



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Margaret M.
Davies, 1978 March 13

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Margaret M. Davies on March 13, 1978. Herbert Hoover is also present. The interview took place in Tiburon, California, and was conducted by Paul J. Karlstrom for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The original transcript was edited. The majority of the interview was originally transcribed in the early 1980s. In 2024 the Archives fully retranscribed the original audio and attempted to create a verbatim transcript. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

[00:00:04.73]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution—an interview with Margaret Davies, the widow of Harold Christopher Davies. The interview is at Paradise Cove, Tiburon, California on March 13, 1978. Also present, Mr. Herbert Hoover, a friend of the Davies' and Mr. Davies' dealer.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:00:41.57]

Herbert and I and the Archives of American Art appreciate your giving your time this way, and I know that perhaps, the prospect of an interview is a little bit frightening, but it really needn't be. What we would like to do—the subject of the interview of course, is your late husband, Harold Christopher Davies, who was a remarkable painter, and a painter about whom not a great deal seems to be known. He was a very private person, from what I gather.

[00:01:15.71]

And he and his work come as something of a surprise to many of us. And what we would like to do in this tape, is perhaps, gain a little bit of insight into Harold Christopher Davies, the man, the painter. How much we learn about him as a husband is entirely up to you. But just to fill in some of these gaps, because nothing really substantial has been written. And we expect that given the quality of the work, something will be written. And we're hoping that this interview, then, will provide a little information that can't be found elsewhere.

[00:01:57.32]

I would like to start out, if you don't mind, with a few words just about—not in any detail, but

about who you are, where you were born, things like this, and then when you actually met Mr. Davies and, well, how you got together. So you can tell just as much as you want to about that, just to give a little idea of how it started.

[00:02:29.90]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, I was born here in Oakland, California, the day after Christmas, in 1900. And I went to school and colleges here in California, and then east to medical school. And I met Harold when I was in the University of California.

[00:03:00.09]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Do you remember—

[00:03:00.71]

MARGARET DAVIES: He was marrying a friend of mine. And then, when they had their first child, he named his daughter Margaret after me. And that brought us in a little closer relationship. And then I went east to medical school and didn't see him, oh, until 1938, when I came back, and wanted to find out how my namesake was. And so, he came—when I came back, he called at my family home, and called on me. And that's how we got together.

[00:03:53.31]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: He obviously maintained that interest in you as a person. I think that's quite clear.

[00:03:59.40]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, he was separated for 17 years from his wife, you see. And when he came to call, he went the next day back to his work, and he said to his secretary, "I just met the woman that I'm going to marry." And the secretary said, "But you only saw her last night. And how do you know whether she's widowed or divorced or what?" And he said it didn't make any difference. "I waited 17 years for her. And now, I'm going to marry her."

[00:04:33.75]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And indeed, he did.

[00:04:35.40]

MARGARET DAVIES: And he did.

[00:04:36.30]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: So when did you get married?

[00:04:41.19]

MARGARET DAVIES: November 6, 1938.

[00:04:44.79]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: 1938. And you did you continue with medical school? Did you finish medical school?

[00:04:53.65]

MARGARET DAVIES: No, I was there during the Depression. And my two brothers had to have their careers, one a doctor and one a lawyer, because they would be the heads of families. And I was only a girl, you see. And so, my father asked if I would take out a leave of absence until they finished their education. And so I did. But I never got back, because my father never recuperated. And I wasn't really smart enough to get scholarships, compete with the men and get scholarships.

[00:05:28.33]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, that's not always—

[00:05:29.53]

MARGARET DAVIES: I probably wouldn't have been given a scholarship, you see. Because the men, they didn't want women in medicine.

[00:05:37.18]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Now, when you married Mr. Davies, where did you first live?

[00:05:45.37]

MARGARET DAVIES: We lived in Berkeley in the home that he had. He had a house in Berkeley. And then, we went out to Orinda, out to the country.

[00:05:58.30]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: How was he supporting himself and you at that time—not as a painter, I gather?

[00:06:05.95]

MARGARET DAVIES: No. Well, he was with a chemical company that is now called Ortho, a subsidiary of Standard Oil. He was there for about 15 years, because he had to support himself. And he was president of the company. And he painted weekends and night times as he could.

[00:06:28.72]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did he have a studio then, in your home?

[00:06:31.63]

MARGARET DAVIES: There was always one bedroom that seemed to face north. And that was turned over to him.

[00:06:40.57]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Already by that time, he had been a practicing artist for many years, I believe.

[00:06:47.44]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, since he was four years old. Somebody gave him a big round ball for Christmas, a big painted ball. And he was furious. He wanted a box of those little metal boxes with the watercolors in it, you know, the little—yes.

[00:07:06.94]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And so he had, from the very beginning, evidenced an interest in art.

[00:07:12.14]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, yes, yes.

[00:07:14.77]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well Mr. Davies was born in Seattle in 1891.

[00:07:21.40]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:07:22.30]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And then, I gather he or his family moved around.

[00:07:26.75]

MARGARET DAVIES: His father came west to be—his father had been traveling around,

really around the world, just sort of investigating and just discovering, on a trip of discovery. And he ended in Los Angeles, where he was married. And they moved up to Seattle. And Harold was born in Seattle. And then, the father went to Washington D.C., where he was in the War Department.

[00:08:01.19]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And then, I gather they lived in Virginia.

[00:08:04.71]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:08:05.05]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —for a few years.

[00:08:05.90]

MARGARET DAVIES: The father had an idea of being a country esquire. He was a wonderfully well-educated Englishman. And so, he bought a farm in Cherrydale. And he knew absolutely nothing about farming, or land or anything. So of course, he found he couldn't support his family that way. So he went back to the War Department. Then he heard about California, so he moved the family out to Fresno. And of course, that was a failure for him, because he hadn't any idea about ranching and Fresno. So he went back to the War Department again and left his family out here. Harold was the head of the family then.

[00:08:55.17]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: So Harold really grew up in Fresno.

[00:08:59.34]

MARGARET DAVIES: He came out here—oh, I guess he must have been just in his teens, his early teens.

[00:09:10.93]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And he went to high school, I suppose, in Fresno, in other words, the teenage years.

[00:09:15.28]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, he went to Western High School in Washington D.C. for about six months before they came out here. And he went to the Corcoran Institute, you now, the art institute at night times.

[00:09:31.54]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see, I see. Did he ever talk about his experience at the Corcoran Art School?

[00:09:40.08]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. The man who was the head of it was very much interested in this young fellow, and he did a great deal for Harold, helped him. And of course, they had shows there at the gallery. And he thought Harold showed a great deal of promise. His name was Messer. And so he spent a great deal of time with Harold, and told Harold that he must learn to draw, do a great deal of drawing. Because you had to have that background for no matter what kind of painting you did later on. You would be a better painter if you learned to draw.

[00:10:19.40]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Which is sound advice. Well, did Harold Davies later on, then, look back to this period and view Mr. Messer in a really special role, as playing a special role in his own development?

[00:10:36.14]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, he was very grateful to him. And of course, Mr. Messer counteracted his family, who did not want him to be a painter.

[00:10:45.63]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see.

[00:10:45.92]

MARGARET DAVIES: They didn't want a painter in the family. And the thing was, you just spent your time supporting yourself and making money. And he would send Harold—his father would send Harold to college if he would study engineering or boat design, an architect. And Harold wanted to paint. So he didn't go to college.

[00:11:10.10]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see. He never did go to college, then?

[00:11:12.56]

MARGARET DAVIES: No. And when he was in high school, the school went too slowly for him. So he left the high school and went to the library every day and educated himself. And he taught himself mathematics, German, French, all these things that I was learning in high school and college. He had read everything, studied everything that we had. So he was self-educated.

[00:11:37.85]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, he apparently had a very active intellectual mind.

[00:11:42.44]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, and he had a terrific thirst for knowledge.

[00:11:44.75]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And what were his special interests? You mentioned mathematics. I think you mentioned some foreign languages.

[00:11:53.81]

MARGARET DAVIES: Art.

[00:11:54.50]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Art? That, of course, figures. I could have expected that. What about philosophy, literature?

[00:12:01.10]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, he read everything he could get his hands on. And he took an enormous number of magazines, from the *Scientific American* to all the art magazines, as well as the *Wall Street Journal*. So he just had to know everything.

[00:12:21.96]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: He must have been a fascinating person to talk with. You had a good number of years of, I imagine, fairly stimulating conversation. Did you oh, after dinner, sit down and discuss ideas?

[00:12:35.45]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, breakfast, you see, we would meet and talk about what we would do during the day. And then, he would go to his studio. And I would go out to my gardening. Then I'd "hoo-hoo" for lunch. And he'd talk about whether the picture was going quickly, or whether he was kind of struggling over it. And then, he'd rest a bit, read a little, and go back to the studio. And then, there'd be dinner. And sometimes dinner lasted two or three hours, because he had read some articles or some experience he'd had before I knew him. And he

would have made a wonderful professor. He was very, very interesting to listen to. And that time would pass, and you'd never realize it.

[00:13:31.22]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you have friends over—well, of course, I'm sure you did. But what was the nature of conversations, the type of gatherings?

[00:13:44.18]

MARGARET DAVIES: With him?

[00:13:44.90]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah.

[00:13:45.53]

MARGARET DAVIES: It was always about art, something he read in the art magazines, or he had seen, or the galleries he had gone to. Then, it might be articles from the *Scientific American*. And having had a very scientific education myself, I was amazed at the comprehension, the understanding. He had of all these articles in scientific magazines, *Scientific American*. And he read all about what people were working on down south in the desert and the nuclear physicists and all, the new mathematics. I was just amazed of the knowledge he had of things.

[00:14:39.37]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did he ever talk about his experience in the military? I gather he was during the First World War—

[00:14:47.11]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:14:48.25]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —in the Army.

[00:14:48.85]

MARGARET DAVIES: He was down in Fresno. And he was working in a power company. And he entered as soon as the United States entered the war, the First World War, he went into—went enlisted. And they sent him up to Camp Lewis in—wasn't it Washington? And they put him in the remount department. They were using a great many horses then, you know. And so they put him in the remount. He never went overseas.

[00:15:29.27]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see. Well, he moved then, back to San Francisco in 1920, in this area.

[00:15:39.26]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, and he moved to San Francisco. The Army gave him \$50 in his overcoat. That's what you got when you came out. And he went to San Francisco. And he went to the University of California Art School there. But they were again, too slow and too academic, and so set in their ways. And by then, you see wanted to develop his own—and so, he left.

[00:16:11.84]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, did he go to the University of California, or to the California School of Fine Arts?

[00:16:18.26]

MARGARET DAVIES: He went to the—it was in San Francisco, the Fine Arts.

[00:16:25.31]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Is that right, Herbert?

[00:16:26.21]

HERBERT HOOVER: Yes, California School of Fine Arts—I don't know. Did he go to UC-Berkeley at all? No, it was the California School of Fine Arts. That's where he met Ralph Stackpole.

[00:16:37.08]

MARGARET DAVIES: I don't remember just when he did meet him.

[00:16:40.83]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, that's interesting. I wanted to ask about that anyway. I gather he knew Stackpole. And was there a special—

[00:16:47.37]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yeah. It must have been at that time. Because that's all he was interested in was painting and going to the academy. He was almost non-social. He was so concentrated and devoted to his painting. It was his life, you see.

[00:17:03.33]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Would you say that most of his friends—looking at that time in particular, do you gather the most of his friends then, were artists, those who were interested in art?

[00:17:15.24]

MARGARET DAVIES: They were. Yes.

[00:17:15.48]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And Stackpole was one of them, right?

[00:17:17.31]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. He wasn't interested in any kind of social life contacts at all.

[00:17:22.53]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did the friendship with Stackpole carry over? In other words—

[00:17:28.09]

MARGARET DAVIES: I don't know.

