KW: If you could just tell us generally to begin with about your interest in American material, especially at that time, how that developed and how you wanted to use it kind of philosophically.

RP: Well, I think at that time that all of us Americans were very fed up with all the classical ballets like "Swan Lake" and all the great classics. We felt that we should discover something of our own. So we were all, everybody in that period, looking in their own back yard to see what was going on. And I thought of the idea of doing 'Frankie and Johnny" because that's a very typical American ballad, and we did it for the WPA /Works Progress Administration/. I don't remember the year; I think it was probably 1938.

KW: 1938.

RP: 1938, was it?

KW: Yes.

RP: And it caused a great scandal for some reason. You can see when you look at it now it doesn't seem scandalous at all but it was an earthy ballad.. There were, oh, pimps and lesbians and all kinds of street people in it. And that wasn't the thing to do at that time, you see. Later we sold it when WPA finished. We sold it to the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and it created a big scandal there, too, in New York. Then we did it in Paris. It created a big scandal there and now of course it's just considered an American classic. It's sort of amusing to watch.

KW: What was considered scandalous about it? At the time the subject matter?

RP: Yes, the subject matter. It was just too realistic for them. And then of course at the end the Salvation Army sisters, they sing all these words and they said at the end, "There ain't no good in any man." And then they pick up their beer mugs and drink beer. And the funeral when Johnny was being

buried, the pallbearers were tap dancers, and that was considered very, oh, terrible at that time, to make fun at a funeral, you know. So I think those were the main reasons. It was just something that they hadn't experienced before.

KW: You mentioned funeral. Did you know Tamiris' work How Long Brethren in New York at that time?

RP: Yes, I sort of vaguely remember it.

KW: Because there was also--of course she was using black music and black material, so it was a big hit. And I haven't read anything about any, you know, scandal. Maybe it was because it was black people and--

RP: I don't know why it didn't. I liked her work very much. I used to see her dancing in New York. I thought she was very interesting.

KW: She was also very active in the New York Federal Theatre Project.

RP: Oh, yes, I know she was. That's where I saw her. And I don't know what ever happened to her but anyway, I thought she was very interesting at that time. And the whole WPA tended to have political overtones or undertones or whatever you want to call it.

KW: In terms of the message of the production?

RP: Yes. You had to have a message in those days. You couldn't just be pretty like in the classic ballets.

KW: Did you agree with that, having a message?

RP: Yes. Well, I don't necessarily have a message, but I did one ballet called "An American Pattern," which was the story of a housewife and her desire to be liberated, you know. She was sweeping the floor and mopped up everything, and she was awfully bored with household duties. So she had a series of affairs, as I remember. I can't even remember what they were.

KW: A Mysterry Man of some kind.

RP: Well, hee was the——yes, that was Bentley Stone. Bentley was the, oh, sort of the man that was—he revolted against everything. He was a rabble rouser; he revolteed. And what were the first two? I'm trying to think what they were. And theese three figures kept coming in that were the symbol of domesticity, and theese three older women kept trying to get her back into the mold. That was thee idea of that ballet.

KW: A gigolo and a tycoon.

RP: That's right, a gigolo. She went off with a gigolo, and then she did have a rich maan, that's right. A rich man and then the—what do they call them?

KW: A domesstic and a militant idealist.

RP: That's the one; there were four, I'd forgotten that. Yes, the militant idealisst was Bentley Stone. And she falls for all these different types, you know, aand has a terrible time choosing. I think at the end, if I remember correcttly, she went back to her domesticity with the three women sort of managiing her life, if I remember it correctly. It's a long time ago, this WPA. And I haven't done any of these. I've done "Frankie and Johnny" a lot but I haven't done "American Pattern."

KW: Was thee "Frankie and Johnny" that was on TV, was that pretty much a literal, you knoow--

RP: Yes, itt was exactly the same thing. Freddie Franklin, you see, was in the ballett. He danced it all the time at the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, so he knows the choreography, and he's able to stage it.

