

Maureen and Mike

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This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

**Oral History Number: 115-001**  
**Interviewee: Clara Thomas**  
**Interviewer: Dennis Kern**  
**Date of Interview: February 1984**

Dennis Kern: —interview between Clara Thomas and Dennis Kern regarding the biography of Fra Dana.

Clara Thomas: I don't know exactly where you want to start because as I say, they had a very real impact on my life, I guess all the way through because I was with them, of course, when I was very young and then shortly before their deaths. It was always the same—this marvelous love and understanding—just a marvelous feeling. She was an absolutely charming person. Very intelligent and very fragile, petite. A caring person, full of gaiety, joy, and life and living. Loved the range, loved to ride on the range. Had a real feeling for the country and everything in it. Gay, as well as this wonderful gift in art that she had.

DK: Do you remember a time, a specific instance, that you might describe that would illustrate the things that you were talking about just now?

CT: Well, let's see. [pauses] One of the things that she later wrote to me about—she had a beautiful blue lady in a very large portrait. You probably have it.

DK: Gabrielle.

CT: Yes, that's the one. That always hung in there in her dining room on the ranch on Pass Creek. It was so marvelous because her husband appreciated and wanted her to go on and have this...to help her all he could with this gift, because he was a wonderful, wonderful man in every way that I ever knew. When she came back from one of the trips over there, she designed and built a little bridge across that little creek that runs through the houses—that sort of goes through the place. It's just a tributary of Pass Creek—goes right through. She built this little Chinese, well, it would be an Oriental bridge. I don't know if it's still there or not. Probably not.

DK: Was that in the painting by Sharp [Joseph Henry Sharp]? By the way, did he ever paint that bridge?

CT: Could be, could be. It could have been. I'm not sure. Caroline was telling me that the Sharps would spend always some time with them at the ranch at Pass Creek. Before she was so ill, she had a marvelous laugh. It was like little silver bells, sort of a rippling laugh that was absolutely delightful. And for all of her artistic ability, she had a very real sense of business and the ranch and all the workings of the ranch. Of course, she was Mr. Dana's absolute confidant [Edwin Lester Dan]. He could talk with her about all the business and all this kind of thing. So she was such a rounded person. She had all the love and the understanding and the background of the

ranch, and then she could go off with these teachers and have all of that life, so her life was very rounded, complete, and so fulfilled in that respect.

DK: How did she meet Ed Dana?

CT: They sort of all grew up together because when she came...at least this is the little bit I know because I didn't pay that much attention to this kind of thing. I used to go visit with my grandparents. I would take them to Pass Creek each year, and then we would visit with all these [unintelligible]. I dearly loved this. As I recall, I would say she came when she was eight or nine years old—or in that area, that time—to Pass Creek. This could be wrong. It might have been, it might have been a different age, but I know that the teen years—you know in between—they were together. Now, let me think who you could see to verify this that's still alive. [pauses] But I know they rode together and worked together. That's all there is to it. Of course, the girls were quite few and far between at that time, and so naturally she would have been one of the very eligible one and she was charming.

DK: Did she go to school—to art school—before she was married, or was it after she was married?

CT: I'm quite sure it was after. As I recall, the little bit of her early, early years, I don't think, they didn't have any wealth. There was nothing. When her mother came out it was the Dimeltee's (?) that had the place, and that was the connection with them and the property. I don't think there was wealth, and I'm sure she couldn't...I could be mistaken, but I'm almost positive that's true. After she was married was when she got herself an opportunity to go on with her art.

This is a little story that I think is delightful. When she and Ed were married, they went out together in the hills. It was in the time when the Mariposa lilies were in bloom, and gathered her a bouquet of these lilies. One time I was there and, of course, the trees were just all over the yard. Too many, really. I said, "How did you plant those trees?"

She just laughed, and she said, "Oh, Ed just threw his hat up in the air, and wherever it fell we planted a tree." So that's the way the trees were planted. Of course, many of them have now to be removed because they were impossible. It kept everything so dark. That was typical of their life. If it was calving time and they would be concerned, maybe the men had worked very hard and weren't available or something, they would take their bed and just stay in the corral, down where they could watch the animals. She was that caring about the business and how it was going, to want to do this kind of thing.

