Mary Ethel Barnard '32

September 13, 1998

John Sheehy '82, Ellen Johnson '38, Interviewers

Location: Vancouver, Washington

[tape 1, side A begins]

Sheehy: The following interview with Mary Barnard was conducted on September 13, 1998, at her condominium overlooking the Columbia River in Vancouver, Washington, by John Sheehy and Ellen Johnson.

Sheehy: I just want to ask you to give us a little background. You've captured a lot of this in your memoir *Ascent on Mount Helicon*, but perhaps we could start with a little biographical information about your birthplace and early family background. You were born here in Vancouver, but you spent your early years in Buxton and Hillsboro, is that correct?

Barnard: Yes. I started school in Hillsboro. And came back to Vancouver in 1918. I was eight. It's easy to keep track of my age because it was the same as the century, minus ten years. So that in 1918, I was eight. 1928, I was eighteen.

Sheehy: Which was when you entered Reed. Your father was in the lumber industry at the time you returned to Vancouver?

Barnard: Yes. All the time.

Sheehy: In a lot of your poetry and in the memoirs, you talk about accompanying your father in his work out to the meadows and into the mountains.

Barnard: Yes.

Sheehy: You said at one point in the memoirs that you always wanted to get that experience down. You wanted to capture that somehow in your work.

Barnard: Yes.

Sheehy: Did he travel the whole Northwest Territory?

Barnard: No. Well, he traveled buying lumber. He dealt in wholesale lumber. And he bought from small mills. The ones east of the mountains delivered the lumber to the nearest railroad station, and it went east by train. The ones closer to Vancouver delivered it to the dock here in Vancouver. And it was loaded on ships in the Vancouver Canal and shipped to Brooklyn, New York. Most of my father's business was for the Midwest or for the East Coast. There was a Brooklyn guy that bought most of the lumber for the East Coast.

Sheehy: The other thing that you mention in your memoir was an early interest in music. You were an avid reader as a young person from what I understand. But you came to poetry through music, through sheet music, is that correct?

Barnard: Oh! Well, no, I didn't come to poetry that way. I came to poetry with my mother reading it to me. And she read poetry very well. You see, it's one thing that young people now just have no conception of. There was no TV. There was no radio. And by some circumstance, I never had playmates who were my age until I started school, because the children in my neighborhood were either older or younger. They were little tots, or they were already in school. I was alone a great deal so my mother read to me. And that was my entertainment. (laughs) Of course I was crazy to start reading myself. And I did start. At that time, it was considered a "no-no" to teach a child to read before they went to school. So my mother did not teach me. But I pursued her around the house saying, "What's this word, Mama?" And finally she just gave in and helped me get a start. At least she didn't say, "No, I won't tell you." She would tell me what the word was. And in no time, I was reading. But before I learned to read I was always begging her to read poems. We just had two little children's poems. One was "As I Was Going to St. Ives" and one was by Robert Louis Stevenson. And then there were poems in magazines, in a way that there aren't now. One story that she told that I didn't put in the memoir was how I came to her. I would come to her with a poem from a newspaper or magazine, and I could tell that it was a poem because the lines began with capital letters**.** I could tell that was a poem.

Sheehy: How old were you then?

Barnard: Oh, I hadn't learned to read yet, so I would be maybe four or five. Because I did learn to read before I went to school. But I would bring these to her to read to me. She later told me that she started to read one day and she said, "I don't think you understand this."

And I said, "I know I don't, but it sounds nice." And that's always been my thing about poetry. I want it to *sound* nice! The sound is very important.

Then one day I was teasing her to read me from James Whitcomb Riley [American poet, 1849-1916]. I wanted her to read me "The Runaway Boy." And she said that she was busy. She was making a pie or something, and she couldn't right now. After a while I said, "You don't have to read it to me. I know it." So I recited it. She'd read it to me enough times that it was in my head.

I didn't grow up thinking that I wanted to be a poet. Somehow I denied it. All poets were old men with black beards, you know.

Johnson: (laughs) I know what you mean.

Barnard: Longfellow and maybe Tennyson. But as far as [female] role models went, they didn't exist. But I did want to be a writer almost before I learned to write. And about the music, I had a piece of music. I started taking lessons. I had a piece of music. It had on the back of it the beginnings of some other pieces, sort of like blurbs of advertising I suppose. And one of them was a piece that had words to a song. It had words to it, just had the first line, or the first two lines. Anyway, it needed a rhyme, to my ear. It needed a rhyme. So I made up another line to go with it. And that was my first attempted poem. (laughs) In my own mind.

Sheehy: By the time that you got to high school, were you writing poetry?

Barnard: Oh, I was writing all through grade school. In fact, I had a couple of poems published in the Vancouver *Columbian* when I was in grade school. Nobody knows about that. (laughter)

Sheehy: You may not want to admit it. We'll have to omit that from the tape. (laughter) You went to high school here in Vancouver, right?

Barnard: Yes. I was writing poetry all through high school.

Sheehy: And were you getting a little closer with your avocation of becoming a writer, then?

Barnard: Oh, I was definitely headed in that direction. I was thinking about writing.

Sheehy: Were you thinking of journalism, or of writing novels, or just poetry?

Barnard: Well, I think by the time I was in high school I'd gotten over this idea of poetry. After all, I was reading Elinor Wylie [American poet, 1886-1929].

Sheehy: Wylie, yes.

Barnard: Poetry was a truer form, but I didn't think that I ought to be making it into a living. I ought to be doing something that brought in money. And so I thought of journalism. When I

was in high school, I went with another girl to interview somebody at the newspaper about careers in journalism for women. And I learned that there women were hired only for two roles. One was for society columns. The other was for the sob sister role, they called it. The human interest story. And that looked pretty bleak to me. So I then more or less gave up on journalism. If I couldn't write anything but that sort of slop, then I wasn't going to do it. (laughs) But I did write things for magazines. And I would earn money that way. Of course, I struggled to do that for many years, and I sold some.

Sheehy: So, this would have been the mid-nineteen twenties. There were a number of literary magazines at that time, weren't there? *Sunset* magazine at the time was a literary magazine, wasn't it?

Barnard: Oh, *Sunset.* I don't think *Sunset* was a literary magazine.

Sheehy: I believe it started that way and then changed.

Barnard: There were so many magazines that did publish short stories. And poetry.

Sheehy: So you would be looking for those models, like *Smart Set* magazine perhaps?

Barnard: No, *Smart Set* had already passed on by that time.

Sheehy: Oh, really?

Barnard: My father in his youth used to read−

Sheehy: *Smart Set?*

Barnard: *Smart Set.* But I don't think I read it. Do you remember women's magazines like *Ladies Home Journal?*

Sheehy: Yes.

Barnard: Do you know it published stories by novelists. Serials. And then there was *Century*. I'm not sure it published fiction. But there was *Harpers,* and there was the *Atlantic Monthly.* And they all published fiction and poetry. Henry James' novels you know were serialized in *Harpers.* And they published the other principal writers of the period. So the idea of writing a piece for magazines was there as long as anyone wanted to buy it.

Sheehy: What was it like pursuing that kind of ambition in high school?

Barnard: Well, I edited the school paper for a year or two.

Sheehy: Did you find friends who shared your interests? Or did you find that your poetry pursuits were a bit solitary?

Barnard: Well, I was the only one who wrote poetry among my friends. I had teachers who were very interested in my work. They encouraged me. And I published in the school paper.

Sheehy: You had intentions, naturally I assume, of going on to college?

Barnard: Yes.

Sheehy: From the beginning. So that was always in your plans?

Barnard: Yes.

