists. That's how I started working for Dale [Chihuly].

MR. HERMAN: So, when you got your B.S. degree in 1972, what did you do immediately after that? And how were things back at home? Was there any question that you might move back to the homestead?

MS. MACE: I did go home.

MR. HERMAN: You did.

MS. MACE: While I was trying to figure out what—I applied for a couple jobs. The first job was teaching. And I didn't get it. And the teacher looked at me that was interviewing me and said, "Do you really want to do this?" And I said, "Well, I really haven't been very far. I really haven't seen a lot. So, I really want to do my own work." She said, "You know. You're right." I walked out of there and I said, "I didn't get the job and I am so glad, because I really need to get out and see and do. I need to experience."

MR. HERMAN: Did you work during the time you were going to college? Because the scholarship money I wouldn't think would be enough. You'd have to have clothes and—

MS. MACE: No, it wasn't. Yeah. I worked in the labs. They gave me money to work in the labs. So I made clay and cleaned the studio and helped the other students.

MR. HERMAN: Which is all related, so it was a good thing.

MS. MACE: Oh, yeah. I loved it. And I liked working nights and mornings. I was in the lab. I was pretty full with my classes, but I didn't have to worry about clothes 'cause you just wear your dungarees, and you got really dirty anyway.

MR. HERMAN: What kind of recreational things besides skiing then did you do while you were in college?

MS. MACE: I didn't do a lot. I hiked a little bit. I mostly really got up and went to the studio.

MR. HERMAN: Were you involved with any political activities?

MS. MACE: Not like Joey.

MR. HERMAN: Oh. Well, we'll get to that. [Laughs.]

MS. MACE: I was very low key about it. It was going on. I was there, but I was mostly in the labs, working.

MR. HERMAN: Were there any romances or anything that took you sort of outside the art field into a more personal territory?

MS. MACE: Not really. I mean, there were a few things, but really I felt like I was given such a gift to go to school that I went inward instead of outward.

MR. HERMAN: That's what it sounds like.

MS. MACE: I just couldn't believe that this had happened to me.

MR. HERMAN: So when you went back home after graduating from college—I'm interested in getting to this travel stint that you had in Norway and all of that, but the kind of progression to not taking the teaching job,

coming back home and deciding you were going to make your own art. I would have thought then that's a whole kind of problem because you've got to get some money from some place, and for a young artist starting out right after college, what are the opportunities for anything?

MS. MACE: Yeah. I decided it was really the best thing to do is not get that job. It was like a burden had lifted. Here I got this degree. My dad said, "You got this degree. What about a job?" And I said, "Well, you know, I don't really need a lot of money yet. And can I have my studio back in the back of the house?" I said, "And you know that building out there that you haven't used in years that has all the duck feathers hanging in bags," because we used to make our own pillows and mattresses with duck down and stuff. I said, "You know, we're never going to use that now, Dad. I could clean that out and I could have a little studio here. I'll get a job for a while. I'm not staying long. I'm not moving home. I'm just going to be here for a while and I need some place to put my studio equipment." He said, "Okay, you can have that building." It had no floor; it was a dirt floor. It was a place where you park the tractors and stuff in it.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah. I can visualize it.

MS. MACE: And he gave me that and that became my project that year to build my studio. The reality is I knew that I wouldn't use it that much because my goal was to leave, but I needed some place to put my things. So, I built a studio, which was in a way rewarding because I really did build a place. I mean, now I had electricity and I had heat and I had windows. I had a studio. I got a job at a farm. By then it was fall. There was a huge orchard. They picked apples in New England. It was a huge farm and I became a crew boss for a Jamaican apple picking team; they were all Jamaicans.

I had a crew of six guys and I kept track of them and brought them to the orchard we were going to pick. I kept count of their apples and graded their picking and all that stuff. The fall started and I said, "Well, this is interesting, but this is nowhere." So then I volunteered on a 4-H thing. Someone said, "You know, there's this program that I bet you'd be interested in, the government's thinking about making," which is now the Peace Corps.

MR. HERMAN: Oh.

MS. MACE: International Farm Youth Exchange. They want to send 4-H students to countries for them to live in a community, to work with the families and with the kids and be like goodwill ambassadors from the United States. You can choose any country you want. If the country's open to it, you can go. I was accepted to do this. I had never flown on a plane. I had never been on a plane. I had never been out of New England. I flew from Boston to Washington, D.C. As soon as I landed, I called my dad and said, "I made it." I was so excited. I was accepted to go to Norway.

MR. HERMAN: You didn't know before you got to Washington, D.C. what country you were going to?

MS. MACE: Actually, I did know that I was slated to go to Norway with a group that was going to Europe. I had never flown. You hear about Washington, D.C. I just went, "God, I can't believe this. I'm finally leaving home. I'm finally flying." We never had enough money for that. The concept of flying to go someplace—so, I went to Europe. We had an orientation. We went to the embassies and met with the ambassadors of Norway at the Norwegian Embassy. Met with whatever country, Embassy.

MR. HERMAN: Did you have to take any language classes though before going?

MS. MACE: It's really hard to learn Norwegian.

MR. HERMAN: Well, that's what I was going to say. [Laughs]

MS. MACE: Most of the young kids my age spoke English. Well, the irony was that once I landed in Oslo, which is the capital, the 4-H, or the ambassador, would pick you up, and I was brought to what seems like the ends of the earth. I was brought to different communities. I lived with each family for about a month. I was brought to some communities that only had five people. I lived on the Arctic Circle. I lived on an island. I lived on a mountain top. I was with these communities where, in most cases, their children, or members of the community had gone off to college or off to primary school and had never come home.

Now the program I was involved in was International Youth Farm Exchange. The program that developed out of what I started with the 4-H became the Peace Corps. So, I was right at the edge of what the government wanted to do was to go to communities and set up programs for helping the community. But my program was to integrate first, to see how these programs would work.

MR. HERMAN: You were really a kind of test tube for the Peace Corps.

MS. MACE: The International Farm Youth Exchange was the catalyst to develop the Peace Corps.

MR. HERMAN: And how long were you over there? What year was that?

MS. MACE: Nineteen seventy-three, I think.

MR. HERMAN: Seventy-three -'74. Yeah. You have that on your resume. So, was it a full year?

MS. MACE: Just shy of a full year. When I came home, two things happened. I was required to give talks to 4-H groups all over New England, or New Hampshire first. Like the Rotary and the Elks Club and Better Business Bureau.

MR. HERMAN: How did you feel about that? Had you gotten up and spoken before groups before?

MS. MACE: No. Well, I did on this trip, but it's easy when you're in a foreign country. People would look at me and they had never seen people with brown eyes. They thought of American women as movie stars that wore high heels and had big cars. So, that was part of the program to let other countries know that we were real people.

MR. HERMAN: Real people. And that we had farm youth.

