

1 UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

2 TAPE 1 OF 11; 1988-102

3

4 INTERVIEW WITH: Harlan Hubbard

5 CONDUCTED BY: Joanne Weeter

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9 JOANNE WEETER: Harlan, would you like to tell me a little bit about your very
10 early childhood?

11 HARLAN HUBBARD: Yes, I think that's the place to get started, now that
12 we have some idea of my background, 'cause -- I've had a very unusual childhood in a
13 way because I was so much alone and left to my own resources to amuse myself. The
14 rest of the family, of course, were busy and I can't remember anybody took much interest
15 in me. I can't remember than anybody ever tried to teach me anything when I was real
16 small. But on the whole, I was very happy and I couldn't ask anything more. For one
17 thing, it was such a nice place to live. It was in this little town of Bellevue, which was
18 right on the very edge, and beyond there was no town at all; it was all country and you
19 could walk out our backyard and there was empty hill, hillside. There were a few houses
20 back there but not close to ours. And, in the house itself, there was a part that was
21 supposed to be a garden but nobody ever got around to making a garden very often so
22 other things were done there. That was my playground usually.

1 I was very much interested in the railroad for one thing. It was right down at the
2 end of the street. I could walk down there and sit on a sandbank and wait for a train to
3 come by and it was very exciting to me to see that spot in the distance and you could hear
4 the noise and the rails would begin to sing and the first thing you know the train would go
5 streaking by; it was almost unbelievable.

6 And me, about the only toy I had was some little railroad cars and an engine but
7 they were not, of course, the electric toys and tracks that children had later; they were just
8 cast iron and very crude. But I would make tracks by pushing them through the soft earth
9 and I had sidings and stations and all that out in the open. I was interested in books, too,
10 from the very beginning.

11 One thing I was fascinated with was Frank, my brother, and Bill Strickland, the
12 boy that lived next door -- they were both about the same age -- they built a canoe right in
13 the backyard. Of course, I was no help at all, but I did watch the whole thing from
14 beginning to end and I remember how much trouble they had bending the ribs. They had
15 a steambox which they made themselves and they broke stick after stick trying to bend it.

16 It turned out, they had the wrong kind of wood. When they got the right kind of wood it
17 went a little better. They also built a bobsled out there which was very fascinating to me.

18 In fact, everything I did seemed to have something to do with out-of-doors. It was partly
19 due to my mother; she had a, was a Spartan mother if there ever was one. She didn't
20 believe in children sitting around in the house and when I came home from school -- later
21 on when I was going to school, even before I went to school -- I acquired the habit of
22 being outside most of the time, winter or summer. Strange to say, I can never remember

1 that I was ever cold or hot. Strange about children, isn't it? There must have been
2 extremes of temperatures in those days.

3 Another little amusement I figured out for myself, the kitchen drain ran off
4 somewhere and my mother would allow me to stop that up, make a dam across it and
5 make a little lake. It was only a few inches deep but I would sail boats on that little lake,
6 boats I made myself. She taught me how to -- one of the few things she did teach me --
7 was how to fold paper into a boat. Most of the time, though, nobody paid much attention
8 to me. How we doing?

9 JW: We're doing just fine.

10 HH: Think so?

11 JW: Uh-hmm.

12 HH: I'll get my thoughts better organized and we can talk more freely.

13 JW: I think your thoughts are very well organized. They seem, you seem to,
14 you speak the way you write, it all flows.

15 HH: I don't think there's much difference between the speaking and the writing,
16 do you?

17 JW: Uh-huh.

18 HH: It might be handy to have that *Hubbard Manuscript* as a guide, you know,
19 to see that I didn't leave out any important sections of my life. And oh yes, I never did
20 pay any attention to that. This train trip West in 1908 was, of course, one of the big
21 events in my life but that comes later. I'm still thinking about those early days. One time
22 -- I always made a nest for the Easter rabbit -- I'd get some sticks of kindling and make a

1 little circle and get some hay from the barn and put that out -- and I'd get up in the
2 morning and there would be a nest full of colored eggs which the Easter rabbit left for
3 me. And one Easter my brother Lucien said, "Let's go fishing in the morning real early."
4 So I thought that would be great. We went over to the Greener Pond about a half mile
5 away and started early but before I left I looked -- this was Easter -- I looked in my nest
6 and there wasn't anything in it. So that exposed the Easter rabbit myth right away!
7 [chuckle] I remember Santa Claus, too. I used to believe in Santa Claus very sincerely
8 but somehow -- I was very logical and I couldn't see how that fat guy could get down one
9 chimney after another with a big sack of toys on his back -- so I told my brother Frank I
10 didn't believe in Santa Claus and he said, "Well, of course, there's no Santa Claus but
11 there's the spirit of Christmas and you must believe in that." And that seemed pretty poor
12 fare to me. I didn't know what he was talking about.