Sheehy: In choosing Reed, you mention in your memoirs that there really was no other choice. I'm just curious with your interest in poetry and in being a writer, how did you come to choose Reed? Certainly it was nearby, but you had other choices, I assume.

Barnard: Well, the East was pretty much out at that time. Because it took so long to go and come. If you went east to go to school, you were there for nine months, usually. I noticed Mary McCarthy [American writer born in Seattle 1912, attended Vassar] wrote about coming home for Christmas from Vassar. But that was a long and expensive trip. And her family had money, and she could do it apparently. But if I had gone east, in the first place… Of course, I entered college in '28, and when we get to Reed, this is a very important date. In '29 the stock market crashed, and in the following years, Reed was nothing like it was before or after. Because so many people couldn't afford to go to college, there were very few students. And there were still

fewer that lived on campus. One dorm was closed. It was just very hard times. And to be able to afford to go and come and live in the dorm, anyplace out East would have just been out of the question.

Sheehy: So it was fortunate when you enrolled in 1928 that you didn't go east, then?

Barnard: Yes.

Sheehy: It's interesting the change you note about Reed before and after the stock market crash. What was the sort of image here in Vancouver of Reed College in 1928?

Barnard: Oh, people now and then say to me, especially people who come to this area, "You know, Reedies have a reputation."

And I say, "Reedies have *always* had a reputation!" (both laugh)

Sheehy: Has it always been the same, though?

Barnard: Pretty much. Pretty much. I think I said in *Mount Helicon* that when I was in grade school, kids said to me, "Oh, you'll go to Reed."

Sheehy: Why was that?

Barnard: Well, I'm one of those booky people. Always reading. Always writing.

Sheehy: Was there anything else about your personality, do you think, that distinguished you as a potential Reedite?

Barnard: No. But I always had good grades. And a number of Vancouver high school students had gone on to Reed, and all of them top notch students. And it was just like taken for granted that I would go to Reed. But I still considered the University of Washington, especially when I was thinking about journalism. That I should take a journalism course, and get a job when I got out writing. Now, considering I graduated in '32, I think I'd be without a job if I had gone into journalism.

But I visited the [University of Washington] campus. I think that helped, too. I went up to visit a friend that was in a sorority house. And I went to some classes. I didn't like it. I didn't like the atmosphere.

Then I visited Reed when they had a day when high school students could visit on the campus. I went with some friends of mine. And Mr**.** Maccoby of Vancouver lived in the dorm. And I thought, this is it. I don't want to be in Everett, Washington.

Sheehy: Do you remember what it was that made you say that?

Barnard: Well, I visited the classes at University of Washington. The girls in the sorority had a small room they shared as the study. Presumably. Though there wasn't much studying going on that I could see. Then they had sleeping quarters. Don't let me digress on the waves of fads, medical fads, and what not. (laughs) In about the time I was born, it was that fresh air would cure everything.

Sheehy: Oh, yes.

Barnard: And so they built dorms with sleeping quarters. And you slept out there summer and winter. And my parents built a house with sleeping quarters. Didn't close it up at all to sleep. And I think it came from the discovery that tuberculosis had been in big play, and all tuberculosis patients were moved to sanitariums with breathing porches. And fresh air was supposed to do so much for the lungs. This carried over into everyday life. And everybody had to sleep outdoors. And after that came the discovery of vitamins. Sun was the thing! And people actually scorched themselves. And a lot of melanoma was the result.

Sheehy: (both laugh) Yes, that was the thinking in those days. So this was one of the contrasts you saw between Reed and UW, then?

Barnard: No. That was complete digression. But the thing was that there was no real academic atmosphere about it.

Sheehy: At UW?

Barnard: In these sorority houses. It was social life that reigned supreme. And studying was just something that was an excuse for being at the school. (laughs) And then we went to a class, a poetry class. The young professor was introducing some poetry by a poet which students never had heard of. It was A.E. Houseman. And I was pretty disgusted nobody else had ever heard of him. But I heard of him!

And I went back to Reed, and there were these roomy studies, with two girls to a room. And two beds. A bedroom, separate, with two beds. And a place where I felt I could study! I could learn things. And I just liked that. I liked the architecture. I liked the atmosphere of the place. So then, I went to a Renaissance lecture by Barry Cerf [English Professor, 1921-1948]. You know, I thought to myself, this is going to be heaven!

Sheehy: So this milieu was more your cup of tea?

Barnard: That Renaissance lit lecture.

Johnson: That was about as high in the century as Barry went. And he was beautiful at it, don't you agree?

Barnard: Yes. By the time that I actually got to my Renaissance lit course, he was beginning to collapse. But I certainly didn't go there because it was close to home. Because I never had any problem with homesickness. I went to camp for a week when I was younger and I never felt anything. It never bothered me.

Sheehy: So it was more the intellectual climate?

Barnard: It was the atmosphere of books! Books, what an important thing! And Dorothy [Gill] Wikelund ['29], the girl that I bunked with became a friend, and we're still friends.

Sheehy: Is she still in this area?

Barnard: No. She's back in Indiana. But her son is here, Phil Wikelund ['68]**.** Do you know him? He runs a bookshop [Great Northwest Bookstore]. He went to Reed.

Sheehy: So here you are, you find yourself at Reed, what are your first impressions as a student?

Barnard: I would like to say what I thought was the worst thing about Reed at that time, and I wouldn't be surprised if it's still true. And that was, it was very cliquish. And I'm not sure how much of that was a result of the system that they had of feeding the students, which was in the commons, where everybody ate. Everybody who lived on campus ate in the commons. And I had a job waiting tables for the last two years. After the Depression started.

Sheehy: Is this what was called being a hasher?

Barnard: That's being a hasher. But we had tables for six. And there was no seating assigned, of course. You just went and sat. And people tended to group themselves and stay grouped. And there was something that was almost terrifying about not having your group to sit with, and having to go and sit at another table. And I suppose it would have been no different than it may be now, but it seems to me that there is now a possibility of more people of different kinds, and they don't always sit at the same tables.

[tape 1, side A ends, side B begins]

Barnard: If you had to go sit at another table, you would see five people at one table and an empty chair and go up and ask if they were saving it for somebody, and then sit down. But they went on with the conversation that had been going on for several weeks, you know.

Johnson: This was in the regular commons, wasn't it?

Barnard: The old commons.

Sheehy: What we call the Student Union now.

Johnson: I have memories of a cubbyhole and a table thing where people put their napkins, right?

Barnard: Yes! We had napkins.

Sheehy: Each person had an assigned napkin?

Johnson: Yes, for the next week or something.

Barnard: Of course, most students at Reed were Portland students. And many of them lived at home. Some of them lived on campus. But even the students who lived on campus, a lot of them were from Portland families.

Sheehy: You're talking about the cliques at Reed that were formed around the dining ritual. Was there another kind of clique between students who lived on campus versus off campus?

Barnard: Well, it wasn't cliquish in the same sense. The students off campus and the ones on campus really never got acquainted much. It was hard to get acquainted unless you just happened to be in a small class with somebody which happened to me in one case. But one of the people that I should have known, she was in my class, and I never got acquainted with her until the week we both graduated or something. And I did see her a few times in Simi, California. That's Rosamond Stricker ['33]. Then we lost touch completely. And she found my *Sappho* [Barnard's book of translations] in the American Library in Athens. And she said she looked at it and she thought, can it be? No, surely it isn't. Yes, it is! So she wrote to me. And next time she was in Portland, we got together for lunch and we saw each other regularly for some time. Exchanged letters and so on. Well, one reason that I didn't know her was that she was doing the combined art and lit major. As an art major she was doing part of her work at the art museum. And also, she lived just over on Johnson Creek somewhere. She wasn't on campus even as much as Scoot who lived on the west side.

