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Oral history interview with Kenneth Callahan,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Kenneth Callahan on October 27, November 21, & December 19, 1982. The interview took place in Seattle, Washington, and was conducted by Sue Ann Kendall for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

[Tape 1; Side 1]

SUE ANN KENDALL: To begin, I think we'll go back to the beginning. We know you were born in 1905.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: 1905, yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Can you elaborate a little on your childhood and where you lived?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: We were in Spokane for a very short time. I don't know just how long, but it wasn't long enough so that I have any memories of living in Spokane. But that's where I was born.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And you moved to Montana?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, not right then. I think we moved to Montana when I was about, let's see-- the war was in 1914 -- oh, I was about six years old. We lived in Montana then for a number of years.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I understand your mother drew some while you were in Montana and you also saw paintings by Russell there?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, Russell was a friend of my family's. I can't say that he was a friend of mine, because no adult is a friend of a child only because he was a friend of their parents, but he used to come by our place occasionally. He often had his things in his saddlebag on a packhorse. Some of these things were painted on cheesecloth, I think, and they'd get wrinkled. I remember my mother dampening the back of them and ironing them so they would be flat. These were things that he would-- oh, roping steers and hunting wolves and various things -- all Montana cowboy stuff. And he'd try and sell them to saloons, I remember.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And you were interested in looking through those, I assume?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, I was very interested. I was interested in painting from looking at those. And there was a half-Blackfoot Indian, Ralph Breckenridge, whose mother owned the livery stable. Ralph was interested in painting and he would use the tack room in the livery stable to paint. He let me watch him and I'd try to paint.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did your parents encourage this?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: My mother did. I remember that. My mother did some drawing, but how well or badly I have no idea, except she had some interest in it as an amateur. I'm sure there was no thought of anything [from her point of view].

SUE ANN KENDALL: Were you an only child?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, I was the middle of seven. There's Benjamin and Frederick and James and Pamela, and myself and Dorothy and [Charles William].

SUE ANN KENDALL: Any other artists?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No. None of the others were.. . One of my brothers [was in] small _____ for a while.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Mostly your family remained on the West Coast?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, my mother died when I was 15, I think, and my father when I was 17. And already, at that time, my two older brothers and my older sister were dead. Anyway, the family was kind of broken up [after] my mother's death.

SUE ANN KENDALL: When did you leave Montana, then?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I think it was 1918.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And came to Washington?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, Raymond, Washington. I was there for about two years. And then we came to Seattle.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was there any other influence that you can think of in terms of your schooling, say in grade school or high school, that influenced you to become an artist?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, it was really the Ralph Breckenridge and Charlie Russell paintings, primarily Ralph Breckenridge because of the proximity with him. Also, he was a bronco champion in northeastern Montana in the fairs, and he painted, and I could paint and I wouldn't have to fight with all the kids to prove I wasn't a sissy, except that Ralph, being a bronco champion, they accepted he was a painter. And those that knew Charlie Russell also accepted him as an artist. So, it made it respectable for me to paint.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was it partly because of being a man and being a painter? They were good role models for you?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yeah. Anyway, from then on, I was always interested in trying to be an artist. But for a long time, up until I was 16 or so, my only idea of being an artist was trying to be a cartoonist or illustrator. Everyone I knew had a job and I knew I had to make a living, so I tried to be an illustrator, a cartoonist and all kinds of things. My idea of being an artist was having a job and doing-- making art of some kind like illustrations or cartoons. But it never worked. I never like to do that. Along in 1926, in San Francisco, I did a lot of illustrations for a children's magazine, The Treasure Chest, and that's when I thought maybe that would be a way of making a living. I always had wanted to be an artist, but I changed [to wanting] to be a painter when I was 18 or something like that.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did Charlie Russell's experience at making a living as an artist influence you?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, I never thought about that. He didn't make a living. Later on in San Diego he did; he became an illustrator. But at that time he was just a camp cook and a roundup cook and kind of a roustabout and wrangler.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What about Raymond? Wasn't there a high school teacher that somehow influenced you?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, yes. She said that she thought I could be an artist if I wanted to. That was a great stimulus to me because she was the only adult who, in a semi-official position -- at the time I looked upon a teacher as such-- and whose opinion was valued (I mean an adult's opinion was valued in reference to being an artist because of being a teacher). Anyway. ..

SUE ANN KENDALL: What happened when you came to Broadway High School in Seattle?

KENNETH CALLAHAN Well, I went there for about a year. I learned later -- I don't remember anything about it myself-- but in Raymond, they put out a paper, the Southwesterly Review, or something like that, Northwesterly Review. It had a story and it said that I graduated from high school within three-and-one-half years. Well, I did leave high school with my diploma at Christmas time. I didn't know until I read that, that this was a matter of three-and-a-half years in high school.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did you take art classes in high school?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I took art classes, and at Broadway [High School, Seattle--Ed.] while I was there, I did the illustrations for the yearly publications. What do they call them in high school?

SUE ANN KENDALL: Yearbook.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: The woman that really influenced me there and who I had great respect for was Tillie Piper at Broadway. It wasn't a very long time that I was at Broadway but she was the art teacher. She was a very unusual teacher for a high school teacher at that time because she thought the use of nude models was an important thing and good training for artists. Well, before that, any suggestion of that would be just encouraging the looking at a naked woman. That was the whole purpose of it, many adults thought.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Were there life drawing classes?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, there wasn't a life drawing class because they wouldn't permit that, but she did have some of these cheap Greek sculptures-- plaster copies of classical nudes that we'd draw and that was very liberal at the time.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Like the academies in Europe, almost? Drawing from the plaster casts?

Did you feel that it was respectable to be an artist -- to be taking those classes-- by the time you got out of

school?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, it never came to mind that it wasn't or was. As far as I'm concerned, I wanted to be an artist and that was that. Whatever that meant, I accepted that completely without thought. Whether it was right or wrong was of no. ..

SUE ANN KENDALL: So you were very determined, yourself, to go that route.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, if you say very determined, that sounds like, "My God, I'm going to do this or die," or something. But it was nothing whatever of that. It's just simply the only way I can conceive of living. That's the way life was: I was going to be an artist. And so, there's no declaration. There's no nothing. I didn't arrive at that at any particular time or anything. It just always had been so. It's like how tall I am. There's no point in arguing about it.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Right. Then you attended the University of Washington for a short time?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. I went out there when I got out of high school, winter session. I was there for just a month or two and then I quit because I realized that that wasn't what I wanted as an artist. I wasn't getting anything of value to me.

One person I found very important there was a painter who just came from studying in Brussels, no from Paris: John Butler. He was teaching there. He wasn't a very good artist, but he was a person that made you feel that nothing was more important than art. He made you feel that painting was an important thing to be doing. And I think he was very stimulating to students from that point of view. I don't think his ideas amounted to a damn, and I don't think his work ever did either.

SUE ANN KENDALL: He was an American, but had studied in Paris?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. He was a local fellow. And he had that capacity to make you feel that art was a very important thing. I think that still is very important in any teacher of art. That it's not a hobby; it's not a casual thing. It's a serious part of life.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And so you left the university and went where?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I went to San Francisco with a couple of other kids. I had a Model-T Ford.

One of the things that encouraged me at that time was that I got a prize in the Northwest Annual-- or else it was the exhibition that preceded the Northwest Annual. I got a second prize in black and white for a drawing and that pleased me very much. That was the first exhibition I ever got an award of any kind.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That was while you were in high school or right at the time you were at the university?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes. I was working for the Chanticleer Cafeteria half time and going to the university when that show was held.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was that the drawing of the waterfront?

KENNETH CALLAHAN Well, I did exhibit many of those at different times, but this one-- I don't know what it was of. All I know, it was in black and white and that it was with an exhibition for adult artists; it wasn't for kids. So that's what pleased me, even if the award was of no consequence whatsoever. It probably wasn't a very good drawing and it certainly was of no consequence in the field of art.

SUE ANN KENDALL: No, but it meant something to you to achieve that, of course.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Then you took off for San Francisco.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. Lived there for several years. While I was there, I did these illustrations for The Treasure Chest.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That was in the early twenties?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. We don't have it here, but one Christmas for a present, Beth got this from the state library in Sacramento; they had copies of this magazine and so they sent us photographic copies of the pages and different issues that had these various illustrations of mine. This was just a few years ago. I hadn't seen them since I was down there. So it was kind of fun to see them.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What was your reaction?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: That was in 1926 that magazine was published, so that's when it was. Also in 1926 in San Francisco was the first one-man show I ever had. It was at Schwabacher-Frey store on Market Street and there was drawings of Yosemite. That summer, I worked up in Yosemite Valley as a busboy and did drawings of the Yosemite Valley. Mountain range, big ones.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And then you went out looking for a place to show them?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, I was living in San Francisco in the old Montgomery Building and it was filled with artists and sculptors and poets and stuff. And somebody I knew -- I don't know who it was-- knew of the gallery and interested them in having this exhibition. Just who it was or just how that exhibition came about, I don't remember. I remember having it, and seeing it.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That year also marks another important event for you, does it not? In your seeing the works of the so-called Blue Four?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, but it wasn't '26; that was '27. That was really a very important thing as an artist, because up until that time, my work was essentially realistic. Madame Galka Scheyer came from Europe; it was one of the very few instances, I think, in this country, where anyone came from Europe bringing European contemporary work, artists of consequence, who didn't go to New York first. For some reason, she came to San Francisco first and someone brought her up to the studio. She had a big folio full of Kandinsky, Klee, Feininger and Jawlensky. We spread these around the room and.. .

SUE ANN KENDALL: Were they oil paintings?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, they were just a few small canvases, unframed, by Jawlensky. The rest of them were gouache and watercolor-- drawings -- Klee, Kandinsky and Feininger. It was a huge folio, thick; she had a great many. So there were many many of these around the room and I can remember so well that I thought Klee and Feininger were like cartoonists. And Kandinsky-- they were kind of silly paintings, too. And Jawlensky -- I didn't like them. Even then I considered Jawlensky just a strong-armed German painter. But anyway, she was there for many hours. Howard Rutzel, I think, brought her in. _____, and Mrs. Jackson and myself and my partner, Jack Finn, who lived with me-- he was a chemist and writer. We had some wine and cheese and some bread and these things spread around. I really saw them, studied them, and then the next several days, walking out on the beach around the Presidio and Chinatown and North Beach, thinking about these works, it made me realize that these were not just cartoons. These people had created images that had a positive existence as images and that each one was an individual. I didn't like these things but I had to admit that they were important, that they had an infinite importance and it was no consequence whether I liked them or not. Because, they did exist, and that made me realize right then that one thing that I really wanted was to have an identity of my own like them -- to make forms that would have a convincing existence and come from me only. From then on, I was never concerned with the degree of realism, of projecting naturalistic readable images.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was that your first contact with original works from Europe?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, probably not the first, because San Francisco's museums had some, but this was my first direct contact, face to face, with a number of works. I had seen isolated paintings of Van Gogh or Cezanne or Picasso or something in an exhibition at the DeYoung Museum or Legion of Honor or Palace. It would be easy for me to dismiss because these were just a single painting and there'd be other realistic paintings and _____ and I'd respond to and these I'd ignore. But I couldn't ignore these because there they were. And I saw enough of them at the time that I really got into them and they really reacted on me. It was a very great and important development in my life, about as important as any because it was-- oh, I don't know. Up to that time, there were certain paintings that, you know -- people like the British school of watercolor, Russell Flint-- they were the kind of things I was very interested in. And the more realistic people were artists that were of consequence to me. Well, then immediately after that when I'd think of Russell Flint, I'd realize that these were just empty, pretty decorations. And these other things, the Blue Four, had in feeling what I wanted. In appearance at that time it wasn't what I wanted, but. . .