13 But my two brothers, in an off-hand way, had a great influence on me, especially
14 since they were so different. And I was never scolded, I can't remember ever being
15 scolded, and to be struck or beaten with a whip or anything, or stick was unbelievable.
16 One time, my brother Lucien, after he had graduated from school and gotten a job, he
17 went to work the day after he graduated from Bellevue High School, I think, over at the
18 Carpenter Stationery Company for five dollars a week and he started giving Mama
19 something out of his weekly pay right away. But anyway, one Easter morning we
20 exploded the Easter rabbit myth.

21 And one time a little bit later than that, on my birthday it was, he came up to me
22 with a strap, razor strap, "I'm going to give you a good beating with this strap." He

1 looked real mad, severe. And I was horror-struck; I couldn't believe that he would ever
2 do anything like that, it just seemed impossible. So I began to cry and then my brother
3 saw he'd gone a little too far and he said, "Oh, I was just joking. Here's a birthday present
4 for you." And what do you think it was? It was a turtleneck sweater, dark blue. I
5 couldn't believe my eyes. And inside was a silver dollar. That's how they, that's how
6 generous they were, in their way.

7 I took a great interest in the out-of-doors, just plain out-of-doors, I liked to be out.
8 You'd go through our back gate and you'd come into an alley but it wasn't like city
9 alleys, it was all sand. It was a wonderful place to play. And then you'd go across the
10 alley and then there'd be a hill with all kinds of weeds and birds and butterflies. When I'd
11 go barefoot in the spring and see the first butterfly . . . I can still remember. That balmy
12 air. . . . And how I'd like to run and leap and shout, all to myself.

13 JW: Did you have any playmates?

14 HH: Not then. Not until later. I'll tell about that later because we did get into
15 the, my playmates became a very important part of my life, when I went to school and I
16 got acquainted . . . This is all pre-school and I don't remember that I learned a thing from
17 anybody; nobody ever tried to teach me anything. But as I went to school, Bellevue
18 School when I was six years old, I went in the first grade and I learned to read very
19 quickly.

20 As I said, I didn't have a name when I was first born, everybody called me Baby.
21 We had a big dog named Duke, a big dog, like an Alaskan Husky, something. But they, I
22 don't know who it was, my father or Frank or Lucien made a little two-wheeled cart and

1 hitched Duke up to it, made a little harness, they'd put me in the cart. I couldn't drive, I
2 was too little, but they'd lead the dog around and sing out, "Here comes Baby."
3 Everybody would get up from their chairs and watch me go by. [chuckle] That dog Duke
4 was a wonderful dog. They say he could climb a step ladder after my father -- my father
5 was a house painter -- not a step ladder but a real ladder, a painter's ladder. I don't know
6 how he did it or what he'd do when he got to the top. Jump off, I guess. One time my
7 father, he had a wagon and a horse to carry his ladders and paint buckets around from one
8 job to another and one time they came home from work and, of course, I went out to see
9 what was going on and he came up the alley and unhitched the horse, old Bess, and for
10 some reason or another she took a notion to run away, just got all free -- I guess she just
11 felt like she wanted to get away from people for awhile. She started down the alley at a
12 gallop but the trouble was I was in the way and she knocked me down in the sand and
13 everybody thought I was killed, I guess. But I got up and no harm done. It shook me up
14 a little bit though.