MS. MACE: Yeah. And that we had farms and everything wasn't just the stereotype of big supermarkets. What I learned in Norway, two things. That the United States was really big and that they had relatives in the United States. They knew where every one of them lived. They couldn't wait to go visit them. They were so amazed that I hadn't been any place in the United States where any of their relatives lived, because Norway is not that big. They envisioned that the United States wasn't as big. Because when you looked on a map back then—I mean, it was big, but they didn't realize how big it was. So, by the time that I spent that amount of time, and granted I had never been this far away from home. We didn't have e-mail or telephones.

MR. HERMAN: There'd be no communication, really.

MS. MACE: There would be no communication. So, I mean, the post office was in the back of somebody's house. They did it out of their kitchen. Where I lived, these little towns. It took forever to get the mail from point A to point B. The Norwegians made me realize, even more so, how much I needed to travel and see and be. So, in Oslo I went to many of the artistic areas. Vigeland Gardens, the great sculptor [Vigeland Sculpture Park, Oslo, Norway]. Edvard Munch. I went to Denmark and Amsterdam and all these great artists that lived there.

MR. HERMAN: So you were able to travel within Europe after?

MS. MACE: After that was over. As soon as that was over, all the program participants met in Amsterdam and then we kind of went as a group to debrief. The American government said, okay, don't make it seven days, seven countries. Since you're there, don't get crazy—they told us all these things. Whatever country you're in, be really careful about relationships because people will glom on to you to become an American citizen. They will want to know about war. They'll think you're a spy. They went through all this stuff before we went. So people had different views of us, but—

[Audio break.]

MR. HERMAN: This is disc three of three, with Flora Mace, a partial disc. And we were talking about, after your stint on the International Farm Youth Exchange, traveling around other European countries. I'm curious to know, at that point, were you interested, even during the time when you were in Norway, even though you were in a Farm Youth exchange, what kind of role did exposure to art play? I mean, you said you went to the Vigeland Sculpture Park, and the Munch Museum [Oslo, Norway], I assume.

MR. HERMAN: Yes.

MS. MACE: What else you were exposed to and whether that, you could see today, that—

[Audio break.]

MR. HERMAN: This is Lloyd Herman, interviewing Flora Mace at the artist's studio with Joey Kirkpatrick, in Seattle, Washington, on August 18, 2005. This is a continuation of session one. This is session two.

Flora, we had just gotten you out of, I think maybe, had you already gotten your M.F.A. in Illinois when we ended?

MS. MACE: No, I was in the middle of it, actually. And I wanted to stress that it takes running into the right people at the right time.

MR. HERMAN: Joel Myers was a pivotal—

MS. MACE: Joel Myers was a pivotal mentor to me at that point.

MR. HERMAN: That was one of my questions, was the role of—whether or not you had a mentor or had apprenticed with anybody who had really influenced you or your work before you met Joey. And your sense of what it was to be an artist.

MS. MACE: Joel was a great role model in that he appreciated what any of his students were passionate about. He didn't try to direct them. If you look at his resume with students who have gone through his program, I think that gives you the key to the kind of mentor he was to his students. I just happened to—I never did go to the school where he taught as a student, but I did go and was involved in his workshops that he developed. And Bertil Vallien was one of the participants at his workshop over the years. It was Bertil's beginning into the United States.

MR. HERMAN: At that point, wasn't he sand casting, and was that what he was teaching there? Did you ever experiment with that?

MS. MACE: I never experimented with the sand casting at all. Bertil came and he was probably going to be doing a workshop somewhere. I had no idea who Bertil was at the time, and was just given the dates, you know, this artist is coming, and I went over and watched Bertil do the sand casting. And I thought, God, that is really amazing. I was so naïve to any of the processes. And also the history of glass contemporarily was just beginning.

So I was not the only one that was really unaware of what was going on at the time. Everybody was striving to experiment. And to me, looking back over the 30 years or so that I've been involved in it, that was the real difference. The students that were involved in glass at that point were students that were artists in other materials. Glassblowing or glass classes were not strictly for glass students. They had the class, and usually the professor was gung ho to get his own work done. It was a great way to support his passion, and he had to take some students in, and you know, okay, let's bring in architects and painters, whoever wants to experiment with the material.

MR. HERMAN: Who were some of the people that you felt were kind of at your level in just kind of moving into glass at that time?

MS. MACE: Oh, um—

MR. HERMAN: Because you said yesterday that the exhibition that your piece was bought for Corning [Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY] was really kind of your introduction to a variety of people. You'd mentioned Audrey Handler who I think was probably just about the only woman working in glass at that point.

MS. MACE: She was, and I should probably give you this little sideline. Audrey gave her workshop, and she was using oxides on the sides of her pieces. And as we look at it now, quite dangerous oxides, yet nobody knew it at the time. But the real key, she turned to all the women, and she said, "Ladies, the one thing I need to stress here is, you must take care of your skin." And she said, you know, "you've got to use a moisturizer." [They laugh.] It was like—a commercial for facial creams and skin creams.

I remember that so distinctly and I got such a kick out of it, because—I mean, she's a really small woman in stature, but came on full speed ahead. And she, as a woman, explained to us that it was very difficult for her to even get into the class because it was kind of a boy's thing, the boy's club. And the way that—I think that Harvey was her instructor—that she really realized that she had to be somewhat subservient, and deliver coffee, and go get donuts, and be kind of the fill-in to even get into it. But let me think here—I'll think of all the names.

MR. HERMAN: I was thinking particularly about people who were working in other disciplines and just sort of getting their feet wet in glass, so to speak.

MS. MACE: Yes, and I haven't lost my mind on those, but—

MR. HERMAN: Oh, it will probably come back, and just interrupt when it comes to you.

MS. MACE: Yes. And to see their work now, it really is a continuation of what they were doing then.

MR. HERMAN: I would guess that probably a number of them would have started as Harvey Littleton did in clay, because I've always felt that there was probably a sense of form-giving, that throwing a pot is a little like blowing glass. That you're dealing with primarily spherical objects with a void—

MS. MACE: Globular objects, yes. Bob Carlson was one that was coming along at the time, and I met—

MR. HERMAN: Bob Carlson, not Bill Carlson?

MS. MACE: Bill Carlson. He was going to school at RISD, or the Rhode Island School of Design [Providence], out on the East Coast. And glass casting, you know, Bertil probably had an effect on people at the time. There were so many things happening, all at the same time. But many of the students that were really the students of those classes were—students, I remember they were architecture students, and they thought it would be interesting to figure out what glass was before they put it into buildings.

MR. HERMAN: Did you kind of get ideas from each other in that sort of environment, or were you pretty much working on your own?

MS. MACE: Yeah, right at that time, we were all—it was getting over the fear of the fire and the heat. Five years later many of the students would come to the field to find out what the material was about because that was going to be something like, in architecture windows. Or design, they would end up designing for glasses. So there was that mix of, it wasn't that they were going to passionately explore that for their own personal means. They wanted to understand materials.

MR. HERMAN: Was there primarily an emphasis on functional work at that stage? And that would have been around 1970—mid-'70s.

MS. MACE: Well, the idea was possibly that you could make something that would be functional, because artistically, we all thought that the block was really cool. But our friends didn't quite understand. So if you could make something that could contain—a great beer mug was an incredible gift for a friend. Because you could make them any size. You could put little decorations on or stuff like that. Or, wings were really popular then. We were just understanding how to clip and pull and all that.

