Oral history interview with Teresa Barkley and Donald McLaughlin, March 29, 2013

Barkley, Teresa, born 1956
Quiltmaker

McLaughlin, Donald, born 1955
Painter

Size: Transcript: 41 pages.

Format of recording: Originally recorded as digital wav file. Duration is 96 min.

Collection Summary: An interview of Teresa Barkley and Donald McLaughlin conducted March 29, 2013 by Margaret Winslow for the Helen Farr Sloan Library and Archives of the Delaware Art Museum.

This interview was conducted for Dream Streets: Art in Wilmington 1970–1990, an exhibition held at the Delaware Art Museum June 27–September 27, 2015 on the contemporary art scene in Wilmington in the 1970s and 1980s.

Funding for the transcription of this interview was provided by a grant from the Delaware Humanities Forum.

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MARGARET: So, this is Margaret Winslow, Associate Curator for Contemporary Art at the Delaware Art Museum interviewing Teresa Barkley and Donald McLaughlin on Friday, March 29, 2013 at the Delaware Art Museum. Now we can just ignore that.

I am so excited that you are both here.

TERESA: We’re excited to be here, too.

MARGARET: This is so—

DONALD: Well, I’m kind of curious about something. What sort of do you know about us?

MARGARET: Okay, not a lot, to be perfectly honest. How much did I explain to you both about the project?
TERESA: Well, my brother, Greg [Barkley], said that you were planning an exhibition that would be about art in Delaware in the ’70s and ’80s and that you were interested in contacting people that were active in the area at that time.

MARGARET: Yes.

TERESA: And then when you responded to my email, you said that it was planned for 2015.

MARGARET: Summer 2015.

TERESA: And that you wanted to get together soon to talk.

MARGARET: Right, good. So you have some actually pretty good detail. And obviously, the exhibition is not for two and a half years so we’re still really in the initial phases of research and development. I will give you a bit of the back story because it might help jog your memory a bit as well.

So I first became interested in conducting this project because I had the opportunity to tour the Queen at Fifth and Market before they started renovation. And at that point, my goodness, it was a complete disaster, but we went in the Fifth Street entrance and we went up the stairs like, “Oh this is curious.” There was this wonderful signage that said “Gallery, Gallery, Gallery”. What was here? And I had never heard anyone—

DONALD: Robbie Jones.

MARGARET: Exactly, exactly. So I went to my colleague, Margareta Frederick, and asked her if she remembered there being a gallery on Fifth Street. And she said, “Oh, of course, that was Fifth Street Gallery and I worked there.” And it was just this wonderful like remembering of this incredibly vibrant contemporary art scene that people—not that it was lost, but somewhat forgotten. And it seemed like the perfect time to revisit that history in Wilmington in the 1970s and ’80s, particularly because there was a new generation of artists that I was working with here, the New Wilmington Art Association, and there were these wonderful echoes of activities that we were doing in the downtown area, you know, putting up exhibitions in vacant storefronts.

I was like; wait, but this group had no idea about this history. So what a perfect time, I thought, to really look at this moment and I thought it was the Delaware Art Museum’s responsibility to look at it historically. So that’s kind of the genesis of the project.

DONALD: Well, do you want to start—

TERESA: Why don’t you start?

DONALD: One of the galvanizing moments here is, you know, I guess the presence of Rick Rothrock. I was an undergraduate, he was a graduate student. You know Rick.

MARGARET: Yes. Oh, so you were an undergraduate at Delaware when Rick was—
DONALD: Rick was a graduate student. So I met him as a— I was taking sculpture, I was doing everything. I was doing performance art. I’m a painter now. I don’t do anything else but paint. But at the time, I was sampling everything, video cameras and the whole deal. And we were all post-graduates there at that point and I remember sitting around on those spool tables, hippy spool tables, and Rick just—everyone was wondering, “What do we do next? What’s part two of this?” And we had all been familiar with PS1 in New York and the idea was that there would be something like that. We were interested in that we would create our own situations.

In fact, I had been to school with Robbie Jones’ sister [Wendy Jones Donahoe]. Robbie wasn’t part of that group, but Robbie Jones at the Fifth Street Gallery had spun off his own thing.

MARGARET: Right. You were in school with his sister.

DONALD: Yeah.

MARGARET: Oh, interesting. Was she an artist?

DONALD: Yes.

MARGARET: Do you know if she’s—

DONALD: I would have no clue where Robbie Jones’ sister is.

MARGARET: Okay.

DONALD: Robbie’s dead.

MARGARET: That I know.

TERESA: Do you know the name?

DONALD: Drawing a blank. Steve Tanis might know.

MARGARET: Oh, okay. I’ll get in touch with Steve.

DONALD: You know Steve?

MARGARET: Mm-hmm.

DONALD: Steve’s another enormous, you know, looms large in this. He was kind of an alpha male in the UD art department and very important to me as a painter, particularly the fact that I realized later that I never actually had him as a teacher.

MARGARET: Oh, really?

DONALD: Yeah, but I would say, you know, if anybody kind of mentored me, it would have been Steve. And then one day we realized this: “I never actually had you in a class.”
TERESA: I never realized that until you said it today.

DONALD: I never had him in a class. I would just go and pepper him with questions.

MARGARET: Oh, interesting.

DONALD: And he would help me with his insights and thoughts.

MARGARET: Now, sorry, let me stop you quickly. Give me a year. So when you were an undergraduate at UD, that would have been—

TERESA: I graduated '78 and you graduated '79. That would be—you are older, but you took a year off. So you graduated in '79.

DONALD: Yeah, I was floundering at the U of D as an English major and I had always done art and then came back as an art student.

TERESA: Yes, you graduated in '79.

DONALD: And then I said I wanted to be a painter and the head of the department then said, “That’s a bad life choice.”

MARGARET: Was that Julio?

DONALD: No, that was not Julio. That was Dan Teis.

MARGARET: Oh, that was Dan Teis, okay.

DONALD: He said, “You will wreck your life. You seem like an intelligent man. Go do something else.” Which is not bad advice, seriously, not bad advice to young artists.

MARGARET: Right.

DONALD: And so I came back and I realized that I was a little bit older than the other students, but I just plunged into being a painter and doing all this other stuff.

A lot of this stuff began—I can’t emphasize enough the importance of Rick Rothrock’s contribution to this stuff in here. And I’m not sure if you know this or not, I don’t know if you’ve been prepped on this, which was—this is another key thing. My dad [William T. McLaughlin] was mayor of Wilmington.

MARGARET: Right. I had seen that in your biography.

DONALD: At the time, yeah, at the time. So he’s elected. Wilmington’s undergoing a Renaissance, a boom. And this is the thing you’re talking about, there are nightclubs, they are holding live concerts on the mall, like hundreds of people are showing up to hear rock bands playing on the mall. Picture that today. It’s impossible. There’s a booming restaurant scene
downtown that’s just—it’s the ‘70s so there’s a fern bar scene where you kind of sit and have a Chardonnay and play backgammon—the ‘70s stuff, wearing the clogs and Pablo Cruz is playing in the back. You know, kind of a smooth ‘70s scene. And my dad was mayor.

TERESA: He was elected in ’76.

DONALD: ’76. Of course, Tom Maloney had been there before that. But I think the real sort of boom occurs under when my dad’s in office. So I’m an art student and the story I think goes is that he becomes aware and sensitized to—like I had never set foot in this building when I was growing up. We were not the kind of family like, “we’re going to go visit art museums,” that wasn’t the deal. So I was probably an adult the first time I came in here or 18 or something like that.

But through me, I think dad had gotten very sensitized to the issues and the plight of young artists. There was an act—I was telling Teresa today—my father liked to bring us along with him. We were his little mascots.

TERESA: I wouldn’t say—

DONALD: We would double date.

TERESA: We were married in ’80 and we moved to New York in ’80 and we came back to Delaware frequently to visit. And when we were in town on the weekends, Don’s mom and dad always had a real full calendar. They had events every day of the week. And so the fact that we were visiting in town meant it was convenient for them to invite us along whatever the events were that they were scheduled to participate in. So if they had something Friday night, Saturday night, Sunday afternoon, we may or may not be invited to go along with them, depending on what it was. But it gave us the opportunity to spend time together that we wouldn’t have had otherwise because they were really always booked with something. So we got to, what Donald likes to call double date with his parents because they were constantly active. So on this occasion, they invited us to—

DONALD: Charles Parks’ house.

MARGARET: Okay.

DONALD: So we go to Charles Parks’ house and I just remember Mr. Parks’ comments. Of course, he was the premier sort of local sculptor, national reputation and all. And my father said, “My son is an artist, emerging young artist.”

TERESA: This would have been ’79.

DONALD: Yeah, it would have been ’79.

TERESA: I remember I gave you the umbrella as a graduation—

DONALD: And it was stolen. Yeah, somebody stole my umbrella at Parks’ [house].
TERESA: That’s how I can date the time.

DONALD: We tore that house up looking for that umbrella. So anyway, we’re there and Charles Parks says something like, “How unusual, Bill. You’re a politician and your son’s an artist?” And I must have been about 24, right?