15 On Sundays -- we had a buggy, too, so we'd go for a buggy ride. That was always
16 a great event because we'd go out . . . right down over the hill from our house was Covert
17 Run Pike which ran out to the country; it ran to Fort Thomas to tell the truth. In those
18 days there was no town of Fort Thomas at all. There was a military post out there, which
19 was exciting to go to; sometimes our drive would go that far. We'd go out to Coal Run
20 Pike a little ways and you came to a place where the road forks which we called "The
21 Fish's Tail." We'd go to the left and go through a deep woods, dark place. Down there
22 alongside that creek was a small, brick house with iron shutters to it and an iron door. It

1 was always a place of mystery. Later I learned it was called the powder house and it had
2 to store the blasting powder out of town, away from people so that if there was ever an
3 explosion it wouldn't do any damage and that's why they had the iron windows and doors.
4 Then you'd go on beyond that and you'd come to a grade and you'd be going uphill.
5 We'd go through what they called the Beech Grove, wonderful grove of beech trees.
6 Nothing like it there now. Then you'd come to Mount Pleasant Pike. That's all there now
7 but it's a paved road and it's called Dayton Pike and they've changed . . . the main street
8 of Fort Thomas is called Fort Thomas Avenue; you'd think they could've kept that little
9 island's name and Mount Pleasant, huh, but all they could think of was Fort Thomas,
10 Kentucky, and North and South Fort Thomas Avenue. How am I doing?

11 JW: I think you're doing great. What were some of the other nearby towns that
12 you'd visit?

13 HH: Well, there were three towns in a row there, Bellevue, Dayton and
14 Newport. Bellevue was in the middle and Newport was on the way to Cincinnati.
15 Cincinnati was the city. I didn't know anything about a city, of course, when I was born
16 but I gradually learned something about it. And the river was, oh, I guess a mile away.
17 I'd go clear across the town because we were on the countryside of Bellevue and the river
18 was, of course, on the other side. Mom says she took me down there once in the baby
19 buggy to see the great ice jam of 1904.

20 JW: The river had frozen over?

21 HH: And when it broke up it was a terrible sight, all of it big cakes of ice. Pell
22 mell, going down the river, tumbling over each other and somehow, I guess I just

1 imagined it, but it seemed like I've seen that, but probably because I've seen it later.
2 Mom said whenever we were out she'd take me out in the cold and wouldn't keep me all
3 bundled up. At one point or another she'd take the coverings off my face and let me get
4 used to the cold air. After all, my father and mother and brothers did just what was good
5 for me, I think. Better than if they'd tried to make me learn the alphabet when I was four
6 years old or something like that. They just let me grow up naturally.

7 I thought that was interesting about me going up to Chicago and visiting our
8 uncle, don't you, and going to the Pullman shop and all that.

9 JW: And drawing the Pullman cart.

10 HH: [chuckle] I learned to draw from Frank, of course, he's a wonderful
11 draftsman. He'd put up things for me to draw: a bar of soap or a tin can or something
12 when I was pretty small. Lucien was all the other kind, he was outdoors. And he was
13 that way all his life, he's . . . I can remember playing tennis with him in New York, even
14 out in California when he moved out there.

15 JW: Were their temperaments similar?

16 HH: No. One was a Hubbard and one was a Swingle. And the Swingles were
17 quite different from the Hubbards, which is . . . they were very respectable and law-
18 abiding people, rather stodgy and very religious and very proper and the last thing they
19 would be was unclean or shiftless, not earning money and very . . . all of them. They
20 came from, their ancestor was Ulrich Zwingli, the great Swiss reformer who was ranked
21 with Martin Luther as a Protestant reformer.

22 The first Swingle [or Zwingli] that they have record of was Swiss but he was in, I

1 guess, Napoleon's army at that time and one story that comes down to him was very
2 typical of a Swingle: from my brother Lucien, he had a fever and couldn't get cured in
3 the army, when he was in the army, and he was just going downhill and he said, "Well,
4 I'm going out" -- it was in the middle of the winter -- "I'm going out and jump in the lake;
5 it'll either drown and kill me or cure me." [chuckle] It cured him. They went to, after the
6 wars in Europe were over he came to the United States, settled in Pennsylvania, with the
7 Pennsylvania-Dutch people. He married one of them, Matilda Kontner was a . . . no,
8 that's one my father married, but the one he married was a different name but she was
9 Pennsylvania Dutch, too.

10 There's quite a lot of different strains in the family; there's German, Swiss, and
11 there's some French in my father's family. I don't know how they get in with his
12 grandfather's name, Lafayette. Of course, that's not unusual because after the Revolution,
13 Lafayette was such a popular figure they named the dogs after him and everything.
14 [chuckle] Somehow, I don't know how it comes in, but there's some French ancestry in
15 there, too.