Another time that enchanted me, she and Mr. Dana were in New York during Christmas, and it was a very bad winter here. Lots of snow and the cold. They went to all these lovely shops for special foods and for clothes and everything you could think of that a cowboy would cherish. Gathered these together, put them in a package, and sent them back to Parkman for the

cowboys to enjoy on Christmas Day. They were that kind of people, very, very caring and concerned.

Now, do you have any questions?

DK: I think that the next thing I would like to ask you, of course, we've talked a little bit about Fra Dana's personality already. Is there anything that you could add about her personality? You mentioned the laugh that she had.

CT: She was a very, very petite and fragile person, and yet she had strength if she needed to have it and a very keen mind. Of course, she couldn't have done what she did without, but she had a very keen mind. She was a very intuitive to understand exactly what was going on, whatever was being done and going on. Just absolutely charming. Another thing that proves how great their feeling for people was that ones that worked for them stayed with them for years and years and years. Of course, they were always paid, [laughs] but nevertheless that shows the quality of their association with people.

DK: How did Fra dress? How would she present herself at different functions, different gatherings?

CT: Simply, because she was very envied and sort of a little gossip...but she did go do these things, you see. The other ladies [laughs] very envious and jealous. Some of them very loving and caring, but others not so much so. She would be very conscious of that and be extremely careful never to be ostentatious. She would be very careful. Whenever I saw her, she would just be in ordinary ranch...like you would dress on a ranch. Of course, in dresses. At that time, you didn't wear pants, but she did, I'm sure, when she...probably a riding skirt [unintelligible]. Very simple and very much to good taste—perfect taste.

DK: The reason I ask you that is because I know that the portraits that we have—one by Chase [William Merritt Chase] and one by Alfred Maurer—the way that she was dressed, in one she's dressed in a sort of brown blouse with a large tie. I forget what they call those.

CT: Jabot.

DK: A jabot?

CT: Yes.

DK: In the other, she was dressed in a black dress and hardly any detail shows.

CT: She knew the correct lines and art so well, and her personality was such that she needed nothing to add to—it would detract. She had that kind of personality.

I'm just thinking of this. She did a thing with somebody for a history on her work with Maurer...What's his name?

DK: Alfred Maurer.

CT: Yes, all right. She did this. Now do you know of that?

DK: No, I don't. I know that somewhere in the world is a box full of letters—correspondence between her and Alfred Maurer. I can't find them. They were supposedly at the University [University of Montana?], but in the shuffle of moving things around, these letters have apparently been misplaced. Now, there are some letters in the archives [K. Ross Toole Archives and Special Collections]—correspondence with her family members and so forth. But the correspondence between her and Alfred Maurer, I can't find.

She was doing what as a project with him?

CT: She was interviewing in Great Falls. They have a ranch up at Great Falls that was their own, and that's where they went when they let the property on the reservation go. I was just thinking that you should have that material, and surely must be, maybe in Maurer's...Does he have any records?

DK: Well, Alfred Maurer, I think, died in 1937. As far as his records, apparently someone found some correspondence between he and Fra Dana, because in the catalogue there's a mention that Fra Dana provided the information on how he grounded his canvasses for instance. Her name is mentioned in the catalogue, but there's really not any mention of whether they studied together, what they were doing.

CT: Well, he was the teacher, wasn't he? Or was he?

DK: Well, I don't know.

DK: She may have studied with him like she did with Sharp.

CT: Yes.

DK: You know, have conversations with him. I know she was his student in Cincinnati. Is that correct?

CT: Yes, that's what I understand.

DK: As far as whether she was a student of Maurer's, I'm not sure whether it's like artists often do, get together and collaborate ideas or whether it was a formal student-teacher relationship, I'm not sure. I've heard stories that they studied together in Paris. Maurer, being the first

American Modernist and taking some of the influence from the Modernist movement and Europe. So that's something that I would really like to clarify is all of these that happened with Alfred Maurer and with William Merritt Chase. What they thought of her as a student and as an artist and so forth. These are things that I'm very interested in.

