

Interview with Lee Natti
Folly Cove Designers
June 24, 1996

with Nancy

PM: Were you content staying at home and not going out to work?

LN: Well I can think of several who probably if they had to, express it themselves wouldn't have called it content, including myself, I'm thinking of Ginny in particular. She had really no interest in day to day taking care of a house, so it was fortunate that she had help and she enjoyed the process of decorating a house, or having a house attractive and welcoming. When she, more toward the end of her career, didn't have any book projects in mind, she did some beautiful screens, painting on covered doors in the house, with her designs. That was what, the house to her was a wonderful place to be in. As long as you didn't have to dust it.

PM: Wouldn't we all feel that way?!

LN: I think it is a perfectly normal feeling, especially to someone who is creative. I'm sure there were others in the group that I didn't know that well who may have delighted in being a great cook or enjoyed day-to-day routines. I can't name any.

PM: Which says something.

LN: I didn't know all of them in their personal lives that well, especially in the later years when there were some of the new people who came in. *imo* ~~imo~~, between her music and her art, as far as her domestic life went, she lived very simply and at that point, her one son, Billy must have been high school aged and must have left home. So she just had herself, really, for many many years. When she worked in Boston she had such long days with commuting and everything, I'm sure her house life was pretty limited.

PM: Do you think that she would have, if she had had sufficient money, to keep herself, to support herself, do you think she still would have gone to the MFA?

LN: I don't know if she would or not. She had so many interests, I think she would have liked to spend all her time on art and music. I sort of don't know how she got in to the MFA. It was really such a long trip for her. Because once you get to the North Station, you've got another 3/4 of an hour of changing street cars to get to the station. She was a person who enjoyed routine, in a way. She could accomplish a lot, just by being organized.

PM: Which, in a way, I think in her prints, most of them are very orderly. I think of the sauna, and even my Friday there is a production Costa used a phrase, he called you all, "transitional women." I said what does that mean? He said, well, they were not like their mothers who stayed at home, nor were they like today's women who go out of the home for the most part. They were an in between group for whom the family came first, and I don't know if you agree with that, but who also had projects, that in a way, it's a way of the Folly Cove Designs, brought you to the edge of the outside world.

LN: Yeah. That's a good phrase, though, transitional woman. I think that says it very neatly.

PM: For you, your family came first, is that true?

LN: It had to. On the other hand, I had the experience of working in a publishing company, in an office so I had already had an introduction to the world outside the home. The Folly Cove Designers was something I hadn't expected to be involved with at all. It did give me a creative outlook that I could alternate with the writing.

PM: Had I had enough money....

LN: Had I had enough money, I would have had somebody come in and do the housework. Where would you have been? I would probably been working at home but not involved in the day-to-day care of the house.

I would have loved to cook, but Robert was very good about taking over. If I really had a tight deadline when I was editing or writing, he cooked and took care of the kids. that was fortunate.

PM: Would you not have gone, would you have chosen, would you have ever considered going to Boston to write, for writing your books?

LN: I don't think so.

PM: Why?

LN: I would not have wanted to commute.

---break in tape---

Faith Harvey joins

PM: ...leave this on so that if you talk about Folly Cove.....

PM: This is Helen ^{Sisterma} ~~Piston~~ McJacobson. Did you know her? She was one of the very, very early Folly Cove Designers...

FH: She was probably in and out of the group before I even came...

PM: I think, because I think she was in the very first class.

FH: It could have been early 1946, that I came here

PM: And that's Eleanor Curtis, isn't that cute? I think it's so darling, with this little blouse and jacket.

FH: She always seemed such a proper person. She's so sensitive and understanding which I've just discovered in recent years. She's delightful.

PM: Just the twinkle in her eye.

FH: Have you read any of her poetry?

PM: She gave me two. I just thought was amazing, not having done it before. That's Barbara Sousa Hoffman. She was...

FH: No. She might have been in the group. It seems to me that I recognize the name, but I don't remember her at all.

PM: You started in 1946?

FH: No, 1947.

PM: When did you leave?

FH: I'm sure I didn't do much of anything after 1950. I don't know why, but at that time I just thought I was hopelessly busy because I had two children. It may have been because the first one was such a horror. It seems to me, I've always wondered about what I've been like in the past because I just seemed to be so dreadful. I really don't remember being active very much after Blaine was born.

PM: Is that your daughter?

FH: My older daughter, the second child.

PM: Was she born in 1950?

FH: She was born in January of 1950 and I probably considered myself too busy to do anything after that. I might have done something later. I can't imagine that it all happened in such a short amount of time between 1947 and 1950 but maybe.

PM: Barbara was later, probably late 1950s and early 1960s.

FH: We lived in Anasquam in 1953, I think, or it was probably around January of 1953. That's nice.

PM: Isn't it nice?

FH: Very nice.

PM: I had two of my students come with me one day and we just went from Lee to Mary in one day and took these. It's dark but you can still see.

FH: I like it that way. I like how you have part of this showing really, it's a charming picture.

PM: This is Ruth Hendy who is almond of Barbara Sousas' so you wouldn't remember her either.

FH: No, not at all.

PM: This is one of George's sculptures, that is still in the yard. I just loved it; the kids loved it too.

FH: Isn't that one in the museum, still in his yard, you say.

PM: It was four or five years ago.

FH: I thought it looked like one had noticed in there the other day.

PM: Here is the barn. As it is.

FH: What is it used for now?

PM: I think there is someone living in the barn now. (?)

LN: Yes. A man named Ralph Colburn who bought it. He's kept it very much the way it is. I think he added on this little 'L' here. He sort of landscaped the front and what we used to call the coffee grounds in back. He sort of opened that up a little bit.

