**Interviewer: Dr. Catherine Oglesby**

**Interviewee: Dr. Nancy Smith Fichter**

November 20 & 21, 2011

CO: Okay, I think we're on. I'm here today with Nancy Smith Fichter. We're in her beautiful home and it's very difficult to concentrate. The surroundings are so gorgeous, but we're at, she, her home is at 710 Waverly Road, Tallahassee, FL. It's midafternoon and she's gonna tell us a few things about her extraordinary life. So we will get started. That microphone's very sensitive so, if Bailey barks we'll let her in. Okay Nancy, we're starting with your first conscious memory. You think back, what is the first thing you recall?

NF: I remember, I remember having an accident because my sister and I, the one who was only a year older than I, were playing a silly little game called pushing each other off the bed and she pushed with a little bit of vigor and I split my chin open and I remember being, that my mother was ill. She was seldomly ill, but she was too ill to take me to the hospital, and so her sister took me there and I remember the two things I remember about it was that when they brought me home they put me under, and I remember this. It was a little blue and white checked blanket and I loved the feeling of sitting on the living room sofa under that little blanket with a lot of attention being paid to me and my aunt telling my mother that I was the bravest little girl. That the doctors were just amazed that I did not cry. I look back on that and think that was not very normal. Why wasn't I yelling at all, cause I think I was between three and four. Now that's a silly little memory but I do remember that and I remembered the house I lived in. We lived in a modest house in Jacksonville. It was two stories. My father's engineering firm had not just taken off by this time. So there were limited funds and it was a lovely little, very homey house and I remember everything about it. I remember all the rooms and, but then I know that we moved out there between my six and seventh birthday to a larger house in another part of town. So those early memories it interest me that they are vivid. That the Christmas memories are strong, and I remember the kitchen, and I remember mother washing my hair in the sink. I remember a lot of things about that first house which I find that

interesting now thinking that that happened in those early, early years. I was the youngest. My oldest sister was 8 years older than I and that's a different kind of relationship than the relationship I had with one who was just a year older. Those relationships have been very, very pivotal in my life they were not untroubled relationships but very, very different relationship with Marianne than the relationship with Elise. And Marianne died very young. She died when she was 44. And Elise just died a year ago, about a year and a half now.

CO: So 8 years difference between the oldest…

NF: Marianne.

CO: Yeah.

NF: And so Marianne did a lot of things that, that an older person, that an aunt or something would've done. I used to say that Marianne gave me my sense of magic. That she, she did fantasy things for us. I mean she, I remember one time it was raining a lot and I don't know, I had been upset about something. And she woke me up from my nap and said I want to show you something and she took me downstairs and opened the front door and there was this little china doll with a little pink dress and she was very beautiful. She was very little, you know, like three or four inches standing there in a little bit of a rain and I said what is that and she said that's Peeps the Sunshine Fairy and you know, then she went into this long thing and you know my whole day was transformed. She did things like that and she, and there are all sorts of magical things that have happened up on Lillian Smith's mountain and she became a part of that because she was very, very much a part of that camp scene.

CO: Do you still call that Laurel falls?

NF: Laurel falls is an actual waterfall on that, what was granddaddy's property, and the camp was Laurel Falls camp for girls. But what we do up there now with the artist retreat is called the Lillian Smith Center.

CO: Okay, but it's the same location that she writes about.

NF: Yeah, yeah, mmhhmm.

CO: But now this Marianne, was not the sister who pushed you off the bed?

NF: No Elise was the sister who pushed me and that was, there was always, in one way when you're a year, a year apart in age, you're very close and you're bonded in a way and mother used to say that people would ask one of us how old, our age and we would always answer we're four and five, or we're three and four. We never just said I'm four, you know. But there was also, there were real issues in my relationship with Elise and continued all the way up through adulthood and I think it was a kind of sibling rivalry although one of the funniest things that she ever said to me was, "I'm just so glad we never had any sibling rivalry" and half of the room fell apart laughing, you know. But she was a very brilliant, brilliant woman and, but also very troubled with a lot of, lot of illnesses.

CO: Now she didn't consider it sibling rivalry. You identify it that way now. Did you think of it that way, where you aware that what she said was, was that not at all your experience of what was happening?

NF: Well she, yeah, she used the term sib…was talking about some other people I guess and she just said "I'm so glad we never had sibling rivalry," and that was just absolutely not the case, you know. But, but there was a kind of tension, but also a kind of love. And I, one, I don't know whether I should go into that now or whether you'd prefer that later when we get into adulthood but…

CO: Well I'll have some more questions that will prompt that.

NF: Okay.

CO: But I definitely want to hear more about it. Then, should I let her in?

NF: I'll go open the door and let her in. See if she wants to.

CO: Okay, definitely. I mean if you feel like, if it's on your mind go ahead and talk about it, it's not inappropriate anywhere and so.

NF: And we can revisit it later too, but Elise was extremely brilliant, and she got her PhD from Harvard when she was 25, and she married an Episcopal Rector. And…

CO: Now what was her PhD. In?

NF: Psychology.

CO: Okay.

NF: She worked for the Gordon Albright, all the luminaries of that time and then she was also trying to be a mother, and the pressure was intense. I mean she was writing the last pages of her dissertation when she gave birth to her second child, and then she fell victim to terrible killing, disabling migraines, and she also started the graduate at Bryn Mawr, and she taught psychology in various places. But her health and the migraines got the best of her and she, I think lived the rest of her life primarily, with and amazing an almost terrifying history of over medication all very legal, but…

CO: For pain, pain medicine was it mostly?

NF: Mmhhmm. Everything you know. And so she eventually had no professional life because she could not sustain it.

CO: Now do, did you ever attribute any of that pressure to being a rector's wife? Was that hard on her?

NF: I know that that seems, I mean I've known my other sister married a Methodist minister so I mean, I know a little bit from the outside looking in about the stresses of being a rector's wife, but Elise pretty early on decided not to be a fully functioning rector's wife and that's the way she sort of escaped from that. I don't know, I mean she's one of the great mysteries of my life and one of the people in my life that I thought more about whatever caused her to have such terrors at times and such pressures and she was also very brilliant and could be charming and could, and was one of the wittiest people I've ever known. So, what I decided since at times when I was with her it was, it was very difficult and that's really an understatement. It was painful. There were times when I thought I can't be around her very much because you never knew when she would…

CO: And she had two children?

NF: Three.

CO: Three, did they escape that?

NF: Yeah, you know I'll tell you one thing I learned from this is how resilient children are. They did not escape without scars.

CO: But I mean, have they had similar like psychological issues?

NF: Not the same kind.

CO: So hers may have been biochemical?

NF: I, I think so, you know, I think so. I decided at one point that no matter what she said or did I would tell her I loved her and this is what, this is the turning point, and that happened a few years before she died. I wish it happened earlier, but so she would call and I would end the conversation with, just say, "Elise I love you," and finally she was able to say it back. And she would say "I love you, and you know I mean that" and from then on our conversations were free of attack and free of hostility, and I consider that one of the greatest gifts I had that I was able to and honestly love her even though it was painful at times. And I don't know how much of this should be on your report or not because it's very personal. I would not want to hurt her children or anybody, you know.

CO: Oh sure, sure.

NF: But when she was dying they said they had let us know that it would probably about six months and then one of her daughters called and said, "You better come right now," and so Robert and I flew up and she died within 30 hours of that. So I was able to be with her and she recognized me and I said, "I'm here Elise," and she said, "Oh this is wonderful." So, that, so when, when we were talking on the way here about your sister dying this, it hit me like a ton of bricks although I knew she was going to die. But, and I knew that we had this trouble relationship at times, and at times a very loving and fun relationship. Still, I still miss her a lot. And I adored Marianne, my oldest sister, and still miss her a lot, but it was not as complex a relationship, you know. Because I didn't feel I was having to dodge things, you know.

CO: Yeah, I'm happy to come back to that at any time. But could you describe yourself as a child? What were you; maybe even describe your sisters? If that helps to describe yourself.

NF: Well see I thought Marianne was very beautiful. And I thought Elise was beautiful, and I thought, I used to tell mother; mother said I first started saying this when I was in Junior High, but I can't imagine that I did, but anyways she said that I had said, "I am the victim of the great genetic swindle." And we started, that became a family thing, the "GGS". Nancy feels she is the victim of the GGS because my sister Elise had this wonderful naturally curly hair. She looked like Judy Garland in Wizard of Oz, which is beautiful hair and she became really in early puberty, she became very well endowed, and Marianne, I thought was beautiful too in a very different way and here I was three strands of no color, you know, pale hair, absolutely straight and always remained flat as a pancake, you know. So I said well mother I was just the victim of the great, I just, you just gave me the left overs, you know, but…

CO: Now could you have described yourself without reference to your sisters?

NF: I can describe myself, you mean could I then?

CO: Could you have described yourself as a child without reference to your sisters?

NF: You mean when I was a child, could I have described it?

CO: No, no now.

NF: Now?

CO: If you had to des…if I said describe yourself…

NF: Oh, oh yeah I can tell you how I, how I looked.

CO: But I, but in what kind of child were you? Besides how you looked, what kind of child were you?

NF: I think I was a, imaginative. I think I was pretty insecure. I think I had a big temper.

CO: Alright. Now do you think that was because you were the baby?

NF: I think it's because one of the first things I remember was that they told me I was an accident. My sisters did. I don't think Marianne did, but I know Elise did, because I remember later on asking mother if, what that meant.

CO: And did you mother own up to it? No?

NF: But she…Oh yeah I mean, she was always wonderful about saying things like that. She would, she said "You know how Christmas is when you get surprises under the tree and you don't know what they are? And what's good about them is that it's a huge surprise?" She said, "That's what you were. You were like Christmas present". Well of course I, I went and said, "I wasn't planned I was a big surprise". So of course there was no sibling rivalry, Catherine.

CO: Well did you get the sense that your sister, especially Elise, resented you?

NF: Mmhhmm. She was pretty outspoken about that, later even in adulthood.

CO: So you, so because typically one year olds don't know enough to even…

NF: Well you know I don't know, maybe you absorb it in some way. But she also, I remember, she also was protective of me.

CO: Elise?

NF: Elise was. I mean Marianne always was, but Elise was. If a bully, you know there was a little, there was a boy in the neighborhood one time who was just being a tough guy, you know, threatened us. We must have then been 8 or 9 or something like that and she took him on. I mean she just, so she would, I will always remember that. And I remember that she, and I know that she loved me. And I know that at times she wished I'd never been born. I mean these are just the honest facts you know. As expressed by her when she said "I never knew any reason why you should have born in the first", little subtle things like that but, but I know she loved me and I know that I loved her and that's not trying to white

wash it. It's just, you know, the human condition, you can have both things in your heart. You know…so.

CO: Absolutely, yeah. Well could you describe your parents, your father and your mother?

NF: My father was sweet and kind and funny. And sort of delegated to mother the discipline. And there was never any physical discipline. They, they did not believe in spanking or striking. They just thought there was a much more creative way to deal with it. But, he would just, I can remember saying, he would talk over our heads sometimes, and say tell her she has to be in 10 o'clock tonight. And mother would say, her is right here.

CO: Well now we probably ought to identify him as he is your connection with Lillian Smith.

NF: Her oldest brother.

CO: Yeah, okay, alright. Could you say something about their, his relationship with her?

NF: I thought, always it just, they always held hands, and so I always just thought that they, and still believe that they had an extremely affectionate and devoted marriage and the thing, you know when you, at one time when I became a better child, I mean I was beginning to grow up. I thought I wonder if he really fell in love with my mother after he had this 13 year apparently strong relationship with Adeline, or was it just convenient, you know. Or I don't know whether someone put that in my head or whether I thought that. Well after they died, and I was clearing out the house in Jacksonville I found this cache of letters, and apparently he had proposed to mother, and mother had said I'm going to get another masters and she went up to Columbia to get her second Masters, which I now in retrospect think was "cold feet". Cause she was almost 40, you know, and all of a sudden she was going to change everything and marry this man. My father who wrote me maybe two postcards in his life, wrote her every day and those were the letters I found.

CO: Your mother, letters to your mother when she was at Columbia?

NF: Yeah. During their year-long engagement. And so one time, after I had moved into this house, I mean it was, I was an adult by then, I had stashed the letters out in the carport and I thought the weather will get to them. I just couldn't bear the thought of reading, but one time I decided I would read them, and so I brought them in. I was by myself totally. This was before I married Robert. And I opened a bottle of wine and I read those letters and they were the most, it was greatest gift in the world, they were the most passionate, beautiful, love letters.

CO: Do you still have them?

NF: They're up in the attic, so yeah.

CO: Oh no, they shouldn't be in the attic.

NF: I know, I know.

CO: No, how big is the, you can get an acid resistant box.

NF: Yeah, I know I should. I have other things that shouldn't be in the attic either.

CO: What are they, how are were, were they written in…

NF: Handwritten.

CO: Handwritten and in ink?

NF: In ink, yeah, mmhhmm.

CO: Okay, you really need to get those down.

NF: Yeah, but it, it just made me know how, it made me feel so grateful that they had had, but I mean saw the evidence of it. They always seemed affectionate, but you know you don't think of your parents, particularly if they're older parents and these, my parents were the age of most of my friend's grandparents. And you don't think…

CO: So how old was your father when you were born?

NF: Well he would have been about 44.

CO: So, how old was he when he married your aunt who died? His first wife.

NF: Well okay, I'm going to have to do a little math here because, a little arithmetic, because they were married 13 years and then he had after that about three years I guess…

CO: Before he started…

NF: [of being a] widower and then he married mother I guess. So, he would have been in his mid-30s, twenty or early thirties.

CO: Okay, alright, and your mother, he was a, he delegated discipline to her.

NF: Yeah, he, he was always working and he was very, he was a very vigorous man who wanted to take care of his family and he built a successful engineering company and at first you know, he, at first it had hard times because I was a depression baby so I mean all of that was going on at that time. And I remember, I remember some discussion but very little, but on some discussion made me know that we didn't have the money that other people did, but I never, I never felt poor, you know. I remember when you know, I might want something, or we might want something, and mother would say well we're just not going to be able to do it this year or something. But you know, but I was never hungry. They had a wonderful way of making fun for us.

CO: And you mother was, was, was she always employed I mean throughout your life?

NF: No.

CO: No? Oh.

NF: She stopped work when she married daddy.

CO: Oh, okay. Well that was the thing to do.

NF: And she had all these incredible domestic gifts and I don't know where she got them. Cause she's a wonderful cook, made our clothes, you know.

CO: So it, she did, but she never went back to work?

NF: She never went back to…

CO: Work outside of the home?

NF: Work outside of the home although she was very active in a lot of things and you know, she picketed and so forth. And she was very, had a strong sense of social consciousness.

CO: So both sides of your family were politically progressive?

NF: Absolutely, that's why I say, you know, when you mention coming from your, the background you came from, I can't take any credit for my liberal views because it was handed to me on a platter from both sides. I heard it all the time and I knew it wasn't the case with a lot of people because I'd go to school, you know, my, my friends, I saw some of my friends having, even if they were totally different political leanings than I was, but are they, were battling it out with their parents, you know. I found that particularly in college. They would say well, "You know, I really feel this way, but boy, I don't say it around home," or something like that. And see I just didn't have to do that. So, that's just a great gift and I'm so grateful for that.

CO: Well that's a, to people who don't have that background its, its, its enviable.

NF: Right, I'm sure. I'm sure because along with any great gift you know ultimately become aware of great responsibility, yeah.

CO: Right, of course, of course.

NF: But you'd rather have it that way then…yeah.

CO: Yeah, right, oh yeah. But so your mother, that is incredible. She had this, this, this very successful career and then she married your father…

NF: And gave it up.

CO: …and was completely, she said…

NF: I think she was madly in love with my father. I don't think she was before when he was married to Adeline, but, I think, I think she really, really was always. It's just so interesting to me, there are so many things that it's always its, its you know, when you get to the age I am, where you think oh, why didn't I ask so-and-so this or so-and-so that, you know.

CO: What would you ask either of them if you just could ask them one question? Would you, can you think of one?

NF: I asked mother a lot of things, but I think I would have asked her how she felt about giving up her work.

CO: Hmmm…That's what I would ask. She could, did she ever show any kind of regret about that?

NF: Not a bit. Not a bit, but she kept herself so active. She was a great reader too and you know, very outspoken about her beliefs in her genteel way, but very, very clear about what she, she believed.

CO: Okay, we've already talked about the siblings and the birth order. What about the extended family grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins?

NF: See I only knew one grandparent because they had all gone, but grandmother Smith, who my father's mother and Lillian Smith's mother, she came and she visited us one time in Jacksonville. Spent the winter, so I mean it was a long visit, so I sort of knew her, but I was like 6 or 7. And she died shortly thereafter, so I didn't really know her. Granddaddy Smith died the year I was born. Never knew him, and the Partridge grandparents, never knew them. So I know them, I have ideas about them because of mother telling me about her parents, but they, but the Smith and the Partridges, and I think this a, such an interesting thing, because it seems to been somewhat generational, came from families of 9-12, you know, children. And that, then all of a sudden, now in today

that would be most, except for people like the Kennedys or the Octomom, you know, there you're not going to find that so often, 2 or 3 maybe.

CO: But, you didn't come together as large extended families for holidays or like that.

NF: We saw them. We always went up to Clayton in the summer. There often, so I saw my Smiths, but then there are some of the Smiths, you know, who didn't live up in Clayton. They had moved from, you know they moved, Granddaddy moved them from Jasper, FL up there. But then the older ones were in various places just following their lives. So, we would go and visit them occasionally, but there was always a little core up in Clayton like Lillian Smith and Esther Smith and Frank that we always saw in the summer or other times, and same was true of the Partridges and one of mother's sister lived with us in the first 5 years in the small house.

CO: Mmhhmm. Wow.

NF: And was my father's, I think, I don't know how they worked out the finances, but she really was his secretary, in a small firm. He started his firm by a wonderful friend who, who was successful in business giving a corner of his office and he started that, and Tee Heart (my aunt) his secretary, and then it just grew successfully.

CO: Did she, did she stay on with him after he…

NF: She moved out of house when we moved into the big house. That's my memory of it. And moved into another apartment and her older sister moved with her. It's a funny thing, there is like split generation because there were like 4 older Partridges and then 4 younger ones. Now mother, and that was sort of true with the Smiths, but, but different in one way in that mother's older siblings did not have her liberal views. They were kind Christian people who thought you ought to be nice to, and I will, I actually remember hearing one aunt call them the "Darkies". You must always be nice to the "Darkies", you know, always be sweet and kind. This was not true in the Smith family. They all somehow had, and I do not know how that happened…

CO: Have you ever reflected on that, because that isn't, would, would that…

NF: No, I've reflected on it a lot, you know, because, and I have talked to mother about this, because Lil and all the Smiths over in Jasper, which is Hamilton County, and right next to is Jefferson County, here's mother and all of hers, and here is mother and Lil who were to become sisters-in-law, with these liberal absolutely, at times almost militant views for women of that generation, but just so liberal and, and I asked mother, I said, "How, how did you do this? Why were you that way when Uncle Waring was not; and and she said, "I just thought," and she said "You can't believe in the fatherhood of God if you don't believe in the brotherhood of man." Logical. And, but, and I remember asking Esther about Lil,must have been after Lil died, you know. I spent a lot of time with Esther up on the hill and she said she always just took everything in and one time Esther and I were sitting looking at some photographs, and there was a picture of Lil sitting on a swing and she must have been about 15. And it's a lovely picture and I cannot find it anywhere. I've been looking up on the mountain for it and she said, and I remember Esther saying "Look at her. She is taking everything in and thinking." And I guess that's how they got that way. I don't know, but isn't it odd. I mean it's, you would, you would think it might have been easier to develop those ideas if they had lived in highly urban situations, but not Monticello and Jasper.

CO: Right, right, yeah. Yeah it reminds me of the mother of, well Clarence Jordan, does his name mean anything to you? Up in the…biracial sort of almost commune in, up near Plains, Georgia.

NF: Oh right, right. The name was familiar but I couldn't place it.

CO: Back in the, in the…yeah. And his family was from Talbot County, which is, I mean the thought of, of any thinking people coming out of there, I grew up near that, so I know, you mean, you know the place by reputation, which goes to show that, you know there, there people all over the place. His mother was incredibly open minded and I'm thinking "An open minded person, THAT open minded thinking about serious biracial relationships in the 1940s, 30s and 40s out of Talbot County, I mean it's just phenomenal. So it, that has always been a curiosity

to me. How, how do these people coming, you know, from the midst of this get these incredibly progressive ideas.

NF: I, I think, I mean there are instances you know like Lill's instance with, with the child. But, but then what made her metabolize that in a way, along with every other experience she had, and mother, mother too. I used to say that the Partridges and the Smiths had no slaves. Well that's not true. I mean those had no slaves, but that's not true. But if you trace the genealogy back far enough there were slaves.

CO: Did your mother and Miss Lillian get along? Were they…

NF: Well that's interesting, because I think they had enormous respect for each other, but there was, there was always something. And I knew it. Children do pick things up. If there was nothing rude, there was never any iciness or anything like that, but they were two very strong women and also I think Lil probably, Lil had a, Lill's strong sense of family manifest itself in wonderful ways, but at times she was blind. We could, we, she always described any of us in terms we probably did not deserve, you know. She just thought she had the most wonderful set of nieces and nephews in the world with special gifts and such. But I think, I don't think she thought that any of her brothers married women who were their equal. She loved her brothers and although she would never have said that. I think there was always a little jealousy, because she was everything to her brothers too, but then they went and found these other women you know.

CO: Right, yeah, yeah.

NF: That's, now those are my theories. I mean you know I have no…

CO: Well, but did, did you, did you have a one-on-one relationship with her?

NF: With Lill?

CO: With Miss Lillian?

NF: Oh yeah.

CO: You did?

NF: Uh huh, very much, and I would, you know I went to camp the times when I was not an official camper I was still up there a lot and then she and I became close, you know. And everyone, you know, all of my adolescent years and when I was a younger person, I was told all the time how much I looked like her, you know. How we looked exactly alike and at camp when we would have the day, it was always one day where the campers took the roles of counselors and I was always with Lil and then when I look at the films, I can see it, you know. I can see, and there were times, I remember one time sitting on the sofa in the library where she did most of her writing and where we now live when we go up there, and we had one of my long deep conversations and I remember looking at her and it was a little eerie, and part of it, now I was an adult at this time, part of it I thought was because we were so much alike and our voices sounded alike at that time. But another part I thought later on was that, the writer in her was taking some of this down. And I don't mean that in a, in a bad way at all, but she was a sponge. Yeah.

CO: Just composing all the time?

NF: Well composing but studying. You know the same thing that interests you about this work and that has turned you on about the stories, I think, I used to say Lil could never have a casual relationship.

CO: Now how do you, how do you feel about her biographers, people who've written about her. How, how, where have they measured up at all in your, did they capture her?

NF: Not much…

CO: No?

NF: To me. I think she captures herself most in *Killers of the Dream*. Have you seen the documentaries?

CO: I haven't.

NF: There's one and I just lent it to Jawole Zollan that's called Miss Smith of Georgia, and it's not for sale and we, we have and I have a copy of it at Clayton too, and the Hargrett Library at UGA has a copy.

CO: Well why is it not, why isn't it for sale?

NF: It was put out by Time Life or in the 1960s and it was produced by Joan Titus and no what it's sort of like, I mean nobody claims it but nobody will release it, you know. I think it will, Robert can clarify this for me, I think it belongs not to Hallmark, I mean it's past its ownership, but they never show it. You know nobody ever can track it down if you were at a calls, but we have power pirated copies of it, but I'd like for you to see and I will but the, the one you can get access to like this just by going to Amazon, is called Miss Lill's Camp.

CO: Okay, yeah I've seen that one. I may have actually seen that documentary. I don't know. I'll have to…

NF: Okay, but that's easy to get. I don't have a copy with me here. I have them up in Clayton. And I think if you just Google Miss Lill's Camp, you'll get it, but the thing about that documentary is that the excerpts, there are many excerpts of interviews with Lill. Well of course it was the documentary was made years, and year after she died. So those excerpts are from the 1960 Miss Smith of Georgia, with the Time Life. And they just took clunks of it and…

CO: How long are they?

NF: About 30 minutes each. But those are really great insights into her.

CO: Well I mean, it's really difficult to write a biography that, cause you only capture one part of her. You can't see the person…

NF: The person who knows more facts about her, I mean about the Smiths, than any of the Smiths do is Joan Titus, who was the one who produced this film. And then she decided she was gonna write the, The book on Lillian Smith. And she even went and lived a year in Jasper, you know, and she, and so she has volumes of materials and videos and pictures many of which we've never even seen and we have developed, reignited the relationship with her. And I think she is going

to give them all to the Hargrett Special Collections at UGA, which is exactly where they should go. And we've been sort of being an unofficial liaison, between that relationship and Toby Graham who is the curator.

CO: Yeah.

NF: Okay he, he's actually gone up to visit Joanne Titus and so we think that will happen. We think according to Toby, she's just not quite willing to give them up yet.

CO: Well I mean she, in my mind she's always going to identify with Georgia, even if you know she was born in and her family was from Florida. I think her, she's just known as a…

NF: Well she was a, a young, very young woman when she moved up to Georgia. You know. So…

CO: What about your mother's relationship with her mother? I'm, I'm interested in mother/daughter relationships. Did she talk about that much?

NF: A bit of course I didn't know her mother or her father, I just think she was, she was very close to them. Everything I ever heard about them she was very loving and respectful of, in a sensitive way. I mean really thinking that her mother had good ideas and wonderful things that she, she really adored her father a lot and I think the sense of humor that my mother had, and she had just a very highly developed sense of humor. A lot of that must have come from her father, because she would tell me funny things that he had said you know that she always remembered.

CO: Well you just answered there were strong generational ties. You spent most of your childhood here in Florida?

NF: Mmhhmm.

CO: You'd spend the summer in…

NF: We would go up to Clayton a lot.

CO: Okay, did you move around a lot after your parents moved in the bigger home? Did they…

NF: No, that was it. I, that was, we stayed there until I went to college, actually they stayed there until they died, because that was the house I cleaned out, you know, and found all the things. Yeah.

CO: What was the most significant or memorable event in your life up, before the age of 12? Just as a child.

NF: Before the age of 12. Well I think some of the camp years, that was about when I was 12. Whenever I started being an official camper up there, and the camp experience is just, was an intense and wonderful one. There were so many. I mean it was just a rich childhood, you know. I mean full of the usual ups and downs, I did not know any death until probably I was in college. And that's unusual, or maybe it's not. But I certainly did…

CO: Yeah, so you didn't experience lose through death as a child.

NF: [Indicates no}

CO: Okay, who were your heroes as a child?

NF: My heroes, I think, well I can, tell you, but it wasn't always as a child. My heroes were my mother, Franklin Roosevelt. You see when I was a child there were three big male figures and Franklin Roosevelt and my father, and God.

CO: Did, did, did you, was Eleanor Roosevelt ever talked about in your family --

NF: Very much and she was, but of course I didn't realize how, I mean she, she quickly took Franklin's place as first place in my book later on, but that was not, would not have happened before 12.

CO: Yeah, okay, you've already talked a little bit about it. If you want to say, if you don't want to say more that's fine, but you're struggles as a child.

NF: Okay part of it's been answered. I have a great deal of ambivalence about my sister even then, my sister Elise. But Elise was, and I should've mentioned this

earlier on because I think it says something, and in all fairness I should've said, she was just intensely shy. Intensely shy, and I don't know where that fear came from but apparently it lasted over her life because, you know, it must have, because why would she have gotten so disturbed later on. But she was shy and I don't know what she was afraid of. And I have looked at her daughter who is the niece I'm closest to and we've talked about it a lot. What was it that happened, because she did not live in an abusive home? I cannot think of anything that made her so shy. In the first grade, her teacher told mother that she much accept the fact that Elise was probably retarded. Well mother said, in telling me much later about that, she said of course I did not sleep that night. I did not, well because Elise didn't speak. She would sit in the back and of what I remember seeing a class picture of her with these big brown eyes and just sit there, and would not speak. Now this is the one who goes on, and you know, gets her PhD from Harvard at 21. She's not retarded, you know. She aced everything. She graduated from Swarthmore with honors. She did, you know, but she was quiet.

CO: So it was her temperament really.

NF: That was her temperament. But I remember, I remember, feeling pain about that.

CO: So that was…okay.

NF: And because she was already, as I say, although we had this ambivalence all of our lives, we, we were protective of each other too. You know. I didn't like seeing her unhappy.

CO: So that was a struggle?

NF: That was a struggle and I also, see I don't know whether this was the sort of thing I should say or not because it is pretty personal. I thought, I knew there was a special bond with Marianne and my father, because she had been his first born and then the child that he tried to raise after his first wife died. And mother, I thought mother and Elise both named after each other, you know, had a special bond. So, I know I must have, although I don't remember actually verbalizing this to myself, but I'm in later life, and you don't know whether this is sort of the

drama queen in you that makes this up later on, but I thought whom did I belong to? And yet I, that is so unfair because they never gave more to one than they gave to me. You know.

CO: So you just described yourself as a drama queen.

NF: Uh huh.

CO: I wanted to ask a minute ago to describe yourself, you didn't say that, but that sometimes you could be, you can, well it, it…

NF: Well I mean a drama queen later on in life, I'm sure too, you know.

CO: Did you, when you look back was there a time that you recall going from childhood to adolescence you know, becoming a teenager. You know was that a marked thing in a household with three girls?

NF: It was for me, because I think every teenager wants it, that you want to be popular. And I remember when things, things began to happen for me in Junior High that made me think I was popular and in the High School, and that seems so superficial now to put such weight on it. And I did not think my two older sisters were that popular, and that hurt. I mean that hurt me. I didn't like that because I knew it hurt them.

CO: So you, you, you felt that sense of jealousy on their part because they could see that you were popular?

NF: Yeah, a bit. I, it wasn't very pronounced in Marianne, she was sort of out of the nest almost before I was that, but it was, and Elise, but you see they were much, I always thought they were much smarter than I. And when we, we all went to the same, in time you know went through, Robert E. Lee High School in Jacksonville. And Marianne being 8 years older, graduated first and she was salutatorian and Elise was the valedictorian. And I was number 3 in the class rating. It would have been better if I had been number 15 instead of 3. So I'm sure I felt, felt that, and I remember the teachers would say that I would go through, this sounds like poor pitiful Pearl, and I don't, I think I had, had a blessed childhood, so. But the teachers would say, "Oh, you're the last of the Smith girls.

Are you as smart as they?" I mean teachers say terrible things or at least they did here. And, it got to the point where I would instead of just going quietly with dignity, I said no, no I'm much smarter. Arrogant little thing, you know. But I would just get so tired of hearing that.

CO: So, so being popular in a way was, was sort of your compensation really for, for, yeah, okay.

NF: Yeah, it was nice.

CO: Did the teachers acknowledge, could you tell that, was it the kind of popularity, because teachers are very aware of things like that. Do you think that they…

NF: I don't know. I was pretty popular with my teachers too because, because I made such good grades.

CO: You made good grades and…

NF: And see I, I've really -- this is another thing when I'm so lucky-- I loved doing homework. Now this makes me a real freak, but I loved it. I loved studying and learning and then I had the models of Elise and Marianne, who also loved studying and learning and so it wasn't like I've got to be as good as they are. It was that I really dug it. I really liked it. And there were always books at home, and there was always music at home and mother was a reader you know.

CO: So you were popular with the teachers because you were smart, but you were popular with other students because you were…attractive? Popular, just a personality?

NF: I think it was personality and I guess I was attractive and…I think the balancing act for me was sort of to think I could be all that in spite of being smart, you know because smart is not always too cool. But the other thing, this is a little bit of luck I had, I ran with a group in high school who were smart and popular. My boyfriend was president of the class, senior class, and he was smart, smart, smart. So how nice to fall into that group, or maybe that's what drew us

together. I don't know. So it was, you weren't considered too much of a nerd, if you were smart.

CO: Now were your sisters officially, Elise who was very shy, did she fall into that category of being nerdy or perceived that way by people around her?

NF: I think, I think so. I mean honestly don't know. I know she suffered because she didn't date. I mean she dated occasionally, but not much. She had some issues with weight.

CO: Was that ever an issue for you?

NF: Oh all my life I've had to watch my weight, but you know when, when I was dancing it wasn't so much that. But I think, I think because she was not dating a lot and, you know I think she came into her own as a woman and as an attractive woman when she went to college and particularly when she left, and she came two years to FSU and then she went to Swarthmore and when she, I mean, when you're in Swarthmore she really was in her element there. And, she blossomed socially in every other way because, I mean when, when she graduated from Swarthmore they were at her door asking her to, you know people from Cornell and people from other places asking her to come. So, that did much for the ego, but there were so many highly intelligent people at Swarthmore.