16 The Hubbards are quite different; they never seemed to be able to make a success
17 in life and I'm typical Hubbard in that way. But I've done pretty well because there's still
18 enough of that Swingle thrift, not to get reckless anyway. I think it's a pretty good
19 mixture because there are so many good Swingle traits, still to get away from all that
20 prosaic stodginess that they had.

21 Soon after my father died, my mother . . . I guess she thought she had to get away
22 from Bellevue for awhile. I think it was 1908, a year or so after my father died, she went

1 out to visit her oldest sister, Aunt Mollie, who, by that time, had married a man named
2 Sam Morgan, a railroader, and they were living out in Arkansas, back in the mountains.
3 There was a lot of government land out there that was still available for homesteading. I
4 don't know why my mother took a notion to go out there, I don't know how she ever got
5 the money to buy a train ticket either, but she arranged it some way and we set off -- it
6 was early in the spring. Steam railroad all the way, of course, that's what pleased me a
7 lot. I suppose we followed the L&N to Louisville and from Louisville, the Illinois
8 Central down the river through Brandenburg and all those places. I think -- no, and then
9 we went to Memphis, turned off and went to Memphis there somewhere and took a
10 railroad out of Memphis, I guess, it was on the other side of the river, called the Iron
11 Mountain Railroad to a place called Bald Knob and in that little town Aunt Mollie was
12 supposed to meet us there. We got there and there was nobody to meet us. Mom was
13 hungry and she went in the restaurant to get a cup of coffee, I guess. I stayed out to
14 watch for Aunt Mollie and I saw a buggy pull up with a woman in it and I dashed in and
15 said, "Here she comes, here comes Aunt Mollie!" Mom came dashing out and it wasn't
16 Aunt Mollie after all. So we started out to walk to their farm and we got some directions,
17 the direction it was in anyway, and we got way out there in the sticks and got going
18 across, and we got off the road entirely and going across fields and Mom almost stepped
19 on a snake and made her hysterical. We kept on going and found a man working in the
20 field. She asked where Sam Morgan lived and he told us and we got there. They lived in
21 a log house. Well, that was great for me. And it was cool and they had a big fireplace
22 that burned logs and we had a big fire at night. I can remember sitting on that pile of logs

1 and not saying a word but listening to Sam Morgan tell us tales of pioneer life in
2 Arkansas. And there was two daughters, Elsie and Grace. Grace wasn't a great deal
3 older than us, she was older than I am, of course, but much the young girl then.
4 Everybody took such good care of me. I never had that . . . never had any love before at
5 home; that was the whole thing was absent in our family. Those girls made up for it in a
6 way for that short time. And Aunt Mollie, too.

7 I remember we went to a church, it wasn't a real church, it was sort of a camp
8 meeting, I guess. There was a woman talking about miracles; she said she was sewing on
9 a sewing machine and she got her finger under the needle and it went right through her
10 finger. She prayed and the finger was never sore at all. I guess it made such a clean,
11 small puncture it didn't . . . but it made a great impression on me.

12 Then we went down to the creek and tried to catch a fish. Put a line in it and you
13 could see the line, the water was so clear. We could see a big fish which they said was a
14 pike come along and it passed the line, right by it; it didn't even look at the bait. Isn't it
15 funny how you remember those things that. . . ?

16 And coming back, we stopped overnight in Memphis with a relative, her name
17 was Shea, and they were rich people, they had Negro servants. I certainly didn't
18 understand all that. ().

19 JW: Uh-hmm. Yeah. We still have about five minutes.

20 HH: Five minutes? I have a photograph of myself in that little wagon. I used
21 to have one of me on the hobby horse, too. But the one I was more interested in was a
22 picture taken of me, I guess I was say, five years old, and I was standing outside the back

1 door in the backyard, just outside the grape arbor and there was no leaves on the
2 grapevine so it was wintertime but the sun was shining brightly and it must have been a
3 warm day for winter because I didn't have much on, no hat; I was just standing there with
4 my hands, my arms down at my side and in the right hand I had a little tin horn. And that
5 makes me feel sure that that was my birthday, January 4, 1900. And that was my
6 birthday present. For one thing, it was the principle of my mother and father never to
7 give their children clothing for presents. The thrifty German people who lived around us
8 would give their children a pair of shoes or something like that for Christmas but not in
9 our family. Poor as they were they always found something, even if it was just a tin horn.
10 And I was standing there with a little smile on my face, looked so self-satisfied, and had
11 pudgy cheeks and thin legs and long, black stockings. But I had such a, I stood up there
12 so firmly rooted in the ground . . .