FH: It's been stained a different color, hasn't it? It looked natural before.

PM: It was natural shingles before?

FH: Yes. I think so, they have gone really dark. You know, you were the hardest one to pick when you were younger. You just seem to look more different than anyone else. For me, anyway. I love these two pictures of you.

PM: (to LN) I don't know if you...Helen Pistor ^{Mc}Jacobson, she was in the very first class??

LN: Yeah.

PM: And another one of you. you, another one of Eleanor, Barbara Sousa Hoffman

FH: When did you take that one of Eleanor?

LN: This was about five years ago, wasn't it Penny?

PM: It was the year that Mary died.

LN: Oh. Well, that would be three years ago.

FH: It probably the last year that I saw her.

LN: I would have never recognized her.

PM: It's an odd angle.

LN: She has a face with cheekbones that you remember, so they're kind of lost.

PM: My students just loved this and I did too. We snapped that in the barn. Did I send you pictures of Maten's sculpture? *Marlon's*

LN: Oh, I would really like to see that.

FH: I was going to call him last night as a matter of fact, and suddenly it was children's bedtime.

PM: I was just rereading the interview with him and he said that after he left, he was two dimensional block prints and then he met his second wife, Olie, and he said, "When I met Olie, my work went into three dimensions.

FH: Is he still with her?

PM: Yes.

LN: Good.

PM: She's lovely. She gets up at 5:30 in the morning on their island in Maine and goes in for a dip in that water. That water must be...

LN: He was talking about his sculpture that day, when I saw him at the opening but I had no idea.

PM: Did you go to the opening? I couldn't get to the opening.

LN: I have to go back because all I did was talk to the people. I never looked at the stuff on the walls at all.

PM: Was there a good turnout?

LN: There was a wonderful turnout. Peggy got there in a wheelchair, and Dr. Gail had changed her medication a little while before and all of a sudden her memory came back. So she was really, I think, that day, connected with people. Out of context, now, we're not so sure. But that day, she was right on target. She had her hair in a French braid down the back. She looked just wonderful.

FH: Didn't she have that flower on the back. Evidently Marsha had bought her a flower, it was a sort of greenish color tinged with a dull pink and she had it on the other day when I saw her. She was very alert then and did remember about the opening, about the exhibit. She was quite thrilled with it.

LN: Louise was there, in a wheelchair. She's had a lot of problems. Seems much more frail than Peggy.

FH: She looks a great deal older.

PM: Oh really.

LN: Well, yes because her hair is ~~white~~ now, and it was always sort of that orange tinge before, which gave her a younger look, and I sort of kept thinking, what's different about Louise? Then I got home and realized that her hair was white.

FH: I thought it was her skin. ^{that} It was her skin that made me think that she looked older because her hands looked almost mummified. Really ~~taught~~ skin. It was such a surprise because she had not looked like that last year. I think I saw her last year.

PM: Was her mind...

LN: Very clear that day. It's Peggy that you're never quite sure of.

PM: Well, what is she, 92?

FH: She said that she will be 92 this year. She's not yet, she's 91 at the moment.

LN: We just went over the other day. Robert's brother-in-law, Walker Hancock's 95th birthday.

FH: He's still driving his car. We're all!!!! Don't meet him on the road!

PM: How's his mind?

LN: His mind is fine. His eyesight only, his coordination leaves something to be desired.

PM: I'm glad you warned us.

FH: Is he still working on his sculpture?

LN: He did a wonderful head of Robert two years ago and he's been working on a head of a cousin of mine this year and Walker's not satisfied with it but Donny think it's great. Did you catch anything?

Yeah, couple

FH: Now, would this look like Olie?

PM: It wouldn't surprise me at all. I didn't see her in a pose like this but..

FH: All I have seen of her is in ^{Malen's} Malen's book

PM: Oh, right.

FH: The profile of her that is quite striking.

PM: In this one?

FH: Habit of Truth.

PM: Oh yeah, I had forgotten that there was a picture of her in there. Does he look exactly the same?

FH: Yes.

PM: I can't remember, I had an exam or something during the opening. He had written and asked if I was going and I said that I would try before I knew what my schedule was. He said that he would be signing copies of his book, his newest book.

FH: Was it the same weekend?

PM: Yes.

FH: I wish I had known when the opening was, because I didn't and I probably could have changed my plans and been there then. It probably would fit in better. These two are so Chinese. They don't seem at all what I have been expecting to do. Extremely Chinese.

PM: Interesting. I can't remember if this is the headboard in his house or the other one.

FH: Oh. They are all beautiful, aren't they? Now, in his book, he mentions Judy once and then he mentions one of his daughters. ~~so that must have been the punch.~~ There is never any mention of his son. I wonder what the story was behind that. It's not that I am prying into his life, but I think that all of these things have a great bearing on a person. His self. Very curious about that.

PM: I think I was there for two hours, I think I had lunch, maybe three hours. I don't think he ever mentioned his children. Not that I was...well, I did ask about his personal life, and he talked about his second marriage but not about the children.

FH: He mentions his second marriage quite a bit in this book. Very little mention of the first one. Very little about his children, but that's not unusual in a male. Men generally don't talk about their children. I suppose actually the finder discovers little left in his sculptures.

PM: It is something that is very playful.

FH: Yes. That's just the last thing in the world that I would have expected him to do. The others, yes. This one is just very close to a sculpture I did many years ago and a painting, quite surprising.

PM: Sculpture out of wood?

FH: It's not unusual, no, the sculpture was out of clay. The painting would have been acrylic, I'm not sure, it could have been oil at that time. Now it would be Kodak film, I'm afraid.

PM: You said I think over the phone, that photography was a big part of your life now. Or, am I misinterpreting?