TERESA: Yeah, like 24.

DONALD: In that range. And I piped up and I said, “Well, you know, John Adams said, ‘I study war so my son can study politics, so his son can study the arts.’” And everybody just kind of cut me a look like, “This kid’s not an idiot after all.”

I don’t know if you know this anecdote or not, but when the DCCA [Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts] opened—and my dad was instrumental in getting that building for them—

MARGARET: At the Water Works, right?

DONALD: At the Water Works.

MARGARET: Carson Zullinger was telling me about this yesterday.

DONALD: Do you know what the rent was?

TERESA: The rent? The sale.

DONALD: The sale. Do you know what the sale of that building was? One dollar, you know, because he thought like this is—you need this, you need the arts. And he wasn’t necessarily an enormous fan of the arts, but he understood this is what made people’s lives livable and this is what draws people to areas and that sort of thing.

MARGARET: Right.

DONALD: And he was always very, very, very, very supportive of my decision of being an artist. There was never any qualms about that on his part. We’d go to Philly, I’d drive him to Philly to go like visit a doctor or something and, you know, I was a graduate student at that point, he’d slip me some money for art supplies so I could go down to Utrecht or something in Philly and grab some brushes or something while we were there.

So my contribution to this story is really about that, which is being at his back whispering the importance of this to this community. That and also—both of us, Teresa and I had a couple of shows before we moved.

TERESA: Well, you had—I don’t remember how this came about, but there was an exhibition at the Grand Gallery, which was in the building of the Grand Opera House.

MARGARET: Which would have been just recently, well, somewhat recently renovated. Okay, right.
TERESA: What’s the date on that, Margaret?

MARGARET: So this is ’78, summer ’78, June through July.

DONALD: You know what? Let me see—

TERESA: We have that. We have two of those [postcard of University of Delaware Art Students exhibition at The Grand Gallery, June 28–July 15, 1978].

MARGARET: Oh, really? Okay.

DONALD: Let me see this here. Oh, you know that guy here to talk to? Jim Schneck. Do you know Jim Schneck?

MARGARET: No.

DONALD: Wendy Jones might have been Rob Jones’ sister.

MARGARET: Okay, Wendy Jones.

TERESA: That makes sense.

DONALD: Carol Gray—let me—the people out of here I would know who sort of went—Carol Gray, Laura Hickman wound up down at the beach, I think, trying to remember. I’m drawing—it’s so long now.

MARGARET: Do you remember who would have organized this show?

DONALD: Yes, the guy that ran the gallery was named Sewell Biggs.

MARGARET: Oh.

DONALD: Do you know Sewell Biggs, the name, Sewell Biggs?

MARGARET: Yeah. Oh.

DONALD: He ran this. And it didn’t last long. At the time, it was kind of funny because there was this—

TERESA: It was only like two weeks.

DONALD: Yeah, this is really an actually kind of interesting thing. The grad students at the University of Delaware were really impressive and they were way ahead of where I was in terms of the scope of their interests. Like you would ask one of them, “Well, who do you think is a great painter?” And they would say, “Well, Brice Marden is a great painter.” And I would sort of internalize those types of concepts.
And so I wind up doing—I’m like a kid and I’m doing minimalist paintings at that point. I am showing near empty canvases at this point that were just surface, acrylic paintings that were just surface. And that was very, very odd because when I went to New York, one of my graduate teachers was Ralph Humphrey. And Ralph Humphrey is literally among the two or three people who invented that type of painting that I had internalized as received information from the graduate students in the University of Delaware. So I hopped in with both feet into like whatever mainstream modernism was at that time. My attitude was ‘bring it on,’ you know.

MARGARET: Do you still have any of them?

DONALD: I do. I do.

MARGARET: I love that answer.

TERESA: Is this the Rhoplex period?

DONALD: Rhoplex.

TERESA: A really beautiful, shiny surface.

DONALD: I have one of them that I showed here.

TERESA: The painting which was in this show was Sudan Girls, right?

DONALD: Sudan Girls was shown here. It might have been shown there as well.

TERESA: I have a photo of you in front of Sudan Girls where it’s hung upside down.

DONALD: They hung it upside down.

TERESA: That’s here?

DONALD: That was here.

TERESA: Oh.

DONALD: Do you have it?

TERESA: Not with me.

MARGARET: Would that have been in a—

DONALD: That was one of the juried exhibitions here.

MARGARET: Okay.

DONALD: I showed it twice.
MARGARET: Do you remember which year that would have been?

DONALD: Probably would have been about ’78.

MARGARET: ’78?

DONALD: It’s got to be here on my biography.

TERESA: I don’t see it, honey. I see the Grand. Oh, a group show at Delaware Museum in ’78.


DONALD: Here’s something funny. This kind of struck me as being kind of funny. This is the trajectory of this. So I’m doing, okay, like group show here, group show there, graduate students. So this is by ’85 is the first time I show in New York. And I’m hanging with, it’s a group show, and I’m hanging with Cy Twombly, Ross Bleckner, George Condo, Max Beckmann, Kevin Larmont, Alexis Rockman, Pat Steir, and Don Van Vliet, who was Captain Beefheart. And this was my first appearance in a group show. So that was pretty cool thing to me.

MARGARET: I would love to have a file of your most recent CV, which I do not have in the school profiles.

DONALD: Yeah, we can—

MARGARET: That’s great. Okay. So where’s the Rhoplex piece?

TERESA: There are a lot of Rhoplex pieces at our house.

DONALD: I don’t think there’s anything in here. A lot of this was—

TERESA: No, none of them are on postcards, but we have the actual work.

MARGARET: You have the actual work.

DONALD: Yeah, I—there’s kind of a funny story from my graduate show of work, which is heavily, heavily—

TERESA: This was at Hunter College.

DONALD: This is at Hunter. Heavily influenced by work that I would have seen here at the Delaware Museum—things like this, sort of Americana like. I threw away all that kind of idea of what I want to do with like Rhoplex and [inaudible] and I become an oil painter. And I start looking at people like Albert Pinkham Ryder and Arthur Dove and people like that, early American. And there was a painting I was hanging on a wall oddly enough with the name of New Brandywine. And I had shown that painting to Julian Schnabel. I used to work for Ross Bleckner and I saw Julian Schnabel all the time. He’d be cracking plates and putting them up on the wall.
And I had a bag of paintings I was taking to the grad seminar and we pulled out *New Brandywine* and he looked at it and said something like, “Well, I don’t like the way you painted the face on this.” Which was very, you know, it was a figure like emerging from—I used to spend a lot of time by the Brandywine River. It was very significant in my youth growing up in a developmental and aesthetic sense. And I’m hanging that painting in my graduate show, which I don’t think my graduate advisor liked either. And suddenly, a woman ran in off the street—this was at 68th and Lexington at the grad center at Hunter College—and I’m hanging the painting and a woman, charitably described as a bag lady, ran into the gallery. And I’m attaching the painting to the wall, that painting, and she said, “You’re hanging that painting?” I said, “Yeah.” And she said, “You did that painting?” I said, “Yeah.” She said, “Do you understand it?” And I said, “I think so.” And she said, “I understand it. Keep it.” And then left.

And I’m thinking one of the few things that refer to Delaware was this *New Brandywine* painting.

MARGARET: That’s so curious.

DONALD: It’s very strange, yeah.

TERESA: I haven’t thought about that since it happened.

DONALD: Yeah, so a lot of the work here—don’t worry, I’m going to shut up in a minute—comes out of looking like this sort of, you know—this is early ’80s, that kind of—

TERESA: His first solo show, right?

DONALD: First solo show. And this is just a quick run through of just various images.

TERESA: [Inaudible].

DONALD: Yeah, yeah.

TERESA: And then that’s what you titled your show at DCCA.

DONALD: Yeah.

TERESA: The *New Brandywine*.

MARGARET: And when was the DCCA show? It was in 2008?

DONALD: Yeah.

MARGARET: Were you in the Members gallery? Which gallery were you in?

DONALD: I was in part of that—like the panel group. They have a—what’s the name of that series? It’s an—
MARGARET: The Hupfel Lecture Series.

DONALD: Yes, I was invited to speak there.

TERESA: It was—I think it was—

MARGARET: Oh, it was March through May. I just missed it. That’s why; I was just finishing up graduate school. I’m like how did I—

TERESA: It’s the first gallery you see when you get past the desk, if you veer to the right—sharp right is like a hallway and then there’s—

MARGARET: And it’s right there. Oh, okay, and that’s why I missed it because I was just finishing up graduate school.

DONALD: Anyway, you can look at this stuff later. But yeah, I don’t have anything—this is all like recent work.

MARGARET: Okay.

DONALD: And you can see the reference for a lot of it is that kind of early modern—

MARGARET: Early modern, yeah. Certainly.

DONALD: That painting doesn’t even exist anymore, which is kind of funny. It exists, but—

TERESA: You painted over that.

DONALD: I painted over it. I painted over it.

MARGARET: Do you have digital files of any of the earlier work?

