

CHRONOLOGY

Tessa Paige
Lindsay Miller



- 1921** Patricia Louise Hill is born an only child in Ashland, Kentucky, on April 3 to parents John and Patricia Ysobel (née Guion) Hill.
- 1928** Patricia Ysobel divorces her husband.
- 1929** Hill writes of her childhood, "It was the Depression and anything anybody had was *it* because there wasn't going to be another. This probably gave me my respect for objects."¹
- 1931** Hill and her mother move from Kentucky to Charlottesville, Virginia, where Ysobel takes a temporary job at Neve Hall, a mission south of the city, and then finds work at St. Anne's School as a housemother. Hill writes, "Although mother felt guilty for treating me distantly in her eagerness to show no preferences, I was never jealous, only immensely proud to watch her in her different and exalted roles of mediator, nurse and... the perfect secretary."²
- 1932** Hill, at age eleven, finishes a novel titled *The House that Grew*.
Her mother leaves St. Anne's School to be a governess for a family in Ivy, Virginia. They move into the faculty apartments at the University of Virginia.
Hill attends the Stonefield School run by Nancy Gordon, whom she forever admires: "I learned most of the important things I was going to know from Miss Nancy Gordon (except about the outcome of the Civil War, I admit she was a little evasive about that)."³
- 1934–36** Hill attends St. Agnes School in Alexandria, Virginia.
Her mother remarries, and they move to Arlington, Virginia, near Washington, DC, where Hill attends Western High School.
- 1938** Chester Carlson invents the electrostatic copy machine.
- 1939** Hill graduates from high school and enrolls at George Washington University.
- 1940** Hill shows two paintings in an exhibition at Phillips Memorial Gallery in Washington, DC, where she had been working part-time as an artist's model.
After a year at George Washington University, she leaves for New York. Hill recalls, "In the end it took several leavings and at least one annulment before I finally took off to New York, City of Light by myself and there, as it turned out, I did quite well."⁴
- 1941** With \$1.75 to her name, Hill lives in a women's shelter in New York City and performs odd jobs before she begins working as a fashion model on Seventh Avenue for Henry Conover Studios and John Powers.
Carmel Snow uses a photograph of Hill as the frontispiece for the August issue of *Harper's Bazaar*.
A news article claims, "Pati Hill's Pigtails Made Her a Top-Ranking Model.... Louisville girl really started at bottom of the ladder in New York."⁵
Hill writes, "Everyone laughed because I didn't put my feet in front of each other the way they still do today and looked the audience in the eye."⁶
- 1942** Hill marries Jack Leroy Long on February 21 at The Little Church Around the Corner in New York City.
At the wedding of a mutual friend, Hill meets Diane Arbus, and they become fast friends. Describing Hill in a letter to her friend Alex Eliot, Arbus writes, "She is so enormously complex (the way she operates)—I think it's even more than that her thinking, doing, saying are all three always working simultaneously [*but not much together except as in a dance, to meet, to merge, to bow, to entwine] and fast and in every varying relations to each other—Oh I think she expects or rather asks the same of others."⁷
- 1944–46** Hill wins a prize for a short story submission and writes a monthly column on interior decorating for *Seventeen* magazine. Her short biography in the publication reads: "Pati Hill ([author of] *Home Talent*) got interested in decorating when she first came to New York, minus funds, and moved into a dismal apartment.... Now she models little and writes much—doing most of it at night and sleeping during the day. Loves to keep scrapbooks and loathes cooking of any description."⁸
Hill breaks from modeling to help run a ski resort in New England, until 1946.



1945 Hill continues to publish brief articles, including “The Compleat Skier” in *Mademoiselle* magazine.

Diane Arbus’s daughter, Doon, is born on April 3, Hill’s birthday. Arbus writes, “A girl... I know you hate them but she is quite fantastic. She reminds me of a monkey and makes me laugh.”⁹

1947 Hill divorces Jack Long. “He went off to war. He went his way, and I went my way.”¹⁰

Hill marries former Dartmouth ski captain Robert H. Meservey on January 18 at the Church of Christ in Hanover, New Hampshire. For the wedding, both arrive at the church on skis wearing traditional ski apparel, and head off equipped for a ski honeymoon.

In August, Hill returns to modeling and travels to Paris to work with various couturiers. She primarily models for Molyneux’s American-inspired collection, the first of its kind in Paris. She is later proud to claim she introduced the blue jeans trend in Europe.