Johnson: Students didn't ride the bus the way they do today.

Barnard: What's more, there were almost no cars on campus. Because both the faculty and the students--well, the faculty mostly, lived right around Reed. So they walked. And the students mostly used the bus and the streetcar.

Sheehy: So there was a streetcar and a bus line that came out to Reed, and you would take them downtown?

Barnard: Well, the streetcar came out to Woodstock.

Johnson: Then it stopped right there at Woodstock, and you could get off.

Barnard: Yes.

Johnson: And then later, there was a bus that came out and stopped there. In the very early days, a streetcar came from Sellwood. It came over to 32nd and stopped by the Stewarts' house.

Barnard: It was a very long trip. (laughs) And we had to change from the streetcar to a bus or a streetcar to go downtown. And the street corners in the middle of winter at night got very, very cold and windy.

Sheehy: I want to go back a little bit to the composition of the students. There were about 250 students at Reed at this time?

Barnard: Oh, no, I think there were more like 450 to 500.

Sheehy: And you're saying that your recollection is it's a lot of Portland residents that were there both on campus and living off campus? Were you aware of different economic circumstances with students at that time?

Barnard: Oh, no. As far as money went, this is one place where Reed was exceptional, I think. After I graduated, I was working in the laundry two days a week. A secretary there I got acquainted with said, "I wish I had known about Reed." Her boss was a Reed graduate. She said, "I wish I had known about Reed. I would have gone to college."

And I said – it was something about money – and I said, "But Reed was supposed to be expensive. Most people considered Reed expensive."

And she said, "Yes, the tuition was high." But she said, "At Reed, it didn't matter if you didn't have money." There was no cliquishness around money. It was remarkable in that respect.

Sheehy: What was the clothing dress style on campus? Did people pretty much all dress the same?

Barnard: You know kids. Of course we all dressed the same!

Sheehy: I'm thinking also the twenties. You had the roaring twenties, you had F. Scott Fitzgerald *This Side of Paradise* image of Ivy League students.

Barnard: Well, that was not Portland. And this was not the roaring twenties. The twenties hadn't roared here. (laughs)

Sheehy: Well, we're still talking pre-crash here.

Barnard: I entered Reed in '28. And the crash was '29. We all wore slickers and raincoats. That was appropriate for Portland. We all wore galoshes and buckles. We all wore berets because Greta Garbo had made them popular.

Sheehy: Well, you also mentioned in your book that you had a difficult time socially fitting into Reed the first year you were there.

Barnard: Well, it was because partly even before the Depression, there were comparatively few students on the campus. There was one long dorm that was locked, and there was Anna Mann Cottage. That's all. It was difficult for me to mix with the upperclassmen because I was just lost. I didn't know what they were talking about. And the freshmen in our house just weren't compatible as far as I was concerned. And none of them finished at Reed. They were all, all the freshmen from that year, I think, were gone by their junior year.

Sheehy: Do you remember what was it that distinguished them that would account for that? Were they not as intellectually inclined?

Barnard: They weren't up to Reed, they weren't really up to it. They certainly weren't readers the way I was. And as I said, we were sort of plopped in these groups, and the cliques were not entirely something that people were attracted to, but sometimes, especially in the freshman year, they were groups that would try to come together for self protection. My roommate didn't like me. She did everything to make life miserable for me. But she clung to me just the same, because she was afraid to go out on her own. I had a very good time in class. And I had a rather interesting time outside class when I was with these upperclassmen and cliques like the Godawful Society [poetry group, 1928-1935]. But at meals and in the dorm and so on, I was not happy.

Sheehy: Were you dormed in the old dorm block?

Barnard: Yes, what is now Westport.

Sheehy: I think you said in your memoir that you did sort of find yourself in your sophomore year.

Barnard: Oh, yes, by sophomore year.

Sheehy: Socially for you, you came into your own, you found a good circle of friends. But sophomore year is also when the crash hits, too, right? 1929.

Barnard: Well, the crash didn't mean much when it came. It was the Depression that followed. My father wasn't into the stock market. It was in the next year and the next year when it got bad.

One thing I want to be sure to mention, because from what I learned from talking to people at Reed now, it's very different. And it's one place where I think we had the advantage. And that was that faculty lived near campus, and the houses were open to us. Very much. And I think it was an important part of my education. And I notice in one of my letters that I was looking over that I said that the day before, that week, for instance Monday, I had been—well, I think it was Wednesday, I'd been to Mrs. Akerman's [wife of Clement Akerman, Economics Professor, 1920-1943] to tea, I'd been to the Hartmus' [Laurence E. Hartmus, Classics Professor, 1930-1939] in the evening, and I was going to the Arragon's [Reginald Arragon, History Professor, 1922-1962] to study. They were all student groups who met for discussion or to read their work or to read papers that were from outside, that they did outside class work. That kind of thing. I was in and out of the Arragon's house all the time, because two of my best friends from two different years lived with them.

Sheehy: They took students in, then? They boarded students?

Barnard: Well, to help. They helped with the housework and helped them to cook, babysat. And I babysat for the Griffins [Lawrence Griffin, Biology Professor, 1920-1943] and Arragons. Not for the Hartmuses. And not long ago, a cousin of mine who I never knew until she moved into this area, she asked me, "When you went to New York and you started seeing all of these learned people, how did you get along? How did you manage?" I think she and her husband had just graduated. She and her husband were both what she called blue collar background. Her

husband was getting his Ph.D. They were invited to faculty events, and she said, "We just felt lost. We just didn't know what anybody was talking about. We were afraid to say anything." And she said, "I just wouldn't go."

And I said, "Well, of course, I'm sure I was gauche a lot of times. Sometimes, anyway. But if there was anything it prepared me for, it was the fact that I had had this experience being treated as a social equal in faculty homes where we talked about all kinds of things. And it wasn't just student-professor discussion. In other words, it was civilized conversation. The kind that certainly I didn't have growing up in Vancouver, really. At least one of my high school teachers gave me a little help along that line. Prepared me somewhat for Reed.

And I asked somebody recently about whether any of this went on anymore. And they said, "Well, you see, in the first place, almost all the faculty wives work. And by the time they work and keep house and manage the kids, if they have any, they don't have the time to take to entertain students." And furthermore, they cant' afford to live in Eastmoreland anymore. And that was one thing about the Depression, those houses in Eastmoreland were going cheaply. Faculty at least had salaries, even if not big ones. And that's when they bought houses in Eastmoreland, or nearby. Now, most have to live at a distance from the college. Even in the West Hills or somewhere. And that kind of contact is gone.

Sheehy: It sounds like in your time, with faculty so close to campus, there were students who boarded with them but who also did work around the house for them. So that was not an uncommon situation for professors with families or what not, to have students working for them?

Barnard: Well, there weren't very many in truth who did that. The Hartmus' had.

Johnson: I know that the Griffins always had.

Barnard: I bet they always had.

Johnson: But it was a different world. Faculty wives then considered this part of their jobs. Their job was to help their husband.

Barnard: Right. Like a minister's wife.

Johnson: Yes. Like a minister's wife.

Sheehy: So, I'm just trying to imagine. The environment you had in a classroom with a professor would be quite different than going to that professor's house, which sounds like more of a hospitable sort of mixing. Would that be a big influence with the professor, or [was] the relationship pretty much the same in the classroom?

Barnard: Well, you really didn't get anyplace by going to their homes. I started going to the Chitticks [Victor Chittick, English Professor, 1921-1948] when I was a freshman.