MR. HERMAN: During that time, when you were in that exhibition at Corning, it must have been, I think you've said, really interesting to see all of this new work by artists that were totally unfamiliar to you, that you hadn't seen—contemporary glass—but also to visit the Corning Museum's own collection. Was there anything there that kind of clicked?

MS. MACE: Oh, the whole thing was just mind boggling. I have to say, probably Fritz Dreisbach, Marvin Lipofsky were two. Because Fritz, I remember there was an exhibition. I'm not sure it was there or very shortly thereafter—he made this huge truck out of glass. And a farm set.

MR. HERMAN: I've seen that.

MS. MACE: Huge! And Fritz was just an amazing man with the material and his energy, and he used all the students wherever he was to help him do these things, and he was making wheels, and it was like—God, you don't have to make an object that is functional, or looks functional. And then you get to Marvin Lipofsky who had always done more or less organic, and it was like—God, Berkeley? You know, because you—being in the Midwest, the East Coast, the Vietnam War, and what was happening, the Peace Movement, you know, all the things that were happening in the world of events, not in glass, but events—it was Berkeley. And there was this guy from Berkeley, and he was doing glass there. California College of Arts and Crafts. And eventually I did make it to Berkeley. Of course it wasn't the same, but there were leftovers from that. But there were the professors teaching at schools that were young, they were very young at that point—you know, they're 30 years older now.

MR. HERMAN: Had most of them come out of Harvey Littleton's program at the University of Wisconsin? I think Marvin Lipofsky did, Dale Chihuly certainly did.

MS. MACE: The way that I envision it now and then, it was like, these guys are really young, they just happen to be all in the same place at the same time. It was an event. And they went and drank and God knows what else they did. And it was like, what a great party, okay, now we have to go back to our places. To me, it was like a mini-Pilchuck. It was one guy who knew a little more than everybody else, but they got there and they all experimented.

MR. HERMAN: And this was all in Corning?

MS. MACE: Well, when the whole thing started with Harvey at Corning, I think that most of the students that were from—seemed to be everywhere—I was so shocked. There were so many people that came to the event at Corning.

MR. HERMAN: Which was primarily the opening of the exhibition?

MS. MACE: No, I think it was the Glass Arts Society conference at Corning.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, so it was—GAS had already started by then.

MS. MACE: Yes. Oh, it was really small, very, very small.

MR. HERMAN: At that point, you couldn't see a difference between university-educated artists in glass, and those who were self-taught. I think Fritz was largely self-taught. I don't remember that he came out of a university program. He was from Penland—

MS. MACE: He was Penland but—you know, different regions very quickly took on the essence of what a region would become. Because somebody there was really passionate about something. Fritz was in North Carolina. And he's an incredibly down-to-earth guy, but he has an incredibly scientific mind. And I don't know where he got his chemical background. But he was one of the most influential people from North Carolina having colored glass.

MR. HERMAN: So he was dealing really with the technical aspects, the physical properties of glass, as much as the artistic possibilities.

MS. MACE: Oh, yeah, and he could roast a pig like nobody had ever seen. So he was this multi-faceted guy. But so many of the people that I was meeting along the way had so many wide, vast exposures in many fields.

MR. HERMAN: How did this sort of influence you, then, when you went back to Illinois to go to school? You were still going to school? This wasn't the kind of culmination—

MS. MACE: Oh no, I was still in school. It seemed like so much more was opened. It was like everything was trying to be done. So just go for it. And especially for what I was doing, it was—do you realize what you're working on? It was like, I had never gotten any feedback about what I was working on, until Joel said that he wanted me to go because he felt what I was doing was an important contribution.

MR. HERMAN: Did your work change after you were exposed to other possibilities that you saw there?

MS. MACE: No.

MR. HERMAN: And besides—

MS. MACE: It just gave me confidence to continue. Because when you have your main instructor looking at what you're doing, and will not allow you to participate with the rest of the class, and then you have another instructor from another school saying, why don't you come? I'll give you a scholarship. You can come and work at my school. I think it's important, what you're doing. And besides that, come with me to Corning to the Glass Art Society, because I think you have something important.

MR. HERMAN: And the school that Joel was teaching at, what was its name?

MS. MACE: Bloomington Normal [Illinois State University, Bloomington, IL]. I don't know the abbreviations of the school. It was just west of University of Illinois [Urbana-Champaign, IL].

MR. HERMAN: But let me just clarify this. You were going to the—

MS. MACE: University of Illinois—

MR. HERMAN: University of Illinois—and actually, didn't you have a scholarship there though?

MS. MACE: I did, from Frank Gallo and sculpture. I was the sculpture tech.

MR. HERMAN: But you weren't permitted in the glass studio there.

MS. MACE: Once I started doing glass, I got tossed out of glass. My instructor saw what I was doing, and I really believed, felt if he could get rid of me—you know, push me down, and get rid of me, then he could go and develop the techniques that I started, which was drawing on glass.

MR. HERMAN: But you were still working in sculpture under Frank Gallo and got your degree there, even though you were taking these workshops at Bloomington.

MS. MACE: And blowing glass at night at my own university.

MR. HERMAN: It's a little confusing; I just wanted to make sure I got it.

MS. MACE: Absolutely. I mean, there weren't that many classes at Bloomington, but there was a support system. And it seemed like Joel and the programs that he was developing, he had a lot more students. He was a lot more

knowledgeable. And also because of Joel's history in glass, or having relatives and traveling to Europe, he knew about glass.

MR. HERMAN: Had he already been the designer-in-residence at Blenko [Blenko Glass Company, Milton, WV] at that time?

MS. MACE: I believe so.

MR. HERMAN: So he was really bringing a truly kind of a production, commercial glass background—

MS. MACE: And expertise. He had the experience with blowers. He was from Europe. He had that affiliation with historical and cultural glass. Then teaching, he has an incredible ambiance with students. And if he was a designer at Blenko and worked in Blenko, he knew how the whole system worked. And most of the other glass people at the time just happened to come upon glass.

MR. HERMAN: What other exhibitions then did you have when you were still going to school? Were there others?

MS. MACE: Oh, none really. I still tried to do my sculpture work. I did metal and cast bronze. But I really liked the glass.

MR. HERMAN: So you saw already that you were gravitating toward glass as a full-time medium?

MS. MACE: Yeah, but I didn't think of it as—oh, I'm going to be a glassblower.

MR. HERMAN: You probably have to make that personal choice—

MS. MACE: I was really in the present—the equipment was really basic. But I was a sculpture student, so if we needed blow pipes or punte rods, I would go and fabricate something. I mean, I would cut up steel, and—I mean, they were really basic. But I could fix or make many of the tools.

MR. HERMAN: What, how many furnaces did Joel have?