SUE ANN KENDALL: But the impact. . .

KENNETH CALLAHAN: The impact that I wanted.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Who was Madame Scheyer? Was she a gallery person who was selling these? Why did she come?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: She didn't bring them to my studio to sell. I never have really known or tried to find out, but as far as I gather in memory, she was representing them and working out an exhibition circuit. From San

Francisco she did go to Los Angeles and then to New York So, I think she was working out a tour of these artists' work which were not well known in this country. There would be a few New York artists that knew of them but they were not well known at all in the United States.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was that in the Montgomery Building?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: The exhibition?

SUE ANN KENDALL: No, when she came to see you.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, that's where we lived; that was my studio.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Can you talk a little bit about what it was like to live there at that time?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It was four or five stories, as I remember, maybe six or eight, but I think it was four or five and it was left over from the fire, previously a business building. And at that time, 1925, it was filled with poets, painters, and sculptors, and writers, and so forth. Mostly painters. At that time, you couldn't walk freely around the city in San Francisco if you had raggedy clothes and you didn't have a job because the police would stop you and ask you questions. And if you didn't have any money and you didn't have a job, they'd run you out of town or else put you in jail overnight and then [of course you would] leave town the next day or else spend the day working on the streets for the city.

And you couldn't go through a respectful neighborhood on the way to the beach, walking through there, without the police stopping you because you were in dirty clothes or old clothes. There was no such thing as "hippy" type clothes being acceptable. And so, whenever you were invited to dinner anywhere, if you didn't have a clean shirt and you didn't have a tie or shoes that were suitable, you'd just go round from person to person in the building and find out anybody that did have, and you'd borrow them for the evening. So you could go to dinner and go to respectful places. There was a camaraderie-- ____ ____.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Sure.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: But the fact that you borrowed somebody's trousers to go somewhere and later they'd borrow yours, wouldn't necessarily make you a friend of theirs. This went on in the building whether you knew the people or not. We all did that because nobody in the building had any money. Among those, you'd make friends but a lot of them you wouldn't make friends; you'd just [be] on that exchange basis.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Were there conversations among artists and poets and sort of cross influences that happened?

KENNETH CALLAHAN Oh, yeah. You know, sometime later, a matter of 20years or so ago, about '55, a woman -- she was an army colonel and a collector. _____. She was Evelyn Roberts and she was retired from the army and lived in San Francisco. She'd been buying paintings of mine for some years. She had a considerable collection. And she heard a half-hour radio broadcast by a San Francisco writer about San Francisco in the old days. It was about me as an artist there. It was how I'd lived in the old Montgomery Building and I'd introduced him to the "inner sanctum" of San Francisco's Bohemia. And that he'd met in my studio Henry Cowell, the composer, doing one of his compositions on a washboard and sitting on the floor. And he met Sadakichi Hartman, the poet, there and several other people. Well, she went to the studio and got a typed copy and then she sent it to me. Until I read that, I didn't know that these people were.. . I knew their names. If somebody said, "did you know Sadakichi Hartman and Henry Cowell and so on when you were down there?" I said, "I think so, seems to me I remember their names but I can't be sure." But then I remembered it, it all came back to me. Oh, and it said how he'd met so many beautiful society girls from the East Bay at the studio. Well, I didn't remember these beautiful girls being there but, anyway.

So there was an exchange, perhaps that made me think of this when you said, "Was there an exchange between people in the building?"

One of the things that made them noisy as hell at times was that the building was built around a center well, like so many office buildings are. And, so people at parties would throw chairs and things out the window down into the well because it made such a terrible noise echoing when they'd crash in the bottom. And so occasionally, it'd be kind of noisy at night, but that wasn't all the time.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And there were other people that you could mention that were there? Say artists or poets?

[Tape 1, side 2]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I can't remember. You see the only reason I know those two names is because they were in this radio transcript. So many people, artists, would be in there for a short length of time, so many

months or a year, and then they'd go away and another one would be there. And, I haven't maintained any of the old friendships I had from those days. The people are either dead or gone or dispersed. Jack Finn is dead.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You started taking freighter trips and coming and going didn't you, at that time, so the friendships would be kind of fluid?

KENNETH CALLAHAN Yeah, I did work in the merchant marine-- trips to get places and see things. It was another one of those things, I was trying to find some part-time way of making a living so that I could have time to paint. But there was also the romantic motivation -- fascinating and getting to places and see what things are like in the world.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Where did you go in the late twenties?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I returned to Seattle in '28. I got back to Seattle then because I was working on a ship out of San Francisco to Australia, Sydney. And I got into a fight with another crew member-- I think it was about four to five days to Honolulu from San Francisco on this old freighter, old rust bucket. .. But anyway, we got into a fight and the skipper -- well, it was really the head steward, I think-- gave us a choice of going to jail in Honolulu and insisting on our wages from San Francisco, or else being just dumped there; we'd just leave the ship without our wages. If we insisted on our wages, we'd go to jail in Honolulu. Except neither of us wanted to go to jail, so we didn't. So, then I was there for a while and then I got a "work away" from there to Portland.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You came back up to Seattle from Portland?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. Playing cards with a crew I made some \$3 and something, so it was enough to get me back to Seattle from Portland because I didn't make any money as a work-away.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Right.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I understood that. It was the way things went in those days. You see, the steward signed me on from Honolulu to Seattle as a waiter because as a waiter I'd make more money for the trip. So he collected more money having me work-away as a waiter than if I'd worked as a mess boy. I didn't think about it at the time, but there were a lot of sailors who were professionals. That was their living and I was just chiseling on their living. The union-- the Sailors' Union of the Pacific -- which I belonged to then was absolutely of no meaning. As soon as you get a job on a ship, you're a member of the union.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Automatically?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. It costs a dollar or something. But it was strikebreaking as far as serious guys who were trying to make a living, with a wife and family and something.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did you draw while you were on these trips?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, all the time. One way I found out I could do, and it worked very well: First night aboard, we'd sit around playing cards and I wouldn't be playing. I'd just be sitting and watching them and keeping score. And I'd take my pencil and just make a sketch of one of these guys and as soon as they'd: "What in the hell is that you got there, Callahan?" I'd say that I was just making a drawing of him. And he'd look at it and: "Jesus, it looks just like me. Can I have that? I'll send it to my wife." Or "Send it to my girlfriend." Or something. So somebody else would ask me to do it. So then from then on, I could draw all I wanted to because I was a sailor that was drawing, not an artist. You know, that made a difference.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Made it okay.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I'd have to fight every guy in the crew to prove that I wasn't a sissy, under other circumstances. And I never would do such a thing as admit that I'd never been near a university. I mean that would be thumbs down. But that's the way I got back to Seattle.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was the influence of the sea-- do you sense that had any impact? Because that's a very early contact you had with the sea, and of course you've moved back to the ocean now.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I don't know. What interests me is interrelationship of man and nature in one sense-- the rhythm of the wind and the wind currents and the patterns in the sand and the rhythm in the waves and the bloodstreams in human beings and animals and everything. And, you know, the glaciers do move. Visually, they're stationary, you can't watch a glacier moving, but by God, you go away for a year and you can come back and see where the glacier has moved. So these rhythms underlie everything and part of the unifying thing of everything -- that moves in life-- it has to be the basic movement. I've always been interested in that and it's very apparent in the wind and in the sea. And in the sand on the shores and in the mountains and trees -- form of trees and animals.

[Interruption as KC mentions a person he sees from the window--Ed.]

SUE ANN KENDALL: Okay, you got back to Seattle and you had a show here in 1929?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, '28 or '29. It was probably the same year. [Some discussion with Beth, his wife--Ed.] Well, yes. It was shortly after that. Dave Hatch was the director of the Seattle Art Museum-- Art Institute of Seattle it was called at the time -- and he's the one that gave me a show.

When we were in New York early last month, I had one of my regular shows at the Kraushaar Gallery and Dave Hatch and his wife were at the opening.

[Beth: Had you met Margaret then?]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yes. Dave brought her up to the studio. She was an associate editor of the Town Crier, a weekly magazine in Seattle, and Dave brought her up to interview me when he picked out the show. Margaret was my first wife, who died in 1961. Yeah, obviously before Beth and I were married.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And so you met her and had a one-man show?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Then you settled here for a while?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, yes. No, I left here again. On, no, I got mixed up about this. I just thought of this now: I came back here to Seattle and then I didn't stay, only a couple of months or something, and then Earl Fields and I left and went to San Francisco and to Los Angeles. I don't know why, but we just did. Then we bummed our way-- hitchhiked; we use to call it bumming -- up to San Francisco, and that was when I shipped on the Malola to Honolulu. And then came back here and stayed on from that time. That was when I had this show. While I was living there, several years, I also made some trips.

Earl was something wonderful, kind of shy. We separated around Santa Barbara because we couldn't get any rides together. So I was sitting up on a bank-- the road came along and curved under a railroad bridge -- and I had some oranges and I was eating one. And down the road came this figure of Earl. He didn't see me. And he'd been so shy he could hardly put his hand up to get a ride when we separated. And as these cars would go by, he'd hold his hand out like this [gesture]: "Son of a bitch, son of a bitch." (laughs) Anyway, he came up there and he had a loaf of bread so we had a good meal of oranges and a loaf of bread.

SUE ANN KENDALL: But, then you sort of settled down and got married? And worked here?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. Along in that time the museum [Seattle Art Museum--Ed.] being built-- the money had been given -- and I wrote on art, about the museum being built and so forth, for Margaret. This Town Crier job of hers as associate editor-- well, she was actually the editor and did everything. She did all the reviews and everything and whatever she could get -- people donated for her. Well, I decided I'd write on art just to save her from having to do that, too. Fuller, who was president of the Art Institute-- the Seattle Art Museum, when the museum opened, he employed me as just a museum worker. It was a part-time job, half-time job. And then I gradually as time went on was given more responsibility and so on. But, it remained a half-time job. That was excellent for. ..

SUE ANN KENDALL: Money?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, making money.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Now you actually became a sort of curator?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, assistant director and then curator. But it was still half-time.