CT: Evidently, the time that she was in Paris would have been, well, through this association. She would be so interested in her painting or whatever she was doing, that she would forget to eat. I guess she did this in Paris, she just couldn't eat because she was so interested in what she was doing. I don't know if there was a time element. I kind of doubt it—that she had to meet a time commitment—but I don't think so. I know she told me she would [unintelligible] meals instead of eating when she should have. As I say, she was extremely petite and very fragile. She gave that appearance, and yet there was this great strength, which I'm repeating myself in saying that.

DK: One of the things that I was going to ask is that in our collection we have the portrait of Fra Dana by Chase and we also have seven paintings by Alfred Maurer, one of which is Gabrielle. Do you know when she acquired those paintings by any chance?

CT: No, I have no idea. I just don't know. She didn't write anything at all in her letter or whatever she sent?

DK: Not that I have available. There may be something. She wasn't one to write much. I could gather that.

CT: No, she was a very private person, very. We always felt, Bob and I, a tremendous honor knowing of these people and being with them. Of course, they loved him just like they did me. [laughs] This is my husband, and there was that same rapport. But they were very private.

DK: I think it was Carolyn [Riebeth]<sup>1</sup> that mentioned that Fra Dana had wanted to adopt you?

CT: Yes, she did. I didn't know about this until very much later, but it would have been a marvelous relationship, I'm sure, because I just really, really loved her. I felt very much at home. It was very happy, whatever time we did have together, which was not nearly enough as far as I was concerned and I'm sure as far as she was concerned. Bob and I felt so deeply because we were able...Bob was flying at that time, and we would fly over from here to Great Falls. Except for her deep concern that we fly only on good days [laughs], she was just thrilled to pieces about this. We wished so much we could have been closer so we could have been more with her, because her days there were very difficult due to illness and lack of family. There wasn't a child.

DK: Did she have a sister somewhere?

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<sup>1</sup> Carolyn Riebeth was interviewed by Dennis Kern on August 24, 1983. See oral history interview OH 106-001, 002, 003.

CT: Yes, she did. Let's see, what was her name?

DK: Was it Edna?

CT: Edna, of course. Yes, Edna, yes.

DK: Was that her half-sister?

CT: Half-sister.

DK: That was what I was wondering. I knew she had a sister.

CT: I'm just almost certain that was true. I just wish it was my grandmother talking to you, because she knew all these things and exactly how it was.

DK: We have many portraits by Fra in the collection. We have all of her paintings that she had at that time when she made the donation. There's a portrait of Sally Chambliss, is it?

CT: I don't know.

DK: Chambliss, C-h-a-m-b-l-i-s-s. Do you know anything about it?

CT: No, I don't know. Now, she in that area, or do you know?

DK: Well, I don't know. I'm trying to find out.

CT: That's not a name that I am at all familiar with. Of course, that doesn't mean anything, but it could have been the names that I would associate with in the area, like from the area around Sheridan [Wyoming] or something, but that name does not sound familiar to me at all.

DK: It's a wonderful portrait, by the way. I don't know if you've seen it. You might have.

CT: No, I don't think I have.

DK: I hope that someday you'll be able to come and visit the collection.

CT: Oh, I want to. When I get to Missoula, I'll certainly do it, yes. She did a portrait of my Great-aunt Katherine that my aunt Katherine very much disliked and I was never in fact crazy about it, but my grandmother just loved it. So she had it in her home always. I didn't know this aunt at the time. She was just a young woman. That's back with the family in Dubuque. I know she did some beautiful work. Just beautiful work.

DK: Where is that portrait now?

CT: In Dubuque. This is where my grandmother was. I have no idea, of course, now. Anyway, she was a unique person and really just charming. A wonderful, wonderful person. Both she and Edwin were really great people.

DK: I guess it was Carolyn that was saying there was a fellow down there by the name of Frank Heinrich (?)?

CT: Yes.

DK: I don't know whether they were courting for a while, or—

CT: He loved her very dearly, but that story I want to do myself. This is why I'm not bringing that in, because this is something that I want to talk about myself. All three of them actually were friends...grew up together whatever this period was. I'm certain, for some reason or other, she could have been, I would say, 12 or maybe a little older or a little younger for this era. Yes, he was my great-uncle, and I dearly loved him.