MS. MACE: I don't remember how many Joel had, but as I went to his school, it seemed to me a more appointed and better running facility. You know, there was a grinding and polishing—really basic, but there were more areas, in the glass—

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, I was trying to get a sense of how limited your own personal—

MS. MACE: Oh, there was probably one furnace, maybe two, but they were very small. Very small furnaces, probably two glory holes. And a pipe warmer was somewhat marginal. They just stick it into the side of the door of the furnace.

MR. HERMAN: So how did your studies progress in Illinois toward your M.F.A., and then what happened?

MS. MACE: When I realized what was going on, I came back, and I think I was really pretty frustrated with—here I'm in graduate school, and I want to do something, and the professor is real reluctant to let me use the equipment or facilities. And so I, I don't know if I asked Joel or my instructor there, who in the United States is doing the most in glass of anybody. If you had to say one person at the top of the list, who was doing the most in glass? Who would that be? And both guys said Dale Chihuly.

MR. HERMAN: And that was about what year?

MS. MACE: Nineteen seventy-three, '74. It was when I was in grad school, and I didn't have any idea who Dale was.

MR. HERMAN: And how did you use that information?

MS. MACE: I turned to my instructor at the University of Illinois, and said, I'm going to study with that guy. And he said, he isn't even going to talk to you. And I said, he might not, but I'm going to study with him. And I said, by the way, where does he teach? And he told me, Rhode Island School of Design. And within 10 minutes I was on the telephone, and got the number of the hot shop at Rhode Island School of Design. And Dale picked up the phone. And I said, Mr. Chihuly, I know you don't know me, and I would like to know if you have a summer program. I mean, it was like, let's say, May at that point.

MR. HERMAN: And you were going to get your M.F.A. the next month?

MS. MACE: No, the following year. I had just finished my first year in graduate school. And he said, hey, by the

way, where are you? And I said I'm in Illinois. And he said, I've been teaching at this school, Pilchuck, maybe you've heard about it. And I said no, I didn't, I hadn't. He said, but this summer is going to be a real special thing. I'm going to go to the University of Utah. They've selected ten craftsmen, I being one, and all the craftsmen are going to be housed at Snow Bird, in the ski area. And we're going to build a hot shop, and there's going to be Peter Voulkos and Marilyn Levine and he went down the list, and I didn't know any of these people. And I didn't even know who he was, but everybody said he was the best. He said, well why don't you, instead of going all the way to Washington State, because it seems like you are very directed that you want to come this summer—

MR. HERMAN: Oh, you mean, rather than come to Pilchuck.

MS. MACE: Yes. He said, from where you are, it's a shorter trip. Why don't you go to Utah? The University of Utah. And I skied, so I knew, I had heard about Snow Bird, by reputation. I said, God, do you have the address or phone number where I should call? I'm there. He said it's not full, because no one knows about it. So it'd be great. And he gave me the telephone number there. I said I'll see you there.

MR. HERMAN: You didn't ask how much it was going to cost?

MS. MACE: Well, if I went to grad school with no money, I mean—

MR. HERMAN: [Laughs.]

MS. MACE: And I did say one other thing. I said, do you think that the other classes would be full? Jewelry—I mean, he named off the list.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, because each one of these artists was doing another discipline. Hence Voulkos.

MS. MACE: Yes. Voulkos was there doing ceramics. God, the clay worker Marilyn Levine. God, there was weaving, the whole thing. I said, you know, my sister—God, what would happen, my sister could drive out, she's been wanting to travel. We could just go there. I said, Dale, I'll see you there. He said, fabulous! And I didn't know who he—I said, God, here I called this guy and I have no idea what he does.

MR. HERMAN: So progress to getting in—

MS. MACE: Then, I went to, rolled in to the parking—I sent my application, my sister drove out, picked me up, we went to Utah. We signed up at the University of Utah on campus at the University. And they said campus for this summer is up there. There was no housing except the lodges for people skiing; you could rent one of those. Well we didn't have any money, so I asked them prior if there were any camping areas around. So we camped the time we lived there.

MR. HERMAN: For the summer. Which was how long?

MS. MACE: I think maybe four weeks. Three weeks, four weeks. And it was absolutely beautiful there. Beautiful. God. I won't say I did a lot of research on who Dale was prior to getting there, but I got there. And he was as flamboyant as a young man could be. With his dark curly hair, and I think he might have had sunglasses on, and short shorts. And he had just finished a tennis game down in the valley when he showed up on the dock of the—I say dock, because it was the loading dock of the gondola to go to the top of the mountain. That's where class was to meet. We were going to build a hot shop there. And I suppose someone in the town had a small kiln that we could transport, build and what not. And there were ten students, I believe, that showed up for this, and Dale, he might have even had white shorts on.

MR. HERMAN: Ten for glass only, or ten for all—

MS. MACE: Ten for glass only, and then, God, there were like 80 students running around. And we, Dale, you know, we kind of introduced ourselves. And Dale said, okay, we're going to head down to the valley and get some equipment, and you guys do this, and you do that. And he said, oh, by the way. He said we're having a big barbeque at my condo—they're not condos, but one of the lodges. So come tonight. He said everybody's going to come.

And we showed up, and Dale's mom came, Viola. Just flew in from Seattle. Dale went down into the valley to get her. I was there when she got out of the car. And she had three suitcases, because Dale asked me to come help him with his mom. She had three suitcases, and when we got to the place and she opened it up—I don't even remember that she had clothes, because the three suitcases were full of salmon.

MR. HERMAN: [Laughs.]

MS. MACE: That's what Dale was gonna have. The barbeque at his place for all the faculty and staff, and his

mom flew in with the salmon in her suitcases. I mean, there were two or three salmon in each suitcases. And of course with everybody, we were all blown away. But it was an incredible experience. Peter Voulkos and everyone who was there. By this time, we're only a couple days into it, I was really nervous. Because Dale, now that I'm seeing who he is and how he maneuvers through society, life, and work. And when we started to work, he asked who would help him to do his work and whatnot. And I volunteered.

But at that point, you know, I was just a student, I didn't want to show him what I did because I was so nervous that he—I mean, it was—he was really a role model at this time. He did not know what I did, and he didn't care. But late at night I would work, because I was used to that late-at-night working. But Dale, which I didn't know, came into the studio at four o'clock in the morning and saw what I was doing. And he said, "Hey! What are you doing?" And I showed him my drawings and he said, God! He said, "Would you make some of those for me?" Some of those images I was working on. Doing the thread drawings. And I said, sure I would.

MR. HERMAN: What was his own work like at that time?

MS. MACE: He had just started doing thread drawings.

MR. HERMAN: The Navajo blanket series [*Navajo Blanket Cylinders*, 1975.]

MS. MACE: Uh-huh. And Kate Elliott had done some work for him. I had no idea what Dale did. Only that he had a reputation. I was too busy with school and trying to keep everything together, and working and everything.

MR. HERMAN: So you started working, doing some of those with him?

MS. MACE: Yes.