Johnson: Mostly, I would think, it would be sophomore and up.

Barnard: But mostly it was sophomore and up. And by the time you got in your sophomore and up at Reed, you're in small groups.

Johnson: You've got a major interest.

Barnard: You're seeing mostly the professors you're majoring with. And I really, it wasn't a lot of difference.

Sheehy: Well, I want to come back to the professors. I want to talk specifically about some of your relationships with some of your professors. But maybe before we get to that point, we could just touch upon some of the cultural things going on campus. The types of things that you did for fun and cultural interest. Was there music on campus? Did you have concerts? Folk dancing? Dances of any sort?

Barnard: Oh, at this time, dating was mostly going to dances. Maybe you might go to movies, too. But dancing was the thing. And of course, couple dancing. Fox trots and waltzes and what not. There was a Friday night dance every Friday night.

Johnson: They were held in House H.

Barnard: Yes. House H it was then. The social room.

Johnson: The dorms were all originally named for the alphabet.

Sheehy: Oh, O.K.

Barnard: And I lived in House D, which is now Westport. We went downtown a lot to concerts, plays, touring Stratford players from Avon. Maybe five or six plays. There were the symphony concerts. That was another thing. I was constantly riding downtown with one or another faculty member for concerts. My roommate and I would be riding downtown with them.

Sheehy: So that was another means of interaction with the faculty, going out and getting some culture.

Barnard: They very much took an interest in what we were doing outside. Lloyd Reynolds [Art and English Professor, 1929-1969] found out that I could draw a little bit. [He said that] I *had to* do something about it! I *had to* go to the art museum. And I would go to some class [unclear], and that got me excited. Because I really wanted to, but I felt I can't do both, and I'm not going to be an artist, I'm going to be a writer. But he said, "It's very important for your writing. You have to do this!" And so I found out I couldn't sign up for the art museum, but I found another art class. I found one class and joined that, and went downtown. But especially in the last two years [of my studies], the faculty and students were pretty well integrated, wouldn't you say?

Sheehy: You mentioned that dancing was a major part of the dating. What were relationships like between men and women on campus at that time?

Barnard: Well, it all depended. Some were, some couples formed who were inseparable. Others mixed around, more or less. When I was hashing, I had a table. I had one faculty table, and then I had a table with my friends and roommates. But usually, the important thing was what

interested the dating. There had to be a meeting of minds. The biology students dated biology students. The political science students dated the political science students. Lit students dated lit students.

Sheehy: Birds of a feather.

Johnson: I remember at a lot of the dances, you went whether you had a partner or whether you were asked to go. I mean, you didn't have to go with a date. You went.

Barnard: No. You didn't have to date.

Johnson: There would be men's and women's groups sort of hanging out in the evening time. It was just the thing to do on a Friday night.

Sheehy: That hasn't changed. It was the same in my time at Reed.

Johnson: Then there were a few special dances, like the senior prom or the junior ball. I was just telling you about. I was remembering when I was there, it had gone on a little before, so it might have been in your time. The women would have a dance where no men were supposed to come. And some man would always try to dress up and crash it.

Barnard: Well. On the whole, students were very much on their own about social life. That freshman year when I was having so much trouble with this ornery girl that I was rooming with,

who didn't come back to Reed after that first term, it was the only year she was there. There really was nobody to turn to. You were thrown in to sink or swim. And Mrs. [Cheryl] Scholz [MacNaughton, Dean's Office, 1925-1938] was the dean of women. But she seemed so remote.

And once, I went to her office – I was still really pretty desperate – and I went to her office thinking, I've got to talk to somebody. I've got to have this out. And I couldn't talk to her! Some of my friends thought Mrs. Scholz was just wonderful. Mary Woodworth ['29] was a close friend, and she thought Scholz was just wonderful. But as far as I was concerned, she didn't reach out to the students. And I found−

[tape 1, side B ends, tape 2, side A begins]

Sheehy: …by having to rely on just yourself? To deal with it yourself? Was that a key learning at Reed College, to find your own way, deal with your own problems?

Barnard: It was very much that way.

Sheehy: A big topic at Reed has always been the honor principle. Was the honor principle in place at the time you were at Reed?

Barnard: Oh, yes!

Sheehy: How was that viewed by students? Especially in terms of finding your own way, how was adhering to a certain code on campus viewed?

Barnard: Well, I don't know that it was discussed. It was accepted. We did have problems occasionally. And I got involved in one of them. Much to my dismay. But on the whole, I think it was reasonable.

Sheehy: And was respectful. It's not questioned. It's not a debated situation.

Barnard: No.

Sheehy: Did people pretty much adhere to it, from your experience?

Barnard: I think pretty much.

Sheehy: What was the political climate like at the time? You talk a little bit in your book about pacifism on campus. The influence of the World War I generation on your classmates. You also touched upon some of the isolationist events kind of outside the campus at the time.

Barnard: Well, there was one thing. I read the obituary for George Wheeler ['29].

Johnson: So did I!

Barnard: Ah! That−

Johnson: I know! I haven't had a chance to say that, Mary! I know just what you mean! I couldn't believe it.

Sheehy: And why is that? Tell me about George Wheeler, I don't know anything about him.

Barnard: Well, George Wheeler and Tubby – Eleanor Mitchell ['30] – his wife, were good friends. Well, I didn't, they were ahead of me in class. But I was a good friend of Eleanor's sister Louise [Emilie Louise Mitchell '30]. And the Mitchell family was something that would take a half hour to discuss. You really need to know it, but we haven't got time to go into it. I was talking about dating going by departments, more or less. And George and Eleanor were both in political science. And they were both [unclear] and very left wing. They had the blue apartment up on Woodstock hill, and they used to invite Louise and me up for stew. And I always enjoyed those dinners with them. And George and Eleanor had five children. They moved to Washington. I saw them in Washington. He was on the National Labor Relations Board, and he was a member of the Communist Party from the very beginning, probably from the time he was at Reed. People were always saying that he was a Communist. And other people said, "Oh, George? A Communist?" And then he – who was the general who was in charge in Berlin at the time of the Berlin Airlift? [General Lucius D. Clay]

Sheehy: I don't know.

Barnard: Well, anyway, George was on his staff. And there were complaints, people in Congress began saying, "That communist George Wheeler [unclear]," presumably. At

Thanksgiving, he and Tubby were in New York, and they had Thanksgiving at my apartment. Of course, not dinner, but they came that afternoon and Claudia was there. Claudia Lewis [‘30]. And to get the full context of this situation. I’d just been to Washington DC to visit Ezra.

Sheehy: Ezra Pound.

Barnard: Yes, and I had a feeling that the FBI were on my tail. (all laugh) Then I have George and Eleanor on Thanksgiving afternoon, and George is telling about how the FBI was checking up on all his liaisons, and trying to prove that he had been in the Communist Party, and that he had been at the communist meetings. And he said that they couldn’t prove a thing. But he didn’t say that he hadn’t been there. And then things got really pretty hot. He and Tubby asked for asylum in Czechoslovakia.

Sheehy: This is in the early sixties?

Barnard: No, this was in the fifties.

Sheehy: Okay, cause you mentioned the Berlin Airlift.

Barnard: Well, when was that?

Sheehy: That was ’49, I believe [1948].

Barnard: It was immediately after the war that he was there in Berlin. It's just that I can never remember this general's name, and I did watch the thing on TV about the Berlin Airlift, which I thought was very good. And he figured largely in that. And I thought, I will *not* forget his name again. Well, I have.

