

VDC Interview Transcript
Elaine Valois

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OhioDance
Riffe Building
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Columbus, OH 43215

Key:

CF: Candace Feck

EV: Elaine Valois

MDB: Megan Davis Bushway (VDC film team)

JD: Jane D'Angelo: (OhioDance Director)

CF: I'm Candace Feck, and I'm talking with Elaine Valois at the offices of OhioDance in Columbus, OH on October 15, 2018.

It's good to finally meet you in person!

EV: It's good to be here!

CF: Elaine, were you born in northwest Ohio?

EV: I was born in Napoleon, Ohio. It was an at-home birth with a midwife, and I lived in the same home I was born in until I went to college.

CF: I understand that you attended Bowling Green State University, and also studied in Paris, at the Sorbonne. But I don't know whether you studied dance as a young girl, and if so where?

EV: Well, I was a very active child, and when my mother decided that I needed some direction for my energies, she took me to my Aunt Augusta's nursery school in the basement of the library. So my Aunt Augusta had a way of dealing with me: when I was getting too involved and too rambunctious, she would say "Come on, Elaine. Let's dance!" She would play the piano — and she was the kind who would bang the piano and put her foot on the sound [pedal] — and I would get up and I would just do whatever I wanted to do, so that seemed to settle me for a while. So, she was kind of the start, really: "Come on, Elaine — let's dance." Then, when I was about six, my mother took me to a tap-dancing school...you see, that's all that was there then, right? So, I was performing a cowboy tap dance at the recital. I had the cowboy hat and the boots and the glad rag and was dancing away, when my glad rag came loose and fell to the floor. I just kept on dancing; as I kept on, I reached down to get my glad rag, and didn't miss a step. I put my glad rag back on and I finished the dance! Everybody applauded, and thought I was very clever, but when I left the stage, my teacher *scolded* me, saying "You should *never* have tried to pick that up! You should have just left that on the floor!" And I looked at her and thought "I thought I was very clever to be able to do such a trick!" And on the way home, I told my mother "I'm not going to that school anymore." And she said "Why?" [I said] "She's *not* a good teacher!" And so I didn't go back. Those were my experiences. And as I grew

older, we did our own shows — I was always in the theater somehow and then, come to find out my grandmother, who was born in Marseilles, France, was part of a circus. She was a circus performer with her brother and her uncle, and when she came to America, there were no circuses here in America, but there were some touring theatre shows —like the Minsky Theatre and things like that. And my grandfather, who was from Heidelberg — actually he was from “Eversdorf, he went to school in Heidelberg. I was told he knew Carl Jung,¹ and he was an ordained Lutheran minister. And he was given his fortune to go to the New World and he saw my grandmother performing in “Peck’s Bad Boy”² — she was a character actress — and he was a “stage door Johnny,” always bringing her flowers, and he finally asked, “Would you please marry me?” and she says “I’m awfully sorry, John, but I can’t leave the theatre.” So *he* joined the theatre and left the church! So there we go: this was my history, my heritage — but I knew very little of it, nobody told me these things, but here we are doing this stuff all the time! And we did one, in junior high school with two of my friends, and it was called “The Ladies of the Mop.” It was about three cleaning ladies, who clean up the theater after the show, and then they would imagine that they were also performers and they would re-enact scenes...and lo and behold, years and years later, here comes Carol Burnett with her “Mop Lady.” And I wanted to say “We did that first!” (laughing) But we were always involved in the theatre, and I was a latecomer in terms of learning any kind of real technique. I am small, and I went to Jacob’s Pillow and I was told. “Well, Elaine, there are probably only two jobs in New York City for you.” And I said, “Well, what’s that?” And he said the end line — the girls on the end of the line of the Rockettes — they’re only five feet tall, too, and he says “That’s about all you’re going to get.” And I thought, “Oh dear, that’s a shame,” but that isn’t the kind of dance I was interested in anyway. So I began to answer my own inner inquiry about what it was that I liked to do. And I realized that I wanted to somehow have a beneficial effect on the human beings who explored the medium called movement and dance. I became really fascinated with the idea that movement is the means whereby we can create an artform unlike any other. It wasn’t Ballet anymore; it wasn’t Folk-dancing or any of the set skilled forms. The vocabulary was *open*. The vocabulary is movement itself! And then I began to find other like-minded people, like Twyla Tharp, who was an explorer in movement — and it became the “Movement Movement” — do you remember back then? The “Movement Movement!” And so actually, Jacob’s Pillow was my introduction to the world! And I became very, very fascinated with other dance forms throughout the world. There was so much! And that was the seed — that, and Attenborough’s Tribal Eye series;³ the years of 1974/75, he did the *Tribal Eye*, and everything that he ever explored always ended up with the dance forms. It was the same way with Joseph Campbell, the same way with...Frazier... so many and they all said, “I get to the dance and then I seem to be stopped at the pass because I *don’t* know how to explain it. And you know, Joseph Campbell married Jean Erdman, and she was a dancer of that sort, too. She was involved in the alternate ways that the human mind accesses a greater venue in the arts. That’s how art begins. What about these “pioneers”? You know, who did Isadora Duncan study with? Who did Martha Graham study with? She *danced* with Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis. There was no *training* in those days! I even interviewed one of the people who were still living— she was 94 at the time —

¹ 1875 – 1961: a renowned Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded the field of analytical psychology.

² A fictional character created by George Wilbur Peck (1840–1916). First appearing in the 1883 novel *Peck’s Bad Boy and His Pa*, the Bad Boy has appeared in numerous print, stage, and film adaptations. This reference is most likely from the 1884 stage production of Peck’s Bad Boy by Charles Felton Pidgin.