MR. HERMAN: And what about your own work? Did you continue to—

MS. MACE: I had been doing some very primitive figure drawings on the sides of vessels. And Dale said, you know, could you write these words, which was really easy for me to write words. And he wrote a letter to Kate, that said on the side of a vessel, "Leave me alone." [Laughs.] And sent it to her. I don't know if she ever got it. But it was to prove to Kate that he could get his work done without her. [They laugh.] Which was a real jab, but at that point, Peter Voulkos saw what we were doing, and said, hey, would you write this verbiage for me? He said I'll trade you some pieces if you write some verbiage on some sides of vessels or plates I've made, you know, hot. So I started writing some things in glass for Peter.

MR. HERMAN: But was he doing stuff in glass?

MS. MACE: Oh no. But he thought it was quite interesting, the whole thing.

MR. HERMAN: And did you trade?

MS. MACE: I had an I.O.U., but I never collected on it.

MR. HERMAN: [Laughs.] What a shame!

MS. MACE: I know. What a shame. So at the end of that period of time there, Dale invited me to go to Pilchuck. He wanted to fly me into Pilchuck to keep working.

MR. HERMAN: That summer?

MS. MACE: Yeah, right at the end of—he was leaving there to go to Pilchuck to teach there. And he said, Flora, I'd really like for you to come with me. And I said, Dale, I can't. And all of the students in the class said, you idiot. Here you've only worked for this amount of time, and he wants to fly you there?

MR. HERMAN: And he wanted to pay it for you?

MS. MACE: Well, he didn't pay me to work for him, but he would have flown me there. I said Dale, you know, I'm really honored that you would do that, but I told my sister that I would drive to San Francisco with her. And the rest of the students, they couldn't believe that I did that. And I just felt—you know, I had an obligation to my sister. And if it was going to work out with Dale. I said, Dale, I'll send it to you. What do you want? I'll do them on the road, and I'll send them to you at Pilchuck. And so we got into this, sending images through the mail.

MR. HERMAN: And so you didn't go, you went to San Francisco with your sister?

MS. MACE: I didn't go to Pilchuck. I went to San Francisco, I thought, God, it would be interesting to see Oregon. And I drove up the Washington coast. And I made it as far as Seattle, and I said, I can't do it. Because I'd heard

then about Pilchuck, what Pilchuck was about, and the students, people from all over the world. I mean, I was honored that Dale had asked me to go, but I'm really shy at heart, and the concept of going there, and being and working with Dale was too much for me to bear. So I did do the drawings, the thread drawings on the road, between Utah, San Francisco, and I sent them to Dale. And he did them, he picked up the images on the vessels at Pilchuck.

MR. HERMAN: How did you do the thread drawings, though, on the road, and send them to him? These were not glass then?

MS. MACE: Yes they were.

MR. HERMAN: How were you doing that? How were you making them?

MS. MACE: I developed a process to draw with glass threading, onto a brick. I could, you know, instead of lamp workers hold the glass up in the air and make their images, I let—I was a welder, so to me, using the brick, I would use the torch like I would be welding with metal. And I would lay the glass thread down on the brick.

MR. HERMAN: So then you could pick it up from the brick and send it?

MS. MACE: Yes.

MR. HERMAN: Very clever.

MS. MACE: And I would just pack it between cotton, and do all kinds of things, and put it in a box and send it to him. And he would be very grateful. And when Pilchuck was over, he called me and said, you know, he said, that really worked out well. He said, would you mind? He said why don't you come to RISD? He said, and finish your graduate work there? And I said, you know, great idea, but I know what it would take to go to RISD. Because RISD then was bigger even than Pilchuck. And if I couldn't even make it to Pilchuck, emotionally, how could I do it to RISD? I said, but I'll be glad to send anything you want. You just let me know, I'll fill it in around my course studies.

MR. HERMAN: So you were not going to go to RISD, but return to—

MS. MACE: Illinois. Frank had stuck his head out for me to work, and Joel was there, and I knew I could keep—it was important for me. And also, Dale Chihuly was an incredible emotional magnet. If you're around him very long, really close, it was difficult for you to keep your personal identity. He is an incredible man. And his personality and emotion and what he's able to achieve, but it is very difficult to get swept up in that. And I felt like if I could just be a little way away, then I could still develop my own work, plus I could get anything done that he wanted also.

MR. HERMAN: And then eventually were you thinking that you would go to Pilchuck?

MS. MACE: No, it wasn't even part of that. I finished up my graduate work. Actually I was in the spring quarter and Dale called me and said I'm going to Europe for Christmas, and I'm going to do a blow when I get back, and I'd really love it if you fly to Providence and you do the blow with me. I'm gonna bring some of the guys that were in Utah, some of the ones that were in Pilchuck, everybody you met would—a few of the people would form a team. And I said, you know, Dale, that would probably be a great way to do it. But I'll send drawings ahead of time, and then I'll come. You know, I'm from New England, but I've never been to Rhode Island. And you know I met some of the students through reputation that had gone to RISD and heard about them.

MR. HERMAN: Like?

MS. MACE: Oh, Howard Ben Tré, Toots Zynsky, Therman [Statom]. You know, all those guys who were in school here. Ben Moore was in school there then. And what Dale did, what I realized, like him asking me when I was in Utah to come to Pilchuck, and if I wouldn't come to Pilchuck, why don't you go to school at RISD, Dale went around the United States giving workshops, and if he found that student that had that kind of energy, and was doing interesting work, we would try to get them to go to RISD. Because he felt if he had a group of students that were really self-motivated, in one respect, he wouldn't need to teach as much. And they would competitively develop their own work.

MR. HERMAN: So did you finish in Illinois before you—

MS. MACE: No. Actually, I did, but the circumstance was not going to happen that way. I was supposed to go and do that blow with Dale. He used to blow during school holidays, so it was a spring break that we were going to go. But he went to Europe to do a project with Seaver Leslie. Seaver was a really good friend of his, a painter. And Dale always loved Ireland and England, and all of the energy of Europe. And he was going for Christmas holiday. He called me just before he left and said, okay, we're on for the blow in the spring. Maybe it was in

January, right when he was getting back. And I said, yup, the drawing's been sent, I'll do some more when I get there. And he left, and I got a letter from him. You know how Dale would just write postcards. Things are going well, really looking forward to my blow at RISD. Can't wait to see you.

MR. HERMAN: You had to get yourself there, though, or was he paying to bring the team together?

MS. MACE: Dale was probably paying to bring the team together, but you had to pay up front and then he'd reimburse you. And then I got a phone call that said Dale was in a terrible car accident and they didn't know if he would survive. And at that point, you know, there's going to be no blow. And they didn't know if he would even make it. And not only myself, but everyone was just crushed, because by this time I was in with the other people who were going to come.

MR. HERMAN: Who were some of the other people that were going to be there?

MS. MACE: Oh, Ben Moore was going to be there, I had forgotten some of the guys that—I mean, it wasn't a huge team. And Ben, the reason I think of Ben Moore, is he's been kind of a staple through the last 30 years, with Dale and myself, and what's happening in glass.

MR. HERMAN: Can I backtrack just a minute, and I'll ask you if you'd remember who those ten were who came to Utah? Do any of them continue to be active in glass?