Hill meets George Plimpton. “I liked George immediately. He was incredibly stylish—like a praying mantis. It was his mantis movement, breaking sort of wildly and elegantly in the middle, that you noticed. That and his bunged-up hat that he wore as if it were a kind of subtitle: The Intrepid News Reporter.”¹¹

1949 Hill, as a translator for *TIME* magazine art editor Alex Eliot (a friend of Diane Arbus), meets Pablo Picasso and interviews painter Henri Matisse.

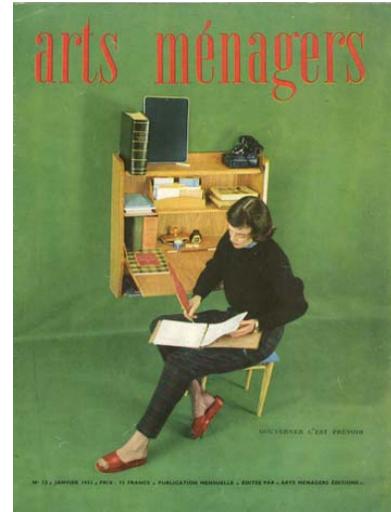
Hill lives between Paris and Mesnil St. Denis near the Château de Versailles with the de la Falaise family. She learns to speak aristocratic French and becomes lifelong friends with writer, translator, and publisher Alain de la Falaise.

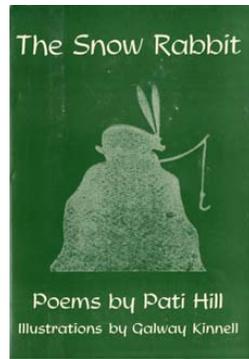
1950–51 With the help of Alain de la Falaise, Hill stays in an abandoned farmer’s cottage in the French countryside, Montacher, to concentrate on her writing. She describes it as “not so much dreamy as dreamed-out, forgotten and forlorn.”¹²

To avoid returning to her easy modeling lifestyle in the city, Hill cuts off most of her hair. However, she remains in contact with the literary sphere through George Plimpton.

Hill begins writing her first novel, *The Nine Mile Circle*, and a memoir, *The Pit and the Century Plant*.

1951 Hill divorces Robert Meservey. She explains, “That ski trooper, [our marriage] lasted quite a long time, but I left and he stayed. I was mostly in love with his mother. She was terrific.”¹³





1953 The *Paris Review* is established. Hill's short stories "In The House Where They Were Born" and "Linda"—both excerpted from her novel *The Nine Mile Circle*—are published in the Summer and Fall issues of the *Paris Review* respectively.

1955 Hill returns to the United States. Harper and Brothers release *The Pit and the Century Plant*.

A short essay by Hill, "Cats," is published in the *Paris Review* after George Plimpton encourages her to write it. "There was this particular little afternoon I remember so clearly of George [Plimpton] when I was living in the Ile St Louis in a tiny apartment, and he had already published [excerpts from] my two books [in the *Paris Review*], and I said I don't have anything at all left to give you. That's it. And George said, 'Well, you can just write about anything at all.' I said I don't have anything to write about. And George said, 'You like cats, so write about cats.' I said, well all right, and George said, 'But you're not going to do it, I can see that, so I'm going to sit here until you've written about the cats.' And he sat there until I sat down and wrote just about any old thing about cats and he published it."¹⁴

1956 At the suggestion of Blair Fuller, one of the founding editors of the *Paris Review*, Hill moves to Stonington, Connecticut, and lives with her friend Brayton Marvell in the house of Anne Fuller. She meets and befriends writers James Merrill and Truman Capote.

At a party for the *Paris Review* in New York City, Hill meets art dealer Paul Bianchini, who had recently opened a commercial art gallery on Seventy-eighth Street that would become one of the first commercial galleries to sell works by Pop artists.

The Pit and the Century Plant is republished in Great Britain by Lowe and Brydone.

Excerpts from *The Nine Mile Circle* are published: "Jetty's Black Rage" in the April issue of *Harper's Bazaar* and "Morton" in the fall issue of *Carolina Quarterly*.

Hill's short story "Ben" is published in the *Paris Review*.