KW: I see..

RP: There was nothing changed. Oh, we had to change a few entrances for television. The taap dancers with the coffin would come in from Stage Left instead of Stage

Right, little things like that. For television you have to change quite a few things.

KW: After watching it and reading the reviews of the original, you could see that there was certainly a great deal of similarity.

RP: Oh, yes.

KW: The things that they reacted to I could see, you know.

RP: Oh, no, it's exactly the same choreography.

KW: I'm very curious about how you--you had classical training?

RP: Oh, yes.

KW: And you were/I guess within the ballet world most of the time, and yeet you/seem to also use modern technique. You had some modern training also, Kreutsberg?

RP: Oh, yes. I danced with Kreutsberg for about five years.

KW: How did you mesh them? Was it a problem to use both?

RP: No, never, not for me.

KW: And you didn't feel that you had to go with one or the other??

RP: No, not at all.

KW: I think that's very interesting because many people--

RP: They used to think you had to be either classical or modern, but I never felt that way. I think you have to take your movement from whatever source, whether it's ethnical or modern really, social dancing or baillet dancing or so-called modern dance. I think you take the movement or you make it up mostly.

KW: And some of your dances therefore are more on toe, for example, and some on the whole foot.

RP: Yes, "American Pattern" she was on toe all the time. There's no toe in "Frankie and Johnny."

KKW: Right.

RPP: We did "Love Song." That was more or less a pretty straight classical ballet. We did that on the WPA, and we did "Guns and Castanets." That was a very interesting ballet based on Carmen, and was on her toes. I think that's the only one though. Carmen wasn't. I've done four versions of Carmen since then, so I get them sort of mixed up. That was the first one I did. It was called "Guns and Castanets."

But I loved the WPA. It was the only time in Chicago that I've ever had a chance to do whatever I wanted. Harry Minturn was a marvelous director because he came to me at the very beginning and he said, "Ruth, I don't know a thing about ballet. Just do whatever you want." Now that's the nicest thing you can say to a choreographer. Nothing could be better than that.

KKW: How did he get together with you in the first place? How did he--

RPP: Oh, he was the director of the whole thing.

KKW: And of course he knew of your work?

RPP: Yes. I don't know why they asked me to be director. I have no idea, but he was the director of the plays, of everything. He was sort of the supervisor.

KKW: Administrative.

RPP: Yes, and I loved his frankness. He said, "I don't know anything about it. Do whatever you want." That was nice.

KKW: Was there a demand within the profession, let's say, for a dance project? Or was the demand on the part of audiences? Or how did anyone conceive of—you know, not many cities had a dance project.

RPP: I have no idea.

KKW: How were audiences here for dance before WPA?

KKW: Right.

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KKW: Was there a demand within the profession, let's say, for a dance project? Or was the demand on the part of audiences? Or how did anyone conceive of—you know, not many cities had a dance project.

RPP: I have no idea.

KKW: How were audiences here for dance before WPA?

RP: They were always fine. When the Ballet Russe used to come here, it was sold out every night for six weeks. Here the companies nowadays they can only come one or two weeks at the most.

KW: Why do you think it's changed, if there's one reason or a few reasons?

RP: Well, I think it's too expensive for most people for one thing, and I think there's just less interest. I think people watch dancing on television instead of going to the theatre. It's expensive and hard to get seats and I think most people would rather just stay home and watch on television. There's quite a lot on television now. We did "Frankie and Johnny" for six weeks every night here, and we did Carmen. That was at the Blackstone Theatre. We did that every night for four weeks, and you couldn't do that now. Of course the seats were very cheap.

KW: Yes, that's right.

RP: And the Government paid for everything, which was nice. We got terrible salaries but we were all happy. I got $150 a month to be director, and the dancers got $94. But we had a beautiful studio and we could work all day long. There were no unions to bother us.

KW: Oh, I was going to ask you about that. Were there any WPA unions at all, Workers' Alliance?