CO: Right, so did, did, did she know even then that it was psychology she wanted to specialize in?

NF: Well she did special honors in English and in psychology, but she always wanted to do psychology.

CO: Do you think that was to figure herself, her own personality…

NF: I don't know. I think it's part of the mystery I guess.

CO: Did you feel after she, she went in that direction that she was analyzing you and everybody around her? When she got the skills to do that.

NF: Subtly, I think she thought that she knew more than most people did about their inner workings, but she probably did.

CO: Well if this were her interview, I would ask about what she thought about the latest developments in psychology, but…You've already talked about your mother, mother/daughter relationships are, can be supremely complicated. Did yours get complicated yet when you became a teenager?

NF: Oh I, you know the reason I think that the answer to this is yes, is that for years I said it, no, but I have been talking to a friend that has a teenage daughter and when she tells me the stories about her teenage daughter who's always been a dream child and now suddenly is rolling her eyes and saying "Oh mother". It is reminding of my early teenage years. Not so much in high school, but in junior high school, you know I was just pubescent. And, that manifested itself, and I remember talking to mother about this afterwards, not in tantrums or anything like that, but breaking into tears at slightest things. And mother always told me that I was entirely too sensitive, for --not for my own good --but for my own happiness. But I just remember being an emotional pool of water a lot. You know.

CO: Hormones?

NF: Oh sure. I'm sure of it and thinking that nobody understood, you know, these deep wonderful things in me, but…

CO: So this would've been like mid-'40s, early '40s.

NF: Yeah, mmhhmm.

CO: So, wow. Yeah.

NF: And, but I will tell you, I mean but I was so, I loved my mother so much I thought that the one, during that period that I mentioned I think in the period of three and a half years when, beginning with my mother's death and then ending with my father's death when aunts, and uncles, and everybody else died. My sister and Lil,you know, my mother's death was the thing I thought, "I'm not going to get over this. I'm not going to be able to stand it."

CO: Now these, what years did that start…that…

NF: My mother died in ’65. And my father died in ’69. So it’s about 3 and a half, four years.

CO: How did you cope with that?

NF: Several ways. I was beginning to build the dance department, here I worked 24/7. I threw myself into my work, and I would go home on weekends to Jacksonville to take care of my father who was then beginning to have the little strokes. But see first he loses my mother, then a year later he loses Lill. I mean, he loses Marianne, his first born. And then a week after that he loses Lill. And he must of just been feeling like …and so I would finish rehearsal late at night and I would drive over to Jacksonville, and I would take care of him, or see that we had people with him, you know, taking care of him. And then I would drive back, but I mean, I did that every weekend for, for about two years. And then I started cracking, you know, I just couldn’t do it that often so I think…

CO: Now, now when did Marianne die?

NF: Marianne died in, let’s see, Lil died in ’66. Marianne died a week before.

CO: That’s your sister Marianne and your aunt Lillian Smith.

NF: Yeah.

CO: Okay, so…

NF: Mother died ’65.

CO: But Elise died…

NF: Elise died just…

CO: Just a year ago.

NF: Yeah.

CO: Okay…

NF: In August of 2010.

CO: Okay, so Marianne's the one who died at 44.

NF: Forty-four.

CO: Okay I, I'm sorry I got those confused, but okay. I'd like, our one hour just buzzed. I have five or six more questions about your childhood.

NF: Sure, go on.

CO: I don't want to go more than say 10 more minutes. You've talked about your family as having very progressive values. Do you recall ever questioning those values? Or not so much questioning the political values, any of your family's values, religious or otherwise; or do you recall that time in your, maybe your teenage years when you, you were rebellious and so questioning…

NF: Well not their political values. I'm trying to think what, I mean, as many a teenager feels, I think that I felt sometimes my father was overly protective. But it was never a big problem, I mean he would just tell mother that I'd stayed out too late or something, and he became particularly protective as he began to have these little strokes. Much later, he would treat me as though I were a little girl who needed to be taken care of. Like he would say now this is the map, you're going to have to drive to such and such, this is the way. And I learned that this was, this was what he could do now.

CO: He was still parenting.

NF: Yeah, and although I didn't need it, this was what he could do. And I saw him, this is an interesting thing about ageing, I saw his world, this is a man who designed the dry docks of Cuba you know, but come down to this, where he wasn't, but he was beginning to have little strokes too and where everything had to be very precise. And he would lay out his, his plate and his silverware for breakfast the next morning, and it had to be exactly right. And it was just that his, well he'd had all these losses and then his world just began to get smaller, and smaller.

CO: And so he was how old when he died?

NF: 84.

CO: Okay, so you didn't disagree or challenge their beliefs or values at all. The religious beliefs even did you?

NF: I know, I will be perfectly blunt about this. That after I went to college I sort of dropped out, when I went home I'd go to church with them and so forth. Dropped out and I had what I have always referred to, as the great 25 year amnesia. It wasn't that I was rebelling against God or church or anything like this. It was just that I sort of forgot about it, you know. And, I mean this says as much about me as it does about the institution, it didn't interest me very much. And every now and then I'd get a little tug, and I would think I really need something . I don't think I lost interest in God and the whole life of the spirit but I didn't do much about it. Yeah.

CO: As, as a college student, really.

NF: Right, and then for a long time really after that.

CO: Were your parents aware?

NF: Yeah.

CO: They were?

NF: They just didn't believe in forced feeding, you know. Mother never asked me to go to church. I would do it when I was with her at home, because, well I liked being with her but I also knew it would make her happy.

CO: Right, right, okay. I pretty much know how you're going to answer this, but I'll ask it anyways. Your parents, your family was obviously conscious of the world outside their household, was it, did, did you all discuss politics, discuss social events, discuss the…

NF: Yeah, well that is one thing we did and this is, maybe this is generational because I think in the first place they didn't get a television set until I was college. I, you know and there's a whole different portrait if you've grown up not in Talbot, but also we ate dinner together every night, and I know from looking at

sitcoms if nothing else, that the whole thing is the kids want to leave the table and they don't want to have supper. We loved it because that was particularly as a young people, that's when the grownups talked. And it, and we would sit down at supper and not get up for an hour and a half or because they were talking and then we'd go up to Clayton in the summer and then after supper Lil and Paul would come down from the hill, and Frank would come in from town. You know and we'd all have this, and I would just sit and listen to all this talk, that I found extremely stimulating and interesting.

CO: Do you recall World War II and their…

NF: Yeah, now what I do, what I do remember is that I had a great horror that we would be invaded. What happened, I figured this out later, is that we didn't have television but we would go and sit at the table, and either right before dinner or right after, H. V. Kaltenborn would come on the radio, and you would hear all these terrible things and I remember going to the neighborhood movie and seeing the worst news. I mean I don't know how any child slept after that. Scenes of the death camps and everything, and the torture and…

CO: So did your family talk about that?

NF: Yes, we would talk, they would talk about this and I mean, in, in good ways. They didn't, they didn't rev up the fear. But I remember being afraid. Being afraid that we were going to be invaded, or that someone would come and make my father go to war. Yeah.

CO: What was your first experience of leaving home like? I'm assuming that's when you went away to college.

NF: When I went away to college. I think there was a pull but I was excited about going to college and what I do feel is that once I got to college I could hardly wait to go home at Thanksgiving or whatever it was. I don't, I don't know whether they let us go home at Thanksgiving then, but certainly Christmas. And I remember noting that a lot of my friends didn't have that strong desire to go home.

CO: So where, did, well it was sad? Was it sad for you mom because you were the last one? Was it…and then did she, she didn't go back to work after that?

NF: [No sound]

CO: No? Do you recall anything like

NF: Well now okay she would've been 58 then.

CO: Do you recall anything like the empty nest syndrome for her?

NF: No, but I'll tell you a funny thing. It was that at one time I don't know, I'm not, I must have been in graduate school or something that I decided that mother and daddy must be withering on the vine with empty nest syndrome. And I went home to surprise them, and I found them in the living room. They didn't drink, each with a glass of wine, and mother, they never smoked, my mother with a cigarette in her hand. And I said, "What are you doing?" Mother said, like a teenager, "Just experimenting." So I thought they're having the time of their lives.

CO: What a cute story.

**End of Audio Track 1**

CO: Okay, you were just telling a story about, you were going to come home and surprise your parents, but they surprised you.

NF: Yes, and take care of them. Because they didn't, life must be a desert without me, you know.

CO: And but then how far did they go with their experimenting? Did you ever find out?

NF: I don't know, but here comes Kent right now.

CO: Okay.

NF: No, I don't think…

[doorbell]

NF: Serve it, but they didn't think the Devil was in the bottle. My father didn't because he was head of an engineering firm with a lot of young engineers, and he said that he didn't want to model that. So at all the banquets that the firm would have and everything, he would never drink. I don't know if that dissuaded anyone but that's what he thought and mother, mother just never had, I mean had not been in her family's culture, so. But the pantry was full of liquor because at Christmas time, professional friends have, my father, they always just gave liquor or cigars, or something. So it was kept there but they didn't, they didn't serve it. And, but during this time when they were suffering so terribly, with empty nest syndrome, I was living in Texas for one, for four years at one time and I invited them to come over and spend some time with me. And they did. And I said I'm going to make daiquiris tonight, because I had invited some people over. Would you like them, and they said, "Well that would be fun to try." So I mean they were okay about doing it, but they've, they didn't serve it in the house. And…so…

CO: That, that memory of catching them having a drink and cigarette, yeah.

NF: And mother with a cigarette at, cause mother was very much against smoking for health reasons and I don't think, I think she really did just try it once, and then didn't do it.

CO: Okay, well this probably, considering your parents' progressive ideals, which were I'm sure you know in a minority, but as a girl living in a region known for its deep rooted traditions did you, did you ever feel bound your gender? Did you ever feel, did you, did you feel at liberty to dream about whatever you wanted to do?

NF: I certainly didn't feel bound by my family about it. When I, the first time I studied with Martha Graham, I was in New York for the summer and I was studying at the Graham studio and I ran into some friends of my parents, who attended Riverside Park Methodist church with them in Jacksonville, and when I came home mother said we have to tell you this funny story that they had come up to mother and daddy at church, you know the next Sunday after they'd come

back from New York. He was there for a Shriner's convention, this man, and they said, "We saw Nancy in New York." And mother said, "Yes, she's been up there this summer." And they said, "Do you know what she's doing? She's dancing." And mother said, "Yes, we're paying for it." So I mean, so there were people I'm sure who thought that this was…

CO: Scandal.

NF: Life upon the wicked stage I guess. But, certainly this view was not held by my parents. Now, I've felt some limitation. There are people in the university who would think I was an ingrate for saying this, but in the early years of developing the dance department here and in working in academe, and particularly as I worked in more levels of administration, I certainly felt that at times, the meetings were dominated by the suits, you know, and that was early on. I don't think that's true now. I don't sense it at all. But I'm not also involved in the administration any more you know. But I know from the appointments that have been made for the people that have earned high places and awards, I, I think that's pretty much gone. I hope. Still some of it, you know.

CO: Did you want to dance as a child?

NF: I loved it. Mother, I was born with really a, a bad scoliosis. And, they, this really got very bad in the my first five years and so the doctors told mother, this I remember from things she's told me, that they, she put me in a full body cast and mother said no I don't think we're going to do that and instead she sent me to ballet school, you know. And so I studied ballet for years and, and music, I mean that was a lot of, that was what young southern girls did anyway, but, but she just knew that was the way to go with trying to…

CO: So that's what treated your scoliosis?

NF: Well it's, I think it's certainly helped and then I think, I'm suffering now because I have stenosis in the back, but I think the dancing kept it from getting worse. Dancing also is a very vigorous athletic activity and so it is not a normal, I think it did more good for me then it did harm, but I think the hips were because

of certain ways I trained and so forth. I mean I've had both of the hips replaced, so they're fine now.

CO: But from taking dance as a young girl, five, six years old, did you, did you early on want to then do that professionally?

NF: I wanted to do it, but I wanted to do two things. I wanted to write and I wanted to do that. And my father wanted me to write. I'm sure that was the influence of Lil,but I wanted to dance. And I did sort of both for a while because, I mean I had, I got two degrees in English Literature. There no big dance departments around, but I would go and study with Martha Graham and so forth. And then when I was a freshman in college, I saw, it was the first time I ever saw the Graham Company. And she was still dancing very actively then. I just looked at that and I thought that's what it, that's what it's all about.

CO: Now does that, you saw her dance?

NF: Yeah.

CO: You actually saw her then?

NF: So I started going and studying with her, but my first knowledge of Martha Graham was at Laurel Falls Camp and Lil used to always have, we had music Wednesday nights and Sunday nights. I think up on the hill and she would bring her little crank controller up there, and we would, and one time she was putting on a Prokofiev Violin Concerto in their early 40s this was very revolutionary, and she said listen to what he's trying to do, and then this is what Martha Graham is trying to do. This is the kind of thing that Martha Graham and I thought Martha Graham, Martha Graham, Martha Graham. I thought that's important. Well shortly thereafter the dance counselor arrived and she was one of Martha's dancers, because Lil staffed her camp with a lot of Bennington Counselors, because those are big emphasis on the arts. So I had my first taste of Graham technique from her, from the dance counselor. So I had had that light turned on and from then on I followed everything I could about Martha Graham and then I saw her.

CO: What was that like?

NF: Seeing her?

CO: Uh huh.

NF: It was unbelievable. I remember sitting, I know exactly where I was sitting. It was here, you know, and in the old Ruby Diamond Auditorium, you know. And I was sitting down in what would have been stage right audience left and she was doing Cave of the Heart, in which she takes this path from upstage left to upstage right when she's eating this fabric, you know. And Cave of the Heart is the story of Medea, and she came in, I thought she's coming right at me, and it was so powerful and so, so wonderful. I mean I thought, I thought just things I had never seen before and images going off in my head and afterwards the dance teacher here, who was teaching in physical education, teaching dance, as most, most dancers taught then in physical education, took me back stage to meet her. And I, so I having seen this giant come across the stage, I went back stage and she came up to my chin. She was this little woman which is just the power of her performance really.

CO: Wow. So how long after that did you go and study with her?

NF: The next summer.

CO: Oh my. Did she remember you?

NF: Oh no. I 'm sure, I'm sure she didn't.

CO: But your parents knew, your mother, and father knew that you wanted to dance?

NF: Yeah, and mother loved the idea. And my father was not against dance. He just thought, I mean, he just thought it would be much more stable.

CO: But that, did they expect that you would, would, would find someone to take care of you? That was your, or was your father wanting you to write

NF: Well see when I look back on it, I remember arguing with him about that and saying do you think writing, that I'm going to make a living writing? And he said well Lil did, you know so. But, I'll tell you another thing he objected to, which seems so strange, because he was very practical, but I said I was going to take one semester and do the, excuse me for saying this, but the Mickey Mouse education courses, you had to take to get a teaching certificate. At that time what I had to take was Mickey Mouse, I don't know if it's any better now in the College of Education, but and I just did it to get a, you know and I did an internship and I thought that I'll just have in my back pocket. And frankly I loved teaching, you know, I loved the internship. I was teaching English, because that was my field and my father didn't like that at all. He said, "If you have that you'll use it, instead of exploring", and which, I mean it was wonderful advice, but I remember saying, "Daddy it's not going to corrupt me. I'm just going to get a teaching certificate, which he, I never used, but you know. So that was sort of an interesting…

CO: But do you think that they had this, this…

NF: That I'd get married and…

CO: That right, that you would marry someone who would, who would, so that you wouldn't have to or were they both set on you being able to take care of yourself?

NF: I think they were both set on my doing something important and would…

CO: Being independent?

NF: Being independent because, right, that I really need to talk about because my mother said, my mother, my happily married mother said after both my sisters had gotten married, she went to visit them once, just sort of made a little tour and visited them, and they were going to you know, young marriage and babies and so forth. And she came back and she said, well I've just been visiting your sisters and I see no reason for you to change your life. And then one time, she also said don't marry, get married unless you just can't help it. And I said, "Why do you say that? What do you mean by that?", because she and dad seemed so happy and she said, "Because marriage is hard. It's wonderful, but it's

hard, and you're very independent." And she said, "You shouldn't get married unless the alternative is worse". And I said, "What was the alternative with Daddy?" I mean she said, "Never to see him again." If, if you, because you know, back in that day they wouldn't have lived together. So if she had just turned him down, they probably would have, that's what she meant. She that you have to love someone so much that to not be with them is the alternative that could be worse, you know.

CO: Did you tell, did, so you took that to heart?

NF: I don't remember saying I'll never get married, but I remember, but I bring it up because the point is they certainly did not put any pressure on me to get married.

CO: To get married.

NF: Although they thought it would be wonderful. I remember mother once saying, "Now you of all the three would have been the great mother." I'm not sure she was right about that, but you know. And, but there was never any, that was long after you know. There was never any pressure to get married, and the other thing that I noticed was that when I would visit some of my friends, I would hear their mothers talking and everything and they would say, "Oh yes, so and so, now who'd she marry?" And my family, I remember hearing them say, "Oh so and so, now what does she do?" And that's a big difference. Yeah, and it was you do something. Didn't mean that they wanted you to be rich and famous necessarily. It's just that you did something and you did something that you believed in and did something that you liked and you know.

CO: Marriage was more or less incidental to that, the first and foremost thing was what you did with your talents?

NF: Well, I guess, but you know if, I mean they, if I found someone and just want desperately to marry they would have certainly endorsed that, but.

CO: But it wasn't the first and foremost calling that they felt for their daughters.

NF: No, but all for so many of my contemporaries it was theirs.

CO: Right, right, did your father know how your mother felt about, or did he know that she told you what she did about marrying?

NF: I don't know. I don't know.

CO: Do you think he felt that way?

NF: I think he wanted us to be happy and successful in what we did.

CO: Do you think that suggest maybe that your mother did, did not regret but miss…

NF: I don't think she regretted it. I think that, I mean that I never saw that side. I mean it seems sort of logical that she would've, but I never saw that side. I think she thought as she said that marriage was hard and have to you really have to want that very, very much, with that person, the particular person. Marriage was a person specific thing, not whereas with a lot of my friends they just, they were going to get married, and then they were going to find somebody to fill that slot, you know. But, and I think that's, that's what she meant and she said she had just visited my sisters and they were going through all this. I mean just the stuff people go through for their, going through marriage, and going through having babies and…

CO: But, but so did either of your sisters question that, because it does seem to be with most people that I talk to and most people that I know, I mean it's, it's the institution. You know something about the institution that is normal and so to not be married they're somehow not normal, but it sounds like that just was not…

NF: No, I think Elise married Dick. They were both up there in Boston and she was going to school there and he was in at ETS Seminary. And I think she, I think that they just really fell in love. I think that was a real love match, although it certainly had its troubles later on, but it certainly a real love match. And I think Marianne decided to marry Omar the Methodist minister because they both wanted to go to Africa as missionaries. And I think once they got to Africa that relationship, I mean they'd already had three children here, and they kept getting run out of churches because of their views on integration and so they went over

to Africa where the British church nearly ran them out because they didn't have the feeling they were going over to teach the white man's religion to the Africans. They were adored by the African people. I mean for years, even after she died they would write and, but they went up there, and she had her fourth child there. And I remember her writing to me after she first got over there. She loved Africa and she just said, "I'm so happy and I think I have really fallen deeply in love with my husband," and so she didn't mention that they had already had three children and she a parent. I assumed that had happened before but.

CO: So they had three children, but they…

NF: They had four children.

CO: But they had the children after they were married?

NF: Oh yeah.

CO: Okay, but she said, she was saying she fell in love with her husband…

NF: She said, "I think I've fallen deeply in"…this is a letter telling about how wonderful Africa was. They already had been married. They had three children and she said, "Oh and I think I've fallen deeply in love with my husband."

CO: Oh what a story. Oh, now did that make you at all think something was missing for you, because you weren't married? Did you ever have that?

NF: No, I really never felt that anything was missing because I wasn't married, because as I, I mean I had important and good relationships. I usually say I have relationships . I just don't let them move in. I think it was a, a sense of not wanting to give up my independence.

CO: Getting [something about Bailey]

NF: Oh thank you for telling me. You don't need that.

CO: So, you didn't, you didn't feel you, that was not because you had relationships so…

NF: No, Yeah and I had the whole active life here professionally you know, and so I never, I never felt that. Now I will say that there was a time I guess in my latter 40s or something or sometime in my 40s where I didn't want to get married particularly, but I had this strong, there is something about this biological clock thing, and I never thought I had it, but I had this strong impulse twice I remember that I had to have a baby. And the first time it took me quite by surprise. I was flying back from some conference or something and a woman walked down the aisle in the plane and she had this little baby in her arms, and I just looked at that and I thought, "I want that," and I mean I wanted *that* particular baby you know. And then I thought what on earth you know. And then another time when I remember just thinking about it. But these are like two instances. They, I didn't think about it obsessively for weeks, but I did, and I think that has something to do with your biological clock.

CO: Mmhmm. So you were in your early 40s then?

NF: I think so, yeah. And you see, I don't know how, I mean I know that they're wonderful women who do it all. I don't think I could've done what I did in building the dance program here, because I was also writing in professional magazines and so forth. And choreographing and trying to function as an artist as well as building something over there, and I don't think I could've done, something would've given, something would've so I, and I, I don't think I could've done it and done right by children, but I know people who've done it, I know people who are doing it now, but they are going into programs that have already been developed and not building them from scratch, you know. I know they're wonder women. I don't think I'm one who could have done it though.

CO: Okay, it sounds like if your both parents and both sides of the family with the exception of the older group were progressive about race and, and it sounds pretty much like your family was the same way about gender. Do you think your, your life would've been different if you'd had brothers instead of sisters? Do you think your parents would have, how do you think they would've been to boys? Do you think they have a…

NF: That's such an interesting question, because I can remember when, when Elise had John Andrew. Elise had two daughters and one son and when John Andrew, when they came to see us one time and I guess I was home for some reason then and my father took John Andrew out for a walk or for ice cream or something. Somehow I got involved in the whole thing because I remember sitting at a table with them, and he was talking to John Andrew like he was a little man. Not like he was a little boy. John Andrew was getting off on it, he loved granddaddy doing, you know treating him, but and my father also said sometimes, said he didn't think there was anything as wonderful in the world except, except little girls and he didn't know how he'd be with a son. Which is, I think is rather unusual cause most men want a son don't they? I mean, that's what the literature says anyway. So I think it would, it would've been very different and I look at, at my family, particularly the Smiths but also the Partridges, there were so many strong women, but there were strong men too who accomplished things you know. The Smith family history's full of people you know who, who did accomplish a lot, I think of the people that had an impact most of my life and most of them are women.

CO: So you, you, it sounds like you really did not at any point feel constrained, certainly not within your family.

NF: No, I…

CO: About being a woman…

NF: No, No, I honestly think, I think I'm being honest when I say I never felt that.

CO: Okay, what did…

NF: I think the culture constrains you sometime, but I can remember when we would not have worn, I'm wearing nothing but pants now, when we would not have worn pants going on campus.

CO: Right, but it sounds like your parents, both of them, escaped that constraint, and so you don't think your mother experienced it as a young woman? Do you think that her family was progressive about gender relationships?

NF: I can't imagine that they were anything except pretty well programed into the culture.

CO: So how do you think your mother and daddy wound up…

NF: But then, then look at that because even, even in the older one, mother's older siblings, who were not progressive in terms of race, they did things.

CO: The women?

NF: Yeah.

CO: The women too?

NF: One of the older sisters was very, very active in, in state issues with the what used to be called Florida Game and Wildlife and she wrote her name is in one, the very first Florida bird book, and all that. So…

CO: So did, did you, we're definitely going to talk about that when we get to history, but was the women's movement sort of much ado about nothing as far as you were concerned, since you grew up in a very progressive household?

NF: Well the women's movement I think was, you know, had to happen was incredibly important and vital and I think took some wrong paths probably, as any movement does. But I remember once, now this was maybe 30 years ago, or something like that when some women on campus asked me to write, why didn't I write position papers, and this sounds arrogant, but I felt I'm doing the thing, why should I write it? And I also felt that this particular group, this is why, this is an example of a wrong path; it was big rhetoric and short on action. You know, they talked, and they wrote position papers. They didn't try to get legislation through or anything like that. So, I had mixed feelings I guess about that, but that certainly is not an indictment of the whole women's movement, because I think the women's movement was one of those world changing and life changing things that had to happen.

CO: We'll ask specific questions about that but I will wait. Let's see. Okay, were pets important when you were growing up? Did you have pets?

NF: Didn't have any.

CO: No?

NF: [Indicates no] We didn't have any and both, that's another thing because mother's family and my father's family had big dogs and so forth, and I was told early on that because we lived in Jacksonville, and not in Monticello or Jasper, that it was just too dangerous to have them. They would get killed, and mother didn't want us to go through that.

CO: Okay, now lastly, and then we'll be finished with this section. We talked about family, but what about friends. Have you got any friends that you, that cover your whole life? Do you still have friends from your young, your early days?

NF: That is interesting. Not from childhood I don't think, you know.

CO: From college?

NF: I have some from college, yeah. Mmhhmm, that I still keep up with and…

CO: And that's a big part of your life now? Are most of your friends…

NF: That was usually by correspondence, you know or emails and such. Most of my friends now are friends that I've known in adulthood and in professional life, yeah.

CO: Yeah, I was going to say through colleague or contacts from…

NF: Yeah, an interesting thing is one of my very, very closest friends lives right outside of London, and she's become a good friend of both Robert and me, and her husband died just about four years ago. And, so when we have gone over there, we always see her a lot, but when, about a year ago, we went on a trip to the Inner Hebrides to celebrate Robert's 70th birthday, belated a little bit, but and took her with us, she's that good of friend. We always say we don't travel well with others. We really don't and, but she's a perfect traveling companion, but the interesting thing is there were three of us in one of our professional organizations that became friends in it, we all are retired about the same time. My first retirement, and it suddenly occurred to us that we weren't going to see each

other anymore, because we saw each other two maybe three times a year at professional meetings only. So we decided that we would have an annual meeting just the three of us, and the criteria is that it had to be in a city that had great food, and it had to be an interesting city, and it had to have fairly good shopping, but Rona and I weren't particularly interested in shopping, but anyway the first time we went to New Orleans, and the second time we went to Savannah. Third time we went to San Diego. Then one of them died, and Rona is the one remaining. So we email, we Skype with her. She's become as close to Robert as she is to me and I would consider that a very close friendship, but we don't see each other some time for several years.

CO: But you stay in touch.

NF: But we're in touch all the, you know, a lot, and it probably wouldn't happen without technology.

CO: Right, yeah, yeah, but friends are a big, sounds like a big part of your life now.

NF: They are and we entertain, and that's fun.

CO: Yeah, well this place is perfect for that. Actually I'm, the next question was about entertainment and recreation and artists and writers and musicians, which that's your family. Besides, some people do those things for entertainment. I mean they do those for recreation. It's been a way of life in your family. What did you all do for recreation?

NF: As a child, I'm going back to childhood now, is that okay?

CO: Oh yeah, yeah.

NF: As I said earlier, they had wonderful ways of making fun things that didn't cost anything when, when daddy had not been really that successful until later, but and one of the things, I remember going on picnics out in a place in Jacksonville, and I don't know if it's still called this, called Soldier's Bluff. And it was just a beautiful thing over-looking Saint John's River and we would swing on grape vines and daddy would have a charcoal pot, and we did not, I never had like

a T-bone or porter house steak probably until I was in college, or something like that. But he would get a big piece of beef and he, now we don't eat beef at all now, but, and he would, you know, cook it on that, and we would have potatoes and everything, and, and most of all it was looking at the river and swinging on vines, and just, and it was just heaven.

NF: So being outside was…

CO: Being outside, and then another thing that we did, because we always went out a big family, big event to cut our own Christmas tree. But we also, there was a thing that we, we would go on, you know the usual Sunday afternoon drive, but we would go in Spring, wildflower hunting. And it was like a contest for whoever could find the first violet of spring. You know, I mean things like this just seem so little, but were huge to us. We thought they were just, just so wonderful, you know.

CO: Did you do that until you became a teenager? Do you remember doing it that long?

NF: I don't know if we did it that long, but and we went, you know we would go to movies. Not a lot, but mother had a sister, who would, to whom she was very close, and they lived close to us and so the families had family things together a lot. And there were church activities, you know.

CO: So besides yourself as a dancer, your one sister was an academic, did she teach with her psychology PhD. or did she practice, was she…?

NF: Oh she taught.

CO: She taught?

NF: And she started the graduate program at Bryn Mawr in psychology.

CO: Oh yes, okay, and then Marianne…

NF: Marianne was a real gifted musician, but she wanted to go to Africa.

CO: So she was really, she had missionary zeal?

NF: She had missionary zeal from the time she was three years old. And then she and her husband had various churches, and she was a very active pastor's wife, unlike Elise, you know, because they dealt with it in different ways. And she got two degrees, I think, in religious education too so masters and…

CO: So how many did children did your sisters have? Marianne had…

NF: Elise had three. Marianne had four.

CO: Oh okay.

NF: And one of whom was the youngest, and was her, I think the last one she had, the one she had it now I forgot, was just her love child. She loved that child, but that child on the day she graduated she went to meet the people at her new job that she was going to have, and she came back on the expressway and a drunk driver killed her. They had a horrible time getting through that, you know. That was after Marianne died, so Marianne did not know that, but her siblings had a very hard time.

CO: Well, let's, the next category is education, so I think we can get through that and then we'll stop for a little while.

NF: Okay.

CO: Okay, yeah I think we're going to do that. You, you couldn't possibly have talked for two hours, in the capacity that you've lived without talking about education so far, but just to reiterate your, your BA and your MA and, and your PhD.

NF: The BA, MA were in English here.

CO: At FSU?

NF: At FSU, and then after I got the MA, I was still studying in the summer with Martha Graham, but they invited me to teach dance here. I mean the day I got the, I defended my thesis, and it was in physical education is was all dance was at that time, is most of it was, and that's another whole story about moving it out of physical education and so forth, which is a very…

CO: Do that, were you responsible for that or instrumental in that?

NF: Very.

CO: Okay.

NF: And it went into various homes, but that in itself, well it's going to take too long, but anyway so I taught here in physical education teaching dance, for five years. And then I went away to get my doctorate and I got it at Texas Women's University in dance and related arts, which was a new program. So I had a lot of flexibility about how I was going to tailor it. And my dissertation was on modern dances that had been based on literary themes. So my two worlds came together and from 1927-1957.

CO: But it was also very historical.

NF: It was and it was pretty traditional, conventional research and I went up to New York for a while to get access, I mean, you know technology is so incredible what it has done then. Back then, you know, if you were doing real hard research that kind, I had to go through all the *New York Times* with all their reviews of things and so forth. Well you know I had to do it in the most arduous and laborious way, so I just went up to New York for a while, and probably for about a month and a half and because I could have access to the materials right there. And, it was really a wonderful experience. I mean I like, as I always said, I liked homework, but I like the research, I mean it was very, it wore me out, but it was…

CO: And that came also from a family very, who highly valued education.

NF: Yes.

CO: So it was really, there was never any doubt about whether you and your sisters would be professionals. It sounds like your parents just expected that of you.

NF: I think they thought it would happen, but they never said you have to do this.

CO: Right, right.

NF: See I think it, I feel like I have, have people say they really didn't pressure us to do this, but you feel a kind of pressure. I remember when Marianne and Elise and I were all mortar boards. Marianne and Elise and I were all Phi Beta Kappas, and I guess it was when I got tapped for Phi Beta Kappa that I called home to tell mother about it and I said, "And this is the last," and she said, "What do you mean?" I said, "This is the last, I don't care what they do." I must have been a difficult person and mother said, "Now, now, now Nancy," and pulled me out of my tree.

CO: Well if you had had children, do you think you would've had strong, would you have been like you parents, and just sort of it would've been up to them? How would you have handled a child who wasn't ambitious?

NF: I have thought, I have thought about how I would've handled a child period, because I've had quite a few people tell me that I would be a wonderful mother and I'm not sure I would've been. I mean I would like to think I would be, but I think I would have I might have been over protective. I'm, I'm a worry wart. I might've worried too much and I think my mother worried, but you never saw it, and she had that kind of control. And, I mean she would tell you she was deeply concerned about something, but I don't know how I would've handled a child. And sometimes I think, you know that, that must been the most wonderful experience in the world. But you know you gotta consider my generation. So many of my contemporaries back in the '60s and '70s were going through the most horrendous things with drug culture and so forth. And see my mother did not believe in censorship, and she said if you try to censor everything there's no, there's no end of it, you just keep censoring. You make the child safe, a safe filter to receive things, and I always believe that. I still do to an extent, but I also think that it was, I don't know if it's ever easy, but it was easier for mother because drugs weren't, I mean I didn't even know about them. And also the world was not an open book the way it is now, and we would certainly didn't have to worry about internet.

CO: Right.