DONALD: That’s a good question.

TERESA: The early work is all 35mm slides [inaudible].

MARGARET: Okay.

TERESA: But I mean, we have a lot of imagery.

MARGARET: You have a lot.

DONALD: Yeah, we do. You probably would re-shoot some of it. They are hard—it’s hard to shoot because they are Rhoplex and they are glossy as hell.

MARGARET: I’m trying to think of what other artists were using Rhoplex a lot at the time. We have a Joe Zucker in the collection that came from the Vogel gift.
DONALD: Yeah, it would have been.

MARGARET: He was certainly using that.

DONALD: Yeah, Rhoplex was something I—of course, Rohm and Haas was around here and I knew people that worked for Rohm and Haas. It’s interesting now to find out, of course, it was just incredibly toxic.

MARGARET: Yeah.

DONALD: It’s like cancer in a bottle. But I still got some Rhoplex in a jar. It’s fine. It’s still viscous. But I just was throwing that stuff around. In fact actually, for me, the key person was Steve Tanis. And Steve took me to lunch one day. See, I never had him as a teacher. He said, “I see you doing regular sort of paintings and everything. You look bored. What do you want to do?” I told him what I want to do. And he said, “Make those paintings. Go make them. Try Rhoplex, try what—”

TERESA: You sort of took over a studio space down by the train tracks.

DONALD: Yeah, I absolutely just bullied my way to a space down there.

[Crosstalk]

TERESA: No, no, on campus.

MARGARET: Right, okay.

TERESA: There was a studio space that was—what did they call it? The Gun?

MARGARET: Oh, yeah—

[Crosstalk]

TERESA: They had a little balcony and Don worked up on the balcony smearing Rhoplex all—

DONALD: And all of a sudden there were [inaudible] still life paintings and I’m laying out Jackson Pollock style things and pouring Rhoplex. And some of them are good. Some of them [inaudible] but a couple of them are nice.

TERESA: You didn’t say anything about ArtSquad. Do you want to talk about—

MARGARET: Oh, yeah, ArtSquad, any other recollections—

DONALD: Well, ArtSquad again was another Rothrock project and I remember we all went up to do projects up at the Winterthur and I remember I was doing a painting out in nature. I set up an easel and I was painting. Actually, it was an odd little painting where I was trying to look
through a clear plastic frame. So I'm painting and I'm **obliterating** the landscape as I worked. So in other words, like I'm working. Let’s say I’m able to see you and I’m painting—

TERESA: You created like a window for yourself.

DONALD: A window to look through so, the whole thing would gradually show up.

MARGARET: Okay.

DONALD: I did various pieces. There was another person, **Stu Moore**.

MARGARET: Hmm, haven’t heard that name yet.

DONALD: Stu kind of gave up—Stu was a very talented sculptor and gave up sculpture. And he lives down in—

TERESA: Moved to Lewes, didn’t he?

DONALD: Moved to Lewes.

MARGARET: But he was involved in ArtSquad?

DONALD: Absolutely. He was involved in all of this stuff.

MARGARET: Now, did you participate just in the project at Winterthur or did you participate at the other ArtSquad project at Lums Pond? I know there was one in the Brandywine Zoo.

DONALD: Yes, yes. I did participate in the one at Brandywine Zoo. The interesting thing about the Brandywine Zoo is they brought in **Alan Sonfist**. Do you know this? Do you know this story?

MARGARET: Yeah, he got in the cage.

DONALD: Alan got in the cage. Alan was the guy who I thought we were talking about. It was really, really, really crucial. Alan was one of those guys. So they had an adventurous program at the U of D for bringing in artists, visiting artists.

MARGARET: Do you remember who would have coordinated that?

DONALD: Excuse me?

MARGARET: Which faculty member would have coordinated—

DONALD: It wasn’t faculty.

MARGARET: It wasn’t faculty.

DONALD: It wasn’t faculty. Oh, god. Did you talk to Rick?
MARGARET: Yeah, I have.

DONALD: Who did Rick mention from that? Matt—

MARGARET: I don’t remember specific names.

DONALD: Oh, god, I’m drawing a blank on his last name. Matt—he was really a brilliant guy. And he was one of the first people sort of out of the box from Delaware to go, just as a grad student.

TERESA: He was a grad student.

DONALD: Yeah, he wound up in the Whitney Biennial like a year or two after graduating. Ask Rick.

MARGARET: Okay.

DONALD: Matt—I draw a blank on the last name. Matt Geller. Matt Geller would have been the guy. And he was one of the people here doing—yeah, if you want to get some interesting stuff—he was doing—I don’t know that he has it—video projects, sculpture, really, really, really interesting guy. I don’t know what Matt—

TERESA: And he organized the bringing in of—

DONALD: A lot of these guys were the people who brought in like—let’s bring Alan Sonfist down. Like, it was them.

MARGARET: So the graduate students were really—

DONALD: Yeah. And again, it was a significant thing. One of the first people I met that was sort of an art guru really—and in fact I’m trying to get my son to read a book about him right now—is Robert Irwin came and hung out and did stuff. And of course, they brought Nicholas Krushenick.

MARGARET: Oh, yeah, we have his work in the permanent collection.

TERESA: But he even had a class, right?

DONALD: Yeah, he taught for—

TERESA: He did a semester.

DONALD: Was it a semester or a year? I think it was a year. I think he did a full year.

MARGARET: Oh, that I didn’t know. Okay.

DONALD: A full year, which was important to me because I would always pick his brain. He worked for de Kooning.
MARGARET: So he was there when you were—

DONALD: So he was there when I was there. He showed me the ins and outs of using Liquitex.

TERESA: And taping.

DONALD: And taping. His thing was taping. He showed me how to tape a canvas and I still do that. I’ve got postcards of Nick’s work. I just remember that sort of thing. Anyway, I’m going to—I think that’s—

MARGARET: That’s good. So many questions. Okay, let’s shift to Teresa to talk about your work because some of the other question, I think, might be a little more relevant, but they may not be. So give me kind of the same thing, early career, University of Delaware.

TERESA: Well, I’ve been making quilts forever. I started to sew when I was five and making quilts was one of the first things I wanted to do. I was copying traditional quilts that my great-grandmother had made. And it didn’t take very long before I figured out it was really tedious and repetitive of previous designs that I would be better to use the time to do new things, one of a kind things. And collecting materials has always been a big part of my work. And one of the first major quilts was a collection of embroidered patches sewn to squares of denim. A second major piece was a collection of clothing labels. And this continued to be a theme in my work from the very beginning is collecting vintage materials to incorporate with contemporary materials on some kind of theme.

And at the time I started college, I did not plan to be in textiles, but I gravitated towards it and finished in the College of Human Resources with a degree in Textiles, Clothing and Design. And at the time—I’m not sure how the program is structured now—but the curriculum at University of Delaware at the time allowed for three paths within textiles. You could study merchandising and business, you could study research if you were interested in textile fiber development from a chemical kind of level, or if you were interested in design, there was a more general program that gave you the option to take art courses. So that was the option I went for and that brought me to the same part of campus as Donald.

I had the first design class, a general design class, with a woodworking teacher whose name was Dave Warner. And this was really new to me because I hadn’t had any training in drawing or design of any kind. I just liked making things with fabric. I had learned to sew clothing when I was around 12 and my mom sewed all our clothes. This was not unusual to be making things. But the introduction to making things in the context of an art curriculum was very different for me. And the first class I was required to take was this design class. And after that, I went with a weaving class and met Vera Kaminski.

MARGARET: I was wondering if you studied with her.

TERESA: I found weaving very, very interesting and I could easily have gotten engrossed in that, but I was already so hooked on quilting that—and I wasn’t interested in having a loom at home and I could quilt any place so quilting always won out.
DONALD: Teresa, you really have to tell that Dave Warner story. Can I tell it? And then correct me. I just told somebody that story this week.

TERESA: No, I’ll tell it. You tell me if it’s the way you’ve been telling it. Well, I told you the first quilt that I thought was really successful was the *Denim Quilt* and it was very precious to me. I worked on it for two years. I was 14 and 15 when I made it. And at the time—that was ’70-’72 I worked on it—and at the time, there were not very many books on quilting but I had read everything that was out there and I knew that there was this tradition of having a baker’s dozen, 13 quilts, by the time you married. And so I had this idea in my head that I should be making these quilts. For some reason, it was very important to me to get this quilt done before I was 16 and I succeeded in doing that. And this was just a really, really special quilt to me. And it was not a real original design. It was modeled after one my great-aunt had made from directions she saw in a magazine, but it was very personal to me because of the things I had put on it.

And I received a letter in the mail from the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York asking me if I would like to lend it to an exhibition they were planning called *The New American Quilt*. I can’t remember if they asked specifically for that quilt or if they asked for me to just submit imagery. I don’t remember. I have to look at the letter. But I had never heard of them before. And this quilt was very, very precious to me. And I remember taking the letter to class and asking Dave Warner did he know these people, were they reputable people, could I trust them to lend this quilt to.