13 END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

14 START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

15 JW: This is June 29, 1987. We are at Payne Hollow, Kentucky. This is
16 interview two, side one. My name is Joanne Weeter and I'm interviewing Harlan
17 Hubbard.

18 HH: I'd like to say a few more words about dogs because they were such an
19 important part of my life, then and now, too, and they were important members of the
20 family all the time. I mentioned Duke, but I don't remember him very well because he
21 didn't last long into my life. But we had another dog named Bob, with whom I grew up.
22 There wasn't anything remarkable about Bob, he was a medium-sized dog with long hair,

1 black and white, a mixture of most everything, I guess, but he was a very understanding
2 dog. Of course, we were all fond of him and it meant a lot to me to have a dog. As I
3 grew a little older, I began to be curious about other people. I didn't realize that our
4 family wasn't the whole world and I found out that across the fence were other people.
5 The people on the, toward the west never meant much to us; their name was Mullarkey
6 and they, he was a, we saw him quite often. He'd go back and forth to work, he was a
7 very stodgy man with a, wearing a white collar with no tie, a stiff, white collar with no tie
8 and a plug hat and carried a little suitcase, satchel every morning when he went and
9 bringing it home again. So we never knew just what he did. His wife was a very florid
10 female. One time when Mom and I -- this was later -- had been to Cincinnati and coming
11 home, as we drew near enough to the house to see it, we saw a great crowd of people in
12 the street in front of it and Mom became greatly alarmed because she thought something
13 had happened to our family or the house. When we got off the streetcar she couldn't get
14 there fast enough but we found that there was nothing wrong with our family but Mrs.
15 Mullarkey had shot herself and killed herself and the bullet had come through our house
16 and had landed in the floor of the front room. That's just an aside because the two
17 Mullarkey children we knew pretty well, the girl, Florence, was very pretty and she
18 turned out well. She married somebody in Chicago. That's the sort of thing that went on
19 down in Grandview Avenue.

20 But the people on the other side were named Strickland and they were just the
21 opposite; they were the aristocrats and Mrs. Strickland especially. She always thought
22 that she and her family were a little better than the rest of us but it didn't bother us any.

1 We were good friends with . . . especially Bill and Frank.

2 Then that's about all that we ever knew there except across the alley and down
3 toward the west was a settlement of people, a family called Krogmanns. And after it a
4 swarm of children; there must have been several families of Krogmanns. I knew some
5 of, two of the girls and two of the boys pretty well, but most of them were older and I
6 looked up to them.

7 Then there was another lady who lived in there, Mrs. Reid, who was an unusual
8 person for those days, she was what they would call a health nut nowadays; she was very
9 careful of her diet and claimed to be an invalid and ate all sorts of health food. I didn't
10 know they had it in those days but she got it somewhere. I think you had to get it by mail
11 or doctors would make this bread out of wheat. She gave me some of it; I didn't like it
12 much, it had no taste at all. But she did pretty well. She survived, long after her husband
13 did.

14 I found there was a good many boys in these families that I could play with but I
15 never had any very close friends. They would all play together, sometimes on a summer
16 evening the whole gang would play around the street lamp up at the corner of Grandview
17 and Washington Avenue. Some of the games they played were quite complicated,
18 running games. They must have been something like hare and hound. They called it "Go,
19 Sheepy, Go" which I've never heard before or since and I didn't know what it was all
20 about except at one point the leader shouted, "Go, Sheepy, Go" and then all of his gang
21 would run home, which was around the pole and then the opposing party would try to get
22 there first. But then they made up their own games, too and I remember one time, and

1 maybe they did it more than just once, they made up a little song, the older boys. It was
2 "Possum, possum, cookin' in the pot. Just you wait till he gets red hot." And they would
3 sing it over and over and the point of it was, they were calling me possum. It doesn't
4 have any relation to the animal, opossum, but to the coffee substitute they drank in those
5 days called Postum. That's where they – "cookin' in the pot." But it irritated me so that I
6 would start throwing stones at them and they would run around and around me in a circle
7 singing this idiotic song and I would fire stones at them until, I don't know what
8 happened though, I got tired with it, I guess.