[00:17:29.29]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: In other words, when you were married, he wasn't seeing Stackpole.

[00:17:34.59]

MARGARET DAVIES: No. No.

[00:17:38.10]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What about any other artists here in the area at that time?

[00:17:40.95]

MARGARET DAVIES: Here, in the area, see, he had very little time for friendships or social life, because he had to work during the daytime, nine to five. And then he spent all his free time painting. In fact, when we were married, he said he had one favor to ask, that we do no entertaining on Saturday and Sunday, because that was the only time he had to paint.

[00:18:17.53]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see.

[00:18:18.49]

MARGARET DAVIES: So you see, I had my life during the week while he was working, my social life in the daytime. But at nighttime, he just didn't want to go places. He wanted to paint, and weekends.

[00:18:36.19]

HERBERT HOOVER: Didn't he know Maurice Logan?

[00:18:41.59]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, he mentioned him. He talked about him. And whether he had met him or had knew him, I don't know. That's not clear to me.

[00:18:51.25]

HERBERT HOOVER: He mentioned to me once, about Grace Morley.

[00:18:55.36]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, yes, yes.

[00:18:56.74]

HERBERT HOOVER: That would be interesting.

[00:18:59.36]

MARGARET DAVIES: In San Francisco—

[00:19:00.16]

HERBERT HOOVER: —in San Francisco, that she was very influential on his career, whether she knew it or not. But he always mentioned her with great feeling.

[00:19:13.48]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, yes. He thought very highly of her.

[00:19:16.60]

HERBERT HOOVER: Remember, when we had lunch together over in Inverness, he mentioned her name in particular. And of course, I think it was at that time, when he mentioned Maurice Logan. Now whether he actually—

[00:19:35.60]

MARGARET DAVIES: —knew him or not, I don't know. It wasn't until he retired from the chemical company he owned, and we went up to New York to be near the New York galleries, that is when his friendship with the artists started. He was retired. And he had plenty of time to know the artists. And we went to East Hampton, where some of the very fine artists were. And then, he had time to—they would come to his studio. And he would go see them. And you see, he no longer had to go nine to five to an office.

[00:20:15.65]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Right. Well, so far, we've been talking—proceeding in a somewhat chronological manner, here through the years. And we've been talking about a time really prior to your marriage, to your life together. And so, I suppose the best thing to do at this point is really move along and talk about the years after 1938—is that right—and your life together. You're certainly in a very good position to recall from those years. You were here probably—after you were married, you remained in the Bay Area, I gather for—

[00:21:08.42]

MARGARET DAVIES: Ten years.

[00:21:09.56]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, almost ten years.

[00:21:10.70]

MARGARET DAVIES: Ten years.

[00:21:11.69]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Is it true that you moved to Alabama in '45?

[00:21:16.37]

MARGARET DAVIES: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:21:17.15]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Okay, and what occasioned that move? Why Alabama?

[00:21:30.51]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, Mr. Davies resigned from the company he was President of. And a young chemist, returning from Germany, was sent over by the government to spy out what the Germans had been doing in the chemical line. And he was very much impressed with the DDT that the Germans were manufacturing. So, he came over. And he tried to get the banks to back him. And they would only give him ten percent of the company.

[00:22:15.43]

So he heard about Harold. Somebody had told him he was the only really honest, civilized executive of a chemical company, to go see him. So he came to the house, and he talked to Harold. And Harold was a very good judge of character. So, he told the young fellow, yes, he'd back him. And that's how it started. And Harold startled everybody by giving the young fellow 50 percent of the stock, which had never been done. And they all said to Harold, "You're crazy." And Harold replied, "The young man is ambitious. If he owns half the company, he'll work doubly hard." And it will prove out, and it did.

[00:23:11.73]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That was the Calabama Chemical Company that was formed.

[00:23:18.11]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:23:19.31]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I still don't understand why Huntsville. Was there government connection or something?

[00:23:27.01]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, they wanted to establish a DDT plant. And they looked around California. And there was no warehouse, no plant, nothing that was available. And so, this young fellow heard about the inactive Huntsville arsenal, that there were loads. There was a plant there that they were going to make poison gas, but they never did. And that building was available, so that's why they went to Alabama.

[00:24:01.09]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see. So you picked up then, and moved to the South?

[00:24:05.44]

MARGARET DAVIES: To Alabama. And of course, that plant was in the Huntsville arsenal. And then, the Second World War and Korean War was starting. So it was very active plant. And then they had also, a plant in Mobile, Alabama. And then, Olin Matheson wanted the DDT plant. So then they traded stock. And Harold and his partner gave up the Calabama.

[00:24:38.06]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: So you lived better than a decade in Alabama? Is that right?

[00:24:45.50]

MARGARET DAVIES: No, we lived there about eight years.

[00:24:48.86]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Eight years?

[00:24:51.02]

Uh-huh [affirmative]. And then went up to New York.

[00:24:53.69]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Okay. Well, I see it more like about twelve years, according to this chronology here. But at any rate, it was a good substantial period of time.

[00:25:05.87]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, yes.

[00:25:06.57]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What do you remember from those years, specifically in connection with Mr. Davies' painting activities? I assume that he continued to paint whenever he could. And yet, his responsibilities with his business must have been considerable.

[00:25:23.81]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, but it was a very small town, of only about—oh, hardly 12,000. And some of the young people there came to him and asked him if he would help them paint, teach them some techniques, and so forth. And he said that—so he set up a room for them in the connection—a room next to the office. And they would come there on nights, and paint. And then he said, it was taking too much of his time, you see. And they'd have to go on now alone.

[00:26:01.43]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But he actually did function as an instructor for a period of time?

[00:26:05.36]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. Oh, he kind of criticized their work, helped them for a little bit.

[00:26:10.79]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: How long did he do that? Do you remember?

[00:26:13.07]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, that was only for maybe, a year. And then he said it took too many of his evenings. And they were too demanding. And he had to supply all their supplies, because many of them didn't have any. [Laughs.] So it was just interfering with his work.

[00:26:33.02]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, it interests me that he would have been sought out, anyway. I mean, he was a businessman, the head of a corporation. How was it that these aspiring art students knew that he was in a position to teach them anything?

[00:26:46.61]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, in a small town like that—and it was a small, little southern town, and word gets around, by word of mouth and the grapevine, you know. And people know all about you when you come into a little Southern town. But they accepted Harold because he had grown up in Virginia. And they accepted me because I had Maryland and Virginia ancestry.

[00:27:13.65]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's fortunate. [They laugh.]

[00:27:14.55]

MARGARET DAVIES: And the Colonial Dames, you know? And then, during the Second World War, many of them had come out to California to see their sons off for the war. So they knew about California, and they liked it. And so, that was all right. We were accepted.

[00:27:34.44]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, did Mr. Davies, during this time, have any professional activity, I mean, as an artist? Obviously, he had professional activity with his business. Were there any small exhibitions, anything like that?

[00:27:53.54]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, well he did organize some exhibitions for the young people to show what they were doing in their work.

[00:28:06.81]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did he show any of his paintings with them?

[00:28:09.06]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. And then the University of Alabama, the head of the Art Department in the University of Alabama, heard about these little activities going on. And they came over to see Harold, and talked to Harold and asked him to—they wanted to give him a one-man show. But he wasn't particularly interested in showing. It would take time out from his painting. And his painting time was so limited. And so, he did send off one picture, but it was sent too late. It didn't get in the exhibit. [They laugh.]

[00:28:51.33]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, this is something I wanted to ask you anyway. And I suppose now's as good a time as any, perhaps better. I'm interested in Mr. Davies' attitude towards exhibiting, and towards the art market. Now with most artists, if they have any ambition in the traditional sense concerning their work, they want to exhibit. They want to bring their work to the public, and they also would like to sell, not only to support themselves, but it indicates approval of what they've done.

[00:29:29.22]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:29:31.02]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And how did Mr. Davies feel about this? It seems that he's a little unusual in this respect.

[00:29:35.85]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, he did exhibit in San Francisco, exhibited two pictures of the Bay Area. They were small pictures, watercolors. And the Fine Arts building that may have—who was it, built for the 1915 exhibit? They took one room there. And they had exhibits for San Francisco.

[00:30:05.67]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: In the Maybach building?

[00:30:06.62]

MARGARET DAVIES: Maybach, yes—Maybach building. And Harold did have two pictures, watercolors, exhibited there. That was way back, oh, 1921 or '22. And he gave one to a friend of his, and in moving from one place to another, the other was stolen. And so then he lost both of them. And then, he wanted to paint. And he wanted to improve, and you know, do better. And he just wasn't interested in exhibiting. I don't know why.

[00:30:55.77]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: It sounds very much as if he—

[00:30:57.39]

MARGARET DAVIES: He painted for himself.

[00:30:58.86]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I was just going to say this.

[00:31:00.45]

MARGARET DAVIES: You see, learned, when he went to art school, that it was very academic painting. And usually, people painted somewhat like their teachers. And he wanted to paint for himself. And he didn't have to exhibit because he had an income sufficient to support his family, so he wasn't dependent upon that. And it wasn't until we went up to New York, and we were there among the artists and the galleries that he became interested in exhibiting, because the artists asked him to exhibit. And he only exhibited in a show, where he was invited to show. He didn't show in any of the public shows. And he was anxious to be considered a good painter by the very finest painters in New York. That was his ambition.

[00:31:58.50]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see, so his—

[00:31:59.07]

MARGARET DAVIES: And they did. Gottlieb and the others did consider him a very good painter. And he—you know, it was a rat race in New York with painters. And they were very friendly with him, and very good about any—if he asked them about a picture, about whether they thought it was good or not. Because he was not in competition with them, you see. He still had sufficient income to—that he didn't have to sell his pictures. And it was a great deal of trouble. It took time out from painting to frame everything and insure it, get it over to the galleries, get it back again, and all. And he just wanted every minute to paint. And he did. And it was so arranged that he could always—that nothing would ever interfere with his painting.

[00:32:53.81]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I think it's remarkable and quite unusual.

[00:32:58.01]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, when I first saw his first paintings, I liked them very much. I didn't know a thing about painting, but I liked them very much. And I thought it was too bad that he wanted to be a full-time painter and couldn't, and that when we were in Huntsville and he had sufficient money to live on, why shouldn't he retire and spend the rest of his life painting? So it was always arranged that nothing interfered with his painting. It seemed too bad to have anything interfere with his painting. And other things, social life and so on, were superficial, compared to his painting.

[00:33:44.01]

And a man so dedicated had the right to spend his life painting. And he took wonderful care of his family, sent them all to college, and saw that they had everything that he could give them. And so, he should have time for himself to paint. It was his right to, anybody that was talented. Besides, I was brought up that way, that the man was the head of the family. The wife went wherever he went in business or anything. And if you tried to make the man happy, you were happy yourself, and you had a happy family. And it is absolutely true; it worked out.

[00:34:30.85]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: We should tell Pinky and Ann that.

[00:34:32.53]

HERBERT HOOVER: Yes. Not to digress, but there was also one time in Oakland in the '30s, when Mr. Davies did exhibit with the Oakland Art League.

[00:34:43.90]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, yes.

[00:34:44.54]

HERBERT HOOVER: And there was a picture in the *Oakland Tribune* under the "Art and Artists."

[00:34:49.34]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:34:49.78]

HERBERT HOOVER: And it described his work as interesting in arrangement of form. We suspect that he played with his little block-like houses, as a child might play with his tinker toy, with the result that he found a naïve and interesting pattern. So that—

[00:35:08.17]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What year was this?

[00:35:09.23]

HERBERT HOOVER: That was, I think—

[00:35:09.97]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, that was he exhibited—

[00:35:12.28]

HERBERT HOOVER: '38 or '39, or earlier than that, maybe.