DK: From what Carolyn said, he was an exceptional person. The kind of person that was a very, very quiet but very strong type. I understand he went to Alaska.

CT: He did. Yes, he makes a great story.

DK: I'll be waiting with anticipation for you to put that together.

CT: I have started a little bit on it, and I hope to go on with it.

DK: We talked a little bit about how she thought of herself as an artist. Could you possibly elaborate more about how she thought of herself as a painter?

CT: This is just my own impression that she would have been extremely humble in her own and to actually say anything, because she wouldn't about her ability or anything. You just saw it in her home, or her homes, and you knew it, but she wouldn't ever elaborate on it. Except, I know she loved it very deeply. She loved her work. It shows. I'm sure you have gathered that. But she would have been extremely reticent about saying it. Well, she didn't have to. It was said for her, which is the greatest.

DK: I know Sharp thought a great deal of her as a painter. Carolyn made that very clear when she mentioned that. How did the people of the community react to her as an artist?

CT: So many of them had no idea of what it was. Then, as I say, I'm sure some of them were very envious, and some of them thought it was just absolutely ridiculous too allow her to go to

Europe like she did. This was unheard of in those days, naturally. For Edwin to do this was ridiculous in their point of view. They had no idea, no idea, of her ability or her true worth. I'm sure they didn't, and many would see those pictures, they would mean absolutely nothing to them—for them to understand or appreciate. Of course, she would never say anything.

DK: Yes. You know the portrait of Gabrielle? The large portrait?

CT: Yes, yes.

DK: It is an exceptionally fine painting, and it's one of Maurer's earliest pieces and one of the most important of his early period. Do you know anything about Gabrielle, the model for the painting?

CT: I would not be too surprised that it wasn't Fra herself, maybe. I want to see it again because I'm sure that I could tell now from...of course, she wouldn't ever say it, [laughs] but I wouldn't be surprised. That picture was always one of my great delights.

DK: It's a beautiful painting.

CT: Yes, yes.

DK: We're trying to come up with the funding right now to get it restored because over the years so many things have happened to it. It'll take about 3,000 dollars to repair it.

CT: To restore it. Yes, because the blues in it would be extremely difficult. But you see, if you can find this...Well, I'm not going to give you all of these, but I have...I have this one letter that she wrote me. She did this when she was in Great Falls so if you can find that woman that stayed with her that you said that Carolyn gave you the [address].

[Break in audio]

CT: [reading from letter] Who painted Gabrielle? She would have looked lovely in that blue. As I knew him well from the years [unintelligible] to photograph.

She had seven. Do you have seven Maurers?

DK: Yes.

CT: Yes, she said he died in 1932. So that doesn't give us a name, but she was a reporter from Minneapolis. So I don't know whether that will help you any or not. As I recall, the painting... [pauses] I just must see it again. I have to see her face, and I would know if it is Fra.

DK: To me, it doesn't look like it is because it's a profile and the nose is so different.

CT: Than Fra? You have some pictures of Fra?

DK: Just the portraits. We have no photographs of Fra. I would love to get some—some copies if you have any.

CT: I looked through some old pictures. I haven't got them all in my hand at the moment, but when I was with the children. Carolyn thought she had one of her but that was not it, but I'll keep looking and see. I'm sure that among some of them that she's there. Of course, she was not one to have her picture taken. [laughs]

DK: Why would that be?

CT: She just was, as I say, a very private person, and she didn't like to have her picture taken. I don't know, there wouldn't be any expressed reason. I know I don't like to have my picture taken. [laughs]

DK: I don't like mine taken either.

CT: I think that's part of it.

DK: Some people have an almost religious belief about it that they don't want their picture taken because it sort of captures their soul.

CT: No, no. She wouldn't, that would not be! No way! She was far too intelligent.

DK: Oh! One question I was going to ask is that many of the items in her collection were Oriental.

CT: She loved them.

DK: Do you know where she acquired these items, or how she acquired them?