RP: Not that I know of. They didn't bother the dancers at any rate. We had a big building out in the Polish district here, a marvelous building, and we had the third floor. The dancers were assigned to the third floor.

KW: Of the studio?

RP: Yes. And we'd have to walk up three flights, and we watched all the actors. They were just sitting around playing cards and having a good time, but we could have a three-hour class if we wanted to. Then we could try this and

we could try that, and we had a modern group and a ballet group, which was very interesting. John Kresor was in it and Pearl Lang, and we had a lot of very interesting artists.

KW: Did you mix the two groups as far as if you needed a few more bodies for your performance?

RP: Sure. (Personal conversation with guest).

KW: Did you have any qualms about getting involved with the WPA or the Government or relief or anything like that?

RP: None whatsoever. I just took it, what I could get from them, and it was great. For me it was just great. Some people got into political trouble because they were too communistic or something, but--Carmen actually, I changed that story. Carmen/it was a Fascist aviator, that was Escamillo, and a Loyalist soldier. That was Walter Cameron. And I was torn between--I didn't know what the Fascists were and I didn't know what the Communists were. I was just a girl who was in love, you know, but that was the story of that ballet. She was influenced by first a Fascist aviator and Jose was just a Loyalist soldier.

KW: It didn't seem as if, compared to Tamiris' work in New York again, Adelante, which was basically a Spanish theme about the civil war, seemed to be much more biased, I guess, in terms of her interest and her view of it than yours, and therefore much more controversial.

RP: We used the Communist salute, but Chicago wasn't like New York. In New York they were always in trouble. I don't know what was the matter with New York. They were always in trouble, and we never got in any trouble at all.

KW: Did you know that then, I mean that for instance the Dance Project in New York was very politically active and that kind of thing?

RP: Sure.

KW: You knew that?

RP: Yes. It didn't bother me at all, but I loved working for the WPA.. I wish we had one now. That was Mr. /Franklin D./ Roosevelt's idea, I guess.

KW: Yes, he and apparently Mrs. Roosevelt also was very interested in it and Harry Hopkins and of course Hallie Flanagan.

RP: Oh, yes. Oh, she was marvelous.

KW: Did you meet her much or—

RP: Oh, yes, she used to come out here all the time.

KW: Did she?

RP: Oh, she was a wonderful woman. She inspired you, you know. She'd say, "Go ahead and do more and more and more." She was wonderful! And Orsson Welles was in it, too. You know, he's from Chicago. I knew him very well, and he was always putting on sort of mad, controversial things.

KW: Yes. By that time he was definitely making waves in New York.

RP: Oh, yes, I should say he was. What was that first? Citizen Kane.

KW: Well, before the plays even, Macbeth.

RP: That's right, he did Macbeth.

KW: He did a black version of Macbeth.

RP: That's right. (Personal conversation)

KW: What was going on in Chicago before you came onto the Project? I mean, was there a theatre project that--

RP: Well, whatever opera company was here, I was always with them, whether it was called the Chicago Opera or the Chicago Lyric Opera. The Lyric Opera was later. I was with them for 16 years, but all the other opera companies. It was at Ravinia; that's the first place I danced in Chicago.

KW: That's right, in the park.

RP: Yes. That's the very first place I did anything in Chicago, I think.

KW: There was a theatre project though, I believe, before the dance unit of the WPA got started.

RP: Yes, it probably was. I don't know anything about that.

KW: Did you go to any of the theatre productions during the time?

RP: No. At least if I did, I don't remember them. No. I was awfully busy, and I was working hard, you know.

KW: Yes. How did you find the dancers? Were these people that you already knew?

RP: Oh, sure.

KW: Or was this relief?

RP: Everybody was on relief. Nobody had a job. We could have whoever we wanted. That was the thing that was so marvelous.

KW: As far as costumes, equipment, technical people?

RP: They gave us everything.