MS. MACE: No, they were not. No, not one of them other than myself is still active in glass. A few have gone on to be designers and architects and craftsman.

MR. HERMAN: Any notable names?

MS. MACE: No. Not that come into my world.

MR. HERMAN: Let's progress then. So the blow didn't take place cause of Dale's car wreck, and then what happened?

MS. MACE: Well, about three months later, I had gotten some messages that he was doing okay. He had a lot of plastic surgery. But when he felt up to it, he was going to give you a call, Flora. And he gave me a call; I don't remember how many months later it was, and he said, you know, he said, I'd really like to have that blow we planned. But he said I don't think I can do it. He said, I just don't feel I can work. And I kind of went into the same kind of upbeat thing—I said, Dale, whenever anybody came around, you handed the pipe to everybody, and you orchestrated, and you cooked chicken, and you didn't have to blow if you didn't want to anyway. And when people were around, you always felt that socializing during the event was an important criteria.

And so I said, Ben's gonna be there, and I can be there. We kind of took over when you went off anyway. So we can still do that. I said the drawings are made, I know Ben would love to do it, and I know these other guys would, and—I mean, you don't even have to invite anybody over. We can just do it and see if it works. And Dale said, you know, you're probably right. He said, well let me think about it and I'll give you a call back. And he called me back and he said, you know, you're probably right. I could do what I did before. But I can't blow. I can't see. And I probably was quite rude, you know—I teased him about it. Whenever anybody came in of importance, he always handed off the pipe anyway.

Dale was an incredible glassblower. But he also knew that it was important to be one with the people that helped support you. And so the blow took place. And he realized that he could orchestrate and he didn't need to blow. And I guess that probably started him on this new direction that he's continued with.

MR. HERMAN: And when would that have been, that first blow that the team did with his direction?

MS. MACE: I want to say it was in the spring. But I don't remember when it was.

MR. HERMAN: Would that have been in '75, '76?

MS. MACE: Yeah, probably. If you look at his resume when he had the accident, it was months after that.

MR. HERMAN: You were at the University of Utah, in that program.

MS. MACE: That was only a month.

MR. HERMAN: And that was '75.

MS. MACE: Then '76.

MR. HERMAN: And so you came out to Pilchuck the first time—

MS. MACE: In 1979.

MR. HERMAN: And so, what happened in 1976? The blow was at RISD.

MS. MACE: Yeah, and I did go, and we did that, and I went back to Illinois, and I continued, and Dale said, you know, when you graduate, it would be really great if you want to come to RISD and become a graduate student, or be my assistant, or just come out there. So it was a way for me to move from graduate school to another location and still work. And, being at RISD, I realized that I was not, I really liked the isolation. So I would still work at night, and many times I would do the drawings for Dale or myself. And I would go to the blows in the morning but then leave when everybody started to show up. So really, I would hide out.

MR. HERMAN: Were the drawings then, still it was just the Navajo blanket series?

MS. MACE: The blanket series, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: Because I think that your own style of drawing, when you and Joey began to work together is very different from that. Curvilinear, as was the writing that you've done too.

MS. MACE: Yes. And I worked for Dale off and on that year, and I went up and visited my family in New Hampshire. I realized that Rhode Island was an incredible opportunity, but a friend of mine in grad school in ceramics got a teaching job down in New Jersey and said, you know, we're thinking of having a little workshop in glass. And Wheaton Glass Company has given us the facilities. And it would be really great if you came down and gave a demo to my ceramics class.

MR. HERMAN: You'd already gotten your M.F.A. at this point?

MS. MACE: Yes. And I went and I did work at RISD. And I was around Howard, and Toots, and Thurman and all these guys doing their own work, and I was helping Dale do his work, and I was working late at night. I wasn't a student there, but Dale gave me an opportunity to work at night.

MR. HERMAN: Did you have to have job at that time, too, to get income, or how did that work?

MS. MACE: Dale knew some people in town, the Jacksons; Dale used to rent a carriage house when he was at college at RISD. And he met these people, the Jacksons. And Dale's place had since been torn down, but he called—you know, he knew everybody in Providence. He said I have these workers coming out, and if there's any way that you need someone to house sit, because I know that you travel a lot. And he set a number of us up with people who gave us places to stay. And the Jacksons were fabulous. And really, I didn't have any money, and glass didn't sell as much then as it does now. Or the money it cost to do the project. So I did that, and I worked for Dale, and I was really enjoying the experience. Well, my friend asked me to give this workshop, and I thought, God, why not? I thought, God, what's he doing now with his life? I went down to Wheaton Glass Company.

MR. HERMAN: Who was that who asked you to do that?

MS. MACE: Right now I can't remember. I think it was Chi Humm. He was a student at University of Illinois in ceramics when I was there in sculpture.

MR. HERMAN: Okay. Anyway, go ahead with Wheaton.

MS. MACE: Wheaton was the most important thing that happened to me there, at that time. I mean, I was working for Dale and doing my own work, and at Wheaton, all of a sudden, I'm in a mini-factory.

MR. HERMAN: What did they make there? I've been to Wheaton Glass Village, but I don't really know—

MS. MACE: Wheaton Glass Company, before I arrived in the '80s, was one of the largest family-owned businesses in the world. Primarily glass—they used to make the Avon bottles—all those molds, blew all the Avon bottles. All those trucks and cars and airplanes. They made perfume bottles. They made bottles for Bacardi Rum and Oil of Olay. They were the largest glass container manufacturer in the world, family-owned. They had little companies all over the world.

And in the beginning, probably mid-'70s, they started diversifying into plastics. Mrs. and Mrs. Wheaton—I really knew the wife, Mary; she was kind of in charge of Wheaton Village, which historically was where the family business had come from. You know, turn of the century, when the Pilgrims landed, their families started the glass company to make containers for colonial America. And then they started getting into medical and then pharmaceuticals. Then into perfumes and perfume bottles. But they built this little factory that was historically

the building that started the whole company.

MR. HERMAN: And what kind of work were you doing there that summer?

MS. MACE: I was doing vessels with figure drawings on the side. It wasn't even for the summer. It was for four days. And when I got there, the glassblowers that were blowing in this factory made things like paperweights. And all kinds of historic bottles. They had one of the largest collections of molds from all the factories. And they would make—

MR. HERMAN: Mold blown bottles, then.

MS. MACE: Yes. Inkwells, and all of the things, turn-of-the-century for the colonial America. And some of the guys that worked there in this little factory were guys that used to blow light bulbs for a profession. And the guys there during the workshop were totally amazed that a woman could blow glass. And that it wasn't out of a mold. And they started teasing me by putting oil on the end of my pipes, and when I would gather the thing, flames would shoot up. Or in the morning, the glass would look perfect, and I'd lay out my stuff and look in and it was all bubbly. And I couldn't figure out why—they would throw coins in the tank. They were totally having fun with me. Or they would plug up my pipe. I'd blow and check it, and when I wasn't looking, they'd plug it up. I mean, they thought it was hysterical.

MR. HERMAN: It must have been frustrating if you were only there for four days.