NF: You know, the dangers of the Internet.

CO: Well when we talk about motherhood, I will get your reflections on that. I think for now we'll stop and take a little break.

NF: Okay.

CO: Okay?

NF: What…

**End of Audio Track 2**

OLD

CO: Okay we're back on and we're talking now. It's still Sunday the 20th and we're talking about moving to the subject of money. And my first question about money, is would you consider that you have achieved your financial ambitions in life?

NF: At the risk of sounding so little, I think I'm very blessed to have what I have. That is in the context this doesn't have anything to do with early ambitions, but that's in the context of seeing myself and my financial stability if anybody really has that these days, in the context of some many people who don't have it. So, I am quite satisfied and grateful with what I have. I think there was a time early on I never wanted, I didn't have any desire to be enormously wealthy but I wanted to be enormously secure, and that may have been from, as I said I never really felt poor even though my family was they managed to make life fun and I certainly never went hungry, so I cannot even say that and there was no real poverty and uh. But I did know that there was a time when daddy gave my mother the final payment on the mortgage of our house for Christmas, and had to take back on New Year's. And it became something they both laughed about so much you know which was a wonderful way. And I knew that there were things sometimes we wanted particularly as an emerging pubescent, my mother would just say that your father can't do that for you right now, and so I knew that there were money issues and maybe that's why I always thought that I don't want to end up in the poor house and I want to be secure, but I never had this ambition to be vastly wealthy, I mean I have so much. I bought this house for $33,000, but that's, those were the times and it seemed like a fortune to me then.

CO: Describe the role money has played in shaping the circumstances of your life.

NF: Okay, I just said I bought this house for $33,000. I couldn't have done that if I hadn't had $10,000 for the down payment that I got from selling my parents' house in Jacksonville. And they did not leave me enormous wealth, but they left, because we spent most of it for daddy in assisted living at the end which I would do anytime, because we got him in a wonderful place right across the street from

the church and people came to see him all the time. But furthermore, but I mean I certainly by that time was earning a living, they essentially paid for my college education. They helped with Graduate School, I did a lot of that too but, where were we, but that helped shape.

CO: Now, you bought this house in 69 you said, it was built in 50. Do you know how many owners it had had?

NF: It had had the original owners and then they left, and they rented it one year to someone else.

CO: So this house is really saturated with your life?

NF: Exactly, and we added and you know I told what I did to that room, that was before Robert and then we added that house, and then we done things like we pitched the roof, it was a flat roof which was beautiful I mean it was sort of a Japanesey design, but you know a pitched roof (??? oak). So when we pitched the roof, we tiled the pool, we put skylights over the pool, things like that and we worked on the yard a lot, but in terms of mass, we redone the kitchen you know, comes a time after many, many years where you have to do that and do a bathroom, but we haven't done major construction except for that a room of my own.

CO: Yeah, Well you really kind of described your relationship to money, does it, when you don't have money and never known security, it has, you have a different relationship?

NF: I'm sure. I believe I must give a lot, I won't say a lot, but a healthy portion of it back. I have a very strong feeling about tithing. I don't think that the tithe means that I have to give ten percent to Holy Comforter Church or St. James Church, I think I have to give it to the needs of the world and God's work you know. Uh I mean want to do this, this is not being goody, goody, it's just I really want to do this, I wish I had more to do, to give that way.

CO: So that's, that's a good point. So, do you attribute perhaps some of what, I mean as you said, who can be secure in today's economy. But of some of the

bounty that you experienced from this, you've kind of been a channel you've let it flow and so you've been fortunate enough, so you've given back, you attribute some of this bounty to that principle, that sort of universal principle, do you see it that way as a universal principle?

NF: As giving back?

CO: Uh huh.

NF: Absolutely, I think we're conduits really for a lot of things. Gifts of money but gifts of other things, and Robert and I have spent a lot of our own money in getting this Lillian Smith center developed, it was an old building, and we have spent a lot of our money that and it is a great labor of love and we do, I work up there so it's all pro bono cause we don't have salaries or anything like that. I mean just what we've piled into it fortunately, Robert absolutely fell in love with the work with Mills work, with the vision, with everything. This was not, I introduced him to the place, and Esther and Frank were still alive, and he fell in love with it, and fell in love with the whole idea. And so, I couldn't do what I've done up there without him.

CO: And how long have you been sort of working on this?

NF: I was left the life, we have a life estate in her place where she did most of her writing and in her library which is two thousand books and so we had renovated the uh, well we made safe all the part that protects the books and we've had them dated and indexed so forth. But we have renovated the living area, it's very small. It's one bedroom, a bath, kitchen, and then the big library which is beautiful.

CO: But there's a retreat center there?

NF: Oh yeah, but see the rest of the hill has, she tore down most of the cabins when she closed the camp, but she left two or three and rocked them in for her sisters when they retired from their universities. So we used those, we have another one down across the road, across the highway which was the original

camp property, and then we have what use to be the craft shop and it's the common room now with a huge kitchen and that's where we meet people.

CO: Meet together for the retreat?

NF: Yeah meet uh huh. So as I said it's been a labor of love and our only concern is what happens when we leave the planet or our energies just run out. So a really wonderful thing has begun to happen and I don't know whether it will be the solution but I would hope it is and that is we have developed a great relationship with Piedmont College, it's a wonderful little ole liberal arts college. You know about it?

CO: Yeah, yeah!

NF: And the provost is so supportive of what we are doing, and they had a Maymester up at our place, last time and they're doing another one this May.

CO: Oh my goodness.

NF: They have done wonderful things that are supportive of us, and so I'm hoping that should I leave the planet or whatever that maybe that can be a more official umbrella.

CO: Right, there's so many ways they can utilize that.

NF: I think it could be a win, win, I mean it already is. We like their sensibility, they believe some of the same things we believe. For instance, one of our board members said, "There's an annual Lillian Smith book awards started by Southern Regional Counseling and it's cosponsored by Southern Regional Counseling, UGA, and the Decatur Center for the book." So we go there whenever we can for the book awards. And one of our board members said, "Well why doesn't somebody get copies of all of the book award winning members?" It's been going on since the sixties. Well I mentioned this, the provost was just telling us what happened at a board meeting and he said, "Well Piedmont College can do that, they already have copies of all the books that have done special collections with plates marking Lillian Smith." And they're going to bring Lillian Smith winners in as special

lecturers, so I mean they're serious, I don't know how serious they will be in terms of taking it over, but I think it's going that way.

CO: I expect that will be, because they can utilize it for so many reasons, it's more than just a retreat.

NF: Exactly, he said can we use it as a location in case we want to bring the faculty. And we said certainly.

CO: Biology department can use it right? There's so much on the land that you need.

NF: You see last Maymester, they had three faculty and six students. One faculty was in Biology, and did the flora and fauna thing, one was in creative writing, and one was in Religion.

CO: And they all two students with them?

NF: No, all of the students took course in all three. They worked their tails off, so this year because it was so intensive they think they're going to do just two. One is in Biology and Ecology, we've got them in touch with some of the people that know every trail, and another's in writing, and they come up to visit us at board meetings, so we just had them in and we think they are going to be terrific. So it's beginning, so we'll just see. It's just the sensibility of that place Piedmont, it seems to be consonant with what we've got. I just sort of got away from money.

CO: That's okay. Well let's just start on the professional life. Most of your professional life has been here at FSU?

NF: Yes, and I left in 59 never to return. I thought and went to get the doctorate and then I really took it as a leave, but I really didn't think I'd come back. I got offered a job at Sam Houston University in Huntsville, Texas. I decided to take it, so I called FSU and told them I wasn't coming back. So I stayed at Sam Houston for four years, and then one day I woke up and thought Sam Houston had little pockets of excellence and I really enjoy my work and dance there, and then you would drive in to the big world 70 miles to Houston and then come back.

One day I woke up and thought I don't want to die or retire here. Also, my mother had a recurrence of her cancer, but I didn't think that she would need me; I thought my sister was dying Marianne. As it turned out mother died first, but I thought well that coupled with my desire to just leave. Not hating Texas.

CO: So can you remind roughly what years you were in Texas?

NF: I was in Texas from 60-64, came back in the fall of 64, and they called me and said would you come back because Bandie Dickinson who was a dancer here is taking a leave but she thinks she is going to retire, and I said I would come back for one year. Because I thought, number one I'll be near my family, but this will be a good place to decide where I'll go next, cause at that age I was being sought after and so I knew I could get opportunities to go elsewhere. So I already thought of this as a one year thing and this was in 64, and I came back and began to seem possible to build a dance department that the university had changed, it was more of a real university. I don't know why I thought that because there was still, nobody really thought dance had much business in academia. But anyways, I just decided that it will be only for one year, but I will give it my all you know. I had a wonderful year and just decided to retire and they said will you stay on, and I said well one more year. Okay so about the third or fourth time I said one more year I thought you know I guess I'm staying. I was just so involved by that time.

CO: Now was that the traditional tenure track? How did it work then, the tenure?

NF: Oh yeah, it was a tenure track position. This really still amazes me because I've gotten so many people through tenure and so forth in the latter years, but I didn't even think that much about it. Back then it wasn't the monster it is now, and so I got tenure, and then I got the dance area, we were invited to move into another area and several people invited us, and I was told just to shop around. The first thing I was asked was if we wanted to become a part of music and so the dean of music then was Wiley Housewrite??. And people have mixed feelings about him. I thought he was wonderful, and he was one of my greatest, I don't use the word mentor easily, but he was certainly that to me in terms of showing me administrative ropes and the ways of the world. So I talked to him, and said

to him do you want us to be an adjunct to you, you know do choreography for you operas and so forth, or do you want a major program, a dance major a professional program? He said I want it to be the best dance program in the southeast and ultimately in the country, he said I'll show what I mean and I'll give you a totally separate budget. So those were just five great years, and they had fought a lot of battles for the arts in the university that I was able then to piggy back on.

CO: So you started building that program or was that to come?

NF: Oh no, I had started when I came back expanding the curriculum, doing this and that, starting a degree program.

CO: So now where did you wind up?

NF: Okay, so after five years, Wiley and I looked at each other and he said they are reorganizing the university again. I used to say the reorganize it every Tuesday, but they were reorganizing , he said that's where tech dance goes at. So we moved out and the university had reorganized into something with eight provosts and this only lasted about two years. We were in a funny unit called Communication and the Arts. So here was big communications, here was big music, and here was little teeny dance in there, and this was okay with me, so that lasted for two years and then the person who had started that left and it had imploded and they went back to the usual system of deans and academic vice presidents or whatever. So we just floated and nobody noticed that we were a part of anything and Bob Lawton who was the academic vice president invited me to sit on the Council of Deans and I learned a lot but I didn't know what I was doing. One day the president who was Bernie Sliger called me and said I want you to come up to my house and have lunch. Well since he had never done that before I just thought oh my, I am in big trouble so bad, but I went to his house to have lunch. [Interruption]

**End of Audio Track 3**

CO: Okay we are, have reconvened again. It's Mrs. [Dr.] Nancy Fichter's home. It's Monday November the 21st and we talked a little bit yesterday, mostly about your family life, your extended family, and a little bit about money. So today we'll start with a subject that's probably even more loaded than your family, which is your work, and I know that's been such a huge part of your life. So anything you want to say about it, and I think I asked you this, and if I didn't directly ask you, you started answering it but maybe we can answer more directly. How many jobs besides this profession teaching here which is I'm sure will be your legacy have you had?

NF: I taught here in two periods. I taught in the fifties, beginning as a graduate student in 52 and teaching through 59, and then I left and I did not think was coming back. After I got a degree I taught in Texas for four years at Sam Houston University. Then I came back, this may be really already on your tape, because I thought I would come back for just one year , because it was good place to be, close to my family but also to decide what I was going to do next, where I would go next. I continued on and on so I've been here ever since.

CO: Did you say you came back in 50?

NF: I came back in 64.

CO: So I don't think I need to ask which job was most rewarding and why, although you can address the why if you want to answer what was least rewarding.

NF: Of the two jobs?

CO: Yes, meaning any work that you've done.

NF: Well I've done a lot of work off campus in terms of consulting and that sort of thing. I think that's a whole different kind of experience, and the work at Sam Houston University was rewarding in that the particular dance program there was in its growth stage and I had good colleagues, and I really did enjoy it, but it was not something that I was to any degree as invested as my investment here at Florida State became. Although perhaps if I would have stayed, perhaps it would

have been there too. The idea of coming back and having total responsibility to do whatever I wanted to, which was to build a professional program here, a real dancing place, a place where dancers were developed but also dances, choreography, the new art was made. As I said yesterday, I don't know why I thought it would be so possible here. At first dance had been in physical education, and it was considered recreational, pleasant, but not a serious art form even some of the other arts I don't think really, it was something adjunctive to them, and I mentioned this yesterday that I had the first few years were the years during which dance exited from physical education. We went into the school of music which is now the College of Music. I had a wonderful supportive dean who didn't want us to be adjunct to another discipline that wanted to develop a truly professional dance program. So those were five years of greatest growth, and I think I addressed that in the previous tape how that went from one place to another.

CO: Was it unusual to be hired to start a program so early in your professional life?

NF: I wasn't hired to start a program, I was hired to teach dance and physical education. I think one of things that was, and I'm grateful that physical education took dance in all over the country, because nobody else did. The idea of dance and I can speak for it here was they wanted it to be good, they wanted it to be, but it was totally adjunctive to physical education and it was simply to serve the needs of physical education majors and the idea . . . They went along with me when I got approval for a dance major program, but it was still very much, that was not the single focus of what they wanted it to be, and I think the time I knew I really had to leave, it just seemed so obvious to me that it should be one of the arts community here on campus. I think the time I knew this was really it and I had do something was when a leader in the physical education program here said, "Okay you've gotten good enough you don't need to get any better." And I don't think you say that to any living, growing thing, then at that time a vice president in a higher position within administration decided that we should be somewhere else. He helped me move, and we moved into music.

CO: Is it now just common that dance….

NF: Very few dances in physical education, very few of the notable dance programs are in physical education. At the time we moved out, there was a little group of about six of us and we actually formed a little organization called CODA the Council of Dance Administrators which became a real force in dance in the country. We were all trying to do the same thing which was to run a certain kind of program which was a professional program and usually leading to the BFA the Bachelor of Fine Arts or the MFA and we were, FSU was about I think was the 4th in nine to move out of physical education of that little group of six. By now very programs are in physical education, that are substantial programs.

CO: It just occurred to me until now because history as a discipline is also depending on where you are as to whether it's a social science or humanities and how dance could be either fine arts or science. If it's in physical education, I'm sure its treated like a science.

NF: No, I wish it had been. Physical education at that time I think was moving more towards the science. It was in the college of education always, wherever it was, and it was I think considered by most of academia as recreation. That's unfair because they did do some really interesting research and they got a lot more closer and closer to science. In fact many physical education programs no longer exist under that rubric they exist as movement sciences, and see that's really more accurate.

CO: That's what I was thinking of how it could actually advance in my mind or could fit in that…

NF: If it had gone that way along with a full emphasis on its identity as a major art, then…but it wasn't going that way at that time.

CO: Is there any other profession you've thought about that you'd like to do besides what you've done?

NF: Well I think the other thing I would have wanted to do was to write and I have written quite a bit but it's been professional essays or professional journals,

or a chapter in a book, something like that, and I think the real thing is that people say is why didn't you write fiction, and my usual answer is no guts. I think that I'm quite intimated by the idea of doing that although I have. People hear my stories sometimes and say you should write, but it's a significant huge difference between a good story teller and a writer of fiction.

CO: Do you have stories that you feel like if you . . . ?

NF: All bits of stories.

CO: How about short stories? Do you ever try short stories?

NF: I've never tried that.

CO: Never tried that. So…

NF: I don't feel frustrated in that, but you asked if there was another thing and this would have been the other thing I think.

CO: Is that the kind of writing you think you would have wanted to do? That kind of popular fiction?

NF: I wouldn't describe it as popular fiction. I would have liked, you know, I would have liked to written the great American novel. I would have liked to have written both fiction and nonfiction. When I would write the essays that sometimes got published in professional journals I would get a real high from doing it. Because I think you know this is the way I teach that graduate course that I co-teach with a musician of course in choreography, I think composition is composition is composition, you know. And I think a lot of the same principles apply, and that's why the relationship with the musician I teach with in the graduate course is so harmonious, although it's harmonious for a lot of reasons because he is so brilliant, but he but we don't both believe in that and he could critique the dance structures and the dance forms as well as I can.

CO: Is that what you're essays were about? Critiquing form?

NF: No there about a lot of different things over the years they've been about anything from the, the whole nature of what dance has been for me but also the

nature of dance as a significant form, to political things that have been going on in the country that are hostile to the arts. And the last few have been more about that I think. I haven't written in a long time and I haven't written in probably about ten years.

CO: So you just said something that prompted me to explore that. Well what dance means to you. I mean is it like the air you breathe, I'm sure but could you talk about that?

NF: I think it is . . . I can say what I think dance is and then you can extrapolate from that I think what it means for me but I think it is a transformative art. I think any art is. I think when you make art you take the stuff that's inside yourself and you cast it out and you put in some sort of form, although those forms vary. I think this is true in writing and in painting and whatever. And then you've turned it into something other that then can be extended to other people or to perceptions so. I mean there are all sorts of clichés and most of them are right that it is at its best, communication. But I think it does something to the person to the person who does that when you take the chaos that usually lives inside yourself, and I don't mean that it has to be great angst--it could be great joy-- and shape it in some way and put it out into another form. And then you are away from it, and you look at that and it's all tied in with what meaning really is and I think its, I forgot what great musician said it, that the meaning of a piece of music lies between the notes, and I think that's true of dance, and to develop dancers who get to that point where they're not doing steps. But they're looking at the arc of the whole movement idea. There's just been one of the most gratifying things. After I no longer dance, I didn't, I never stopped choreographing. And then I haven't now in the last few years because of mobility problems but I never stopped choreographing. I still love to direct and that's why the directing class, like this afternoon the rehearsal I have is not over in dance it's over in the college of music. I'm working with a young woman who took my directing class last year and she's working with two young singers, very gifted young singers, who are singing parts of Strauss's Arabella Opera, and so I'm the director watching the director watching them. You know. And it's a DIS that she's doing with me and

then we work collaboratively with them and other times I'm just watching what she's doing. And then we talk about it afterwards.

CO: You're watching her to talk afterwards about what you see?

NF: What I see has happened with their progress and with her directorial approach. What works and what didn't work.

CO: So she's requested this?

NF: Yes she asked for a directed individual study with me, but she was in my directive class last year, and that's what got her interested. And also another wonderful thing that happened this year was that I had two theatre MFAs, really mature theatre directors coming to the class. So I have one, I have another opera student and two theatre people along with my six dancers and that's a wonderful, it's just transformed the class because they found so many things in common. You asked what dance means to me, that's some of it, but the idea to be in a place where you can help and then develop a young artist it's been a wonderful thing. To be in a place where you can make your own art, your own choreography and you have dancers, and increasingly over the years they got better and better who could be these wonderful instramentalities for your own art. And that's a great balancing act to have a faculty that is full of artists, but to have them share time and space as you can imagine how there's a shortage of both. So that the students get full measure, and the faculty and the way to explain that to students is to say if you want artists teaching, you've got to let them be honest, you know too. And then as the program developed the administrative part got more and more complex. You know I started with a program of three people and, when I left it it had, I think it had either 15 or 18 full tenured, you know, tenured track people. And now it's larger with a lot of middle management adjunctive staff. So it's one of the largest programs in the country and large is not always good but this is a really good program. And it's branched into a lot of things, technologies, therapy, there's the whole technology area; in the dance building, but in the dance program too where you can really take courses in that. There's a large emphasis now, there's a degree program in dance history and dance studies, as there are in theatre.

CO: Is that in your department?

NF: Yeah, but the department has now become a school. So there is a degree in that.

CO: Is there anything done in the history department on the history of dance or is it all sort of…

NF: It's all through the Dance. There are collaborations all over the campus, because it's become a really good program. But you, I'm not sure how I got into that. What was your last question?

CO: I don't remember. I would though and maybe this is just isn't the inspired time, but I'm really interested to, if you feel led to talk more about how dance is, I mean I think most of us in academics are in whatever discipline we're in because we feel it's transformative, but how…have you felt that way about dance ever since you realized you wanted to dance?

NF: I probably didn't feel that I couldn't have expressed it that fully but I really do feel that way but I have seen the evidence of it. But I see it with the other arts too.

CO: I think that…okay. I'm trying to get at…I know that you mean something more than simply you hear people talk about how it really helps a girl's, a young woman's self-confidence to play sports, you know. But I know that you're talking about more than self-confidence you're talking about a genuinely transformative…

NF: I'm thinking about…I think it is a way of learning. So I think it is an intellectual activity as well as an aesthetic and physical activity. I think it opens the mind. It sometimes in ways that I can't possibly articulate. But I've seen it happen. Of course the curriculum is built that way too. I mean there are many, many courses that are not studio courses too. My whole idea about building the curriculum which may get us into talking about the administrative function but my whole idea about building the curriculum was that it was a design project, and what I wanted was to build, now, I have been out of that position, out of the

position as chair for fifteen years but I think it's still going in that line, and what we wanted was a compliment of courses and major tracks and so forth that infused each other because what I remember writing something once and just saying what I'm afraid of because I see it happening in other disciplines, a curricular sclerosis, you know, where the lines between certain areas of thought get so fixed and you've seen that happen. I've seen it happen between studio art and art history. Instead of one being, informing the other. I've seen happen in, I could, you know we could all do if we've had experience in an institution see how that happens. But to keep the lines open I think is a function of curricular design but I think it also is the way you staff, and I think that's a creative challenge too. The way you build your faculty. And staff. I think the whole thing is part of design and that, I think when I started…. In the first place I was the administrator that's been a long time before I thought of myself as an administrator I was just doing it you know, but this is not something I thought of immediately but as I moved through it, and learned from my mistakes as well as from some of the things that worked, I realized the whole thing was design, and that, I got very fascinated, although it was sometimes my bête noir, and it was very frustrating, with the whole idea of human governors and how to work with a group of people as their, quote "chair," or leader in a way that was effective and right, and needless to say I made many mistakes, but you learn from them. I mean I look back now and I can see some mistakes I made in the way I handled certain situations, but those happen. And they happen in every area of your life.

CO: So design became a transformative or process of transformation. Design itself.

NF: Mmhmm. Isn't that true almost in every area of your life. I mean I have not had children. I have not had that kind of traditional family, but I would think a lot of that has to do with design too.

CO: I would love to explore that. Back to the old saw of gender. You went into dance while another sister went into psychology, and another sister became a missionary.

NF: Religious education I guess is what…

CO: Okay. So, it doesn't sound like your parents sent any signals to either of you that there were jobs or there was work that you just shouldn't do as a woman.

NF: Oh no. I don't think they ever said that. I have thought a lot about my mother's career as a teacher because apparently she was a wonderful teacher and from what I've heard from other sources. But I remember her telling me anecdotes and funny things that happened in passing and she obviously loved her students and loved teaching. And she taught every age group, you know. I'm sure that must have had, in other words, I never thought of teaching as something that was dreary. So that probably fed into that. It was always an exciting thing.

CO: But I think it's almost not worth the time to ask if you think there are any jobs women shouldn't do.

NF: I can't think of…

CO: Students love to debate.

NF: Well what do they come up with? What do they think they shouldn't…

CO: Some don't think women ought to be in combat. So while they don't think that, you know, they think that women should be in the military but they have misgivings about women being in combat.

NF: Well I don't think there should be combat.

CO: Exactly, right.

NF: So that's my answer to that. There are women all over the world who are in combat.

CO: Yeah, yeah, but depending on the person you ask, I mean…

NF: I think it's a horrible thing to be in whether you're a man or woman

CO: Right, right. But I mean some…

NF: Do they think they're not equipped to do it or they're just feeling protective?

CO: Oh it's very, it's typical argument that it would upset the balance of, because men would be more protective of women so they would be less inclined to be…it'd be distracting, women are temperamental, more temperamental than men, which is just absurd. But you know those are typical arguments they use so…I don't do a whole lot with it because I preface the whole subject with just precisely with what you've said. If you don't believe, it's a moot subject if you don't believe any more…okay. Is there some significant accomplishment in your life that caused more sacrifice then it was worth?

NF: No. I mean I think I think this sounds ego…when I say building the dance program here, I was always accompanied with the caveat that this was not a one person thing. There were so many wonderful people who helped, wonderful faculty who helped develop this program. But that is the accomplishment that has been the largest part of my life; has taken the most of my energy; has caused some emotional-psychological, probably physical sacrifice and I think it was well worth it.

CO: I read an article online where they, someone I forget the publication, it was local, called you an icon, because that.

NF: Oh my. That's a very popular word these days.

CO: Well right. Well this was actually several years ago. I think it was on your retirement.

NF: Oh, maybe. That's right, yeah, yeah.

CO: Okay, how do you respond to something like that? How do you respond when you've been really the success of the program is largely attributed to your design.

NF: Well, as I say, I do want to say how many people were involved in it, because nobody does this kind of thing by themselves. I think my biggest response and this is, sounds a little "goody goody," but it's just gratitude, I mean

people ask me as I was about to retire in '97 from stepping down as chair. I didn't know I was going to continue teaching for…when I retired in '97, I would say 90% of my work was administrative. I always choreographed and did this, but I was teaching less than, I had always taught too, but I was teaching less than I had, and…'cause you just do that when you're trying to be an administrator. But when I had, people used to say, "How are you feeling about this?" Well it was a huge adjustment. Before I retired, I knew two years in advance I was going to do it, so I gave the word out and worked with it, it was in a department not a school, to try to make as smooth a transition as possible. But my biggest thing was just gratitude. That I happened to have been at the right place at the right time and wanted to do this thing and it happened. Although there were times I wondered if it really would but…

CO: When you do the administrative part, does that affect your-- I'm sorry that I'm projecting here--I mean teaching can both facilitate research, and it can also undermine it. You know. Did administration, how did it when you sort of just said that.

NF: It caused me to do much less. I was much less in the studio making dance or working with dances, but I never gave up making it completely. I would always be making at least one piece a year. You know. You know which was a huge change after I used to choreograph all the time you know. So you do much less of your work as an artist because by then the, it's the price of success. It's the price of having built something that is succeeding and then it has to be managed and taken care of and fed.

CO: In some sense of it, it's like a child. I mean you've got this huge project like that and then it gets to a…

NF: It assumes a life of its own which you want it to have but that calls for all sorts of transitions internally, in yourself and in your thinking. And externally when you find out ways to give it over, and so all those but I can remember getting very tired and I can remember at one time, when it was at its most successful, I remember exactly where I was in the building and everything, I

thought we've created a monster. Here is this wonderful thing but it just takes a lot of management.

CO: And so did being able to hire your own faculty, that didn't relieve the pressure of…

NF: Oh sure. I mean the more people we had working the more good people, I think hiring is so sensitive, you know. You just, because you don't, one of the early lessons I learned in administration is that you can't ask an apple to be an orange you know I would think some time after working with people I think why can't so-and-so be like so-and-so.

CO: Did you ever hire anybody that turned out to be you were just completely wrong about.

NF: Not too often but I did. Then you try to take what that person is and get the best out of them but if it doesn't work it doesn't work.

**END OF 3-4A in edited**

**BEGINNING OF 4_A-5**

CO: Is tenure for music faculty, I'm sorry, I mean dance faculty. The same sort of…

NF: It's very demanding. You know for a year, I don't know if you know this or if I've mentioned this; after I retired as chair but was still doing some teaching dancing I was really pretty much removed but I was going teaching the courses. The Provost called, and he asked me to be Dean of Theatre on an interim basis because they were having some issues. I mean they had, the dean had retired, they had something like four deans in three years, or something. I mean things get changed and they needed someone to hold down the fort for a year. And so I said I would do it but only for a year and Robert was going to teach that summer in London and I said, but I'm out of here on April 28th because I'm going with it. So I deaned over in theatre for a year and the learning curve was straight up. Although I had grown up with these people on campus I knew them, our programs were similar in that they were both arts and such but they were a very

large establishment and they were, you know you just learn a lot and it was a good experience for me. And I enjoyed it; I enjoyed the people. But it was a particular year when a lot of tenure cases were coming up. And they were as complex as any I heard around campus. And the demands for tenure now are very strong. The criteria are very demanding and you know how that is.

CO: Have you ever thought about…have you writ…do you journal?

NF: No, I…very sporadically. You know. I will go…I journal when I'm up in Clayton. But there will be years when the journal is totally a nature journal. Birds, wildflowers, etc. And I should be journaling all the time up there because we're building something up there. And it's young enough now that I should be and that's something I think about. We should just archivally do it.

CO: Well I mean this this whole notion of the capacity of a discipline to be spiritually transformative, there would seem to be a real market for the kind of reflection. Just wondered if you ever…cause you…cause I mean clearly that bubbles up out of you when you talk about how it was personally transformative. Obviously that's what…that's what your students get. I mean that's probably what draws people into it and that innate whatever dancer in people. But I just wondered if you've ever thought about writing

NF: Not in a system…a systematic way. I mean I have for instance we just took this ten day trip and I took a little journal with me. And journaled during that, but then I, you know I told you that Linda Elder came and spent some time here, and she journaled all the time. She's a great journaler. I remember thinking that is wonderful and I should do that.

CO: Well yeah, and I mean for some people journaling is a transformative process in itself and it sounds like maybe it might be a good thing for the future as you do less especially now that you've said you're not going teaching.

NF: I'm not. I'll do less over there I do. I'll do, I'll have more time to work on what we're doing up in North Georgia. Cause, although that has heretofore been happening only primarily in the summer. It's expanding and more things are happening. The relationship with Piedmont College is developing. And so it's

taking a lot of my think time. And also just plain clerical stuff because you know one of the funniest things that has happened recently is that someone we did a presentation on the Lillian Smith Center on what we were trying to do up there to a group and one person said, can you address some of the issues that you have, with the staff issues. And I said well the biggest one is that we have no staff. So we have no issues.

CO: Well is now a good time to talk about the Center. I would love to hear about it.

NF: That'd be fine.

CO: I would love to hear more about it. I know you said it's been going on for a few, for a while but can you talk about it from its genesis?

NF: Sure but the little stone house where Lillian Smith did most of her writing was also the biggest repository for her library, although there were little libraries around the hill. You know and various cottages but that's where Robert and I lived. Now, it was left, I was given a life estate in it after she died.

CO: So it was willed to you? And have you …

NF: With the life estate, yeah. And then the rest of it was given over to her sister who then gave it to her cousin and so forth and so, but there were, the idea was in time there would be the five branches of the Smith family that would take it over. Well my cousin Laurie Peeler who was the daughter of Anna Laura Peeler and I, Robert and I really had the idea and then Laurie bought into it, and turned the whole thing into a foundation so that it couldn't be that property which is almost a 140 acres could not be sold because it's prime real estate.

CO: It's how many acres?

NF: About a 140.

CO: Wow.

NF: Mostly forest. And could not be sold and so the five branches of the family agreed to do this. So now it is a foundation, and nobody can sell any part of it and

turn it into a little condo or something like that. So, but the genesis of the idea of the center was and the reason that I kept pushing to get it turned into a foundation was seeing what was happening around here, and also looking at some of the buildings on the hill, and seeing that it was just gradually self-destructing. So I thought so much happened for me up there and for so many other people that we've got to do something about it and turn it back into something that is productive, and Robert felt exactly the same way, and he's had many ideas and gone the other my thinking on it too. So we began and I think we just completed our 12th year I think.

CO: So it became a foundation roughly 12 years ago?

NF: It became a foundation in 2000.

CO: In 2000, okay.