³ Sir David Frederick Attenborough is a broadcaster and historian, who wrote and presented *The Tribal Eye*, a seven-part BBC television documentary series on the subject of tribal art. It premiered in 1975.

she was with the Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis group — the Denishawn Company. Of course, that's where Martha Graham was “born and raised,” you know? And she was telling me all about these people we kind of regard like they're real icons, you know? And they just said, “Well, you look good, you move fairly well, you're attractive — Join our company!” (Laughing) There was no real training in that sense. It was all coming from the heart and the self. And you can go on and on about those people who were un-tutored that entered the world and created forms that we never had before. It began of course in the 60s and 70s — exploring the *world* of dance to gain new access to ideas, and so on. Some worked and some didn't, because they were just copying the forms — you don't copy the form; you become *in*-formed through it, and then it becomes something of yours. And then the wonderful, wonderful Butoh Theatre of Japan! When I first saw Sankai Juku, I took my students — I was always taking them here and there — to see these new forms. I saw them for the first time in Ann Arbor. And when they were finished, I could not explain to you why, but tears were just flowing down my cheeks. I mean, it wasn't the kind of tears of regret or that sort of thing, but *tears* were flowing, and I realized the magnificence and the beauty and the *shock* of recognition — *one shock after another shock* — so captivating, so awesome! I had never seen anything quite like it! And guess what, the one who began the Butoh movement... you see, *Buyō* in Japanese means “in the air” — that's like ballet — *Buyō* is ballet — and *Butoh* is of the earth, on the ground, looking at things we don't want to see, sometimes.⁴

CF: I'd like to come back to that point, but if I might first clarify, when you went to Bowling Green, had you not really done any formal training since your tap teacher, and if so, how did you know you wanted to study dance? I'm curious how that came about...

EV: Well, we must call it something. It was always Dance Theatre for me! I was a storyteller, and we did a lot of that at Bowling Green. I walked onto campus, and I remember they were doing this great show for the Homecoming week (she laughs), you know, and they were writing their own songs — and guess what? I'm the choreographer. And then... I find it hard to remember one of their names, so I'm not going to mention names at this time — but this was following World War II, and there were two women who were connected with college professors — one was married to a young college professor, and they were displaced, as it were — they weren't in New York. One was with *Dance Magazine*, and the other one was a premier ballerina in the Boston Ballet, and they came to, oh-gosh-Bowling Green, Ohio. So they got together, and they said, “Aaargh, c'mon, we've got to *do* something here!” So they called a few people and put up a little sign, and they said “We'd like to do some dancing here! Would you like to join us?” And they did choose me, they picked me, and I had an incredible, well-founded education right there — unofficially! They were both *extremely* good! They were my true first teachers, when I was a freshman — to a junior or senior at Bowling Green. So that was a tremendous influence on me, and when I say training, they really did work with me, and really develop my understanding of technique. *Late-bloomer!!!* But dance theatre was my venue. It was not abstract. I wanted to tell the stories. Well, guess what? Martha Graham was doing — or attempting to do — all ten of the Greek dramas at the time! The ballet companies were doing *Hamlet!* So that was my influence, but it was also my *kuleana*, the Hawaiian way of saying “This is where you belong, because you're good at it.” And I didn't realize that I was good at it, I just liked to *do* it! I liked to create an *adventure* in movement. That was what I did, and I didn't realize that that was my *kuleana*. But that's what I did. And so we started...we did all kinds of things. And actually, in

⁴ In reviewing the transcript, Valois clarifies her point was that *Buyō* is more accurately a Japanese classical form as Ballet is a classical European dance form, whereas Butoh is comparable to our contemporary dance forms.

the meantime, I went to Europe when I graduated, and I had quite a bit of influence there, and lived the Bohemian life, and it was great fun, and I danced whenever I could; I was with the Art Students Association — the American and English Art Students Association in Paris — and so we did stuff there.

Then, I got pregnant — and they said “Oh, you must stay!” They said, “You can go to the Critaille Clinique — they have a new thing called Lamaze, and you should come here and do that, and stay here, and your husband can stay with you.” They had a wonderful, very advanced plan for child-bearing, birthing. And wouldn’t you know, I said “No, I gotta’ go home’ (laughing). ‘I gotta’ go home.’ So I had my first child, Kathy, in 1950 in Napoleon, Ohio. And then we very quickly moved to Toledo, and I got involved soon with the activities at the university, and at Bowling Green — remember, that was my old stomping ground. But I had had my children, and guess what? I started the Toledo Dance Theatre and we did a *lot* of things, both for children — “The Pied Piper of Hamlin.”... I had a pianist who composed music for the whole thing, you know. It was all original stuff! And while I was in Bowling Green, I got my Masters — they gave me credit for doing *Our Town*⁵ — in Dance, but it also used dialogue. That was when I first went to Jacobs Pillow and I found out that the author of *Our Town* was at Sugarloaf Mountain, and he was writing a new musical, a new play called *The Matchmaker*, which, of course, *Hello, Dolly!* was based on. And so I just called up and it was dinner time, and I said I’d like to speak with Thornton Wilder, and they said “Oh, just a minute!” and they yelled to him, and he came to the phone, and he said “Hello?” (She imitates a deep, male voice), and I said “Are you the author of *Our Town*?” Did I really get the right [person]? And he said, “Yeah, why? What? Who is this?” You know, and I said “Well, I want to do a dance drama of *Our Town*, but I want your blessing and your permission to do it.” And I said, “Can I talk with you a little bit about it?” And he said, “Yeah, uh, why don’t we meet at this little restaurant over here. It’s closed, but I’ll ask them to open it up and then we can sit in the old dining room there, and we can work it out. So, I’ll meet you there.” “Okay.” That was Labor Day, and anyway, we got there. I got there by car, and he got here in his wonderful little roadster — and he jumped out — he didn’t even open the car door — and we went into the restaurant, just like with tables sitting around, and I said, “I’ve got to describe to you what I’m doing here.” I’m pushing the tables and the chairs out so it would look like a stage, you know? And so I had to sell him on the fact — I said, “Now look, if I use all of your dialogue — you know, the Stage Manager, I’ll have to cut it and he said, “You can’t cut it! I’m not going to let you cut *any* of my dialogue! The Stage Manager has to have his dialogue.” And we argued and argued about it. He just gave me the *hardest* time, but at the end of the day he said (begrudgingly) “Oh, alright!” He said, “But remember, *because* you’re in an educational institution, I’ll let you do it.” And years later, he allowed a television station in New York to do a musical version of *Our Town* with Frank Sinatra, and the famous music from that was (she sings) “*Love and Marriage...*” I said, “That’s *innocuous* and I said “Why — the end, where the girl dies and there’s that scene in the graveyard” and I said “How could you *let* her get well and it’s all a happy ending? This is not *Our Town*!” I said, “How could you *do* that?!” And there was this little silence, and he says “\$25,000.00.” And I said “Oh!” And he says “C’mon now!” And I hate to say this outloud, but he said, “Television doesn’t matter. What *you* do at the university matters.” I said, “Oh, well, alright.”

CF: Alrighty then!

⁵ *Our Town* is a 1938 three-act play by American playwright Thornton Wilder. It tells the story of the fictional American small town of Grover's Corners between 1901 and 1913 through the everyday lives of its citizens.