FH: Yes, it has been really. I haven't done anything, well, almost nothing with it in the last year. I haven't done anything with anything at all in the last year. I just haven't had enough energy most of the time, physical ability to move around enough to do anything. But, I like to get out, just on my own and ...me and just looking around for beautiful and different. I like the combination of the two. These are delightful.. I'm really delighted that you brought these with you.

PM: He clearly is proud of them. When I left the island, he didn't have them with him and he said I will send you pictures of my sculpture and he surely did, very quickly.

FH/LN: I remember from the very first time, almost the very beginning of the time I knew him, he was very fond of wood. He had picked up some lovely wood prints and he was admiring the grain in them. I think that was the first time I had heard anyone mention it. It was something that I had admired but I've never heard anyone comment on it before. There had been some big gaps in my development, obviously. I had a lot to make up when I came over to this country to live. I remember Betty filled us in on the background of these prints. He's be admiring them in the shop window and went without lunch for several days so that he'd have the money to buy them. That's typical for him. I can't imagine he would have lost that quality of being able to give up all sorts of ordinary things in order to have some outstandingly extraordinary...

PM: The house and, is nothing but wood. It is unfinished, the shingles on the outside. All I can remember is wood, wood, wood, all over.

LN: Different sorts of wood?

PM: Different kinds of wood; open beams, just very informal, it's a summer place.

LN: He has probably gone through a great deal of trouble and expense to get the types of wood that he wanted.

PM: That's where it is deceptively simple. It also reminds me also of talking about the wood, about his two prints of wood, that were schooners. It was called Crusin I and Crusin II. They were both sailboats with large and expansive wood. That's very interesting.

LN: Of course, sailing seemed to be a very important part of that families life. I remember they used to hire or rent big sailing boats and the whole family, not the parents, just the children would go together on that cruising up and down the coast. It just seemed wonderful. I didn't know, I still don't know how to sail. I think the only time I have been on a sailboat, was with Malen. I was scared to death that day. I'm a born coward and it was rough and choppy and I didn't dare dive in swimming it was so rough. Definitely not brought up in New England.

PM: Well, I was brought up in New Jersey, but spent a lot of my summers on Cape Cod and I probably have been on a sailboat just a couple of times. It wasn't something that my parents did and I always loved the water.

LN: I've never been on Cape Cod in the spring and the fall but not in the summer.

PM: Those are the two best seasons. The summer is pretty awful now.

LN: Yes. That's what my friend tells me, she goes to the library at the very beginning of summer, just before the crowds come and gets a really good stock of books, and gets canned goods and then she had the minimum amount of things that she has to go out for.

PM: It is. I lived there for five years and taught high school. In the summer I would go to the supermarket at 5:30 or 6 -- as soon as it opened, or you would go late at night.

LN: Did they open early for the sake of people who were escaping the crowds?

PM: In the fall, I think it's gorgeous. Because the colors are not I've lived in Vermont and the colors are so wild and brilliant. On the Cape the colors are muted, golds, and browns. It took me a couple of seasons just to get my eye adjusted and realize how beautiful it was.

FH LN: I didn't realize how beautiful it was until after my first visit. That actually must have been quite early in the summer. The flowering either spring or fall, that should have been summer, it must have August, but summer is quite chilly in Wisconsin. ...was wanting to prove that he would be able to come through Massachusetts in October to be here when _____ had her first baby. He was so weak, he couldn't do anything. We could only go a very short distance in the car. I tried to convince him that this was really an impossible dream. There was no way he could get here. So we agreed that when he got better he would tell me and we would go on a camping trip and see if he could manage in the RV. So he said he was feeling better and we headed north and drove around Lake Superior and we didn't get all the way around, we got about half way around the north shore. Then, he had what appeared to be another stroke. I turned around and headed for home, determined to drive until he was in the hospital. He wouldn't consider going into any of those along the way. We finally did have to stop because we ran into such a terrible thunderstorm I couldn't see to drive and the road was being widened on either side so it was really hairy because there was this big drop-off. I remembered the road very well and exactly where I could find a campground from where we had stopped on the way north. We did that and thank goodness I had fairly high boots with me because the water was really deep. We were wading through this in the campground. The following morning he seemed to be alright. We took off for home and then he decided he was going to stop at Equal River on the way home and there again we pulled in in the dark and there again when we woke up the next morning we were about this far from the lake. There was no sign of it in the dark, of course. All he wanted to do there the next morning was go home. He died about three weeks after we got home. That created marvelous memories. I think that was the best gift he could have ever given me. I'm just sorry he didn't get to Massachusetts to prove this.

PM: That's a wonderful trip. Talk about courage on your part.

FH LN: I thought it was on his part. No, when you have lived with the situation for several years, you are accustomed to this sort of thing. And, besides, this man's health was such that he could have just dropped dead at any moment for several years. You live with that day and night. It's a 24 hour a day situation, very

wearing, but does make you willing to take a chance, because if you don't you may not have anything good happen. Everyone I knew in that situation, it was just the same. Then you met the people who hadn't experienced it; you say how brave you were. The rest of us know otherwise. It's desperation.

PM: My mother went to live with my sister in Albuquerque, my youngest sister, three or four years ago. When she left New Jersey, when she left her home, her health declined. She had congestive heart failure and Chris was working all day long and mom's health started to decline and I said to Chris after mom died, about a year and a half, I will never be able to thank you for what you did for mom so she didn't have to go to a nursing home and she said that was mom's greatest gift to me, that she came out here and let me take care of her. And I thought, a lot of people would not think of that as a gift and I think.... But you said the same thing.