[00:35:16.06]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, it was earlier—

[00:35:17.02]

HERBERT HOOVER: Earlier than that.

[00:35:17.77]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, it was very much earlier than that.

[00:35:19.78]

HERBERT HOOVER: Yes, it was. We'll have to get the date. The date isn't on this piece. I don't know why.

[00:35:23.83]

MARGARET DAVIES: He exhibited in the forerunner of the Oakland Museum, art museum before they built the Oakland Art Museum. Yes, at that time, he was doing pastels and etchings and pen drawings, charcoal drawings. He also did some sculpture. He did, with his etching, he did monotypes. In fact, his whole life was—he just went right through the scale of everything, from a pen and ink drawings, to sculpture, to ending up Expressionism. He tried everything. And the funny part was—that wasn't so funny, but he was good at every one of them.

[00:36:18.11]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I think of him primarily as a painter.

[00:36:21.29]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:36:21.62]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And so, I'm a little surprised to hear that he was involved with sculpture. Does anything remain of that body of work? Or is it hard to tell?

[00:36:32.90]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. It was given to—he did a head of his son, and his daughter, and Louise. And the heads were all given to the models.

[00:36:46.97]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: So he really was a, I guess, a portrait sculptor.

[00:36:51.68]

MARGARET DAVIES: He went through portrait work too. But did everything along the way.

[00:36:57.41]

HERBERT HOOVER: There is a body of the plates. We have all the plates for his etchings and lithographs. And there are some of those works are still in existence.

[00:37:08.07]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. And I have some of the etchings and monotypes in this studio here, the storage room.

[00:37:15.59]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see.

[00:37:16.25]

HERBERT HOOVER: One interesting thing that always came to mind, to personalize this—when we had the first show of Mr. Davies, which was so well-received, I didn't have, at that time, a realization that Mr. Davies had been painting since age four, and that he had—but I saw this great body of work in his studio. And then one day, he asked me to go into his other studio, where he had stacks of these paintings and watercolors from going back to Fresno. He always was very interested, at a very young age, in deep, rich magentas and purples and blues and reds, and always sort of an abstract approach to things, even in his figurative drawing when he went into the flophouses of Oakland to do the topless. At those times, he was doing topless for figure studies.

[00:38:13.22]

But I was having my eyes examined by my eye doctor. And well, he had the light shining in my eyes. He said, "That was a very interesting exhibit you had down there the other night. Did that man always see those horrendous shapes and forms and colors? Because I have a theory that after a man has had a cataract operation, he sees color differently." And I said,

"Well, I have to disprove your theory, that Mr. Davies was always interested in very bold colors right from the very beginning." He loved working. He was an experimenter, also.

[00:38:50.45]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:38:51.02]

HERBERT HOOVER: He wasn't a formalized painter. He had a style that he grew and kept growing. But he was always looking to—I think, the same thing as was his—an inquisitive mind, is what you want to say.

[00:39:03.20]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, he was learning about color. And in the early days, when he didn't have very much money, he mixed his own colors. And he was living in Fresno and San Francisco. And he was trying to get the brown hills of California color to suit him. And he thought they were very ugly at first, until he began to work with them and see the shadows and the different browns. But his first impression of California was very harsh and brown. You see, he had come from Virginia where it's—

[00:39:43.77]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: A lot of difference.

[00:39:45.27]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:39:45.65]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What a contrast.

[00:39:47.37]

MARGARET DAVIES: Of course, he had been to the 1915 World Exposition, the gallery at the exposition. And he used to go there a great deal. And these little square houses and so forth, they were going—the artists were doing Cubism—and that is the influence that had on him of Cubism. And that picture was done over here in Tiburon, when it was just a little fishing village and a coaling center for the boats. And the railroad came in there. And then, that's the picture. So, as he went along, he learned more and more about color. And he was a colorist. That was one of his main interests, was color and how you could mix them together and make them come through each other. And he goes on to Expressionism.

[00:40:51.60]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: In his papers, in the Davies Papers, now in the Archives, thanks to you, there are notebooks in which he discusses, develops ideas about well, a number of things with color, of course. One of them—it seems to me, that Mr. Davies was quite interested in art history, I imagine for what it might teach him, or offer him for his own work. I mean, this would be generally an artist's interest in looking to the past. Did he ever discuss movements in art history with you? Was art history a topic of conversation, artists that he admired from the past?

[00:41:38.69]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yeah. In his reading, he read I guess everything that was out on art history. And he could discuss Monet and Cézanne with you, as though they had been friends of his. And they were personal friends of his in the work. He would discuss them. This would go on at our sitting at breakfast, lunch, or dinner, that would be one of the topics—he would talk about the artists. And as he could tell you just about everything there was known about the artist. And so, he was very, very much interested in art history.

[00:42:28.16]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did he have any favorites that he admired the most? Were there any

figures that come to mind in that connection?

[00:42:38.52]

MARGARET DAVIES: Not that I know of.

[00:42:40.59]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I mean, Cézanne or somebody?

[00:42:43.16]

MARGARET DAVIES: No, not that I know of.

[00:42:45.09]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: At least he was interested in many—

[00:42:46.68]

MARGARET DAVIES: He was just interested in all of them, and all the different movements as they came along. And he kept up with everything as it developed, except Pop art. That, he just could not—couldn't see. It was just a waste of time. It was commercial art, you know?

[00:43:10.80]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, let me ask you something else, then. He was interested in art history. And that doesn't surprise me. Did he also keep abreast of developments in contemporary art?

[00:43:22.44]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, yes.

[00:43:22.56]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And I'm speaking about from the early days, through the '30s and '40s.

[00:43:27.66]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. That's what I meant when I said, he went along with each art movement that came along. And when we were in Huntsville, when there was nothing, we went up to New York about every three months.

[00:43:43.08]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see.

[00:43:43.47]

MARGARET DAVIES: And he spent all of his time in the galleries.

[00:43:47.22]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Uh-huh [affirmative]. That's interesting.

[00:43:47.71]

MARGARET DAVIES: And collecting books—the books on the different artists. And we'd go back just loaded, you know, with things.

[00:43:55.26]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see.

[00:43:57.69]

MARGARET DAVIES: So, he kept up with everything that was going on in New York.

[00:44:02.26]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And then, finally you actually moved to New York in 1957, was it?

[00:44:11.64]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, he no longer was president of Calabama. And another young man from the arsenal came to him and asked him if he would back him in doing some work for von Braun, who was making the Saturn rocket. And there were parts on the cone and all that had to be just so precise, so special, and the big companies didn't seem to be able to make those particular satisfactory parts. They almost had to be made by hand. And so, he started up the Huntsville Machine and Tool, and they made parts. It was a small company. I don't think there were more than twelve workers. They made the parts for anything they wanted at the Huntsville arsenal. And then, he was president of it. And I thought that—he had worked all his life. He'd worked hard enough. And he wanted to just paint so badly.

[00:45:26.69]

And so, one morning at breakfast, I said to him, "Why don't you just give up the work and just spend the rest of your life painting?" And he said, "Well, I don't like to ask you to live on a retirement income." And I said, "I went through the Depression. I can live on anything." And so, he was just delighted. Really, I never saw such a happy expression on a man's face. And so, he asked, "Would you really?" And I said "Yes, I can get along on anything." And so, he asked me to go up to East Hampton and find a house. But I went up to East Hampton, but only the great big houses were for sale. And I came back and told him I couldn't find anything.

And he said, "Well, go back and find a piece of property and an architect and build the house you want." So I came back, and I never got the house I wanted, because he got interested in how the house should look and what it should be. And so, I just chortled to myself, the house that I was going to have. And he had the house that he wanted, and it was very satisfactory. And turned out to be very, very good. But I really didn't care about a house. I want—I liked the garden, developing a garden, landscaping a garden. So wherever I lived, the house didn't make any difference to me.

[00:47:05.31]

HERBERT HOOVER: I think he startled the architect with the price of the house.

[00:47:09.89]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, we went up to New York. And the real estate man showed us this piece of property in the woods. And it was so overgrown with poison oak and ivy and all these rats, that the real estate man said, "Well, it's back there. It's an acre in back there." And so Harold said, "I'll take it." And I whispered to Harold, "How do you know? There might be a big sump in there or something." Harold said "No, this real estate man wouldn't do anything like that to me."

[00:47:47.40]

So he bought the land. And then, I had found an architect that would build the kind of house Harold wanted. And so, he told the architect, it could only cost just so much money. And it must be done by the 27th of July, because he wanted to move at that time. And he wanted a studio, and the restriction said no. He might sell pictures from his studio, and that was a business, and they wouldn't allow it. So it was called the family room, and it was really a studio. And then, he said to the architect, "Now, let me know when it's finished, and we'll move up."

[00:48:31.51]

And so, we went back to Huntsville. And we never saw the house. And he said he didn't want to see the house. He might make changes, and it would make the house cost more. So we went back to Huntsville. And sure enough, on the 26th of July, the architect telephoned and said the house was ready. And we had already packed up. And the furniture was to be sent on the 27th. [Telephone rings.]

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:49:00.32]

We moved up to the house. We came down this long driveway, into the woods. And there was the house. And there was the architect and the builder standing in front of the house, looking kind of scary and perturbed. And we walked down, and Harold and I both looked at each other, and we said, "Yes, it's exactly as we pictured." So then, there were broad smiles on the architect's and the builder's face. But I went along with Harold with anything he wanted to do, because he was really practical. And yet, he wasn't a dreamer about things like housing and all.

[00:49:43.20]

Everything was very satisfactory and very practical and workable. And one thing we agreed upon was that when we were first married, that a man had a different outlook on life, and he had a right to his outlook. And the woman had a different outlook on life. And it was give and take, you see. He had a right to his view, and you had a right to your view. And that someplace, we would meet in the middle and agree. And of course, my having been brought up that the man was the head of the family, really the head of the family, I would always defer to Harold. And I would give in to him. It wasn't really giving in to him. It was agreeing with him, because his ideas were very good. And his way of life was very good. And I would go along with it.

[00:50:42.52]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Why the decision to move to East Hampton? Maybe that's a question that doesn't need asking.

[00:50:47.71]

MARGARET DAVIES: Move to East Hampton?

[00:50:48.44]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah.

[00:50:49.84]

MARGARET DAVIES: We were on a trip to New York. He was on a business trip. And a friend of his invited us to take a trip out on Long Island and stay at different inns and look around Long Island. And we came down the highway to this little village called East Hampton. And as we made a turn into the little village, there was a pond, a very pretty pond and a flagpole with the American flag standing. And we drove down the main street. And there were these colonial homes and little white picket fence. And he said to us, "Someday, I'm going to live here." And we all smiled and said that was nice. We thought it was just that he liked the village, and he was just making a pleasant remark. So about twelve years later, when he said to me, "Go up to that little village East Hampton and find a place to live"—

[00:52:00.14]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: So, it wasn't that he was drawn to that particular location because of the other artists that were there. This is more a coincidence.

[00:52:11.29]

MARGARET DAVIES: He didn't know that. He knew their painting. And no, he was drawn there because he wanted to be within distance of the galleries in New York, and still be out in the country. We had always lived someplace where there were loads of trees and a garden, and so forth. And so, he chose East Hampton because it was within distance of New York.

[00:52:39.98]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But he didn't, at that time, know any of these artists that he later met—for instance, de Kooning—

[00:52:48.73]

MARGARET DAVIES: No. Once in a while, he would meet one of the artists in a gallery, who happened to be there talking to the gallery owner, or at an exhibit that the artist had. So he knew some of them by name, and had talked with a few of them. But no, he didn't move to East Hampton because they lived there. Many of them didn't come out there until after we were there.

[00:53:15.17]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see.

[00:53:15.28]

MARGARET DAVIES: They had their studios, or their little rat-infested places in New York. And then they moved out.