EV: Alrighty then! But the point is... I wanted to be *involved* in creating ideas and adventures of the mind and the heart and the body. So I was basically...well, I could call myself in *some* ways a pioneer! Because most of the pioneers don't have the deep and demanding influence of somebody else's ideas: I was free. And so as the years passed and I finally got at the University, a year later, I did *Tommy*. And I got Peter Townsend's permission. He was in England at the time, in London, and I called him up and said "Look, we want to do this, and it's never been done as Dance... as one of my students said, "It's a Dansical! It's a Dansical!" "Oh, okay." So, he gave me permission to do it.

CF: Without a meeting, and...?

EV: Without meeting and all that stuff. No, no. No meeting. He was in England. And I said, "Well, what about the music? Do you have any "fake books" out there, or something?" You know, and he said, "I can't give you any. No. I'm not going to give you any of my music." And he says, "So how are you going to do it?" I said, "We'll think of *something!*" And so my daughter, who was now grown up — you know, like, she was seventeen or so — her boyfriend was a musician, who has since performed on Saturday Night Live and things like that — he says "I can do it." And I said, "What do you mean, you can do it?" He said, I can write the fake book. He listened to the music and literally wrote the book, and it sounded *exactly* like Peter Townsend. So we had our music. And I said, "You'll let us do it, if we can do our own?" He said, "Yeah, if you can do your own, hahaha!" You know. But we could, and we did. And it should have indicated to me that this was my path — dance drama. But then we got involved in other things at the university. Because I ended up writing, creating, designing 64 hours of dance curriculum! So, that show was a world premier of *Tommy*. And we have only photographs, because the Department of Theatre and Film — eventually, it would be Theatre, Film and Dance — thought that we couldn't keep it, because they'd be sued, or something. So they destroyed the video. But we do have some pictures, because *Dance Magazine* came out. Doris Herring showed up, and she was the Assistant Editor of *Dance Magazine*. She came in January, we were rehearsing without heat in the old Doermann Theater, and she had to wear her coat... I mean, you know, *steam* — you could see her breath, as she was watching. We'd get her hot coffee; I don't know what she thought about it, but everybody who was involved in it — and there were twice as many tech people as there were performers: 46 performers, and oh, like, 79/80 tech people. And the musicians — because we sat for three months with my tech director, and we had lunch every week, sometimes twice a week, and I said, "Okay, Dan," his name was Dan Hannon, "Let's pretend that money is no object. What would we do with these scenes? How would we create them?" And we went *crazy* with ideas, you know, like these glass tubes where the kids would slide down through them, and we would have the pinball stage and all the pinball machines were people with rubber tires around them so they'd go "Boing!" you know, hit one another, and literally bounce off one another. We did slant the stage, as they did in the days of Shakespeare. And the band was sitting up high above, visible, but they were forced...we couldn't continue our rehearsal there because the walls were crumbling, and the light fixtures were falling off of the walls from the sound, the impact. So the Presbyterian Church on Collingwood said, "Well, we have five-foot walls in the basement — maybe the band could go there and rehearse." I mean, it was just like this *madness*, you know! We had to hire the police department in Toledo to control the crowds because they... tried to break down the doors. We did it ten times, and somebody said, "Why don't you just do it ten more times?" and the Theatre Department wouldn't let us. We were just wild mavericks with this idea, and I guess we stepped on toes, politically, and things like that, looking back on it...I remember not being sure how we could end the show, and I wanted it from underneath the stage, where it would open up, you know, and doves would fly out because Tommy dies, and so the white doves representing Tommy

would be flying up. And they said (feigning a crotchety voice) “They’ll be all over the auditorium and they’ll be pooping on the audience! No, we can’t do that.” I said, “Well, we could...you know, the next day we could collect them and send them on their way...” But we did find a way; we took a white, Indian-like guru suit, and without a form — just the suit itself — would float up into the heavens, you know? I wasn’t sure that was going to work, and oh, you know, the ending — “You can’t leave the ending to the end.” But it was dress-rehearsal, and it was a full house; we invited some people to come and see it, and we went through that show non-stop, almost two hours and when the show ended and that form of his robe came floating up past the proscenium — and there was silence. And I remember just dropping my head forward and just putting my head in my hands like this (she demonstrates) and I thought, “Oh, it failed! It didn’t work.” And then I began to hear (she claps, slowly) some clapping, and it got louder and louder and louder, and the people stood up and for twenty minutes, they wouldn’t stop applauding. What an emotional roller coaster ride that was!

CF: I can imagine! And how long was it, from the time you talked to Townsend until...

EV: Well, we talked to him — it had to be in the Fall of 1970, and then I sat with Dan for three months and we talked about it, alright? And then that January of 1971, we had auditions, and then it began to move very quickly. But we got his permission way back in September. And then we had six weeks to go to put this show together, and we opened on the 26th of February.

CF: Gosh!

EV: Yeah... And you see, here was the problem: I was hired by the university to teach in the College of Education. The Theatre Department — we wanted to do this show — and some members of the Theatre Department said, “Let’s do this show! Let Elaine direct it. She wants to do it.” Because — you know, the dance aspect of it, and all. And they said “Well, sure.” You know, that’s when college professors were wearing jeans and had long hair and so on: “Oh, it’s an interdepartmental endeavor, that’s great — let’s do it!” And I needed the technical aspect that the Theatre Department could help me with. So, it was fine — and Dan and I — oh, wow! Boy, did we work well together! And he was just totally, *totally* there with the idea, every second— and I was, too. You don’t meet too many people like that. They’re always telling you “You can’t do this because....” And he *never* did. As we sat together, he never did. He’d say “Well, how can we manage...that’s going to be too expensive — I’ve got an idea! Let’s use cargo net! And let the avatars be attached to the cargo net and then loose ropes will swing out into the audience and back so that we could...” We had them three-dimensionally in the air, in the back of the auditorium — everywhere! There were people in one scene or another — you didn’t know *where* the show was going. You had to turn your head and watch *behind* you, sometimes. You know, the *whole theatre* was the stage! And the kids were so, *so* into it. I even had to have psychiatric counseling for several who thought they *were* Tommy. She laughs — well, I guess we all are, in part — we all have this part of us, you know? This passion to bring humanity into the forefront rather than survival, and so on. That was a funny part, but they were all just intensely involved.

CF: I read Doris Herring’s review. She was very impressed with the production.

EV: Did you? Yes, she said it was a surprise; she wasn’t expecting something like that.

CF: Right. Your studies at Jacob's Pillow — were those during your graduate years at Bowling Green, then, in the summers?