SUE ANN KENDALL: At the same time you were writing occasionally for the Town Crier. Did you use a pseudonym?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, I did at one time. I was writing for the Times, a regular Seattle Art Museum column by Kenneth Callahan. And then the Town Crier wanted me to write for them occasionally and rather than using the same name in the magazine, I used Larry Cross. My mother's maiden name was Cross and so I just used Larry Cross as the reviewer in the Town Crier so that the Seattle Times would have a reviewer and that the Town Crier would have a different reviewer. Because at that time, there was nobody else writing about art in Seattle and I thought it was better for art to have apparently two columns than just one.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was the writing for the Times originally part of your museum job?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, for several years. It was just called the Seattle Art Museum column, a weekly column, and it was part of my job at the museum.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So it was all about museum news then?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, only exhibitions at the museum. But very soon after that, why I don't know, anyway. When I was fired by the museum, I went to ask the Times managing editor if he'd be interested in an art column for pay, and he said he was. So I was paid \$35 a month for a weekly column.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That was after 1953 when you left the museum?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How long did you do that for the Times?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I did it for a number of years at the museum as part museum work and then I did it for another-- well, I wasn't doing it when I got the Guggenheim in '55, so it must have been before that. [Discussion with Beth--Ed.]

SUE ANN KENDALL: It seems like that was a lot for one person. You were painting and you were also working at the museum and writing?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, you see, it was just a half-time job at the museum and the writing was done in the morning as part of the museum work. So, I was completely free after.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did you feel like there was some conflict of interest by being both one of the main painters in the area and being a person who could organize shows and also write about them?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I couldn't write about myself and I didn't. I didn't try to be analytical, especially, or anything else. I couldn't avoid giving opinions at times, but essentially it was just news about art. Because, the papers, if I hadn't done this, the only people they had writing about art were the girls in the society department of the paper. And with all good will in the world, the girl working the society department probably knew nothing about art nor was interested. She couldn't write very intelligently about it, through ignorance, not stupidity.

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And it was long time since I quit. I should have quite before that, on my own. Because at that time, I had already had a very successful show in New York and a number of museums-- including the Metropolitan Museum and the

Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney and the Guggenheim and, oh, the Brooklyn Museum and a lot of other museums in various places bought paintings -- and many collectors, name collectors, and so on. And I had a dealer in New York, the Maynard/Walker Gallery. But I was always afraid, a little afraid, of depending on the sale of my work to make a living for fear I'd be influenced, by the necessity of making money, to copy my own self. Because, you have a successful show in New York and so a lot of paintings are sold. Well, the dealer, obviously, makes money on that as well as you do. So then two years later the dealer will have another show of yours, and there would be a tendency, with many dealers too, to encourage you to do things that are like your first show because that's what the people liked and the museums liked and the galleries liked and so on. I also knew that as far as I was concerned, that copying yourself is no better than copying somebody else. I mean, if I try to copy, the first time I can do it again pretty good and the second one won't be quite as good and third would be less, and pretty soon it would be nothing. And so I was afraid of depending on the sale of art influencing what I did in painting. So that's why I kept the job as long as I did. But it was long since time that I quit. However, it was a number of years before I could make a living just selling paintings.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Were there any shows of yours at the museum while you were working there?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No. I would enter the Northwest Annual, but other than that I didn't have any shows of mine.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What about the museum's policy for showing local artists during that time?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It was a very good one. I mean, we used to have regular exhibitions of local artists and I always encouraged that as much as I could. And Fuller was very interested in that. Almost every month we have a show of some.. .

SUE ANN KENDALL: I know Margaret Tomkins didn't feel like she could have a show there because of museum policy-- I think that was during the fifties -- and I wondered if you could illuminate that?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, my differences with Margaret Tomkins were personal differences and there were things.. . This is one thing that happened, just to give you an idea. There was a man, Dr. Newmeyer, a German, who was teaching at Mills College in Berkeley, and he wrote me and asked if I could get together an exhibition of local artists for Mills College. He sent me a list of names of those he wanted. I got in touch with these people and packed and sent this exhibition to him. And, well, Margaret Tomkins and Jim FitzGerald, her husband, were not included in the list. So Margaret Tomkins saw me and wanted to know, very militantly, why she and Jim were not included in this exhibition. I said that I didn't have anything to do with selecting them. Newmeyer sent me a list of names of those painters he wanted and those were the ones I asked and those were the ones I sent. "Don't give me that," she said. So she believed that I deliberately had left them out. Why, that wasn't true at all. But there were things like that created a.. . Well, this wasn't the museum policy.

SUE ANN KENDALL: No, that was outside of the museum's domain.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. No matter who I was, or what was at the museum, that list of paintings would be exactly the same number of items and the same items would be sent to that show.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I suppose misunderstandings like that are somewhat inevitable when you are in.. .

KENNETH CALLAHAN: They are inevitable. And apparently, there may have very well been several reasons that caused her antagonism, because to this day she feels very antagonistic toward me.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And it's over the lack of shows she had at the museum?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I don't know what it was. It was something to do with me. It could very well be a personal dislike. I just spoke about that show of Dr. Newmeyer's as an example of one thing I know that made her very mad.. . But it shows I had nothing to do with selecting.. .

SUE ANN KENDALL: Do you think it created any other antagonisms between you and other Seattle artists?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, I'm sure I did. I don't remember any other specific ones, but I think that anybody who's in a job as a curator or assistant director of the only art museum in a city and at the same time was the only one that was writing an art column in the city-- well there's bound to be all kinds of antagonisms and cross things coming up. I know that a number of people felt that I had great influence over Richard Fuller and that all I needed to do was say, "Now Dick, I think this is what we should do," and Dick would do that. That wasn't true at all. He was absolutely in authority at all times. The only times I had any complete authority was if he was away and I could state what the museum would do about a specific thing. But otherwise, he was entirely in charge. He asked my opinion very frequently on things, and I'd give an opinion and he would do the opposite.

SUE ANN KENDALL: But it put you in somewhat a difficult position to ride the fence between the museum and your colleagues.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. I couldn't write and say, "This isn't my fault that we had this exhibition. This is Fuller's fault." So a certain amount of antagonism with a number of the artists developed.

Oh, one of the other accusations was that I lost the good will of the Seattle artists. It was one of the reasons for my being fired. And

SUE ANN KENDALL: And there were other people that you could mention that were there? Say artists or poets?

[Tape 1, side 2]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I can't remember. You see the only reason I know those two names is because they were in this radio transcript. So many people, artists, would be in there for a short length of time, so many months or a year, and then they'd go away and another one would be there. And, I haven't maintained any of the old friendships I had from those days. The people are either dead or gone or dispersed. Jack Finn is dead.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You started taking freighter trips and coming and going didn't you, at that time, so the friendships would be kind of fluid?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, I did work in the merchant marine-- trips to get places and see things. It was another one of those things, I was trying to find some part-time way of making a living so that I could have time to paint. But there was also the romantic motivation -- fascinating and getting to places and see what things are like in the world.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Where did you go in the late twenties?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I returned to Seattle in '28. I got back to Seattle then because I was working on a ship out of San Francisco to Australia, Sydney. And I got into a fight with another crew member-- I think it was about four to five days to Honolulu from San Francisco on this old freighter, old rust bucket. .. But anyway, we got into a fight and the skipper -- well, it was really the head steward, I think-- gave us a choice of going to jail in Honolulu and insisting on our wages from San Francisco, or else being just dumped there; we'd just leave the ship without our wages. If we insisted on our wages, we'd go to jail in Honolulu. Except neither of us wanted to go to jail, so we didn't. So, then I was there for a while and then I got a "work away" from there to Portland.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You came back up to Seattle from Portland?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. Playing cards with a crew I made some \$3 and something, so it was enough to get me back to Seattle from Portland because I didn't make any money as a work-away.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Right.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I understood that. It was the way things went in those days. You see, the steward signed me on from Honolulu to Seattle as a waiter because as a waiter I'd make more money for the trip. So he collected more money having me work-away as a waiter than if I'd worked as a mess boy. I didn't think about it at the time, but there were a lot of sailors who were professionals. That was their living and I was just chiseling on their living. The union-- the Sailors' Union of the Pacific -- which I belonged to then was absolutely of no meaning. As soon as you get a job on a ship, you're a member of the union.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Automatically?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. It costs a dollar or something. But it was strikebreaking as far as serious guys who were trying to make a living, with a wife and family and something.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did you draw while you were on these trips?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, all the time. One way I found out I could do, and it worked very well: First night aboard, we'd sit around playing cards and I wouldn't be playing. I'd just be sitting and watching them and keeping score. And I'd take my pencil and just make a sketch of one of these guys and as soon as they'd: "What in the hell is that you got there, Callahan?" I'd say that I was just making a drawing of him. And he'd look at it and: "Jesus, it looks just like me. Can I have that? I'll send it to my wife." Or "Send it to my girlfriend." Or something. So somebody else would ask me to do it. So then from then on, I could draw all I wanted to because I was a sailor that was drawing, not an artist. You know, that made a difference.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Made it okay.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I'd have to fight every guy in the crew to prove that I wasn't a sissy, under other circumstances. And I never would do such a thing as admit that I'd never been near a university. I mean that would be thumbs down. But that's the way I got back to Seattle.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was the influence of the sea-- do you sense that had any impact? Because that's a very early contact you had with the sea, and of course you've moved back to the ocean now.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I don't know. What interests me is interrelationship of man and nature in one sense -- the rhythm of the wind and the wind currents and the patterns in the sand and the rhythm in the waves and the bloodstreams in human beings and animals and everything. And, you know, the glaciers do move. Visually, they're stationary, you can't watch a glacier moving, but by God, you go away for a year and you can come back and see where the glacier has moved. So these rhythms underlie everything and part of the unifying thing of everything-- that moves in life -- it has to be the basic movement. I've always been interested in that and it's very apparent in the wind and in the sea. And in the sand on the shores and in the mountains and trees-- form of trees and animals.

[Interruption as KC mentions a person he sees from the window--Ed.]

SUE ANN KENDALL: Okay, you got back to Seattle and you had a show here in 1929?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, '28 or '29. It was probably the same year. [Some discussion with Beth, his wife--Ed.] Well, yes. It was shortly after that. Dave Hatch was the director of the Seattle Art Museum -- Art Institute of Seattle it was called at the time-- and he's the one that gave me a show.

When we were in New York early last month, I had one of my regular shows at the Kraushaar Gallery and Dave Hatch and his wife were at the opening.

[Beth: Had you met Margaret then?]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yes. Dave brought her up to the studio. She was an associate editor of the Town Crier, a weekly magazine in Seattle, and Dave brought her up to interview me when he picked out the show. Margaret was my first wife, who died in 1961. Yeah, obviously before Beth and I were married.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And so you met her and had a one-man show?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Then you settled here for a while?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, yes. No, I left here again. On, no, I got mixed up about this. I just thought of this now: I came back here to Seattle and then I didn't stay, only a couple of months or something, and then Earl Fields and I left and went to San Francisco and to Los Angeles. I don't know why, but we just did. Then we bummed our way-- hitchhiked; we use to call it bumming -- up to San Francisco, and that was when I shipped on the Malola to Honolulu. And then came back here and stayed on from that time. That was when I had this show. While I was living there, several years, I also made some trips.