NF: But we started the first year turning it into the Lillian E. Smith Foundation. Its biggest project is the Lillian E. Smith Center for the Arts. And I think the next thing I'm going to ask is that they just call it the Lillian E. Smith Center because it does a lot of things in addition to the arts. But we developed a Board and we now have put people on the Board. One of whom is the Provost of Piedmont College, that just happened. And for the first year that we started the center we decided just to have two artists up there that summer. And we had two writers and that worked out. And then we added and then this last summer we had 14. I think the largest number that we've had, because we don't have a lot of housing, has been 17. That's in addition to the Piedmont group that comes in May for the Maymester. So it's just grown and it's been…

CO: And now what, do you invite people or do you…

NF: They apply and we have a website and they hear about us from the website, from word of mouth and from we're members of this Alliance for Artists Communities and they have a little directory. I think that gets a lot of people. And I used to advertise and I don't think I ever in *Poets and Writers* and arts, arts magazines. And I don't think I ever got anybody that way. But now it's usually about 50% returnees, people who have been there, and 50% new people. And

they stay for they have a little cottage that is fully equipped with bathroom and kitchen so they, we don't offer meals but I end up cooking a lot because I like that. When we first started I did that a lot and Robert made me stop after a while because we were just wearing out. But I usually would do it once or twice a week. They'd come down to the common room and we'd eat or they'd frequently come down just to have, we do, we started doing ice cream socials, or have a glass of wine I think. And then they end up having, we've had some wonderful, particularly this last summer, wonderful evenings down there where they did readings or maybe they showed their work but that is not mandated. And that is unlike some other places where there is a regular "show and tell" that they're asked to do. And the way we feel about that is that there are some artists who just thrive on that, and so that opportunity is there for them if they want to do it. And there are others who at a certain point in their work where it, they don't want to do that. And so it's not at all mandated but last summer they just, we had a group, they just--- I would just say come down for some wine such and such. And they would say well "Can we read or can we show our work. I have done this painting…" or something like that. And we now have, we've had scholars up there, so it's not just artists. We've had musicians because they use, they have keyboards and they use their computers. We've had…

CO: Now how did you, did the foundation pay for the equipment, the needs, and so forth of the…

NF: No they pay a 150, the residents pay a 150 dollars a week, which is nothing for them for college you know. Then I started a support group called friends of the Lillian E. Smith Center. I did that about, I started it about, I based it really on what I had done here with the Friends of Dance and I mean that's how I knew how to, I just followed some of the same procedures I followed here. I did that I think it's about five years old now and friends I've, and we have a 120 people now who have made, if you make a contribution to LES ---there are various donor levels you know. So that takes a lot of time. I'll have more time for that since I'm just learning the technology that will help me do some of that. It has just grown and we got grants a couple times that have writing workshops. And we had one with Janice Ray who's a great ecologist around here and that was very successful

and we had Frank ? Walker who has formed Appalachian poets who's, he's African American who has said the emphasis everyone knows about Appalachia but they don't know about the black poets. That was a terrific workshop and so we would like to do more and more things like that. And we have readings open to the public occasionally and so forth. It's just, it's a lot of work but it's great labor of love and the, our only concern as I mentioned before is, I mean I maybe one, Robert is younger, is nine years younger than I am but we just want to find something that will ensure the future of it. You know.

CO: So when people apply and does the board do the…

NF: No Robert and I do the decision. The, we get the application, application in addition to usual biographical, I mean you know contact information and so forth. They are asked to give, send in three letters of recommendation. They're asked to do a brief summary of what they'd like to work on but they're not, that's not in concrete if they change their mind when they get…they're asked to give a CV and then we either pick them and decide and the choices are pretty easy. Then if they've been there before we don't make them go through the whole routine again.

CO: And do you have, do you allow a certain number of, what do you call the people who come back?

NF: No, not, in time I imagine we're going to have to get a little more detail about things like that because it's growing, but the way it's broken down is about 50/50. And the time span is different. We've had people stay, the longest anyone stayed is nine weeks. Next to that was five weeks. But this summer the coming summer, the applications are beginning to come in. We have one for three weeks, usually, I would say the average over the years has been two weeks. We have some people for one week, one week works if they know, if they have a particular goal that they want. For instance if they say I'm going to finish this chapter by this deadline. If they come and they're not at that stage, by the time it's time to leave they've just settled down because they're in a new context there. They always sleep the first night a lot because the mountain air, you know. So, we encourage two weeks, but it sometimes depends on what they're working

on and we've begun to get a lot of self-acknowledgements and introductions to books and so forth. People said that I couldn't have finished this without [the retreat]. That's making us feel that we are doing something. We got on the Southern Literary Trail. We were invited to be on that. There are six places like Flannery O'Connor, and Carson McCullers. And we are one of them in our own, in Georgia but it's a tri-state. It's Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia. And it's gotten sorta big, and people come, that's another way people hear about us and they call and come up and get a tour. We have, I've formed a little group of Docents. We had some training sessions and so forth and they're lovely, wonderful people, it's real small, five people, and so people will call you know, and when we're not there and there's someone to call who will take them on a tour, because Lill's Grave is there. We have a little Lillian Smith museum, which is a house, the apartment she built in the last neck of her life, where she did where she lived where she did some of her final writing.

CO: There's a photograph of her in one your the biographies. I'm not sure how many biographies there are, but anyway, one by Ann Loveland. There's a picture of her and it does look just like you. That didn't occur to me until after I was sitting here thinking all the time we were talking, and then later I thought silly me it's because she looks just like that picture.

NF: We do. Every now and then I'll come across a picture I'm not too familiar with, of her, and realize how much… or I'll come across this snapshot of me and I'll think there was that strong resemblance.

CO: So, so far it's, it's accessible that your chief concern now is about the...

NF: Future

CO: …future

NF: And see when Laurie died she left some money but she was not wealthy at all and the royalties from Lil's books are not huge so we squeaked by. And then Robert and I do everything pro bono, but just keeping, we've done enormous amounts of repairs to the place. We have a man who lives at the bottom of the hill that's never lived off that mountain. And his father worked for Lil so he knows

where the bodies are buried, meaning the septic tanks usually, you know. There's always something like that, there's always something like a septic tank, you know.

CO: Is it something that you're in conversation with Piedmont about? Possibility or?

NF: It has not been that overt but we both know what we're talking about.

CO: Because it's, I think off record I was telling you about the acquisition of properties of Kennesaw State came just really and just dragged on and on because of the person wanting when I told you about the controversy but just having the donors request, having the university able to agree on the donors request is quite complicated.

NF: I think it does get to that, I mean the great desire is because I feel so confident of the sensibility of that institution. Having worked in other institutions. Then the Provost is so interesting enough. He's been there a long time and will continue to be I think. So that's the encouragement of it. When I think if something official ever does happen then we really sit down with our lawyers and talk about it. And we have a good lawyer. [He's] in Taccoa who knows the Provost very well and his family. I think the ground is ready and ripe to begin to think more officially but I have to wait 'til I hear something from them.

CO: So you drive up there. So I mean that's what a six hour drive?

NF: It's about really it's about it's more like a seven, and if we stop for lunch it's seven and a half but we don't usually because we're taking Little Badness [Bailey] there.

CO: Do you ever foresee yourself moving, like doing half a year there and half a year here?

NF: We are approaching that this time but I don't think it'll ever be half and half. At one time, you know, we really thought it was, at one time I thought we'll maybe we'll even just move up here, but there are no two inches that are level and my mobility problems make that somewhat problematic although I've been managing to do it. It is harder living up there because of that. It's so beautiful

and I just love it. It's a place this, this house is my real home but that's a page of my soul too, those two places. But I always have great anxiety, separation anxiety, when I leave here and I have great separation anxiety when I leave there. It's great to have that problem you know.

CO: Do you, so many people who write about Georgia write about that red clay and

NF: Which is hard, hard, hard.

CO: Yes it is. Yes it is. I think that qualifies you as a Georgian right there because you have separation anxiety when you leave.

NF: Right.

CO: Okay well I just look forward to learning more about that. Off the record as well. So we'll hopefully continue that conversation. Is there an accomplishment or an achievement that you wanted but didn't have it, didn't accomplish something that you really, a goal you set maybe that you didn't weren't able to fulfill?

NF: I guess, I feel so grateful for those in my life so that's hard to say yes to. I guess I would have liked, I put my choreography on companies away from FSU. I've had some wonderful experiences with that. I guess I would have liked to have had my choreography be more accepted and asked for but every choreographer I know feels that way, you know. I would hardly say that keeps me awake at night, you know. I do not grieve over that because I've had, I'm just so grateful for what has happened here with the dance program. Really it's such a strong thing.

CO: Okay, now you've talked about this since I got here, but do you want to speak specifically to what retiring was like? You really haven't retired.

NF: Well, but I retired from the big thing which was running that program, developing it and running that. A friend of mine who had done the same thing at Ohio State said, retired a few years before I did and she said, "Nancy it's a big adjustment". And I said tell me how, and she said because it's just a whole different way of being. And I think she was right. It was a big adjustment but that

doesn't mean a bad experience. I'll tell you, I'll start with the positive first and say that I knew two years in advance I was going to do it, and after I retired, because that to me was the real retirement retiring from shaping and developing that program. The teaching has been wonderful dessert after that. After I retired I did not once wake up in the morning and think I did that too soon. See I think that means it was very right too. But when something has been the center of your life, I mean Robert is a center of my life too, but Robert came in later in the game of my life, you know. When something's been the center it's been your way of being, it's been what you have risen every morning to do and it's what you think about at night. Working out problems.. You know and it's, it is, you change into a new way of being. I'll tell you one thing, we had a scare. This was I guess back in the '70s. I mean as every university has many of them of financial woes. I thought, and the rumor was they're getting rid of the small departments and so forth. We were never in danger but I didn't know that. I had some sleepless nights, really sleepless nights, very upset. And trying not to let the faculty feel anxiety and so forth. Then all of a sudden I had this great sort of epiphany and I thought what I'm having is a kind of identity crisis, that if something happens and the dance program is erased I'm beginning to think that that's the end of me. And that is a very unhealthy way to feel both for me but for the program. And I have hit that and that was really just a huge, that's **a turning point** for me where I thought, I thought okay you cannot do that, you cannot do it to yourself, but you cannot do it to where you get yourself so, your identity so mixed up. That is not good for the program. So, it just sort of shifted, a lot of things shifted, found out later we were never in danger.

CO: But that shift, you knew it, can you just talk about what that's like when you feel that shift, you know that something is perceptible in you has changed.

NF: Has changed and that was the shift of thinking that I was…

CO: So your identity was no longer, after that exclusively about the success of the program…

NF: That's exactly the way to describe it. It was not I'm many more things in the first place if it goes out tomorrow it has a made a wonderful contribution that

was the first thing I thought about. I'm, that's a relief. It doesn't mean that the end of world has happened, and there is still me. It's a different me maybe but it's still me. So that was good, that was good thing and so then I continued. So then when it got to retirement time I thought, I'm going to feel this identity thing, but I was so sure that it was right. And I can't tell you why I know it was right. Ester Smith told me, she said you will know. You will just feel the day it's right. So I did. So I prepared for it and the first, after I retired and then I knew I was coming back. They had asked me to come back to teach but I went up to Clayton. I did not have the stress of knowing I have to come back and plan the big retreat and the party at the house and so forth. It felt funny a little bit the first day when I knew they were all in retreat session and it felt funny for them. I mean some of them had been there for 30, 30 years, you know. But it was okay I think I did something simple like go out to lunch with somebody, you know.

CO: Do you think that experience of it in the '70s where you beat the identity crisis, do you think that…

NF: I think that prepared me for it.

CO: And so that kind of…

NF: it was such a false thing to be feeling that way, that strong, it was so way out of proportion. I mean I do have a degree of common sense, certain about. And it just seemed so wrong and so then when I think that prepared me, plus the fact that I was needing some relief and I was needing to get away. Then Robert and I went to Italy. We were working on, he was we went several time for the FSU program to Italy, and one time I would teach and the other time he would teach and this time I wouldn't teach I was just a groupee so I taught for the fall semester here and then we went to Italy. And that was a great way to sort of teach and then I came back and they asked me about teaching, and I've been teaching ever since. Just in the fall and as that then my life has shifted more and more and more to other things. And there's a gray and increasing distance from the program and I don't mean, I mean I still love it, I'm still very proud of it, but you just get so involved in other things. You know.

CO: So it sounds like the answer to the question, "How do you feel about your life now that you're retired?" is that you're, well how do you feel about your life now that you're retired and let you state it.

NF: Very good. I think I feel better and see each when they've sort of called me in and asked, will you teach for one more year, which has been a great honor and very flattering and so forth. I will look at the students all coming in for the next year, and it's been sort of hard to say no. And this year it's, I have one of the best students I have ever had, I will miss them a lot. I look at some of the ones that are coming in, they're wonderful and I just know it's right to leave. I feel it's somewhat bitter sweet but it's not a big pang any more.

CO: And do you think that the Clayton venture is…

NF: That's filling up a lot of that desire to design and to do things.

CO: Right.

NF: But also one's 81 year over energies are not what they used to be. That makes it sort of easy to…

CO: Well do you ever think about as you're designing this writer's or artist retreat center that you yourself might write there?

NF: Yeah, every now and then I think I ought to apply.

CO: Well and so do, but seriously thinking is that something you might do some time?

NF: It might, it might be and that's all I can say is that it might, because I don't know, I would like to. Life takes strange turns, but Robert always refers to me as the novelist who does not write.

CO: Okay well I'm going to stop this for just a minute before we shift.

**End of Audio Track 4 on the original audio tape;**

**30:35 on the edited tape titled Nancy Smith Fichter 4-A-5**

CO: Okay. Moving on to another subject now, that of marriage and children and motherhood, but for you it will be mostly relationships except that you maybe want to talk about your…I mean I'm interested in your ideas about motherhood and so we might get there but it, when you were at home was romance, you talk about the affection between your parents that was obvious. Did they, did that give you an idea of what romance was supposed to be like, or where do you think your ideas came from?

NF: Well remember I was born in 1930 and so probably in as I was growing into puberty and adolescence, just remember how the movies of the 1940s were, you know. All epic romances and I imagine that that had some influence, but also in my family and in the relationship between mother and daddy and also the aunt who lived so close to us, not the one who lived with us, but my mother's sister that she was so close to and they always lived just a, even when we moved they moved, you know, a few blocks away. [I saw] their family; they always seem to be so have a good relationship and so forth and so, plus I had my first sort of intense relationship was in high school. I had a boyfriend that we went steady for probably, I think that was the term then, for 3 years maybe.

CO: When, how did you parents feel about that? Were they concerned?

NF: They liked him. I don't think that they were concerned. Now what I found out later but I'm not sure it's true, was that as I dated a lot and continued to date although I was away from home, you know, my sister told me that mother always was a little bit worried because I didn't, not that she wanted me to marry particularly, but that I seem to have a lot of relationships and was dating a lot. But that came from my sister, Elise. And we know we have to filter a little bit of that.

CO: So when you were "going steady," that was the term when I was in school as well, were your parents concerned about intimacy and did they express that concern when they were afraid that you were getting…

NF: They probably were, my father probably delegated the concern to mother but mother may have been concerned. She didn't, I think she was wise enough to know not to make a big thing about it. She liked him.

CO: Was he your age?

NF: Yeah. He was the one who was the President of the senior class and, but we broke up at right before the senior prom. This was bad timing on my part.

CO: So did go to the prom?

NF: Yeah, I went with somebody else.

CO: And did he?

NF: Mmhhmm.

CO: How'd that feel? How was it to be…

NF: It was sad. I mean I was hurt when we broke up, but I had moved on too I think.

CO: What's the main response that you…

NF: I mean I look back on it now and it would not have worked as a long-time relationship. Not just the age of it, I cannot, you know. I mean I married for the first time when I was 51 so, and I just don't think it would have worked much before then.

CO: So okay it sounds like your ideas about romance and relationships came from the movies.

NF: Well and you know and from what people said.

CO: But you've had, it sounds like from your family anyway you had good models of relationships.

NF: I had good models and they did lay down a curfew hour, you know.

CO: So when you left home and you didn't have a curfew or maybe you did in college.

NF: Well at FSU one had a curfew.

CO: I mean you weren't necessarily…

NF: It's a different world then it is now.

CO: Weren't quite free then but a little freer then you were at home. So did you exercise that freedom by having more relationships or…

NF: Yeah probably, I probably did. As I said yesterday when we were talking about marriage, that I had relationships but I just didn't let them move in. Well that was not the time in that age where you lived with people.

CO: And once it became okay in the '60s did you have a relationship that was…

NF: I think I had significant relationships in every decade but not lasting ones.

CO: Can you talk about any of them? Without calling names.

NF: I went through, well the age thing is interesting because there was a period in the latter '50s where I dated older men. I mean, and I don't know why this happened, just happened. I wasn't seeking them out but…

CO: So you were in your late 20s in that you…

NF: Yeah, and I dated people who were 10 or 15 years older than I. A couple who were professors who had just been divorced or something like that. A couple who were not. There was a period during the early '70s I guess, latter '60s early '70s, where for some reason I had switched and I dated younger men.

CO: It was time.

NF: It was time to change. I mean I'm no dummy. I had one really, I look back now and I think it was a lovely relationship but he was entirely too young, a young actor.

CO: What was the difference in the age?

NF: Fifteen years.

CO: Fifteen?

NF: Mmhhmm.

CO: Was it a scandal?

NF: If it was they didn't tell me. There was some great interest in it, I've heard.

CO: I'm sure. I'm sure.

NF: But again I didn't let him move in so nobody could say too much, you know.

CO: So how long did that last?

NF: That only lasted about a year and a half.

CO: Was it a painful break?

NF: It was but it was just such an, I mean such, I just knew, I knew he needed to try his wings elsewhere. I knew it was gonna happen.

CO: But it was worth it.

NF: It was worth it, yeah. I saw him later and we were, I saw him twice later, and each time was affectionate and fond, and a thing of the past, you know. And the second time I saw him I was already with Robert. And he was with somebody else.

CO: So how did the attraction come about?

NF: With him?

CO: Mmhhmm.

NF: We had mutual friends who kept, who were somewhat exclusive in that they would not invite, unless they have a big party, they would invite just a very few people to supper. I look back on that now and I was always one of the people

that they invited and he was another one. And then it got to be like foursome but it was still, I mean, it was still not under consideration that it would be anything else I guess because of the age difference.

CO: So how old were you and how old was he? I know there's fifteen year difference but roughly…

NF: Let's see, my memory is so funny. I was in my latter 30s, that wouldn't work. He was in his very early 20s and I was in the early…that wouldn't have worked yet. I was in my mid 30s and he was in his early 20s I guess. I can't tell. I can't remember exactly.

CO: Yeah. So does that relationship give you any fodder for a novel?

NF: No, it gives me fodder for a few scenes in a play.

CO: I would so love to hear more. Okay, so that was in your mid to late 30s. Besides your husband now, when did the most memorable, deepest relationship happen?

NF: Probably right before [Robert]. See Robert and I had two relationships, only at different times. Probably right before Robert and I really finally got together.

CO: So can you talk about what the experience of falling in love, I mean, what is that like?

NF: It's different at different stages in your life.

CO: That's what I'd like to…

NF: I think because the early ones were, I think young romance is different from more subtle romance and romantic feelings. I think, well the thing I've found out after my latter years, in my middle years really, was that I think I hadn't, I hear is this, is this Augustus? That this is…[Door Bell Rings]

**End of Audio Track 5 in old audio files;**

**End of Track 4_5-A in Edited Files**

**Beginning of Trac 6**

NF: I have had …relationships, but I think I had, for a long time, confused intensity with intimacy. You know you can have, if someone has said to me well you've never been deeply in love and I would say are you crazy, you know. I've had these intense relationships, that's very different from intimate relationships. And I think it took Robert for me to really discover that.

CO: That the, okay.

NF: An intimate relationship really is much more open. Not open in the terms of [conventional use of the term open relationships] but a much more giving relationship, and almost familial at times. It doesn't mean it can't be deeply erotic, but it…Intense relationships sometime, well I'll say my relationship with Robert has been both intense and intimate, but I'm not sure that I achieved the full intimacy with other people.

CO: And so how did you know that Robert was worth marrying?

NF: Well see, I said I had a relationship with him which at that time in both of our lives we were great intellectual mates. We were great, it was very, very consuming physically too. But neither one of us, I think was ready to commit to a monogamous relationship.

CO: So when would that have been?

NF: That would have been in the early '70s. Okay, so you know he was teaching open on out at UCLA as well as here, you know, so he was there a lot. He had other people in his life and I had other people in my life. It just sort of went into a, what I call a "Bobbsey Twin" period, because we weren't, we went through a period where we just physically were not together very much. We were in different places, all the planning. It got to the point where, I mean I would, we would…when he came back here we would meet and we would talk and we would really tell each other a lot. I mean we would confide in each other a lot.

CO: But your mother never knew him.

NF: No, but I think usually when a relationship gets to that point, and he is your best friend and maybe the brother that you never had, you know, it doesn't reignite again, but it just did and it surprised me very, very much. I had come out of a sort of bad relationship, an unhappy one, and was sort of feeling like the walking wounded and we went to a meeting together and then one time one of our colleagues died and we went to a funeral together, and then one night it just ignited again. So we, he, and at this time it was very clear to me that I did not want to get that involved unless it was really going to be a monogamous relationship. I just had enough of that. So one time I remember saying do you think we'll live, well I had now I look back and I think, "How could I have said this to him?" I mean he said something that indicated that he wanted a deeper commitment, and I just said, "Yeah but I'll never have a live-in". Fortunately, he did not take me seriously. I think back now and think, "How could I have said that?" One time I remember just saying, "Do you think we're going to live together?" and he said well aren't we, and I realized that we were practically living together, and he just gradually moved in and we lived together for two years before we got married. Everybody seemed to know we were together. But I don't know, he still had his house, so I don't know. But it didn't seem to, if it caused scandal I never heard about it. Then we got married, but to answer your question, you know I told you that my mother said don't get married unless you can't help it, and I think that's what finally happened, was that I just thought…cause he had mentioned marriage, but he had also backed away from it. He'd had two marriages. I guess I just finally thought mother's right; the alternative if he moves out of my life, I really can't stand that.

CO: Had you ever felt that way about anybody? No? So that was very telling for you.

NF: I had loved people, but and I had been in love, but not to this extent. One time he came in this, the house and I was just crying and I had just suddenly the whole thing had seemed overwhelming to me and he said, "You just can't handle this can you?" And I said, "No, it's like sleeping with your brother at times." It's so intimate. It's so…and he made some funny comment, "Well you know that's

what we do in the South." [hearty laughter] He always made me laugh, you know.

CO: Right.

NF: So ultimately we just decided to get married.

CO: So now the time you were 51 he was 42?

NF: Yeah.

CO: Okay.

NF: And this, approaching May, next May, will be our 30th, which, so I guess it's not just a phase.

CO: By all appearances it's…

NF: Oh, but I the reaction when people knew we were going to get married was interesting, because I remember a former a student, a young man, who was out and was dancing, cause we're in New York I guess, he called me and he said, "Is this true?" And I said, "Yes", and he said, "You were our icon of singlehood." And I said, "Well you're going to have to get another one."

CO: Did the age ever bother you, the age difference?

NF: No, and the only time, and when I married him, he looked so much younger. I look at the pictures now and realize that, that the age difference was more apparent than it is now. And I used to say, "You could at least have the decency to turn gray a bit." He did start losing his hair which I thought was a really nice thing. One time we went in a store, we were buying some boots for him, and the sales person said, "Now do you think your son would like this?" The age difference was more apparent then. It doesn't seem, and that bothered him. He didn't buy the boots. I mean he just said, "Let's leave." Because he thought it hurt me and it really didn't. I, it just never has been a big problem and he, you know. He thinks he's much older because of the diabetes. He said, "I've aged so fast", you know. It just never has…

CO: Now how long between his last marriage and your, his marriage to you?

NF: Oh some years, because I think she was already remarried. Those two previous marriages lasted just a couple of years. I never met his first wife. The second wife, I met, and this is sort of interesting. One time he took me to dinner at some friends' house and when we left I said, "Those are really nice people." He said, "Yeah, those were my in-laws." And I said, "They knew they were?" And those were from his second wife well the, then one time he came in and he said, "Marjorie's coming through town." And I thought, "Marjorie, Marjorie…Now who's Marjorie?" And I said, "Marjorie? You mean Marjorie?" And he said, "Yeah, Marjorie." And he said, "I'd like her to come over." And I said, "Fine." And I thought how about this, she then had two children. She was remarried, you know. She came in and she and I sat on the sofa and within, and I'm a jealous person at times, but within five minutes I liked her so much because she didn't play any games. She played no little games, no little games, so well Robert remember when such and such. She started showing me her children's pictures and such and we went out to dinner and we got along just fine. And it was like she, I mean, she could have made that go the wrong way, but she seemed totally, she treated Robert like he had been an older brother that she had known. It was very nice and I have seen her since and have liked her a lot. Now this is not true for some of the girlfriends. I mean we had a few encounters with former girlfriends because he had quite a few I think but who were playing their little games, you know.

CO: You didn't hesitate for a moment to admit that you were jealous. Is that something that was a problem or is a problem, I mean was this…

NF: It's not a problem. I think it has been a problem 'til I got a little more mature but…mmhhmm.

CO: And so how did you deal with it? Cause I mean that's just such a…

NF: It's a very corrosive and toxic thing to have and I think I didn't always deal with it very well. But I think ultimately I just, well as far as Robert was concerned, I knew that he loved me.

CO: So was there a time when, okay with him, you have a, the antidote is that you rely on his love for you. Were there times in the past when you, it was, you realized the toxicity of it and you had some kind of shift like you explained happening with the work?

NF: I think the shift took different forms. I can think of one relationship were I think it really caused the end of that relationship, but it was mutual jealousy I hate to say. Which just means there was no trust in that relationship on either side. I walked away from it cause of relationships I think. Again that's a trust issue.

CO: You walked away because you couldn't take your own jealousy or their jealousy?

NF: Both.

CO: Did your parents ever…did you ever, was any of that ever exhibited in your household?

NF: Never saw that. Either they were master actors, but I don't think so, I just think it wasn't there. It's just, I also just realized I mean jealousy is a very corrosive thing. You just don't want it in your system. I mean there are a lot of things I think as you grow older and hopefully--I have hopes one matures as one grows older--that you realize things that are toxic in your system and you just want to get them out.

CO: How do you do that? Leave a relationship, but if you want to be in a relationship…did you ever have a relationship that you wanted to stay in and so you had to find a way to deal with the jealousy?

NF: Well that, but…well I wasn't jealous in every relationship. So I mean they ended for other reasons too. I think so and I think you just decide what do I want more? And if a degree of denial has to be…I mean there's a lot to be said about denial.

CO: Denial of your own feelings of jealousy?

NF: No, denial of…just not letting your imagination run wild and just saying okay I chose not to believe this.

CO: Okay, you don't have a daughter. You do have nieces. Do the nieces ever come to you for advice in relationships?

NF: Oh yeah, one of them spent a lot of time with me. Because there were difficulties in her own family that's Elise's first born, Niece-Nancy from New York. They've all come to see me at various times but she would a lot in her adolescence and well actually she still does, but she spent big times, big hunks of time with me then. We still see each other as often as we can. She lives in Greensboro and you know that's not a weekend trip.

CO: Right, and so when she talks with you about relationships do you, what do you, do you feel confident in advising her?

NF: I think so. More so now because I think you feel that, you feel, I felt it all my life with my students, is that when you're in a certain position you carry more weight then you even deserve to carry and so you have to be, you have to be careful with what you say. I mean it's, it can carry a load that you don't even intend. That has been true with her although we have talked with great levels of intimacy I think about relationships. Because we are very, were very much alike in some ways too, and very different in some ways.

CO: Do you advise her the way you think you would advise a daughter, if you had a daughter, is it, do you…

NF: It's not so much giving advice; it's like sharing ideas about things.

CO: But she comes to you in a mentor, I mean she really, it sounds like she wants…

NF: She comes to me in, sometimes in, well sometimes she just comes to have fun, but sometimes she comes in a sort of, if she's going through a crisis or in a confessional mode and we've talked many a night into the wee hours, you know. More so than with my other nieces although we have too on occasion, but I'm closer to her.

CO: Is she still in relationship when you all are…

NF: She's divorced and she's, she could be having severe empty nest, but I don't think that . . . . her first born now has, is out of college and has a good job and is living with his girlfriend whom she happens to like thank God because she would be a very stern mother-in-law if they were to get married. And her second one is just finishing college so. I think she's facing…

CO: If she's divorced then she doesn't have a partner, but children are gone. Do you ever, well you talked about the empty nest syndrome with your parents, and thinking they had it and discovering they didn't.

NF: They didn't.

CO: But you can relate to that I'd expect even with students.

NF: Yeah, see I have students now who are grandmothers, this is what is amazing to me because they all look so young to me, I can't imagine that they are but I couldn't imagine you were either.

CO: That's the right thing to say. That's the right thing to say.

NF: But I see them, I've seen one in particular go through real empty nest. And she has a job which is very demanding and I think that will be, and she has a good marriage.

CO: But what I was talking about is that you, have you experienced some of that with, like students you might, you've watched them go through 4 years and sometimes 6 years and then…

NF: …they're gone.

CO: Yeah, does that ever happen to you with…

NF: I don't think it's severe empty nest. I think there is some, cause so many of them keep in touch and I'm always very gratified by that. Some of them send me mother's day cards, it's a little weird but…and some I never hear from again, but you know teaching is, as I've told some of them who want to be teachers, is the

profession of delayed returns. And if you want instant gratification get another gig. You know. And sometimes you'll get a note, you'll get frequent correspondence, and sometimes you'll get a note ten years or twenty years later and it's really nice and you know you, and sometimes you may never get it. But it doesn't mean the contribution wasn't made or there wasn't something there.

CO: Yeah, I can relate to that. Sometimes it happens just when you think that, you know, it's reached a pit and a note from out of the blue, you know from ten years back. When you were at home with your sisters did you think, did you ever expect that you wouldn't have children or did you think about children as a young girl when you were thinking about…

NF: Yeah, but I didn't, I loved little babies. I remember that. But I loved it when a cousin or someone would come over and they would have the little baby. I guess I sort of thought well that I'll have a little baby sometime but I didn't. I didn't concentrate on that. As I said my, some of my high school friends immediately, they knew they were going to college and getting married. And they, when I look back on it, when I realized that a lot of them then looked for the man to fill that slot instead of the other way around. Which is if there was a man you found, found in love with him then you thought about marrying him, you know. I remember thinking towards the end of my 20s, you know I may never get married, but that wasn't something that upset me greatly because life was so full, you know.

CO: Right, yeah. It's interesting how some women talk about the past, it was just, it was assumed, you know it was an assumption that was in the whole family including the woman herself as a young girl. They never questioned that they would grow up and get married and have babies. You know it was just a…

NF: I think that the culture I grew up in assumed that.

CO: Yeah. I guess what I'm trying to get at is how is it that some people just…

NF: Well I think as, said yesterday in my family the thing that was asked about other people, "Is well oh what does she do?" It wasn't like, I mean maybe mother and daddy thought I would get married. I think it became apparent to them after

a while. But see I was in my 30s when they died. So they probably didn't know whether I would or not.

CO: They had come to terms with it either way?

NF: Yeah, I mean, I said this yesterday, I think that mother said one time now you were the one who would have been the great mother you know of the three, but she didn't say and therefore you should do that. It was more comment about Marianne and Elise then it was about me.

CO: Did, what about when your sister's had children, how was that for you and for your mother?

NF: Marianne had the first grandchild; and mother and daddy love their grandchildren, but they did not become babysitters for them. You know, I remember they were older parents too.

CO: Yeah right, yes.

NF: Now…

CO: But your father had the experience of having a grandson.

NF: A grandson which was novel for him, yeah.

CO: Yeah. And that was interesting to watch. Did your mother find that interesting

NF: Mother thought it was amusing. She said he doesn't know how to handle little boys, you know.

CO: How many grandsons did he have?

NF: Just the one. No, no, because he had, he had John Andrew and he had Ray. So he had two grandsons. See Ray died, I mean Ray was born, he didn't really have much contact with Ray, because by the time Marianne died it was three years before Daddy died. And after Marianne died we didn't have as much

contact with Omar, her husband, and their children. And he married shortly, and he remarried shortly thereafter.

CO: Did he continue to pastor throughout his life?

NF: Mmhhmm, he's still living.

CO: Oh, okay.

NF: I'm in touch with him every now and then. He emails. He was gonna come by and see us in Clayton and just couldn't do it.

CO: You've said that your, your own experience with relationships changed over time. How would you, how would that leave you to counsel a young woman about, who came to you with issues--- did students ever do that? Come to you with issues?

NF: Yeah, I mean they certainly did more in the past cause I'm not over there that much, you know. And I'm not in the head honcho position over there.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

NF: But they used to come into the office and talk. But I should say you do it very carefully. You share what you think you know that will be helpful. You draw the line at just talking about your past, you know. Although that may have given me some information to share with them.

CO: Yeah, so you try to let them make their own decisions. You don't make any…you don't…

NF: Oh, you cannot tell them what to do, you know. I think sometimes what we can do if, if you have enough information and are smart enough to pick up on it, is to talk about several options that may be available.

CO: Yeah, it's, it's really a touchy situation when someone comes to you for advice, and well just the notion of motherhood---it can be a consuming thing for some women. What to you is a good mother? How do you define that?

NF: Well certainly someone who will talk with you. And I, I was, I had one who would have talked with me any time I ask her to. And who tells you the truth as she sees it. Like I asked the first time I saw the "F" word or heard it, I was 6 or 7, I can't remember. And confronted my mother with it and with what one of my little playmates had told me it meant because I certainly didn't believe that, and I went up, . . . you want me to tell you this story?

CO: Sure, yeah.