Anyway, they lived in Czechoslovakia for years. I've heard recently from somebody who knew them in Czech, who was in Prague at that time, that they did not have a very good time of it. That the Czechs didn't want them. They were sure they were spies. They couldn't believe that any U.S. citizen would want to live in Czechoslovakia unless they were there to spy.

So anyway, they finally came home, George and Tubby, eventually. He taught for a while, and then they were both settled back where Tubby grew up in Lakeview, Washington. And she died. And recently, he died. There was a long thing in *Reed* [magazine] about him, and you wouldn't guess any of this about him.

Johnson: You couldn't guess anything about him. No, I just couldn't believe it!

Sheehy: You mentioned in *Helicon* something about Reed at the time when you were applying already having a reputation, as I recall. It was Reed being about communism, atheism, free love. Was that already the reputation of Reed in Portland at that time?

Barnard: Yes! Yes. That's what I was talking about.

Johnson: The majority of his friends and his coterie, and there were five broods of them, several generations, brothers and sisters, so it lasted a number of years. People were coming with this

type of background. So if there was any disturbance downtown, they were there with their little- - they were there taking part in it**.** [unclear] as clear as I can tell, managed to [unclear] an advantage and [unclear] but I wouldn't say [unclear] such as this one makes you sick. But it's quite an interesting theory.

Sheehy: So did you at that time−

Barnard: I sure did. Yeah.

Sheehy: Wow.

Barnard: They have a file on me, because I knew all the wrong people on both sides.

Sheehy: And would that have gone back all the way to your Reed days? With the Wheeler connection?

Barnard: Well, I don't know how much they know about that. But certainly it was my association with them in fact.

Sheehy: Were you politically active while you were on campus at all?

Barnard: I have never been politically active. I wrote.

Sheehy: But there were a number of students who were involved in political activism or political discussions?

Barnard: Oh, yes. Yes. There was something else I was going to say, but I'll take a break.

Sheehy: Let's take a break.

[After break]

Barnard: You might be surprised to learn that two of my books are on the reading list for the general science course at Boston University.

Sheehy: General science course.

Johnson: Which are these?

Sheehy: Congratulations, first of all. Which ones are they?

Barnard: *The Mythmakers* and *Time and the White Tigress.*

Johnson: Oh, *The Mythmakers* is fun too. But the *White Tigress* is fun.

Barnard: Have you seen *Paiduma* [journal that featured an issue on Barnard]?

Sheehy: Yes, I have a copy of it.

Barnard: Well, as the young woman who wrote the thing on my poems, the master's thesis on my poems that was published in that [journal], a librarian. She occasionally puts my name into her computer to find out what she gets about a Sappho poem. But she discovered that I was on this reading list for general science course, and she was so pleased that she got in touch with this proctor by email. That's how people communicate these days.

Sheehy: That's how they do it.

Barnard: And he responded with very detailed letters and she asked permission to send them all to me. And of course he gave them. So I got these letters that he sent her. And then I wrote to him, and I got another letter. I think he's quite young. He'd been assigned – it's always the young ones, usually, who get assigned the general science courses – and he'd been assigned to teach this general science course. And it's set up historically, and supposed to start with what he calls "myth, place, societies," and progress through the weeks and so on, to modern cosmology.

So he said, knowing nothing about mythology, he went to the library and looked on the shelves and came across this poem. He took it off the shelf and looked at it, and thought it looked interesting. Then he took it home and read it, and he said, "What a wonderful poem!" It was the first poem he ever really liked. He said, "Usually when people write about the stars, they write about how the stars make them *feel.*"

I loved that, because I was always being asked, "You had feelings for true art. Why don't you put more *feeling* into the poems?"

He liked them because I didn't write about how the stars make me feel. So he went back and took a look at *The Mythmakers.* And he said, "Another gem!" And he even read from *Time of the White Tigress* in his first lecture!

Sheehy: Really? Well, congratulations. That's wonderful.

Barnard: So I think that proves a poem's ability. Anyway, I was thinking of another social kind of thing [at Reed]. That the faculty and students gave combined plays, they put on plays [together]. And some in French. There was [one by] Moliere, that most of my friends were in. And there were other things from time to time. And this kind of thing I was closest to.

Sheehy: Did faculty share roles with students?

Barnard: Yes.

Sheehy: And were they directed by faculty? Or was there a theater director at this time?

Barnard: No. But I think I mentioned who directed. There were always enough people interested in theater to have an enthusiasm about doing something like that.

Sheehy: Mary, I want to spend some time about your poetry at Reed, but before that I'd like to talk a little bit about what you mentioned before, about the onset of the Depression and the impact that had on the campus. You started out at Reed right before the crash. The crash hit in

’29, but you said it really didn’t impact the college directly at that time. But by your junior and senior years there was a big impact.

Barnard: Yes. There was a big impact.

Sheehy: What was that impact like?

Barnard: I never applied for a scholarship because I had [unclear] and it worked enough to go around, but I made most of my board money. By hashing. It was supposed to come out about even. You were supposed to make, if you hashed all the time, you were supposed to make enough to cover your board. I didn’t do it weekends, because I came home sometimes. And they never used all the hashers on weekends. [unclear] And a lot of my friends worked in the library. Two of them worked in the library.

Johnson: The library at that time was in the west end of the arts building, wasn’t it?

Barnard: No, no. It moved to the library building in my sophomore year.

Sheehy: 1929. That must have been exciting then. To have a big library open up.

Barnard: Yes, yes.

Sheehy: Did the enrollment drop during those years?

Barnard: Oh, yes, I'm sure it did.

Sheehy: Your junior and senior years?

Barnard: I'm sure it did. Also, I think they probably lowered their standards to take in more people. Enrollment dropped, and certainly the number of people living on campus dropped considerably. They closed one dorm. And there was just one girl in rooms for two, and some [girls] fell asleep studying in some places. I don't know whether there were any rooms that were actually not occupied. I think they just split up and made singles out of doubles.

Sheehy: Did they let faculty go at that time, as well?

Barnard: I wouldn't know. You [Ellen] might know more about that than I do. I think perhaps they didn't rehire some that left.

Johnson: My freshman year they took down the graduate assistants. [inaudible section]

Barnard: Well they had graduate assistants who were working on master's degrees.

Johnson: Working on master's degrees at the same time. But it was horrible.

Sheehy: Master's degrees with Oregon State? Or Portland State?

Barnard: No. At Reed.

Sheehy: We were giving graduate degrees at that time?

Johnson: Master of Arts in biology or in [unclear]

Sheehy: I did not know that.

Barnard: And one of my longtime friends who I kept in touch with until she died, and visited often, she went from Reed to Radcliff and taught. She was at Smith for a while, and wound up at Wheaton College in northern Massachusetts. She was a day-dodger. But I got acquainted with her because we were in the Greek class together. She graduated two years after me. There were, I think, only four of us in Greek class. We had it in the afternoon. After class, before she went home, we'd go and sit on the lawn and talk. And gradually got acquainted.

Sheehy: So Mary, Greek was your second language at Reed?

Barnard: Yes. I had Latin in high school. Latin and French. I had three years of Latin and two of French in high school. And then I continued the French, but mostly just reading courses. You had 48 courses [unclear], language courses [unclear]. You had the grammar, but you wanted to keep up with reading, but you didn't want to major in a language, you would have an appointment once a week or once every two weeks, something like that, with your professor in the language.

Sheehy: Was Greek popular at Reed?

Barnard: No! Of course, you have to remember, there weren't many students.

Sheehy: Right.

Barnard: And there were just a few, I think at one time they had five teachers with classical backgrounds. That was the most. And also during those Depression years, we had more one-on-one conferences with the professors. Kind of put a class together.