Earl was something wonderful, kind of shy. We separated around Santa Barbara because we couldn't get any rides together. So I was sitting up on a bank-- the road came along and curved under a railroad bridge -- and I had some oranges and I was eating one. And down the road came this figure of Earl. He didn't see me. And he'd been so shy he could hardly put his hand up to get a ride when we separated. And as these cars would go by, he'd hold his hand out like this [gesture]: "Son of a bitch, son of a bitch." (laughs) Anyway, he came up there and he had a loaf of bread so we had a good meal of oranges and a loaf of bread.

SUE ANN KENDALL: But, then you sort of settled down and got married? And worked here?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. Along in that time the museum [Seattle Art Museum--Ed.] being built-- the money had been given -- and I wrote on art, about the museum being built and so forth, for Margaret. This Town Crier job of hers as associate editor-- well, she was actually the editor and did everything. She did all the reviews and everything and whatever she could get -- people donated for her. Well, I decided I'd write on art just to save her from having to do that, too. Fuller, who was president of the Art Institute-- the Seattle Art Museum, when the museum opened, he employed me as just a museum worker. It was a part-time job, half-time job. And then I gradually as time went on was given more responsibility and so on. But, it remained a half-time job. That was excellent for.. .

SUE ANN KENDALL: Money?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, making money.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Now you actually became a sort of curator?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, assistant director and then curator. But it was still half-time.

SUE ANN KENDALL: At the same time you were writing occasionally for the Town Crier. Did you use a pseudonym?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, I did at one time. I was writing for the Times, a regular Seattle Art Museum column by Kenneth Callahan. And then the Town Crier wanted me to write for them occasionally and rather than using the same name in the magazine, I used Larry Cross. My mother's maiden name was Cross and so I just used Larry Cross as the reviewer in the Town Crier so that the Seattle Times would have a reviewer and that the Town Crier would have a different reviewer. Because at that time, there was nobody else writing about art in Seattle and I thought it was better for art to have apparently two columns than just one.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was the writing for the Times originally part of your museum job?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, for several years. It was just called the Seattle Art Museum column, a weekly column, and it was part of my job at the museum.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So it was all about museum news then?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, only exhibitions at the museum. But very soon after that, why I don't know, anyway. When I was fired by the museum, I went to ask the Times managing editor if he'd be interested in an art column for pay, and he said he was. So I was paid \$35 a month for a weekly column.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That was after 1953 when you left the museum?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How long did you do that for the Times?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I did it for a number of years at the museum as part museum work and then I did it for another-- well, I wasn't doing it when I got the Guggenheim in '55, so it must have been before that. [Discussion with Beth--Ed.]

SUE ANN KENDALL: It seems like that was a lot for one person. You were painting and you were also working at the museum and writing?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, you see, it was just a half-time job at the museum and the writing was done in the morning as part of the museum work. So, I was completely free after.

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Oh, one of the other accusations was that I lost the good will of the Seattle artists. It was one of the reasons for my being fired. And

that was true too-- not all of them, but with some. Just at that time, the reference to a thing the Art News, a national art magazine, asked me to write an article about the artists of the Northwest, including Oregon. What they were doing for a living, and minimizing any reference to Mark [Tobey--Ed.] or Morris Graves, because those were artists I'd been really shoving in many articles. They were artists of important consequence, I thought. Well, I thought I was too, but I couldn't write about myself.

SUE ANN KENDALL: They asked you to minimize their role? Is that what you are saying?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, they said. ..

[Tape 2, side 1]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, the reference was that in writing this article I was not to stress Mark and Morris. He said that in his letter. He said that he wanted to know what the rest of the artists were doing now. Because I'd written quite a bit just about them. Not through friendship -- because I believed in their work. Simply that.

SUE ANN KENDALL: This is the article you did in 1946?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Somewhere around there.

SUE ANN KENDALL: In Art News?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. And so then I wrote this thing about the artists of the Northwest and I said that Morris Graves lived up in Deception Pass and has this place by this lake. And that's about all. So, anyway, they got sore and they got together and they wrote the editor of the magazine.. .

SUE ANN KENDALL: This is Morris and Mark?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: .. Morris and Mark and a few others, complaining about my position doing this writing. And I think that Fuller was probably influenced by those letters. Theirs appeared in the Art News.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What did they say in those?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, I don't remember just what they said. But they were in agreement that I should not have the job of curator of the Seattle Art Museum and I should not be the only art critic writing in Seattle. That was where I think Fuller got the idea I lost the good will of the Seattle artists.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Once again, you were in a difficult position through all of that.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, yeah, I mean it was not pleasant.

SUE ANN KENDALL: We've sort of skipped ahead with the museum. I wanted to go back to the early thirties and talk about a different aspect of your life in that you and Margaret went to Mexico. That was after Fuller had

purchased some paintings, is that correct?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. He bought a number of paintings of mine in 1930 and it amounted to a few hundred dollars. We probably had a couple hundred dollars in the bank. Anyway, living was cheap in Mexico at the time and so we were there for quite a number of months.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Can you talk about your experiences down there? I know you had some major influences on your art come from that trip.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. It was a very, very good one. We ran into Frances Tour, who was kind of the Gertrude Stein of Mexico City. She had a big apartment and she used to give parties and collect all the visiting artists, writers, dancers, etc. from the United States and elsewhere at her parties. At her house we met Tamayo and Maria, his friend, who was also a painter. They became very close friends of Margaret's and mine. We also met-- Mark Tobey was there. He came from Dartington Hall in England.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was this the first time you'd met him?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No. I'd met him just once for a moment in Seattle, some years before. Oh, Martha Graham and Louie Horst, her accompanist, were there.

SUE ANN KENDALL: This was all in Mexico City, where you were?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: eah, in Mexico City at Frances Tour's. And Oliver LaFarge, the guy that wrote Laughing Boy and so on, and Joseph and Elsa Hirsch -- he was a New York painter. And C. Glasgow-- the Whitney Museum had just opened then and he was the first curator. He was there with his wife, a dancer.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Can you talk more specifically about the Mexican muralists?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, my interest in Clemente Orozco's murals and Diego Rivera was one of my main reasons for wanting to go to Mexico at that time. See, Frances Tour did Mexican Folkways, a magazine she published and she founded, I think. She was the publisher and editor, and Diego Rivera was her art editor. But he was in New York at that time. Orozco just got down there briefly because he was doing the murals at Dartmouth-- or was it the School of Social Research in New York? Anyway, he was in New York then.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was it your seeing their work or spending time with them that was the most. ..?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, seeing their work was the whole thing. I know the time I spent with the artists would be just as friends, discussing and talking. But that was when Rivera was doing these things like the Agriculture College at Chapingo -- the murals in the church. It had been a church and in the aftermath of the Revolution religion was kind of thumbs down and he did these social conscious murals on the walls of this church there. They are beautiful. They're very strong and important to us as works of art. And then later he became-- just doing cheap portraits of Hollywood actors and actresses -- kind of nothing.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did you also meet Marsden Hartley?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. He was at this party at Frances Tour's. I met him there and a few other New Yorkers; I can't remember. Oh, [Romany Marie] was there. She was a lovely person. You know she had this tea room in the Village and she knew all the New York artists. She was a very impressive person and warm. She read your palm and so on.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did you have your palm read?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yeah. I mean in those days, it was kind of.. . Every once in a while, you'd encounter somebody like that at parties who'd be doing it.

But, it was a very interesting time in Mexico and we had a great deal of fun. As far as close relationships, it was Tamayo and Maria and Margaret and I were fooling around. We went various places like San Juan Teotihuacan and the floating gardens and the pyramids of the sun and so on, Puebla.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So after that trip, you came back to Seattle?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It was after that you started at the museum?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. I got the job right after that at the museum, about 1932. And then, during the years I worked at the museum as a half-time job, the job was this: That any time I made any money or sold and paintings and got any money, I would quit and go to Europe or wherever until we ran out of money. Then, I could

come back to work. I wasn't paid during the time away but I could always come back to the job as soon as we returned.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And know that you had a job?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: And know that I had a job. So that was wonderful, and due to Richard Fuller. And occasionally , I'd get murals to do or something during those years. Like at the Weyerhaeuser mill and some of the government things like the Centralia Post Office and.. . Oh, yeah, Rugby, North Dakota, and-- not Edmonds Post Office -- Port Townsend?

SUE ANN KENDALL: Anacortes?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, the Anacortes Post Office. You know, murals occasionally. That would give us a certain amount of money at one time and then we'd almost always go to Europe. But we did go to Central America and Cuba one time.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Now the influence from the Mexican muralists came into play, I assume, in those murals that you were doing in those years?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, I'm sure they did. I know they did in the Marine Hospital [now called Pacific Medical Center--Ed.] murals which are now-- this evening -- is it this evening? Yeah.

They are having an opening, kind of, with three or four of those murals from the Marine Hospital. For many years-- since 1943, I think, when I did them, '36 or something -- they were in the Marine Hospital on the walls for ten or fifteen years, maybe twenty years. And then they remodeled the hospital and tore them off the walls and they ended up in the basement of the Museum of History and Industry. And then the group from the King County Arts Commission came to see me and wanted me to look at these murals-- they had them -- and repair them if I could. So I did repair some three or four of them.

SUE ANN KENDALL: When was this?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: This was maybe ten years ago?

[Beth: It was when [John--Ed.] Spellman was County Executive.. .]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. So, they hung in the foyer of the King County Building for several years, and a few years ago, they did, for some reason or other, start using the foyer as a storage room. Then the King County [Arts--Ed.] Commission people-- Glen [Lawrence] who's a close friend of ours is one of the commissioners -- phoned me just recently and said that they understood that I had three others of these, which I have. Could they be repaired and did I know who owned them? Well, I didn't own them and I didn't know. But then, they were obtained by the county [arts--Ed.] commissioners from the Museum of History and Industry. And then we got a note from the Museum of History and Industry a week or so ago, inviting us to an opening. Where is that little note?

SUE ANN KENDALL: Where is that going to be?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It's in the Museum of History and Industry.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Tonight then?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. And we received this note. By reading, you'll see that apparently they do belong to the museum.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And they're putting them on display?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: And they loaned them to the King County thing. So they're permanently installed now. But I have still three of them, that are badly damaged, in my possession, and now that I know that they have them, I'll get in touch with them and if they want them.. .

SUE ANN KENDALL: You're thinking that you may then repair them?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: When we received this [the invitation--Ed.] we knew who owned them. See, the government owns everything, like the Marine Hospital _____, the Treasury Department. But apparently, they gave them to the Museum of History and Industry. We hadn't known previously.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So most murals you did were through the WPA or through that project?

KENNETH CALLAHAN Not the WPA but through-- one percent of federal funds in post offices that were to be built around the country. And, that would go to some artist in a national competition and then that artist would be

asked to employ as many assistants as he could use or she could use from the relief rolls-- the WPA rolls. So there were two men from the WPA -- a very good friend of mine, a Yute Indian-- [Tuvenatche]. He was one that I had as an assistant, and then another man. I can't remember his name, but this man had seven children and he certainly needed the job. But, anyway, he was a very nice fellow.