NF: This little friend of mine, the three of us playing and we were about 7 or 6 outside and there was a street marker and it had the "F" word and I said, you know somebody had graffitied it, and I said, "I see that written, I don't know what that means." And one of my little friends, who was unfortunately wise beyond her years, said well that means, that's what your Daddy does to your mother and she explained it more graphically than that, and that's how babies get born. And so I told her that it's the silliest thing I've ever heard, you know, and I certainly don't believe THAT, and my mother and daddy would not do that. Then I looked at my other little friend and I said, "tell her that's not true," and my other little friend was just sort of looking at the ground and said nothing really. So I left them immediately and I walked back to the house and walked up the stairs and I passed my daddy on the, he was coming down the stairs getting ready for dinner and on the off chance that that might be true, I just wouldn't speak to him. . . . And I went into the bedroom where mother was dressing for dinner, and she was at the, I remember one thing about this. I remember several things about it, but she's filled in a lot of the blanks, at that time mother had not cut her hair. She ended up cutting it almost like mine, but it was very long, she wore it in a bun. So she was combing her hair and I said mother do you and daddy ever [pause] and I used the "F" word and what I do remember was seeing that my mother's hand did this [pause] and she said, "Well, let's talk about this" And then she went to the, out the door to the edge of the stairs and called down and said, "Dinner will be a little late this [evening]…" So then we sat in her big rocker. She used to always put me in rocker when we were going to talk. And I was 6 or 7, I was big, but and we rocked. And she explained the whole thing and just made it sound wonderful and fine. And I said she tells, told me later that I said this. That I said,

"Well I think that's wonderful that you and daddy have that. I for one will never do that."

CO: [Laughter] What did she say to that?

NF: She just probably said, "Mmhhmm," knowing better. So, she, a good mother will always talk with you.

CO: So your mother modeled good mothering.

NF: Oh yeah. You know, in many ways. I mean I look back now and realize that in some ways I idealized her. Everybody has flaws but I think the most futile exercise in the world is always to blame your parents. Now some really deserve it but because they can in turn blame their parents, you know and so forth. So, I mean, I know that there are some flaws.

CO: Did you get the sense that she felt her mother mirrored good mothering so she…

NF: She always just spoke in the most devoted terms about her and so since I didn't know her at all, I mean it didn't make too much of an impression on me. She was very fond of her parents, that was, so that's a good thing that got passed down I think, you know. I think a good mother does always talk and of course in addition to the things of being kind and loving.

CO: Yeah, did, do you think it's gotten easier or more difficult to mother?

NF: More difficult. We talked about this a little bit before, but I think when I was growing up and when mother was having to mother there was no drug culture. There was not technology. There was not worrying about violations on the internet. There was not this. So, I would suspect the culture's gotten so complex. I mean it's always been complex but I mean with, with just those things because I can remember and I think may have said that of having friends of mine my age where they had teenage children, things they were going through, were so, so hard. The children and the parents, you know.

CO: Usually if people have children I ask them what they admire about each of their children but I'll just ask you that about Robert. What do you admire most about Robert?

NF: About Robert? Oh my goodness that's so hard, there's so much. Well I think he's the most interesting person I know and his honesty. He has never, to my knowledge, he has never lied to me. He's funny as hell. He has such good values. Some of which I didn't even know when I married him, and he just, you know, you just, they say this about marriage, is that the person you end up with after many years is very different from the person you marry, and it's not very different. I mean there are some core values that have always been there, but I certainly know things about him now that I didn't know then.

CO: And it turns out they, they're, it's better than you imagined.

NF: Oh much better. You know not that we don't have our times, you know. We certainly have our times of disagreement and being short with each other and such and such. Two people living in the same place. And the dailiness of it. The big things are easy, it's those little daily annoyances and, but I just really admire him so much. I admire the way he's handled his illness, his diabetes. Because it has not defined him but he's very vigilant about it. We, we just have great times together too, you know. So I'm very lucky and he can be stubborn and annoying at times but then I can too, you know.

CO: Do you consider him the love of your life?

NF: Absolutely.

CO: Wow. I love this story. This is why you have to write?

CO: Can we shift to another subject. The subject of loss, if you feel like talking about that.

NF: Mmhmm.

CO: I don't like when people ask when people ask to rank things, but can you identify the *most* difficult loss you experienced through now?

NF: Well the first great one and I think in many ways the most difficult was my mother. Then a year later, when Lil died that, that was, that was hard. We knew it was coming and although I was close to her, it was not that deeply personal. When my sister, Marianne died, she died a week before Lil died.

CO: A week before?

NF: Yes, see if there were like those seven deaths within three and a half years.

CO: But a week?

NF: A week. I was going over to take care of Daddy in Jacksonville because he just lost his daughter, my sister. When I heard that Lil had died too. So we had to deal with both of those. Marianne, the loss of Marianne was hard but it, I've repressed it so much and plunged into work as I always did. And it has revisited me since that, a lot. And I think that's going to happen with Elise, I told you about that and how grateful I am that we had some time. I don't know whether reconciliation is the right word but coming together in the last few years and also that I was able to be with her when she actually died, you know.

CO: How, how do you, when you say that you've revisited the Marianne's, the grief of Marianne, how do you know it's over her? Is it thoughts of her that provoke it?

NF: Yeah, it is thoughts of her and unexpected memories. It's not, it's not searing grief any more, but it's sometimes it's really a good memory and I think oh I really miss that. And with Elise, I think I will go through the same thing. You know you're experiencing some of that.

CO: Yeah, yeah. Okay, and it's, so there were…

NF: There were, they were, there were Tee Heart and Mogue, the two elderly aunts and Wallace, the youngest. Have I got seven yet? And my father finally. My mother was the first and my father was the last of that. And work was my way of coping.

CO: Have you learned lessons from that grieving and bereavement that you…

NF: I have learned to know that memory can really help and that it does. That those words on Lil's grave are true because I mean I still think about them and periodically at different times these people in my life and so they're still with me in a lot of ways. I also learned that the thing you think you can't get over, you can get over. Not get over, you don't get over it, but you can move on and deal with it, you know.

CO: So you don't, you don't, you're not tied to any regrets or serious regrets with those, with those…

NF: Oh I think any time any one dies you come over things, you come up with your list of "I wish I had" and I wish I had been able to spend more time toward the end with Marianne. And I wish I had with my father, but I don't strong guilt about it. And I know I don't feel a bit of guilt about my mother because I felt I was everything I could possibly have been at that time. I wish I had come to more reconciliation with Elise earlier but you do what you can do.

CO: And the experience of this grief in either case did you feel that it had a silver lining.

NF: Yeah, I think as I said I thought the surprise to me was going through mother's death and feeling in some ways it was very affirming. It was affirming of the depth of the relationship. And the fact that I was able to do something for her, and for my father, for Elise, for the people who were around at that time who needed help, gave me a sense instead of feeling just so devastated that I was able to do something, you know. So it gave me a sense of, of, I guess of, of some confidence and some feeling that at least I could do.

CO: So that was a silver lining to be able to… Besides loss through death, can you recall other significant losses that caused a similar kind of grief?

NF: Not a similar kind of grief. Not to that extent but the young actor that I had been involved with many years later, I was in, I think I was in Dallas or something like that, but meeting and I ran into a friend who had known him who had who, and he told me the young actor had died. And he had died of AIDS and that, cause I've had, I've lost enough students from that, and friends from that, that I

know what kind of death that can be. So that was a really stunning, and I thought about that for a long time afterwards. And when I think of him now, I don't think of his death. I think of how it was and how we knew each other. But I know that doesn't rank with some other deaths.

CO: Yeah, right, sure. But the losses that are not due to death like separation seems, you had to separate from them. Even a pet, of course that one hits

NF: That are not death. Oh well we are terrible when they.

CO: Or divorce, you know, like divorce, not in the, not necessarily a spouse, but a sister's spouse, or you know. That can be devastating kind of loss. Sounds like your family has been pretty stable where marriage is concerned.

NF: Well there have been divorces, but not in the nuclear family, but there have been divorces.

CO: Okay, in health and illness. Have you had major health issues?

NF: I told you about the precancer thing and how I had to do that. I've had that. I've had hepatitis. I've had two hip, I don't know if you consider this an illness, but two hip replacements and…

CO: So healing from that you have, there's a loss of independence for a little while.

NF: I'll tell you what is, I'm glad you just mentioned that word because what it, it's probably the only really cloud on my life right now, is my loss of mobility. Particularly having been in dance, but I mean it is, I have a great loss of mobility and of balance and I'm in a lot of pain in the lower back and we can't do anything about it. The best thing I can do about it is to go and work out in the water, which I do when I don't have a cold. And it's the one time I'm completely free pain and it's the way to get cardio. I do 30 minutes of laps and then I get into the other pool and do exercising. And I love doing that so when this cold is over I'll resume doing that. I can do it up in Clayton because we're near a pool and I can go to it. And so, but that does a number on your head when you can't move well. And I've had to deal, I've had to work on myself about that. About not letting it, not

letting it diminish my idea of who I am. But it does change your identity, I will tell you a little bit so…

CO: Yeah, well that easily goes into the next topic about again, I mean do you wanna?

NF: Yeah.

CO: How much time do we have?

NF: We are approaching 11 so we're pretty good.

CO: Okay well we'll do this and then we'll stop and decide. When you were young, like let's just say teenager, early young adult, what was old?

NF: This is so ridiculous, probably 60 or 70. When I was very young, it was before the time of miracle drugs. If somebody got pneumonia, that was a death sentence. And I remember thinking people who were 40 were old. But I probably later on, it was like 60 or 70, which now is very young.

CO: This question comes out of watching a film with Anthony Hopkins in it and I don't remember the, no not Anthony Hopkins, another equivalent actor, a British actor, who was an elderly college professor and fell in love with a young, I think someone maybe a third of his age, and I remember being so struck, and I probably have heard this before, but it really struck me in that film, where he said, you know, I mean it was scandalous because he was so much older, but he was really in love with this young girl and he said, "in my mind I'm not [whatever he was, like] 60s, early 70s something. He said in my mind I'm you know, I'm in my prime] and so I thought you know, how old do you feel in your mind?

NF: See I still have, I know exactly how he feels because at times I just have ideas and thoughts that are those of a much younger. I don't ever really, the only time I feel old is when I'm having trouble walking, but I don't feel old in any other way. And I know a lot of people my age who have the same feelings and we just don't feel, I mean 81 I don't really relate to the number too well. I mean it doesn't, I mean I'll read obituaries and I think they talk about people being 80 and I think, "Oh my, that ole person," you know. I haven't made the connection and I

don't deny my age. I've never lied about my age. I don't mind. I am very glad that I've had this long life. It doesn't change your fantasy life too much. It doesn't change your imagination. It hasn't so far. And I'm thankful for this changed my intellectual appetites or my mind as far as I can tell. You know we, Robert and I both have forgetting problems but we just figure that cause we have a lot in our data banks.

CO: Yeah, right, right. So you couldn't put an age on how you feel. You just feel, well let me ask you…

NF: Except for the moving. When I'm moving and having trouble I feel like I'm another person. I don't quite know me.

CO: What age do you recall most nostalgically?

NF: I guess when I was in my 30s and 40s.

CO: Okay. Do you feel like that was your prime? Physically, emotionally, intellectually?

NF: No, I don't think that was my prime. I think it was a little, I think I was a late bloomer. I think it was a little bit later when I was . . .

CO: So 30s and 40s, do you look back at that nostalgically because…

NF: I look back at it because of some wonderful things that happened and because I was young and it didn't seem impossible to build a dance department…blah, blah, blah, you know. All of those things had great zest to them and so I admit that. Do I want to repeat them? No, no, no, no.

CO: Right, yeah.

NF: I don't want to repeat the early years of my marriage, but I look back on that with a lot of nostalgic because we did some wonderful things and traveled. Some things that we really aren't so able to do any more.

CO: Yeah, if you could chose an age to remain…this is a silly question, but if you could chose an age to remain, you know, what would it be?

NF: Would I have to do what I did then?

CO: Well I guess it's really another way of asking that same question and I'm going to ask it again in another form under a different sort of. . .

NF: I guess just in terms of how I was physically and everything else, I would have to say latter 30s.

CO: Cause you had, did you feel as much physical mobility

NF: Yeah, I felt great then.

CO: Yeah, okay, alright. You've already really answered this, the most difficult part of aging and for you it's the lack of mobility.

NF: The lack of mobility and there are a lot of little body things that happen, you know. Health things we talked about this a bit yesterday, diminished hearing and then there are things that I feel, I don't feel that I'm a hypochondriac, but list doctors is long. And I think that's not so much a function of where I am but the fact that everybody's a specialist now so you can't have just one or two or three doctors. You have to have, you know someone for your right ear lobe.

CO: That's right. What's been the most rewarding part of aging?

NF: Stopping and smelling the roses I guess. You know really having, both Robert and I are so much tuned into the natural world, and I don't, I think when I was much younger, I loved things in nature but you're so busy changing the world and doing things, you know that you don't and now the, I mean I just, I just revel sometimes in the natural world and I have more time to do that now. And now particularly since I'm not going to be teaching more, I love reading and I have more time to read. We go to simulcasts of the Opera faithfully and love that. We've just been, we're doing, we're having more time to do things like that and we go to performances and lectures and so forth and that's…

CO: So in one sense it's kind of given you more independence.

NF: It's freeing, it's freeing. It's freeing all of the challenges of health issues and mobility and such. And fatigue, you know you get more tired more easily, more quickly.

CO: What do you do about that? Do you take naps? Do you…

NF: Yeah, and I try to get a good night's sleep, which is sometimes possible and sometimes not for various reasons.

CO: What do you lose sleep over more? Is it a, do you have insomnia or do you have health, pain.

NF: I used to have insomnia. I don't, I don't have that and then pain used to keep me awake. It doesn't seem to be doing it. It's usually something, I mean every now and then I have a funny sleep pattern where I wake up every hour but I go right back to sleep again. It's obviously something is percolating in my mind. You know and if there's a particular issue, and I go to bed with that issue unresolved that would give me a…

CO: Do you dream a lot?

NF: Off and on, and I'll go through periods where I have these, an incredible dream load, and then I'll through a period where they say you always dream, and maybe you do, but when I don't have any cognizance of having dreams, you know.

CO: Do you, do you have any interest in dreams. I mean do you try to analyze them?

NF: Mmhhmm.

CO: You do?

NF: If they're interesting I try to.

CO: What advice would you give to younger people about the best way to age?

NF: Well I started to say don't fight it, because you use up a lot of energy that way. I think you have to be realistic about it and accept it, but I do think you ought to fight it as far as doing good health things and trying to exercise and that sort of thing. I guess is the way of fighting it or just really dealing with it. I think, and I don't, I am not always been able to do this but I think you ought to deal with the things that come along with age that are plusses and it is like some realizations that you didn't have before. And some freedoms that you don't, that you didn't have before. And every, every decade has it's plusses and minuses and if you can think of what the plusses are more than the minuses. I think the minuses with most people have to do with health or loss of security or loss other than that and those are hard.

CO: Loss, yeah. Do you they get that, for, do you think you have more capacity now to deal with loss?

NF: Yes, although the prospect of losing Robert is scary to me, and you know we have this silly thing that we do where we say, "I'm going to die to first. I get to go first," and he says that to me and I say you, that is very cowardly and very rude. I think we both do that.

CO: Okay, alright anything else about aging that…

NF: Well you know all the funny clichés about it. That it's not for wimps and such. I think that's true. I think it takes, I think it takes a certain desire to have a kind of emotional stamina about it and, but there's some sad things about it, you know.

CO: Do you remember, was there a point in time where you decided that, did you ever color your hair?

NF: Oh yeah.

CO: Okay, and so when did you decide I'm not going to color my hair? I'm not going to try to hold on to a certain image?

NF: Okay, I can tell you exactly, I was in my early 30s and this young actor I was involved with, said at that time I had some gray in the hair but I was coloring it

and it was very long and in a bun and he said I'm going to bring somebody over and we're going to cut off all your hair. And I said oh no you're not. He said you would just be stunning with it short and so he brought someone over from the theatre school, who did hair and we sat in that back bedroom, I mean bathroom and he, this young man who fortunately was very good, cut off all my hair. And I saw it on the floor and I thought mmm, that's sort of strange and I looked in the mirror and I liked it. And by then it was half, it was salt and pepper, and I just never colored it again. People, my own students didn't recognize me the next day, and, but I remember, he called me the next day and he said how do you feel about it? And I said well at that time when I laid in my bed I could look, I had a panel of a mirror. And I said, I woke up this morning and I thought I'm in the bed with some little Italian boy, but and then it, it still, it was full and it was more like an early Jane Fonda, but it wasn't this short. It just got shorter and shorter, because I loved it short and I just let it go completely white.

CO: And so did you ever miss the hair? Did you ever miss your hair? No.

NF: And I thought I would; and I don't know whether that was a great, but he was absolutely right. I did, I liked my self-better, I like. I see some of those pictures, even when it wasn't quite as short as it was this, it was better in the long hand.

CO: So since that haircut in whatever, 19…

NF: In the 30s. I mean in my 30s.

CO: You were in the 30s so it was in the 50s.

NF: Uh huh.

CO: You have…

NF: No, would it have been. No.

CO: Yeah, because you didn't buy this house until…

NF: No, No, No, it was before this house in '69 so this would have been in mid-'60s.

CO: So it wasn't, it didn't happen here.

NF: It did happen here.

CO: So you bought this house in '69? Right?

NF: Yes, so it would've been in the early '70s.

CO: So you would have been…

NF: I would have been early 40s.

CO: Early 40s. And since that time you've had short hair? Wow.

NF: Mmhhmm.

CO: And so that, okay, and then was that a, so sounds very liberating and you just gave up on…

NF: Coloring.

CO: Coloring it, but that's a major image change.

NF: Oh it was and as I've said students the next day did not recognize me. Students I'd known, I mean they would, I would walk in the studio and they would start looking and then double take or something. And see it's like you, you know, because I wore it colored and long or something up here on the top of my head.

CO: So okay, and then did you get to a point where you noticed that you didn't turn heads as much as you used to? Was that a?

NF: Oh yeah, you know, that just happens. I can remember saying to a friend of mine, I want them to fall in a heap on the floor, and don't any more. Not that they ever really did.

CO: But there's that perception that it's happening and then a perception that it isn't happening anymore.

NF: Yeah and you have that, and particularly if you're having a happy life by then it's okay, you know, you don't.

CO: Yeah, you can accept it.

NF: You can accept that what then begins to happen when you get as old as I am is that you, you can sense that people are really receiving you as old. I told Robert one time, I think, very recently, one of the times where you give your age or something, and I sat there and waited for the gasp and it didn't come. Nobody was surprised that I was 81 years old. You know that people are perceiving you as old and that's, and you don't perceive yourself as old. Although you're a realist, it can you know how old you are. That's interesting. I don't feel it very painful. I just feel it a little weird.

CO: It sounds like there's, you don't have a, there is no such thing as old for you. That there's just no---not the way it's defined by this culture. I mean cultures sometimes it's so negatively that.

NF: Oh no, I think you're right about that. You know I now read those things, you know, that everybody reads now about women in their 90s running marathons and I think why can't I do that? So the parts of this culture that don't believe old is old but.

CO: Yeah, well any final reflections on aging before we stop for a minute?

NF: Well I remember telling of a real good friend of mine when we were talking and this was decades ago, he's no longer living. About growing old, and we were talking, this was before I got married, and we were talking about how we would be perceived and he said let's become even more eccentric. Let's become remarkable old eccentrics. And I said to become a magnificent old ruin like Coventry or something, you know. Cause I, I don't want to do all of this. I don't object to that I think it's fine. I just don't want it…

CO: Yeah, do you think you would feel differently about the aging process if you weren't happily married?

NF: Oh I think I'd be much lonelier. Although, I think it's important, I mean we fill our lives with a lot of things. But there are things that you separately and i would hope that I would continue to do those. But I think I would feel, I think

there is a fear thing that happens with what is going to happen when I need help. And if you're happily married you're not as afraid of that.

CO: Did you…

NF: And since we don't have children, you see there's nobody we could call and say, "help," you know.

CO: Did you, your father wound up in assisted living. Did you think about that? I mean is that.

NF: Mmhhmm. We do and we have policies for assisting, assisted living help but it's the home. If we can possibly do that and you know insurance policies that we have that would provide health care here. I read there's an article in today's paper that addresses that about living in the home and how there's a growing wave of people who really want to do that and who are trying to figure out the logistics of that.

CO: So do you…yeah.

NF: We would both like of course to die in our beds here but…

CO: Right, but given does that involve so having individuals here one or whatever individual to live here with you?

NF: Well or could come in. Depending on what we needed. I mean it does do that and Robert is not as realistic about things as I am about that. I mean and he's not in denial about it. He just wants, he's just too busy living in the now. I don't mean he's being silly about it. We've taken out insurance policies but, like I keep pushing him we've got to figure out our final arrangements for when we die. I mean we have wills, we are fine on that. We have gone back and forth between, at first it was going to be cremation and then we decided, particularly Robert, that that's ecologically so bad. So I want either organ donation or to give my body to medicine and he's cool with that. The trouble with organ donation, is that they give what's left back to you and I would really just like the whole, I'm a great believer in recycling. You know. So we're trying to figure that one out.

CO: I don't know what is ecologically unsound about cremation. What is the, because of the…

NF: I guess the chemicals used and the, I'll have to, you'd have to ask Robert. He's the one who feels so strongly about that.

CO: I was no aware of that.

NF: And that would be fine with me and then he also, you know, that movements around where it's just the simple pine box and you let nature take care of the remains and there's no place here in Tallahassee for that. I think there's one in Gainesville.

CO: Gainesville, Florida?

NF: Mmhhmm. So I don't know but those are practical things that we really need to settle.

CO: Well.

NF: And I can understand why he doesn't want to spend a lot of time thinking about it, but we do have to think about it.

CO: Sure, yeah. It's and, you know, I mean when we first talk as it, when you experience a death it catalyze…it either causes you to shut down, which I've seen that happen or it catalyzes you to get yourself in, you know, especially when it happens to the baby in the family, you really think, this could happen, and you know it's, I may not live 95 years, you know. So, it had that effect and so it's, so and that brings up the whole issue of aging, as though looking in the mirror doesn't. You know that itself. It's interesting how people deal with that and interestingly some people don't deal with it at all.

NF: I know.

CO: I'm going to stop this for minute and see where we are.

**End of Trac 6**

**Beginning of Trac 7-8A**

CO: Okay, we will move onto another sort of heavy subject. It's titled core values, religion, church, or spiritual awareness.

NF: That's okay.

CO: People use in different discourse to talk about the same thing, you know. If you grow up in a Evangelical church the way most Southerners do it's you know you might use one discourse, so, if I use a discourse that you wanna answer in another way feel free to do that. Basically, to start with, I heard this question on NPR a week or so ago and just kind of added it, because it was very thought provoking to me. They had something on their website where they were inviting people to write in what was their core value that had driven their lives, you know. Driven them throughout their life, the core value. So that, do you, could you identify a core value.

NF: I could identify it better in the plural, but

CO: Well that's okay.

NF: I think as long as I can remember, the belief in equality for all, you know, was very strong and I was, I've mentioned many times that came from my family. It wasn't just on the race level, it was on the economic level as well, and the fact that you're not superior to anyone. There are superior attributes you may have, but you're not. So I think that was, that was very strong in me and the feeling of being really upset when I saw two little Jewish girls at camp being discriminated against and that's a very, that's a very strong, I mean that's as long as I can remember I felt that.

CO: So you, you've had a sense of social justice all your life?

NF: I think so. I've not always done all I should, nobody has, but I haven't done all I should have done about it, but I certainly had it.

CO: Do you recall, I want to get back to core values, but do you recall, it's hard to fathom [having that awareness from one's earliest days. I did not.] I mean I can tell you when I woke up.

NF: Tell you the moments.

CO: So you really have, I mean you have, it's just been in the air you breathe, because your family was so…

NF: Well it has been but that doesn't mean that I've raised it to a conscious level all the time. You know particularly as a, as a child, but I know I encounter the opposite of that in public schools. For people who did not feel that way and I would always go home and talk about it, you know. And so it would get reinforced in that way and I can remember these, these may seem small to you, but I, but if a memory stays with you from almost childhood, you know it's important.

CO: Absolutely.

NF: I can remember once we lived here for one year in Tallahassee. Most of the time we were in Jacksonville. My father was involved with his engineering company in building Dale Mayberry Field and so we lived here for one time, and I can remember walking along what is, I don't even know what the street is now, but it's off opposite the governor's club, it's at Duval and Hammick[?]. Walking along that they had raised sidewalks and looking down and seeing an elderly black man with a little, I guess it was a little leather purse, everything about him was shabby you know. And he was counting out his coins and I can remember the, I mean I can get it almost in tears thinking about it. Now I don't know what he was doing. I don't, but just thinking there's somebody here whose life is so different from mine. And I, I have kept that image in my memory. I can still remember it. I can call it up.

CO: And you were how old did you say?

NF: Oh I would have been 11 or 10 or 11, depending on what part of the year it was. And see I mean you can hear, you can grow up at Lillian Smith's feet and, or

at your mother's feet and hear all these things, but then you see something and this was not, I mean he was not being abused by mobs or anything, but it was just a searing image which I've always kept with me. And another one that, and I don't know how I would've been older now, was seeing a newspaper article that showed a picture of someone, there are very few of these around but there are some classic ones, of someone being executed, electrocuted. And I have always as long as I can remember had this very, very strong opposition to the death penalty. But that was horrible and frightening to me and still is that people do this to other people. I don't know if that's a core value, but it's an example of a core value.

CO: Sure, sure.

NF: I guess, you know, I'm an anti-war.

CO: Yeah, it's really a, the sense of equality of all human beings, has really governed, your, your ideals, your, and do you think that that, --since the major topic here is religion, does that come from religion or does it…

NF: I think it gets reinforced by it in terms of my experience of organized religion, it has been up and down, as I have mentioned before, but I was brought up in a church. I was brought up in big city church. I was brought up as Methodist, that's different from a rural Methodist church frequently and it was not charismatic. It was not fundamentalist. It was not and it probably, I mean this would have been a racially segregated society at that time.

CO: But, I know you've talked about your parents. They took you to church. I mean they weren't, they didn't send you to church. They took you to church. I'm, what, did they talk about religion or did, was it…

NF: Yes, I remember mother used to do classes over, adult classes at the church. I guess it was Sunday school classes, and I would frequent go attend them because I thought she was very good, and I liked her. I liked what she said.

CO: Your mother?

NF: Uh huh.

CO: So she taught then, okay?

NF: Yeah, and then I remember one time I was out of school for about six weeks with some sort of chronic infection, but wasn't well enough to be mobile apparently because mother, there was a visiting preacher down at one of the big churches and we went every day and I remember thinking he, this is a really smart man. Part of that attraction was that after he spoke we would all, mother and I would, mother would take me to Morrison's Cafeteria and I would have something yummy. So, yeah, I'm sure there was early childhood.

CO: Did…

NF: And did they talk about them? Mother would talk about them and they would talk about religion, but it usually wasn't like *the* topic. Something else would come up were we would talk about an issue. Make reference to…

CO: Do you think they have strong faith?

NF: I know, I know my father did. My father had sort of an old fashioned faith, I think, and his father, my granddaddy that I did not know, had, when they moved up to Clayton, had self-ordained circuit rider you know so he preached.

CO: You're, your father's father?

NF: Mmhhmm, my grandfather.

CO: Okay. Methodist circuit rider?

NF: Mmhhmm.

CO: Okay.

NF: After having sort of run Jasper, FL owning all the utilities there. Owning the navy stores and so forth, and when he lost all of that, when Dewitt died, he moved the family up there. Then he became very active. He built that little Methodist church up in Clayton and came back. So I mean there's all that in the background. My sister Marianne wanted to be a Methodist, I mean wanted to be

a missionary to Africa from the time she was three. She always said and I believe that. It stayed with her and each of my sisters married men of the cloth.

CO: It's interesting because you studied Southern religious history. You see far more social activism came out of Methodist church.

NF: Mmhmm.

CO: Than any other denomination really. Do you think that that somewhat explains the heavy percent of, percentage of your family that turned out to be social aware?

NF: Probably and there were ministers on both sides of the family you know. And see this granddaddy who was the circuit rider was Lillian Smith's father. And then Joseph Smith was on the way to being the bishop in Mississippi when he had a stroke and died. And on my mother's side there were Methodist ministers.

CO: So it really is, this is always been a curiosity to me, how differently the gospel can be interpreted.

NF: Oh yeah.

CO: And that, but your family it, it sounds like they, it simply wasn't an interpretation of the Gospel that you take care, that there was an equality of all people.

NF: That's right.

CO: in the…

NF: And probably my father had a more simplistic version that my mother questioned everything, and but this is good you know.

CO: Did she ever, was she ever, did that ever trouble her?

NF: I don't know if it troubled her. I have heard a story but again it's just from Elise and so I don't know how much it should filtered that she says that mother said toward the end of her life that she really didn't know what was beyond. And

that would, she didn't know, she loved God but she really didn't know exactly what she believed. And mother may have said that because she was questioning person. Since that…

CO: Right, right. Did that upset you?

NF: Uh Uh.

CO: No?

NF: No, because I'm not sure what is beyond, you know. The church that Robert and I go to up in North Georgia has a rector who is extremely open and encourages that kind of questioning. So, that was not disturbing to me. It was disturbing to me that it was said in front of my niece, because my niece was at a period at that time when she was trying to figure things out.

CO: Well can you, can you talk about your own religious beliefs? Your spiritual values?

NF: Well I think that, I think that from the get-go I probably believed in God and then I had this childhood that we've just been talking about and then as I mentioned yesterday I had this sort of great amnesia period were I just didn't go to church but this was not a rebellion. I mean it didn't mean that I didn't believe in God. I just wasn't interested very much in church. There was nothing at church that was exciting to me intellectually at that time. I probably did not find the right church, you know. But it, I read a lot and I read Teilhard De Chardin a lot. And what's interesting to me, was that after Lil died and I went, I was going through some of her books, she had almost everything he had ever written and then in talking to Paula, Paula said how interesting and then if you read the letters Rose Gladney's edition of the letters you see how interested she became until audition and she was interested in de Chardin, she's interested in God but she did not think, in whatever letters she writing to her oldest sister, Bertha, she says it's not this warm fuzzy thing that people say God is. Like a friend of mine up in North Georgia says it's not daddy in the sky. So she one of the things she also introduced me were to the works of Charles Williams and I when I did start reading them I was just addicted to them.

CO: Now, I, Charles Williams…

NF: Charles Williams was with this group of people like C. S. Lewis and that bunch and he's written some remarkable books there. They're mystical. And they're great reads.

CO: I was going to say in some of the letters you can tell that Lillian Smith read Eastern mystics as well as Western mystics.

NF: A lot, a lot. So my life when I wasn't going to church was full of that. I read a lot of different kinds of things other than this, but I read Merton. And I did not feel I was being deprived of spiritual material because I was reading a lot about it. And you know you end up talking to people about it, but I didn't go---- occasionally I would go to church. When I was in Texas I even taught Sunday school. That was a real disaster, but it was a very conservative community and apparently I taught the wrong things. Like there were such things as dinosaurs and evolution. But then I got back into the church through a series of interesting events when I was lead to, it was suggested that I talk to someone, a priest over here, and he was a priest at that time at Holy Comforter. His name was George Kontos somewhat controversial person and I would just go and talk with him. It helped me through some difficult times and then I started going to the Wednesday night service over there. It was very informal, very and I think he was an extremely gifted person spiritually. It was like when he was at his best, it was like something was coming through him. The ego was out of the way and suddenly something's coming through him. And he made some mistakes and some people got upset with him. I still love him very much and I wish I were more in contact with him but he left town after a while. I remember I was saying to him one time, "Are you ever going to ask me to join this church or invite me to join the church?" And he said well you can any time you want to, but it was no pressure which was exactly what I responded to so eventually I got confirmed in the Episcopal Church and since then there are many things I like about it. I'm more at home frankly in the church of the North Georgia than I am here, which is really odd because this is a church through which I entered the Episcopal denomination

and also I've been an Episcopalian longer here than any other place but there's something about that church up there that is really remarkable.

CO: What is it about the Episcopal Church you think that has appealed to you?

NF: I like the idea that it has a large quotient of sometimes unrecognized mysticism. I think a Eucharistic church has that. I don't think it's always on the level of consciousness in all the people who were there, but that has appeal to me. And I can't explain it because it's just too inexorable, but it's there and then the I like what the National Episcopal Church has to say against certain, against the death penalty, you know and some political issues. I like what it's done on the gay rights front. Other churches are beginning to do that. To be perfectly frank the church here in Tallahassee that does more social justice issues and is afraid of nothing is a very old church here, it's First Presbyterian. It's remarkable and if I did not have these strange sort of bonds to the Episcopal Church I would be there.

CO: So did, it sounds like you find something, something in the Eucharist itself that is yeah. Yeah.