~~FH~~LN: I think all of us who have gone through that, no matter how many years of his last, but think of it as...I don't know if we would call it a gift...I don't think we feel quite that grateful, because there is still very vivid memories of all the bad part of it. I don't think any of us would give up the experience. It was such an opportunity for growth. It does become something that is very valuable.

FH: Thank you for showing us these. The next one down...from about here up, just the head and shoulders, it's just like the photo of Olie in the book.

PM: I'm sure she's an inspiration for Malen. *Malen*

FH: I'm so glad he's happy. That's real good to know.

PM: He seemed very, very happy.

FH: These also are Chinese, aren't they?

PM: There is very much an oriental.

FH: Because they have all of this ivory carving with multiple bands spiraling around each other and this is like a simple variation of it.

PM: And, even this, almost like a Chinese pagoda.

FH: Yes.

PM: It would be interesting to ask him about....and that too.

LN: This is very much like the carvings in temples. Did Malen ever go to China?

FH: I don't know. I'm sure he grew up going to museums and doing all kinds of things when you see everything.

PM: Lee, what a feast!

----LUNCH----

Jan (2)
LN: She didn't really like using mixed colors.

FH: Well, everyone in the group was using mixed colors, weren't they?

LN: Yes, but I mean she wouldn't have gone for a primary red, yellow, or blue. It had to have an off tinge to it.

FH: Most people who are involved in any aspect of art at all can never find a color they like. When we would paint any room in the house, we would nearly cover the wall with paint samples before we found the one that we liked. There probably wasn't a big difference between that one and others but to me it did.

PM: I think that people who are artists, are biological, I think that their eyes are different. They see the world, whether it's different colors, or different...

FH: I think so, because it is scientifically proved that taste is actually physically different, so why not any of the other things.

PM: If you print this, do you have a block?

LN: Let me see if you can find the lines...

PM: The border, Lee.

LN: Yeah. You'd make a block. You can see where it overlapped.

FH: This side doesn't quite come to the corner.

LN: A lot of the Christmas presents that we gave each other were tablecloths that didn't quite pass...

FH: It is so much fun to see those designs.

PM: Do they have one of everything?

LN: They had to make a selection to things to put up. Even though they had a big room, I think each designer has six or eight blocks. And those who didn't have as many were sort of grouped together.

FH: Yes, I think I'm on a panel that had just one of a kind because I had only two designs, I was the most unproductive person there. I only had two by the time I left here.

PM: But you put in three years in the design.

FH: But you don't know how creative these other people were. I can't understand it now looking through that book. It would have been so much fun making all of those designs, why on earth didn't I grasp the concept at the time? I was so immature.

LN: Well, you know, I think you were totally involved in keeping your family going, for one thing.

FH: Well, yes, as I said to Penny, I don't know how on earth I was so busy with two children.

PM: When you ended up with four.

LN: Peggy and ~~Ginny~~ ^{Ann} were probably the most prolific, and ~~Ann~~ they didn't have any household constraints.

FH: That's true. Of course, Peggy was so extremely particular. She was really a meticulous worker, wasn't she? Everything had to be mathematically correct, for Peggy.

PM: She said she loved to do the homework.

FH: Yes, she did!

PM: Just page after page. She loved doing that.

FH: She did. Then later when she learned to weave, she was the same with that. She had all of these graphs that she made up. Remember, using all the different mathematical formula. To work out colors and intervals.

PM: I didn't know she wove.

FH: She probably explained that to us because of Gil being so keen on math. I remember we were visiting her one time and she brought this out and showed us. One summer when we came back from somewhere else.

LN: When it got hard for her to print. Or, it was after the Folly Cove Designers closed, that she bought a big loom, and really went into it. Scientifically learning how to weave.

FH: Yes, remember she went to a workshop, I think it was, or seminar, on weaving. It was given by an English weaver who was internationally famous for his weaving, and I cannot think of his name. I heard of him later on when I got interested in weaving.

LN: Then she went to Blue Hill...Deer Isle...Haystack.

PM: Did she?

LN: Yes. She went for two years.

FH: What is ~~the~~ Haystack?

LN: Its a art school for crafts.

FH: Supposedly that is where this man was teaching.

PM: Wonderful photography....

FH: Then she bought the large loom, after that? She wanted one large enough to make rugs.

LN: She started with a table loom and then worked up to something she could use. Again, where she had to use her feet and her ankles on the pedals, it was not easy for her.

FH: That was what made her give it up eventually, wasn't it?

LN: Yes.

FH: She did some lovely rugs. She had one in her living room, remember that one?

LN: I remember a lot that she did. I would have given my eye teeth for.

FH: That was how I felt about this particular work. The hearth and the living room fireplace, oh, I wanted that so badly.

PM: Did she sell them?

LN: She did. I don't know, I think it was just through the Anasquam village shop or ...I think she also had some at the arts and crafts society in Boston.

PM: Oh really?

LN: I think so.

FH: Oh, they were good enough.

LN: _____ would probably know. They were certainly good enough to be sold there.

PM: Who were the people who bought Folly Cove items? I'm trying to picture...were they tourists? Were they people who knew good art?

LN: I would say all of the above. There were a lot of local people who were very supportive and over the years they would sort of collect them. And then there were people who came to the hotels and motels that were around. Because we would always have one of the invitations up, for publicity.

PM: Did you?

LN: Yes.

FH: At all of the hotels around the area?

LN: Maybe not all of them, but all of the big ones. I don't think we ever advertised, though. Do you remember any ads in the paper.

FH: No, and I wasn't aware that there were posters up in places like that. I'm surprised because there is so much resistance in places like that today, to putting up posters. Because I'm always looking for places to put up posters for the paint arts.