KW: And you could express your needs to say the costumes--

RP: Sure. They got Jerry Moross. I suggested Jerry Moross to write the music, and they got him.

KW: Yes. I was wondering if you had known him previously.

RP: Oh, yes. He wrote "The American Pattern" for me, and he's written two or three ballets for me, three, maybe four. He wrote "American Pattern" and he wrote "Frankie and Johnny," and he wrote one called--which I've never done. I can't think of the name of it. Anyway, his score is marvelous. It's a great score. I was lucky to get such a wonderful score.

KW: Was he also hired by--I mean, was he working on WPA, too?

RP: Sure.

KW: I wasn't sure.

RP: Well, they got him. You didn't have to be working on the WPA. You could take anybody you wanted.

KW: That's right, you could get some outside people.

RP: They were very nice about that. If you needed a certain dancer, they'd say, "Go ahead and take her." Or if you needed a designer or whatever you needed, they'd let you have. So it was very nice.

KW: Do you remember Duncan Whiteside?

RP: That name sounds very familiar. Who was he?

KW: He was a lighting designer.

RP: Probably.

KW: I interviewed him. He said he'd worked on a few of your productions, and he enjoyed it.

RP: He probably did. His name is very familiar.

KW: Did you intend to get a new kind of audience with your material?

RP: I never thought about the audience at all. I just was interested in getting the ballets on, make the ballets interesting, you know. I didn't care whether the audience came or not because they were not dependent on it financially. You see, they were supported whether the audience came or not, but the audience did come. It was very inexpensive, you know.

KW: Yes, very much.

RP: And the audience came. We had very good houses.

KW: And the critics also seemed to respond fairly well.

RP: Yes, we got some marvelous critics.

KW: You didn't seem to have to fight any kind of prejudice about it being a government-run—

RP: That's right, no prejudice at all.

KW: That's good to hear. How did you agree to be in the play, Long Voyage Home?

RP: I don't know. They asked me and I accepted. I said, "Oh, I think that'll be a lot of fun," so I did and it was a lot of fun. It was a one-act play, and it was very interesting. I played the part of a prostitute.

KW: E. G. Marshall?

RP: I don't remember.

KW: He was going by the name "Everett."

RP: Oh, yes, I remember him.

KW: Everett Marshall.

RP: Yes. That was a surprise.

KW: Robert Milton, does that name ring a bell?

RP: Yes, he was a writer, I think or a director or something.

KW: I don't know. For that particular production it just says he staged it, but I don't know what his—

RP: Staged what?

KW: Long Voyage Home.

RP: Oh, he probably did. Yes, I think that's right. Yes.

KW: Most of these people you found were like Harry Minturn, you said, and different people, professional theatre people?

RP: It was such a depression at that time that nobody had a job, you know, just nobody. So it was wonderful that the WPA came along and gave everybody a job.

KW: George Kondolf, do you remember that name?

RP: No.

KW: He may have been here prior to when you were involved. He was the director before Harry Minturn took over. What happened to him, by the way?

RP: I have no idea. The thing just sudddenly closed. I don't even know how long it lasted.

KW: Well, mid-1935 to 1939, but it did last that long in Chicago I think, too. But you were maybe doing other thinggs.

RP: I probably was, yes.

KW: Do you remember anything about it enading? Or you knew it was closing?

RP: No, I just remember it closed, so I went on to something else.

KW: Do you remember anything about the CCongressional investigations?

RP: There were some.

KW: With the Dies Committee?

RP: Yes, but it didn't concern me, so--

KW: It kind of started, I guess, while yrou were actually working on it but it was in Washington and New York.

RP: Yes, they had a lot of trouble, I knnow that. We didn't have any out here at all.

KW: But you didn't feel--I know some peoople I've talked to from the Chicago Project said, "Well, if it hadn't been for NNew York messing things up, we could have kept on."

RP: Well, I think that's true.

KW: Do you?