1957 Hill and Marvell purchase a house at 51 Main Street in Stonington, where they live for two years.

The Nine Mile Circle is published by Houghton Mifflin. Diane Arbus writes, "The book is beautiful. It enchants so that when I stop reading it I am drunk with it. It's not circular like so many books (where the end is a prelude to the beginning)... It grows as surely as a flower does and its flowers get plucked and blown away and in the end I was so sad I thought it must have died. Read it twice with interruptions, and then sometimes just picked up any part. It's very sad, not by anything in the subject of it, but like it's constructed by loss, I mean the losing of its parts, fading, forgetting... whereas most books, even the saddest, are resolved and tied up, each thread to another, so that somebody (author or reader) ends up with a package and takes it home. Really marvelous (the people, times, places, meshings, crossings)... and the marvelous absence of an obstreperous, omnipotent author... and the brilliant floating center of it. (I remember wondering ages ago where everything goes when you throw it away, garbage, things you lose, forget, etc. and vaguely expecting they'd all turn up in some immense spiritual city dump... but it's like you followed a thousand things and found they all go different places and never stop.)"¹⁵

Hill interviews Truman Capote in "The Art of Fiction 17" for issue 16 of the *Paris Review*.

1959 Xerox introduces the Xerox 914, first plain paper photocopier.

1960 Filmmaker Richard de Rochemont purchases the film rights to *The Pit and the Century Plant*.

Hill is accepted for the first of two residencies at the Yaddo artist's colony in New York from February to March. In her guest's file at Yaddo, a grader writes, "Her touch and style are more original, she has a more personal quality in her work, and shows more actual distinction in her material and her artistry. In the ten files I have read so far (up to February 17, 1960), I would say that Pati Hill is the most distinctly gifted writer [among three guests]."¹⁶

Hill's third novel, *Prosper*, is published by Houghton Mifflin in October.

She marries Paul Schildge Bianchini on November 3. Hill comments, "I thought he would be rich because his family made silk in Lyon, but it turned out he was as poor as I was."¹⁷

1961 Hill is accepted for a second residency at Yaddo from January to March.

Hill changes her name from Patricia Hill Schildge-Bianchini, as issued from her marriage, to Patricia Hill Bianchini.

1962 *The Snow Rabbit*, a book of Hill's poems illustrated by poet Galway Kinnell, is published by Houghton Mifflin. Excerpts titled "Animal Poems" are published in *Harper's Magazine*.

Hill and Bianchini's daughter Paola is born in Geneva, Switzerland. Hill moves to 20 Grand Street in Stonington to raise her.

One Thing I Know, a novel about a teenager navigating love, is published by Houghton Mifflin and dedicated to Diane Arbus.

1963 *Prosper* is translated into German under the title "Mein fremdes Haus" and is published by Henry Goverts Verlag, Stuttgart.

1964 *One Thing I Know* is translated into Italian under the title "Una cosa è certa" and is published by Rizzoli Publications, Milan.

"Americian Supermarket," an exhibition installed to suggest a grocery store and featuring works by Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, James Rosenquist, and Robert Watts, among others, opens to acclaim at the Bianchini Gallery.

1965 Hill moves her household to 32 Main Street in Stonington.

The Paul Bianchini Gallery relocates to Fifty-seventh Street in New York City.

1967 The Paul Bianchini Gallery closes. The family moves to France for a short time.

1969 In July, Hill and James Merrill do a reading of their poetry works at The Church in Stonington.

1971 Diane Arbus commits suicide.

1972 IBM introduces the Copier II.

Film director Francois Truffaut reads a draft of the novel that becomes *Impossible Dreams*.

1973 Hill, at the request of Doon Arbus, translates some of Diane Arbus's writings into French for the Éditions du Chêne publication of *Diane Arbus: An Aperture Monograph*, edited and designed by Marvin Israel and Doon Arbus. "Doon doesn't like Chene's translation of Diane's text, so I tried out a page to see how it would go, but I hate translating. It is something like the opposite of writing—a kind of mirror made for reflecting inaccurately."¹⁸

1974 An excerpt from *The Angry French Housewife*, later retitled *Impossible Dreams*, is published in the winter issue of *Carolina Quarterly*.

Hill expands her experiments with the photocopier as an artistic medium (possibly begun the previous year).