LN: I think the inns and the places like that were interested in finding things like that, ^{for} people to do. They came and they stayed longer. They weren't just overnight, like so many of them are today. We always gave a printing demonstration Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays so that gave them something to go and do this.

PM: I didn't realize it was three days a week.

LN: Was it?

FH: I don't remember. I was only down there weekends.

LN: I don't know. Monday, Wednesday, Friday, or Tuesday and Thursday.

FH: I think I would have only been there on weekends because that would be when Gil was available to take care of Dale.

PM: Did people want to meet you? As the artist, as the craft person?

LN: If they discovered it. When you were selling stuff, if they bought something of your design, you were very apt to say what you're looking at in my design. Things like that, just to make it more interesting for them.

FH: Didn't you find that people wanted to meet the person whose work they were about to buy?

LN: I think that is what stunned me.

PM: I was just reading a book about hand crafts in Appalachia in the early part of the century. And the man who was really instrumental in getting hand crafts out of

----- end of side 1 -----

FH: With the children's things, children's clothing, it was mostly grandmothers who bought it.

PM: That was going to be my next question.

FH: Because, face it, what's practical besides plastic?

PM: Right.

FH: As mother's of small children we were not looking for things that needed hand washing. It was mostly grandmothers and I thought they were mostly grandmothers from the south but maybe not, but I think little girls in the south were getting far more dressed up than little girls around New England.

FH: I can imagine it would have been. I think this young man was an architect or he may have been an interior decorator.

LN: Frank Barnes was an interior decorator. Maybe the young man was the architect. That's why the house looked so gorgeous.

FH: Now I wish even more that I had seen it then.

PM: Is it still there?

LN: Oh yes, I don't know who owns it or who lives in it now or whether it is still as perfect as it was.

FH: I don't think that Gil's family was the sort that was particularly attractive to people in arts.

LN: Well, one never knows.

FH: I think that Foster was about the only one that Gil knew well. It generally worked the other way, you know, that I would get to meet people and then he would. Sometimes he just didn't know.

LN: That's an interesting question whether there were many men who came in, singly...

PM: Were the items expensive for their day? Was it people who had money..

FH: Penny, I couldn't tell you because I had so little at that time. Gil was still going to school again. He had gone back to school, because of an injury he'd had during the war had kept him from continuing in the line he started out in. Well, he would have been working for a while, but, just started working. Everything was expensive to me.

PM: (to LN) I just asked Faith whether the items were for that day considered expensive. If the people who bought them would have been, not necessarily wealthy, but certainly had a fair amount of discretionary income.

LN: I think for some of them it was hand done and good craft, it was amazingly inexpensive, but whether people appreciated that or whether they were buying disposable stuff for table linens, which it is really the way they were treated.

FH: Really?

LN: To a large extent.

FH: Oh, goodness, I really cherished mine.

LN: It wasn't until the last...well, until the last four or five years that we began to think of them as art pieces, when ~~M. G. M. M. M.~~ began framing fabric and things like that.

FH: Well, at that time, crafts, no matter how much art was involved with them, were not considered works of art. It has been in more recent years that they have been classified that way and given the respect that they deserve. They are the sort of items that I would certainly zoom in on if I saw them now. Now that I've gotten all them pennies.

LN: There's been a revival, an appreciation for crafts, I think.

FH: Oh, very much so.

PM: I think if you all... if it had continued...let's see, you stopped in 1969...I think that whole hippie, back to the earth movement which really, let's say 1965-66 really did bring people in contact with crafts. That the whole earth, fairs, and food, like that.

pages missing:
14, 15, 16

against him for bringing in people from outside when there were others out of work who lived there that there were even death threats made.

LN: Who was that?

FH: This was against Nathan and Jessie Paine who built this house that now is the Arts Center where I spend quite a bit of time. Eventually they gave it up during the Depression. He felt too threatened and they left Osh Kosh and went out to California where her family lived or had moved to because her family had the name of Kimberly. They were the people who started the paper business in the Fox Valley and these were two leading families, both economically and socially that were joined with this marriage. About two years ago, the last member of the Kimberly family died, a very elderly Mrs. Kimberly, she lived there alone, she had someone who took care of her, somewhat, I take it. She was living in a rather run down part of the house and there house was so like the Paine mansion. Two of them very similar, very similar ornamentation, of course, the two families would have been friendly. The big difference, I think, was the Paine mansion has always stayed immaculate because it was never lived in. Never had the exposure to children.

PM: When they left and went to California, no one moved in?

FH: No. It was just left empty. And then they came back in the mid-1940s and started having work done on it, the outside was complete. They had people working on the interior. The two of them, whenever they traveled, were looking for things like light fixtures, bathroom fixtures, anything that was absolutely gorgeous. I think it was in 1948 that it was open and he died just a few months before. They were going to move in and live in it then. It was only supposed to be a summer house...summer cottage, if you will. It was never lived in at all. The Kimberly's house, on the other hand had loads of kids in it, and you could see that. It was even furnished the way a teenager would have had certain rooms finished.

PM: I went to a conference in St. Paul - Minneapolis in the fall and gave my paper, it was early Friday morning, and the conference lasted until Sunday. I gave my paper and I said, that's it, I am finished. Never went back, just explored Minneapolis and St. Paul. One of the first places I went because of my interest in Folly Cove Design and crafts, was the Swedish American Institute. It too was built by a man around the turn of the century, a little bit later, maybe it took seven or eight years to build. As soon as you see the carved ceilings; incredibly carved ceilings and lots of tile stoves brought over from Sweden, and exquisite wood. Unbelievable parquet floors. He did not live in it very long after it was finished. It looks in perfect shape. I don't know what became of it. I think he was a newspaper man. Whether he gave it to the Swedish American Institute. It was wonderful. Downstairs in the basement, they had a craftshop with all crafts from Sweden.