[00:53:24.09]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see. So then, these relationships developed afterwards. Obviously, if I judge from what you say, Mr. Davies didn't move to East Hampton or even the New York area to be part of an artist community.

[00:53:43.08]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, no. No, no.

[00:53:43.80]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But he was interested in being able to get to the galleries, be able to keep track of what was happening.

[00:53:52.17]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:53:53.04]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: How were these contacts made? It's very fascinating that during these years, I gather he and you were friendly or at least had an acquaintanceship with people like Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, Adolph Gottlieb, Ludwig Sander, not Jackson Pollock, we determined, because he died—he was killed the year you actually moved there. How did this all come about?

[00:54:19.88]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, he met them sometimes in the galleries when he came up from the—he knew who they were. And he knew their work. And then, there would be exhibits, and they would all go. And they would either introduce themselves, or somebody introduced them. And they learned that Harold was a painter, that he lived in East Hampton. And he was just—he was a much older man than they were. And they just enjoyed talking to him, because they could talk about other things than art.

[00:55:00.40]

And we would have a Sunday at home, sort of a Sunday at home. And they would come over and talk to him. He went and talked to them, and they became friendly. And they seemed to like somebody to talk to, who was not in competition with them, and who was well, old enough to be their father. And they just seemed to enjoy Harold and talking to him, conversation.

[00:55:38.46]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did you participate in any of these visits? If somebody came to your home, was it that you would talk together? Or would they go off, Harold and the company, in the studio?

[00:55:53.28]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, they would go to the studio. And if they went into his studio, I didn't go. Because I felt that they were—well, it was better they could talk alone. If they stayed in the living room or the patio, then I knew Harold would like to have something served, and then, I would serve it. And believe it or not, I would sit very quietly and listen, because I was fascinated. Now, if their wives came with them, or some member of the family, then I stayed with the women.

[00:56:31.84]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's interesting.

[00:56:32.83]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Excuse me. I have to depart for a minute,

[00:56:35.72]

MARGARET DAVIES: I thought—I was impressed that he wanted those very fine artists to consider him a good artist, and he wanted them to tell the truth about his work. And he was very anxious that they considered him a good artist. He had a great deal of self-criticism. And he said that so many people painting the trash they painted, it was because they lacked any self-criticism. And a man should really be hard on himself when it came to this painting.

[00:57:19.48]

And so, sometimes I would go into his studio. And a picture was at a certain stage. And I was delighted with it. It just hit me. I just liked it so much. And I'd say to him, "I buy, I buy." And then, I'd go out in the garden to do some more work. And when I came back I didn't recognize the picture at all. He had changed it, and so forth. And then sometimes at the end of the day, he would say a picture came out very quickly and satisfactorily. And I used to change the pictures all over the house about the first of every month. It made a different atmosphere. And it was as good as going on a vacation.

[00:58:15.67]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Were there any artists, who—or let's say one, in particular, who seemed to be close to Mr. Davies, of whom he was very fond or spent extra time with? Or was it—I gather these were—none of these were intimate relationships.

[00:58:35.50]

MARGARET DAVIES: Harold never seemed to pick out one person to be a personal friend of his. They were all treated, more or less, the same. And I couldn't see any difference in friendships.

[00:58:53.98]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Was there entertaining back and forth? Did you ever go to dinner at the house of say, the de Koonings?

[00:59:03.37]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. De Kooning built—took an old house in Springs, where he lived. It was just ten miles from East Hampton, and turned it into a very good reproduction of a Dutch home. And he gave a magnificent do. Of course, he was getting tremendous prices for his pictures. And he could afford just anything. And so, he gave an outdoor party, magnificent party. And most every one of the artists made it a point to give one party a year, and invited all their friends and people from the galleries. And it was one of their ways to keep in touch with things and keep people in touch with them. And it was lots of fun.

[00:59:57.85]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did you get to know Elaine de Kooning or anybody like that at all?

[01:00:03.70]

MARGARET DAVIES: No, she remained in New York. She didn't come out, that I know of, to any of the parties that I was at. Kline—I think she became the mistress of Kline. Kline was a very fine fellow. Now, Harold liked Kline very much.

[01:00:30.72]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see.

[01:00:32.76]

MARGARET DAVIES: Sometimes, Harold would take a walk in the afternoon and go to a little tiny pub. And Kline would be there, and they would talk.

[01:00:45.15]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see.

[01:00:47.16]

MARGARET DAVIES: He liked him. Personally, he liked Kline. And he liked his work very much.

[01:00:54.66]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yes, I gather that from some of the notes in his papers, regarding these other people.

[01:01:01.71]

MARGARET DAVIES: It was—most of the artists were not very good conversationalists on general subjects. They could speak about art. But they were not very good on conversation. And Harold enjoyed holding conversations with people. The real old-fashioned—you sit down, and you have a conversation. You take time to talk about things. He liked that. And the artists mostly just talked about art, and about each other.

[01:01:37.27]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And gossip? [Laughs.] Well, everybody always does that. What about just, for the record, Jackson Pollock? Now, we know that obviously Harold Davies never met Jackson Pollock.

[01:01:55.57]

MARGARET DAVIES: No.

[01:01:56.89]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Although I gather he did, or you did, meet Lee Krasner.

[01:02:02.59]

MARGARET DAVIES: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[01:02:03.04]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What I want to know is, did Mr. Davies come into—or when did he come into contact with Pollock's work? And under what circumstances? Do you remember this?

[01:02:14.98]

MARGARET DAVIES: It must have been when he went from Huntsville, up to New York to the galleries. And I'm sure that's when he came in contact with the work.

[01:02:27.56]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did you have any, then after moving to East Hampton, any connection with Lee Krasner or any opportunity to go look at the work?

[01:02:36.26]

MARGARET DAVIES: No.

[01:02:36.51]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: No? You're smiling. What does that mean? [Laughs.] I gather that you didn't perhaps, didn't get along, or have the opportunity.

[01:02:49.52]

MARGARET DAVIES: He just wasn't interested in her, in knowing her.

[01:02:55.43]

HERBERT HOOVER: He had met her, though.

[01:02:57.14]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, yes. And I'm sure she wasn't a bit interested in—[inaudible].
[Laughs.]

[01:03:15.79]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, what about what these very interesting neighbors of yours represent? In other words, the whole phenomenon of action painting, Abstract Expressionism? What kind of an impact, if any, did that have on Mr. Davies and his work? Did he express any excitement in seeing the work of any of these other artists? Or was it just a matter of, I mean, there it was, art. And it was either good, bad, or indifferent. Did he ever talk about this movement, this Abstract Expressionism? Did he ever describe himself in those terms, as an Abstract Expressionist? I mean, what kind of a connection was there, if any?

[01:04:05.65]

MARGARET DAVIES: Harold wanted to just develop along his own lines. He was a very—just an individual. I don't think any of the artists that he knew there had any influence on him at all. What would I say? He was his own man, his own type of painting. And they didn't seem to have any influence on him at all.

[01:04:35.32]

HERBERT HOOVER: He told me that he didn't like to catalog himself. Or he didn't like the way they name-tagged everything. He said—I remember, I think they mentioned that he was an Abstract Expressionist. And he said, "Well, that's as good name as any," was his comment to me when the first review—

[01:04:51.98]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But that's not entirely—I think you'll agree, that's not entirely satisfactory. I mean, I can understand what he's getting at.

[01:04:58.75]

HERBERT HOOVER: Yes.

[01:04:59.37]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well—

[01:05:00.16]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: There, the work stands. And we do group things, and he was in contact with these Abstract Expressionist artists. It's a rather remarkable coincidence, maybe, just that his work was developing along similar lines. And one would think that even unconsciously, there was some reinforcement, at least, from these.

[01:05:22.59]

HERBERT HOOVER: Well, in the Fresno Museum, that one painting that Mr. Davies gave to the Fresno Museum when they had the show down there, it was "Homage to Franz Kline." That was the title of the painting. And it was a marvelous work on paper.

[01:05:38.12]

MARGARET DAVIES: And I think that's the only one he did at that time, "Homage to Kline." I don't I don't think he did any other of that. I think that's why I said he enjoyed Kline. But it wasn't any particularly near friendship. It was—Harold wasn't the type that had friendships like that. He liked everybody, and he was very friendly with everybody. But he had no one particular friend.

[01:06:10.87]

HERBERT HOOVER: He was [inaudible]—

[01:06:12.13]

MARGARET DAVIES: He was doing all this work by himself. I don't know whether people influenced him, or not. He seemed to be doing certain types of work before the other artists did. And—

[END OF TRACK AAA_davies78_3344_m]

[00:00:02.08]

MARGARET DAVIES: [In progress] "Look away. What do you see?" And I said, "A lot of color." And he said, "Do you see individual outlines?" And I said, "Not particularly." And he said, "That's abstract." That's what you—Now, in an abstract painting, there is a realistic background to it. But it's like closing your eyes quickly and turning away. And you're just painting the colors.

[00:00:27.49]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: So he really was interested in color all along.

[00:00:31.15]

MARGARET DAVIES: Color was his—he wasn't—I wondered. People asked him, "Would you do a portrait for me?" And he said, "I'm just not interested in doing portraits."

[00:00:43.42]

HERBERT HOOVER: But he did some in his early days.

[00:00:45.55]

MARGARET DAVIES: In the beginning, in his early—in the Fresno days, he did one of each member of his family.

[00:00:51.88]

HERBERT HOOVER: And a self-portrait, beautiful self-portrait of himself.

[00:00:54.73]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh yes, he did two of those.

[00:00:56.56]

HERBERT HOOVER: And that marvelous painting of that young boy, when he must have been himself, a very young man. But he was always, I think, well, just before we turned the tape over, we were getting to a very meaty point, in that you said that he was even experimenting with some of these things before some of the other artists were, such as a drip painting that we have in the gallery that I'm saving.

[00:01:28.61]

MARGARET DAVIES: And I wouldn't doubt. But what that drip method was by accident at first. And he liked it. You know, he was painting, and some of it dripped. And it made a certain design, or something, and he became interested in it. I think it was first by accident, that he had the drip.

[00:01:53.58]

HERBERT HOOVER: It was also very intriguing that, when he wrote in a letter to me, he said "Free, free, at last to paint." And that the timing was so perfect, that here, a man had been—painted traditionally, you have some paintings when he was around 14 years of age, 13 years of age, that are done in a Barbizon manner. There's one up in the studio, which is Cherrydale, a snow scene, which, if you put it up against a Barbizon painting in the museum, it's incredible to see, you would say, "Who is this?" I mean, it's so well done. It needs a little attention. And we've been getting around to doing that.

[00:02:41.12]

But then all of a sudden, this great earth of Fresno, wherever he was, everything became purples and reds and yellows, and—And always, the look ahead. And he kept looking ahead. And then, he would do some of these, as I mentioned, these figurative, lots of figurative things—the fish market in Oakland, the library, the landscape of the city, not the Oakland newspaper building, but—

[00:03:16.94]

MARGARET DAVIES: City Hall.

[00:03:17.48]

HERBERT HOOVER: City Hall—and then he would do people sitting in railroad stations. And he loved charcoal.

[00:03:26.45]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:03:26.87]

HERBERT HOOVER: He would do a lot of those with charcoal. And then, he would come—he went up to the summit one time, that painting at the Oakland Museum, he was very interested in. And he said that he had gone up to the summit, and that was 1941. And he said, "You can see it. Look right there. There's the top of the mountain there." It's quite abstract. I mean, so abstract that there's—but to him, that was realism. And then, he would go back. Then he sort of, like many artists, I think it's interesting—there was a sort of a quasi-Picasso, I think he worked a very short time. And he put that aside.

[00:04:10.04]

MARGARET DAVIES: That—he didn't like that.