DONALD: Didn’t you ask if it was a good neighborhood? How would I get there by subway? I think you used to tell those kind of stories, like practical stuff.

TERESA: I don’t remember.

DONALD: Is there a hotel nearby? I thought it was all that kind of stuff, too.

TERESA: I don’t remember. I hadn’t been accepted into the show yet. But I showed him the letter and he looked at it. And he was real quiet and he said, “Yeah, you can trust these people.” And then he took the letter over to Vera Kaminski and he said, “I’ve got a student that’s been invited to show at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts.” And I can’t remember past that because I had never yet been—this was my first art class.

MARGARET: How would you have come to have received that letter?

TERESA: I don’t know. And in fact, I asked that question of Paul Smith, the director emeritus at the Museum at an exhibition just about a year ago and he could not remember. He said it was word of mouth. There was no computer then. The only connection I had to anybody else was that I subscribed to *Quilters Newsletter Magazine*. So I said, “Did you get names from magazines?” The show was called the *New American Quilt* and it had some connection to the Bicentennial. There was a lot of craft exhibitions being promoted in the year of the Bicentennial.

There was the resurgence in an interest in quilts in the ’70s. Many people have said there are three main factors for the resurgence in quilt interest at this time. There was the exhibition at the
Whitney Museum of the Amish quilts from the collection of Jonathan Holstein and Gail van der Hoof. These were quilts they had collected in mostly Pennsylvania and Ohio I think. They were quilts selected for their graphic appeal, not for the workmanship, not for the historical value, quilts that had the look of the painting of the time. And the Whitney gave them this time—I think it was in August, I don’t remember—they didn’t think it would be such a big deal. But it really had phenomenal impact, this exhibition of Amish quilts in the Whitney. It was phenomenal.

MARGARET: I didn’t know about this.

TERESA: It was phenomenal. So there was all this interest in looking at quilts on the wall as a result of this Whitney exhibition that was, I think in ’71.

DONALD: Do you have something I can write down for a second while she’s—I just want to throw something in there. I’ll just throw this in real quickly. You might be interested in locating some of these. Nick Krushenick painted a series of paintings that had Delaware names, Bombay Hook, all these—like weird beach names and things. There might have even been a Marcus Hook, I’m not sure of that now. But it was all like different areas of like the shore and it was just his Delaware body of work. And I know who his gallery is today and he’s dead, but I know who that gallery is. You might want to find out the name—I’m drawing a blank—to connect to find out where that work is.

MARGARET: So that was made probably while he was here.

DONALD: He painted them all here.

MARGARET: Okay.

TERESA: So the Whitney Exhibition was in ’71.

MARGARET: ’71, okay.

TERESA: Because I did a quilt about it later, like a fictitious 10-year commemorative stamp. And they were all quilts that had this kind of strong graphic appeal. So there was the Whitney Exhibition, there was the Bicentennial and there was the women’s movement. So all of this kind of culminated in tremendous interest in people making quilts and quilts that would be—there was an interest in traditional quilts, but also in applying new techniques, new designs, making them not that appropriate, but strictly for the wall.

So the Denim Quilt was accepted into this exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, which is now the Museum of Arts and Design. And my sister and I came up on the train and went to the opening and I was astonished at the things that qualified as quilts in this exhibition, that it was really, really dramatic how sculptural some of the work was. And I went back to Delaware kind of really astonished that—I don’t know how to articulate it—there was just so much I wanted to do with interesting materials that would be different from the traditional quilt and I didn’t have the means to acquire all these interesting things I wanted.
MARGARET: Interesting.

TERESA: But I have acquired them now. But this was before I was working, before I could travel to antique shows for vintage textiles, before there was an internet, before there was eBay, before I had work experience that took me to a lot of different places where I could buy vintage materials. But in the same way that the denim quilt was the assemblage of different patches and embroidery from all over the place—let me show you what I mean.

MARGARET: You must, of course, have the quilt.

TERESA: Pardon?

MARGARET: You must have the quilt.

TERESA: Oh, I do have the quilt.

MARGARET: Okay, good.

TERESA: Army patches that were my dad’s when he was a child. The work looks really different now, but it still is this collage of imagery from all over the place and a mix of contemporary materials with vintage materials.

So after taking weaving with Vera, I wanted to do a—I think I asked her if I could do a special project that was a quilting, but I don’t think that came to pass. I’m trying to think chronologically from—let me just look at the quilts and see. Okay, so Denim and Labels were made in high school. And then college kept me really busy. I’m looking at the date here, ’80 is the Delaware Trust Stamp. There’s nothing that I finished during college. A lot of things were in progress, but—

MARGARET: Let me interrupt you quickly though. The ’76 20th Annual Contemporary Crafts Exhibition here at the museum, which quilt [Labels Quilt] was included in that show?

DONALD: This is when you had the opening and somebody—and that’s part of why we’re together.

TERESA: I’ll tell you a funny story. I’m very meticulous about keeping print materials from things that I’ve been involved in.

MARGARET: I love hearing that. You’re a good archivist.

TERESA: Donald laughs though. So let’s start at the beginning because we’ll run out of Delaware stuff pretty soon. This is the article in Women’s Day magazine that my great-aunt copied to make her denim quilt. And then I saw her quilt and asked her for the directions and that’s what made me making my own, which was featured in this quilt magazine, which may be the connection to how the—because otherwise, I don’t know. I wasn’t connected to any organization. I was in high school, you know, starting college. I don’t know who would have known of my quilt if not the people at this magazine.
MARGARET: And this was a national magazine.

TERESA: Yes.

MARGARET: Okay.

TERESA: And it was in a show at my high school, Padua. And then they did this article in the *Evening Journal* about me. And this is one I made for one of my friends.

DONALD: She got rid of this dress fortunately.

TERESA: I made that dress for a St. Patrick’s Day dance.

DONALD: Did you really?

MARGARET: What are you holding up there?

TERESA: I’m holding up—

DONALD: The *Labels Quilt*.

TERESA: —the *Labels Quilt* in progress, as far along as it was at that point, or some section of it. Oh, yeah, you can see that diamond shaped piece here. This here is this strip here.

MARGARET: Okay.

TERESA: I got labels from friends of mine, the *Labels* got featured in the magazine, the *Labels* started to travel—so here’s the Museum of Contemporary Crafts. And there’s their catalog from that and then it [*Denim Quilt*] traveled extensively.

[Crosstalk]

TERESA: Monique Knowlton said, “Would you like to show work?” And I said, “I don’t have anything else to show and I don’t want to sell that.” So that never went any place. Then there was this show.

DONALD: The interesting thing is years later I went to the Monique Knowlton Gallery to float the idea of [Teresa] doing a show with her. And at that point, she had no interest because they had moved on to showing paintings at that point.

TERESA: Do you have one of those?

MARGARET: We do have this in the—okay, so that was the *Labels Quilt* that you showed. Okay.

DONALD: Where did you go to grad school?
MARGARET: I went to SUNY Purchase actually, did their MA in Modern and Contemporary Art Theory and Criticism and studied primarily with Tracy Fitzpatrick, who is now the chief curator at the Neuberger [Museum] and Michael Lobel. Fabulous program. Really good faculty. And I just had to come back to Delaware. My husband is the exhibition designer and preparator at the DCCA, who you would have actually worked with in 2008, Stephen Ruszkowski.

DONALD: Yes.

MARGARET: Yeah.

DONALD: Oh, okay.

TERESA: Oh, really?

MARGARET: He was here at the museum before, which is how we met. Yes.

DONALD: You met here?

MARGARET: We did.

DONALD: Oh, cool. Very good. I remember he was showing some paintings. He had some paintings down here, some of his own work.

MARGARET: Oh, was he? Yeah. And he’s still working. Having a small child does make it a little more difficult.

DONALD: It’s a hard, hard, hard thing to want to do.

MARGARET: Yes, indeed. But he is committed to art.

TERESA: This quilt won for the State of Delaware in the competition for—what was it—Great Quilts of America competition, Good Housekeeping, U.S. Historical Society and Museum of American Folk Art sponsored this contest to choose one quilt from each state.

MARGARET: And so this was in ’78. Okay.

TERESA: And the quilt is called Bicentennial Bride’s Quilt and it was made for a very close friend who was married in ’76, a friend from high school.

MARGARET: Okay.

TERESA: So, where are we now. [Inaudible] okay. This brings us up to the time of Linda Brennan Jones and Susan Isaacs opening a gallery.

MARGARET: Okay.

TERESA: How much do you know about this venture? Because with Susan being at DCCA, you might easily know a lot about—
MARGARET: And I do know Susan well, but I have not conducted an extensive interview with her yet. So fill me in on anything.

TERESA: Well, Linda Brennan Jones is first cousin to the woman who was my oldest friend. She recently passed away. So my friend, Kathleen [Brennan], was my connection to Linda Brennan Jones, who partnered with Susan Isaacs to open this gallery in Wilmington. And I don’t know how long they had been in business when I was invited to exhibit, but—Susan Isaacs had a friend from maybe grad school, Elizabeth Cherry Owen.