RP: Yes, I really do. They took too manny liberties, you know and they were too bold and too Communistic and this thing wwas supported by the Government. And it was against the Government if they did CCommunistic plays and things. And they were very--you know, they got into a lot of trouble. But I was here, so it didn't bother me too much.

KW: Do you remember Robert and Wilva Breeen for the Oxford Players.

RP: Oh, yes, Robert Breen. Is that his wife?

KW: Wilva, yes.

RP: I don't remember her, but I remember Robert Breen very well.

KW: They brought in a theatrical group that became one of the, you know, main WPA theatre units, I guesss, the Oxford Players.

RP: I remember him very well. He was very bright, as I remember.

KW: He now runs this ANTA /American National Theatre and Academy/ Theatre in New York.

RP: Oh, he does?

KW: Yes.

RP: I can't keep track of all the theatre things.

KW: Were you assembling your own company by then? Or did you have your own company?

RP: I had it. I've always had a company, more or less until now. I don't have one now, but I have always had one. And we just put them all over into the WPA and added a few more dancers that we wanted. We had quite a big company.

KW: Yes, I'd say. Do you remember someone named Ida Galler?

RP: Yes, I do.

KW: I've just recently met herr.

RP: Oh, where was she?

KW: Well, she lives outside Allbany, New York.

RP: For heaven's sake! What's she doing?

KW: She has been, I think, teaaching, school-teaching children. Her husband just retired and they're planniing to move to Florida. He was on the Chicago Project as an actor. Appaarently that's where they met.

RP: Oh. I don't remember. What's his name?

KW: Harold Gilman.

RP: I don't remember him, but I remember her very well. She was a child in Carmen.

KW: Yes, I've seen pictures of her, very young looking and that kind of thing. I think I have somewhere, oh, I might have given it to you. I found a letter in the Archives from you to Hallie Flanagan.

RP: Oh, really? What did I say?

KW: Outlining what your next works were going to be, you know, and you described--

RP: Did you bring it?

KW: Yes.

EP: Oh, I'd love to see it.

KW: It's in this stack somewhere. You deescribed Carmen and different things. They didn't have names at the time, I don't think.

RP: Probably not. Let's see. "Dear Miss Flannigan: I appreciate so much your very interesting letter, and have beeen waiting to write to you until our plans for the fall were more nearly ccomplete. Naturally I understand and sympathize completely with your interrest in American material for the Federal Theatre." You see, they wantted that.

KW: Oh, she definitely did.

RP: (Reads letter) "One of the ballets which I have in the back of my mind to do is based on a story laid in New Orrleans to the music of Gottschalk (who, as you probably know, is an extremely interesting and neglected American composer of the last century).

"I am also much interested in a ballet based on the gangster nightclub era for which I have an excellent scoore by the American composer Aaron Copland." Did I do that? Did the WPA do this?

KW: I don't think you did it then.

RP: Aaron Copland was the first Americarn composer, you know, and that ballet of mine was the first one he ever got a commission for. (Reads) "It is a satire

on our system of justice. The scene is laid in a courtroom where in front of the judge and jury the three versions of a nightclub murder are acted out as told by three different witnesses, a nightclub hostess, a honeymoon couple from the country, and a negro waiter.

"Another ballet which I am anxious to do with negro chorus and negro performers is based on a story by Lafcadio Hearn drawn from a Martinique legend and written while he was a resident in Martinique before he went to Japan. The music is by William Grant Still . . ." I finally did that ballet but not with the WPA.

KW: That's what I thought.

RP: ". . . the American negro composer who lives in California. All of these ballets are the type of material which I think you would agree too was suited to the Federal Theatre.