EV: I have to sort of stop and think...but it started in 1958, I was going to Jacob's Pillow, and I tried to go *every* summer because that's where we were just really *personally* involved with these wonderful artists. Actually, I'm a producer; my life was not meant to be as a performing dancer. I loved to move and dance, and I had *some* talent perhaps — but as they said, I would be very limited because of my size. [Editor's note: I must have looked displeased at this statement]. Oh, but that was true — that was just a fact. Also, I think that if I were to have become a performer, I would have been a comedienne. I like to make people laugh! I could not take myself seriously as, say, a ballet dancer, you know? My family was also a group of performers themselves. Some of them were stand-up comedians — and we entertained *ourselves* during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, and reenacted Debbie Reynolds and all of those dances they did, knocking couches over, and things like that. We would do that — we would reenact the whole thing, just for entertainment purposes. And so, there was that entertainer in me, but not — you know, you have to give your *life* to the technique of classical ballet — or Bharatanatyam, the Indian dance forms and so forth. They are married to their art. And I certainly didn't have that background. But I did have *something*, and so part of my teaching to my students was “We all have something. Don't bury your original self with *too* much outer influence — unless that appeals to you!” Unless they want to become a performing artist — some people do, and they don't *want* to be the one who writes the story or sings the song or the music; they want to ...they're beautiful, they're strong and they're well-trained, and they would prefer it. Fine! That wasn't *me*! That wasn't me. And yet I never got tired, *except* for when I had rehearsals in the evenings. I taught all day, had dinner. At 6:30, I would lay down on the couch and die, I'd wake up at 7:00 and go to rehearsal. And that's what I did and that was sufficient. Some people go to church on Sundays; I had rehearsals on Sunday: solos, duets and trios.

CF: You had two children?

EV: I had two children. My son was born in 1955 — we kind of jumped away from that. But both of my children were — I just couldn't conceive of separating myself up. There is a little scene in the trailer that you'll see, and I say “I am a wife and a mother and a dancer and a choreographer and an activist and an environmentalist...” and on and on — and what do you call that? What's the name you give to that? I wasn't sure there was one, but a lot of women are that way. We are multi-taskers to the hilt. So I was a multi-tasker, but without the creative life and the involvement with my students, I would have been a completely different person, I think. They tell me “You've changed my life,” and I say, “I wouldn't have been *me* without *you*.”

CF: Could we talk a moment about the call from Perry Johnson that led to your appointment at the University of Toledo? I understand that he knew of you because your sons were in Cub Scouts together...

EV: Oh yes! Isn't that funny? Yes, his wife had a son the same age as my son, and they wanted to start a Cub Scout group, and they said “Would you do this?” And I said, “Well, sure. Let's do it together.” And so, what I did with those boys is, I said, “Look, we're going to reenact all the sports. I said, “How do you throw a ball? How do you catch a ball? How do you run? Show me how you might tackle somebody, or use a tennis racket,” you know. I just asked them to do that. Also, I said, “You've got to learn how to climb a tree, you've got to learn how to jump off of a four-foot high stage without hurting yourself.” In other words, how about boot camp? Let's see...what do they do

in boot camps? They swing on ropes, they climb on ladders, they walk across the parallel ladder, all those things. I said, “Oh, there’s a lot of *movement* that goes on. And I also said, “You also have to learn how to use a knife properly. And I remember his wife going “Oh, no, they’re not supposed to use knives — let’s make candles and put them in the plastic milk cartons.” I said, “Naaah!” “But — at the party where they invite the parents,” I said, “Let’s do a shadow play. They’re going to stand behind their shadow, a side view, and they’re going to draw their own profile, and then cut it out and place it on a mat and their parents are going to have to find out where to sit by recognizing their profile. (She laughs.) And they also demonstrated that they could climb, they could swing on a rope and they could jump off of four feet, and then I said “Okay, now we’re going to give it some timing here. We’ve only got so much time.” So, I had said, “Okay. I wonder if you can take three steps to the edge (she taps the table three times), jump, tah-dam! da-ta-da-ta-da-ta-da!” And in the end, I put music to it, and they did a dance. You know, very, very jazzy, and very strong and very masculine, and I told them, I said “You know what you’re doing, don’t you?” And they looked at me: “You’re dancing.” (She imitates their boisterous incredulity): “Oh, no!!!!” “Well, do you like it?” “Yeah... yeah! It’s fun!” So, you see, I couldn’t get away from it, no matter what I entered into or was invited to do, *that’s* what happened.

CF: And that’s how it was that he asked you to come to the university and teach?

EV: Right! Right. He said “Hmmm! What are your credentials?” And I said, “Well, I have my Masters.” And he said, “Well, you’re qualified then, you know, if you’ve got your Masters.” I said, “Oh, am I? Yeah...well, I’m too busy; I have the Maumee School of Ballet and Dance Theatre.” What *they* did? They did *The Red Shoes*, they did Oscar Wilde’s *Song of the Nightingale*. They did *American in Paris* — as a three one-act evening performance: twelve, thirteen and fourteen year olds. And I really didn’t think about it at the time, but that was pretty advanced. And they *loved* it! They loved it. In fact, at my last reunion — yesterday, the Sunday reunion — the one who played in *The American in Paris* and *The Red Shoes*, she was in *The American in Paris* — the tall one, was in *American in Paris* — that was Maribeth, and then Joni played the wicked shoemaker in *The Red Shoes*, and she was there.

CF: Were you the founder of the Maumee School?

EV: I took over some ballet classes when the teacher left. She said, “Elaine, take it over.” And then I called it the Maumee School of Ballet — *and* guess what? — Dance Theatre. It had to be Dance Theatre.

CF: So when Mr. Johnson asked you to come to teach at the university, you had this other commitment...

EV: Oh, yes. Yeah. And I said, “Oh, I can’t do that. I can’t *do* that — I have this other commitment.” And then I remember seeing these other people being interviewed, you know, in his office. And I said “Uh, did you find anybody yet?” And he said, “I don’t know.” And then he said, “It’s too bad, Elaine! Because we’re going to build this building, and I thought, you know, if we could have a dance program here, we’d build a dance studio.” And I remember doing a triple pirouette (she laughs): “Say that again, please?” And he says, “We’re in the market to build a dance studio now, and it can be designed by whoever joins the staff.” And I said, “*Don’t* interview anybody else. I’ll take the job.” That’s what really turned me on. And I could design it myself!

CF: Did that happen?