[00:04:10.73]

HERBERT HOOVER: He said, "No, that's not for me." But all of a sudden, all of this work blossomed forth. And it flowered in this great Abstract Expressionism, where he had his studio. And he just painted and painted and painted and painted. And there was no looking back. It was always looking forward. Even up until the time he died, his colors were getting more high key and fresher and fresher.

[00:04:40.97]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, he was a little afraid that he was going blind. We were in East Hampton. No, we were—yes, we were in East Hampton. And he thought he was going blind. He really was getting cataracts, and he didn't know it. And so, he wanted to go to Europe, to all the galleries to see all the fine old paintings before he went blind. And he wouldn't go to a doctor. It was suggested that he go to a doctor and find out. And no, he was very sure he was going blind.

[00:05:21.02]

So we went to Europe. And we were gone four months. And he did nothing but galleries. In Italy, he went to the Uffizi Gallery about nine times in succession. And I would go the first day with him. But I didn't go the other days. I went on my way. And we went to all the big cities. And he went to all the galleries, day after day. When we reached Amsterdam, he went to the gallery there. And the guide said to him, "Why, you were here yesterday." And Mr. Davies said "Yes, and I will be here the day after today and the day after and the day after." And it was amazing to me how he could go and spend all day in a gallery, go out to lunch, and then go back to the gallery. But that's what he did. And in the old churches, he couldn't see the things on the walls. They were faded. And so, I carried a big searchlight, a big light and shone it.

[00:06:25.47]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's a good idea, anyway. I can't see. It.

[00:06:29.79]

MARGARET DAVIES: And then we—

[00:06:30.30]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: You could drop a coin in one of those devices they have. And for a few minutes, then lights will turn.

[00:06:35.34]

HERBERT HOOVER: Yes.

[00:06:35.76]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: The church makes money.

[00:06:36.54]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, he said, he wanted to see the pictures. Of all the pictures he had, he had a marvelous collection of books, you know, the big books of all the pictures and scrapbooks. And he wanted to see the originals. So that's all he did. He didn't do any tourist stunts or anything like that. And I would see him at breakfast. And off, he'd go at the galleries. And then I'd see him at dinner. And he would tell me what he had seen and what he enjoyed and so forth.

[00:07:10.88]

When we came back, and somehow or other, he decided to go to an eye doctor. And the eye doctor said, "Well, you have a cataract. It's just as simple as taking out tonsils." So, he did. He went to this very fine physician. And he had practically 20/20 vision when the cataracts were removed. He had marvelous vision.

[00:07:32.44]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: When was that? What year?

[00:07:35.47]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, '59, '60—oh, about '60 or '61. And he had marvelous vision. And he tried contact lenses, because they give you a wide vision. But he was losing them all the time. And we would go to New York. And one day, he came back to the hotel. He was sitting in the lobby, looking like he was about to pass out. And I asked him what was the matter. He had lost one of his contact lenses. Now, when you lose one of them, you can't adjust. Your eyes don't adjust. So we went back to the Whitney Museum, and I asked him, "Take me to the place where you were standing when you missed it." So we went back. And there, up against the wall, was his little contact lens.

[00:08:23.44]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Lucky, lucky.

[00:08:25.42]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, they were very expensive. So he gave them up because they were a nuisance to him. He'd lose them all the time.

[00:08:33.34]

HERBERT HOOVER: They do pop out.

[00:08:34.27]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, they pop out. So he went back to his glasses.

[00:08:41.80]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I would like to ask you, if I may, a couple of questions about Mr. Davies' working method in his painting. I don't mean technical questions at all. But you mentioned—I was very interested in your mentioning the fact that when he went to—when you took the trip to Europe, he wanted to see all the originals of all the pictures that he had saved in his scrapbooks, because several of these are in the Archives.

[00:09:09.88]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. That's right. Yes.

[00:09:10.33]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And it gives them meaning to know this sort of thing. He, I gather, just clipped out things that interested him and put them in the scrapbooks.

[00:09:20.62]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:09:21.43]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Now, do you recall if he ever referred to these specifically, in connection with any painting? Like, did he have them in the studio, where one might think they would stimulate an idea? Or perhaps he could go for a color, or something like this. Do you see what I mean?

[00:09:40.73]

MARGARET DAVIES: No.

[00:09:41.51]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Okay, he has these books, scrapbooks.

[00:09:43.79]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:09:44.27]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And what I'm trying to determine is if he used these in connection with his own painting. In other words, referred to an image—

[00:09:52.40]

MARGARET DAVIES: No, his scrapbooks were in the storage room, in what I call my workshop and garage. They were on the shelf in the studio, those scrapbooks. They were in garage in a big old cupboard that he kept those things in.

[00:10:16.41]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But I presume he did refer to them in some way?

[00:10:20.18]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, once he had completed the scrapbook, they were put into the shelves there, where his earlier sketchbooks were.

[00:10:30.89]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I see. So in a way, they represent a process in itself, an experience in itself, assembling—it was the process of recognizing things that he enjoyed or liked and then putting them in a book— [Cross talk.]

[00:10:49.93]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. Those scrapbooks are very early scrapbooks. Later on, you see when he had them, he took all the art magazines that were published. I suppose he didn't cut pictures out of them, because he kept the magazine. So he didn't need a scrapbook. He didn't cut pictures out of them and put them in scrapbooks. Those are early scrapbooks. See, if he wanted to refer to anything, all he had to do would be to go and look in the magazine.

[00:11:25.62]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, the things that we have—

[00:11:26.43]

MARGARET DAVIES: They were all stacked in the—

[00:11:28.26]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yeah. The things that we were all in the Archives include all sorts of reproductions and so forth. And I was just trying to understand what these meant to him, if anything.

[00:11:41.99]

HERBERT HOOVER: I remember the first time I was out there, he had *Art in America* on the table in the living room, and *Art News*, and magazines. And he had—

[00:11:56.00]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, he was interested in what other people were doing.

[00:11:59.65]

HERBERT HOOVER: —Were doing.

[00:12:01.72]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:12:02.62]

HERBERT HOOVER: And in the studio itself, the studio was so crowded with paintings, you couldn't get in their place. And there was paint all over the floor and all over the ceiling. [Laughs.]

[00:12:14.24]

MARGARET DAVIES: What a mess. And he called it "orderly confusion." And he said, "Please don't ever clean up my studio because I won't be able to find things." And as it is—I said, "But there's books and paintings and brushes and paraphernalia on top of something." He said, "Oh, I know it's there. So I just reach into under all that and get it if I want it." Orderly confusion.

[00:12:37.79]

HERBERT HOOVER: And it was interesting to see him drag a painting. He might have had 30 stacked up against the wall. And he would decide that he wanted to do something to a painting, that—how he remembered this. [They laugh.] And he would just pull it out of this rack without too much care, because he never thought of himself as painting for posterity.

[00:13:01.98]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yeah.

[00:13:03.39]

HERBERT HOOVER: He remembered a painting he'd done, and then he wanted to do something to it. At that moment, I'd always say, "Could I help you Mr. Davies?" "No, I don't need any help. Let me get it." And scratch, scratch, and drag, drag, drag it out.

[00:13:15.99]

MARGARET DAVIES: There was some he worked over—some he worked over.

[00:13:19.56]

HERBERT HOOVER: He did.

[00:13:19.98]

MARGARET DAVIES: He changed his mind about them, and he'd work over.

[00:13:23.52]

HERBERT HOOVER: He didn't think—he didn't feel that everything was finished.

[00:13:26.40]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, he was just painting for himself, you see. Gottlieb, one time told him, that he said, "Don't ever get mixed up with the Marlborough Gallery. Because they say, 'Oh, we like this. Give us a half a dozen like this and we'll send some over to Europe. And we'll put some in this gallery and some in that gallery.'" And Gottlieb said it was very—it just cut down on your creativeness to be told by a guy, "paint me six like this." And I remember Harold saying—

[00:14:02.09]

HERBERT HOOVER: High class [inaudible].

[00:14:03.86]

MARGARET DAVIES: —Harold saying, "I couldn't paint that way." Harold says, "I can't paint that way. Each picture is separate. I couldn't paint six of the same picture. I couldn't copy another one of my pictures and make it exactly like that picture. I couldn't do it." He thought it was an awful thing to do to a painter. That's one reason, you see, he wasn't interested in going to the gallery people. And besides, you had to drag the pictures around, let them see them. And Harold just wasn't interested in doing that.

[00:14:42.92]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did you ever have the opportunity to watch him work, actually watch him—

[00:14:49.22]

MARGARET DAVIES: Paint?

[00:14:49.94]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —make a picture?

[00:14:50.78]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, many times.

[00:14:52.19]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Maybe when you'd go into the studio.

[00:14:53.57]

MARGARET DAVIES: I could go into the studio and stand the doorway and look and see what he was doing. And of course, I never knew why he did things that way, or why he chose that color, or anything. And that's when I would see one of his paintings and I'd say, "Oh, I buy. Don't take it any further, I buy." And then I'd put it on the living room wall. But he'd get it back and change it if he wanted to.

[00:15:18.65]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did Mr. Davies, at any stage in his career, make a practice of going out and drawing from nature?

[00:15:31.94]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh yes, in his early days, that's all he did was outside. Fresno, when he was in Oakland, when we were in Orinda, he did some watercolors outside. Yes, he did. It wasn't really 'til we went to Huntsville that he began to work indoors. But I think it's because he couldn't take—he didn't take the time to go out around the country, since he was head of establishing a chemical company. It took a great deal of work. And he didn't have a—it just took time to go. But when we would drive back and forth, or go on a trip any place in California, or up to New York, he always had sketchbooks with him. And he'd sit there, because I did all the driving. And he was always sketching.

[00:16:25.68]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Even as his car was moving, as you were driving, he was sketching.

[00:16:28.86]

MARGARET DAVIES: As I was driving, he was sketching. We'd go to the theater; he'd take his sketchbook. And he'd look around, sideways, and what—And he'd do some sketching. And people would see him looking in that direction. And they'd all begin to preen themselves and always they thought they were being—and he wasn't. And he just chortled to himself. Because he wasn't drawing them at all. It was some impression he had of their face, or on the stage. He always took a sketchbook with him.

[00:17:04.39]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did he ever talk about or say anything that would suggest a consciousness on his part, that his abstract work was an extension of his figurative work of an interest in landscape? In other words, forms of nature being worked out in the abstract.

[00:17:32.07]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. And when he told me—when I asked him, "How do you come to this picture?" And he would say to me, "It's oh, some of the trees out here or some of the rocks." And, too, sometimes, I saw in his pictures, the exact colors that were in a certain spot of the garden. And that's when he explained to me, "Come to the window and look." So I had the impression that his Impressionism was a realistic thought he had in his mind, or something realistic from scenery. But it was realistic, and he interpreted it in an Expressionist, Abstract manner on his canvas.

[00:18:20.16]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's interesting, because that's, in some fundamental way, quite different from the New York School Abstract Expressionist movement. And so, it appears there may be a formal, perhaps surface similarity between some of the Abstract Expressionist painters and Mr. Davies, that he really was developing, along his own lines, with—even coming from a different position, maybe coming to a similar-looking work.

[00:18:54.36]

MARGARET DAVIES: He was bent on going his own line. And he did make the remark about these young painters. They go to a school, and they immediately want to do abstract—you know, immediately. And his idea was that you had to go through all these forms of drawing and realistic painting and all to arrive at satisfactory work in abstract.

[00:19:25.24]

HERBERT HOOVER: Tom Albright, brought up, I think, in his first review, he mentioned—he said, he noticed the titles stemming from Inverness series. And he said, after one studies his works, he realizes that he basically, his things stemmed from nature.

[00:19:43.31]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yeah.

[00:19:43.69]

HERBERT HOOVER: And he called him an Abstract Impressionist.