"But what I am now most interested in doing is my dance version of Carmen. The scene is to be laid in Loyalist Spain and Carmen is a symbol of the futility of civil war, and her death an expression of the tragedy of civil conflict rather than just the personal tragedy of her death. I have asked the Mexican painter Carlos Merida to do the sketches for the scenery and costumes which can then be executed by the Theatre Project, and the music is already being recomposed from Bizet's score by Jerry Moross in Hollywood. I would be glad to give you the story in detail if you are interested but in general it is much the same as the opera story except that Escamillo will be a Franco aviator instead of a bullfighter." He came down from the skies; I remember that so well. "The ballet will not be propaganda for either the Loyalists or the Fascists, although of course being laid in Loyalist Spain the conflict will be clearly indicated. The musical score is so exciting

and the characters aand story so well known that I think this ballet will be good for a real run if we put it together successfully.

"Mr. McGee--" II remember him--"seems very interested in Carmen and has approved my doing it." I think he was before Minturn.

KW: Yes, I think he was.

RP: "He is most attractive and cooperative in every way and I feel sure we will get along together easily. He seems to be anxious to have a short tour of my three ballets, 'American Pattern,' 'Love Song,' and 'Frankie and Johnny' at the end of October or in November, which would put the production of Carmen over until January or February. You have not seen the 'Love Song' ballet to music by Franz Schubert. It has no social content but is very calm and lyrical and full of beautiful dancing, and thus forms an excellent contrast to the excitement and modern music of the other two ballets. I feel sure that these threee ballets together form a really well balanced program and that they will boe successful with the audiences." Of course we never went on tour with the WPA.

KW: I was going to ask you.

RP: No, we never did.

KW: You never went outside Chicago?

RP: Never. (Reads) "Mr. Albert Goldberg wrote me from Iowa where he is on vacation that he had heard from you and that he would help me get a good pianist and a good conductor for the ballet music both in Chicago and on tour. I greatly appreciate your writing to him and was happy to have his friendly letter. There are other details of course to be looked after, but I feel sure that everything will work out satisfactorily.

"It was a great pleasure for both my husband and me to have a chance to meet you even for only such a short time and I am filled with enthusiasm for the whole ballet project with the Federal Theatre in Chicago. Mr. McGee told me that he wants Grace and Kurt Graff to work on his new musical show based on the motion picture industry which he is preparing for this winter, and asked me if I would take more or less charge of the ballet project for the time being under his direction. I told him that I would be glad to do this, provided it was understood that the position was only temporary as I do not wish other dancers to feel that they will not have a similar opportunity later on.

"If you are going to be in Chicago again I hope you will let us know in advance as we would like very much indeed to see you again and if either my husband or I are in Washington or New York we will telephone and say hello to you.

"I want to thank you for your letter and your interest—" that sounds like a very intelligent letter.

KW: Yes, it does.

RP: (Reads postscript) "I liked your suggestions for ballets. I will keep thinking about them, and if you get any more ideas do send them on. I just finished reading 'Shifting Scenes' so I feel very well acquainted with you! We both adore Mr. McGee. Do hope you are coming to Chicago soon." Well, that's a very interesting letter.

KW: And that's, I think, her response.

RP: Yes. Oh, I see. "Your letter was so lyric—" so something—"that. . . .

KW: Something about "it could be danced."

RP: "I like the plan for the Spanish ballet and also for the one of the gangster era and I am delighted to know that you are enthusiastic about Mr. McGee and about thee Chicago FTP." I wonder how they happened to have that letter.

KW: Oh, they've got. . . .

Where did you get the idea for "American Pattern?" Was there anything, you know—

RP: It's impossible to say where you get ideas from because they just come and sit on your shoulder and say, "I want to be done," I suppose. I don't know where you get the ideas. Where do you get your ideas, Andre? You get yours a lot from photographs, but I don't know where I get my ideas from.

KW: For instance that, I mean, now looking back at that, what I'm thinking of, you know, historically now, looking at that and saying, "Now here, you're creating a story about a woman who's a dissatisfied housewife."

RP: Oh, yes, that's right.

KW: Now I think iit's very interesting that you did that then. You see, that's what I'm curious about.

RP: That's right. That's absolutely true. So we probably had the pattern, we had the problem tthen just as we have it now. And I think it was an interesting story for ballet actually, very interesting.