9 One time, around the street corner, the boys were all in a quiet mood, I guess, it
10 was a cold winter, and a delivery wagon came down drawn by two horses from one of the
11 department stores in Cincinnati. And Greener Krogmann was up on a pole and he could
12 look down on the wagon and he shouted, "Harlan, there's an Irish Mail in there for you."
13 They had asked where the Hubbards lived and Greener Krogmann had directed them
14 where we lived and he said, "There's an Irish Mail in there for you." And sure enough,
15 when I got home there was an Irish Mail all for me, thanks to Lucien. He was working
16 by that time and not earning much but it was a way of getting me out of doors and giving
17 me some exercise and he thought that it would be a good thing. It is a coaster that's self-
18 propelled. And nowadays, of course, boys of my age are already getting three wheelers
19 with motors on them but the best I could do was an Irish Mail. It's something like the
20 track workers used, if you've ever seen them, only on a much smaller scale. The rider
21 would sit on a board and his two front feet would go to the front axle and that's the way
22 he would steer it, by turning the front wheel, turning the front axle. And right in front of

1 him was a post with a cross piece and he'd take hold of that cross piece and work it back
2 and forth just like a handcar on a railroad almost, only it was back and forth instead of up
3 and down, and that would operate a gear under the rear wheel which would move the
4 vehicle along the sidewalk.

5 He couldn't have used it in the street; for one thing the streets of Bellevue were so
6 rough and the sidewalks were pretty bad because they weren't all cement. A lot of them,
7 most of them maybe, were just old brick laid down in the sand, the brick they made
8 houses of. Very picturesque but tree roots would raise them up into great heaps
9 sometimes but that made the riding more interesting. I got to where I could ride all over
10 town on that Irish Mail.

11 Judging from the viewpoint of today the Bellevue schools were quite primitive
12 when I started in the first grade when I was six years old in 1906. I was taken to the old
13 Center Street school building which might be a quarter of a mile, no more than a quarter
14 of a mile from our home, and it was just a two story brick building divided into rooms,
15 big windows and high ceilings. I don't know how it was heated, I guess they had a
16 furnace in the cellar or somewhere. I never saw stoves, I don't remember stoves in our
17 rooms except the first grade and the second grade were in an annex out in the school yard
18 which was a frame building and I think they each had a stove for those two grades. Then
19 there was a yard on each side of the school with an iron fence around it, one side for the
20 girls and one side for the boys. At recess we were all turned out into those yards to play
21 and fight and argue and screech.

22 The teachers in Bellevue were just Bellevue girls. I don't know how much

1 training they had; they must have had some. They started when they were young and
2 many of them stayed there until they were old and had to retire from old age. I remember
3 the first two that I had: young, pretty girls and I liked them very much: Miss McLaren in
4 the first grade and Miss Genoway in the second grade. There never seemed to be
5 discipline problems in school and I don't remember how they taught me to read and write
6 but it didn't take long before I was able to do both. Then we got up into the third and
7 fourth and fifth and sixth grades. Miss Genoway in the second grade -- strange; she
8 married in Bellevue and her daughter married Jim Milliken, he was my good friend in
9 Bellevue schools all the way through. Doesn't seem right but that's the way it was.

10 There was one teacher in the sixth grade, Miss Carrie O'Neal, who was different
11 from the rest. She was not much to look at; in fact, she was a fright, as a boy would say,
12 but she had a feeling for art that none of the rest of them had and she tried to teach a little
13 of it in her, to her class. I remember she didn't have very good judgment sometimes --
14 she asked the class who was the greatest artist in the world and of course, everybody was
15 silent. Nobody knew of any artist, I guess, except me; I had learned some of that from
16 Frank. So I piped up, "Rembrandt." Oh yeah, she had said his name begins with "R."
17 And I said, "Rembrandt." She said, "Oh, that's very good, but I didn't mean Rembrandt."
18 I said, "How about Reynolds?" That almost shocked her because one of her students
19 knew of two artists beginning with "R." "No, that's not it, either," she said. "It's Raphael.
20 He was the greatest artist in the world." And then she went on about Raphael. I still
21 think I was closer to the mark than she was. But she was very encouraging to me and
22 gave me an interest and that's where I acquired the idea that I would really like to be an

1 artist. I remember when the year was over and she left and we all left and she was at the
2 door with a little word for each one of us. She told me, "You can do anything that you
3 want to. Just make up your mind." I thought that was a pretty good start.