Oh, I could never really use, adequately, anybody as an assistant in an actual painting. But they helped me with the installation and with various things and they did make drawings and things around the waterfront and so on. It was a very good thing that they could make a living like this and that was one way of theirs to be employed.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And the Marine Hospital murals -- that's the Logging in the Northwest mural? Is that right?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, the Marine Hospital's is of ships and merchant marine. They're all based on freight, shipping-- sea. Engine room and deck stuff, and lifeboat drills.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Right, I've seen those.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: That's the ones we're talking about here.

SUE ANN KENDALL: They are now owned by the Museum of History and Industry.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, and this opening tonight. It'll be those same things that were in the foyer.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Now what about the mural Logging in the Northwest?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Most of it is destroyed. That was done for myself. They were not commissioned by anyone. They're 12 feet high and some 75feet long and they're on panels of four by twelve and. ..

[Beth: Didn't Mr. Hauberg take one?]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Ah, no.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Most of them are destroyed, you say?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. I had them and they were shown in Tacoma at the Lumberman's Association and in the Seattle Art Museum. And then Fuller bought them. I think he paid \$2,000 for the works. Then they were cumbersome and took up a lot of space so he gave them back to me. He decided he didn't want them any more. So I had them. And then I used them as the inside of the ceiling of my studio up in the mountains at Granite Falls. Covered the whole interior of the thing with these murals, cutting them up and packing them up there. Then the place burned down.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Granite Falls studio?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes. The one that you're speaking of that John Hauberg had-- Along in 1934, or maybe earlier than that, I did two panels, four by eight feet, and they stuck them together and made one painting of -- I just call it kind of a conflict. There's masses of figures all interwoven. They're all gray and red-brown. And that painting John Hauberg has.

SUE ANN KENDALL: He still has that one?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. The only thing left of that logging mural that I can remember is that I have that one panel in storage in the studio at Long Beach, of two hands on a saw handle.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That's all that's left of that mural?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. [Discussion with Beth as to what the mural was painted on--Ed.] Yeah, it was on masonite. You see there's a hard masonite and a softer masonite. [This was softer.]

SUE ANN KENDALL: Now could we talk a little bit about the late thirties? That was, I assume, the beginning of your association with Tobey and Graves and Anderson and others here. I know you established a studio up in Granite Falls at that time.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, when my son was born, when Margaret was in the hospital with him, Morris and I drove around.. .

SUE ANN KENDALL: What year was that?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It was '39. We drove around looking for a place. He wanted a place, isolated, and so did I, but in both cases, it had to be something that was very cheap because neither of us had money. One of the

places we went to was Index and we also went up the valley of the Stillaguamish and liked that very much. That's when we also went around Deception Pass and that's when Morris found this place at Lake [Campbell], right near the pass, and he built that house and studio. Very elegant place. When we were up around Index, it was Morris Graves and Margaret and I. Margaret herself had her stomach out to here [gestures]. We had--boosting her over these big rocks and things when we were looking around these places. So that's when that was. But, then I ran into a guy, Forest Service fellow with a backpack, up near Monte Cristo. We were hiking around there, fooling around. He was living at Robe Ranch and I asked him if there were any places around there. He said there were a number of cabins at Robe Ranch where he and his wife and kids had this old ranch house. There were some cabins around there for pulpwood cutters and he said you could rent one of those for very little. So I went up there and that's when we got the place at Robe Ranch. Wirt Robe was living there, the old man who originally homesteaded it. He charged us \$25 a year for our cabin. He had very little other money and so we hustled around. Mark Tobey we here and we got him interested and he rented a house, one of the shacks on the top of the hill, and paid us \$25. And then Guy Anderson rented another and paid \$25. So collectively that gave Wirt, in those days, enough money with his old-age security, whatever in the hell he got, enough to live on. So that's how that thing started. But the thing in La Conner was that before Morris found this place at Deception Pass, around that same time, he rented a house in La Conner. And he was living there.

SUE ANN KENDALL: In close proximity?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh no, you see, the Stillaguamish is way away from Deception Pass. Yeah, we'd see Morris all the time. He'd come to town and we have him in our house for dinner and we used to get together quite a lot then. I introduced him to Mark Tobey through our house. We used to get together during the war here [KC added later: Mark, Morris and myself] and try and make out symbols of war that were new, not clichés.

CALLAHAN

TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH KENNETH CALLAHAN

AT THE CALLAHAN'S HOME IN SEATTLE

DATE: NOVEMBER 21, 1982

INTERVIEWER: SUE ANN KENDALL

KENNETH CALLAHAN: KENNETH CALLAHAN

SUE ANN KENDALL: SUE ANN KENDALL

[Tape 3; Side 1]

SUE ANN KENDALL: I guess we can pick up where we left off last time. I wanted to ask you about the four of you-- I guess the "Big Four." The groups, the little meetings you had in the evenings, often at your home.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Could you talk about that a little bit?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, yes, this is one of the things that was very good about this. .. One of the reasons, I must say, that we met so often at my house was that I was the only one married. And, Margaret, my wife, she liked cooking, entertaining. So it was a logical place for us to assemble. Not because I was the motivating thing in the group.

One of the things we did -- this was during the war. I don't know whether the United States was in it at the time or not. But, anyway, we would try to work on the idea of doing paintings or drawings that created a symbol for world warfare that was not a cliché. I don't think any of us came up with one. Once a week we'd meet at our house and look at these things and discuss them. I don't think we ever resolved any real symbols of consequence as far as symbols of the world at war, but it was a very good learning process because painting, for my point of view, is realizing symbols that are presently created by yourself that will have meanings for other people. That's the whole thing that is in back of painting: creation of symbols. And so, I think we learned a lot by trying to create symbols for specific subjects. Anyway, that didn't go on forever.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How long did you do that? You said it was like once a week?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, some months. We met over a period of two or three years but how often, I don't know. Another thing we did was-- George Mantor, one of our friends who used to come there, was not a painter. But he had a great record collection. So we had a Mahler cycle, and every week he'd bring another symphony or music written by Mahler. So we went through everything that Mahler had ever written and we also did the thing with Beethoven and various other composers-- Bach -- that we were interested. So these conversations and these evenings were not solely upon art.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did you relate the works of Mahler to the concerns that you were dealing with as painters?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, Mahler was, you might say, for pure enjoyment. I was much less informed about Mahler before than I was when I finished. George Mantor was very highly informed about Mahler. And then Bill Cumming used to come there occasionally, and he had quite a lot of knowledge of music.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So, it was not just the four of you. There were others who came?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, there were others. It was a group of us, say eight or so.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Who else?

KENNETH CALLAHAN Well, I can't think of-- oh, there was James Stevens, who wrote Brawny Man and Harold Davis, Homer in the Sagebrush. Oh, and Archie Binns, who was also a writer. He wrote -- I don't remember-- anyway, he was a published novelist.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Were they brainstorming sessions or was it mostly social?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Social, and we discussed what happened to interest us. But frequently it would be dealing with art and other things. Our ideas at that time of having a good time -- it wasn't just to get drunk and have fun. We were interested in each other and each other's ideas. We'd have wine and so on with us but really the interest was in getting at ideas and expressing ideas.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What kind of ideas are you speaking of?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I don't remember. It was dealing with philosophy, dealing with painting, [things about American paintings]. And the theater. Glen Hughes was director the of [Glen Hughes Playhouse--Ed.]. Nellie Cornish we used to see occasionally. Some of the repertory theater people I can't think of now. You see, this was a loose group of friends and the only thing that joined us as a group positively was the artists, in as far as art was concerned. Otherwise, it was just people that we knew as friends and we might run into. [Johnsrud] was an actor then and he came around.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Where were you living at the time?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, this was mostly up on 17th in Capitol Hill and then before that over on 23rd. Oh, Thomas Wolfe was there, if he happened to be in town. Then later, he died [here], you know. He had this attack. That was not Tom Wolfe, that was Thomas Wolfe.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Can you talk a little about Margaret's role? Because I've often heard said that she was sort of the intellectual who generated a lot of discussion at these meetings?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, Bill Cumming said in an interview he had somewhere that she was really the leader and focus of the group, and I think she was. Everybody liked her. These were all friends of hers as well as mine. See, these were not art friends of mine and not hers.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So she was interested in the intellectual discussions about art as well?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, she was very interested. She was a very brilliant person and all of these people, I think, felt very warmly towards her as a person. They liked her as well as respected her.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What was her background?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: She graduated from the university in literature and she was associate editor of the Town Crier for several years. She worked as a feature writer for the Seattle Star, one of the three newspapers in town. And then she wrote a section of a book that [Peaty] published on the Northwest-- the mountains, and character of the people.

You know, to say it was an art group would not be so. When we would discuss, especially Mark and Morris we would be discussing some of these things on art. The other people might be on another side of the room discussing something totally different. And, they didn't listen in and put in their oar; there would be separate conversations.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did you actually critique each other's work at the time?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: The only time we did was in the instance of these ideas for symbols of world at war. But what I always did and always have done, which is one of the greatest learning processes that any painter or artist has, is artists, friends, criticizing each other's work. I'm a self-taught artist. Well, that doesn't mean a damn thing because I studied these painters in Europe and various parts of the world that I was interested in. So I've got a lot from studying them. And then all these friends I've had, the artists, they criticized my work and I

criticized their work. That's a learning process that is very valuable to an artist and I think almost all artists do that. That is so much more important and it goes on all your life. It's not a course, it's.. .

SUE ANN KENDALL: An ongoing process?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, it's not an art school.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Is that where a lot of the ideas of dealing with the transcendental came into your work, in the course of those discussions? That's a theme that runs through a lot of your work.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh sure, because you see the other thing is that we shared an interest in Oriental art. And Mark was a Bahai and Morris was a Zen Buddhist and before that a Father Divine disciple. I've never been specifically religious on any particular thing, but very interested in the religion of what we discussed-- all these ideas about Oriental religions and philosophy as well as the art of the Orient. We were all mutually interested in the art of the Orient.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Were you reading a lot about Oriental philosophy? Or were you looking mostly at Oriental artworks?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: During that period, I was working at the museum at this part-time job. And the principal collection of the museum was Chinese and Japanese art. So really, during the time we were living there in Seattle, the only source, practically, for seeing first-class painting was the Oriental paintings. During those years, most of us artists, especially Mark, Morris and myself, had traveled a lot in other parts of the country and in Europe and so forth. So we were seeing a lot of things. You can't say our total background for study was the Seattle Art Museum. That's not true. But that was the best art you could see locally. You could see other great art, but there was nothing locally from the School of Paris at that time that was of much consequence, and certainly not renaissance or masters and so on. There was very little that was really first class.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What was the group's relationship to people like Isaacs, who was at the university, who did bring a different type of influence?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, we all knew Isaacs, and Ambrose Patterson would frequently come to our house and we'd go to theirs. I'd forgotten to mention them as some of people at the parties. Definitely Ambrose and Viola [Patterson's wife--Ed.] and also Margaret and Peter [Camferman]-- we'd see them whenever they'd come in from Whidbey Island. In those days, movement from a place like Whidbey Island to Seattle was much more difficult than in recent years.