NF: I can't explain that.

CO: Right, right, right. Okay but you did go through a time when you read a lot of Eastern…

NF: Still do occasionally, you know. Yeah.

CO: Did that affect or did that lead you into any kind of spiritual practice?

NF: No, well I, and that's not quite true because I think it opened up for me ideas about prayer but I did not observe a daily practice. I do observe a daily practice of prayer but if you're thinking of did it lead me into I think a more formalized…

CO: No, daily practice is really what I was talking about not necessarily, so it did…

NF: There's a Greek theologian, Bloom, is his last name, and I read him a lot. And it's old Greek Orthodox…

CO: Oh yeah, I know that work.

NF: That book meant a lot to me. And so in a way that helped me with the daily practice of prayer. It's still, a lot of it's such a mystery.

CO: Some people don't love mystery you know they don't have to have it. Other people don't want the mystery.

NF: I have, I have to have the mystery because I can't believe. I find it difficult to believe in anything for sure.

CO: Okay, yeah.

NF: I don't mean I don't believe in God, but I mean anything for sure, because I cannot imagine, well as the rector in North Georgia says you know the God you understand fully is not worth worshiping, you know.

CO: Right, well have you had something you identify as a, maybe more than one, could you identify a most spiritual moment of your life. Something that you would identify as spiritual. You're already said the Eucharist is, has that.

NF: Yeah, that's been sort of a growing thing.

CO: But is there some other, well actually what I'm talking about you even, I mean, what I would identify is that shift that came through you in your…

NF: That's, I mean where do you draw the line because that's a spiritual revelatory thing.

CO: Actually that's what I'm talking about. An epiphany of any kind you…

NF: Well we've talked about turning points as certainly of another kind, another category, the decision to marry Robert, but to me that was spiritual too and the whole relationship.

CO: Because it was an insight.

NF: It was an insight and a real turning in me. And also I could not believe, see I had right before Robert there had been what I considered a not very pleasant

relationship, and I was just walking around feeling a little shredded. I couldn't believe that I could be healed so vastly. I think, I think, I think Robert was just given to me, you know. It's certainly really, it's so like us human beings to want to make everything finite and draw these lines between the spiritual, the emotional, the psychological, the physical, and so forth. Can't really work that way.

CO: Yeah, I agree. So I mean I maybe I did maybe I didn't identify that experience but that's how I, I think some people would interpret that experience, that any time there's a shift inside you know that and along with it comes some insight that is, what else can you call that. Can't put your finger on it, so, okay. So yeah, that, so spiritual moment for you is really kind of, sounds like it's kind of an integrated experience the intellect, emotion and it all just kind of, kind of difficult.

NF: But surely the shifting and with Robert was a big one. And then I think the early times when I was just talking with George Kontos I would come away and I would feel something and I would feel that this was one of George's good days when something came through him and I got, I was the beneficiary.

CO: This is the priest?

NF: Yeah. Here, yeah.

CO: And it led to an insight about something that you were seeking, sort of to maybe figure out?

NF: Yeah.

CO: Is that what it was?

NF: Yeah.

CO: Do you have a spiritual confidante like that now, that you are able to consult?

NF: No, there was a time, I mean I talk to George about almost everything but there was a time when George came over here and asked me to be his spiritual advisor, and I said I'm not qualified to do that and besides it would take you away from me at times especially that. So we became, we just didn't use that term.

We became sort of spiritual friends or whatever. And he'd come once a month, and those were wonderful times.

CO: But you felt like in a sense it wasn't about, it was about, I don't want to use the word channel, because that's has, it's loaded but you really were just sort of conduits…

NF: We were, mmhhmm.

CO: for each other.

NF: At that time also the trendy, but I mean the term that was used was Spiritual Director and I would not accept that responsibility. I didn't feel I could do that and besides, he had been mine and so we just didn't title it.

CO: Yeah, but the same, did the same sort of insights continue to resolve?

NF: Yeah, and then he left. So and that was very sad for me.

CO: And do you have that in up in North Georgia. Do you have a relationship…

NF: Yeah, I mean it's very different. I mean the rector there, I've never talked to him that personally, but we have talked and he has this wonderful Wednesday class that is so full of diverse opinions and so forth, but…

CO: Now does Robert go?

NF: Yes, and then there was no pressure from me because I figure all that's between Robert and God, you know. Not my business, but he just started going to both church and to this class. But he doesn't go here, and I don't, I'm not certainly ever going to ask him to.

CO: So if you feel drained, well I guess, you've probably already answered this, but how do you renew your inner strength?

NF: I think by seeking quietness. I think I tend to get drained if I let myself get very tired and that's easier to do as you age. I say a lot of sort of, you know, things that can be depressing like friends dying and things like that. It'll go on but

I think if I can find quietness I can open myself up. I mean I don't know whether you call prayer or whatever and that can…

CO: But it does require being quiet for you?

NF: It does.

CO: Would you consider that a sort of a form of meditation?

NF: I guess, yeah. Although it's not formally structured. But you know when "work in the world" is too much with us, that can in the world is too much because that can really make a dent in your quietude.

CO: Well you said a few minutes ago that being in nature kind of does that for you.

NF: Yeah, that is very healing. We have a place out at the river which we go back and forth about, thinking that we have to sell because we can't really afford it. The taxes are hard. It's out on the Waukala[?]. And during that one year that I was deaning in theatre and trying to do everything else and still teaching in dance, and so forth, that's when we got that, and we got it simply as an investment because Robert inherited some property that he had to sell and then you had to giggle it around. And of course he's fallen in love with it now, but he would take me out there every weekend and we would get in a canoe and just go up and down the river and it was like everything would fall off of me. And it was…

CO: Yeah, and that's a spiritual experience, I bet.

NF: Yeah, and it would just be a saving thing.

CO: Have you had something you would consider a miracle happen?

NF: Robert's close to it coming into my life, and that's not this, that's not being said sentimentally. I mean that really.

CO: Yeah, I get that. I get that.

NF: I've wanted other kinds. You know I think we've appetites to have…

CO: Sure.

NF: But I can't really say that.

CO: Well, I think some people would say that getting the right partner is a huge…

NF: Yeah, it is one, yeah.

CO: But that's been pretty, if you don't get another one…

NF: That's right.

CO: You really also kind of answered this, about how your values have changed over time. That you, I don't know, you want to put that into words? Your religious values and how they've changed over time.

NF: I think if I were to do a one liner on it is that I'm just not only willing to but eager to embrace the mystery and not demand rational explanations.

CO: Okay, okay. Do you believe in an afterlife?

NF: I think there's something and that's about as far as I can go and I think there's something, you know, the early ideas about, "I'll meet Momma, and Daddy in heaven," and so forth, I don't have to hang onto that. I think it would really and truly be a miracle if all that turns out to be true but I think there's something, I mean I just don't think energy gets destroyed and so I think there's something that will happen.

CO: Do you think consciousness remains?

NF: I don't know, but you know, isn't that the great question always, because consciousness is the me of me, you know. Is that just going to go away?

CO: Right, yeah. So, but you're willing to live with that, not in that we…

NF: Don't have a choice, yeah.

CO: What, some of these questions I've realized are just impossible, but what single experience has given you the greatest joy?

NF: Robert. That's not a single experience, that's a whole bunch of stuff. The greatest satisfaction I think has been the marriage and the work. But that's full of so many single experiences.

CO: Well no yeah. But the word was joy, and that's some interesting, because for you joy and satisfaction seems like pretty much the same thing.

NF: There were moments in the work, but I can't limit it to a single experience. But like when they named the theater after me or when I got the Lawton award which was just up, all of that was unexpected, and I felt real humble by it. Those were joyful experiences but they don't rank over the joy with Robert. You see so, it's hard to say single.

CO: Well right. It sounds like you feel at peace in yourself now?

NF: Yeah, I think, Robert and I have a funny, funny thing. You know how you get nicknames and funny word, code words with a partner, but we have this thing called "EP" and it stands for Existential Panic and every now and then I'll say I'm having a little EP or he'll say that.

CO: May I borrow that?

NF: Certainly.

CO: Plagiarize it?

NF: Absolutely. Because everybody does have those moments I think. Maybe some people don't, but then I don't think they've let themselves be bothered by much if they don't.

CO: You've already answered this one too, but I'll give you a chance just to say it one more time. Are you certain of anything?

NF: I mean you know there are certain like death and taxes. You know you're going to die. I am certain that I found the right partner. I'm certain that my work

not only did make a contribution, but is going on. It's not my work, it's taken a different directions with different leadership and that's really a good feeling and I, that is a certainty I think that that contribution continues.

CO: Okay the next one's hokey.

NF: Well I've given you some hokey answers too but I didn't mean to.

CO: When you meet God, if there is such an experience, what do you want to say to God?

NF: Now that sounds like that theatre program. Have you heard on Bravo?

CO: No.

NF: It's Actor's Studio.

CO: Oh yes, yes. Well I didn't get it from that, but now that you say it, it does.

NF: I guess I would say thank you, particularly if he lets me in.

CO: Okay, so what do you want God to say to you?

NF: Welcome.

CO: Okay, I think I got these questions from him. Does he say this?

NF: He gets the one I remember is that he's always asking, maybe he does say what do you want God to say to you.

CO: Oh my goodness, well I may have to, may have plagiarized him. Okay and I think this last one is just simply pretty much what you said with the first one I expected what you how you will answer it, but what do you believe are the most vital spiritual or religious values that people ought to observe?

NF: Love for other people you know. And I think that includes self, love the self and other people.

CO: The, okay that's a whole other, so you really don't think you can love other people until you can love yourself?

NF: Well I think loving yourself is like, quoting Shakespeare, "to thine own self be true," you know, and believe you have some value because again like the cliché, God doesn't make trash, so you know. You have some value. One of the things that happened up at Saint James last summer was that they have as the youngsters were getting ready to go back to school, they all had their backpacks you know to go to public school. So they had a blessing of the backpacks and on the back of each backpack the rector had put, "I am one of God's children. Don't mess with me". Which I think is wonderful.

CO: Well that's probably a good place to end for this part. Alright.

NF: I've…

**End of Audio Track 7 [from 37:27 to 41:50 part of another interview bleeds in; at 41:51 the Fichter interview picks up at Janury 20, 2012]**

CO: Okay, I think we're on. It's January 20th, Friday, January 20, 2012. I'm at Nancy Smith Fichter's house and we're hoping to finish up her interview today. And I think that we will start by revisiting, some of what covered the last time I was here and I'll ask Nancy if you, if there was anything that we talked about that came back to you after, you know, you had time to reflect on it that you either want to clarify or just simply follow up on in any way.

NF: There is and it has to do with the relationship with my sister Elise and my mother and I remembered something I said and I thought , "Oh, I need to both follow up on that and hopefully clarify" because I remember saying once that, when we were in the other interview that in talking about sibling rivalry in relation to this sister that I thought that my mother had a special bond with her and that my father, because Marianne was his first born from his first wife, had a special bond, and that somehow I thought well I wonder which I belonged to and I thought, in thinking about that that sounded so Poor Pitiful Pearl and one of the things I really wanted to clarify and this is not, in my view, defensive but I felt that I was abundantly love. I mean I did not want to suggest that I was not loved by them. I thought, I never felt unloved by them, in fact, in the latter years of my mother's life she made that so, so clear to me. I think the thing that I learned to

realize and probably realized on a less than conscious level when I was young but certainly grew to realize is that one loves in different ways. One loves one's children in different ways, and that there was certain history with that in Marianne that of course was not shared with anyone else, and there was this bond with mother and Elise that so deep, but I don't' think it meant necessarily that it was one got love and one didn't. Cause I said I felt so loved and in the latter years when Elise was so ill, and mother realized how deep her psychological problems were, I think in a sense that must have been just extraordinarily painful to her because of that bond. Because she saw Elise being unkind to people at times because of her illness and her addiction history, and being so lost which I just think grieved her terribly. So I don't think it was a blindness to the situation. I just think she, I know it hurt her very, very much because she would talk to me about it in a lot of years. I'm sure it hurt her and Elise too and do think I mentioned when we talked about my relationship with her that, that she died, you know, a year and a half ago, and that I miss her. And I have found it very interesting, I've been through this is the second Christmas season I've been through since her death, there were so many happy things this Christmas that I thought, "Oh I want to tell Elise that" so and I treasure that really. That I don't think of her and, in a negative way.

CO: Well I want to say just by way of response about how it came across about you talking about your younger sister, I mean, yes she would be the younger sister having a particular bond with…

NF: No I was the youngest.

CO: Yes, that's what I'm saying. So, but Elise was the younger of the other two sisters…

NF: That's right.

CO: And you did, you said that, you made that clear but it did not at all come across as Poor Pitiful Pearl. So it was just sort of you stating a fact and almost as though you realized that in retrospect and you might have had some awareness of it as a child but it wasn't something you…

NF: But I don't remember grieving over it as a child. I mean, we, we had the usual rivalries, you know, but I think they were rather usual.

CO: Well you talked about the, the dynamic between you and Elise a good bit because obviously it was, well it maybe, in part because of her fairly recent death. But I wondered if you wanted to revisit any of that.

NF: I think it was a powerful dynamic in the first place, I've thought about this a lot recently too about how close we were as children. Although she has, she had said that she never saw any reason to my having been born you know which was said half facetiously, but not totally, and because that upset her apple cart. Because it was only a year and eleven days you know and she, but we were very close. What I have begun to remember, I guess I always knew it, but I'm thinking about it more these days is that she was very protective of me. I remember times when she would come to my defense if someone was bullying us, you know at school. And I think of those things now and I'm so glad that for some reason my erratic memories choosing to latch on, on that. And yet, as the years went on she became increasingly sort of competitive and jealous at times, and that is sad. It's sort of like towards the end she became loving again. But other things that I think of not having to do necessarily with the relationship with the parents but the three of us were bright. Marianne, and I think I told you this about Marianne being salutatorian, Elise being valedictorian, and I was third, but I always thought that Elise was just, she had a steel trap mind and just really, really brilliant. Marianne was too, but Marianne had also more of the softer artistic thing in her. I did think, I know I did think that I was never going to be as smart as Elise, you know, as intelligent as Elise. Now as I aged I realized that there are different kinds of intelligence, you know different intelligences and different gifts.

CO: Well do you think that part of her, it seems to be, certainly, I know this is stereotypical, but some, but brilliance and psychological issues often go hand in hand. Do you think your sister's…

NF: It may have been, but you know I'll never figure out exactly what happened to cause her to get, to become ill. And her daughter who is my beloved niece, Nancy, you know, is, we've talked about it a lot of times, we can't figure it out.

Her daughter went into the same field into psychology but we can't figure out what on earth caused it to go awry because she had so, she has such a load of gifts, you know. But, you know.

CO: Yeah. Anything else?

NF: I think that's about…Something may pop up later.

CO: Right, right, sure. Well as I said as we sort of close down I'll ask some questions that will definitely sound repetitive, but after sort of rehashing all those memories you might think of it, it might sound, come across differently. Anyway our topic now is something that I'm finding people have a difficult time grasping what I'm talking about, which is for me kind of hard to understand because I think I grew up myself being acutely aware of my "southern identity" you know and probably so and that's one reason why I think I gravitated to it when I became an academic, you know I was trying to figure this out, and maybe not everybody is as obsessed with their southern identity as others, you know, but in any case if you travel outside the south, as I know you certainly have, as you travel outside the south, people outside the region in this country recognize that southerners are strongly, regionally identified, so, so these are questions about, about that. And the first one is if you, if you had to, to explain to somebody from another country, I know it's not true of Europe, we didn't talk about this, she's okay. We didn't talk about this did we? Do you remember?

NF: I can't remember.

CO: I don't think we did. [Loud jingle noises]

NF: I could put her out.

CO: No, no, she's fine. She's fine. She's just being friendly.

NF: Bailey.

CO: European's know a lot about the South and you know, they're sort, they're sort of indulgent about that but let's say someone, an Asian, didn't understand regional differences, how would you describe the South?

NF: Okay, this is going around Robin Hood's barn to get there but I think the way I felt, I feel the way I feel about the South have felt about that and have felt about the South I saw replicated when Robert and I first went to Italy. I felt so at home in Florence, we were there for four months and the first time I felt so at home and I did not know the language but I felt, I felt that way and then kind of to do with the warmth and high, high spirits, sometimes high tempers, the feeling for food. I mean I tried to analyze it later, I just felt very, very much at home.

CO: So, so you, the parallel between Florence…

NF: The parallel I think has to do with great feelings for, and they, when I say great feelings they can be negative and positive, for family, great feelings for land, land as property and land as this wonderful stuff that you're close to. And because it's rural, so much of it is rural.

CO: Do you think she wants to go out?

NF: No I think she wants to play.

CO: Oh she wants to play.

NF: But I think I'll let her out. How about you go play outside. Okay, we're set. She came right back in and I let her out again to play outside.

CO: But so, okay that's interesting.

NF: But see a lot, a lot of the feelings I have now I think also one reads about, so I don't want to sound as though, but I think I really had them. I can remember driving when I was of driving age through the South, probably on the way up to Clayton, and just thinking "ooh I love this, I love this, I love being so close to the natural world, what, how beautiful it was", because it wasn't that developed back then and, I was, I've always been deeply aware of being Southern, now I was also taught the things about the South that were sinful and wrong, such as the treatment, such as slavery and the treatment of Black people, and the, frequently the treatment of poor people and that's a great blessing I've had. That I was taught and I had parents who felt so strongly about that. And grow up in a civil-rights-oriented family. As I've said before so I was aware of all of that, I still loved

the South very much and I became very aware of it when I started studying up in the North and realized that I was considered a different being in many ways and I resented that because I did not think and I may have said this earlier, I did not think that the South had cornered the market on prejudice and so I deeply resented it. And that, but I found African American friends who resented it too because it happens all over and you never can combat it if you don't just accept the fact that it is, not just somebody else's problem, admit that it's every body's problem. So that's a complicated way of talk about Southern-ness, but it does relate to one's feeling of the region. And I love traveling and I love going to big exciting cities and I know that also when I leave them and when I come back here it's as though I let off my, feels like waiting to exhale. I let out my breath and feel better. I feel very sustained, I guess comforted is the word too, but I'm very sustained and helped by the natural world and by being so, so close to it as I think we are here. I also think that this is, this is from having grown up in, you know, having gotten 2 degrees in English literature and so forth that the South has produced a lot of wonderful artistic output. It's just amazing. And now what does that have to do with us, it has to do with the fact that we are so close to the natural world. We are so close to things that are living and growing, but there is something very… verdant and. . .

CO: Did you read a lot of southern literature, in your, was your, were your English degrees…

NF: You know what is interesting is that at first you know, I don't know whether this is a true, you would know this better probably than I that English courses concentrated on British and European literature. And then there would be courses later in American literature, 20th century primarily. But I read a lot because you know everybody in my family read a lot so I read the Southern writers and read the people who wrote about the Southern writers.

CO: So did you, I'm trying to think of when---do you remember reading Faulkner?

NF: Oh yeah.

CO: And when, like when, what age would you have been when you were reading his work?

NF: Probably not until high school and I know I read him in college, but probably not until high school. I read Steinbeck, and didn't get it. When I was 11 and 12 simply because we rented at a house, did I tell you this?

CO: mm hmm [suggesting no]

NF: A whole bookshelf, daddy was doing the electrical work, was building Tindleville over in Panama City and we rented a house for a year in Panama city, and there was a bookcase and it was full of Steinbeck. I think they just wanted matched volumes, but I read them all. Did not understand them all, but my mother didn't believe in censorship, so every now and then I'd ask her something, but I don't think I read Faulkner until high school. And I'd read a lot in the summer, you now, on vacations. I remember one time reading a whole about a several weeks of just reading Faulkner and Kane and Caldwell, not all on the same level as Faulkner and just thinking, just having to take a vacation after that.

CO: Sure, sure, but for so many people because southern literature became more in vogue you know, probably after you were right when you were in school, but now people, you know, will read southern literature and think they know the south and of course it is, it's just insightful as anything, you know.

NF: But see that's another thing that can stir up the resentment is this stereotype.

CO: Sure.

NF: Which we all do of everybody but the stereotypes of the south, the assumptions people make that are so one dimensional and unfair.

CO: But nobody critiques the south like a southerner, you know.

NF: I mean Lillian Smith

CO: The consummate example, right, right. Well, so, really kind of answered this but, did, was your family strongly Southern identified? I mean was it, did they talk about it?

NF: I think so. You see my mother's father whom I did not know because I've only known one grandparent and they, they died long before I was born. My mother's father at 15 years of age was a Confederate soldier in the Civil War. He enlisted when he was 15 and so mother had to work all that out I'm sure herself, but by the time I came along she was very clear about slavery in the Civil War, adored her father, but her father probably got out, you know, before he left his teenage years.

CO: Right, right.

NF: Because if he went in when he was 15.

CO: Well…

NF: So there was that funny kind of thing growing up hearing it occasions Dixie played and Dixie has the connotation of, it does not the dreadful connotations that the Confederate flag has, but it carries some of it, yeah.

CO: Sure, sure, yeah. It is interesting though the varieties of outcomes from people who, you know, have direct ties to the Confederacy and still, you know, maintain those direct ties, how for some of them it seems as though the pride is devoid of understanding, you know, it's a pride…

NF: Oh it has no connection with any sort of rational, but how can you believe, it, I don't, I mean I have heard too many southerners talk about it being that we have it all wrong it took poorly and economic, well of course it was economic because it was based on slavery for God's sake, you know. So I mean you can't be in favor of the Civil War, either you can be in favor of the Civil War but you can't be in favor of the Confederate side of the Civil War and not believe in slavery.

CO: Right, well, but, but, people who want to play that game…

NF: It's just a disconnect that is like many disconnects, I mean Vietnam War had some disconnects.

CO: It's true the students though will, I mean you know they, they, they're still, some of them still want to just simply claim that it's all about quote heritage and not having a clue what in the world that means. It's, has nothing to do with institution of slavery. It's all about pride.

NF: It is about heritage. It's a terrible heritage.

CO: Right, right, right. One thing that I'm trying still grappling with how to get at when we as southerners become conscious of racial etiquette. You know, when is it that we recognize, or as children, we recognize that there was a different set of rules for you if you had white skin and a different set of rules for people who didn't have, and so I vividly recall the time that that happened for me, but do you, because what's interesting about your situation's because your parents were both so progressive on this subject that, it's almost like, I mean can you locate a time in your past that you…

NF: I can locate, and I think I may have already said this about when I heard the "N" word and can remember, I mean I was, well I was five or six and I went home and went into the kitchen and ask mother and our, our cook whom we were real crazy about named Inez was sitting right there and I said mother why do some people say, and now I can't say the word, but it was the "N" word and mother said because they're wrong, wrong, wrong, and she said all this right in front of Arnette? Inez and said this is not the way you speak to someone as if they thought of a bad word to call you and so I remembered that and I guess, you know, I grew up in a segregated society, but certainly in my teenage years and early teenage years we had black guests in the home.

CO: Guests?

NF: Yes, I mean we certainly had Black, a black maid and so forth, but I mean we had Black guest from Boylan Haven and from Edward Waters College and so for that, which were in Jacksonville, and we had to be careful about that for their sake.

CO: To be sure that others did not.

NF: That they were not harmed.

CO: Oh, okay, yeah.

NF: You know in Jacksonville, FL in the 40s.

CO: I see, okay.

NF: And we had a place out on the river, now this would have been when I was in high school and college I guess. And that was mother could have large groups like people from Boylan Haven school or something, a black friend of hers out there because it was pretty isolated. But I mean it's pretty awful to think they had to be careful but you did have to be careful.

CO: Oh absolutely, sure, but you were kind of, do you think and recalling that that, that that question to your mother about the "N" word was your first conscious awareness of racial difference.

NF: Probably because at, in Jacksonville, FL it was not a rural community and the only black people I knew were the people who worked in our home until mother and daddy started having guests then. So I wouldn't have known it at school. We would have known it driving through colored town, you know. But it was always explained to us, I mean thank God.

CO: Yeah because if you, I'm trying to grasp that experience.

NF: But see it's just so different in my family and I don't say that arrogantly I say it with great thanksgiving, you know, also mother's two, you know I told you mother came from a split generation, so there are two older sisters, one of whom lived with us for a while, and then they lived in together in Jacksonville and mother took care of them so they were like really older then she, like 25 or 20 years older. They did not feel the way mother did. They, they were, you know, sweet lovely, kind, generous people, but they had closeted themselves and wrapped themselves in all these ideas and they were bright so I don't know how

they could've done it, but all these ideas that distance them, disconnected them from the truth.

CO: And I'm sure you did question that because you're a questioning person, how in the world could these two…

NF: I can remember standing in the music room, which was just a little den in our house where we had the big piano, standing in there and going at it with one of my elderly aunts cause *Strange Fruit* had just come out and she just said these things did not, happen and I said oh but Mogue they did, we called her Mogue it was short for the great Mogul. Oh but Mogue they did and you know, I said you know these are the facts of it, nope, I said well where do you think people of mixed color, mullatos, came from, well she said, I mean she just was blind. My father was of that generation and he would not have done that. And I said well maybe granddaddy didn't, a lot of people didn't. And mother just, mother got into it once with her older brother who was the age about of these two elderly aunts and I can remember driving away from their house, one time, and mother I could just see, mother didn't weave off and back and see her and I say mother just because you're biologically related to them you do not need to…

CO: Now did your, you know, there were these sort of rules that were such a part of society that southern culture that it's almost like you, you know, you were born with these instructions on how you act if you're not white, and I remember distinctly that the yard man had to come to the back door, and the woman who cleaned and cooked for us could never, I think she came in the front door, but she could never eat at the table, she always ate in a separate place, and I remember, I mean, I, that sort of thing was just in, in, was just bred into people that this was, this was particular etiquette and so did the women who worked for you, you mother, did they have…

NF: I can remember Annie who was the one I knew best, and mother eating lunch together.

**End of Trac 7-8A**

**Beginning of 8B-9A**

You know that's really interesting because when Augustus who helps us does practically everything with our yard now because I can't bend over, sometimes he comes and his time with us extends over lunch. So we go, Robert or I will go get him lunch if we don't have something prepared and he and I sit at the counter and eat and that's just as natural to me, but I bet you it would not seem to some people right now if they heard.

CO: Yeah, right, that's probably the most prominent etiquette, breach of etiquette that people just, you know, was eating together. That's just something you did not do.

NF: And the separate bathroom, *The Help* was right on about that.

CO: About that.

NF: About that, yeah.

CO: Okay so but in your household you don't remember…

NF: In our household everybody came in the backdoor because that's where the driveway was. Okay so there was a bathroom down there which we called Annie's room. Where she could hang her clothes if she wanted to change her clothes and we used it as much as Annie used it and if Annie was upstairs and needed to go to the bathroom she used ours so there was never, I mean I, that never occurred to me not to and the only thing is that mother would say you know, cause she knew that we had the habit of going in the bathroom and reading, she would say now if you're going to go into Annie's room don't stay there for two hours.

CO: Don't stay.

NF: Ask Annie if you can. But it was there also as a kind of cloak room for her so when she could come in she could, cause she would, suppose she was going to, she would either have on her work clothes and put on her work clothes if she was going to something at night, maybe she was going to church afterwards or something and so she would have another set of clothes. So this was where she had that and her cosmetics and everything. But we could go in and we did.

CO: It wasn't a matter of separating or segregating. It was really a courtesy sort of thing.

NF: Yeah, but see that house had been built with that and I'm not sure what the motive for building it there, the servants quarters I suppose.

CO: But you were in high school by then, by the time..

NF: By Annie I was junior high and high and college. You know that's interesting about servant's quarters cause they're servants quarters that are all white too, I mean I'm sure that there were houses where they had white servants and they had their separate quarters so you know as a friend of mine who is African American frequently tells me, it's as much class as it is…

CO: Oh goodness.

NF: Skin color.

CO: Oh, yeah well and of course academics tried to take all that stuff apart which makes it, you know, clinical but it's of course, because we, we just know that, we intuit that. It's all those factors, but it, you said, you just said a few minutes ago that even today some people might find having lunch at the . . .,

NF: I don't know that, but I sort of think so because I've had a couple friends express surprise because Augustus calls me Nancy and I call him Augustus, and we did from get-go. And I cannot explain that, why because at the same time he was working for someone who was only about five years older and he was calling her Miss so-and-so when that wasn't an overall happy relationship either.

CO: Did you introduce yourself as Nancy?

NF: Oh yeah, I'm sure Robert and I met the whole family. He has some brothers and talk about bonds, I cannot explain this but, you know, his brother had been working for me that day, the first time I'd ever met him, a friend sent him to me to help me with something and he brought all his brothers over and it was sort of the idea of who gets this job. And Augustus didn't even talk to us, he said this is my job, we went in. We shook hands and went then and said this is Robert

Fichter, I'm Nancy Fichter. And so well then he's never called us anything else and we call him Augustus and he just looked at us and said "I'm taking this job."

CO: So do you think that was because he perceived a bond?

NF: I have no idea but I mean, I don't know. But I feel very close to him. And I think, and he told, oh this is sounds so self-centered, I don't, but he's told me nobody's ever been as good to me as you have, you know, which just…

CO: Do you have any sense of your past of the, of your openness?

NF: He is judging me completely from the time we met out in the front yard.

CO: Maybe some people just intuit.

NF: Yeah.

CO: Or know…

NF: Or know how they're going to be treated. I think the fact that I think back to this now, cause I can sort of imagine a sort of remember after how we were all standing in the front yard the fact that Robert and me, you know, approached him with his hand out.

CO: Right, oh goodness.

NF: Which he would with anybody, you know. To shake his hand. And I don't know if that's always…

CO: Right, well, I mean it might be a gesture that to you is just natural but I'm sure he's encountered many people it's not a natural gesture for, and so that probably speaks volumes to him.

NF: I mean that's, you say do it intuit or is just that, I mean we send out signals to people when we meet them and maybe this is what it was, but I mean it's been, it was that way from the…

CO: And that's been years?

NF: Maybe 5 or, yeah, I mean it's not been real long.

CO: And he's Augustus, is that right?

NF: Augustus, uh huh.

CO: Yeah, okay. Well I know the answer to this so I don't even have to ask it but I'll just, your opinions on race really are your family's opinions. I mean you just….

NF: Well at a, Lillian Smith, I mean if you're thinking the extended family although there are people in that extended family who do not have those, I've just pointed out the two aunts but who are deceased now but what gets me is that there are some of the younger generations who seem to have decided to become Republican. That's not in the gene pool.

CO: Ah, yeah well.

NF: But which doesn't necessarily mean that they have racial prejudice cause there are a lot of Republicans who don't, but I mean in this case they've become so, you know.

CO: Yeah, you wonder where in the world that comes from.

NF: Yeah.

CO: What is it about the, the party that's appealing to them? That's deeply disturbing. Well, have your opinions on race changed at all over time or do you feel like it's been pretty consistent?

NF: The fact that I believe that believe that equal rights has not changed. I think I've understood the subtleties more and more as just through living life and through living through this the 20th century and now into the 21st and seeing what happened and by being, having lots of black students and black friends and black faculty members and so forth and I have understood, I would never be able to say I know what it is to be black but I certainly have understood subtleties more as they have been very generous in talking to me about, about things. Which I wouldn't have had any clue about growing up because it wasn't in my life

experience then. What I was taught was the idea of equality and you know as mother said you can't believe in the fatherhood of God if you don't believe in the brotherhood of man, so but that, see that makes a kind of logical rights sense, but you have to really hear people talk and be around people who are different from you whether it's skin color or gender, or what to get more insight. So has it change, yes I hope it has deepened and evolved into a more comprehensive understanding than what, what childhood we had, you know.

CO: Do you think that having a black man in a white house has made a difference in race relations it's just that kids don't…

NF: Oh yeah.

CO: You think it has?

NF: Well yes I do, I mean I just, I just you know I never thought it would happen in my life then. I mean how many times have you heard that I bet? You know. I think it, I think it has, and although there are policy things that maybe one wishes were, were different, I'm just determined to do everything we can to get him re-elected, you know. That means we just have to, the alternative is too scary and also if he has not had a chance to do everything.

CO: But you don't think that it has made race relations worse by having him, because in the people who so deeply despise him.

NF: No I don't. I'll tell you my big fear when he first got elected was assassination, because we've experienced that with people whose skin was white but who just felt differently. So I was still in, I think it, I just assume that the protection is there because…

CO: Yeah, okay, anything about Southern identity that you want to add or, you didn't have any problem at all grasping what I meant by it, which is good that that's very helpful.

NF: I think there is a difference, well I've talked about being profiled and so forth but I've had friends of mine say about people who were not southern well Nancy just can't expect this cause it's just not southern. And part of that is a very

prejudicial thing to say, but sometimes I agree with them. This person is just not southern and then that's why they're acting that way.