4 I used to make drawings on the board for . . . there was no such thing as a PTA
5 but they had a time at the end of the term when the parents were supposed to come and
6 visit the class. So that's what the drawings were for, to kind of dress up the room a little
7 bit. I remember I made a drawing of, I guess it was from some old picture of a Spanish
8 galleon and an English man-of-war having a battle at sea. I was quite proud that my
9 mother was one of the, was about the only woman that came that I ever knew and she
10 would sit up there on a special chair and listen to the recitations that the class was giving.
11 And Moobley (?) Krogmann –no, , I don't know, I think it might have been Tootsie
12 Miles was reciting something and all of a sudden he stopped and said, "Henry Carpenter
13 is making faces at me." The teacher was in a position that she couldn't see that but Mom
14 could see it all and she couldn't help laughing at the little contretemps. [chuckle] Well, I
15 went on through the seventh, eighth grades and high school, too, of course.

16 But I had much in my life besides school. For one thing, I had discovered the
17 river and I was always begging my mother to take me down to the river and she did once
18 in awhile and very patiently sit on the hot sand with a black umbrella over her to keep the
19 sun off while I and some of the other boys, friends, sported around in the river. And she
20 soon had enough of that and let me go by myself which I did almost every day, it seemed
21 like. I learned to swim and once in awhile, on weekends, Bill Strickland or Frank would
22 come down and take out the canoe and take me with them on a canoe ride, which was a

1 heavenly treat for me. They'd even let me paddle sometimes. In the front, one time the
2 wind--I think it was out at Bill Strickland's -- we were coming into our home harbor
3 there, the boat harbor where they kept the canoe at that time, facing a headwind and they
4 couldn't make it. I was so light, the bow of the canoe would always blow around so Bill
5 said, "Let me get in the bow and you sit back here, maybe that'll do." So with heavier
6 weight there we went into the wind quite well. I thought to steer a canoe was something,
7 the greatest thing I'd ever done.

8 Another canoe incident that was earlier than this one, when they used to keep the
9 canoe under the shed that belonged to a family named Winters and that was farther down
10 the river. One time when the three of us were out, Frank, Bill and myself, a storm came
11 up just as we almost reached the path up to the Winters' shed. When the storm struck
12 with a strong wind blowing up the river and when the boys lifted the canoe out of the
13 water and tried to carry it, the wind blew the canoe out of their hands. And it also blew
14 some of their clothing out and that was being scattered up along the shore so I ran after
15 the socks and things and while I was up there the canoe instead of just -- it was blown out
16 of their hands -- just lying there, it somehow landed on the point and went head over
17 heels all the way up to where I was and in one of those circles it hit me on the top of the
18 head and knocked me out. That was another time I thought I was dead, I guess. They
19 carried me to Mrs. Winters' house and she gave me a little glass of her elderberry wine to
20 drink and I was all right.

21 That old Bellevue part ended about 1912 when I was in sixth grade; that's when
22 Lucien left Bellevue and went to New York and he got married that same year, much to

1 Mom's disappointment. He was quite young; I know she didn't want him not to get
2 married at all but she didn't quite approve of him getting married so young. But after
3 that, it wasn't long before Frank went to New York, too. Lucien went to work as a
4 newspaper man, a reporter, and Frank had studied art in Cincinnati and he went to New
5 York to work as a commercial artist and it wasn't long before he got married.

6 Well, in the meantime I got one year in Bellevue High School, which wasn't much
7 different from grade school, except that they had some men teachers, one anyway. They
8 had another teacher, Annie West, I was afraid of her; she was so powerful, powerful
9 mind, a dominating person. She was the only person in the world that ever got me to sing
10 in public and the public was just her. She said, "Let's see if you can sing. I need students
11 to sing these graduation songs." She got students to sing these graduation songs. And I
12 actually did sing a few notes: "Do-Re-Mi" or something like that. She didn't think I
13 would do anyway so I was released, much to my relief, because if she said, "You come
14 and learn to sing with us," I would have done it. It might have done me a lot of good,
15 too. Maybe that's just what I needed.

16 I mustn't leave those early days, though, without talking about some of our
17 camping, or especially one camping trip. Camping was a part of our family life; even my
18 father went camping. He would take his camping outfit in the old buggy, I mean in the
19 old wagon that he carried paint stuff around and hitch up his horse to it and drive up the
20 river to a place called Oneonta, which might be fifteen miles from Bellevue and they'd
21 put up a camp there. He went with a man named Pfister, one of his friends in Bellevue,
22 and they put up a camp that lasted quite awhile, even whitewashed trees that held up the

1 dining table awning. That's where I really first . . . then Mom would go up for a day,
2 that's about as much as she could stand it, but she'd take me with her.