MS. MACE: Oh, yeah, but the guys, they really had a good time with me, and I did give this workshop, and Mr. and Mrs. Wheaton came over to me at the end of the thing and said, you know, you've been a breath of fresh air here. For the workers, for our place. And we would like to invite you to do some more of this. Stay here and do your work.

MR. HERMAN: So you were really the first artist-in-residence, so to speak. It wasn't called that then, but that idea.

MS. MACE: Yes. So Dale called me and said, you know, we really want to do a blow. And I said, okay, but I'm working—I'm thinking I might stay at Wheaton for a while.

MR. HERMAN: So they invited you to stay on then?

MS. MACE: Yes. So I stayed on for another week and did my work. And I met Paul Stankard. Very well-known paperweight maker.

MR. HERMAN: Was he involved in making paperweights there?

MS. MACE: No, but he had come as a tourist. He had heard that this person there—me. And he could not believe that someone was showing how they did their work or giving information to anyone. He just thought that was—well, he came like a normal tourist through the village, pretending he didn't know anything about glass. And when he left, he asked me some questions, and I think I even gave him some threads of my color. Oh, he said, God, I've never—this is amazing, it's like pencil thread.

It was a real generic conversation. And when he left, two of the glassblowers there ran over to me and said, do you know who that was? And I said, I have absolutely no idea. He said, he's the most famous paperweight maker in the region. I said, and I teased them, I said, he just didn't know anything about glass. Well, at the end of the week, he came back. And I said oh! How ya doin? He said, oh, I had such a good time, just thought I'd come see you again. I said, why didn't you tell me you were a glassmaker? He just slumped right there, and we had a conversation. He said, I figured if you know I did glass you wouldn't tell me anything. And I said, no! I believe that the more you share, the more you'll gain, the more you know. He said, I don't know how you can do it. He said I could never do that. We walked some more, and I gave him some more—I said, well try my colors, and I started to give him all kinds of colors. And he was absolutely amazed. He was totally embarrassed, totally amazed, and he left with a bunch of colors that I use.

I left Wheaton but I ended up going right back. I moved out of Providence and I moved down —I moved everything I had back to New Hampshire. And I moved down to Wheaton. Wheaton Glass Company gave me an apartment in their corporate executive hotel, where their corporate clients that would fly in for the weekend would use. Wheaton was really small. And they said, we just want you to work on your work. Mary Wheaton was just so excited. She said, do whatever you want, but could you make me a little paperweight?

MR. HERMAN: Did you have other responsibilities, or was it really like a free ride?

MS. MACE: Nothing. It was a totally free ride. And I said, God, Mary, I'm really nervous about taking your hospitality. I think I might have given her a piece or gave her a really inexpensive piece, and they weren't that

expensive to begin with.

And she said we're having some corporate guests come. I don't remember, it was Oil of Olay or Bacardi Rum or something, and she said, do you think you could make a little paperweight for those guys when they come through?

MR. HERMAN: You mean to demonstrate one, or make one for each of them?

MS. MACE: No, make one for the president of a company. They were trying to get work from McDonald's at that time. And so McDonald's corporation, the President or somebody flew in. And so I started making corporate gifts. Oh—a couple hours.

MR. HERMAN: What kind of things would they be?

MS. MACE: Oh, paperweights, or vessels that had a little logo, or the name on it, and they'd watch us do it.

MR. HERMAN: You'd do that in your drawing method?

MS. MACE: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And I'd make it for them, and the guys who got it, just thrilled. They would be personalized, and it was their experience with glass, and they had something to take away, and they'd bring it back, put it on the desk or something. It really started energy happening at the factory. Then the guys that worked there wanted me to do a little decoration for them. I was there for—and then they started paying me. They started paying me really well for doing this, because they got incredible kickbacks from the companies that were going business with them.

MR. HERMAN: So how long were you there doing that?

MS. MACE: Four months, five months.

MR. HERMAN: Oh. So it wasn't years.

MS. MACE: No.

MR. HERMAN: Because I'd never known that about your background.

MS. MACE: And Mary Wheaton and Frank Wheaton had a meeting with me and said, we're really like you to stay on. And I said that I didn't think I was corporate enough to stay on. I said I really wanted to do my work, and that. But I think I stayed there for a couple months more, but the best thing that they could do with the facility that they had, the most important thing that was needed, was to give artists graduating from college a place to work. It was the best dollar that they could ever spend was to help the young artists. I said like myself, this has been an incredible opportunity for me. And I said it's been really good for you too. That it was a win-win. You wanted more energy in the place, you had this big place, and you were just putting money up the flues anyway. And a lot of the glassblowers were getting older and she had an incredible facility.

MR. HERMAN: So did their resident artists program start—

MS. MACE: It didn't start. I left and I kept quite a long correspondence with Mary. And it was about—and Stankard too. I corresponded with him and he said I really enjoyed the energy that was there. And I came back to Wheaton and I went over to Paul's house and he still wouldn't let me in his studio. He still wouldn't let me see what he did. He said, it still makes me uncomfortable. I said, come on, Paul, it's not that bad.

I think that about the third time over there I did get into his studio. But it was through the insistence of Paul Stankard who helped me convince Mary and John that it was a good thing.

MR. HERMAN: So, at that point, were you thinking about—you're out of school, you've gotten your M.F.A., you decided early that you weren't going to teach, you wanted to make your own work.

MS. MACE: I ended up having a show in New York City at Heller Gallery. And right now I can't even remember the date.

MR. HERMAN: It was probably at that point, Contemporary Glass Gallery, up on Madison.

MS. MACE: It was, it was, it was. They invited me to have a show, and I said, okay, how many pieces? I got the work together and I sent it, and then my sister called me and said, New York City, let's go! I said, oh, I don't know if I can do New York. She said, oh, let's go. My sister made the arrangements for us to fly.

MR. HERMAN: But you had agreed to do the work.

MS. MACE: I agreed to do the show, but I didn't expect to go.

MR. HERMAN: And what was your work like there?

MS. MACE: They were more conical cylinders with figure drawings on the sides, with powder drawings in them. My sister was so gung-ho, she was the more aggressive, go to New York, fly, do this whole thing. And we went to New York and Heller did a beautiful show on Madison Avenue. I mean, a beautiful space—I'd never been to the space, ever. I'd never been to New York. And now I'm in this capacity as an artist in New York. I was overwhelmed with the experience.

MR. HERMAN: How were your sales?

MS. MACE: I think we sold a couple of pieces. Doug loved the work. He was so thrilled. It looked great. I think the work still holds up really beautifully.

MR. HERMAN: Do you have any of that work?

MS. MACE: I have one piece.

MR. HERMAN: I'd like to see it later.

MS. MACE: Okay. And it was just thread drawings with powder drawings. Threads with powders filled in, with figures on the side of the glass. My sister loved the experience—oh, she thought being in New York, and having a reason to be there. And I felt like a fish out of water. I wanted to be an artist, but I didn't want to have to be up front and personal, I just wanted to do my work. And after I left there, I said to myself and to my sister, I said: you might have really enjoyed this, but I don't want to do this.