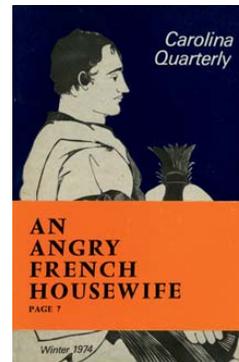
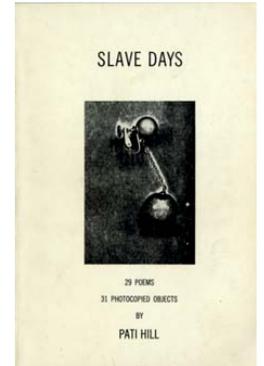
1975 In September, Bianchini introduces Hill to art dealer Jill Kornblee. Hill's first exhibition, "Objects," takes place at Kornblee Gallery in New York, which also publishes her book of poems and photocopies, titled *Slave Days*, with support from James Merrill, to whom Hill dedicates the book. "Objects" is also shown at the Centre Culturel de Flaine in France. Writing to Bianchini about the upcoming exhibition in France, Hill says, "Getting things started is the whole battle.... I am not going to have the strength to start anything new again ever in my life."¹⁹

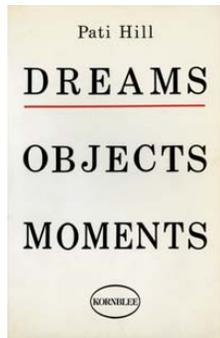
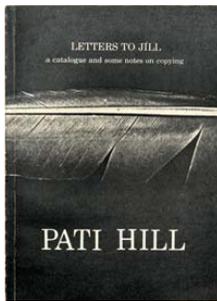
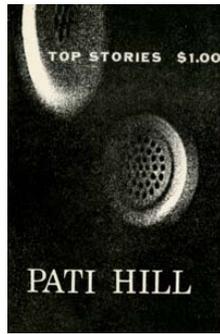
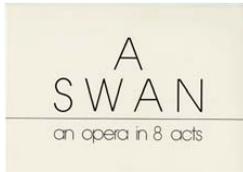
1976 Hill's short story "The Falcon" is published in the spring issue of the *Paris Review*.

In May, she speaks at the second annual Book Affair at Harvard University, an event for small publishers.

Impossible Dreams, Hill's novel illustrated with forty-eight photocopied photographs, is published by the Alice James Poetry Collective. A review in *The Kansas City Star* states, "Pati Hill's unusual book creates, in a series of expressionless and exquisitely selective prose, a family album of verbal photographs.... Together the chapters work as a subtly perverse chronicle of familial dissolution, a kind of ersatz family album."²⁰

Hill receives a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Arts Fellowship (one of 200 nationwide winners to receive \$6,000 that year) for *Impossible Dreams*.





Work on Hill's second solo exhibition is facilitated by her surreptitious weekend use of IBM copiers at the company's New York headquarters thanks to assistance from a friend who worked for the company.

The exhibition "Garments" takes place at Kornblee Gallery, and *Six Photocopied Garments*, a book consisting of poems and photocopies, is published in issue 43 of *New Letters*.

Betty Henry starts teaching Hill's international symbol language at Deans Mill Primary School in Stonington, work she continues for two years.

1977 Hill meets designer Charles Eames in July on a transatlantic flight from Paris to New York. With Eames's influence, IBM loans her an IBM Copier II, which is delivered to Hill's property at 20 Grand Street in Stonington and installed on the second floor. Hill cultivates an active correspondence with Eames about the copier as well as her *Symbol Language* and a publishing project to facilitate collaboration between artists and writers.

Kornblee presents Hill's "Dreams Objects Moments," an exhibition comprising short texts representing each category of the show's title. Afterward, the gallery publishes a book of selected dreams.

1978 Hill exhibits *A Swan: An Opera in Eight Acts* at Kornblee Gallery, the first public presentation of the work that Hill would retitle *A Swan: An Opera in Nine Chapters*.

Hill presents a reading of *Impossible Dreams* at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York.

1979 In January, Hill reads from *Impossible Dreams* at Hallwalls, a non-profit contemporary artist-run space in Buffalo, New York. Later in the year, Hallwalls publishes Hill's short stories "Mrs. Starling" (1978), "The Falcon" (1976), and "The Ballad of Annie Bates" (1970) in *Top Stories*, a prose periodical specializing in experimental fiction, art, and photography by women.

Letters to Jill: A catalogue and some notes on copying and *Italian Darns*, a book of poems paired with copier prints, are published by Kornblee.

"Electroworks," an exhibition of copier prints surveying the work of eighty-five artists, opens at the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, in November. The exhibition features *A Swan: An Opera in Nine Chapters* and places Hill with other "first generation" pioneers of the medium. Hill attends the opening and exhibition symposium and begins discussing her aspiration to "photocopy Versailles" with representatives from IBM and Xerox.

1980 "Electroworks," opens at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York. A review of the show is published on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*, opening and closing with a discussion of Hill's work.