3 I remember very well what the river was like even at that early age. I can
4 remember looking up the river and feeling the attraction of what was up around the bend.
5 In the evening, little packets were still running out of Cincinnati, the Tacoma and the
6 Shiloh, the Chris Greene, old Chris Greene, they would pull into Oneonta to put off a few
7 empty chicken crates or something and then go on up the river. But it was a great sight. I
8 think that's where my real love for the river started.

9 But all this was soon to end because Frank and Lucien, after they were settled in
10 New York and doing pretty well, they encouraged Mom to move there. I don't know
11 why. I think they felt that she was lonely; of course, she was lonely out there after, since
12 her husband had died and her two older boys had gone off and left her. They couldn't
13 come back to live in Bellevue so. . . . She didn't look well in those days; I remember
14 Mrs. Strickland told her neighbor that she thought Mom had tuberculosis, consumption as
15 they called it in those days. I think Mom's greatest trouble was strain from frustration,
16 though. She would have liked to have done something else besides keep house for these
17 boys. After they had gone, she thought maybe that would be a chance but there I was. I
18 never heard anything about that, of course, but . . . this is all imagination. Anyway, after
19 one year in high school, we went to New York.

20 I remember Frank came up and we went back with him. We took the C&O to
21 Norfolk, rode the Fast Flying Virginian that I was so proud of and at Norfolk we took a
22 steamer on the Old Dominion line which ran from Norfolk to New York. I don't think it

1 runs anymore but I really saw the ocean and had a ride on an ocean vessel. Well, we
2 landed in New York, and we saw New York as the immigrants saw it, too, coming up the
3 harbor with the tall buildings and the Statue of Liberty and everything. But I was
4 interested in the pier because there was Lucien, was standing, my brother Louie. And
5 then we were all together again for awhile, though we didn't all live together. I soon
6 started to school. As I said, I'd had one year at Bellevue High School and I thought I'd go
7 on to the second year in New York. But they were very particular and questioned me a
8 lot and looked over my papers and things. Finally they said, "Well, we won't give you
9 credit for this but we'll let you in on probation and if you do pretty well, we'll give you
10 credit and you won't have to take these courses over again." Well, that was certainly an
11 incentive to work but I had quite a drag on that first year. I had some courses that I had
12 to take which were required in the New York school but they were not thought of in
13 Bellevue at all.

14 This New York school was not what you'd expect; it was in the Bronx, of course,
15 but it wasn't what you'd expect because it was a school that had just been established, I
16 think the year before I entered it was its first year, and it didn't even have a school
17 building of its own. They were housed in upper floors of elementary schools. And then
18 the earlier grades, they were not even in the same building so my first year there as a
19 sophomore was in a building of a part of the Bronx called Fordham and I lived in a place
20 called Tremont and I began to learn that all of the Bronx was made up of little towns; but
21 that era was fast passing away and the space between the towns was all built up in the
22 city and the towns themselves were swallowed by the growing city. Even so there was a

1 good deal of that when I learned more about it; I spent a lot of time walking around the
2 Bronx and it was my, almost my sole pastime.

3 But this school was called the Evander Childs High School and just recently my
4 friend Jonathan Greene brought me a book that he had found in his mother's apartment
5 after she had died. Jonathan had lived in New York, too, in the Bronx, later than I had, so
6 we had something in common to talk about. And when he found this book he brought it
7 to me, he thought I might like to read it. And I would like to get that book and read a few
8 selections because it's a collection of articles which the Bronx County Historical Society
9 put together in this volume. One of them is about the Evander Childs High School and
10 written by a girl whom I knew. So she can describe -- I will read her description of the
11 school, some of it, to give you some idea of what it was like. You can imagine how
12 different it was from the Bellevue School.

13 This book is called *The Bronx in the Innocent Years: 1890-1925*. It was 1915
14 when I went to New York and entered Evander Childs High School, so this is included,
15 all my years there are included in this book. *The Bronx in the Innocent Years, 1890-1925*
16 is a result of a project sponsored by the Bronx County Historical Society. For the past
17 several years, the Society has been at work on an informal history of the borough. With
18 this new volume, the focus shifts from the period that you saw . . .

19 END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B