Sheehy: This is what you called tutorials at the time. So that change came about because of the Depression, that change in teaching style to tutorials? And what was that like for you?

Barnard: Well, I think I said in the book, it was good in some ways, but I felt that I did better when I had other students to compare myself with, and the conversation was on our level. But when I sat down face to face with Mr. [Victor Lovitt Oakes] Chittick [English Professor, 1921-1948] and was supposed to tell him about literature, he knew all about lit.

Johnson: But if [it] was a course where if you didn't have it taught, you wouldn't have had it at all.

Barnard: Yes. Yes.

Sheehy: And that's because there weren't enough students to fill the class?

Barnard: What actually happened was that they were giving a class. If you wanted a class, they'd just give you that class even if nobody else wanted it.

Sheehy: Really?

Johnson: It was a need, so the faculty members said, "All right, we'll add this because you need this for your own programmatic course."

Sheehy: Now let me see if I understand that. So there was a set number of classes. But it sounds like for upper class−

Barnard: There was a lot of tutorial.

Sheehy: For the upper class, essentially on whatever interest they were pursuing and needed to get the classes for them. Ideally for their thesis, I would think, or for what their major might be.

Barnard: Well, for instance, I took the French course because that's what all entering freshmen who had French in high school were supposed to take. But it was in that form because the other students were nowhere near as prepared as I was. I'd had a better French teacher and I had taken to it. I was at a reading level. This was pretty much a waste of time for me. So the next year, I

took French as a tutorial course. But I don't think this would have been a matter of the Depression. They did this anyway.

Johnson: If you look at the old catalogue, the course offerings were miniscule compared to what they are now. Each one was interested in a subject [inaudible]

Barnard: And this, it was called 48. French 48. I would meet with Professor Woodbridge, I don't know if it was, I don't think it was once a week.

Johnson: I had it once every two weeks.

Barnard: Once every two weeks, maybe. And I talked with them about what I had read. And we would discuss it, and we would discuss what I might like to read next. If we were really good about it, if we were reading Proust for modern lit, we got double credit. Because we got credit for reading Proust in French, and then we got credit for reading in modern lit. And I really liked that.

Sheehy: (laughs) Sounds like a real Reedie there, working that angle. You mentioned in your book the relationships you had with your professors. There's four that you point out there as being primary: Victor Chittick in romantic literature; Barry Cerf in classics; and Lloyd Reynolds, who you were introduced to early in your junior year, it sounds like.

Barnard: Yes, I did take a class from him. He didn't even come until my sophomore year.

Sheehy: You did his creative writing class, as I recall. And then Rex [Reginald Francis] Arragon [History Professor, 1923-1962].

[tape 2, side A ends, side B begins]

Sheehy: I read the introduction of your creative thesis, which you titled "Confessional," and shared it with friends, and it actually moved somebody to tears. Another Reed woman. (both laugh) She said, "That's exactly what I was feeling!" So, many years later, things haven't changed. But you identified six professors that you're calling on in the "Confessional." Are there a couple of other professors who also had a big influence on you?

Barnard: Let's see. I looked over my letters that I still have. There's a description of the ones who were at my oral, Arragon and Reynolds and Chittick and Cerf.

Sheehy: They sat in on your orals?

Barnard: They were all at my orals. And Woodbridge. And Dr. [Charles Henry Stafford] King [German Professor, 1926-1941] was at my orals. He taught German, but I never took any German. And I never had any dealings with him except at the oral, and I can't remember that he asked me any questions. And [Norman Frank] Coleman [English Professor, 1911-1919; Reed College President, 1934-1939] didn't come. But he was a member of the lit department. And entered into all of the goings-on about my thesis. No, I guess he didn't enter into it. But he was

always sort of off to the side, and somebody suggested that I had to go take a sample of my work to Coleman and try to get him enlisted on my side.

Sheehy: It sounds like from your memoir that Lloyd Reynolds had a real impact on your poetry.

Barnard: Oh, Lloyd, just a tremendous−

Sheehy: But your first two years, you were part of the Godawfulers?

Barnard: No, I still was.

Sheehy: O.K. Tell us a little bit about that.

Barnard: I was part of the Godawfulers for all four years that I was there. Well, it was just one of those groups of students who write and read what they write to each other, and then wrangle over it.

Sheehy: And they had been going as the Godawfulers and were already intact when you arrived at Reed.

Barnard: Yes.

Sheehy: And it was focused around Victor Chittick, right?

Barnard: He was the sponsor, so to speak. It was very informal. And we met at the Chittick house.

Sheehy: And it was not part of the creative writing class at Reed, or anything like that.

Barnard: Oh, no, no.

Sheehy: It was a very informal group.

Barnard: Well, I imagine one way it got started was that before Lloyd Reynolds came, Coleman, President Coleman, taught creative writing. Did you know that?

Johnson: No, I didn't know that!

Barnard: Well, you just would have to know President Coleman to know−

Johnson: I know him. And that's why I'm sitting here with my mouth open.

Barnard: Well, Claudia Lewis ['30] took creative writing with Coleman. Well, he was a clergyman before he was the college president. And he was very straight and rather courtly, I think, wouldn't you say? Tall, sort of Lincolnesque figure. Extremely dignified. And very conservative, really. It was so strange that Reed had the reputation it had with Coleman as president. But anyway he was certainly very conservative about literature. And he would never

have introduced me to T.S. Eliot. I'm sure he probably never ever read him in his life. But he was a member of the literature department. It wasn't English. It was literature. Because it was intended to include other languages besides English. And so I expected Dr. Coleman to be at my orals, but he wasn't. But Dr. King was, but I have no memory of his being there.

Sheehy: What was Chittick's interest in poetry? What sort of direction did you get from him in those years?

Barnard: Well, Cerf was the conservative. No. That's not right, Coleman, I guess was. Cerf was the classics. And if it hadn't been for him, I probably wouldn't have taken Greek. But it was hearing him read to me some Greek homework, made it sound fabulous. And I'm sure I wouldn't have taken Greek if it hadn't been for him.

Sheehy: If that hadn't happened, I suppose we wouldn't have *Sappho* [her translations].

Barnard: No, we wouldn't have *Sappho*. And Chittick taught romantic lit. And he could become very emotional. He wasn't an emotional type, but he became very emotional with Keats. And he taught romantic lit and modern lit. I took the modern literature course from him. And you know, it's interesting what we were reading in those days. We were reading Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Proust, T.S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound.

Sheehy: This was in Chittick's class in modern lit?

Barnard: Yes.

Johnson: Was that a sophomore year course in literature, or was it a junior year course?

Barnard: No. Well, they didn't distinguish. It was an upper class course. Cerf's course was the freshman course, and that started with the Greeks and went through to the Renaissance. And Chittick's was the romantic literature. Mainly, well, romantic and eighteenth century lit. Seems to me we never got much farther than the middle [of the] century. But it was both prose and poetry, essays. But we didn't read novels in those days in class. Well, we did in modern lit, but Victorian novels we were supposed to read on our own. We weren't supposed to have to read those in class.

Sheehy: When I was a literature major and I got to be a junior, they gave me a list of all the books they assumed I had read by that point.

Barnard: Well, something like that.

Sheehy: And you had to read them on your own time.

Barnard: Yes.

Sheehy: It was quite a list! (both laugh) I spent the whole summer reading. So you had something like that going on, too, at that time? They were expecting you to read outside the classroom.

Barnard: Yes. Reynolds taught a course in eighteenth century lit that I didn't take. But most of my modern poetry I got from Reynolds in creative writing.

Sheehy: What was that class like? Were you reading a poem by a poet and then discussing it? Or were you writing creative poetry?