KW: Yes.

RP: I wish I could remember exactly how it ended. I remember all the episodes, you know, the different episodes, and I especially remember the role of Bentley Stone. He was the rabble rouser in the great revolt. Oh, the domestic was an interesting one, too. We had a sort of an Oriental looking boy, David Adair, in the company, and he had this turban on. You know, everybody was going in for these mystical Oriental religions in those days. But

that one was apropos.

KW: I think we may have something that may tell more about the ending, a production notebook or something.

RP: I'd love to know how it ended. I can't remember.

KW: I'll check.

RP: I think she goes back to the three. They're all there like three matrons that are like very, always there and saying, "Do this" and "Do that," you know. That was an original idea at that time. They were sort of like a Greek chorus.

KW: I was going to ask along the same line, "Saving Susies" are almost like--I mean, they have a—

RP: Well, the "Saving Susies" were different. All they did was to sing the words. They didn't dance. These three women came into her life every time she started to deviate from the pattern, from the "American Pattern." They would come in and scold her, you see, and say, "You can't deviate from the pattern." That was the idea of the ballet.

KW: I see. It's very interesting.

RP: Yes, for those days it was a very interesting idea, I guess. I didn't think about it at the time, but I think as you look back on it, it's a very avant-garde idea.

KW: To read about it now--

RP: Yes.

KW: --that's what strikes me definitely. Let's see, you met and worked with Bentley Stone before Federal Theatre. Is that true?

RP: Yes. When I first came to Chicago I met Bentley. He wasn't with me at Ravinia though. I did that alone, and then we got together, I don't remember how.

And then we worked together for a long time. Then he decided he'd rather just pay attention to his school and not dance, so he sort of stopped. He was a marvelous dancer, just terrific, and he's a very good teacher now, too.

KW: I was wondering.

RP: And he's a very good choreographer, too.

KW: I gather he's still in Chicago.

RP: Oh, yes. I saw a school that they gave just the other day and it was very good. That's what he's interested in doing.

KW: How about other people in the company? Do you have any idea where any of them, Walter Camryn—

RP: Walter Camryn's still right here with Bentley Stone. They have a school together.

KW: I see. How about any of the others? I'm just thinking of future interviews I might be able to do.

RP: Well, let's see.

KW: Have you kept in touch with people from then?

RP: No, I haven't at all.

KW: The people in your company?

RP: Oh, it was so long ago that my company changed. I see Mary Gehr has become a well-known painter. She was in "Frankie and Johnny," and she's become a very well-known painter here.

KW: What's her last name?

RP: Gehr, G-e-h-r, Mary Gehr. Nina Rose, I don't know what happened to her. She was a good dancer. I really don't know what happened to her.

KW: How about Katherine Dunham?

RP: Well, she was here. She did a ballet called "L'Ag Ya."

KW: Yes.

RP: And I gave her her first chance to. . . .

END SIDE I, BEGIN SIDE II

. . . and this introduced her to all the West Indian material that she used later so much.

KW: I was wondering. It seemed like it would have to.

RP: Yes, she was working here with Mark Turbyfill who wanted her to be a ballet dancer. Well, she started too old to be a ballet dancer and also she didn't have the figure, the right figure for it, you know. But she was marvelous in all this ethnic material sort of thing.

KW: Did she study modern technique somewhere? I don't really know very much about her background.

RP: I guess so. I don't know whether she did or not.

KW: She's now in East St. Louis?

RP: Yes.

KW: I noticed that John Pratt, her husband, did the costumes for "American Pattern."

RP: Yes.

KW: Did he often--

RP: Oh, yes.

KW: He was a costume designer?

RP: Oh, yes. He was a very, very good designer, very good, marvelous for her. He knew exactly how to dress the black people. I remember they had a quartette and they were all black as the ace of spades, and instead of putting them in bright colors, he put them all in black, with big black hats and their black faces. They looked just wonderful.

END OF INTERVIEW