DONALD: Right.

TERESA: And they paired up together. I had never met Elizabeth before, but she was a friend of Susan’s and—

DONALD: New Orleans art.

[Break in Audio]

TERESA: Does the gallery guide describe different exhibitions in upper and lower?

MARGARET: It does.

TERESA: Because I think—I was first introduced to the ceramic work of Paula Camenzind at Linda Brennan Jones and I bought a piece there. So let’s see, was she showing at the same time as us? Because that would explain how I came to be there.

DONALD: Well, did you notice who was showing at the Station Gallery back then?

MARGARET: No. Who?

DONALD: Graham Dougherty.

MARGARET: Oh, really? I haven’t done an interview with Graham yet. And I know he’s been at DCCA since the beginning.

DONALD: Oh, yeah. Graham would probably be—what would you call it—an emeritus figure of this scene. There was that kind of stuff going everywhere.

MARGARET: Right. I have to do an interview with him as well. I did not know that Paula Camenzind showed at L.B. Jones. She was just in our Centennial Juried Exhibition.

TERESA: I bought a kind of ginger jar shaped piece from her. Later we did some trades, but that was where I first saw her work.

MARGARET: I want to take us—
TERESA: I’m going to see if I have photos of the installation there because I can’t really answer that. I don’t have a vivid recollection of how—

MARGARET: Any installation images that you have from any of these older gallery spaces—

DONALD: I have—

MARGARET:—would be wonderful.

DONALD: I have a hilarious photograph from here of me standing next to my painting, which was hung upside down.

MARGARET: Oh, really? From the annual show?

DONALD: And I finally whispered to somebody, “Re-hang this.” They were ambiguous in terms of that—

MARGARET: Of orientation?

DONALD: Yeah.

MARGARET: So it was round.

DONALD: No, it wasn’t round, no. It was a rectangle.

TERESA: I thought it was labeled clearly, too. I don’t know how—

DONALD: But anyone would look at it and think it was a horizon line. There was a line at the top.

MARGARET: Okay.

TERESA: But this show—you had a question.

MARGARET: Well, I just wanted to take us slightly back in time just for a second. January 1988, article in X-Ray Magazine. So Tom Watkins—

TERESA: Is this my folder or is this yours?

MARGARET: This is my folder.

TERESA: Because I have the exact same—

MARGARET: Oh, you do? Oh, okay, good.

TERESA: That’s so funny.
MARGARET: So tell me about this particularly because I don’t know if—were you in touch with the curatorial intern, Caitlin Davis, who was here at the museum? She was conducting research for this exhibition last year and was focusing specifically on xerography.

TERESA: The name Caitlin sounds familiar, but I know a number of Caitlin’s. I haven’t been in touch with anybody here in the last year.

MARGARET: Okay, I just wanted to make sure that she hadn’t talked to you already about that because I know that she is looking specifically at this other kind of offshoot with Tom Watkins interests and Anne Eder and this whole geographic focus.

DONALD: Do you know—I don’t know how I completely blanked on Tom, you know what I mean, just in terms of talking about Robbie Jones and everything. But Tom was, again, a big emeritus figure over this whole scene. He loomed very large, very influential.

MARGARET: And we’ve been able to track him down. Actually, Caitlin found him, which was, my goodness, a year and a half long task. But I have not conducted any sort of extensive interview with him yet and I’m—

DONALD: Where is he?

MARGARET: He’s in Philadelphia. No email address. Just like trying to get in touch with him by phone, which is definitely a challenge.

DONALD: Do you know what’s interesting actually is that—of course, he was part of that huge comic book scene back then.

MARGARET: Right, right.

DONALD: Right.

MARGARET: Right. And Xanadu and the Rondo Center, yeah.

DONALD: Which had direct connections to Baltimore, the—

MARGARET: John Waters.

DONALD: John Waters was part of that. John Waters used to say to describe Wilmington, he said, “Wilmington is worse than Baltimore.” Yeah, he thought it was worse than Baltimore.

MARGARET: Do you have any recollections of the Rondo Center or Xanadu? Tell me everything you remember.

DONALD: Well, I’ll tell you something that’s really significant is that—and I got to meet both of the actors who played these roles, which is the woman who worked there alongside Tom—what’s her name?
MARGARET: Joyce Brabner.

DONALD: Joyce Brabner. My father married them.

MARGARET: Oh.

DONALD: He performed the wedding ceremony for Joyce and for Harvey Pekar.

MARGARET: Okay, so this was after she was married to George Stewart. So she would have been married with George Stewart. He was involved with some of the Rondo things. And then when she married Harvey Pekar, your father married them.

DONALD: My father—and he comes home—

MARGARET: So they were married here.

DONALD: They were married here.

MARGARET: In Wilmington.

DONALD: They were married in Wilmington. And my dad comes home with a stack of underground comics under his arm. And I said, “Dad, what are you doing?” He goes, “I married some cartoonist and he handed me these.” And I said, “Oh, this is interesting.” I remember these were the types of comics I used to hide from my parents, you know, like back when I was in high school.

This was an interesting thing also back then, head shops back then around Wilmington, a number of them where they had, you know—I was a student at Salesianum in a coat and tie and we would go down there to look at like album covers and look at our white shirts in black light. They had black light posters and they would sell bongs and all of that kind of stuff. And that was a big—there were outposts of that kind of hippy culture all throughout—

MARGARET: And that was downtown Wilmington?

DONALD: That was downtown Wilmington. That was on upper Market Street, you know.

MARGARET: Okay. Because of course what I’ve heard from everyone—and it’s just interesting to find—it will be interesting to find the appropriate way to articulate this is of course this fear of downtown Wilmington and who is in Wilmington, who’s going to Wilmington as well, just because, as you know, it’s still that case today.

DONALD: Absolutely, absolutely.

MARGARET: The people, you know—

DONALD: You started to see, again, I guess—I’m not saying it’s because of my father. I’m not saying any of that, but I’m saying you started to see a turnaround in Wilmington whereby people
were flocking to Wilmington. I knew artists who were moving into Wilmington to live in lofts in downtown Wilmington, which would have been an unimaginable thing in my childhood that this was happening. But there it was. There I am sitting; I’m in the loft part.

And not only that, there was a big kind of like—there was a gay scene in downtown Wilmington—discos, like, gay discos in Wilmington, downtown at that point. There were all kinds of just weird, interesting things happening that were just bubbling up.

I attribute it all to this—this is my theory and it has nothing to do with like [Pierre S.] Pete du Pont being governor or my dad being mayor or any of that kind of stuff. It has to do with a bored and emergent baby boomer population, then hitting their early to mid-20s looking for something to do, looking for a place to eat, looking for a place to dance, looking for a place to show their art. And then when they became more job oriented or family oriented or whatever, a lot of that dissolved.

MARGARET: And is that what happened in the early ’90s? Because it’s like the Susan Isaacs Gallery closing, it’s just things dissolved.

DONALD: Things dissolved.

MARGARET: I’m wondering if that’s what—

DONALD: Yeah, that’s what I think. I saw it again when I moved to New York. We got married and moved to New York in the early ’80s and there was that East Village scene, which is where I kind of started to happen. I mean, I was picked up right out of college to show in a gallery. And that was kind of amazing to me. I thought the trajectory that I understood it from teachers at the University of Delaware was, you know, that you paint still life paintings for 20 years and then you dare make an abstract painting. Once you do this [inaudible] all back.

And that’s what I’m saying; a figure like Tanis comes along and says, “Do it. It’s important.”

MARGARET: Right.

DONALD: Oh, here’s [inaudible].

MARGARET: Sorry. I know we got off—

TERESA: Got off on a tangent.

MARGARET: I know.

TERESA: You got tape, we got time.

MARGARET: Yeah, that’s true. I know, this is good, it’s only 11:15. I try to limit the interviews to like two hours at the very longest because by then everyone is—

[Crosstalk]
TERESA: Well, you had asked me about Tom Watkins.

MARGARET: Yes.

TERESA: I had my first commission in 1987 and it was for Aetna Commercial Insurance. And this is the quilt. They wanted a representation of the types of clients that they represented. This star is the logo for the commercial insurance division. And I don’t know how to silkscreen. I needed some way to transfer imagery to the quilt surface. And I found a copy center in New York that would take my photographs and transfer them to the waxy paper where I could do the iron-on transfer myself like people do t-shirts at the beach, whatever, but that kind of technology.

So this quilt was my first experience with transferring imagery to fabric and I liked it. I described how obsessive I am about collecting the vintage materials. I didn’t say that my most favorite type of material is things with text, advertising, imagery of interesting things, a kind of scrapbook look. Because I’ve always had a fascination with Victorian scrapbooks, which I was able to see at my grandmother’s house that her mother had made.