[00:19:46.18]

MARGARET DAVIES: That's right.

[00:19:46.81]

HERBERT HOOVER: —rather than an Abstract Expressionist.

[00:19:49.10]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yeah.

[00:19:49.33]

HERBERT HOOVER: Again there, it's playing with words. But he did get the idea without knowing even knowing Mr. Davies whatsoever, that all of his work seemed to stem from the landscape, which is—

[00:20:01.84]

MARGARET DAVIES: That's right. And it did.

[00:20:02.23]

HERBERT HOOVER: —an interesting point. He got that just by looking at the work.

[00:20:06.79]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: At the work.

[00:20:07.72]

MARGARET DAVIES: And it did. Because Harold, as much as said so, when he showed me in the painting, how you looked at the garden, made it an abstract picture, and put it on the—and when he named the azalea garden and the rhododendron garden, it was certainly realistic. And you could see the colors there. And sometimes, things that I put in the garden, for instance, in Inverness, colors of flowers and so forth, appeared in his drawings. And when the living room was done with some of these red pillows and so forth, he went into sort of a red period. So it was rather interesting. So I thought I saw things that were around the house and so forth, that he decided he'd use that color.

[00:21:01.58]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: So he was just really drawing from his environment? Everything around him, I think, that would be fair to say.

[00:21:08.84]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, yes. Everything around him.

[00:21:09.96]

HERBERT HOOVER: Well, I think, yes, but he never repeated himself.

[00:21:14.24]

MARGARET DAVIES: No, as he said to Gottlieb, "I never could make a copy of my own picture. I wouldn't be able to do it."

[00:21:21.70]

HERBERT HOOVER: It's a style.

[00:21:22.86]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:21:23.12]

HERBERT HOOVER: It's not a formula.

[00:21:24.17]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, a style, and "I just wouldn't do it."

[00:21:29.24]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: No, but there was an external impetus, apparently, to the development of his work. Whereas, with the proper Abstract Expressionists, I mean, one can debate what the true impetus is there. But they at least claimed the philosophy, the idea was that it was an internal—

[00:21:48.62]

HERBERT HOOVER: Internal, yes.

[00:21:49.23]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: A subjective impetus—

[00:21:50.56]

MARGARET DAVIES: That's right.

[00:21:51.00]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —that comes from within. Well, that's true of all artists to a certain extent. But I think that this is—it seems to me, from what I hear today, that this is an important distinction or characteristic.

[00:22:02.73]

HERBERT HOOVER: Very. I think you're right, Paul. Well, the fact is that if there is a painting that Mr. Davies did in 1911 that is very abstract landscape, purple, all purples, and it's hard to feel the forms out. I mean, they are beautiful forms. But it's so hard to see anything that it's really a landscape in a way, I mean. And you put that up to one of his later works, which has taken that to the close encounter of another kind. And yet, when you juxtapose them—I was showing this to Tom Albright. And it's amazing that—how he was at a very early age, playing with abstraction.

[00:22:47.70]

MARGARET DAVIES: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:22:48.96]

HERBERT HOOVER: Now—and you can call it interpretation. You can call it anything you want to. But now, he did do some things that were much more representational, never, never, academically, though, however. He always transformed nature, but he was constantly, I think, influenced by his environment when he was doing the flophouses and the people and the studios.

[00:23:09.93]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, yes.

[00:23:10.35]

HERBERT HOOVER: And then, these charcoals, there's a great amount of work in charcoals, in abstract charcoals, that are just there, that he used as sketches. They're large. They're quite large.

[00:23:25.56]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, during—when he did the fish market and those, he told me that he was working, struggling with color. He was teaching himself color, to handle colors, to get the right colors. And really, it was work. See, he was mixing his own paints and things at that time. And it was quite a struggle for him to get those colors. And he remarked that some people never learn colors, never learned to handle color. They just have to take it out of the tube, as it is, and put it on a painting. They can't mix. They can't interweave color. They do not understand color. And he studied that color always, during—his painting life was color and how to get the effects of this and that color.

[00:24:25.62]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did he ever evidence any interest in Josef Albers—the writing or work of Albers, who, of course, was very interested in color?

[00:24:36.48]

MARGARET DAVIES: The name is familiar. But I don't remember what he said about it.

[00:24:42.27]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Okay. You think it's possible, though, that—well, we really shouldn't speculate on that. I'm interested in something Herbert, that you said, a series of abstractions in charcoal.

[00:24:57.90]

HERBERT HOOVER: Most of them are from East Hampton.

[00:24:59.34]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:24:59.97]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Non-objective works—

[00:25:01.68]

HERBERT HOOVER: Non-objective works—

[00:25:03.42]

MARGARET DAVIES: It seems—it's interesting to me because obviously, I think we've established—I think it's evident that Mr. Davies' passion was color. And so, what was he trying to do in monochromatic compositions this way?

[00:25:17.64]

HERBERT HOOVER: Structural.

[00:25:18.30]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yeah.

[00:25:18.75]

HERBERT HOOVER: Yeah, structure. He always, with a grid pattern—a grid pattern, that you can go all the way back to, he was fascinated with the grid pattern, which Tom Albright brought up. But even in his sketchbooks, he was grid. And actually, that Brooklyn Bridge, where he's completely scientifically analyzed how it was composed.

[00:25:36.57]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, sometimes his charcoal drawings were a study that he was going to work out in painting later on. And he would, I guess, get interested in the paper and the charcoal. And he'd go on to make any number of them, and just take them off the pad throw them in the corner, do some more, throw them in the corner.

[00:26:00.60]

HERBERT HOOVER: And walk on them.

[00:26:02.10]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yeah. And just throw them in the corner. He was through with them, you know. And then, sometimes, I'd say, "Oh, you know, I like that." "Oh, you can have it. Take it. And here, you can have the whole thing. Maybe sometime, there'll be some use to you." [Laughs.]

[00:26:20.82]

HERBERT HOOVER: I would like sometime, because it's interesting to have a showing of those charcoals. Because while there is an absence of color, they are quite interesting from the standpoint that they're very complete paintings, I mean, complete drawings. So one time, you have to take a look at them.

[00:26:44.55]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Are there any correspondences that you've come across, where you can pair up a painting in finished oil with one or a series of these charcoal studies? Because Mrs. Davies mentioned here, that at least they got started out that way, that these were studies—

[00:27:02.61]

MARGARET DAVIES: Some of them.

[00:27:04.68]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —structural, formal preparations for paintings. Did you ever see him referring to, in doing one of the paintings, referring to any of the sketches or anything?

[00:27:16.34]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, yes, yes. And there was a period in East Hampton, where Marca-Relli and Sanders and one of the other artists were doing some charcoals. You see, they visited each other. And they visited Harold. And you never knew whether they decided to—"let's try some charcoal," or some things. That's the way they would talk. "Let's try this or that, or the other thing." Or, "have you ever tried—," or, "how do you mix your paints," or so forth.

[00:28:02.16]

I asked Harold, why couldn't I see the paintings the way he saw them? And he said, "it's impossible because," he said, "I am taking something in and translating it in my head into something, and then I'm putting it on canvas, while you are looking at it after it's done on canvas, and you can't understand or see what was within me that made me put it on

canvas." You see, I'm seeing what it is, and taking it in. He was seeing it within himself and then putting it on canvas, just the opposite to what I was doing. And the layman couldn't possibly see the same as the artist, would never see the picture as the artist sees it. It's impossible for them to.

[00:28:59.88]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, I would think that would even apply to other artists, because they're working through different—each one has its own personality.

[00:29:06.62]

MARGARET DAVIES: Somehow or another—

[00:29:07.85]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I mean, they might come closer.

[00:29:08.99]

MARGARET DAVIES: They seem to be able to have a little better understanding of each other's work, than the layman did of the artist's work.

[00:29:18.45]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: You mentioned that occasionally, Mr. Davies and some of his friends and acquaintances at East Hampton actually had sessions together or worked together, as you said, "Let's try a charcoal," or something.

[00:29:33.59]

MARGARET DAVIES: But then, they went home and did it, you see.

[00:29:35.94]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Oh, they didn't actually work together?

[00:29:37.84]

MARGARET DAVIES: No, no, no. Oh, no.

[00:29:38.85]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: They talked about it, and then—

[00:29:40.41]

MARGARET DAVIES: They talked and then did it.

[00:29:42.45]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That leads me to another question. Most artists, or many artists, no matter how non-objective or figurative their work, and where they fall on this scale, seem to at least periodically enjoy the exercise of working from the figure that seems to be one of the great common denominators for artists. Did Mr. Davies indulge in figurative work? In other words, did he work from the nude figure?

[00:30:12.24]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, yes.

[00:30:13.32]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did he do this throughout the career? I know of course, in the beginning—

[00:30:17.90]

MARGARET DAVIES: He did it in, of course, the art schools, where they were drawing. And he and a friend hired a model one time. He went to the friend's studio in Berkeley. And they hired a model. And she became ill. Or so they made her post too long, and she got kind of faint. So she toppled over. And Harold threw a blanket around her to take her home, didn't get her dressed or anything. She just fainted, she fainted.

[00:30:52.53]

And oh, the newspaper. And they took her down and put her in the car and took her home, to her home. And the newspaper, somehow or other, got a hold of it and. Oh, it was quite a little scandal, a little scandal in it, about this nude. [Laughs.] I don't know. I think it may be at someplace in the Archives, this little article.

[00:31:11.64]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Oh, I hope so.

[00:31:12.39]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, it is.

[00:31:13.38]

HERBERT HOOVER: Really?

[00:31:13.71]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. I think it's the one—it was a newspaper clipping. And I'm pretty sure it's in one of those little clippings.

[00:31:22.71]

HERBERT HOOVER: I've never seen it.

[00:31:22.83]

MARGARET DAVIES: You didn't see it?

[00:31:23.73]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: No. When did this happen?

[00:31:24.84]

MARGARET DAVIES: In Berkeley.

[00:31:26.25]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But when? Do you remember?

[00:31:28.56]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, it would be back in the early—'20, '21, someplace along in there.

[00:31:35.85]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But that's a long time ago. What I was getting at—it's a delightful story. But what I was getting at is this—did he ever pick up the practice again of working—

[00:31:45.36]

MARGARET DAVIES: No.

[00:31:46.05]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's interesting. That's extremely interesting.

[00:31:47.13]

MARGARET DAVIES: No, no, never again. I think as time went on, he was less and less interested in portrait painting, less interested in the figure. No, I don't think any of his paintings—

[00:32:05.45]

HERBERT HOOVER: None of his—I mean, everybody can see shapes and forms. Obviously, you could say this is a head up there. But of course, this isn't a—

[00:32:18.65]

MARGARET DAVIES: No, not that I've—

[00:32:20.09]

HERBERT HOOVER: I've never seen anything of his—other than in his late sketchbooks, where he was sketching figures, he always kept it up.

[00:32:26.93]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, yeah.

[00:32:27.11]

HERBERT HOOVER: Like on his trip to Europe, there, and Mexico, because Mexico —

[00:32:30.89]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, because he saw so much figure painting, you know.

[00:32:35.09]

HERBERT HOOVER: So in his sketchbooks, they relate to the figure to painting. But it didn't come out in his large, massive paintings that he would do. There's nothing—it's usually—I mean, again, we get into in this landscape, rather than in figurative. Maybe because—was he disenchanted with human beings as such, sort of, at times? I think this is a story about that I read in—he didn't want to do any more human beings.

[00:33:08.18]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well, he was an extremely intelligent man. And when he went into the army, they gave them intelligence tests, you know, and all kinds of tests. And his test was high-superior. And the next grade would have been genius. And he was high-superior. And of course, he was naturally pleased with it. And he knew he had a great deal of knowledge. And he thought of himself as an intelligent person, which other people did.