FH: I would like to get there sometime.

PM: It doesn't sound as big as the Paine. It's a mansion. What I was thinking about, I bought a doll for one of my friend's daughters at the Swedish American Institute dressed in the Swedish costume, and it made me think about Folly Cove Designers and you peasant blouses and peasant skirts. What I wondered was whether that was a Finnish influence?

LN: I don't think so. I think Ginny's skirt idea...people were wearing a lot of skirt at that point. Finnish costumes, I don't think anybody around here had them. Later on some of the groups who went to learn the folk dances and the songs, imported them from Finland. There were different weavings and colors for different sections of the country just as there are in Norway and Sweden. When we were in Sweden I wish I had bought one for Susie because I lost the catalog when I got home and of course, the prices began going up where it was just prohibitive. It would have been a nice thing to have.

PM: Do you think that being a Folly Cove Designer gave you some cache in the community?

FH: I think it did to those of you who were really productive.

LN: I'm sure people in Anasquam were aware of Folly Cove Designers and who they were. I was already known as that peculiar woman up in the woods who wrote. And let her 10-year old daughter go to a nude life drawing class. Also, I had refused to join the Lutheran Woman's thing at the church. I wasn't brought up Lutheran, I didn't particularly care for the women I had seen in the group and I didn't go to the church

particularly. We sent the kids to Sunday school. I was not a joiner. I'm not a joiner. I didn't do what was expected of a person who married _____. Cache in the community, I don't know.

FH: It certainly had that effect in Anasquam. I wasn't familiar with the people in any other part of the area.

PM: Did they look upon it as a way of life? If you were a Folly Cove Designer....

FH: With someone like Lee, refusing to do all the things that a good New Englander should do. I now have that sort of reputation too. Something we have both lived with. I guess if you don't do all of the things that other people do, than they notice what you do do. It might have been a redeeming factor for you. She was an artist and so that excused all peculiarities. It could even make people admire her.

LN: I didn't have the sense as we were doing it that it was a big deal. But now when I look back on it I can see what it stood for and what the accomplishments were and what the achievements were.

PM: At the time, you didn't have any sense of

LN: At the time, part of it was wanting something creative to do. Part of it was an excuse to get out of the house every now and then. Part of it was desperation to earn money for a while there; for a good many years, for a matter of face. That was a way of doing it. I think it took a toll.

FH: It must have been very hard to do all of the printing that you would have done.

LN: I spent most of my summers down in the dungeon printing. And getting more resentful of it everyday.

PM: Would people place their orders ahead of time? Would they come and say, Lee, I want 13 or 14 of these placemats?

LN: At the barn, Dorothy handled their orders. And then she would send you a slip written up with the order on it. If it was something she wasn't sure you wanted to do or not - if it was mixing up color that you might not use, or, trying to match a color that somebody else used, or, a very involved tablecloth that would take a lot of energy. She would call up and ask do you want to take this order? Or shall I let so-and-so know that you just can't do it. So there was a little give on that. If it was just so many sets of mats and a runner and this, that, and the other, or if she was sending you an order for Johnny Appleseeds catalog, you got the order and you did it.

PM: I remember Lee Steele saying....and she joined fairly late, in the 50s.....she said that she admired the women who were Folly Cove Designers and wanted to get to know them and wanted to be a part of that circle, and that ~~is~~ what motivated her and not so much that she wanted to do linoleum block print on fabric. And that's what I wondered, whether all of you were people ...people would gaze at you from afar and say, I wish.

FH: The certainly didn't gaze at me because I didn't do anything worth while.

LN: I think Ginny had an aura of

FH: I certainly admired all the people who were really productive in the group and wished I could do what they were doing. I looked on all you as being very talents and myself as being totally uncreative and very unhappy with myself. I probably made myself very tense because of feeling that you were all so much bigger that I could possibly be. I'd never done anything like that, any artwork that I had done in the past was so different, I just felt like I was way behind all of you and that I could never do it. I think that stopped my from being able to. Nowadays I would be able to.

LN: Who took it with you, do you remember?

FH: I don't remember anyone starting when I did. I was working along with the group. We were all doing exercises at each meeting. Would ~~Nalen~~ have gone at that time?

PM: It was about the time he joined.

FH: I don't remember him being there for the exhibits. We were both there on the same day.

LN: I think Betty came with him too but I don't think she ever did a design that was juried.

PM: I don't think she was listed.

FH: No I don't remember her being there and the only time I recollect Malen being there is one of the days when we had open house at the barn.

PM: Did Ginny charge for her design lessons?

FH: No.

PM: Oh, is that the book?

LN: This is the book. I didn't know if you had seen it.

PM: I was going to come down again.

LN: I got this out because I had the greatest time talking to Betty and Tony Y_____. Their son was around taking pictures.

PM: Did you know them?

FH: Yes I did. They are two of the few that I remember and I would have never have known seeing them like this.

PM: They look good.

LN: Tony is painting portraits going to back to what he did originally and he just got a commission to paint a whole lot of MIT faculty.

PM: Good for him.

FH: I never had any idea of what they did.

LN: Betty taught art.

PM: Pine Manor

LN: Pine Manor and then Endicott, I think

FH: They do look so nice, don't they?

PM: Yes. They are just lovely, lovely people.

LN: I hadn't known whether I was going or not because it was Lydia's birthday that day. I didn't know. I had written Betty that I might be there and I might not. So when I came about 4 o'clock, this little bullet came flying

PM: Nice.