A Swan is included in "Photocopies" at the Centre Pompidou's Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, a group show that also featured Orlan; Claudine Eizykman and Guy Fihman; Claude Toney, known for his collages with Daniel Spoerri; and Gianni Castagnoli.

The Copier II lent by IBM is removed from Hill's Stonington residence.

Hill writes to Gerald van der Kemp, chief curator of Versailles, for permission to photocopy the palace. "I wish to copy a cobblestone, parts of espaliered trees, anti-damp grilles, graffiti, lollipop sticks, the embroidery on Marie Antoinette's bedspreads and draperies, and the King's left foot from the equestrian statue in the front yard."²¹

1981 IBM's office in Stamford, Connecticut, purchases a version of *A Swan: An Opera in Nine Chapters*.

1982 The University of Paris VIII begins a copy art studio in the department of plastic arts.

Hill participates in a panel with other copier artists in New York moderated by Louise Neaderland, founder of the International Society of Copier Artists.

1983 Hill purchases her own IBM Copier II, originally on loan to her from IBM's Paris offices.

1984 Hill teaches introductory courses on electronic art at Université de Paris VIII.

Hill presents a reading of *Impossible Dreams* at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in conjunction with its exhibition "Electra."

1985 Rank Xerox in France allows Hill to keep a Xerox 3107 originally loaned to her for use on the Versailles project.

1986 Hill unsuccessfully attempts to patent a printing process she developed that involves inking copier prints on acetate.

1987 Hill opens an antiques business at the Mystic Mall in Mystic, Connecticut. "My own merchandise tended toward found objects. A heavy ball of tinfoil, collected during the War years and gently peeling, three enormous photographs of an empty canoe (bought at once by the director of a museum) and a series of paper children, probably made by a child who lives on in my memory. The cardboard hand in a glass-topped box is still with me. The idea was to lure a tiny ring onto the proper finger by cleverly shaking and tilting the box. I concluded that this was impossible."²²

An exhibition surveying the publications of Paul Bianchini, organized by Barbara Zabel in conjunction with Connecticut College, is presented at the Lyman Allyn Museum in New London, Connecticut.

The Tribunal d'Instance de Joigny in Burgundy confirms Hill's French nationality, acquired through her marriage to Bianchini.

1989 Hill closes her antiques business and permanently moves to her studio at 12 rue de Palais de Justice in Sens, France.

Hill begins working with the artist Robert Dutrou in his etching workshop in Yonne. "The great 'graveur,' Robert Dutrou, whose skill and patience has resulted in the etchings of Miro, lived in the neighboring town of Parly. I hoped this genial master would help me make saleable work of my untidy Versailles pieces."²³

1990 Hill opens Cinq Rue Jules Verne Galerie Toner, Sens. She gives the first exhibition to her daughter, Paola, a show titled "Monuments–Mirrors."

1991 Hill and Bianchini open Poissonniere Galerie Toner, Paris.

Lily Tuck's novel *Interviewing Matisse, or The Woman Who Died Standing Up* is published. One of the novel's two primary characters is based on Hill.

1994 A photo of Jackie Kennedy, taken by Hill when she was married to Robert Meservey, is published in *TIME* magazine.

1999 *The Selected Letters of Dawn Powell: 1913–1965* is published, in which Powell describes Hill during their shared residency at Yaddo.

2000 Paul Bianchini dies. Hill closes Galerie Toner in both Paris and Sens.

Hill is included in a solo show entitled "Wall Papers" at Bayly Art Museum, University of Virginia, the first occasion since "Electroworks" (1980) that Hill exhibits her work in the United States.

2001 Eugene Walter's memoir *Milking the Moon*, which references Hill, is published.

2003–5 The exhibition "Pati Hill: Vers Versailles" takes place at the Orangerie des Musées de Sens (December 2003–February 2004) and the Musée Lambinet de Versailles (April–July 2005).

2008 *George Being George*, a book about the life of George Plimpton, is published. In addition to several comments about Plimpton by Hill, the book includes a biographical note about Hill that mentions an in-progress memoir about Diane Arbus.

2012 Stephen Dixon's novel *Story of a Story and Other Stories* references Hill and Alain de la Falaise.

2013 Hill self-publishes *I Decide To Wrap Up My Family*.

2014 Hill dies in her home in Sens, France, on September 19. She lived near the river Yonne in Burgundy off and on since she first found it while living in Montacher in the 1950s.