CO: Right that's right, yes, and of course, yeah, we I think most of us know what that experience is if a marriage didn't work out between a southerner and non-southerner. It was all because of, you know, and for some people, anybody who's not southern's a Yankee. It does not matter if they're from California, it's just, yeah that's a, there is an unspoken affinity I think that and you get it so much more if you move outside the south than you, you know, you either come back or you visit back or something it's just really it is palatable I mean it's, it's.

NF: It's very much so.

CO: Well I will move on to the next topic which is history. I think I'm going to leave this the way it is history, and some of these questions are you don't have to respond to them if you don't want to, but you're historically aware clearly, what do you believe is the most important historical event that you've either participated in or lived through in your life?

NF: Well I think the Civil Rights Legislation which was not immediate, it did not immediately change the world as we certainly know, but was huge, huge. Major. I think, I think it, it caused many, many people to just really accept the fact that the world *will* change, has to change, not that it has completely to our satisfaction. I think the Vietnam War made people know that there was such a thing as a truly evil bad war. Even people, which does not mean I don't support the Vietnam Veterans, it just means that that was like the current war you know. A useless war, and a terribly damaging war. I mean that lot of it, well you're asking for the most…

CO: Well, I know it's hard to identify one but…

NF: Technology is huge and that has changed the way. That has changed the face of the world. I mean I've just seen that in my long professional career, how much that has changed and how it changes human beings and I'm concerned about it to an extent. I mean I think it's a wonderful gift, but it's like the atomic bomb it can kill you or it can cure you know then…

CO: So are you talking now primarily about computer age? Is that mostly what…yeah…yeah.

NF: Well the whole electronic age and the, I mean I think that Steve Jobs is one of the most creative forces, was one of the most creative forces where I'm thinking he's done a wonderful thing, I think how we learn to use it, but I mean I look at my students they're sense of time. I mean they're multitasking like nothing I could ever have done. Their sense of, I know, there was a wonderful book by Michael Kirby some decades ago called something about time and he talks about the the only trouble is with technology is that it may destroy the zone of contemplation. And see I've begun to see that sometimes. My students they can do everything fast, sense of time is different. It's speedy. They easy access. You talk about the silence between responses and what that indicates to you. Frequently there is no silence between responses now and I think that that is something we have to deal with both spiritually but psychologically too. I mean, you know. There is no, I heard that this must have been on public radio, someone said they were in a situation recently where they had to find out the answer to something and they were, let's say a small group of three or four, and they were without computer or anything like this, so they couldn't Google and so they had to think and they had to trace thought, and they had to talk until they found the answer by narrowing it down. So they had much richer results whereas before they could have just Googled and gotten the name right away, you know. So that's fascinating to me. I think has certainly changed the face of the world. And I think it's a bad thing. I think it's something we're going to have to figure out how to work with so that the goodies that you get from it outweigh the losses. The gains outweigh the losses.

CO: Okay. Do you remember the Depression? Do you remember, you were very young.

NF: I was a Depression baby. So I remember some things about early childhood that were the results of the Depression and I can remember. See I was born in 1930, so I remember that we didn't have a lot of money, but that we never, I never felt poor, but I look back and I just realize that was because the way they

dealt with it. Neither did we feel rich, you know. I remember that there were some times when I knew that it was really important for Daddy to get a certain business contract. You know he was an electrical consulting engineer, which he built up from the ground. That it was really important and that everybody was sort of relieved when he'd get a contract and he'd be so excited about it. And I remember one time that, and again I may have said this earlier, that he paid off the mortgage on that house and gave it to mother for a Christmas present and on New Years he had to take it back, I told you about that.

CO: Yeah, you mentioned about that, yeah.

NF: I told you that. So I remember things like that.

CO: Oh yeah.

NF: But they were not terribly painful because they just you know took good care of us and mother made our clothes and…

CO: Yeah, yeah, But they didn't talk about it much? Talk about the times as being particularly historic, I mean did, there, a lot of people in the Depression realized that was something historic.

NF: Yeah, they talked about it afterwards, I mean but certainly I don't remember it at the time but I was a child.

CO: You were just a…yeah…right. Well we did, you did mention FDR.

NF: Oh, he was a god.

CO: Yeah, okay, so your family…

NF: And Eleanor was too.

CO: Oh that's so good to hear.

NF: Yeah, but FDR, Oh yeah.

CO: So your family were big supporters of FDR?

NF: Yeah.

CO: Okay.

NF: I remember one of our cook's saying--- mother often quoted this cause they were always saying about Coolidge, that he was the "do nothingness" president whatever sought [sat?] his seat [sod his feet???].

CO: One of the cooks said that? Oh cute. How cute. Well now you do recall the 40s and the 50s, correct?

NF: Oh yeah.

CO: Because you were a teenager in the 40s.

NF: Right and I had a great car that my father was gonna have to go to war.

CO: Okay that was that.

NF: And I'm at, you know, Catherine, I keep feeling I'm told these things, or maybe I've just thought them so much that we'd go to, we always sat down for dinner which I loved having dinner with the folks and it would be usually right after the we had radio. We didn't have television right after H. V. Kaltenborn and the news and sometimes I just thought I couldn't eat. Cause the news stuff, the war news was so bad.

CO: Frightening.

NF: I remember that and I remember going to movies that I'm sure mother didn't know we what they, and they had the news reels of the concentration camp, and I may have said that too. And oh here comes the postman. Go to and they would be perfectly fine movies but then they would bring on the news reel and the news reel was horrendous and those images.

CO: They actually showed footage from the concentration camps in those…

NF: Uh huh. And they just showed war things, which I wasn't sophisticated enough to process at age 12. I don't know if one ever gets able to process those but so I definitely remember the two wars with Japan and the Nazis.

CO: Yeah, okay, well okay the 40s and the 50s you remember those because you were a teenager and…

NF: I remember the Korean War primarily because this would have been after high school and they, that the young man that we all loved and he was considered the most handsome I think was killed. But I don't have a real deep memory of that. [21:07]

CO: Well the decades apart from the war did, do you recall them as a good time for your family or where they, was it a good, were the 40s a good decade, the 50s a good decade. I mean you might know them now in retrospect, but in the 50s did you think of that as a as a good time…

NF: Yeah, I think the 40s and 50s both were you know. It's, we were home most of the time. Yeah, because I didn't, I mean I was and then even when I started teaching here the first time I was close enough to go back to Jacksonville, you know. But I mean they were good times.

CO: And now your parents were what age in the let's say 50s. What your mom…

NF: Mother was always ten years older than the century. So in 1950 she would have been 60.

CO: Okay.

NF: See I had older parents.

CO: Mmhhmm, alright. And she died in '66? '65?

NF: '65, and she was '75. And Lil and my sister died in the next year in '66.

CO: In 1966, yeah, yeah, okay. Now what about the Cold War? How did that, how did your family process the Cold War?

NF: I think it was, they didn't like anybody until Gorbachev.

CO: Oh yeah.

NF: You know.

CO: Yeah.

NF: I think, I think that…

CO: Do you remember the McCarthy the…

NF: OH, I remember that. That is another very important thing and I was here then. I think I'd even just started teaching here or was just finishing up a graduate degree. One of the, a colleague over there who was another young dance teacher and I used to go to the person who was head of the dance program and physical education go to her house and listen, she had a television and listen to the McCarthy hearings, and we were all of the same mind of it. And you see my Barnett cousins you know aunt Bertha was Lill's oldest sister and she married Eugene Barnett who became international head of the Y, and this is very interesting because I've just been going through some things in my desk found his obituary, the little obituary in *Time* magazine, it had been clipped from *Time* magazine but anyway they had some of them were investigated by McCarthy. My cousin, my dearest cousin and to him I was close of the Barnett cousins, Bob was investigated by the committee.

CO: Wow.

NF: And we know that Lil had tons of material on her. I mean that's been documented.

CO: So it hit home.

NF: Yeah and we just thought it was so evil.

CO: Yeah, right. Yeah. Now you've already identified the Civil Rights movement as one of the most.

NF: The Civil Rights legislation was one of the, well the whole movement was, but I mean in terms of something that began to really make things happen, not, I mean the movement made it all happen but if we're talking about a single act that…

CO: Sure, sure, sure. But do, when you recall the '60s, like people typically feel strongly about the '60s.

NF: Well I loved the '60s, but I was also, there's a, the Kennedy assassination hit me in a way that almost nothing…

CO: JFK?

NF: JFK. Which was followed by RFK and Martin Luther King. See I mean in my world assassinations was something that happened to [madam news country ?] or something. I mean we've had them in this country before but no, it was not in . . . , but I also, I remember it was as personal as though it were a member of my family. I remember weeping for several days and I was in Texas and I remember walking to a memorial that was held on campus in back of two deans, please, one of whom when they were talking about it and one of them said, "well we've gotten one of them maybe we can get the other." So I mean I wanted to leave Texas. I left the next year.

CO: Oh my goodness, and make it oh my God. How chilling.

NF: I mean that was, I hadn't you know a few years early lived in Denton because I was getting a degree there and that was real close to Dallas and Dallas was the favorite spot. And for a while I couldn't go to Dallas, I could not go to Dallas. And that [JFK assassination] was huge in my life.

CO: And then okay, the '63 and then in when Malcolm X was assassinated in '65 how was your, how did you process that?

NF: Malcolm X?

CO: Yeah. Well what were your feelings about him and about radical militants as it was beginning to emerge?

NF: Well mixed up, because I thought it was the same sort, I thought when is this cycle ever gonna end you know. Very understandable but you know it's the same feeling I have about capital punishment we don't accomplish it when it's killing somebody who's killed somebody. So I thought we're going in the wrong direction although part of me could certainly understand it and I think we had to have it. The separatism and we still have some of that. And we still have to acknowledge the reasons for that, but it's not going to solve the problem ultimately. And I think that's, that's the way I felt about it although I have regard for Malcolm X. And I think he was a person of courage.

CO: Yeah, okay. And then…

NF: But I'm Martin Luther King ideology I mean that's. And when he was assassinated that was…

CO: Yeah, yeah well I was going to get to that. How did, where were you when that happened?

NF: I was living out at Goodward here.

CO: So here

NF: in Tallahassee and I remember calling Paula because Lil was gone by then and saying is anybody representing the family, because they did when, when Lil died and she said she couldn't, and so no nobody represented the family except through telegrams and letters. Some of which I think are in the Lillian Smith archives.

CO: Well scholars now are, like to, when they write about Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, and you know they do the comparative thing. They like to talk about how King was becoming, you know becoming more, never giving up on non-violent protests, but, but they were, they were coming closer to each other.

NF: Coming closer, I think they were, I think they were, but I, but I think I tend to see that in retrospect.

CO: That's right and as scholars, have only seen it in retrospect, but it's.

NF: Yeah, I mean I certainly, I didn't at the time. And I was not anti-Malcolm X's I would say

CO: But that's just that's how history works.

NF: Exactly.

CO: Bless you. Well then of course and then right after King, Robert Kennedy, do you remember having a reaction to that?

NF: Oh I just remember being so sad and thinking when will it stop and how impossible for both of them to be because I loved Bobby Kennedy. I just thought he was wonderful in so many ways and I have a young cousin who stood in the line you know to see his, pay respects at his coffin, who just couldn't get over it you know. And this is hopeful because this is a very young man. Feeling that way, that strongly.

CO: There was such a…

NF: At what…

CO: Year that year of '68 was just…

NF: And I remember, I remember of course everybody remembers the Kennedy, JFK funeral. And hurt, the feeling among, by this time I was, goes back from Texas teaching here and so forth, and was running with a little group of people most of whom were very, very liberal. And I remember the outrage on part of some of them when Jaclyn Kennedy got connected with Onassis, you know. Do you remember that?

CO: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

NF: That people were offended by that.

CO: Yeah, sure. Well of course I'm sure that in your household the effort to integrate, to desegregate were an issue. Do you remember, well of course you were on your own by then, but what do you remember about that whole movement to integrate?

NF: Well I remember that, well it was so long ago and as I said we had, we had African Americans in our home, and then when Marianne went to, Marianne and Omar went with the children to Africa, and came back and you know Linda was their oldest daughter, the only men she ever dated were black. And she married, but I've gone over this I think, in her early history she married Dan Matthews who head of African Bibliographic Institute.

CO: Now who is this again?

NF: Linda Fink who married, who was Marianne my oldest sister's Marianne, her daughter.

CO: Her daughter, okay.

NF: And so all of my, all her children are of course mixed ethnicity. In fact I got an email yesterday from her saying Strelca who was her older daughter had just had her fourth child who was named Austin, which was my father's name. Everybody in that Strelca's family has an "A" name. So she's named after her great, great grandfather. So they lived in Washington, they live in Washington so and Francesca the other daughter went to Europe for her education and is now back in this country but I mean they have not known, they have known prejudice certainly Washington D.C. is not free of prejudice, but they've moved with diplomatic, in diplomatic circles and that was a little easier, you know. My when Robert and I married we married at Washington Cathedral and in little Bethlehem Chapel there and…

**End of Audio Track 8**

CO: Yeah, we're on.

NF: The rehearsal dinner was given, Linda gave that. Linda and Daniel gave it at their apartment. Strelka and Francesca and all the family there.

CO: I can't even getting married in the National Cathedral. That must of…

NF: It was beautiful.

CO: I'm sure it was. Oh my goodness.

NF: Well we had, Robert and I been going up to Washington. We had a dear friend there, Bill Crain who assistant carrilloneur at the Cathedral and he was a musician who was fairly prominent in Washington and so we would go and go to Evensong(1:06:09)? there which I just thought the door is open. We started even just talking about getting married. I said well I just think we ought to, cause, you know, we couldn't have gotten married here. We both knew too many people. It would have to be big or hurt feelings. We talked about Monticello. We talked about Cedar Key and so we were up there, I thought, I just think we ought to come up here. And go to EvenSong and you know, just like in the middle of the week we'll get up and get married. So when we finally decided we called our friend, Bill Crain. And said we're going to get married and he said, "Oh wonderful, wonderful, Nancy I'm going to start cooking right now." You know because he was a great cook and he said "When are you going to get married?" and I, we said, "Well we think we'd like to come to the Washington Cathedral and get married and there was just this long silence and he said, "Nancy people sign up for that at birth, and I said well they only do one every Saturday every third week or something like that. I said well, "Make it so." And he did, and it was wonderful.

CO: You willed that into being.

NF: And it was wonderful and he prepared a lot of the music I wrote up the text for him, and he had it composed and we had the organist from the Washington Cathedral it was a good friend of his and so he did, he played the organ and we had a bell choir. It was in the Bethlehem Chapel it intimate, smaller, and beautiful.

CO: I would love to see a picture of that if you've got one.

NF: Well I'll show you pictures of it.

CO: Oh, great, great, great.

NF: Then at the very end he had which we didn't know what was going to happen he had when it said you know, Mr. and Mrs. Fichter come and great your

guests or something like that, he had two Kommono Clad Kyoto players down at the, cause we were going to Japan the next day.

CO: Oh my gosh.

NF: So…

CO: Well…

NF: It was…

CO: You could find a

NF: It was an interesting thing to do when one's 51.

CO: What how cool. Oh my goodness. Do you remember the sit-ins for the freedom rights and the…

NF: I remember bus strikes here in Tallahassee. I certainly remember all the reports, I wasn't there for sit in certainly we all remember those I mean the very vivid when the four were killed you know, that was, that was just such a terrible, terrible thing.

CO: You talking about Mississippi, the, the, the civil rights worker.

NF: Right.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

NF: I remember all the pictures of the hosing down.

CO: Oh yeah, sure.

NF: The pictures were…I mean that is really a wonderful thing to have those graphic images because they stay in your mind.

CO: And of course they say that, you know that, it's very telling that, that we were not allowed to see body bags come back from Iraq because that certainly made a difference we saw body bags come back from Vietnam.

NF: Exactly.

CO: Yeah.

NF: But there, you know.

CO: Oh the footage, there's no substitute for it. Students it, I mean you can talk to til the cows come home, but when you show that footage of the eyes on the prize it's, it's there's no substitute for that.

NF: Show that footage. It's great to have that.

CO: Okay, about the 70s, so we're getting, let's see you would've been in your 40s then that would've been sort of almost prime of life for you, what do you remember about the 70s?

NF: I remember how alive we all seemed.

CO: Do you think that was because you were in your 40s in the prime of life?

NF: Well, and you know we were even, even oldsters like me I mean the 40s were flower children, you know. Could be.

CO: Did you feel in yourself a sort of a flower child?

NF: Oh yeah, yeah. And we had demonstrations on campus in the latter 60s and early 70s.

C: Demonstrations on, against the war?

NF: Against the war and other things and we always bonded with the demonstrators. I remember one time when we were getting ready to do the concert up in our student theatre and I was working all night up there sewing cushions to go on the floor for people to sit in this was, cause we had no money and there were protesters who were part of a group, I think a, I think they were a SDS popular student group, and they had been demonstrating, and they had a safe house where they were staying but they wandered up, and they helped us rig lights and the curtain. And cause I remember taking some of them home to the

safe house other than they said once I said well do you want a ride and they said you won't tell anybody where this is, and I said of course not. So it was, we had that kind of contact, it's hardly makes a pivotal figure in it.

CO: But so how many, how many faculty participated, in that way?

NF: Oh I think there was always this little group of liberal faculty. I don't know if they did that kind of thing but they certainly spoke out.

CO: Okay, alright. You know, obviously strongly identified with the Civil Rights Movement but then in the 70s you get all the other movements that come along, inspired by the door opens as a result of Civil Rights Movement. The Black, I mean the, well, Black Power, but the Red Power Movement the gay/lesbian of course the Women's Rights Movement. Were you drawn to any of those?

NF: I think I always, you know, spoke out the right way about them. I never became a real participating member of them except, you know, I join now and I didn't, you know occasional writings on it but I think as I mentioned in one of our interviews I remember being approached by a feminist organization on campus, but I can't remember it being, said you must write position papers and this sounds snobbish but I was too busy doing the thing they were talking about. It was just very hard to try to build the dance program in the early years. I felt a lot of it was--- rhetoric is important, it is very necessary. You have to have it but I think it always needs to be supported by action. I felt sometimes those movements just descended into rhetoric.

CO: Mmhhmm. Yeah, yeah.

NF: But did I support it, I supported it monetarily, or when I could with my speaking or something like this but not.

CO: Right.

NF: Someone said the other day and this is very recent, this was oh it wasn't New Year's Eve…a woman I've known for years in arts here and we were with them briefly then and she said we always admired you so much, you were such a figure in the, for the feminists. And I wasn't, Catherine. I was not a leader in, in

that group, but I said I've known, I really was not that active. She said no just by what you were doing.

CO: That's right. So, so in effect you, that sort of validated what you said to the feminist who asked you why you weren't writing position papers.

NF: Right, but I, I was really thoroughly taken back by her saying that because I never, in fact I probably thought I should've done much more for all days, you know and so forth and…

CO: Well now, did it offend you that you were identified with them?

NF: No.

CO: No?

NF: No. No, I just didn't know if I really deserved it.

CO: Oh, oh I gotcha, okay. I see. Did you, have I asked you if you read the *Feminine Mystique*?

NF: Oh yeah.

CO: I did? I asked you that?

NF: Sure I read it when it first came out.

CO: Okay, alright.

NF: You know how I first heard of that? An English professor who was a man, who was about 20 years old then I, gave it to me and said you ought to read this.

CO: Cause he had? Had he read it?

NF: Yeah.

CO: And so what were his thoughts on it? Did he?

NF: He thought it was terrific.

CO: Yeah, cause that's not, I mean, weren't a lot of men who got it.

NF: Oh I know it, that's why I'm saying it just seems real interesting to me.

CO: Yeah, so was he known to be a real open minded person?

NF: He was known to be sort of a Byronic English professor who was very eccentric and very funny stories told about him and I never knew him to be political, you know. But he really thought that was excellent.

CO: Wow, gracious. It's amazing how sometimes a cause will, will break a cultural barrier, and you don't even know how. That is very interesting. You really already answered this. Did you ever, I mean in the course of the women's movement, you know it started off with this real concerted effort to find a sisterhood. Did you, did you, did you, how did you feel about that? That whole notion of sisterhood, did you?

NF: You know I think it's because I grew up surrounded by strong women. A lot of whom didn't marry. That it didn't seem like a novelty to me to find connections to other women. I'm not answering your question am I?

CO: No, that's okay. I mean but I mean some women are just really turned off by a notion of sisterhood. That you know they don't have any…

NF: Oh I don't see, I don't think we can advance politically, professionally, anything unless we do have a strong sense of that, really. I mean we do need to support each other. That is what sisterhood means not blindly, not that the object does not deserve supporting.

CO: Well I think it didn't take long for people to realize how closely aligned the notion of sisterhood is with essentialism. You know there's something that all women share essentially that sets them apart. Makes them superior, whatever.

NF: And they can also be honest to get equal rights--we get back to that again.

CO: Well it's like the word in class, you just, I never use the quote F word, feminism, because it just so offends people. I mean I do use it, but I use it in, I don't use, I'm careful how it in my women's history classes because most young

women don't want to be identified with it at all. But by the time the course is over they're completely identified with it.

NF: They have, they are.

CO: Yes they are. It is them you know, so, so but the word has a negative connotation to so many people.

NF: Yeah, but also there's some of us I feel, some of us meaning people not necessarily just women, an allergy to being put in a box.

CO: Right, sure.

NF: To being classified. And you know, I mean that is why I, the transgender movement is so interesting to me. That must be the most difficult kind of thing.

CO: Oh.

NF: Where you are part of a one thing, part of another thing that bit, and see I think all of us are.

CO: Oh sure.

NF: A part of you know, we have so many parts of everything in us. So I'm really interested in that.

CO: Yeah, me too. Oh my goodness. It's such a, yeah, I'm, that, that's why gender I think has always . . .

NF: But see that's tied into that putting people in boxes too.

CO: What's that? The transgendered?

NF: Well I mean the way we were talking about that and how, how we are part of all that we have met, and you know there's so much of everything in us although there, we are focused in one or another direction. That is, the recognition of that I think is also why I always never liked to be put in a category. I mean I joined a sorority and would never live in the house. You join a sorority because everybody joins a sorority, but would never live in the house because I

didn't want to be just categorized as the, cause they, back in those days they all hung out together, they did everything together, and I was over in the dance studio half the time, you know.

CO: Well the students that I know who react to the term, they react because to them a feminist is someone who hates men, and they don't want to be identified with those men haters and so you know when they grasped that that's not what it's about, then you're okay, but it's amazing how bad, I mean I've been, I've been teaching 2omen's history for over 15 years and it's a pretty consistent major reaction. You know.

NF: Uh huh, and women's lib was considered a really, the same, I mean people had the same reaction to that, but you say by the end of the course they're different.

CO: They are, and but what's also interesting to me is the number of young women, it's a minority. It's always a minority, who I have that never seem to having any problem embracing it, and they're completely heterosexual, you know, they don't, they don't have issues with men, but they also don't have a problem embracing that concept of…

N: Embracing the difference. Yeah, because they believe in equality. Yeah.

CO: Right, right, and then, and some of them are actually Southern. So it's always an interesting…

NF: It is.

CO: It's an interesting phenomenon how people react to that and I, I mean I can't quiz it, you know, I can't interview them all to find out what kind of mothers they had, but I think sometimes that is it. It's the mother, you know that…

NF: Oh I think so.

CO: The mother's openness.

NF: I think so but I think that's because I had the kind of mother I had. That I think that.

CO: Well right, right. I know that I asked you this but I'm going to ask you again, what do you think has been the legacy of the Women's Movement? I asked you in another context. I wasn't talking historically at the time, but did, if you, how would you respond to that?

NF: To realize that what I think the legacy has been a real irrefutable recognition, although not always acted upon of the power in women. That women have the power to do almost anything.

CO: Yeah.

NF: And can do it, you know.

CO: Do you think that misogyny is still an issue for some men?

NF: Yes, I do. In the early days of trying to build a program here, I was usually the only woman in a room full of suits, and I was never treated, well maybe once, rudely, but I was invisible some of the time, or just not heard when I would, did speak, and then that began to change and I don't know whether I just got more vocal, or my program began to succeed or what, but it certainly changed and I have been treated with enormous respect, and help in the last decades of my professional life.

CO: One thing I've discovered in talking to young women who come from families where there isn't, where the women are strong and there's an awareness of the gender equality that really is not questioned, you know. It's pretty much a, they don't, they don't see any need, they never saw a need for a women's move…because they never experienced, at least they never perceived any kind of discrimination. How did you, when you came from a family where there was strong women and there was not, you were taught you could do anything, how did it strike you when you first realized that's not the norm? The norm is, is closer to the feelings you talk about of being invisible and…

NF: Well I felt lucky, but also, lucky that I had that, but I also, and I noticed this mostly professionally, was really quite offended, and quite annoyed by some of the treatment. I was never abused, you know. But the…

CO: Was your mother still alive? Were you able to talk to her about it?

NF: I can't remember. Well my mother died in '65. So, probably she was gone when I found it the most apparent. And it was a growing consciousness of how one, I mean I can remember a couple times going home and thinking if I were a man they would not have ignored that, you know.

CO: Yeah.

NF: So then you just figure out the ways to wake them up.

CO: Right, but you had a distinct consciousness of that and nobody really had to tell you.

NF: mm hhmm.

CO: Okay, alright. Well we're to our last thing, our last category and it's kind of a hodge podge of different things and again as I said, you've already said many times this in repetition here, but it's okay if you repeat yourself because I repeat myself.

NF: But I'm sure I have today.

CO: You know, scholars, historians, especially, they're always interested in cause and effect as though you could, they, knowing that you can't ever really say that something is the effect of particular cause, but in your own life do you believe that where you are now, who you are now, what you have now, and all of the circumstances of your life now are more the result of the decisions you made, or are, is your life more the result of circumstance. Just things beyond your control? I know it's a case of both.

NF: It is a case of both because I think some of the decisions I made were because of circumstances which, either the circumstances of my rearing, of my birth, of my growing up, led me to make certain decisions that in itself causes more circumstances to happen. You know I grew up with a family they had certain things and that caused me to be value them. Although that doesn't always work that way. Sometimes you just turn your back on that, but it mean it

caused me to want to read, wanted me to be involved in thinking so then that colors your decisions, but it doesn't have to. Because some people I still think they rebel and won't have anything to do with it, but I mean, to me I was lucky, just began to bend me in some directions. So then you make some decisions and then that causes more, more circumstances. But that's really almost really impossible to answer because it is such a circular thing.

CO: Oh sure, sure, it is. But there are, I mean there are, I mean some people really believe that, that it's all about the things they do, you know it's more about the things they do, and the decisions they make and from will…

NF: Well I think I could have made some wrong decisions. I certainly did make some wrong decisions. I cannot say that where I am today, and what I am today is the result of just my decisions.

CO: Yeah, yeah. I know that I asked you this in some form, but what period of time, and it can be anywhere from a day to a decade, what period of time was the, the happiest, the most gratifying, the one you recall with greatest pleasure of your life?

NF: Well I think the '80s, not my 80s, but the 1980s because I was newly married to Robert and we were having some wonderful adventures in traveling and I'm, and things were happening in the dance program and so that was, that was just really, but I'm so, I'm very happy now, but I also another sort of magical time, was that time of the latter 1960s and early '70s. Where it doesn't, it seemed to me, and this is the beginning of all the movements, that there was a freshness and an aliveness and a sense that change was around the corner and that gave us a great zest for things, you know. So both of those times, but then I can't discount now.

CO: Right now?

NF: Yeah, mmhhmm.

CO: Yeah.

NF: Yeah, it's a different kind, there is a deeper kind of contentment now. It's not the always as rhapsodic as it has been at other times, yeah, but that's fittin'.

CO: In all, in all, does the depth of the contentment compensate for the not quite as euphoric or ecstatic or whatever?

NF: Yeah, for me it does. I would not have thought that.

CO: Sure.

NF: Earlier on I just would not have thought that.

CO: Yeah.

NF: But, I mean the depth of contentment can bring it's kind of euphoria too you know, but, but yeah it does compensate for that heady, heady, heady thing, you know. I thought of that.

CO: So, so to be sort of hokey, there is something about the wisdom that comes with the…

NF: Wisdom, and well you keep using the word depth, and that's it. There is a depth, a deepening of almost everything. A deepening of one's appreciation of the natural world, just a lot of things. This does not mean it does not carry along it's moments of depression and it's moments of anxiety.

CO: Sure. And are those shorter lived because they, because there's this other well?

NF: I think there shorter lived. They're more intense at times because you're at the shorter end of life. And so you don't have that cushion, and that brings me to one, you know you asked earlier about, I don't know if this is the time you want to do it, about other questions or categories or that might be asked.

CO: Oh please!

NF: And now that had said about what you read and thought.

CO: Absolutely.

NF: Well one that I think of, although I'm sure there's a better way to put it then this, is how do you feel about death?

CO: I would love for you to respond to that.

NF: I don't know if I can, but I know that it is certainly, I mean I can't as intelligently as I would like to, but when you are closer to it, you think about it more. It brings its share of anxiety. I don't think I'm obsessed by it. It also brings a funny kind of thing that I think is a kind of acceptance. I mean obviously that it will happen. I don't know the answer to the question are you afraid of it? I'm always afraid of anything I don't know anything about. So I have that level of fear. On the other hand, I'm curious.

CO: Well okay that's a Segue into how, what, how to respond in what way does your proximity to the end, we're all approximately related to it in the end because we don't know when it's going to be, but in what way does that affect your religious faith…

NF: Well that, it is the most fascinating area of inquiry I know, you know. Of what, what, "what it's all about Alfie," you know. I, it deepens it because it makes me question more, and more, and more, and more, this doesn't mean it makes me get more of the answers, but neither does it make me despair. I just think there is something more, and of course I don't know what the something is. And it makes me want to spend more time in prayer and meditation, although I can't tell you exactly what form that takes.

CO: Would you consider yourself a contemplative?

NF: Yes, a contemplative without the discipline. I mean I don't like,…

CO: You're knocking the world.

NF: I don't have, I have not disciplined except for the part where I'm going to set aside this 20 minutes first thing in the morning to do this, but I find myself doing it and I find myself connecting a lot at odd times with what? Well I don't know, but it's something outside of me, you know.

CO: Yeah, yeah. So do you sit, you used the word a few minutes ago, acceptance. Does the ability to accept death, that doesn't mean that you stop questioning or anything, but the ability to accept it as reality. Does that, it seems to me like that's connected with all this contentment that you, you know the contentment that you, you sort of access.

NF: Yeah, I think, I think so, but make no mistake I still have my anxiety about it. I'll tell you something that Marianne said, it was, we were lying up in our two beds, on the sleeping porch right after mother died, and she had come down to help me, Marianne had, and we were talking about mother and we were talking about death, of course she was a year away from her own death, I never, she was in remission at that time, and she Nancy you know the only thing I fear, and she was the most deeply connected person that I think I knew and she really had a deep religious, spiritual base and she said you know the only thing I fear is that at the very end, I'll go screaming up the wall. Which I thought was a very honest thing to say, and I said well you won't. I just, I mean I will maybe, but you won't, cause I just never thought she would and she didn't you know she was very, very, very…

CO: But what, you weren't with her when she died were you?

NF: No, I heard all about that and from someone who was. But no she was up in Virginia and I was in Tallahassee, but I think that what I'm saying is despite the contentment I have begun increasingly to feel, sometimes I wonder if I'll go screaming up the wall you know. Cause you don't know, but I think there's more of a feeling of this acceptance doesn't mean I think, that I'm at a point where I'm just totally steady, okay, well in the first place you know you have no choice, you are going to die so, but it means, it's very different from panic. And there are people who live in dread of death all the time, and I just don't, you know when, when my mother and my sister, and three aunts on one side, and four aunts on another side all had breast cancer, everybody said don't you, not everybody, but people have said to me, Nancy, don't you is and this and this haunt you and I said no, and I do, I think that was a gift, Catherine. I don't think I just suddenly became spiritually real strong, but I just thought you know, if I'm going to die of

breast cancer, I don't think I'm going to waste any time wondering if I'm going to die of breast cancer.

**End of 8B - 9-A**

**Beginning of 9-B-10**

CO: That is a gift.

NF: And I have never, I've done, I had you know a double mastectomy when they found pre-cancer cells and so forth. I've, I do my best. I do the mammogram, and all that's about all I can do. And I don't want to waste time worrying about it because time is so precious and we also, you know that I can slip on a banana peel tomorrow.

CO: Absolutely.

NF: So, but it was a gift I think because I didn't really have to…

CO: Yeah.

NF: A friend of mine just said, you know, her mother died of cancer, and she said I think about it all the time. I'm so afraid, as she continued smoking. Yeah, so.

CO: That, I'm sure it's common with this project, but the end of life issues have just really interested me. I'm sure my sister's own passing had something to do with that too, but it's been, you know, it's just been. So when people talk about someone who died it's always, I always want to know where you there, you know.