We all knew Isaacs, and Isaacs studied with Andre l'Hote in Paris. And Ambrose also studied with l'Hote to some extent. Isaacs was an exponent of l'Hote's philosophy and most of the rest of us did not think very much of l'Hote. _____ . How much we might think of Turner, of Picasso and Renoir and Degas, Bracque and so on.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So your orientation was very different than someone like Isaacs. Let me ask you something else that maybe came up before these leanings of the early forties. What was the Cherry Street Group all about?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, that was earlier. I came back from Hawaii and found this empty house down there on Cherry Street. It was just off Broadway and I could get it for a small amount, maybe \$15 a month. I got that place because I wanted to have life classes. There was no return money involved for having life classes but I wanted a model to study. And by having a place, a house like that, there was room to have a model and I could get these different artists to each put in a nickel or dime every time to pay for the model. I didn't do any teaching or anything. All I wanted was to get the models. At that time, they got a dollar an hour.

SUE ANN KENDALL: When was this?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: This was in the twenties. It would be '28 and '29.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So that was the Cherry Street Group?

KENNETH CALLAHAN Yes. People used to come there-- Jim Stevens, I imagine; Dick [Wetchen, Wetzen], he was also a writer for the Saturday Evening Post; and Harold Davis, among the writers. Archie Burns, a writer. And then, [Johnsrud]; he was an actor. The Jameses, Burton and Mrs. James.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Who were some of the other artists that came?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: There was Barney Nestor, Earl Fields and Ambrose Patterson.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did Tobey come at all?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: He wasn't here. You see, between 1928 and '38, he was at Dartington Hall in England. I

didn't know him at that time.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So that was a different group from this other group who started meeting in your home later.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It was a totally different group. You see, in the meantime, I left Seattle again. So that ended that group. Oh, Terry and Berta Pettus were there. He was a writer, a newspaperman.

Well, this house was a good size and I was renting. But there were a lot of extra rooms and Terry and Berta were a couple and he was out of a job or something. So, I invited them to come and use one of these rooms and they did. Barney Nestor was also a painter. He was out of a job so I gave him a room and also Earl Fields. So, those people living there, together with the people who would come there, constituted what was called the Cherry Street Group. But what got into the newspapers and such. .. I don't know whether I told you, Beth, but apparently the police knew about this, but they knew it was all right. Oh, I had ____ a studio, it was on this hill, down over there a ways. I moved out of there one night because I don't think I could pay the rent or something. Anyway, Terry and Berta and Earl Fields (and there was somebody else I can't think of) came and they carried all this stuff -- these beds and everything-- through the streets around midnight. Carrying them up to this new Cherry Street place. And the police stopped us. They wanted to know what we were doing and our names. I said, "I'm Kenneth Callahan." And I gave the others' names too. He said, "Oh hell, go ahead." He left me alone. So they knew we were living there but we weren't doing anything that was bad.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was it because of zoning laws?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, they just thought you were stealing furniture or something like that.

The only thing we did which was not very desirable was that it was a very cold winter and we had a fireplace. The front door was right here and the fireplace was right across there. We didn't [have--Ed.] money for fuel so we picked up some big, long, kind of timbers alongside the street. And one of them had to be brought in through the front door and put into the fireplace. Well, the other end of it stuck out so the door wouldn't close. So we had to get a lot of old blankets to put around it and as it burned, we would move it in. We also did that to the back porch of the house. We finally used it up as fuel.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Had to keep warm somehow.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I hadn't thought about that for years. But that was all over and done with except later, when I came back, these same people were still friends of mine. Some of them, like Harold Davis-- he got the Pulitzer Prize and one other prize for his novel, Honey in the Horn -- he and his wife, Marian, weren't here any more. They moved away and we met again in Mexico in 1930 with Oliver LaFarge. I didn't see so much of Jim Stevens and Theresa any more, and [Wetchen, Wetzen] moved to Portland.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You were seeing other people more often?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Can you talk about any of the specific influences that went back and forth in terms of your work, say between you and Tobey or between you and Graves or Anderson, during that time period?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I can't think of anything except we used to just discuss art and we were quite a bit in agreement. But nothing about the philosophy of Father Divine, as far as Morris was concerned, or Zen Buddhism, nor Mark Tobey with Bahai and also with Buddhism. I was not in opposition to any of those ideas. These ideas were very valuable to them and Margaret agreed to that as well. So we all agreed to these ideas. But I was not somebody who was satisfied with Zen Buddhism by itself. So often, subjects in relation to that, and art, came into discussions.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was it at this time you started using symbols in your work, so to speak, that you were really satisfied with?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, yes, I always have. But, to say satisfied with, that's the one thing-- you are never satisfied. You always feel that if I can just work a little more on this, I can get much better. It's the one thing, I think, that keeps all artists going. They always feel that if they do a little more, this whole thing will come out very impressively. That's one of the reasons why, whenever I receive any particular acclaim for something in painting, for a very important exhibition, I try and avoid thinking about it because I don't want it to influence me so I'll try to do another one like it. I want always to do something that has a greater meaning.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Always going further.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I don't try and make it different. I try and make it more. More, that's right. Not to try and make it a different kind of art, but try to make what I'm doing more, which will make it look somewhat

differently and hold greater meaning still.

SUE ANN KENDALL: When did your groups that met in your home sort of stop coming together?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, along about 1955, that's when I got the Guggenheim, I think. Mark Tobey, one day -- we weren't seeing him that often; were seldom seeing Morris for some reason, no specific thing-- Mark said, "You know, Ken, this is not very good now. We are commencing to live on our publicity." He meant he, Morris and myself. We were the only ones, as it happened, that were getting what you call national publicity of any consequence. And he was conscious of the fact that he was taking this national publicity too importantly, and that I was and Morris was. And some jealousy was built up because of who got the better statements.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Among you three?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, among the three of us in reference to the national publicity. Because none of us, as far as... . With national publicity at that time, I was still the only art critic.

By the way, one of the things that I wrote down [for this interview--Ed].. . Occasionally, I've heard references that I was ambitious as a museum person, and as an art critic and so on, that I wanted to be everything. Well, never once in my entire life have I ever had any ambition to be anything except an artist. I respect very much the art critic and the field of art criticism and the field of museum workers-- the curator, assistant director. But never have I ever wanted or have any feeling of wanting a career.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That wasn't your bag?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: That wasn't my bag. And you know what used to happen, every once in a while I'd be somewhere else, in New York or something, and meet somebody I hadn't seen for several years. And they would say, "Oh, Ken, it's good to see you and what are you doing these days?" And I'd immediately think of what I was painting and I'd start in about the painting and I'd see their face fall, you know. "Well, you must be selling a lot of work. You look very prosperous." And I'd say, "No, I seldom sell anything." They'd say, "How are you getting by?" "Oh," I said, "I'm working part time as a curator of the Seattle Art Museum." "Wonderful, marvelous!" You know, that was a great thing. Or, I'd say, "As an art critic." "Wonderful!" And that is really what people think. They think that an art critic, that job of curator, assistant director, is a hell of a lot more important than the name artist. I'm not blaming anybody special; I just mean I think that's true. I was very conscious of that.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You felt they were laying this trip on you? Of wanting you to be a museum person or art critic rather than an artist?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, they thought one and one makes two, you see. If I have a job as a curator or assistant director, it would only mean that I'd worked like hell to get that job, or art critic, the same.

Well, I think one of the reasons this did happen is that I always felt, since I was quite young, if I got interested in whatever I was doing-- if I was busboy or what -- that the time went much faster. And as soon as I was through with this part-time job as a busboy, I was free.

1
[Tape 3, side 2]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: The thing is that if you let yourself get interested in whatever you're doing, you're going to do a better job. You're going to work at it as hard as you can. And the time goes much faster and you're free then.

Well, I did become head busboy based on that kind of thing, and I became a curator and assistant director and an art critic based on the same thing. Only because as long as I had to do this, as quickly as I could get through with it, I could drop it. I did a good job; my conscience was clear.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You were free to go on to what you really wanted to do.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: .. .to do what I really wanted to do. I think that everybody knows that.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You had some things you wanted to say.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I read in an Australian art magazine that I had graduated from the University of Washington and that, at the writing of this article, I was teaching at the University of Washington. Well, actually, I've taught at the University of Southern California and Syracuse and Penn State and Boston University, but never at the University of Washington. And I was only at the University of Washington for two months.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So you wondered where they got that information?

KENNETH CALLAHAN The thing is that I'd mentioned earlier-- it couldn't hurt me at all if it were true that I graduated and was teaching there, because at that time every artist had to make a living somewhere, teaching or doing something. But it just wasn't true and that's why. ..

SUE ANN KENDALL: You'd like to set the record straight?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes. Another thing was that I read that I'd been a student of Mark Tobey. Well, that's not true. We were friends and associates. Also, I read that I was a student of Eustace Ziegler. He was an early painter here and he was a wonderful person. When I was a senior in high school, I got a third prize in black and white in the Northwest Annual _____. Well, I was very blown up about that because even adults were in this show. That's when I was working at the Chanticleer Cafeteria half time and he would eat his lunch there. I'd mentioned that I was interested in making etchings, and he said he had an etching press in his studio in the White Building. And I could come there and use it anytime I wanted. I'd make the etchings and go up there and use the press. So that was probably the idea that.. I was a student of his.

SUE ANN KENDALL: When was that?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It was about 1924. Oh, if I had been a student, it wouldn't hurt me any. But, it just wasn't true.

Another thing was, I read in a book that I was the adopted or near adopted son of Mr. and Mrs. Horton Force. Well, Horton Force was the secretary of the board of the Seattle Art Museum. What was true was that my young brother, Bill, was about seven or eight and living with us (my wife and myself), and we got some money-- through painting -- to go to Mexico. We were looking for somebody where Bill could stay that wouldn't cost too much while we were in Mexico. We had very little money. Mrs. Force heard about that and invited him out there because they had a daughter, Frances, just his age, and they thought he'd be a companion for her. Well, it worked out that way and he spent many years living with them and it was a very nice environment. I hardly knew Mr. and Mrs. Horton Force. I've only been in their house up to the date twice in my life. But this was shifted around to where I was the adopted son.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Somebody had gotten the facts mixed up.. .

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes. Bill wasn't adopted; he was just a visitor, a guest. And you see, again I say: it wouldn't have hurt anything if I was the adopted son of the Forces. But, it wasn't so.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I think it's a good idea for you to clarify these things that have been written that aren't true.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Something else I read somewhere was that I, in the early thirties, was so interested in the work of Mark Rothko that I went to New Mexico and studied with him. Well, actually at that time, Mark Rothko was about a year or so younger than I am and he was living in Portland. And, I didn't know him. But it was true that it was Clemente Orozco, not Mark Rothko. And it wasn't New Mexico; it was old Mexico. I was down there for six months and never studied with Orozco, but I gained a lot from seeing his works, his murals, and also Rivera's Chapingo and Secretario murals. We had a wonderful time for about five or six months there.

SUE ANN KENDALL: We spoke about that last time, your trip there. So, it certainly wasn't Mark Rothko.