[00:33:47.58]

So, he was very impatient with scatterbrained people, what he called "scatterbrained people." And he did not like the chit-chat and the small talk of cocktail parties and women gathering together. And he wanted real conversation about something tangible, like painting, or something scientific, or something in business. He just didn't like small talk. And he expected everybody to be much brighter than they were. So that kept me hopping.

[00:34:34.43]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: So you think it's possible that he, at times, became somewhat impatient with other people if they didn't live up to this?

[00:34:49.23]

MARGARET DAVIES: I think he was very impatient with a lot of people, particularly business people. And they were just stupid, you know? Yes, but he never would let on.

[00:35:03.05]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But is it possible that this, in a sense, might account to a certain extent, for his—I don't want to say "isolation."

[00:35:13.67]

MARGARET DAVIES: Right.

[00:35:13.82]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But he chose to be very much a separate person.

[00:35:16.22]

MARGARET DAVIES: He was really antisocial. And he was a very private person. And he really liked—he must have liked isolation in order to paint. You can't paint when other people are around. And his brother would have liked, very much, to have him live down the Peninsula near him. And he purposely chose as far as he could go, and yet get to San Francisco, Inverness, because it had three acres of woods, densely wooded. And this house sat in the middle of the three acres on a private road. And so, really, I felt that relatives, of whom I had about 50 in California, could not come hobnobbing and watching what he was doing and interfering in his painting. And I went along with him.

[00:36:17.52]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Why did you move back to California in 1969? It sounds like you had a very delightful situation in East Hampton.

[00:36:25.53]

MARGARET DAVIES: Very, and his brother came east to see him.

[00:36:34.83]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: This is Ralph K. Davies?

[00:36:35.58]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. And his younger brother had cancer of the brain. And they shipped him all over the United States, trying to do something for him. And finally, he died. And the two men were discussing cancer in the family. His father had died of leukemia. His brother died of cancer of the brain. And Harold thought maybe, you know, he would get it. They were discussing whether it was hereditary or what.

[00:37:14.81]

Well, then they were both getting older, both the brothers. And Ralph, every time he came to see us, he asked how why he didn't come back and live nearer the relatives and family, and so forth. And Harold tried to explain to him, he preferred that isolation. So finally, he decided that he'd come back to California. And he had said to me, "If you will come to Huntsville, when I retire we'll go back to Carmel and live." And you see, we went up to East Hampton instead. And so, I guess Harold just thought he'd try it in California.

[00:38:01.62]

HERBERT HOOVER: Did he know about his brother's illness when he moved out here, though? Was that—

[00:38:07.35]

MARGARET DAVIES: Ralph had not yet developed cancer. Or if he had it, that he didn't know it. No, he didn't know it 'til later. And Harold always felt that before Ralph died, that they would find some cure, some miracle. He didn't believe Ralph would die. And it was a terrible shock to him, terrible shock to him when he died. So that left Harold the last in the family.

[00:38:35.55]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: What was Harold's relationship, or how would you describe his relationship to his family? But I'm thinking perhaps, particularly of Ralph K. Davies, very successful businessman.

[00:38:52.32]

MARGARET DAVIES: Well—

[00:38:53.67]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I mean, how was he viewed by the family?

[00:38:56.37]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh, well, they liked him. The children all liked him. They thought he had a marvelous sense of humor. And Ralph couldn't quite understand why Harold wasn't anxious or interested in making a lot of money, as he was, you see, and why he wanted to spend his time painting, which didn't make money. Because money-making was Ralph's hobby—his business and his [inaudible]. And he once said to me, "I can't understand why Harold isn't interested in making a lot of money." And of course, I replied, "He wants to make enough so he lives comfortably and his family lives comfortably. But he wants to paint. And you can't do both."

[00:39:51.03]

And I think they were very fond of each other. In fact, they were very fond of each other. Every time Ralph came east on a trip, he always came and spent time with Harold. And I think they were very, very friendly. And Ralph never quite understood why Harold wanted to be a painter. But he once said to Marian, "Isn't there some way that Harold could exhibit his paintings in museums—have museums buy a picture?" See, the money—money background. "Wouldn't the museums—" And Marian said to him, "Oh leave Uncle Harold alone. Don't try to interfere with his painting." [Laughs.]

[00:40:43.04]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Was there anybody in the family that understood what he was doing, the activity, the choice the activity? Did he have any sympathetic support in his own family?

[00:40:57.39]

MARGARET DAVIES: No.

[00:40:57.71]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: I mean, besides you, obviously?

[00:40:59.69]

MARGARET DAVIES: No. His mother and father just couldn't believe that they would raise a painter. No. Making a living and getting ahead was the thing there. But his sister wanted to do some writing, but she didn't have the self-discipline to get down to doing it. And of course, they were very sympathetic, I guess, because they were both creative.

[00:41:28.05]

No, it seemed, to them, rather strange to have a painter in the family. You know, painters were rather seen to have the standing of a garbage man, almost—they had no standing at all. And to be a painter, you had to be a little weird and a little something may be wrong with you. And I found that out in East Hampton among my friends, they couldn't believe that I would marry a painter, you know?

[00:41:50.43]

And when he went any place, socially, he had very good-looking clothes from Abercrombie and Fitch. And one day, he was passing the store window. And I was in the store. And I said to the clerk, "Oh, I have to leave. My husband just went by." And she says "No, some very well-dressed gentleman just went by." And she knew my husband was a painter. And I said, "That's my husband." She said, "No." I said, "Yes, that's my husband." They couldn't believe that a painter was a gentleman, or educated, or anything. He was just kind of a S-L-O-B, slob. [They laugh.]

[00:42:32.19]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But you know, Mr. Davies occupied a somewhat peculiar position. Because I don't think anybody would say—well, it's quite clear what was important to him. He considered himself a painter, first of all.

[00:42:45.15]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. He was a painter.

[00:42:45.81]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But he was, for most of his career—

[00:42:50.37]

MARGARET DAVIES: A businessman.

[00:42:50.58]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: —a businessman.

[00:42:51.26]

MARGARET DAVIES: And was president of companies.

[00:42:53.05]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Exactly. And so he, it seems to me, achieved success in a way that would have been understood by the his own family. I mean he really wasn't a painter in a sense, the sense of those who go off and starve to paint.

[00:43:05.70]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yeah.

[00:43:06.03]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: He never did that.

[00:43:06.69]

MARGARET DAVIES: No, he wasn't.

[00:43:07.23]

HERBERT HOOVER: He told me he didn't want [inaudible]—he said—

[00:43:09.92]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But you see what I'm driving at.

[00:43:11.87]

HERBERT HOOVER: I first remember something he said, "Those poor old blokes starving to death." He said, "I could never do it." He said, "I just didn't want to do it." But he sacrificed, mind you, all types of social gatherings. I mean, he was a man—I mean, probably, he painted more in his, what we consider spare time, than most painters would spend in their studio.

[00:43:42.89]

MARGARET DAVIES: That's right.

[00:43:43.40]

HERBERT HOOVER: Because he was so disciplined.

[00:43:45.14]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:43:45.20]

HERBERT HOOVER: I mean, when you think about, when you look at the large amount of work that's been left, and over the long period, we're going back from 1905. We have one that signed up there, 1905, all the way straight through to 1976. You're talking about a tremendous amount of years of discipline.

[00:44:08.85]

MARGARET DAVIES: And that's all he wanted to do, really, from the time he was a little boy, would be a painter. But he was compelled to work to support his family. And so, it was a duty. And he felt his duty very strongly. And he felt it his duty to put the children through college, the three of them through college. And when the boys wanted to get married, they were just out of the army. They had no work then. And he told them that, go ahead if they wanted to marry, he approved of the girl, he would help them financially until they were on their feet, each one of them. And so, he did. And that was one reason.

[00:44:59.43]

He had done so much for his family that in '57, he had a right to retire, no matter how much we lived on, and spent the rest of his life painting. He had a right to it. He'd done everything for everybody else. He'd been very kind and generous. And he had a right to spend the rest of his life painting, anybody that wanted to paint so badly. Besides, I knew how badly I felt when I had to give up medical school. I had spent 20 years from kindergarten to college, getting into medical school. And it was just like a death. It was just a traumatic experience. And so I thought, he had the right to spend his life painting. And nothing must interfere with it.

[00:45:48.73]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well certainly, he must have done little else after the move to Inverness. No business, no—

[00:45:55.45]

MARGARET DAVIES: He did nothing. He wouldn't—On Sundays, he went down to Woodside because Ralph wanted him. They had family dinners, the Sunday family dinner, the old-fashioned dinner. And whenever he had an opportunity to see Ralph, or Ralph wanted to come and see him, that was fine. But anybody outside of that, he didn't care one whoop for. He wanted to paint. They took time. You see, they would take time.

And he knew I was satisfied, that I didn't miss social gatherings at night, because I could go during the daytime. And I did during the daytime. So I had a rounded life. And he had had a pretty well-rounded life with business and painting. I think that's what made him the type of man he was. He had the discipline of business, yet he had the outlet of painting. It made him a very balanced person. He was a well-balanced person.

[00:46:59.45]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Did he strike up any acquaintances with artists in this area after he came back?

[00:47:09.31]

MARGARET DAVIES: No.

[00:47:09.64]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Not at all?

[00:47:10.49]

MARGARET DAVIES: There was one or two out at East Hampton. There was someone who was the head of one of—the Art Department out at UC. What's his name? Not Phipps, but—

[00:47:24.37]

HERBERT HOOVER: Not Dora [ph]?

[00:47:25.69]

MARGARET DAVIES: Somebody—he made no effort to meet anybody. In fact, people would have interfered with his paintings.

[00:47:32.78]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Yes. Well, I'm beginning to get that pretty clear. Well then, this is a question for both of you. How did he get together to have an exhibition? How did he get together with Mr. Hoover, here, especially in light of the fact that he didn't seem interested in this?

[00:47:53.22]

MARGARET DAVIES: As I understand it, my sister-in-law had a painting she wanted Mr. Hoover to sell.

[00:48:03.42]

HERBERT HOOVER: Um—no. Mrs. Davies, Mrs. Ralph Davies had asked me to—she said she wanted to buy a Hans Hofmann painting.

[00:48:12.93]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:48:13.65]

HERBERT HOOVER: And I told her that I knew of one that was for sale. And so I said, "Could I bring it down to their house?" And she said yes. And I brought it down. And it was a really, very nice painting. It's an oil on paper. But when I came in—and I had never seen these paintings before. I don't know why they weren't hung before. But anyway, they were up there. And I said, "Well, why are you buying this painting when you've got two fantastic paintings here?"

[00:48:45.25]

She said, "Do you really think they're any good?" And I said, "Well, you know, Mr. Davies, I think they're good." I said, "Who are they by?" She said, "My brother-in-law." I said, "Well, I didn't even know you had a brother-in-law." [Laughs.] So, I said—well, I said—I didn't even know how old he was. She said, "Would you like to see his work?" And so I said, "Well, I think I would, very much."

[00:49:06.64]

So it all worked out, that—I remember that I got sick. And I couldn't go out to see him. So I had to postpone it about five weeks. And then, we did make—and I just only saw the studio. And I had no idea from whence this man came. But I knew that we were not talking about a Grandma—

[00:49:27.22]

MARGARET DAVIES: Moses.

[00:49:27.79]

HERBERT HOOVER: Moses—that he was a painter. And I even doubted my own beliefs. And I brought young Patrick Riley out, who—Mr. Davies having been Irish, and Patrick being Irish, they were on this very poetic level from time to time. And I said—Patrick just took one look at me and said, "No, you haven't lost your mind. The man is good."

[00:49:52.67]

And then after subsequent visits is when I got in to see this other work. And then, of course,

everything began to come to a realization in my mind. You just don't start painting this way. There's no way you can start painting this way with this definition, and everything stemming from a large reservoir of images. So that's how it all worked out. And we're thankful to Mrs. Ralph K. Davies to bring us in together. Or we may never have gotten together.