Barnard: Well, we were supposed to do both. He would put a poem up on the board or, you know, it was before Xerox, one way or another, present us with a poem to look at and discuss. Sometimes he'd give us a definite assignment for an analysis of a poem or a short story or something. I remember another person we were reading was Joyce. *Dubliners*. He assigned us a paper on history in Dublin. And I wrote a very good paper, if I do say so. He was so pleased with it, he read it in class, and didn't say who wrote it. That was all right. We had conferences with our professors, one-on-one, besides classes. And a lot of what I got from Reynolds was from having these conferences.

Sheehy: Let me ask you about that. In your memoir, there is a sense that Reynolds has a big impact on your work. And yet, when you're working on your thesis, you're not getting much back from Reynolds. I remember you writing that he would read it and simply say "yes" or "no." Am I correct in that?

Barnard: Well, I got very frustrated with him that senior year. I think I said somewhere in that book that he was great as a stimulator, but I didn't find him to be good as a critic. It was Arragon who became my best critic because he was such a good reader. And he would say, "I shouldn't be doing this. I can't write poetry. I don't know anything about this!" But he was such a good reader.

And I remember one time that I took him something. This was after I graduated. All of this, his reading and criticism of my poems only started with the thesis. But actually, I took him a poem and said, "I think there's something wrong with the last line. I can't think I can find it. But there's something wrong with the last line."

I didn't know what to do and tried to do something about it, but I just couldn't see it. I felt uncomfortable with it, too, so I sent the poem to Pound and he sent it back and said, "The next to the last line needs to be fixed."

I told Rex that, he was just sort of elated. He said, "Isn't that great! I knew there was something wrong, but of course Pound knew it was the next to the last line that threw the last line off."

Sheehy: Now this was after you left Reed?

Barnard: Yes. I didn't write to Pound until I'd been out a couple of years.

Sheehy: So, in dealing with Reynolds, in the book you talk about [how] you really shifted away from rhyming poetry with him.

Barnard: No. He was just so insistent that I loosen up. Because I could write another jingle, but it was very conventional and rhymed and metered. And he was so insistent that I loosen up. The first time, I went on with end rhymes, but I varied the meter more, the line length more. And then I began to get freer and work more with internal rhyme instead of end rhymes. And so for better or for worse, he certainly had influence on me, and by the way, I had on him.

Sheehy: Really?

Barnard: Because Reed gave me a doctorate. Honorary doctorate.

Sheehy: That's in 1978 [Doctor of Humane Letters, September, 1978]?

Barnard: I don't remember.

Johnson: We'll check with Reed.

Sheehy: I think it was around the time I started Reed, that's why I remember.

Barnard: He called them before he called me up. And he was very ill. It was just before he died. And he said, he called me up to congratulate me and say that he was sorry that he was too ill to come down and to be there. And then he said, "You may not know it, but it's your fault that I got into calligraphy."

Sheehy: Really?

Barnard: And I said, "That's impossible."

And he said, "No, you were always complaining that you couldn't read my handwriting. And finally I decided that I'd have to do something about it."

Sheehy: Really! I thought *Sappho* was enough. But now Lloyd Reynolds and calligraphy. That's great. That's a great story. Was Lloyd the one who first started you reading Sappho in college?

Barnard: Well, you know, the translations were so horrible. I was interested because she was such a famous woman poet, but I read the translations and didn't see it. And then I copied out some of the Greek. I didn't really get interested until I got that little Italian book [Quasimodo's *Lirici Greci*], which really [unclear] the pages of Quasimodo. It was his Italian translation that sort of revealed her. Because I was dependent on a lexicon with the definitions of words scholars had used, they weren't approximations of normal speech. And many of the Italian translations just wouldn't have occured to me. Then I wanted to do the same sort of thing.

Sheehy: Mary, I'm going to restrain myself. This is an area of great interest to me, and while I'd love to go down that road a little more, let me pull you back a little bit to Reed and your thesis experience. Then we can start down that closing the interview.

Barnard: Well, I got out my senior year letters home. Of course, it's not a consecutive story because occasionally I saw my parents on the weekends. Told them part of the story that is now lost forever because I lied about it. But it was pretty crazy. Again, I think I said in *Assault on Mount Helicon* that at one time, somebody [Lloyd Reynolds] suggested that I change to a history major. This was my senior year.

Sheehy: Well, I know that in *Mount Helicon,* you mention that you had trouble with critical papers.

Barnard: Yes.

Sheehy: And you did attempt to do a critical thesis, but Chittick --

Barnard: Well, I proposed doing a thesis on Elinor Wylie's poetry. She'd just recently died, and her final poems had been published. I'd always been intrigued with her. So I suggested it. He said he thought it was something that needed doing but he doubted that I could do it. And I thought it was a rejection, but later I realized he was actually just warning me.

Sheehy: Sounds like a crushing blow.

Barnard: And so then I got the idea of a creative thesis.

Sheehy: Was that very common at Reed at the time?

Barnard: Oh, no!

Sheehy: But other people had done creative theses?

Barnard: Well, it had happened. But some of the professors took a very dim view of it.

Sheehy: It hadn't changed by my day, let me tell you. Then you worked with Reynolds. He was your thesis advisor?

Barnard: No. I proposed writing a play. Cerf objected to that. He wanted a long poem instead, a long sort of dramatic poem. I think he mentioned Robinson Jeffers [American poet 1887-1962]. I felt that was a terrible idea. I guess it was a terrible idea about writing a play, too. I had written a history paper on Marie de France [French-born English poet of the late 12th Century]. And well, that whole scene. It's a fascinating period with the troubadours and so on. Do you know anything about Marie de France?

Sheehy: Very little.

Barnard: Well, she's presumably written, when she was in the court of Henry II, and dedicated her poem to one of her courtiers. [unclear] I think the very first known episode in the story of her *Lais*. That's what got me interested in troubadours. And that's one thing that led me to Pound. When Reynolds introduced me to Pound, one of the things that got me interested in him was his translations from Marie de France. And so I wrote this one paper, and it was a very good

paper, and then I wanted to use this material in my thesis. But in the first place they didn't approve the thesis, second place I hadn't proved I could write a play. They had one proposed option, another that I considered. (laughs) Even worse. And finally, the suggestion that came about that I major in history was because of this paper, you see. It all originated with this paper. It was a long paper. I put a lot of work in it. I reported in my letters about somebody very heartless, somebody who checked through it twice, took notes. So I, it was a big success.

Sheehy: You had a lot invested in it.

Barnard: But when it came to doing it, I wanted to carry on with this same thing with my thesis. But I wanted to do it in dramatic form. Finally, I did do a draft and realized that this was not going to work. And then decided I would use poems that I wrote to go in the play and other poems, and offer a selection of poems. That was sort of the last straw. (both laugh) But finally, I think they gave in because they were getting as desperate as I was.

Sheehy: Well I'm very curious after hearing you went through that experience, to read your *Confessional* in your thesis and to realize, as I think you mention in your book, that you were called upon to write something else for the thesis, some type of critical piece about poetry, and I assume that's what the *Creed* [from her thesis] is.

Barnard: Yes.

Sheehy: And both of those writings strike me as one of the most elegant expressions of both defiance and a declaration of independence I've ever read at Reed College. And after the struggles you went through with the thesis topic, I'm just curious as to how the *Confessional* was taken at Reed?

Barnard: Oh, it went over big.

Sheehy: Did it?