MR. HERMAN: So what had you decided you wanted to do? I mean, here you are, young artist, really young artist, with a New York solo show, and virtually the only true glass gallery in the country.

MS. MACE: Yeah, I dropped out. I just couldn't do it. I couldn't do the up-front and personal; I enjoyed the work. So Dale called me again. You know, he was always, "Flora, come back and work for me." I said well Dale, I—you know, that Dale thing might work. I can work at night, I can do my work. I said, well, I don't know, Dale. He said, why didn't you come to Pilchuck? I said, well Dale, alright. I will. I'll go out and I'll work with you and I'll go to Pilchuck. 1979. Dale said, okay, I'm sending you an airplane ticket.

MR. HERMAN: [Laughs.] No backing out.

MS. MACE: No backing out now. And I went to Pilchuck. Dale came to the airport and picked me up.

MR. HERMAN: What was to be your role at Pilchuck?

MS. MACE: I was just going to help Dale do his work. But I had dropped out. I hadn't done anything in two years since I had that show with Heller, I just went aah, and moved back to New Hampshire.

MR. HERMAN: And what did you do there then?

MS. MACE: Oh, I worked at a restaurant; I worked in a deli, at a store. I mean, it was really—and I built a house. And get this—I'm building the chimney of the house with this bricklayer. And he sees some of the work that I have around the house, he says, what in hell are you doing here? What a waste of time. And here's this bricklayer telling me I'm wasting my time. And it wasn't about two weeks later that Dale called and said, you know? You know I really need some help. I'd really like it if you came to Pilchuck. And it was that bricklayer—

MR. HERMAN: Well we're just about at the next episode.

MS. MACE: Yeah, stay tuned. I did good at Pilchuck. I flew there. I met Bill Morris. I started working for Dale. And then I was so relieved that I had never been to Pilchuck before. Because the hot shop was built, the lodge was built. There were 80 students that were just so gung-ho.

MR. HERMAN: It was well-established; by then, it had existed for eight years. And all the major buildings, I guess, the flat glass shop and the hot shop, that was all built. And the lodge.

MS. MACE: Yes.

MR. HERMAN: What about accommodations for students?

MS. MACE: We still lived in tents. Now Dale had begged me to go before when I was at Providence helping him

there. He had, every year, he had asked me to go. And then I went to Wheaton and he asked me to go. And I just felt it was more—it was too big. I wasn't ready. So I finally agreed to go, and I got there, and it was like, oh, I can see why I didn't want to come here. Pilchuck was just amazing. Those huge trees and those huge buildings, and beautiful buildings. And 80 students that were just so gung-ho. I mean, there were like five people blowing glass at once. Everything was going on. It was like a three-ring circus.

MR. HERMAN: I want to pick up with Pilchuck when I talk to you and Joey together. But backtrack just a minute. Where did you make the pieces for the Heller Gallery, the Contemporary Glass Gallery's show? And how were those made? If they were conical with the drawings, were they blown, or—

MS. MACE: They were vessels. I would do the drawings with glass threads on a brick. And I would lay them on a piece of stainless, on a hot plate. And then I would crush up glass in the beginning, I used to use beer bottles, because we couldn't get powders to fill in the glass thread drawing. Then I would pick up the glass drawing from the hot plate onto the glass blown vessel.

But at Wheaton, the chemist from Wheaton started coming over and watching me work. And he would see the rods of color that I had. Because Dale gave me color for helping him. I didn't get paid with Dale but he had given me things to help me work, which to me were more important than finances. There was the color. And Dale used to go to Europe, and he knew the guys that made the color and he knew many of the artists there and he would see what's going on and bring some back.

The chemist at Wheaton said, what color do you want? Well, Wheaton Glass Company made any color, like Corning probably makes any color, but most industries would not share their secrets. But this chemist was totally fascinated with what I was doing at Wheaton, and he took some of my colors and analyzed it. I mean, I was blown away with the possibilities at Wheaton, and that's why Mr. and Mrs. Wheaton and the chemists and the people that I was with there, I saw the incredible opportunity for any artist, if they came there, especially one that was really into his work, what the possibilities could be, but then going to Pilchuck and then seeing artists working, it was an incredible state.

MR. HERMAN: But get back to how you made those pieces for the show, were those all made at Wheaton?

MS. MACE: I made some of them at Wheaton, and some of them at Rhode Island School of Design.

MR. HERMAN: But you would pick up the drawing.

MS. MACE: Yes, and then blow—

MR. HERMAN: On a blown—

MS. MACE: —vessel, and then I would flatten the bottom and putty 'em up, and then.

MR. HERMAN: And then you'd shape it.

MS. MACE: Yes.

MR. HERMAN: So the drawing would be expanded somewhat, but in fact, I would think if they were conical, you'd have to compensate for the image.

MS. MACE: And that became a very important thing. They, some of them were vase-like, some of them were conical, some of them were cylinders. Yes, and that became a very important aspect throughout Joey and my career, once we met.

MR. HERMAN: Good. Now before we get into that, is there anything else that I haven't asked you, that you think would be important to know?

MS. MACE: No, I think I've probably more than filled in—

MR. HERMAN: We haven't talked about, and I don't think you had any involvement with, any of the other summer craft programs.

MS. MACE: No.

MR. HERMAN: Because Pilchuck really was the beginning of that. And any other travels beyond that European, that 4-H trip?

MS. MACE: No.

MR. HERMAN: Or, it wasn't 4-H, but, that International Farm Youth Exchange.

MS. MACE: Yes.

MR. HERMAN: Had you begun to think of yourself relative to other glass artists that were working at that time or anything, historically in glass? Did you see yourself as part of a long continuum?

MS. MACE: I didn't think of it as a long continuum. I was just really pleased that I could add to what was going on. And then also, for the glass artists at the time, there was very little printed material available to us. Like, Corning might have had an incredible library, or in Europe there was incredible historical references and visuals. But 95 percent of the United States where glass studios were being built, there was nothing.

MR. HERMAN: So really, your opportunity at Wheaton, to learn from that chemist, was really an opportunity that nobody else would have had in schools, because the instructors didn't even know that stuff probably.

MS. MACE: But Penland, then you'd start to hear; Penland, there's guys there doing color, and it was Fritz Dreisbach, and so Penland became kind of the center of color, where Rhode Island School of Design became the blowing center.

MR. HERMAN: Interesting.

MS. MACE: So that certain centers started to take place.

MR. HERMAN: Did you know about those other summer programs, like Haystack for example? Because I know Dale—

MS. MACE: Dale used to talk about Haystack, and they used to talk about Penland. But as successful, marginally, as I felt, financially I was living a lot of times out of a van. So to go to Wheaton and have them put me up in a hotel; when I went to Pilchuck, we were back to a tent. When I was in Providence, I was living in somebody else's home. So there wasn't a lot of extra money around. And I won't say that galleries have supported me over the years, and I think most artists will say, the artist is probably the last person that gets paid.

MR. HERMAN: [Laughs.] I think we need to stop there. This is the end of the interview with Flora Mace.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]