Back to sort of the breakup of the group, or the four of you in particular. You mentioned that there were jealousies among you, sometimes in regard to who was getting the most publicity nationally and so on. Can you elaborate more on that?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I don't know whether it has a bearing or not. I mentioned this thing of Mark saying to us that we were all living too much in our publicity. That's the only thing.

The things that separated us was that I got a Guggenheim in 1955 or '54.

Anyway, in 1936 my family and I went to Europe and we were there for a number of months. And Morris, somewhere around in 1938, went to Puerto Rico and the West Indies for a time. And at that time Mark was not in Seattle. And then he came in 1938. These evenings were going on with people other than Mark before 1938. So those were some of the things. ..

Oh, yes, one of the things that kind of separated us was that we'd found this place at Robe Ranch. The main ranch house was what we occupied. Then, there were these other cabins scattered on different sides of the mountains. And we got Guy Anderson to rent one, we got Mark Tobey to rent another, so that Wirt Robe would have a little more income. Mark couldn't stand it up there in his cabin alone. He just stayed one night. He was up on the hill and Mark was not a woodsman type by any means. And by himself up there-- you can't blame him. If you live essentially in cities and then suddenly -- he was about half a mile from our house up on the hill in this

cabin all by himself. There were lots of bears around there. There's no question about that. And coyotes and voracious things, you know. So, we didn't blame him about that; it just happened.

But there were all kinds of things that interfered. And then we'd be going somewhere. Our lives were being disrupted by individual activities. And in 1934, Margaret and I went to New York for a time and then we went to Havana, Cuba, and then to Panama for a couple of months or so. And then we stopped at several places in Central America. San Juan del Sur in Costa Rica, and Corinto, Nicaragua, and _____. I've forgotten. Anyway, quite a number of Central American countries.

You see that head [over there]-- that's from the [Cochi] _____ Indians of Costa Rica.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That you got on that trip?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. The other figures [over there] also from the same Indians. These are early things that they dug up, 14th or 15th century. At that time, nobody was interested in any primitive art produced by Central American Indians or the Mexican Indians. "That's just funny old antiques," was the attitude.

So, we paid \$7.00 for the figure and I think it was \$8.00 for this head. And they're stone. They're not a superficial effort.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What eventually happened with the friendships? Let's say with Tobey, for instance? Did you remain friends until he died?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, no. There was a definite break when I was writing the art column for the Times as part of my job at the museum. And then, when I was fired by the museum, I needed some income after the birth of my son. So I got a job at the Times doing the same column I'd been doing for several years for the museum, once a week. And then Art News, a national art magazine, wrote me and asked me if I would write a piece. I'd been writing quite a lot of things-- trying to build up the reputation of Morris and Mark. Those were essentially the only two artists that I was really praising because they were the only two I felt worth national attention, including myself. But, I couldn't write about myself. Anyway. ..

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was that the incident when the publisher wrote and asked you not to talk about them?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yeah. He asked me to write a thing on the artists in the Northwest, including Oregon. On the various artists, including architecture, painting, sculpture, and so forth. And he said not to devote a lot of attention to Mark and Morris because everybody already knows about them.

One of the things that resulted in me getting out of the museum field was that the Art News came out and on the page listing the contents of that month's magazine -- I think it was a monthly magazine-- it said something about "Northwest Artists, by Kenneth Callahan, distinguished curator of the Seattle Art Museum, art critic and painter." And it sounded like -- of all the Goddamned amateur superficial people, how in the hell could this schmuck, this dilettante "museum curator, art critic and painter." How serious could anybody be? When I read that thing I thought, well, Jesus, I'm going to get out of this soon. Because I had no idea there was such an idea prevalent. You know this job at the museum was wonderful because I didn't have to go to museum meetings. I didn't have to pay any attention to what the board wanted me to do, not socially or anything else. And I didn't have to go to previews and I didn't have to do any lecturing. Once I did my half-time job, I was through. I was free.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So that was the definitive break with Tobey?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, yeah. This article came out with just so many words about Tobey and so many words about Graves. And they both got mad and they got together with a few other people _____ and they wrote the editor saying that I was psychologically not fitted to write this kind of criticism.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did that letter appear in the magazine?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yes. The editor read that letter and then wrote to me and asked me if I wanted to write a reply. He said that he would publish both. So I did write a reply.

Well, I won't say how Morris Graves reacted to this but we ran into Mark on the street, Margaret and I, a couple months after this-- by that time, I had already been fired by the museum -- and Mark said, "You know sometimes when you get mad, sometimes you say things and you write things that you're sorry you did." He said, "I'm sorry I wrote that."

SUE ANN KENDALL: It was already done by then.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: So, things never really became the same with Mark and Morris. We used to say hello when

we'd meet each other. When I had an exhibition at the museum of the Emily Winthrop Miles Collection-- a New York woman who collected my work over a period of 25 years (her father was Winthrop who gave the enormous library collection to the Met and to the Boston Museum). Anyway, that show was held at the museum and Mark and Pehr [Hallsten--Ed.] came. We were casually friends and I appreciated his coming.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What show was that?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: In 1965 on the death of Emily Winthrop Miles.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So, he did come to your opening?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, he came to the Seattle opening of this when they had this collection at the museum. The show in its entirety was on the national circuit. It was perfectly ridiculous to call it a retrospective exhibition. Mrs. Miles bought these over a period of 25 years but she had certain tastes. She wasn't just buying anything I did. It was certain kinds of work that she was interested in. I think it was very good; I approved of it entirely. It was a beautiful collection. But it wasn't a complete collection. Right in this room, you'd find things of mine that are in greater contrast.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Than she would have picked out?

So was that also sort of the severing of your relationship with Morris as well?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Morris also wrote a letter to the Art News and there were two or three people. _____

SUE ANN KENDALL: Let me ask you about your friendship with Guy Anderson as well. That also was severed at some point wasn't it?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, it was kind of severed. But it was never a close friendship. It was a casual friendship. There was never any particular reason except that he was one of those people who went along with this Art News thing. Although I don't think he personally wrote; he may have.

SUE ANN KENDALL: His sentiments were with theirs?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Definitely. And so that, as far as I'm concerned, is the main basis of the divergence.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So that one article did a lot, didn't it? All of which wasn't positive, for you at least.

Also, there was another series of events that affected your work, I believe, in the early forties. Was that the summers you spent up in the mountains on watch?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yeah, I worked at Forest Service. During the war, having a child and my age was such that there would be just a matter of so many months before I'd be turned down by the draft. So, the district ranger from the U.S. Forest Service in Darrington wanted me to work for him and that's what I did. I worked at that for a couple of years-- the last years of the war -- living by myself up in the mountains. At that time, you see, the Forest Service only had high school kids and old winos to work in the woods. So, as an adult with average intelligence, say, I was getting much more responsibility than I would ordinarily have been given. Simply because they couldn't trust the old winos, and the young high school kids didn't have the experience. It was an interesting time for me, but I was alone up there a good deal. There's a kerosene lamp that has a magnificent light-- it's almost as good a light as any electric light I can think of -- and I had one up there in the lookout and also in the guard station when I was there by myself. I had to do a certain amount of working around, patrolling areas, something like 25 square miles. The mountains are more than that. But, anyway, keeping the trails up and watching for fires and some of the time I'd just spend on lookout. On these lookouts that are exposed, in the lightning storm, why I'd put the stool on dinner plates -- one leg on each. And you sit there on that with the fire finder in the middle there, so that if lightning struck, it wouldn't hit you. You'd be grounded by the dinner plates you were sitting on. And you'd locate where the lightning strike was and make a notation of that using the fire finder. And then the next morning look to see if there was any smoke in that area. If there was, then you'd have to go out there and find your way to where it was and put it out or else call a crew from outside.

Anyway, I had a lot of time to paint and think. The mountains were beautiful-- the mist falling all through them and the light and the animals -- the whole thing. I was extremely fortunate that I didn't get mental over the isolation. I liked being there. I could stand being there for a couple of weeks without seeing anybody.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That's a long time.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. Some people can't stand it. And if you can or you can't, it's not to your credit. It's

like catching a cold. You catch cold or you don't catch cold. That's what it amounts to. I was fortunate in that it didn't bother me. So I could really think about my own thoughts and think about my painting. That's when I did an awful lot of painting-- evenings and times when I was free to, either as a lookout in the guard station or somewhere out there. What they used to do -- we had a cache by a little creek, a spring, we knew by a certain place by the road. And, the Forest Service from Darrington would once a week by phone-- we had a fireman's phone line -- would bring in my groceries and put them there, with big rocks over this little cavern down by the springs, so the bears couldn't get at the food before I did. I would go down there once a week and get it. So, sometimes for a couple of weeks, I wouldn't see anybody. And evenings a lot of times, and daytime when I had time, I was painting and drawing and working out these things of art which interested me. I learned a great deal and I think I produced certain things. I had that feeling that you want to make a statement that is yours and yours alone and that it's meaningful to other people. That it's not just a private language that only you can respond to but believe that other people can conceivably respond to. You can't modify it so they

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will. If it's any good at all it has to be what you feel. And then you hope it will have meaning for others. Anyway, being isolated up there for long periods of time, I was able to develop, to a degree, a style, an approach. My painting still to this day, in some sense, relates to what I was doing at that time. Those things-- some 30 years old-- kind of suggest it, perhaps.

SUE ANN KENDALL: The influences from those long days spent there -- you still feel they come through in your work.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, long days and long nights. I was so lucky because there are people-- the loggers accustomed to working in the woods all their lives. You put one of those in a lookout and next day they're down and they say, "I'll never go back to that goddamned place again for anything!" They just can't stand it. And if you can't stand it, it has nothing to do with courage or any of those terms -- complimentary terms as far as humans go.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I wanted to ask you, too, about a word that has been used so much in describing your work and Morris and Mark's and so on. And, of course, that word is mysticism. I'm curious to know how you feel about that word in relationship to your work and where it came from? For instance your article in Art News did use the word-- I think the expression was "a mystic essence." I wondered if you'd like to elaborate on that?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, in 1946 I had a very successful show in New York. Quite a number of museums bought paintings. There's favorable reviews in all the magazines and newspapers, and even New Yorker and so on.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Now which show was that?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It was my one-man show at the American British Center. I was having dinner with Francis Taylor [and his wife Pamela--KC], who then was director at the Metropolitan Museum, at his apartment. All these articles I'd read called me a "mystic" and I was objecting to that to Francis, because at that time I felt a connotation of reading cards and reading palms with the word mystic.

