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Catherine Madsen is interviewed by Mareca Guthrie by phone in Amherst, Massachusetts on March 20, 2017.

Series: Alaskan Artists Interviews.

Catherine Madsen talked about her personal background. When her father was in the Army he served in the Aleutians. When her father finished with his course work for his Ph. D. he applied for a position at the University of Alaska. He was in the English department. Her mother ran the cooperative nursery school which was in the Eielson Building which also held the museum at that time. Her family stayed in Fairbanks for three years, 1962-65. She was in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades during this time. They returned to Detroit.

Mareca Guthrie asked her to talk about Enid Cutler and sitting for the portraits. Madsen said she always called her Mrs. Cutler. She met Enid Cutler in the summer of 1963 when Lee Salisbury was doing a production of the Emperor's New Clothes. Madsen was in the play at the time. Mrs. Cutler was backstage after the production doing watercolors of everyone in the cast. Guthrie said her mother helped Cutler put the sets up. In winter break 1964 her parents had arranged to have her portrait done by Enid Cutler. Madsen said they were beginning to be friends. After the oil had dried Enid Cutler had her come over to sketch another portrait. She said she became friends with Enid and also with Enid's daughter, Kristen.

Guthrie said it was good to hear about Enid Cutler. Madsen said she was social and had a presence about her. She was delighted to see people. It made an impression on Madsen. She felt it came through in her paintings. Guthrie asked about her paintings. Madsen said they shipped them to Detroit. Her oil painting is in the dining room and the smaller one is at the top of the stairs. She related how she feels about the paintings.

Madsen said she was just visiting with her mother in Detroit. When they were at the University of Alaska Dr. William Wood was president. Madsen's mother told her that Mrs. Cutler and Mrs. Wood did not see eye to eye. Mrs. Wood was very refined, Mrs. Cutler was not at all like that. Madsen said one time they snuck into Wood's garden and took weeds from their garden.

Madsen talked about Mrs. Cutler's children. Thor was a couple of years younger than she was. Kristen was a few years older than Madsen. Cheryl was older and was a dancer at that time. When Madsen returned to Detroit she auditioned for dance classes and got in. Madsen said Cheryl Cutler was later a dance instructor at Wesleyan. Both of Cutler's daughters wrote books. Cheryl wrote a motivational book. Kristen Bissinger wrote a book about creative movement. Thor worked for the EPA and was involved with the oil spill. Discussion about various people at the university. Madsen said in 1965 she was reading parts of Lord of the rings to Mrs. Cutler.

Madsen talks about being in Fairbanks as a child. She described some of her impressions of living in Fairbanks. Returning to Detroit also impressed her, but she always had this other point of reference. She talks about her college days in loose times when she wanted to be purposeful. She hopes to return to Alaska after her retirement.

Madsen talked about her letters from Mrs. Cutler and how important they were to her. She donated the original letters to the archives at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Madsen reads excerpts from some of Mrs. Cutler's letters. Madsen expressed how she appreciated Mrs. Cutler's mentoring and encouragement.

Madsen talks about her father's work at the university. Her father and Lee Salisbury created the College Orientation Program for Alaska Natives. She donated some of her father's notes to the archives. She talked about people her family knew in Fairbanks.