So collecting pictures of things has always interested me and if I couldn’t find the picture I wanted, it would be great to be able to apply it to fabric. And I didn’t want to take time to learn how to silkscreen and stuff. This gave me a way to put imagery on fabric and I needed it for this client that I had. And this gave me the idea of doing it with something more personal. And I don’t have a good picture of the *Wilmington Stamp* quilt, but there’s a small picture of it here on display at the Hotel DuPont lobby. And that’s the quilt that Tom’s writing about in this publication. I tried hard to find a copy of *X-Ray* and I could not find it and I wonder if I didn’t save an intact copy of it. I don’t remember what the publication looked like, but clearly you have—I mean, I remember cutting it out and blowing up this portion and Xeroxing it.

MARGARET: University of Delaware has original copies of *X-Ray Magazine*.

TERESA: They do? Okay, good.

MARGARET: Yeah, *X-Ray, Dreamstreets* and *Fine Times*, all three of them.

DONALD: By the way, look up that name, Anne Eder.

MARGARET: We’ve been in touch with Anne Eder.

DONALD: Anne Eder?

MARGARET: Yes. And Caitlin has—

DONALD: Boy, that came flying back out. I was like, “Oh, my god, Eder.”

MARGARET: Yes. And our hope was, of course, we wanted to talk to her about her work and then talk to her about her collaborations with Tom Watkins as well, which Caitlin has done. And she does have a lot of—
DONALD: You met her?

MARGARET: Yeah, Caitlin—I met her briefly. Caitlin has—

DONALD: As I recall, I could be wrong, I could be totally wrong on this—she was lovely. Right?

MARGARET: Yes.

DONALD: She was like lovely.

MARGARET: She was lovely.

DONALD: Yes, Anne Eder is just very special and otherworldly.

MARGARET: She’s a lovely, lovely person. And she was—I think she was also involved a bit with Flounder Graphics as well, which was down in Newark.

TERESA: I don’t know that name.

MARGARET: And it was on like the second floor of a space, commercial space and everything that they hold had something to do—

DONALD: Commercial space on the street—I didn’t know it was on that street.

MARGARET: Everything had something to do with fish.

DONALD: It was in that—remember there was somebody doing graphics on that—what street did I live on? It was on—

MARGARET: Yeah, I can’t remember right now. Because Caitlin has really been focused on—

DONALD: What about the dude who created the bear logo for the Grateful Dead?

MARGARET: I don’t know. Wait, is he from Wilmington?

DONALD: Do you know the bear logo?

MARGARET: Yes.

DONALD: The famous Grateful Dead—

MARGARET: Yes, with the—

DONALD: It’s out of Bear, Delaware.

MARGARET: No, I don’t believe that.
DONALD: It’s out of Bear, Delaware. It’s out of Bear, Delaware. It has nothing to do with the Grateful Dead other than bear, you know.

MARGARET: I had no idea. I have never heard anyone—oh, my goodness.

DONALD: Grateful Dead bear logo. So you’re doing graphics and stuff like that, oh, yeah. Do you know my cousin, Kevin McLaughlin?

MARGARET: Yes.

DONALD: He’s a painter.

MARGARET: I didn’t know you—I just didn’t make that connection.

DONALD: That’s my cousin. Kevin was older than me—and Kevin might know a lot about Anne Eder.

MARGARET: Okay.

DONALD: And Kevin has a significant exhibition record of showing here, a lot of these—he’s a landscape painter, primarily. And he showed here a number of times, a lot of these shows. And to me, it might be interesting again, at the same time, to dig up some of his abstract work from the University of Delaware. He was making large, abstract canvases which certainly behooves me to see my older cousin, you know, like wow, he’s like the darling of the art department here.

MARGARET: And how much farther ahead of you?

DONALD: One year.

MARGARET: Just one year. Okay, so you would have been at Delaware at the same time.

DONALD: I would have been at Delaware, but I was like a starting art student. He was an advanced art student. So he had been an art student all along and I suddenly show up. And it was also Nick Krushenick who put the bee in my bonnet about New York. Like, “You can’t be here. You’ve got to go to New York.”

Can I tell a story real quick about why we sort of left to go to New York? Which is I was invited to have an exhibition at the city building where they had exhibitions down in the lobby.

MARGARET: Oh, yes, the county city building.

DONALD: And the curator there said, “Well, Don, your work, we’d love to have it.” And I said “Dad, they invited me.” And he went, “No. No.”

MARGARET: Conflict of interest?
DONALD: Yeah, he said, “I don’t even care whether they perceive you as being worthy of this. That’s the way it’s going to be presented. So, no. There’s going to be no perceived conflict of interest.” And I thought, “You know what? I should maybe go somewhere else.” I love my dad. It has nothing to do—there’s no problem. I understood it. But I understood that I’d be his son here.

MARGARET: Delaware is a very small state.

DONALD: It’s very small. We were driving into Trolley Square today. We went over to grab some coffee before we came here and I casually commented to my wife about being his son. And he named it Trolley Square. You know, like, “What’s this going to be called?” And he says, “It’s going to be called Trolley Square.” So it’s like his presence still looms large over the city.

MARGARET: Yes, because you all moved to New York pretty quickly after finishing at Delaware. And was your motivation to get into the garment district? Tell me about your motivation.

TERESA: When I started at the University of Delaware, I was a student in medical technology because I knew I could get a job in that any place. And I did not do very well the semester I had labs for chemistry, microbiology and physics. And it made me aware that I would be in a lab if I was a medical technician and why was I pursuing this. And I was pursuing it because it had been beaten into my head in high school “get a job, get a job, get a job” and I was not sure how you would go about getting a job in textiles. But I could not deny that that’s what I was interested in and where I spent all my free time and where I took my free electives. And my advisor said to me, “I can’t tell you what to do, but don’t you think that this is where your interest lies?”

So when I switched to textiles, I knew that I would have to be either in New York, LA, Chicago, Atlanta. There were only a handful of cities where you could work as a patternmaker and what they recommended was that you go on the one semester visiting program at FIT [Fashion Institute of Technology] in New York if you were interested in patternmaking or design and see if you like the city. Because if you didn’t like living in the city; it was not a good career choice for you.

So in the spring of ’77, I moved to New York for one semester and studied at FIT and it was at that time that Donald and I had just started dating and I became convinced that yes I did love New York and I would love to move back to New York. And so I came back to Delaware for senior year. I graduated in ’78. Donald had taken a year off and changed majors, so, even though he’s a year older; he finished the following year, ’79. And by the time we graduated Delaware, we decided to be married and Donald was accepted into graduate school at NYU. And we planned to be married in ’80 and he started graduate school in the fall of ’80 and did not like the NYU experience and changed to Hunter. But I always knew I was going to look for a patternmaking job in New York. By the time I finished school, that was my goal.

My sister [Patricia] worked in the theater industry in New York and I had the opportunity to move in with her in the months prior to getting married and have a home base while looking for a job. And I found a job doing fitting and alterations in a boutique the summer before we were
married and waiting to get the first patternmaking job. And that’s what I continued to do is work in the garment industry. And I find quilt making a very good complement to that because I use a lot of the same tools and techniques, but can do whatever design I want, whatever materials I want, take as long as I want. I don’t have to satisfy a fit model or a production schedule. It’s all about what I want to do, but I’m using a lot of the same skills that I use for my job to do my own work.

I forget what your initial question was. Did I answer your question?

MARGARET: Yes, motivation, which is good. Wow, I think we may have covered all of my questions, though I won’t be surprised if I have more over the next two and a half years. But I’m pleased to have updated versions of your CVs and any interesting other archival material, images of, like I said, installations and galleries, I would love to see those materials. And I would love to see more images of your earlier work.

DONALD: Yeah. It exists—

[Crosstalk]

TERESA: The interior of L.B. Jones, me with my brothers and sisters. It doesn’t show you very much of the gallery, unfortunately, but I will look and see if I have other photos from that roll of film that would include more pictures of what the installation looked like. Susan had—well, I’m sure you will get a much fuller picture after talking to Susan.

DONALD: You know who you might want to talk to about this?

[Crosstalk]

DONALD: Because she was snapping—

MARGARET: I didn’t know she had her own publication.

TERESA: Perceptions was the publication of her gallery.

MARGARET: And I don’t think we—why do we not have that in your artist file? We have a lot of the—it’s interesting. I think that at some point Susan gave materials to the library and I don’t know—

[Crosstalk]

MARGARET: A lot of these things are in here and I think what happened was instead of keeping all of the gallery correspondence together, it was separated and filed in individual artists’ vertical files. So I’m actually trying to go through and pull out a lot of these materials. But I’m surprised that I’ve not seen Perceptions in any vertical files.

DONALD: I’ve got another name of someone who might be able to help you with this.
MARGARET: Oh, yeah?

DONALD: Chandler McKaig. Chandler McKaig was a photographer. I think he even taught photography here.

MARGARET: How do you spell the last name?

DONALD: M-C-K-A-I-G. He was constantly snapping pictures. He was always involved in like every opening he went to and that camera was just clicking away. And I’m sure that Chandler has probably been in numerous of these juried shows here and may have taught here, may have taught photography here.

MARGARET: I have a name for you. So is this Perceptions? No, or is this just her news—

TERESA: That might have been a first.

MARGARET: What? I haven’t seen this.