LN: We had a great time talking together. But, you know, it was a shock as I'm sure when people saw me, when you hadn't seen somebody for 25 or 30 years, I wouldn't have recognized Libby's husband, Bob Hallarand.

PM: Was he there?

FH: I never thought of anything that Folly Cove was doing as far as their families and their homes. It was nice to print fabric for a dress for yourself.

PM: Did you ever do that?

FH: Weren't we supposed to?

LN: Each year we were supposed to arrive at the opening with some new creation. Some of us got down to aprons some years.

FH: I only made one but I remember being terribly fond of that one.

PM: I saw one, the woman who lived in Rockport, the one who owned the restaurant. ~~Ida C. Olyana~~ She brought out for me this tiny little dress. She must have been petite. It was darling. It was some type of a peasant outfit. It wasn't a skirt and blouse, it was a dress. It was stunning...gorgeous.

LN: She wasn't there, was she? She died some years ago. I never knew her very well.

FH: I don't remember her at all.

LN: They ran Olyana, the restaurant.

FH: In those days, we never ate out.

LN: We didn't either. That was the thing, ~~none of us had any money~~

PM: That is what I wondered. Most of you didn't have...

FH: I don't think we were exceptional in that respect. I don't think any of the young people had money then. It was right after the war and most of the men were in college again.

LN: Or else, you had young children and babysitters were cheap, now compared to what kids get for babysitting, but at the time, you only got babysitter when you really had to go out and you couldn't take the children with you. What kept the restaurants going were the tourists.

PM: I wondered if Folly Cove would have developed if it hadn't been in an area of tourists?

FH: I wouldn't doubt it. I don't know why the group wouldn't have been just as active. It didn't have that commercial aspect..

LN: That's probably true.

FH: I think the group would have been just as busy because everybody liked doing that. It was a nice group to be with.

PM: That's what I asked about. Was it a way of life? Is it more than just printing? It clearly was more than just printing.

LN: Oh sure.

FH: It was the designing that was the best part of it.

PM: Being with each other??

FH: I feel that I didn't get to know most of the people in the group that well. It was just nice to be with a group that was doing that type of thing.

LN: It was the only group around that was doing that type of thing, and I remember it.

FH: Yes. And as far as I was concerned, I had never heard of doing anything like that before.

LN: In a way, it preceded woman's support groups. Which I'm afraid I never...went in for.

PM: Was it a support group, not using it as we use the term today?

LN: I don't think you went in and you talked over your problems with you husband or your children, or trying to get time to work, which used to drive me crazy with the writers group I belonged to. We were talking about anything but writing by the time people got through their spiel that they couldn't write because....

PM: Didn't have time to.

LN: In that sense it wasn't that type of support group. On the other hand it was encouraging to what you were doing. You might have run up against criticism because somebody felt that something in your design didn't work or it wasn't drawn well enough, but it was always constructive criticism and how you could make it better. Which, had you been working on it without the input of other, you might just of gone along with or not realized it was off. It was valuable from that point of view.

PM: Or gotten discouraged and dropped the whole thing.

LN: Yeah, not going to bother with that.

PM: Faith, I would ask you this question because I think I have asked Lee before; did it have any impact on your life at all, really, being a Folly Cove Designer?

FH: It kept me from going mad at that particular time, I was so shut off from everybody it seemed. And I was feeling very much like a fish out of water because every aspect of my seemed to be so foreign to everything I had ever experienced before. I'd only just come to the United States.

LN: Were you and Gil married before you came over?

FH: Yes. I wouldn't have come otherwise, probably. It was all very different and Gil's family were not any foreigners, but a different type of foreigner that anyone I had ever met before. I kept being reminded of a comment that my favorite uncle had made before I left New Zealand. I would find it a lot more challenging than I had expected and at first I would think it was probably going to be easy and if only Americans looked totally different from New Zealanders and spoke a different language altogether it would be so much easier.

PM: Interesting.

FH: He had lived in the United States and loved it. He realized what it would be like. I knew everything at that age. I didn't listen to what he said.

LN: Did you grow up in a rural area, or a town, or a city?

FH: Towns which were, well I don't know how you would compare them in size. We were talking just last night about the sizes of places that we've lived in and how much smaller towns and cities were a few years ago; very difficult to make a comparison now. Lifestyles have changed so much in the last few years. I would think it was probably the same as a medium sized town here. I never thought of Gloucester as being anything different from what I have experienced. I don't know if that was considered small or medium town. It was called a city but it wasn't very big.

LN: The thing about Gloucester when we were all starting our families and living here was, I think I mentioned before, how compartmentalized Gloucester was. You don't think of it as a city, but racewise and incomewise, it was a definite cleavage between the summer people, the York Club people and the people who lived here year round. Anasquam east of point I think of as the two places where those extremes sort of came together but never made for comfortableness in either.

FH: I always thought of the summer people as pretty normal, to me. Normal for what I had been accustomed to except they had so much more money than anyone I had ever known before. I think that the unease if there was any between the two groups if there was any was on the side of the local people. Those who don't have wealth are normally very aware of those who have it. Whereas if you've got it, it doesn't matter if other people don't.

LN: I know my sister-in-law, Walker's wife, had a very hard time because being Finnish and in a large family, they used to go out and chambermaid the br_____ and some of the other places and then Walker was from St. Louis but went to Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, so his associations in Philadelphia were all wealthy, mainline people. She found it very difficult because she felt people always looked down at her because she was Finnish help. I don't think people actually did, but that was her perception.

FH: I doubt that they would have because I think my experience, I think, has been right from the beginning that it doesn't very much matter what people do; they're judged more by their personalities. Not on what sort of job they had. The fact that Stephen's work he did while he was in college, contributes to that a lot.