EV: Yes! It's the prettiest room on the University of Toledo [campus]. I had plants across the window, a view of a beautiful field in the back, a storage unit for costumes. It was 60 feet long, with mirrors across the side of the 40-foot width [of the room].

CF: So that was the beginning? And it was part-time for one year...and then it was all-Elaine, all the time...because they never hired another fulltime person...

EV: Yeah, the one who had — it was the wife of one of the professors of the Theatre Department, and she was taking a leave to have a child. But she didn't want to go back, and so, they said it was open. And so it was part-time, yeah. They had three classes: one was Introduction to Modern Dance; the second one was Folk and Square [Dance]; the third one was Dance History. Interesting. "Well, can you teach Folk and Square?" I looked at him, and said (in a nonchalant tone) "S'pose so..." And I learned how to call Square Dancing, I learned "overnight" — over the period of years, I learned 78 ethnic folk dances. And I always used... I really worked hard to get the *fun* ones — where the boys, you know, are in the circle and the girls would be swung off the ground as they did it — and, being more interested in ethnic dance rather than just the traditional folk-dancing that they did I said "Let's have some fun, here!" So, in other words, I adapted! I always took *me* with it, and I adapted and always said "What good can I do here, and what fun can I have here? Rather than (she adopts a dejected tone): Oh, no, I don't want to teach folk-dance..." but I did, and I had a good time doing it. And it sort of moved me into exploring ethnic dance forms. Much deeper than a folk dance class with those funny records that they played, you know?

CF: I remember some of those!

EV: Mm-hmm...

CF: May I circle back and also ask you about The Defiance School of Dance? Was that another position?

EV: Oh! I don't want to eliminate *anything*, but that was tandem to my getting the Maumee School of Ballet, because the teacher who left also had this other tandem school going on. Yes... And oh! My requirement there was that I needed to teach Ballroom Dancing and Etiquette! Hmmm..."What can I do here?" But, now, I didn't consider them roadblocks; I considered every invitation an opportunity — to adapt and to employ my own creativity to it. And it didn't last terribly long, because I accepted a job at the university, and I said, "Well, that has to go..." I tried to continue the Maumee School, which was much nearer and more directly connected — and, those students in my school at Maumee came to the university after they graduated from high school. So we just kept on keeping on. The Defiance School — I don't want to *not* bring that into focus, because that was a real challenge. I went Thursday night to teach Ballroom, all dressed up to the hilt, you know? — And teaching *manners* — oh my goodness! Well, I had to adapt *that* a little bit — because it was just so stilted. Oh, *psban!* So stilted. And I also saw the human condition of young girls who were not asked to dance, and things like that. And so I invented ways in which everybody would dance with everybody.

CF: This was in the '50s?

EV: Uh-huh, '58, yeah. '59 — that was the Beatles, and they all told me about the Beatles...

CF: You kind of touched on this earlier, but I always wonder what the dance landscape was like in northwest Ohio, in the Toledo area, when you were growing up, and I guess you implied there was nothing...

EV: Well, in Napoleon there was nothing. In Toledo, there was Marie Vogt. She was just starting.

CF: Yes, of course!

EV: She also was a Jacob's Pillow "graduate," so to speak. I remember calling her up and saying "We're here and we're doing this and that, and so on..." and I remember her saying "My, you're ambitious!" (She laughs). And I said, "No, not really — just active." You know, I didn't really have *ambition*, not in that sense, at all — I was just involved in what was happening *right now*.

CF: Clearly, you were a risk-taker.

EV: I guess...or I took advantage of opportunities; *everything* gave me some new ideas! In other words, how to adapt to what *I* saw was a better way. That may be just ego, I don't know. But I saw things that were outmoded, and so on. Not certainly with Marie. We eventually *did* get together, and did perform in the same Hall on the same day together — you know, and they began to recognize the value of modern dance, and they were beginning to invite some of my people to come in and teach some of that — it was good for *them*. And then some of my students would take dance classes with Marie. I would say "You need to strengthen your body, and ballet will certainly do that." So, we became, in the long run, very good friends. And my daughter Kathy studied with her — because your children! "Oh, you're my mom; I want to do something else." You know? But she (Kathy) did perform with me, too, in *Tommy*. She took ballet lessons when she was very, very young — she wanted to be in *The Nutcracker*.

CF: The famous Toledo Ballet *Nutcracker*!

EV: Yeah, the famous *Nutcracker* of Toledo. And that was fine, and it's hard for me to bring this up, but one of the most touching moments I had with Marie — you know, my daughter passed away...it's really hard for me to talk about it. But Marie came over to the house. It was the only time she ever did, but she came over to give me her blessings and sympathy and support. And I think it was the first time that we ever really looked deeply into each other's eyes. You know, how it must be...because she was very upset as well, you know. Marie was a strong woman, and we did have some commonality with the Jacob's Pillow experience, so I appreciated coming to know her in another way. My daughter passed in '88, and my husband passed ten months earlier. I had two deaths, ten months apart, and it was so devastating, it took me five years to come out of it. I was in the dark night of the soul. But I took Agnes DeMille's advice, because she was kind of a maverick herself, you know, she did her thing — taught Russian ballet dancers to walk like cowboys. But after her stroke, people said "How did you manage that?" How did you go through that?" She said, "Well, I'll tell you what we learn, being dancers: you put one foot in front of the other, no matter what." And that's what I did for five years: I put one foot in front of the other. I did everything I could think of to bring my desire to live back *in* me again: I did bungee jumping off of high bridges; I did sky-diving; I went to South America and did Ayahuasca — because I was told I could reach the other side...I was in a flooded area after a great rain on The Amazon. We leaped into the water, and