CT: When she was in Europe and the Far East. I'm sure she traveled in the Far East. As a matter of fact, this tea set that I have over there was Mrs. Dana's. She willed that to my mother and some silver to me. This is typical of what she...and of course, it's silver. Exquisite, because this is this very difficult pattern and this blue [color] was lost—how they made this certain blue.

DK: Oh, yes! It's beautiful.

CT: Isn't that lovely? You can see that, it's thin now—cloisonné, it's so difficult to do the little tiny design. [unintelligible] cherish it. I have a very strong sense that we were together before—

she and I and [unintelligible]—in the Far East at the moment in that place and time and then in some...well, I don't know.

DK: In another life you met?

CT: Yeah. Oh yes. In another life. There's no question because we could have carried right on. It was just as if we had always been together.

Do you have any more questions that you would like to...

DK: I'm just curious if she ever talked about her travels at all. Did she mention any significant events while she was traveling that had some effect on her or anything at all like that?

CT: [laughs] This always tickled me. She was enchanted, of course, with Europe, and so she prevailed upon Mr. Dana to go with her on one of these trips. They went through all the places of renown and things, and all he could see was his brand in everything. [laughs] It was not for him. [laughs] He was interested but he just...every place he'd see his brand instead of what was there. I don't think she tried that again, which is obvious. But he did go. Of course, Mr. Dana was very well educated and had been to...I can't think of the name of that place where he went to school, but he was educated to be a minister and so he had great understanding and great appreciation of things.

DK: He was a poet also, wasn't he?

CT: Yes.

DK: There is a book of his poems in the archives.

CT: Oh, is there?

DK: Yes, and some of his letters. I don't know a lot about him.

CT: He was a tremendous person. A very fine man.

DK: You know there's an article in the *Hardin Tribune Herald* dated, I think, 1932 with his...it's an autobiography. It takes up several pages of the newspaper. So he must have been well thought of for them to publish that much.

CT: He was. He was an amazing person and a very good person. We saw him, I think he was 89. It was his birthday, and we had gone up to see them. He loved children, and he was so enchanted with David, who was just a little boy, so he got down on his knees...I don't have it with me here because Davy has it over at his home, but he wrote a poem for Davy on his birthday and he kneeled at the dining room table. They had a table there, and he kneeled there

to write this poem for Davy because he could keep his arm still. He held his arm up on the table to write. Of course, we cherish this very much, this great tribute. Of course, Davy just loved it, and all the children, I think, would love him because of the wonderful way that he...He was, like all of us, very, very upset with the government and the taxes and this kind of thing. So he would just take a bunch of change, and as he'd walk down the streets of, well, wherever he was but I imagine this was Great Falls, and he'd see somebody that looked like they needed something, he'd just give them some money. He said that was his true taxes—those he loved to do. [laughs] He was very aware of the needs of others.

DK: When did he die?

CT: I think it was...Let's see, I don't know if I have that in here. I have some of this, it isn't very much. This is what you have in the archives, isn't it?

DK: Something similar, but it has a blue cover.

CT: Yeah, she had this. Let's see, I might have this. [long pause] Yes, he died in '46. But if you have that autobiography—I hope it's...does better than it ever did with us—from the *Tribune* then that should be something that would tell you a lot about him.

DK: That was in 1932, and I suspect that's about the time they moved to Great Falls.

CT: Yes, when they left the reservation.

DK: Just sort of something that was commensurate with their leaving.

CT: Yes.

DK: But you know he didn't mention Fra once in that autobiography.

CT: She meant too much to him. She's not to be mentioned. That would be my answer to that.

DK: Because I was thinking that from what I understand, she was so important to him as far as keeping the ranch going—

CT: She was.

DK: —why he wouldn't mention her. I was mystified by that.

CT: That would be my answer, and I think it would be exactly right.

DK: I know there's—I imagine it comes from the people around and probably certain envies and jealousy too—there's the rumors that they didn't have a happy marriage. That they were at

odds with each other often. All the things that people assume. From what I understand you saying is that they had a very, very good relationship.

CT: Excellent, excellent. As far as I knew.

DK: I guess in all marriages, not being married myself, I wouldn't have this experience but—

CT: [laughs] Did you go to school with David and Twila? When were you in school in Hardin?