[00:50:30.59]

MARGARET DAVIES: No, Harold would never have gone to any of the galleries to ask them to come see his painting.

[00:50:36.38]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: How did you convince him to have a show, though? It seems like an exception to his basic attitude.

[00:50:47.69]

MARGARET DAVIES: After Mr. Hoover left, Harold said, "I like that young fellow. He really knows about painting."

[00:50:59.18]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Obviously, a lapse in judgment there. [Laughs.]

[00:51:02.12]

MARGARET DAVIES: "He really knows about painting." And he liked him and he trusted him. And he was the first gallery owner that Harold was interested in. And when it was suggested that he have a show, Harold said, "Good." He would be very pleased to have a show. And he said it's the type of gallery that will frame them right and do things right and exhibit them right. And it was very satisfactory to him. And he was pleased, because he considered it the best gallery in San Francisco. And I think it flattered him a little. It was a compliment, that here this young fellow, who knew about painting and had a fine gallery, and he considered the best gallery in San Francisco, that he was pleased that the young fellow wanted to exhibit his work.

[00:52:10.48]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: This was the exhibition of 1975?

[00:52:13.54]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:52:15.88]

HERBERT HOOVER: Yes. So we got—we had that one exhibition. And then we had the big show in Fresno. And Mr. Davies drove down there with Mrs. Davies driving.

[00:52:27.88]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Mr. Davies was sketching.

[00:52:29.64]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yeah, well, it was just about in January that I noticed Harold really was changing. He was getting old. See, he died when he was 85. Then, he was 82, when—wasn't he 82 or 83, the first exhibit? He then, up to that time, he hadn't showed any real advancement in age. But he really began to show his age then.

[00:53:01.67]

HERBERT HOOVER: In that year, just I think the fall in the studio when he was—when we were down in Fresno that time, and he said, "I've got to get away from these women. I need a drink."

[00:53:14.24]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes.

[00:53:15.08]

HERBERT HOOVER: And that didn't show any advancement in age at all.

[00:53:17.42]

MARGARET DAVIES: No.

[00:53:17.72]

HERBERT HOOVER: By that time, he had had it. And he said, "Fresno is still a hellhole." But in the bar at the Hilton Hotel, these raucous men—and one of them—and Mr. Davies, he had a cane. And he sort of toddled along slightly, but not—he always stood very erect, and somewhat imperious statue, which I think is great to have. And one of these young 40-year-olds, who was too old to be making all that noise in the bar, said, "Here comes grandpa." And Mr. Davies, with that, raised up his cane and pushed him aside and said, "Still a bunch of chicken thieves in Fresno, aren't you?" And everybody just dropped their teeth.

[00:54:06.32]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: That's great. Chicken thieves.

[00:54:07.85]

HERBERT HOOVER: But I'll never forget that scene; "still a bunch of chicken thieves in Fresno, aren't you?" Of course, we didn't tell the Fresno papers that. Because after all, the museum did do it. Andy Martin. It was—well, Andy is from New York, who did a great job. And Mr. Davies did give him a marvelous "Homage to Franz Kline" for their permanent collection.

[00:54:34.58]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: You were starting to say that around in January, you noticed a change, a decline, an aging.

[00:54:45.90]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes. And he would sometimes, when he came in to read, I guess, he was waiting for the paint to dry. He'd come in and sit down and read for a few minutes. He was feeling his pulse. And I said to him, "Do you not feel up to par?" And if he was ever ill, or anything, he would never let me know, because I would think he was falling apart. And you see, he was ten years older. And he didn't want me to feel that he felt his age, and the difference in age. But I didn't. I felt his age.

[00:55:27.81]

And so, he never wanted that—well, going to New York one time, we were on the train. And we got he got off one end, and I got off the other looking, for a porter. And finally, I found a porter, and he got the baggage, and I tipped him. And when we got into the station, the head porter came up to us and said, "The young lady"—no, "your daughter." "Your daughter already paid the porter." And it hurt Harold. Because it made him seem like my father.

[00:56:14.27]

And that really hurt him, because he felt young. He felt young and agile and so forth. And he didn't like it. And so after that, nobody could ever mention anything about age. Of course, ten years is nothing. It's nothing, particularly as I always liked older people. So ten years was nothing, and I never even thought of it. I thought of myself as his age. And so, when he ever had anything wrong—like his eyes. He didn't let me know that for some time that he thought he was going blind.

[00:56:52.88]

And so—when he was very young, he had pneumonia. And it left him with a weak heart muscle. That's why he didn't ever go yachting, or playing tennis or golf or anything of that

type. He had been warned not to take on exercise. And he could not get life insurance. Because when he was examined, they discovered he had a weak heart muscle. And as he was in his 80s, which is fairly old for a man—

[00:57:30.38]

HERBERT HOOVER: He [inaudible] weak heart muscle.

[00:57:32.34]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yeah. I think he began to have circulatory difficulty. I know he did. Because as I look back, he's feeling this, you know. And he had to use his cane. And he should use his cane because he was dizzy. He didn't have enough circulation to the brain. And he would rise from the chair, and sometimes he would fall back. And so, he was unsteady on his feet. He was unsteady when he went to Fresno.

[00:58:07.73]

HERBERT HOOVER: Yes, he was.

[00:58:09.35]

MARGARET DAVIES: And later on, you know, when he fell, he undoubtedly hit his head. And though he didn't have a concussion, that was really—

[00:58:19.36]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Where did he fall?

[00:58:20.30]

HERBERT HOOVER: In his studio.

[00:58:21.17]

MARGARET DAVIES: He was in his studio. And he turned from his canvas too quickly, to the bench beside him to get some things. And he didn't have his cane in his hand, of course. And just that turning quickly, he fell. And he managed to get himself, drag himself, to just under the telephone. But he couldn't get up. He couldn't rise. He had a broken hip, and he didn't know it. But he couldn't rise.

[00:58:50.84]

And that happened at twelve noon. And I didn't get home until five o'clock that afternoon. And when he called from his studio and I went in, he said, "I have badly sprained my hip." So the test of it is, you take a hold of their arms. And if they can't rise up at all from on their back, you know it's a serious hip, broken hip. So we called the doctor. And they took him to the hospital and said yes, it's a broken hip.

[00:59:27.84]

Well, from the shock of falling and his poor circulation, after about—oh, it must have been two weeks, he was sent to—they took him to the convalescent hospital. And he got very tired sitting up. And he tried to get back to his bed—imagine, on a broken hip, and he fell and broke his wrist. So, they took him back to the hospital again and set his wrist. And he must have hit his head again, undoubtedly. And then he began to hallucinate. And sometimes, he was perfectly normal and could talk to you. And sometimes, he was hallucinating. And he knew it. He knew what was wrong with him, with himself.

[01:00:18.58]

So about 9:30 at night, he had the nurse call me to come early in the morning to the hospital. He was losing his mind. And he told me not to come. They had given him a sedative—so not to come that night. But the next day I went, he was perfectly lucid. But he said, "No man in his right mind has the hallucinations I have. And so, I know I'm losing my mind." And then so he said, I know "I will never be able to paint again."

And I said to him that, "Look at the painters that were certainly not in their right mind and painted, and what they did. It won't make any difference to you." And he said, "Oh yes, yes, it will. And besides, I probably will not walk again. And I have heart trouble. And I won't be able to paint. And I'm not going to spend my life in a wheelchair. And certainly, I'm not going to have you taking care of me for the rest of my life in a wheelchair."

[01:01:36.28]

And so he said, "This is the time to go." And of course, you're horrified when you hear a man say that. But he made up his mind. If he couldn't paint, and he was going to be in a wheelchair and maybe be a vegetable, he wasn't going to live. So from there on, he refused any kind—He wouldn't eat, he wouldn't take any of the medicine, and they would strap his wrists to the bed to feed him intravenously. And he'd get out of those straps. And they tried to restrain him around the waist. Because they must, otherwise they'd be sued for malpractice. They had to do everything they could. He'd be down at the foot of the bed and out of the straps. And finally, the doctor said to me, "I don't know what—What are we going to do? He won't obey orders. He won't take anything."

[01:02:36.47]

And so I said, "You do what he wants done. It's his life. And you do what he wants done." And they said, "All right, if you take the responsibility." But you couldn't—I couldn't do anything when he made up his mind that he was not going to be in that shape. And in a way, I sympathized with him. I could see his point of view. I wouldn't want to be that way either. But you feel duty-bound to do all possible to keep the man going. And when they gave him oxygen, he pulled the thing off and just threw it aside. You can't force them. There wasn't anything they could do with him.

[01:03:17.46]

So, he just made up his mind. He was not going to go on and not be able to paint and read and so forth. Though, he was conscious, sometimes. And sometimes I couldn't understand him at all. But he didn't want to see anybody. He wouldn't let Louise come. He wouldn't let my family come. He didn't want to see anybody. And sometimes, I could understand him. Sometimes I couldn't. When he was lucid, he gave me implicit directions on what to do with his paintings—how I was to arrange my life, what I was to do. And he said, "If Mr. Hoover wants to continue exhibiting my paintings, you give him free access to the studio, and a free hand with the paintings. And I think it would be wonderful for you, if Mr. Hoover is still interested in my paintings."

[01:04:18.01]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: And he seems to be.

[01:04:21.10]

MARGARET DAVIES: And he told me something about the financial arrangement to make with Mr. Hoover, and so forth. And he'd be clear as a bell. And every time they gave him—would give him oxygen, he was clear as a bell. When he threw it off, he would be off talking about things I couldn't understand. He died in his sleep. He contracted pneumonia because of his heart condition. And he couldn't walk and all. He had double pneumonia. And of course, then that's it.

[01:04:59.83]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: How long was he in the hospital?

[01:05:01.84]

MARGARET DAVIES: Two months. Two months—well, he was just in the convalescent hospital with his leg when he fell and broke his wrist. So then, that really was—

[01:05:15.28]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: But I gather he was able to paint right up to the very end, until he—

[01:05:20.52]

MARGARET DAVIES: Oh yes, until he fell, he was painting.

[01:05:24.08]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Which is very lucky—

[01:05:24.64]

MARGARET DAVIES: He was painting when he fell. And he asked me to bring sketchbooks and pencils to the hospital. And that was when his leg was healing. But after he broke his wrist, he told me, "Take the sketch books back, and take the pencils and things. Take them, because this is it." And he also told me about his funeral arrangements. And he said he wanted to go from the hospital to the crematorium and be cremated. And he wanted his ashes spread in the fern beds in the woods behind his studio. And I was a little bit horrified at that, but I carried it out. And he didn't want any memorial services. He didn't want any notice in the newspaper. He wanted people to remember him as he was when he was alive. And so, I carried it out to the word. I felt, that's what—my duty to do so, to the horrorification of my relatives and my in-laws.

[01:06:41.22]

HERBERT HOOVER: Yes, I think that created a little bit of a schism.

[01:06:44.38]

MARGARET DAVIES: It created quite a situation for me that they hadn't forgiven me yet, but —[laughs.]

[01:06:50.45]

HERBERT HOOVER: We did—Mrs. Hoover and I were there the day that they brought the ashes.

[01:06:56.63]

MARGARET DAVIES: Yes, yes.

[01:07:00.44]

HERBERT HOOVER: But Mr. Davies' wish was that he'd be remembered alive and painting.

[01:07:07.76]

MARGARET DAVIES: Remembered alive, yes.

[01:07:09.11]

HERBERT HOOVER: Not to really get into any great deal about all that.

[01:07:13.91]

PAUL J. KARLSTROM: Well, that's I think the way he will be remembered. Thank you very much.

[END OF TRACK AAA_davies78_3345_m]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]