the water took us down to our camp. I mean, it was a huge flow of water into The Amazon. And the natives just gasped when they saw us, and they went “Ahhh!” and then one of the natives picked up two green snakes, like this. There were snake frenzies in the water, and we didn’t know anything about it – we just went in the water. But this is what I was doing. Because when I leaped out of the airplane, my whole body said “I want to live!” When I jumped off the bridge with a bungee cord, with your head about this far from the surface, you had this panic, the gasp that says “I want to live!” And so I had to do that, to get back. And then my vow as I took the Ayahuasca, and it does take you to other places of consciousness — an incredible thing — I said, “Kathy, please remember that I’m going to take you with me, I’m going to take you with me. I’ll live the way you would want to live. I’ll be your vessel of your heart.” And then I heard a voice. I was taken out into the jungle by one of the natives to sit all night alone; I had no idea where I was, or how I could get back; if he didn’t come and get me, I would have been lost. And I took Ayahuasca alone with a little gown, a little cover, in case it would rain. I was stalked by a jaguar; I could actually smell his breath. But when you take Ayahuasca, you are a complete and total observer. You can’t act or react. I just listened and watched. And then I heard the tree fall, and it sounded like a gunshot — Bam! And I turned to look, and the light! It was like something... it was not as if it was coming from a singular source at all — it wasn’t coming from back there. The thing just lit up a tree lying between two verticals. I said, “Hmm, that looks like a stage, a proscenium.” And then I got a little amused. I said “Kathy, are you back there?” (Feigning an irritated voice): “Mo-oom!” I heard this. “Mom! You know my idea of camping is a Motel 6! What are you doing in South America?” I couldn’t have said that, thought that, imagined it. I said, “Oh, I’m sorry.” It was the only thing I could think of to do! (She laughs, recalling): And it broke. That suffering broke. And I’ll never forget her voice – because you know how kids do – she used to say “Mo-oom!” You know how kids do? Take it or leave it — but I came back to life. I was still doing things, you know, but oh my, it was hard!

CF: I cannot imagine — really... You’ve laid out a couple of directions...one of them was your leaning toward dances of the world, towards almost cultural anthropology...

EV: It was! It was!

CF:...and also the Human Movement Capacity workshops that you did...

EV: The Imaginal Body?

CF: Yes. Well, nothing is separate, but...

EV: No, they aren’t!

CF: But did they begin about the same time, or did one of them lead you to the other, or...

EV: The first thing was the Dance Anthropology. Actually, at the university, the Anthropology Department was beginning to recognize it, and wanted me to do some lectures there, you know, about that, which I thought was very interesting. They were fascinated by this — because many anthropologists can’t explain the dance and yet the dance is so central to all of what we know about cultures. It’s cultural *signature*, is what it is. So that was the first thing. And actually, what I notice also, when I look at my own life process, is that I went *back* in time — deep, deep time, the aborigines and the ancient cultures, back 8,000 years in India and so on — back and back in time. And then there was this thing going on in the late 70s — the journey into self, which took us into the stars and

the heavens. So I went back this way and then catapulted up through what is the human potential: who, how can we arrive at the possible human. And that's Jean Houston and that was *my* influence with Jean, and her husband Robert Masters.

CF: How did you encounter them?

EV: Oh! Well, while I was moved into the Theatre Department — or they were contemplating moving me into it — and the chairman of the Theatre Department, his wife took all my classes and we became really very best friends, loving friends...

CF: Was that Coyne?

EV: Coyne, Bernie and Dorothy Ann — we called her Dottie. Now Bernie had just been to one of Jean Houston's workshops, and he said, "You've got to meet this woman!! You've got to talk to her! You've got to know who this woman is!" And just as he was talking about her, it was in the late 70s when he came, and Dottie gave me a brochure and I said, "Hmmm." And what really got me was the title: *The Possible Human* — that was one of her first books — not *the* first, but one of the earlier books. She wrote *The Possible Human*, and I said "That's it! That's what I've been doing all my life! I've been looking for the possible human in all of us!" And the brochure said this was going to be a workshop in Florida. And I went to the chairman of our department, Perry Johnson, and I said "Dr. Johnson" — usually I said "Can I...?" "Would you please let me...?" — But I went in to him and I said, "I am *leaving* for the long week-end and I am assigning my classes to this person and that person and that person, and I have all of the lesson plans, whatever you need, you know, this is what they're going to do Monday, this is what they're going to do Wednesday, and I'll be leaving and I'll be back at such-and-such a date. Do you want to know where I'm going?" In other words, I didn't say "Please, may I?" Because he *always* gave me a hard time — for his pleasure, I think. Just a cat-and-mouse game: "Why are you doing this? What good is it? Why do you think you can just leave when you say you want to?" And all that sort of thing: "You can't just do that sort of thing! What has it got to do with Dance?" Ugggh! So I just said, hmmm, I'm just going to go in and tell him — and he was so surprised, that he let me go! (She laughs): I didn't give him a chance to say no. So, I flew down to Florida, and had my first week-end with Jean Houston, and Jean told me, she said "I was just born with two left feet." And I looked at her and I said, "Oh, yeah?" (Laughing): "We can *change* all that." And I was changed, totally. I mean, she opened up something in me — almost like Ayahuasca — she opened up the heavens. In the power of 10. We would go into the heavens. Not to go into the *detail* of all that, but it was a wonderful, wonderful awakening — and I know that years later, we were doing something — and she's as big as I am small, you know — and she said (in a commanding voice) "I want to show you something." And she went into a movement riff like I've never seen, and she said, "I *dance* now!" And I said, "Cool. You're *good*!" (more laughter) So I was with her for the Cultivation of Human Capacities program, which was like forty days and forty nights in the summer time, and two weeks in the winter and two weeks in the spring, for three years. Hooah! I opened up, it was like I *spelunked* into the depths of human development and *astro-projected* into the possible human. So, my education was not exactly traditional. And I'm still involved, and because of Bob Masters, he was the one who — whatever you may say, he explored the Egyptian culture that existed 3,500 hundred years ago, and don't ask me how he *did* it, but he came back with the information about the Imaginal Body. It's called *The Way of the Five Bodies*, and it's esoteric. And they don't publish it, you don't hear about it...did you? Did you ever hear about it? (I shake my head) No. Maybe one day. But it was called *The Way of the Five Bodies*. There's the Physical Body, you know, that we have. And then there's something called The Subtle Body. And some people call it