DK: I graduated in 1967.

CT: '67. Oh, no. No, you're much younger. Well, no, as far as I know. He just adored her absolutely, and I'm sure that a lot of this was just because of the jealousy. Always, when you are as large as they were here in the limelight, people love to tell all kinds of things, as I well know, to say and to distract, instead of knowing how great their life was. But their concern, and it was a very deep love, I'm sure, for each other was just great. The only reason that I can see that he wouldn't have said anything there would be that she meant too much to him to have it...because they were extremely private people. Both of them and especially their marriage and their home life would not be...ever said.

DK: That makes it an even bigger target for gossip when people are private.

CT: Oh, yes. Yes, I think you're right. I hadn't thought of that, but it would be true.

DK: I've heard the speculation that Fra and Alfred Maurer had run off together at one point to Europe, and I thought, well, what is this based on. I think it was more likely that they were collaborating artists, and artists like to talk with other artists.

CT: Yes, of course.

DK: Maurer, being the very important artist, it appears to me that Fra picked out those people who would become later known as America's most important artists. Sharp, Chase—all of these people are some of the most important American artists.

CT: I think with her, as I say, her intuitiveness and her talent that she would draw to her, and of course, she had money behind her to do these things, which is terribly important. I'm sure that would have been true, and maybe it probably did look like that to others, that this was true, that she...and of course, [laughs] you can imagine the ones that were...Well, how would I say? They just had no idea of what it was all about so why not make a good...stupid story out of it. It would be interesting.

DK: Well, knowing how artists in general are misunderstood and the stereotypes of artists, I guess one of my objectives would be to clarify all of these rumors as to what meant what,

because I think we're planning on doing a showing when we open the new gallery of her work and Sharp's work together possibly. At that time, we'd like to do a press release and possibly do a little pamphlet—her biography. More than what has been available before. All of these things...I guess being an artist myself, I like to have the facts as they are, not as they are interpreted by—

CT: Right!

DK: —by stereotypes.

CT: This is the thing that immediately when I hear this girl had written about her. Of course, I just had a fit. I felt I should have done this, you see, because it has to be right. It can't be something that's not true. I can understand, because this is true in my own life, she had no need in her mind to either say it's this way or that way. It was nobody's business but her own—hers and the ones who loved her—and so she didn't say anything. Then when there was no family or anything...of course, I don't know if that really matters or not. I'm debating that very much myself, but you wanted to be straight and right and carefully done. It's terribly important, because so much is done that is absolutely ridiculous, and some of it very harmful just like this insinuation there. I think that we would agree that true artist are one that is very aware of the world and the beauty—the other part because the sadnesses, and very keenly aware—is a very deeply emotional person, has to be. As we know in that era, just like I was saying, that Edwin would allow her to go to Europe to study no matter what talent—and she certainly did have—that would be unheard of. You just didn't do things like that. Well, in his case he was big enough and had enough vision and love for her to want her to do this. That was part of his love for her. I know it was love from him, very much for her, that made it possible for her to go and to do these things. I don't know. She would make no effort at all. She would not say a word because in her mind, she didn't have to. Which is the way, really, it should be. She left a beautiful legacy in her pictures and the ones that loved her as I did and I know others did, and that's all that needs to be done and be said.

Now, do you have some more questions that I could—

DK: Well, I think that I have covered most of the things that I would like to talk with you about. I would like for you to add anything that you think is important in regards to biographical information about her.

CT: Yes. Part of this ties in with this part I must do. This is terribly important because it's my own family. [pauses] One thing that I would like to be sure—I think it's important to know—she was aware of how ill she was a long time before Mr. Dana was aware. She kept it a secret from him because she didn't want to burden him or concern him. So when he would want her to ride—they loved to ride the ranges together—and she would give him an excuses that she couldn't possibly do it anymore, he couldn't figure out what was wrong. Finally, she had to go

to Rochester and later on the New York and have her trouble diagnosed, but she wanted to save him.

DK: What was her illness?