NF: Right.

CO: Did you experience that with them.

NF: I was with my mother. And it was relatively, well the last day I guess she was comatose, because she didn't speak but I did tell you that she, what she asked me about three days before she died. She said, "Am I doing this well?" And I said you're doing it with great grace. Which you know, knocked me for a total

loop. But you know Elise's husband died, let's see three years ago, Dick, and we all loved Dick very, very much. He was an Episcopal priest and so Robert and I went over to see him a lot because they were living in New Burn and they had moved into an assisted living place. It was, visits were mixed blessings and horrors, horrors because of the family dynamic that was going on at that time. Elise was getting worse, but anyway, we would go and see him. And then I know a lot of what he said through Nancy, my niece, who was with him a lot, and so was her sister, Becky, but also things that he said to me, and one of the things he said was, you know he didn't seem afraid, but he just said, "You know, you never, they don't prepare you for this. They prepare you how to live. They don't really prepare you for this end of life thing." I mean he knew he was dying. I mean poor, poor…Then he had sort of dreams that he would tell Nancy and about and she would tell me. And one was he said, "Okay, last night I was standing in a long line and everybody had their suitcases, and we were moving slowly to the door. But I never could get to the door to go out". And he told that the next day when he was awake. He said, "And I know that's about dying," and he had all of these imaginary experiences, or dream-like experiences which he shared. But he did not seem afraid. And the last time we went to see him, which must have been about three weeks before he died, well I had taken him a Barbara Brown Taylor's book about leaving church cause he was her interim after she left, I told you that, and he just wanted to read that last chapter over a little bit, but he wanted us to read. And after I left niece Nancy read it to him cause he liked it a lot, but that last time I went over to see him when we got up to read he actually stood up out of the bed, and put his arms around and he said, "I will be with you". And now he was very, very close to death. And Becky, Becky still to this day says that she thinks he communicates with her.

CO: Really? His daughter?

NF: One of his daughters, mmhhmm. Nancy's sister.

CO: Wow.

NF: So. It is such a mystery.

CO: Yeah, I think that's why I can't get enough, you know reading about it. And it's popular of course now because so many new baby boomers are you know, okay. Well we can come back to that. I just asked you about the happiest time.

NF: But that question about how do you feel about death was one that I don't know whether one can include the political, when we were saying you know Nanette said you were asking what things

CO: Oh right.

NF: Yeah, yeah. And I don't…

CO: Yeah, Right, that. You can, you couldn't, I shouldn't, I mean do you think that.

NF: No I said, No I'm asking you. Do you think you can could include that?

CO: Well…

NF: Or is that too bold for?

CO: No, I mean it, in all of the, all of the sources I've consulted, some people do include that. I, I don't think I would've hesitate to ask you, but there are a lot of people that I sense I have to be very sensitive about.

NF: Yeah, I would imagine that.

CO: Because they don't, I just, I don't want to set off, you know painful, because some people have not come to the acceptance stage, so…

NF: And I, I'm not fully accepting.

CO: But you can talk about it.

NF: I can talk about it.

CO: Yeah. I have to think about that. I mean I have thought about it. It's not that I haven't thought about it because I told you I took the hospice training and one of the mandatory things is that you know you go through this process and it,

and it, and it forces you to answer that about your own death, and so you have to ponder, cause you have to write about it. So and it was sobering, it was very sobering because you have to write, you know what you think happens, and you have to write what you want done at your funeral and you know you have to really think. I remember it being extremely sobering, and it's not like I'm not a deep thinker, thinking person, so I do, you know, I mean I think about these kinds of things, but I remember that being particularly sobering.

NF: I see that.

CO: So, and now I just read about it all that I can. And, and people who work with people, the dying have a you know they have a, they have a deep experience of although some of them I wonder if they aren't disconnected you know because it does, some of them are deeply empathic you know, but it seems that some of them are just not, they just don't, I know that I would not feel, would not feel that that's who I would want with me if I had no family at death

NF: If that.

CO: To have with me it's like, it's like this, this world that, but I'll think about ways to ask about, you know I mean I think, I've been thinking about it…

NF: Yeah.

CO: Decade my 50s I don't think you have to be 70s, 80s, or 90s.

NF: No.

CO: To think about it.

NF: You're getting a head start. See I mean the thing that worries me and I can honestly say this, the most about dying would be leaving Robert. Not only do I just selfishly don't want to leave him, but I don't think he can do well without me. Yeah.

CO: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well that's probably true. Yeah.

NF: I told you that when I say this to Robert that he always says that Augustus will take care of me. And I say Augustus will not write your think notes.

CO: Well as I talk to people who are mid-90s and Sunday I'm talking to a woman who's a 107. Still plays bridge. 81's a spring chicken. So…

NF: Well yeah, a 107 and still plays bridge. Does she live in assisted living or?

CO: Lives with her daughter. She's lives, and they don't live in assisted living.

NF: Well and is she, obviously she's okay.

CO: She's in Thomasville. Right. Her daughter said she's perfectly, I mean she will, she might not have a lot of short term memory but it's, but I don't care about short term, I mean that's not my…

NF: Right, and besides you know many of us much younger though.

CO: Yeah like my short term memories gone but, but yes, she, her daughter said, she owned a bakery, and ran a bakery until after she was a 100 and something so.

NF: And physically she's seems pretty…

CO: She, right, she's got limited mobility, but she's not bed ridden so I'm.

NF: Plays bridge.

CO: Yeah I know. And Bridge requires, I don't play it, but everybody says . .

NF: That's why I never, I don't play bridge either.

CO: So I think that you know, I don't think you have to worry much about Robert based on, based on a time you know it's relative I think that's what I'm learning. It's just so relative.

NF: It is so relative, yeah. And I, you know, Robert's nine years younger than I am and he always says I'm going first and I say "coward." That's not very chivalrous.

CO: Well you've also said his own illness has made him aware that…

NF: Yeah, he says, he said that, yeah.

CO: Mortality more than his age. Well, you don't seem to have had a lot of unhappy times. What would you to identify?

NF: I can generalize unhappy times.

CO: On unhappy times…

NF: I can generalize and say that the ends of relationships, there have been several that have been really traumatic, you know. And I guess my mother's death was very traumatic, but I think it also was very affirmative in some ways. Number one I got through it. Number two the way she did it was strengthening.

CO: So do you, the way she did it, you sound like that was instructive. Do you, does that?

NF: Well I can't explain how she was, but I mean how it was, but she got just quieter and quieter. She did say things and she said, she asked me that question about how she was doing it. She was so considerate, you know. Hey baby…And the fact that she had up to three weeks before she died, when I came home, I was called home, that's it. And she was driving into the driveway, crying in the driveway, and because she had gone out to get something for my supper. Something I really liked, you know. And we had it and she sat up in her chair and we talked and then she got up and she went into her room and lay down and she really didn't get out of the bed very much for three weeks. But I knew, I mean I had been called back to really take care of her and I was at a conference and they called and said we think you better come. So I knew she was ill and then my, her attending doctor was my cousin and he, I had told him early on you have got to tell me the truth, you can lie to anybody else, but you have got to tell me the truth because I'm going to be the one to take care of everything. Because Marianne is not well and Elise, we never know where she is and so he told me, he said, you know, the cancer's all through her blood and there's no way to get out of this. And so I I knew. I remember going, I was at this conference and a friend

took me to the airport in Denver and I fainted. And I don't do that often. And it was just I'm sure shock. And I got alright and then I flew home and I was okay but it was, it was bad.

CO: So that was, that was one of the unhappiest times, your mother's death?

NF: Yeah and Elise was there and that had to be dealt with. Her husband came and took her back home.

CO: Now okay, you want to talk to me about why that was as…

NF: She was out of it.

CO: Oh, so was she unable to grieve?

NF: I think it was delayed. It was strange. I don't know if it would be the sort of thing you want.

CO: But do you feel like she was able to eventually…

NF: Yes, I think so…

CO: because that's…

NF: And I think she probably did at the time, but denial was her strong suit. And I think, I mean see for instance there was some stories afterwards where she told people that mother died in her arms. Where she was in you know five states away. That's what I mean. And mother, mother called me and asked me, and mother had never asked me to give up anything to interfere with my professional life at all. And I was editing a publication that was important and she said I really hate to ask you but will you come home and Elise got on the other phone and I could tell that she was, and mother just said you see, so I came home and called Elise's husband.

CO: Do you think that she thinks she, your mother died in her arms or do you…

NF: Thought that?

CO: That she thought that?

NF: At the time, but probably didn't afterwards. When she was clear she was just utterly brilliant. She could just say, but I've seen her do things like, be like this and the thought of coming here and reaching for, punch something on her computer and work the stock market. So it was difficult to say the least. Got, certainly got better towards the end and I am so grateful.

CO: Yeah, yeah, but that was a long time before her end. Your mother's death was many, many years.

NF: Oh yeah.

CO: And would you say that your mother's death is the saddest period of your life or what has been another time that sadder?

NF: Well see I came home from that and plunged into work which was my coping device.

CO: Right that's the way you.

NF: And but then within a year that my sister and then Lil, and so then I was trying to take care of Daddy, but also working here so I was going back and forth a lot. So it was a hard time, it was a hard time. Sad, and just very difficult. Thank goodness for my work.

CO: Right, well so okay, for some people sadness is a way of life. You know, some people have a melancholy temperament. It doesn't sound like you've had that. That hasn't been a real problem for you.

NF: I've had periods of depression for which I have sought help, but I wouldn't say they became a way of live, because when it looked like it was the, you know there's a difference between just being same, I'm having the blues and having a real depression. And I've had a real depression I would say really only once. But I've had sort of bouts with it as a lot of people have gad and when it got to the point where I thought I didn't use the term in my mind, way of life, but when it was becoming a part of my daily life, I sought help.

CO: So, yeah right. So that, that for so many people depression entails sadness because you, it depression is a loss of any kind of…

NF: At the worst it's like loss of energy, loss of everything. Loss of will.

CO: Yeah, oh yeah. So that's a, that's sort of a…

NF: And that was, and that was around the, that followed my mother's death. But see there were all these other deaths too.

CO: Right, sure, yeah.

NF: And I dealt with it by working all the time. But every now and then it catches up with you, you know.

CO: Sure.

NF: And so…

CO: So, so the depression set in after all the deaths?

NF: Mmhhmm. 'Bout a year.

CO: So you hadn't really dealt with it. The depression was really the…

NF: No, no. You think you have and you work, and I'm so grateful for the work. I mean I'm so grateful for the work and I never became suicidal. But all of a sudden things just began to go wrong and everything's seemed so sad and awful, you know. And I got to where all I wanted to do was sleep and I couldn't, because I was working.

CO: Right, right, clear sign of clinical depression.

NF: Absolutely, could write a text book.

CO: What were the, what had been crucial decisions of your life. You talked a few minutes ago about decisions. What would, if you could name say the three most crucial decisions in your life what would they…

NF: One of them was to go to Texas and get a degree and stay in Texas and work for five years. And another was to leave Texas forever. And certainly a major one was marrying Robert.

CO: Yeah, okay. And you know I asked you this a week before we even got started that one thing, you know, people who do life reviews are looking for is turning points in life and so you've been very aware and you've mentioned what as you talked about it, you were aware of what's a turning point in life, can you recall now, maybe three turning points for you?

NF: Well I think those three that I mentioned.

CO: The three, the three decisions were the turning points for you.

NF: Yeah, yeah, were turning points, yeah.

CO: Okay, well that's fine we can.

NF: Well I sort of omitted one which was getting back, getting into the Episcopal Church which is not because it was the Episcopal Church but because that coincided with my getting back into a deeper exploration, deeper connection with God, and a deeper explanation of the things that were spiritual in my life.

CO: Now was that a conscious decision or did circumstances just lead you back.

NF: Circumstances, circumstances.

CO: Okay, can you say what that was?

NF: Yeah.

CO: And when that was?

NF: I was going through a painful relationship which I don't want to specify, but and I had had the double mastectomy and everything so I was dealing with some surgical issues and a hysterectomy before and the doctor who, my cousin, who had attended mother was me helping me through the mastectomy and all that, you know. And he had become part of the Charismatic movement which is just

like the most, the one thing in my knowing him growing up with him all my life, I would have thought the least likely to happen. He was really so prototypically the yacht club, golf club doctor who everybody adored and drank too much and everything. We all adored him and so forth and was wonderful in a lot of ways. But for him to suddenly have this almost conversion experience and through, now this was the other time in the Episcopal Church when the charismatics were very strong. And so he took me to one of those conferences. He and his family did and so forth and then, then I had an oper…now which operation was this? I can't remember but I was in the hospital over there in Jacksonville for about a week. And he said now I'm gonna send someone to speak to you and he said Frank Daring. I have not told you this?

CO: No

NF: Well Fr Daring is deceased now but he was a mystic. I really do believe he was a mystic. He was like a little gnome. He had gray hair and he came in and he would sit by my bed and he wouldn't say much. He gave me a book or two that he'd written. And I kept waiting for him to say something, but he didn't say and then one time I looked over at him and I thought he's gone to sleep, but his lips were moving and I realized he was praying. But he just, he did this. In fact we never talked much. We would say a couple of things to each other and then suddenly I knew I was going to be dismissed the next day and I had this great sense of panic. I thought what am I going to do if this little gnome is not with me and so I said ok, what's going to happen? I've got to leave tomorrow. He said there's this man over in Tallahassee and he gave me the name. He said go and talk with him. Well he was the rector of Holy Comforter at that time and he was wonderful. He's one of my deepest and dearest friends and who never asked me to join the church, but I went to talk to him and I remembered after the first time I stayed about an hour and a half and I, I remember even what I had on, and I put my hand down on my leg and it was wet and I realized I had just, I did not know I had been weeping because I wasn't. I wasn't actively crying. We were just talking and he was talking as much as I was, and we just talked about another bond. So I would go to what I would call, I would go to the Wednesday night services. And one time I said George are you ever going to invite me to come Big Church and he

said whenever you want to, you know, no pressure, no pressure. And it ultimately I joined the Episcopal Church and he and I stayed very, very close until he died.

CO: Now your cousin who was the Episcopal priest, who can, who can became charismatic, no not a priest…

NF: No not a priest, doctor.

CO: The doctor. Was he was Episcopalian before the Charismatic movement?

NF: Yeah.

CO: Oh so he was, he was very…

NF: He was very high society, not a cradle, high society, Jacksonville.

CO: But, okay…

NF: Episcopalian which is the, I mean he was brought up Methodist, but you know there was a certain social group that goes to the Episcopal Church and it's not that, I'm not suggesting it didn't mean much during it, but that was what he did until he got really moved.

CO: Now this man at Holy Comforter did he, was he also mystical? Was he, was he a mystic?

NF: I think so. I used to tell him, I'd say, "You know when, there are times when God just seems to move through you. It's like you are no longer there," and he said, "That's when I get out of my way." And one time he came over it was sitting on it so when he just said I want to ask you something will you be my spiritual director and I nearly . . . .

CO: You told me that you all became that to each other.

NF: Yeah because I could not, I felt I was losing my spiritual director. And also I felt, number one not qualified to be anybody's spirituals director. So we just

became each other's good, mutual friends and every other kind of friend, you know, I mean we would just, we really enjoyed each other, you know.

CO: But that, I think that says so much though about the, just that whole phenomena you were talking about, when God moving through…

NF: Exactly. So that is certainly a huge turnaround time. I don't know why I left that the way I…

CO: Did you say when? Did you say what

NF: Okay this would have been in the mid-70s, when I first, and when I became a member of the Episcopal Church and when I knew him and so forth. Yeah.

CO: So you became a member of Holy Comforter?

NF: Mmhhmm.

CO: And that's where you go now?

NF: That's where I go now here and now up in North Georgia I go to Saint James. And that is the church of my soul, has become that really.

CO: Saint James?

NF: Mmhhmm.

CO: Okay.

NF: I still go to Holy Comforter and I have friends there. It's, it's not the same and I don't think it's just because it doesn't have George there as a rector, but it's not, it does not, it's not the same experience as Saint James is for me.

CO: Yeah, oh my gosh, I know that. Do you find that, the Eucharist compensates [for] whatever else is missing?

NF: Yeah, isn't this interesting because there are times when, in fact I've said this, that's when go, I go to Holy Comforter and it's not that I don't like the priest there. He's nice. He was brought up in a Roman Catholic Church as a Roman

Catholic priest. And he's got married and is an Episcopal priest. There's still so much of that Roman Catholic theology that's very strong in him and guess I just need more breathing space. So it's not that, but I say to people sometimes I go to Holy Comforter just to pay my respects to God, you know I mean it doesn't really matter the priest is. I have old friends there but I'm not as invested in it as I used to be. The Eucharist is very important to me. Now I can't explain that to anybody to whom the Eucharist is not important. It's just you know. I mean I remember talking to a Meth…a Presbyterian woman who was deeply involved in her church and so forth. I said something about the Eucharist and she said, "Well Nancy it's just a matter of place. It's just grape juice. I mean it's just…" and it's just not, for me.

CO: Right well, yeah and yeah.

NF: And see I didn't know that until I got into an Episcopal Church because I, because the Methodist church although, I thought there were wonderful things about them Methodist church just, and then I went 25 years without any church and the Eucharistic presence was just not there in the Methodist Church maybe it is now in some. I think that First Presbyterian here there is a very strong feeling of that. But that's a very liberal church. I don't know whether those two go together or not, but I mean it's open to a lot of different things.

CO: Yeah, yeah that's a, I can talk about this all night.

NF: Yeah, and then I can't, well do you find it hard to explain to people?

CO: Oh my goodness, yes.

NF: I can't explain it really, but I know it's real.

CO: But you don't any, anybody who like any, Lay Eucharistic ministers who I'm not one. I don't have to be back there but people who help in that capacity say that, it's palpable that you know, and I mean you look at, I look at the kids that where I go and I think that something brings those kids back and I know it's the Eucharist and I know it's their families because, I mean they might be doing what all they did then, it's the liturgy. It's the Eucharist. They will come in. That's all

they do. They're there for the Eucharist. They'll stay for the concluding prayer, but…

NF: That is so interesting isn't it?

CO: Yeah, there, yeah and when you do connect with it, I think it's, but I can't, you know, I can't explain it to my family. But it's why I, you know when people ask me to go to church with them, if I, if I will try to find an Episcopal Church and go to two churches. You know, because I don't feel like I've been to church if I…so that's kind of comical but, but it's, I just don't try to explain it

NF: No, yeah. But it's nice when you can talk like we're talking, you know. So…

CO: Yeah, I feel, I think it a gift to be, you know, to have that.

NF: Right, oh I do too. I do too.

CO: You don't have to address this at all, but mistakes, do you, I know you don't, you know, they don't haunt you, but are there mistakes that you, you…

NF: That I think about?

CO: Yeah.

NF: Yeah there are, and this is another thing that I've been thinking about recently because I think maybe this is something that comes with age. Where you begin to think back on errors you've made and think. And I think there's a way of wallowing in it. And taking on the old southern Christian guilt you know. And I don't think I wallow in it, but I think, and I don't think it's fair to do that. You know the unexamined life is not worth it and all that. I don't consciously do it but I begin to think about things and think I could've handled that better. Lot of them are situations, I mean I think I was successful in my professional life, but when I was chairing the department I will look back on some of those and think, everybody says I was such a success, but I can remember such and such happening and I could've handle that, I would love to be handle that differently. You know so personnel problem or something. I wish I could've handled that differently or way that…

CO: But you don't, you don't, you don't hold, you don't hold that against yourself. It sounds like, hold on a second.

NF: You know.

CO: You…

NF: I regret it.

CO: You regret it? Okay, so you will use that word regret?

NF: Yeah I do regret it. I think if anything redeems it, it is that I am thinking about it and regretting it. That's different from wallowing in guilt.

CO: Oh, that's right. Right. So remorse is a cleansing kind of, you…

NF: Well, yeah, because the opposite of that is denial and that doesn't.

CO: So do you feel like it's coming back for that reason? That's its coming into your mind?

NF: Well I don't know. There are all sorts of scenarios. One is that because I'm getting closer to the end that I want to do that. I don't want to do it, but that I'm doing it more. And another is, see, the thing about not denying things is that you do learn. And so I want to learn up to the end, you know. And otherwise then I've just slammed the door on everything.

CO: But I mean, is this something that is come back in the past whatever two or three years or months or whatever that they you haven't thought about in a long, long time?

NF: That's an interesting question cause I think, cause I have thought, have I always been thinking about this, you know, on some level, obviously, I must have been. It's in my memory bank somewhere but I think that's real easy when you make mistakes of course, to justify them. And so probably early on you sort of semi-justify, I just thought well you know maybe that was not too cool but it, but I think it is important to examine pretty clearly also I have found that it tells you a lot about yourself, and that's, that's good. And I think we're sort of meant to do

that. And again I don't mean to say that you're going mea culpa all the time, you just.

CO: Now does any of this, cause this is a subject close to me, of interest to me, do you, is any of it that you can recall and have a sense of remorse over, do you, is there any element of making amends in that?

NF: Some of them are possible to make amends. Some of them it's out of your control after so many years, you know. What you can also do is to try not to let that pattern recur with other people.

CO: Recurrence, sure.

NF: You know. See this is one of the things that during that time I did seek help. And I went through analysis that I found out, although I guess it should've been plain, that going through that kind of therapy and that kind of process doesn't make you a perfect person. But what it does make, if it's successful, I think help you realize a pattern, your patterns of behavior, so that you may still do some of those same things, but you think uh oh, you think, you recognize it. You recognize it. You think oh, I'm doing that thing again. That pattern. So I think sometimes in going back through some of your mistakes and saying you know wonder, if I could've have, how would I have handled this? Could I have handled it better? It makes you recognize patterns in yourself that's why I said teaches you something about yourself but the, the good thing that can come out of it, not always does, but can, is that it keeps you perhaps from doing that again.

CO: So there may be an element of personal change that can take place.

NF: Yes, oh yes. I mean that's to be hoped.

CO: Right, right. So you well, if you could live your life over again would, what, the question is what would you do differently? Would you, is it one of those in particular you want to talk more about or you just respond to that any way you want to.

NF: Yeah, well I think I almost have responded to it. I think I would try course if you could live your life over again with all the smarts you have accrued by now, that's a different matter.

CO: Well right, right, sure. I mean think, I think that's what the question's asking. If you could, if could carry your wisdom and so forth back and live your life over again but that, that also, I mean, how many of the things, because as you say when you can say at this stage of life, that this is the best time of your life, I mean what more can you ask?

NF: Well I mean I could have, I was so driven to build this thing, this dancing place, you know, place where young people could make art and so forth and I could myself and all that. That sometimes you can get to be the beady-eyed sculptor you know, which means that this wreckage unintentional, unintended, but it's like war. You know there are these unfortunate thousands of bodies, I mean it wasn't that severe at all, but so I would have tried to handle people better. I'm told that I did very well, but I don't agree with that because I can think of times when I'm sure I hurt people. You know. So I just tried to be better, you know a better person.

CO: What do you consider the most valuable lesson you've learned in life?

NF: Oh my goodness.

CO: I know. I'm sorry. Well the most valuable five or whatever. You don't have to answer that.

NF: I really don't anything, I mean that would just, I've answered it a lot in a lot of different ways I think.

CO: Yeah.

NF: Yeah.

CO: Alright. Has there been a single individual, I think I know how you're going to answer this, but who's had, who a single individual, who's really dramatically changed your life?

NF: Robert, my mother, and also, Lil, not as dramatically as Robert and mother. Isn't that interesting? Cause it's hard to rank them, because Lil is enormously important to me.

CO: Sure, well her effect is so…

NF: Right.

CO: far flung.

NF: And I've been, I wasn't with her daily as I have been with both of them.

CO: Yeah, yeah. What gives your life unity or meaning now?

NF: I think my continued, and will always be continuing, quest about God and I don't know whether you'd call that a spiritual quest, and Robert.

CO: Okay, okay, you've already answered this too, but maybe in a different context. What's your biggest worry now?

NF: My worry is getting everything done that I think really important for me to do before I die. I worry about the future of the Lillian Smith Center. I worry about making all the preparations and I think we've made as many as we can right now. You know for Robert after I die and so forth. I worry about the world, but I can't solve that one. So, sometimes I just feel so grieved about it. And it, you know I just think how does one stand this, and then I think and I'm not even standing it firsthand. I'm just hearing about it.

CO: It is a suffering.

NF: It is.

CO: This is one of my favorite questions. I know it's going to sound repetitious to you, but what inspires you? What is your greatest source of inspiration?

NF: God whenever I'm in touch. Music. Words, both written and spoken. Now we're not talking about people because we've sort of talked about that.

CO: Well some people live to be inspired, and so I just love the whole concept and, and I love the, those answers. I just, I love them. Well it does seem like a good time then to ask the question that Nanette suggested about…

NF: Books.

CO: Books that had been left you know, lasting impression on you.

NF: Lill's writing really does because I think it's wonderful. I think it's brilliantly crafted, but I also think it's just wonderfully true. Oh gosh, there're so many.

CO: I know. I know it's an impossible question.

NF: I went through a period of reading all of Laurence Durrell's works. Beginning with the Alexandrian Quartet and they were enormously, but I was so stunned by the language. So that was almost just a totally aesthetic experience. The Charles William's books were a profound spiritual experience. And see Lil had read them before she died, and we talked about them and so forth. And I had sort of thought about them, but didn't read them. And then after she died, Paula gave me a set of them. And I still didn't read them. And then one time I was out of town. I was doing a consultancy somewhere and I picked up, I took one of them home. I mean with me on the trip and I read it and it was like it applied to everything that was going on in my life right at that time. And I couldn't put it down. So then I got home and I, well I'll read the next one. But I didn't. Things didn't fit. And I had that experience with all of those first four books. That when I pick them up they would seem to be okay I should be reading this this very day because it is related to this, this this, this, this.

CO: Like it had your name on it?

NF: Yeah. Oh but there have been so many.

CO: Charles Williams I don't really know if…

NF: He was in that little group of people with C. S. Lewis.

CO: Oh uh huh. So that's his generation?

NF: Yeah, and there was a gang of them, you know.

CO: Right, yeah.

NF: And he's one of them and I think he is in some ways more profound, he's mystic. He's a mystic, at least the books are. And they just have to hit you right. I mean he's, it's not in some ways it's not as accessible as C. S. Lewis. But in some ways more profound, but they're fanciful and you have to be, at least I had to be really ready at that particular time. But it's interesting that we're talking about this because I've been seeing them on the bookshelf and thinking, I think I'm going to dip back in and see if, how decades later how they hit me. She was reading a lot of Teilhard De Chardin. And that's another one I started reading after she died. Simply because I was up there one, there after she died and I was put in a room that had all those books in them and I started reading. And then I got interested and started buying them and so forth. It's really hard to answer.

CO: Oh my goodness, I know. But those are, I mean that's a, a sort of a genre.

NF: Yeah because, but the Laurence Durrell that's just pure fascination by the artistry of his writing.

CO: So the aesthetics of that was more.

NF: Yeah, I just remembered thinking if I could write like that I would not, I would leave my current profession, but I wouldn't have.

CO: What are you proudest of in your life?

NF: Two things, one very personal which is my relationship with Robert, but the other is the dance program. That's the major, in my opinion, the major accomplishment of my life. Which includes a lot of things. It includes building the program and the curriculum, but it includes my choreography. It includes my teaching. So it's very, it's all is very inclusive the thing, you know.

CO: This, this it's not repetitive to everybody but it might sound repetitive to you. What do you want your legacy to be? It doesn't have to be a single thing.

NF: Well I think what I just said is my biggest accomplishment, I want that to be and that I, whatever I was able to do was meaningful to, to people. Was a plus in their life, you know. It doesn't have to be me so much as just the work that we did, you know. It was meaningful.

CO: Right, but surely you, I mean you, but like there's a building named after you, right?

NF: Well it's the theatre.

CO: The theatre. When was that?

NF: When I retired. Which was '97.

CO: How did that feel? I mean has that sunk in? What, I mean because think about how you have people don't have theatres named after them.

NF: The theatre, well and then they, you know, we did the whole building and made that into a huge theatre. I mean a lovely theatre. So that even was like a second dose of it, but oh I, it's one of the most meaningful things to me. I mean if if you know, if you enjoy being recognized and accepting awards and I, I mean who doesn't? That's probably the most meaningful or one of the most meaningful.

CO: Yeah, is there anything that, I'm sure you're very open with friends and family and people who know and care about you, but is there anything that people don't know about you that you'd like for them to know.

NF: There are things that people don't know about me. I'm happy they don't. But there are things that people don't know about just me the person. Robert knows most of them, but, because I was such a public person. But that how many times have you heard people say this, but actually she's very shy. But that I have a real shyness, and I, that's why I understand, understood Lil so much. Because she had an incredible shyness. Although you'd never know it from this personality that could just walk into a room and just take over a room.

CO: That's hard isn't it if you're forced into being a public person but the shine…

NF: But you're not forced, I mean, remember the thing about decisions. You make your own bed. You make your own bed, and you create your own circumstances. That was one thing I learned early on. That you do create your own circumstances and that barring the fact that you were in California when there was an earthquake, but then you should always wonder why you chose to be on the San Andres Fault, you know. But I mean we do create our own, what were we saying? Why did I get on to that?

CO: Well I asked you was there anything that you would like to people to know that they didn't know.

NF: Oh people to know. Oh, and we got onto the shyness, yeah. I don't know that I really want people to know that but it's a fact. And I, oh I know where we said, you said well you were forced to do it. No I wasn't forced to do. I went for it. I went toward a life that caused me to be with people all the time. This is why this house saved me. I used to call it, you know, this is where I bailed out. It was my sanity saver, cause I had all of, and I was living alone, and I had all of this plus nature so I would come home after a 24/7 week it would seem like. And have, have this. And that probably is why I was so reluctant to share it until Robert.

CO: Would you and then choose to be alone and not have company so you could, so that you could recharge or whatever?

NF: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I went out a lot. I mean I had, you know, oh but I was so much involved in my work, but I also had a busy social life too and I could manage it, but certainly I had the quietness, you know, of it, and I still, I still do. You know, Robert set in his studio a lot of the time and then even when we're here, I think this is one of the things that made us know that we could have a life together, was when we were driving back from Gainesville one time and I said this is so peaceful because we've driven most of the way without talking and it wasn't that there was anything wrong it was just we didn't feel we had to fill it up with talk. So, but the shyness is very much there and I think it's in the family. I mean I look back on some family members and I think Elise was just real shy, really shy, that's why I have compassion for her when you know.

CO: You realized what she…

NF: Yeah. And Lil I know was.

CO: Yeah, I'm trying to remember if I've read that in any of her biographies.

NF: You may have because I think, I think Paula acknowledged that.

CO: Two more questions. Is there anything we've left out that you…

NF: Probably but I'll think about it by 3 o'clock this morning.

CO: Well then you call me.

NF: Okay.

CO: Or write me. Although writing is a completely different experience.

NF: Isn't it?

CO: But, yeah, it is and I wonder how different my own response would be to the 300 and something questions I answered would be, cause I wrote them. And I wonder how different it would be. What it is fundamentally different to speak it than to write it. But it sounds pretty cathartic to have to write it but this is really, what would be the title to your, to this story of your life? How would you title it?

NF: That's sort of like what would you like on your grave stone isn't it?

CO: No, no.

NF: I'll have to think of that, Catherine. I promise you I will respond to it. It's not a top of the head question, you know, yeah.

CO: Well…That's right, I know. I realize that. Students and I were just talking about how so many biographies are "the life and times of" so and so, you know. And sometimes that's all people can think about is, is that. But there's something about you that would capture your, your…

NF: I really, but that's a wonderful question.

CO: You can certainly think about it. You don't have to answer that.

NF: You know Isadore Duncan's autobiography was just called *My Life* and a lot of them are sort of like that.

CO: Right, yeah, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gillman*, the woman I wrote about, [titled hers] *My Book and Heart*, and *As a Woman Thinks*. I mean you know these all that's Victorian, Victoriana, but, but it's because they had a particular, I like if you were to sit down and write your autobiography there would be some*thing*, you know, that flowed and informed it. But you don't have to answer that but I would like for you to think about it.

NF: I will, I will think about it. I will try to answer it.

CO: Yeah, because if we went back and listened, something would probably, would probably come to you. Not everybody's been able to come up with something clever, but occasionally something will strike somebody when they, they think on it.

NF: Have you, have you gotten some clever ones?

CO: Couple yeah, just, but I think it was because I just kept probing and, and because most of the time, it isn't something you can answer off the top of your head. So it's probably not a fair question, but I think it does make people think.

NF: I think it does too as I was going to say it's a wonderful question, wonderful exercise, you know.

CO: Yeah, so will close this and you can think, but I would ask you to please get back to me.

NF: I will. I promise you I will.

CO: Because it'll be quite telling.