TERESA: I see it starts there so I’m thinking that might be an introduction and then later on she might have—

MARGARET: Right, so it’s the new name for L.B. Jones Gallery and then maybe she—oh, I have not seen these. Okay, so we have the newsletter first and then Perceptions. So this would have been—

DONALD: You said you really haven’t spoken in depth to her yet? She’s going to open a treasure trove of these names.

MARGARET: I haven’t. I mean, I know Susan very well personally, but we have not sat down to really talk through this history.

DONALD: Yeah, these names are going to come back to her.

TERESA: We have lots of those. You can keep that.

MARGARET: Oh, I can keep it?

DONALD: Who was the name—

MARGARET: And of course I’m forgetting. His first name is Carl.

DONALD: Carl Sl—

MARGARET: Schlatter?

DONALD: I know who you’re talking about. He was a photographer.
MARGARET: And he is still in Wilmington. Calls himself the Art Car Guy. He has an art car. I’ve seen him out fairly often on the art loop.

DONALD: Does he have glasses?

MARGARET: Yes.

DONALD: Sort of very intense look. Yeah, Carl. I know Carl. Carl was around here back then as well.

MARGARET: I think he would have been an undergraduate around the same time as well.

TERESA: Susan will probably be able to give you—this was her last show, but it was—she sent—I mean, she divided the show between the gallery and a hotel or a bank, I forget which—

MARGARET: This would have been on—

TERESA: ’91, I think, so it’s past your time.

DONALD: Is there anything related to art in this thing here?

TERESA: Yeah, there’s the page that said—

DONALD: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Could you imagine this stuff like today?

TERESA: This was ’91, yeah. Susan divided this between her gallery and the Hotel DuPont Gallery. So there were things put up, but that was ’91 so it’s past your timeframe.

DONALD: Look at the glasses on dad, Jesus Christ. Look at those things.

TERESA: They were appropriate for the times.

DONALD: They were appropriate for the times. Here’s my dad with Cheryl Tiegs, the supermodel. She was like the first supermodel.

TERESA: Did you interview Greg [Barkley]?

MARGARET: Yes, I did.

TERESA: So you heard all about his—

MARGARET: Controversial—

TERESA: Controversial exhibition.

MARGARET: My goodness, the number of controversial exhibitions that have been held at the city county building and the [inaudible] building—
TERESA:—get the newspaper article from the time and I cannot remember that amount of angst about it, of Greg’s exhibition, you know—

MARGARET: It was incredible. I mean, the amount of angst from that exhibition, the amount of angst for Joe Moss’s show that he did a state building—

DONALD: What was the thing with Joe Moss?

MARGARET: Oh, there was tar—so he had some sculpture and then he had this big kind of tar, foam pit in the center of the mezzanine gallery. And just the frustration with the materials and “Is this art?” and this is state funded and that whole component of the exhibition has to be removed. But the controversy between state and city funding and then the exhibitions and programming that was being held at the time, it’s just incredible like ongoing controversy.

DONALD: Another name that sort of—because you mentioned Joe. It made me think about Joe’s son. One of them did a lot of fabrication and stuff like this and he had another son that was pursuing the rock thing. And the other component to this creativity thing was bands everywhere. And a guy you might want to talk to—I think he was performing back then—is the radio host down in the city. He has a radio—W—

TERESA: WDEL.

DONALD: WDEL. You might want to talk to him about what he might remember from that scene from like alternative spaces, bands.

MARGARET: Right and Caitlin have been exploring that a little bit as well. I know she’s been in touch with one of the members of Blondie.

DONALD: Of whom?

MARGARET: Blondie.

DONALD: Who’s the member of Blondie?

MARGARET: A guy I can’t remember. I’m not sure who she’s been talking with.

DONALD: Shut that off and I’ll tell you a great story. You know what I’m going to say, right?

TERESA: I do know what you’re going to say.

[Break in Audio]

MARGARET: Oh, yeah. [Inaudible] Yeah, [inaudible]

DONALD: Another name, Bob Troxell.

MARGARET: Yeah. I know she’s—actually, who is –

DONALD: Bob Troxell is a really, really, really –

MARGARET: Bob Troxell—but he was—oh, there are so many names. Carson mentioned his name. Was he also involved—I think he was also involved with ArtReach.

DONALD: Yeah, it’s possible.

MARGARET: At the Museum.

DONALD: Yeah. Bob was involved. Yeah. I thought he—yeah, I think he did something here, and Bob was also involved, like had the [inaudible] role in that whole [inaudible] emerging punk rock scene.

MARGARET: Okay.

DONALD: And when you said you were talking to somebody, are you sure you’re not talking to somebody from Television instead of from Blondie?

MARGARET: No, from Blondie—not from Television.

DONALD: Because you know –

MARGARET: Because Television—yeah—or from –

DONALD: Yeah. You know, punk rock was cooked up at Sanford Prep here in Delaware. It was—you know, Tom Verlaine and Richard Hell both went here. And that had a huge—you know, that punk aesthetic is kind of—Richard Hell was the first guy to rip a T-shirt. So—which then the Sex Pistols imitated and all, you know with the [inaudible] holes in the shirt and [inaudible].

MARGARET: Right.

DONALD: That’s like Delaware stuff.

MARGARET: I know, and this is [inaudible]—and I have to—this is where I’m a little overwhelmed by the overwhelming nature of this project because, of course, I can’t look just at the visual arts. Because of the collaborations that were happening between artists and musicians and dancers, and just everything that’s happening at this moment. And not just—and it’s not that there are two different themes in Wilmington and Newark, but there still seems to be that divide.

DONALD: Well, it was only, you know, 17 minutes away by car.
MARGARET: It’s still—it’s the same now as well.

DONALD: Yeah. Yeah. There was—it was a real link between, obviously, like—again, that—this museum [inaudible] you know, the emergent things [inaudible], and then all of the little things flourishing at the same time, which included just all kinds of interesting people. I forgot about Anne Eder—big deal—you know, [inaudible] again, I hadn’t thought about Anne in years. And she was there doing like a lot of the graphics and stuff like this.

MARGARET: Um-hum. Right.

DONALD: You know. I wish I had a better memory for some of these folks.

MARGARET: Oh, no, this is wonderful. What’s great is that every time we talk to someone, additional names [inaudible].

MARGARET: Do you have a list of names that popped up?

MARGARET: On my computer. I have a whole list, kind of people of interest.

DONALD: Names to run down and stuff like this. Yeah.

MARGARET: Oh, my goodness. And they’re like—

DONALD: Because things might—if you send me that list, things might pop up.

MARGARET: Yeah. I should. I’ll try to—

DONALD: Funny story here—James Brown comes to play Wilmington. Okay? And he’s staying in the Hotel DuPont. And they got rained out, so James Brown needed to stay over, and the [inaudible]—like can you stay two more days until we get like—we’ll reschedule? So it’s okay—except, he doesn’t want to leave his—his wife doesn’t want to leave her room. And they had to get him a different room, but she didn’t want to leave that room. It’s like no—it’s like rock star stuff—no, we’re not leaving the room. James Brown is terrified of his wife and has to get my dad to go talk to Mrs. James Brown to leave the room.

So the mayor has to show up and say, you need to get out of this room.

MARGARET: That’s why he was so impressed with Wilmington’s hospitality.

DONALD: Oh, [inaudible].

MARGARET: That’s what it says.

DONALD: [Inaudible] impressed with Wilmington’s hospitality.

[Crosstalk]

DONALD:—lots of people—Ray Charles coming through at that time, and—
MARGARET: And comedy, like stand-up comedy—comedy clubs that I keep finding in *Fine Times*—things like that. It [inaudible]—

DONALD: Well, you know, the great—you know the great saying, and I tell this to my students. I show the film *Basquiat*. I teach at Kean University, and I show the film *Basquiat* as an introduction to sort of like the art world. They can’t tell, but it’s like 1980—it seems like [inaudible] that. And the *Basquiat* thing is this—it’s that in the ‘60s rock stars were rock stars. In the ‘70s, rock star were comedians, and in the ‘80s, rock stars were artists because it’s when the Basquiat/Schnabel thing emerges.

MARGARET: Um-hum.

DONALD: So the—and everybody was interested in artists back then, and it was a great time to be a young artist in New York because people thought you were a genius. But that music scene of the, you know, or suddenly the comedy thing—there were these comedy clubs all over the place. Like [inaudible] saying, you know, Dad would go—want to go to the Chuckle Hut or whatever new place had just opened up. The same way these things bloomed all around the country, and they were here too.

MARGARET: Right.

DONALD: So it was just some—you know, kind of like amazing culturally.

MARGARET: Right and it’s—I mean really like my kind of focus with these exhibition is to remind everyone that that was happening.

DONALD: Yes.

MARGARET: And of course, to archive that history as well, but definitely to remind everyone.

DONALD: Yeah. Joe Moss’ kid was a big guy in the band scene here.

MARGARET: Huh. That’s interesting. Joe hasn’t talked much about his children, at least in the communications that I’ve had to talk—I mean, granted, were talking more about his work specifically, but yeah. Oh—

TERESA: I have a couple questions, Margaret.