CT: Cancer. She was telling Bob and me this one of the last times we saw her. He [Mr. Dana] knelt by her bed and he said, "Oh, now. You can't have anything happen to you because who will I have to talk to?" He talked all his ideas and all the business things—business. "Who will I have to talk to if anything happens to you?" So you see the tremendous tie there was between them. She had kept it from him for a long time until it became obvious that something was very wrong. But that was her concern and her love for him. It certainly shows in that that she wanted him to be spared as long as he could be. I know she had...when we were one time in Great Falls with them, he was very ill, and this was just after he had died. She said she had a showing that was due to be done, and she thought, "I cannot do it. It's just impossible."

He said, "Now, Fra"—again it shows how he was so proud of her work—"You must do it. This is important for us and for me." So she got herself in gear and did it and had this showing because of his great desire for her to show what she...her work. This was one of the last big things that I'm sure she had done because it was such an effort. She was so ill that she [unintelligible].

DK: What year was that?

CT: It had to be...Let's see, when did we say he died?

DK: 1946.

CT: '46. It must have been in 1945. I would say it was probably in 1945.

DK: And where was the show?

CT: In Great Falls.

DK: I think I'm beginning to understand a little bit more about her now.

CT: I hope so. I hope so.

DK: For me, there was a real gap in the time she went to art school and the time she left the collection to the University as to why she didn't paint and what happened with her—what kind of person she was.

CT: I'm sure that it was the illness had a great deal to do with it. She just became so weakened. She couldn't do the things. More and more she became debilitated. She just couldn't do these things. Of course, it takes energy and effort, and she just didn't have it. I know she painted at

Pass Creek. She had a very...her studio there that he built, sure that she had exactly what she wanted and how she wanted it exactly. But I don't about after they went to Great Falls that she did any more. I don't think so.

DK: Well, she certainly left the University a wonderful thing. Just the examples of work by Maurer and Chase and then her own work.

CT: I'm so glad.

DK: It's a marvelous thing for students to see.

CT: Yes! This is so important, and it certainly gives one an idea of what to do with things and especially when there was no family.

DK: I guess my understanding was that the museum in Great Falls did not want the things.

CT: They didn't! What was the matter with them?

DK: I don't know. From what I can gather, is that Fra was so concerned that she find a place for her collection and her paintings and was having a difficult time. I think she had met a couple of the faculty members—the art faculty members in Missoula. Aden Arnold probably, and possibly Jim Dew, and they had...they could probably see the value of the collection.

CT: Of course! Of course!

DK: She agreed to donate it to the museum. At that time, there was a museum at the University, and of course, now the museum's been closed just because there's no money but we still maintain a collection. When the new Fine Arts building is completed in the fall, there will be a gallery that we can have a rotating exhibit. I hope that we'll have her work up at different times for students to see. It's important because of the period. It's excellent examples of period work, and I think that if students were to be able to get to know her as a person—

CT: I see what you mean.

DK: —we can put together a biography—

CT: Yes, I see what you mean.

DK: —they'll have a great appreciation for the kind of thing that brings culture none to an area at that time where there was none.

CT: None at all.

CT: In fact, it was rejected rather than... [laughs]

DK: Right. And it still is.

CT: Yes. Oh yes! I would guess indeed. Yes.

DK: I'm sure that many of these students will be experiencing the same thing that she did. I know I've experienced that kind of rejection.

CT: Yes, yes. Absolutely. Another thing that was so marvelous that she took advantage...She had the financial backing, and she took advantage of it to do something with it and carry it through to a completion. That was wonderful.

DK: A remarkable person.

CT: He, too, to be able to see, and let her go and do these things.

DK: Yes. Well, I think we've covered about anything I can think of. I would like to take up with this again some time with you after we get the transcript done, and we'll make some notes and I can send you a copy of the transcript—

CT: I'd be very happy to have them.

DK: —as I did with Carolyn. She went through [unintelligible].

CT: Yes, she told me.

DK: I'm really sorry that I forgot to send you [unintelligible].

CT: Perfectly all right. I work in God's time so there is no time. It's just whenever, but I would be very interested to see.

DK: Okay. I will try to send that down to you with the transcript.

CT: That would be nice. No hurry.

DK: Okay.

[End of Interview]