Barnard: At least, I don't know how Cerf felt about it. Anyway, I had a little fun with my orals. That one play−

[tape 2, side B ends, tape 3, side B begins]

Barnard: I feel that I got a well-rounded education at Reed College because these people were so diverse. They were coming at me from different directions. But on the other hand, it was uncomfortable because often I thought they were getting at each other through me. And this was particularly true in the orals. There I sat, a little girl, and all these people around, all men. And Cerf asked me which was truer, history or literature. And I said—I knew that he was trying to get at Rex Arragon [who was sitting there]—I said, "Well, if you want me to answer that question, I'll have to define truth first. And he said, "Oh, well I wouldn't want you to do that!" And Rex went, "Ha, ha, ha, she'd have to, though." And that was the high point of it for me. I got out of that one.

Sheehy: You were clearly in a jam there. So the orals went along the same lines, you felt. They were using you as a conduit?

Barnard: Well, I didn't feel that they were there, but there was this division in the culture. That is the only specific thing I can remember. But there was Lloyd saying, "You should transfer to history." That was not about the one I just told you, but I can remember there was some division.

Sheehy: I was just wondering. You don't have to answer that question.

Barnard: And oh, [unclear]

Sheehy: Well, what comes through in the *Confessiona,l* certainly, is that you pay respect to all the professors and their transmission of knowledge.

Barnard: Yes! Oh, yes.

Sheehy: But at the end, you also find your own voice. That also comes out in the *Confessional*. Did you have that feeling at the end of the process? Did you feel—you had such trouble going into the thesis process—it sounds like you're triumphant by the end of it. Had you found something of yourself as a poet in that process?

Barnard: I don't know. I'm not sure what you mean.

Sheehy: Well, the voice that comes through in the *Confessional* is one that's saying in essence, "I'm going *my* way."

Barnard: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Sheehy: So at the end of the process, then, did you feel satisfaction with your thesis experience?

Barnard: Well, yes. I was happy about it, I think, because it was generally accepted as having been a success in spite of everything. I included Chittick's remark that "the pedagogy juggernaut has been overturned by a butterfly."

Sheehy: Yes. That's a beautiful saying. I want to ask you a little bit, Mary, about how you look back upon Reed at this time, unless there's something else that you wanted to share about the thesis with me. But looking back at Reed now, there was one sentence I noticed in your memoirs, where someone had said, "Reed can be bad for some. It's the first place they ever felt at home. And they spend the rest of their life looking for what they had found there, and never finding it." Now, I take it that you don't identify yourself as being one of those people?

Barnard: No.

Sheehy: But did you have any of that feeling after you left Reed, that you had found−

Barnard: Oh, well, I felt, I think we all felt just miserable when we left Reed that year. Because that was the worst year of the Depression. They hadn't got any of the things—well, Roosevelt was elected that year—but they hadn't got anything in place to try to get career training. And none of us just knew what we were going to do. This one friend of mine who got this fellowship to Radcliffe, Jane Ruby ['33], then graduated in '32, no, she graduated a year later, but she stayed on and did her master's and was an assistant for a year. So it was a full two years before she was out. But there were people who couldn't even go home because their families didn't have anything. I could at least go home, but we were short of fuel and my [unclear]. It just looked so hopeless. I had a friend who stayed on campus and worked in the library, and I'd see her sometimes. But, anyway, it was very hard.

Sheehy: Well, looking back a little bit from this point in your life, what are the things that you see in your life that carry through from the Reed education? Was Reed helpful in any way? What is it you value about your time at Reed?

Barnard: Well, I can't imagine. It's like asking me about supposing I had different parents than what I had, you know. (laughs) I wouldn't be me.

Sheehy: Without Reed?

Barnard: I certainly think it was the place for me. That I wouldn't have been happy anywhere else, as happy as I was there. Of course, there were times when I wasn't happy. But on the

whole, I didn't want to be somewhere else. I wanted some things to be better than the way they were. But I didn't want any place else.

Sheehy: Is there any quality about Reed that you valued most over life? Is there anything that stands out for you that you learned there that−

Barnard: Well, I think I said this in *Mount Helicon,* that I felt that Reed gave us a very good outline for an education. Didn't I say something like that? That it was a good basis to go on from. Of course, Reed was not an entity apart from all those people I studied with. One thing that I had that I felt was a boon, but I don't think they've had it since, was the general science course. Of course, the science professors all hated it because the only people who took general science were girls who were majoring in literature. [both laugh]

Johnson: Dorothy Johansen ['33; Reed Professor of History, 1934-1984] took it. She was majoring in history.

Barnard: Well, history or literature or languages, maybe. But I'm going to say this, too. That I don't think that there was ever a time when these subjects [history, literature, languages] were so much women's subjects. Men did take them. I remember vaguely they took the classes. They endured the classes. But they majored in science, or economics, or political science. There were just almost no male students majoring in literature or languages. Two or three.

Sheehy: And not humanities?

Barnard: It was a time when there was great emphasis on science, and great emphasis on politics. And actually, you know, literature and poetry writing were more feminine things. Real men didn't do things like that. I think that it was one of Hemingway's hang-ups, because he was just preceding that generation, and he was in the Midwest, and newspaper work and that kind of thing. And he wrote poetry! I think he spent the rest of his life trying to prove that he was a real male! And that changed dramatically. The women keep saying that the women in those days weren't getting proper recognition. Actually, I think that the men had a harder time of it in some ways than the women did. Maybe not in recognition, but once…

Sheehy: In terms of repressing interests in poetry?

Barnard: Yes. There were those who stuck with it and were successful. But it was difficult. Poetry writing was something women did.

Sheehy: Well, I think we're about coming to a close. There are many things that we didn't talk about, certainly, in this short time. But is there anything in your mind that you really want to address that we didn't cover?

Barnard: There's probably something that I passed over and thought I'd come back to, but I can't think of it now.

Johnson: If you think of something special, you can always let us know.

Sheehy: Yes.

Barnard: I felt, when I went to New York, that one of the things that I felt was [with] Marianne Moore, that I didn't measure up−

[end tape 2, side B, begin tape 3, side A]

Barnard: I knew her, well, since I've been reading her letters, I discovered that while she was at Bryn Mawr, she wrote to her mother about some of the girls at Bryn Mawr, and she mentioned one of them as being very Western. Then after she graduated, she and her mother went on her trip to the Panama Canal and around to California, and she wrote, "Mother and I find Western women very creepy." Well, you know, the difference between the 1929 Bryn Mawr and when Marianne graduated in 1909, was a lot more than twenty years and the width of the continent. (laughs) It was two different worlds, almost!

Sheehy: Right.

Barnard: I was talking to a couple of poets recently. One of them had been reading Mary McCarthy's memoirs, in which she mentioned that she would almost rather have gone to Reed when she left Washington. But she was determined to go to Vassar. And I said, "Those Vassar girls of my vintage who made literary history—Mary McCarthy, Elizabeth Bishop, Marilyn [Kaiser?], and Eleanor Clark—I knew Eleanor Clark, I knew [Kaiser?], and I met Elizabeth Bishop late in life. Something about that school—I don't know whether it's Vassar or the

difference between Vassar and Reed, or whether it's the difference between the prep schools they went to before they got to Vassar. But I just couldn't relate to them. And they didn't want to relate to me. So that was O.K. (laughs)

Sheehy: Mary, it's been a real treat meeting with you today, and talking about your times at Reed. I'm always tempted to hear all of your other escapades, because Reed is such a small part of your life. A fascinating life.

Barnard: It has been interesting.

Sheehy: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it.

[tape 3, side A ends, End of interview]

[Transcribed by Teresa Bergen, February 22-27; March 27, 31, 2006; reviewed by John Sheehy, April, 2006; final read by Gay Walker, May 11, 2006]