MARGARET: Yes, of course.

TERESA: Is Tom Watkins still around?

MARGARET: Tom Watkins is—he’s in Philadelphia—no email. I’ve spoken with him once on the telephone. And now, it’s just trying to get him to commit to coming to the Museum or making time for me to come up to Philadelphia to conduct an interview. But he is still around.

TERESA: Okay, because I’m trying to remember how he and I met.

MARGARET: How you and he met.
TERESA: If he did transfers for me for later projects after that first one. Because I know the first one, transfers were done in New York, and I think this is the business where he worked—Totally Pro.

MARGARET: Well, that I don’t know.

DONALD: That’s right. He worked in a copy shop.

TERESA: Because—no, [inaudible]. I found these transfers that never got ironed onto anything. Would have been on Ninth Street.

DONALD: Tom’s a very big name, you know, and—but—

TERESA: He might’ve done these transfers for like the *Wilmington Stamp Quilt* or something.

DONALD: Yeah. Yeah.

TERESA: Clearly, he was somebody I got in touch with about Xeroxing onto fabric after that initial commission.

DONALD: But he’s distinct from this scene we’re describing. We were kind of like generally PS1-derived things. His whole [inaudible] was very much punk comics.

MARGARET: Comic. Right.

DONALD: You know, that whole sort of like trashy Baltimore aesthetic.

MARGARET: Right, and is this—oh, sorry, [inaudible].

DONALD: And actually, that was originally a kind of a niche thing. And you know, I don’t even know if Tom—I mean I saw Tom [inaudible] he was like, you know, [inaudible] was a painter or have one thought on it one way or the other, but his—his stuff was almost like guerilla art. You know, Pop art—images would pop off that Rondo face. The Rondo Hatton thing. Every— excuse my language—every fucking place was a Rondo Hatton face, like this—a kind of a— almost a graffiti-like image blanketing the city was that monstrous—you remember that face, right?

MARGARET: That face. Yes.

DONALD: Rondo Hatton. We’ll look it up on the Internet. Do you have any images of—you must have images of it.

MARGARET: Not in these files. I do have images of—

DONALD: You’ve got to put that in your catalog.

MARGARET: Oh, yeah. No, that’s definitely going to be there.

DONALD: The Rondo—yeah, it’s got to be there.
MARGARET: Yeah. And it’s interesting, it seems like from—and this is—I guess that it’s still initial phases of the project, so really trying to articulate what’s happening. But there do seem to be these kinds of three different arms of the scene at the time, which is like the Tom Watkins comic book kind focus. And then what’s happening with University of Delaware to ArtSquad, the DCCA, Fifth Street—all of that. And then, the other wing that I really haven’t done enough work with is this kind of abstraction with the somewhat older generation of artists like James Newton, Simmie Knox, Margo Allman that are still incredibly active, of course, in interesting collaborations with musicians and dancers.

But this other kind of arm that’s coming off as well, though artists who were involved with DCCA but not really in that kind [inaudible]—

DONALD: Simmie Knox painted my father’s portrait, which we still have.

MARGARET: Oh, [inaudible]. That [inaudible]—oh, and you all have that.

DONALD: We have that, you know. It was one of his first I believe, commissions.

MARGARET: Oh, so that would’ve—so—

DONALD: It was real early—

TERESA: Who commission it [inaudible]?

DONALD: I’m not entirely sure. Bill [Donald’s brother] would probably know that. But that was a—you know, like a big deal.

TERESA: Because it wasn’t somebody in the family.

DONALD: Wasn’t somebody in the—but it was gift. We were thinking [inaudible] like in that—

MARGARET: Okay.

DONALD: You know, we were thinking of donating it to the—you know, that building that’s named after my dad, which is the police station.

MARGARET: Just—oh, right.

DONALD: So it’s Bill McLaughlin—

MARGARET: Right.

TERESA: Public Safety Building.

DONALD:—Public Safety Building. And I don’t know if anything happened with that. It’s probably under—in storage—I would imagine, the Simmie Knox portrait.

TERESA: But Bill has it.
DONALD: Bill has it. But it would’ve been within that time frame of, you know, within—certainly would’ve been finished by—you’re doing it seven—you know, it’s ‘70 to like ‘90.

TERESA: ‘70 to ‘90.

DONALD: To ‘90—yeah, certainly would’ve been painted within that timeframe.

TERESA: Okay.

DONALD: So.

TERESA: Oh. Okay. Oh, [inaudible] to

[Crosstalk]

MARGARET:—these people. Sally Cohen or neither—neither one—Sally Cohen.

TERESA: They did this book in ’81 I think, which was to - [inaudible] have my [inaudible]. I couldn’t find my copy of it, but [inaudible] that—’81.

MARGARET: Eighty–one.

TERESA: So that would include—if you’re not able to reach them, I have a copy of it someplace.

MARGARET: Okay.

TERESA: I would be curious to see who’s included in that because it would’ve been, you know, a lot of mixed media people.

MARGARET: I wonder if we have that in the library.

DONALD: What is your year—‘90?

MARGARET: ‘90. I don’t know why I’ve selected ’90.

DONALD: And you’re showing [inaudible] what—

MARGARET: I’m just [inaudible] it’s like—

[Crosstalk]

MARGARET:—it’s now I’m little worried. I’m like, well, maybe I should push it to like the closing of the Susan Isaac Gallery, and then, how—maybe it should start like ’68. I was like, no, no, no. I guess [inaudible] more than 20 years.

DONALD: Time [inaudible].

MARGARET: So roughly—
TERESA: You’re going to have so much material.

MARGARET:—from ’70 to ’90.

TERESA: You have this [inaudible].

MARGARET: We have that. Yes, the ’89 biennial.

TERESA: Do you still do a biennial?

MARGARET: Our last biennial was held in 2000, before we underwent renovation.

TERESA: Um-hum.

MARGARET: We had not had one until last fall—we had the centennial juried exhibition. And we hosted that for the centennial anniversary year, and it was a juried exhibition, juried by John Ravenal who founded the VMFA—open to any artist living within 100 miles of the museum. So we did still want to keep it regional, and that was to, of course, celebrate all of the annual exhibitions and then the biennial as well. So the thought now is that maybe we’ll have a juried exhibition like every ten years kind of thing—to stick to the anniversary. But doing a biennial is—oh—that would be exhausting. And of course, the way we plan the exhibition calendar, I don’t think it would work as well.

And of course, the DCCA hosts annual members juried exhibitions, and then they have the MSA biennial as well.

DONALD: By the way, I just discovered when I was looking through this catalog, [inaudible] ‘80s work of mine. I mean [inaudible] unlike this. [Inaudible] this. This was up during the time of a show. It was the Art Fair in Chicago—the big Art Fair in Chicago. I got a kick—it was just a little anecdote, but I was walking along, and I had a show, coincidentally, I had [inaudible] huge and in my basement—that painting there.

MARGARET: Oh, 94” by 78” [inaudible]—

DONALD: And I was there, and I was walking around. And I’m looking to talk to these different dealers. I tried to connect to this dealer, but nothing happened. But I was saying, have you seen anything, you know, did you get outside the big—you know how art fairs work. You know, like the booths and the [inaudible], and I was New York and San Francisco—I said, have you seen anything that you liked as you get into Chicago? And he said, there was one show I liked in the town—like one only [inaudible] shot. I said, what was that? He said, some guy named Donald McLaughlin. And I went, uh doy!—that was, you know, that was a show.

MARGARET: Yeah.

DONALD: I thought that was cool. I thought it would be nice to show with them, but that never happened.

TERESA: When was that [inaudible]?
DONALD: [Inaudible] dealer from San Francisco. We went to the place in San Francisco to look at the space when we were in San Francisco. But you can see, looking at these, there’s this weird kind of like nocturnal Ryder-esque quality in a lot of these.

MARGARET: Yeah, definitely. Um-hum. Any copies of any materials—I always say this to any artists, but to the two of you especially, anything that we could put in the vertical files would be wonderful. I’ve been really doing a lot of work to add a lot of materials to the artists’ vertical files that we maintain in the library just [inaudible] those resources, because what we have is incredible.

DONALD: I bet.

MARGARET: I remember when I was working on the [inaudible] show, I went into the Richard Tuttle file, and we have the exhibition materials from his first show at Betty Parsons [Gallery]. Like—oh that’s incredible. That’s why we need to have these materials in the library.

DONALD: Yeah. Right.

MARGARET: So we’re really archiving this history.

TERESA: Can you tell us what you do have that we not be redundant?

MARGARET: I have—oh, no, no, no. This is great. So I will show you—

TERESA: Let me look through—

MARGARET:—your vertical file, and Donald, I do not have any material for you.

DONALD: I’m not—yeah, you know what? I have been—

MARGARET: But I mean I think part of that is because, you know, going to New York in 1980, it would mean things being sent in to us.

DONALD: To me—to me, is that this—

[End of Audio]

Duration: 96 minutes