the Double...the Subtle Body, the Double Body, the Etheric Body, and then there's the Emotional Body, the Shape-Shifter Body — it could be the “Intellect” Body, but *this* one is the Spirit Body. The Spirit Body happens when you experience all the other four as one. The spirit body emerges, and we sense that as Presence; when you sense a Presence, you probably are sensing the Spirit Body. And, you know, I'm curious! I thought, “Oh, wait a minute. We're pretty familiar with this corporeal body, the physical body — but the imaginal body, the double body, does it still exist in us? Is this what was in the seed of our emerging embryo, because that seed had an intention!” You know, there's a maple tree, there's an oak tree, there's a nasturtium (she laughs at this addition) — all with seed and all producing an intention. Do we have that seed in us, and does it still exist? And Jean Houston called it the kinesthetic body, and lately Barbara Marx Hubbard called it the Butterfly Effect, and so did Deepak Chopra. How can a worm become a butterfly, and there's something *in* that seed of that being that changes. And so, do we have something like that in us? And can we access it in some way or another? And we know that it isn't imaginary! Don't you dare say it's imaginary. It's not! *Imaginal* means it is felt and known and does exist. Alright? And so we've devised several movement things that would help us understand that it truly exists, because we could...at one point in time, once you start moving and you've been meditating the Imaginal Body — just *imagine* getting up out of this chair, and do you know the very first thing you do? Do you breathe in or do you breathe out or do you hold your breath? What's the very first thing you do, what's the second thing you do, what's the third thing you do, you know. And how does that shift, and how much of yourself is employed in the effort? Do you employ all of yourself, which makes the effort infinitely easier? Or do you grunt? (She does so) — like that, and use just your arms. So there are games we play with that so that people can imagine quite accurately, *image* quite accurately, how they would get up out of a chair, or how they would walk forward or backwards, or how they would lift their arms. And the hard one is turning: how would you turn and imagine you're turning — it gets harder. But then you actually use your real body, and because you've imaged — you probably have become much more accurate about how you really would get up out of your chair. You use the way a person moves most ideally and comfortably, with as little energy as possible, with the greatest result possible, [that] is efficiency. If you learn how to image your movement, you are actually teaching yourself to access something. When we were born to move, how did we move? And when we began to explore possibly crawling and so on, or rolling over and so on, we didn't watch babies! With great joy and ease, and their heads are so big, and yet it doesn't seem to matter at all! And that's how the Feldenkrais movement influenced me as well.

CF: When did you get involved with the Feldenkrais work?

EV: Somebody from Ann Arbor, Michigan, who studied with him came down to do a workshop — I always had people coming in...I don't know if it's listed, but she came, and I remember her doing a simple exercise and all it took was, say, find a way as you're lying down, find a way to touch the palm of your left hand to the palm of your right hand; you know, you have to leave your right hand where it is. (She makes effortful sounds) — you can't do it, you can't do it, you know. You can do whatever I said not to do — you know, I only told you to leave the right hand. But the thing is people will work for an hour, trying to figure that out. And then once you realize how to figure that out, then you conduct an exercise that allows you... “It's your whole body, dear, your whole body, your whole body.” You know, and you incorporate *naturally* your whole self, and a movement becomes *so* easy. That'll take care of a lot of aging, you know. But it's *more* than that — because mind and body is one thing — so I said, you have a mental body, a physical mind...oh, I get all mixed up about what order these things follow, but...

CF: Oh, that's fine...I'm just asking questions because I'm interested in all the parts. Somehow we'll make sense of it — or not!

EV: Okay (she laughs).

CF: I'm jumping now to when you retired in 1991. Did you go right to Hawaii?

EV: I went to Hawaii in '98, because I taught as a superannuate because it was a good way to increase your pension and so on — but I didn't have the stuff around me to keep going and building...and I said, "I don't want to just have a *routine* here; I want to *go* someplace with this, I want to go someplace *with* my students and with the people who are interested — and *I* want to be stimulated!"

CF: You felt confined by the university structure...

EV: Oh, yes! It was not... so I did a lot of other things, you know — one quarter, and then the last one was a semester that I did. But I was *invited* to come to Kauai, by an old friend of mine, who lived in Toledo and built a home in Kauai — you know, a summer home, a vacation home. We had a farewell party for me, you know — I was leaving the university for good, and all, and she said, "Well, come and visit me in Kauai for a couple weeks," and so I did. And then the people in Kauai said, "If you want to stay here, why don't you just send your car over here, and Matson will take all the stuff from your house..." and I was going to sell the house, and it was just "Pack up everything and bring it over here, we'll find a place, a storage unit for you, and you don't have to worry about a place to live — we'll figure it out for you..." I mean, it was like "C'mon in!" And so I did. And the second day I was there — well, the first day I road up to visit my friend, Carol, to stay there for two weeks and there was a gentleman there, and he said "Do you want to go to "A Course in Miracles" with me tomorrow morning? And I wasn't in the habit of saying no anymore, so I said, "Sure, sure!" I knew about the Course in Miracles — never really did it seriously, but I *knew* about it, and I said "Yeah, c'mon." So he picked me up about 9:00 in the morning, took me over by the Kuhio Shores, and everybody was watching the breaching whales, it was the season, and I walked into the room and there must have been eight or nine people there, and each and every one of them came up and gave me a hug and a kiss. "Nice to meet you." And that's the way it was: Kauai opened its doors and its heart to me...this is where I was supposed to go next. There was nothing left, I thought, where I was anymore. So that happened almost immediately, you see. And then, somebody else came in, and his name was Les. And everybody said "Oh! Hi, Les! What happened to you? We haven't seen you in a year! What are you doing back? Where were you?" And so on. "And, oh, by the way, this is Elaine." *We've been together ever since*. And then immediately, I got involved with people who wanted to help me with my work. We started doing — not Imaginal Body work, right away — we called one of our early workshops "Embodying the Miraculous." Because we were involved also with Gurdjieff.⁶ I mean, I was involved with Gurdjieffian stuff as well. Just always, *always* embroiled with and fascinated by leading edge thought.

CF: I want to acknowledge that you were one of the founding members of OhioDance...

⁶ George Gurdjieff: 1866–1949. An influential spiritual teacher of the early to mid-20th century who taught that most humans live their lives in a state of hypnotic "waking sleep," but that it is possible to transcend to a higher state of consciousness and achieve full human potential.

EV: Oh, yes! I was Vice President, when they first started!

CF: How did that come about?

EV: Well, I was just asked, when they started forming it, if I would like to be involved. I mean, I was all for it and became a member, and my student union and the dance association became members, so they knew who I was — and I was one of the early ones, right? And they were like “We need a vice-president! Would you like to do it?” “Well, sure!” I didn’t stay very, very long — but a couple of years. And I remember doing the invitation to join, and I said “OhioDance looks both ways.” I remember that brochure: “You enter in and we look for you” — and they got a good response from that, as I recall. But it was not like it is now — they have *so* much going on now! And I did teach a workshop a few years ago for the OhioDance Festival.

CF: I’m skipping around a lot as the clock winds down...

EV: I know — there’s so much...

CF: Well, you know, when you live 90 full years, you have a lot of ground to cover! A lot has happened, and you’ve been part of a lot of things.

EV: (She is laughing hard...)

CF: I’m worried that I’m missing huge important things in the little time we have — I’m *sure* I am — but what I’d like to ask, as you sit here now, having skimmed over these many parts and over the web of your life, looking back, what do you want to say — or what do you deeply believe? What might be worth sharing with people?