PM: I think education also goes into that mix. Had ___ gone to Vassar, then she would be able to say to people, well, I have a B.A. from Vassar. The fact that she had been a chambermaid would cancel that out.

LN: But she did have a college degree. The chambermaiding was in high school, as every kid has a summer job. Where kids now work motels, families have money. It's a little different now than it was then. It's more accepted. You expect kids to do anything now, and go to college at the same time. She graduated from Wheelock, I think. Was a kindergarten and 1st grade teacher in New Jersey for years.

PM: I'm surprised she thought that.

FH: Being a teacher doesn't necessarily raise your self esteem.

PM: No.

FH: At least in this country.

PM: What was the most popular item?

LN: In the barn? I'd say Ginny's baby and her kittens.

PM: The item?

LN: Table mats, don't you think, Faith?

FH: Yes. I think what people liked best, what they were attracted to most, were the yard goods, the drapes, and that sort of thing. Certainly what they saw most of would have been place mats.

PM: Did buyers come from gift stores to buy for their store?

LN: There were four or five accounts that we had and they would come and Dorothy would show them what was available or they would come to the barn in the summer.

PM: An order?

LN: There was a place, I don't remember the name of it, on Nantucket...

FH: I never knew the names of places who bought.

LN: And there was a place out in the Berkshires, I think.

FH: And there was a place in the south, what you would think of as a southern state.

PM: I do remember a place, now that you say that.

FH: I think it was a large, high-class department store.

PM: It was Rich's department store in Atlanta.

FH: It was something of that nature.

PM: And, it was also, some of the designs, some of them were on display at the High Museum in Atlanta. I don't remember, I have it written down some place, which ones they were....and the Brooklyn Museum too. I think it is just extraordinary work.

FH: Those designs went far.

PM: I love the story, I think Peggy told, there was a traveling exhibit that went overseas, after the war.

LN: That was sent by the state department.

PM: Peggy was in the barn, printing one day, printing apple pie, and a young man and a woman came by and they were watching, and he said something like, I can't believe it, I don't believe it! He said that he had seen her design overseas and he said no one could carve out of linoleum. He said I really didn't believe it could be done. So she printed one for him right then and gave it to him, and he was in seventh heaven.

FH: Goodness, when you look at some of those designs now, you do feel like that, don't you?

LN: Yes.

PM: I look at all the time, and I cannot believe how intricate they are.

LN: ^{Oh my} Mo's musicale, for example,

FH: She used to use a magnifying glass, didn't she? That's what I remembered her saying.

LN: And the hanging that she did that had the spinet piano in it; the lines were just so fine.

FH: Yes. They were really fine for a paint line. I don't know how she did it.

PM: They were all quite intricate. There wasn't anything really simple. Simple in the overall feeling, but not if you look at the detail that goes into it.

LN: ~~The one impression that I got at the show, when I was looking at things from behind people on the walls, is what a variety, not just of subject, but a variety of style, despite the Folly Cove Design underpinnings.~~

PM: When I was looking at the designs everyday, a couple years ago, I could pick out, oh, that's Lee's, that's ^{Oh my} Mo's, not all of them...

FH: Most of them are distinctive.

PM: But by the same token if you put them all on the wall, there is this overall, I guess from Ginny's design lessons. The portions,...

LN: ~~The underpinnings would be from the design lessons.~~

PM: I thank you both for sharing this time with me. I'm so glad Faith, that this worked out.

FH: It was just wonderful. How long have you been working on this project?

PM: I was looking...I think I started in 1991. It's been five years. I usually work on it just in the summers. During the school year, there's not any time. Then I've had....my mom was sick for a couple of years, so I spent a fair amount of the summers out in New Mexico with her. I'm getting back to it now, for the first time in a while. Usually I see Lee about once a year,

FH: The last time I was here, I think she said something about Penny and I must have looked bewildered, and she said, don't you know Penny Martin? That was when she gave you my name.

PM: We talked; it was two years ago, I looked.

FH: Was it that long?

PM: I think it will be two years ago this fall.

LN: Now you are really getting a feel for what you want to do.

PM: I'm still not sure how to go about it, but I think that, I originally was going to spend the summer down here, because I thought I have to be here. I have to be in this landscape, because the landscape influences the designs. I have to be able to talk to Lee and Ethel and Costas and then first of all they decided they were going to move my office, my department this summer, so I have to be there to help with this move, but then the more I thought about it, I thought, I don't need to go running around anymore, and looking at things. I need to sit down with all of this material.

FH: You've got it all there now, haven't you?

PM: I applied for a Bunting Fellowship last year, I was telling Faith, and they called, at Radcliffe, and they said they were unable to offer you a Bunting fellowship, but we'd like to offer you a Bunting Associate, and I said, oh, what's that? They said well, it's just the same as a Bunting Fellow, you have your library space, but you don't have any money. So I'll apply again this year and see what happens. Then, if worse comes to worse, I will, I think it's the year after next, I have a sabbatical year. So that will give me a whole year off. I should be able to do it. I keep thinking of it in terms of a book. It does behoove me just to write an article or a short piece on it first. At least that will cause me to focus. It's so much more fun just to sit and talk to you all.

LN: Once you have an outline and as they say, a sample chapter or so, you could try at Houghton-Mifflin and see if they would give you an advance on something.

PM: That's an interesting thought. I never thought of that.

LN: You would have to have something substantial to show then the way you intend to approach it and how much you wanted to cover. I was thinking that Houghton-Mifflin where they did all of Ginny's books would be a logical place to...

PM: And where Lee worked. I just think that would be the most...glorious thing in my entire life.

LN: I wasn't there for that long.

FH: It's not as though she was unpublished. That wouldn't.....

--end of tape--