EV: I just— my *raison d’être* — is to bring the humanity forward for *every* individual. In other words, we were born as humans; our first impulse is to be in cooperation with one another. We are essentially cooperative beings, not competitive. We mean to cooperate. We mean to be in cooperation with one another. We need to be in understanding of one another. Actually, to understand the essence of humanity would *completely* make null and void competition, jealousy, supremacy, fear, anger, the idea that there has to be a winner and a loser — those things I *never* felt had any real value. And I am *absolutely* convinced that we are not *born* with that. On the contrary, we’re born with a loving heart, not a hating one — and then something happens. And so that’s why I was so attracted to Jean Houston’s “The Possible Human.” Well, the truth is — and my son pointed this out: He says, “Mom, it’s not the *possible* human — it’s the human we *were*. It’s uncovering the truth of what it means to be human.” I said, “Yeah — maybe we’re both right, you know? Maybe we’re both right.” It feels like we’re growing, or we’re becoming more than we were before, but yet we’re also uncovering what we always have been. They’re both true! Yeah...

CF: Would you have anything to say about coming at that discovery or that life force as it relates to dance?

EV: Ahh! Okay. Yes! We’re also finding something out in science today — this is not a divergence from your question; it may seem like it, but it isn’t. They have just found out that it’s not crossword puzzles that help people who are getting Alzheimer’s or the other mental problems that we’re finding with children and adults as well. The crossword puzzles and all of that are not working as

well as we thought. But *movement*, with thinking, *does* work and *does* avert Alzheimer's! Now that's what they're finding out. "Oh, we knew that!" But that's what they're really finding out. It's the mind and body so *connected*, so together, in whatever it is at this moment and the next one and the next one — that you're not disembodied when you're thinking. The body thinks and the head feels. They have to be together, absolutely. We have separated *this* part of ourselves and *this* part of ourselves (she indicates the head and then the body) so much that our language doesn't support what's really going on. So, understand that it's the movement — and not just *because* you're moving, although that can help a little. You don't know what you're doing; you're just doing it by habit. It's *conscious* movement. Now add the *conscious* movement — head, body — with the idea that you can *remember* what you did — *continuity*. So, it's like when you begin to live longer than most people, you tend to habituate almost everything. Stop habituating! And start moving and remembering — and also remembering *continuity*. I don't care what it is, and that's what Twyla Tharp was doing — it doesn't matter what kind of movement. (She demonstrates with simple movements): I can do this movement with *this* movement. Okay, (now) I'll remember that I did this movement and then I did this movement. And then I did *this* movement — this movement, this movement, this movement, *this* movement! Very simple things, but I'm saying that I'm going to remember the continuity — and then the circling of the head, and so on. If you can remember the continuity, you have kept it in your consciousness. It's conscious movement with conscious thought — and de-habituating *both*. Because remember, we can habituate thinking, we can habituate moving, and we can habituate *feeling*! Somebody always says, "Well, what you *feel* is really true!" *No*, it isn't — it's just as habituated as anything else! Some people, when something happens they don't like, they get angry — all the time. Or whatever. Their habituated response is anger. Their habituated response is crying. Their habituated response is ... "Do nothing." So don't habituate — and that's where dance comes in. You can say "Well, I'm going to remember this until it's just habituation. But it *never* is! You might remember this...that, this...that. But every time you do this...that, it's different because *you're* different! Five minutes later, you're different. I don't know if I'm explaining myself well...

CF: Oh, I think you are.

EV: Okay...

CF: What you're saying is that to dance is to be very conscious *in the moment*.

EV: *Supremely*. Supremely conscious. And of course what happens is a *swelling* up of thought through *feeling*. I used to do an exercise with the kids. I'd have them go out into the woods — because we *had* some woods once in the university — and sit on a log and look at each other and just record everything you see about that person. Alright? And then in about ten or fifteen minutes, nothing more. You know, they are done. And then I put blindfolds on them and have them walk. Walk, feel, go out...and then I say "You will hear my voice, and you will always know how to come back to my voice. You'll come directly back to my voice. You must be very conscious of what you're doing so you don't trip over a log," etc. Well, they came back that way, with their blindfolds on, and I said, "Now, take your blindfolds off, and now start writing. *Now* start writing — and I couldn't stop them — page after page after page! I'd ask "What are we demonstrating here? You had a *felt* experience. And you had to be *very*, very alert. And that stimulated your feeling, your emotional responses, which also stimulates your desire to express that. Okay?"

CF: Okay... Our time is up, but I have so many questions...maybe I will have to come up to see you in Toledo next time you're home!

EV: You *can!* You can come! Sometimes we just aren't finished, and I'm also not finished with stuff — you mentioned a few things, like the Defiance School — Oh my God!

CF: I know, it's way too much for an hour and a half. There's no doubt about that.

EV: But you kind of know what happened. The story of my early life was...my brothers, I always wanted to be a boy because they got to do so *many* other things, and girls... The other girls were playing on the front porch with their dolls, and that was okay for a little while, but I wanted to go to the river and build a raft and climb the walls and explore the haunted house. You know, I was just built that way, I guess. But that was my ecstasy! There was just this "Ah! The sweet-tasting joys of life... *Oh boy!* Yeah, let's take a chance!"

CF: I think you've railed against limitations throughout your life.

EV: Oh, yeah, well I didn't...I don't think I was limited at all — because I just didn't *accept* limitation! You know, I love to cook and the reason why I love to cook is because my mom said "You can't get in there — you make too big of a mess! Go on out — I don't want you in here." And then she had to go to the hospital with a tubal pregnancy, and my dad and I and my brothers were all there, trying to figure out stuff, and how to cook and so on. So I was in the kitchen doing all *kinds* of stuff. And we were going to surprise her — we made these biscuits. But I didn't know the difference between the flour, you know, and the soda? And I put in a little bit too much soda, and it came up this high (she demonstrates), and they were *gorgeous!* They looked *gorgeous*, but they tasted like a salt pond when you bit into them. But that was my *pleasure* to do that. So I always felt that that was a *privilege* to mess around in the kitchen. Stuff like that, you know? It's like you make whatever you want to make of this world. And I never, never asked anyone: "Mommy, I'm bored! What can I do today?" (She almost shrieks): *Are you kidding???* *Never!!! Never.* They just couldn't keep up: [for me, it was just] "Now I want this," and "now I want that," and "now I need this."

CF: It seems to have stood you very well!

EV: Well, it's given me joy!