[Tape 4; side 1]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: And he said, "Ken, you go back to Seattle and you try and think like a mystic and act like a mystic and paint like a mystic." He said, "Then's when you have to worry." He said, "Remember, in America everyone but the pigeons have a pigeon hole." It really made a lot of sense to me. Because from the sense of a side of human beings that is not explicable in terms of degrees of paint and degrees of sustenance and so forth, there is a thing that is basically completely mystical about life itself. So it has never bothered me since then because, again, it seems to me that as soon as you start to think about anything.. . Well, the way my art worked out. You see, at first, I was interested in what I saw. And very early what I saw was working men-- on the docks or fishermen and people. So that interested me. Then a little later I got more interested in not just the person in reference to what he was doing, the fish worker, as this Fulton Street guy is [a painting from 1925--Ed.], but he was more important as a human being in relation to other human beings than he was as a fish merchant. And then, he was more important to his total environment as a human being than as a fisherman. And then it moved on and became a relationship between people and the earth, and people and people. This interrelationship of man and nature, which is completely interwoven. The more you think about it, the more you realize that is so. So it's a natural outgrowth of that, what I'm doing now, because I'm still interested in this man, and I'm a man. The relationship of all these forces and things, in the wind. In recent years, the rhythms of the earth and the winds and all these different kinds of currents has interested me more and more. Because the same kind of rhythm prevails in your bloodstream or in animals or in the muscles of an animal and of a man. And with the wind, you see the currents and the waves in the water-- you see these currents in the wind and the movement is exactly the same movement as you see in the sand and in the trees on the side of the mountain and rhythm of

the clouds with the mountains and the rocks. And all these are alike, at the same time with infinite variations. They are totally unlike in one sense but basically they are alike. So that's the mystic element, in that you can't put your finger on it specifically and say this has it and this hasn't.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Right, there's no separation.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, no separation. And yet, if you try and find the likenesses in sand, the movement of the waves in sand, and try and specify that this is a very special one, you can't, because immediately others you see are formed. In glaciers, that same movement is there; the glacier doesn't move visually when you look at it, like a gravel going down a bank. But you go away for a year and come back, and you see where the movement has been. The fact that as you look you can't see it, that doesn't mean it isn't so. That movement is going on.

So these things interested me and still interest me. Human beings and animals, and so on. But I'm no longer interested in describing what they are doing because I think that you, as a human being sitting there, are infinitely more important as a human being than you are as a person sitting there and writing something and I'm talking.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It sort of goes beyond that?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: If it's anything, it goes beyond that.

SUE ANN KENDALL: The word mysticism, I think, often implies, at least when it was applied to your earlier work, to an interest in the transcendental. Martha Kingsbury speaks of this in her book, in the romantic interest in, let's say, the cosmic. Do you feel that you were consciously trying to put that into your work at that time?

KENNETH CALLAHAN No. Consciously, I have always tried to-- everything I feel about something, I try and paint. I never tried to analyze what I really feel about things. .. Well, very frequently, all my life, I've used horses. And often people have asked me, "A horse must be a symbol to you?" Well, if I tried to analyze, if I thought, "Yes, that's kind of a symbol," then every time I saw a horse starting to appear in my paintings I'd think, "Aha, that's a symbol of this." So these paintings would become just illustrations of an idea of what the symbol is supposed to represent.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That's too specific in a way?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It's nonsense. A symbol is an avenue to a greater understanding of something else. It doesn't matter a goddamn itself. But, it's extremely important as an avenue for you understanding why. If I was a great actor and I did this with my hands [gesturing--Ed.], it would have fantastic meanings. But if I could explain, as a great actor doing this, the whole thing would go dead.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Right. It's the acting that does it.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Your reaction to that, that's the important part. So, all I'm doing, when I do this, is wave my arms, but if you have a great actor it's fantastic expression.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And the same way with the brush stroke.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: The same with the brush stroke, yes.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What about specific influences on your works, since we have started to talk about your work specifically? For instance, from Blake or El Greco? Those names have been brought up in relationship to your work.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: They are painters who have meant a great deal to me. That's all I can say because I've never, you see, studied any artist from any other point of view except I think what he does is wonderful. And I love to see it. And so, what do I get from it? That's why I never try to analyze at all. Because what I get from it goes inside and comes out as Kenneth Callahan, it doesn't matter a goddamn.

The only thing possibly it could have of any value in my work would be if I drew from this some sustenance that made something of consequence appear in my work. And if it did, it wouldn't matter whether it was very much like ElGreco or slightly, or hardly any. But, I do think with human beings if you say, "Oh, El Greco means a lot to me now." These elongated figures and the long, shadowed face and the attenuated hands and so forth. You can build up a whole category of illustrations so that if you were a movie director, you could bring these out in the person playing this role of a saint or something. But what has it got to do with art? It has nothing to do with it. Because, that painting has meaning for you. If all it looks like is an imitation of ElGreco, it might as well be burnt up. There's nothing there. But if you find it has meaning and then you look and say there are similarities to El Greco in there, that's all right. Any artist who says he has never been influenced by anybody, I think he's dead, literally. Because, what you see-- the work around you and paintings and everything else -- that's what you draw

from. You're not drawing from that necessarily what ElGreco felt at all.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So it's a very non-specific kind of influence on you -- if you looked at Blake or ElGreco and you liked their works -- that somehow gets absorbed and changed and comes out "you" on the other side.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It has to come out you. If it's of any consequence, it comes out as you. It's out of your hands whether it's.. . Do you know of the young reporter who went to George Bernard Shaw, interviewing him, and said, "Mr. Shaw, do you consider yourself a genius?" And Shaw glared at him and said, "Young man, for 50 years I've been trying to do one thing and one thing alone. I either think I'm a genius or I'm a damn fool."

SUE ANN KENDALL: That's great.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, you know, I don't carry it to that extreme in calling myself a genius. But, it is nonsense. I'm 77 years of age. I've spent my whole life just painting. Either I believe in myself or, my God, I am a pretty stupid individual. After 77 years, I should have learned if there's nothing there.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Let's go back and sort of take your work through the progressions that it went through over the years. When was the change from basic landscapes into something beyond a pure landscape where you really were representing what you saw?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I mentioned this thing of Galka Scheyer in San Francisco. That was a revelation to me which shifted my emphasis completely. I think a very important thing stemming from that experience with those artists, and then my wife and I went to Europe and saw a great many things. We had about six months: two months in London, two months in Paris, and two months in Florence. I had the idea then-- I think I was right -- that you could make a tour and it would be like a newsreel, you get a little smattering. But by spending two months, it worked very well. In Paris I spent quite a few days just leaning over an embankment-- out among the little newsstands and etching sellers -- along the Seine. Days where I completely relaxed, just fuddled around. And I really got a feeling of these places and things. We were going to be living in the Hotel de Seine on the rue de [Seine], about a block from the river. Also, I monkeyed along the Thames quite a lot at different times. But, at any rate.. .

SUE ANN KENDALL: We were talking about influences which changed your work.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I think that's one thing I've tried to avoid thinking about because I welcomed whatever.. . I have a feeling that the last thing I want is to [go on and say], "Now there in the Louvre, I saw this and that changed my life. Then, I started thinking of all these different things." Because I think that's all superficial. I think the important things come to you in a nondramatic way, in a nonimportant way. It's just as if after you experience things, a month, two months, maybe longer-- a year later. Suddenly, you feel this way and you think, "Yes, there was something in China, there was something in Paris that probably had to do with this feeling." But the only important thing is, this is what I feel.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It comes together and it starts happening?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, it starts happening. Because I think it's very easy to convince yourself by dealing with the surface things that you are something. ..anyway.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I'm interested, too -- this is jumping way ahead in time-- in talking a little bit about your more recent work which, for the use of a better term, has become more abstract. You don't have the horses so much, or the riders, nor the insects, whatever. It's pretty much large sweeping movements in the canvas. Can you talk about that at all? That shift?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I noticed it coming. Well, this painting is semi-abstract; this was around 1950.

Beth: Miss Kendall is talking about later than that. It could have been the open spaces at the beach.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It's looking for and experiencing basic rhythms of nature and rhythms of the world. A good part of our life [KC and wife Margaret--Ed.], up to a certain time, was spent in the mountains and there were these relationships -- I'm speaking of the rhythms of the earth and of the total phenomena in relation to the mountain formations and the wind and so forth. Then these last 20 years or so, it's been on the ocean, primarily, occasionally getting into the mountains. And then for several years, Beth and I used to go on horseback trips into the wilderness areas in the North Cascades and Goat Rocks and in Montana, the Bob Marshall wilderness. I can't do that any more because my heart up high, about 8,000 feet, gets into trouble.

Sometimes I'll look at this -- it was done in 1924 or '25-- and it seems to me there's something very good in that. Well, there are other things; I had many other experiences and feelings about art and so forth since then that had nothing to do with.. . That doesn't refute what I had, but it's no longer meaningful and I don't think you

should try and analyze too much, anybody, why they are and why they feel the way they do. I think the concentration should be on the way Beth feels now, the way I feel, the way you feel now. In reference to this and to everything else.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It's what's happening now.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: What's happening, yes. And what you are, you have no hand in. You already established that. And, well, say, I'm trying to guess about this; I try now and then tomorrow and the next day. Well by the next day I'm quite a different person in many ways than I am now. Different environment and different things come into my mind and into people's associated closely with me, like Beth. And so, I'm not

quite the same person. But if I just say I'm alive and here it is and what I feel, that is what counts. It doesn't matter a goddamn what you thought day before yesterday. Not quite, you know, _____ but essentially. There's an immediacy about living, I think. And if you try and pin it down, by the time you get it pinned down, the whole damn thing is shifted.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It's no longer valid anyway.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No.

SUE ANN KENDALL: As you look back at your career, do you assign any difference of quality to your own works? Do you find a certain period that you think, "Ah, this was a time when I did a lot of really fine works whereas some other time, I didn't?" Or, do you not look at it that way?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, yes and no. Not as a period of time, but some years may go by and I suddenly see something I haven't seen and I say to myself there is something that is very good in that painting. And, it's not a matter of conceit, especially, it's just that you see after time. And again, you're seeing something else you did at that time, maybe, and you'll say that's just not very good. But, neither bothers you. I don't let either bother me because it's inevitable that that's true.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Everything I do stems from visual experiences and that's the outer eye. You see these forms. I love to see the horses racing at Longacres, their muscles, the way they run, and any of these _____ things I see. But, then there's the inner eye. The outer eye's experiences are transmitted through these inner feelings-- the inner relationships of man and nature and the interrelationship of all these currents and rhythms that are true of the earth. And it's true of the outer spaces as far as we know. You know, this pattern is very interesting. A friend, a doctor, loaned me a microscope, one of these very high powered ones. Well, I put on a wing of a dragonfly on it, and it was like a pattern of rods holding and then a membrane between it, and it was wider at the end that attached to the body of the dragonfly, then it thinned out like this. And, then I turned up the microscope and things started to disappear and I'd see more things appearing. And, then I got up [increased the magnification--Ed.] again, and it was a kind of strange kind of maze of things without form. And then suddenly, I turned it up again and I got a very high power. And I saw a little bug thing with a head and shoulders and legs up like this, and a body and the hind legs not unlike a grasshopper. Well, this was some little tiny insect that was so small that only under very high power you could see it. But it was the same basic image as a human being -- head, arms, torso and legs, a grasshopper, the same. It goes down way beyond what the eye can do and here was the same damn basic form. I think it is a basic form of life, and not just our life-- an insect's life, life in outer space, perhaps. Because not once have they brought back from the moon or Jupiter or anywhere in outer space anything that contradicts basic human form -- basic rhythm as you know it on Earth.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Which is where you get the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm; it's all part of a piece.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I think it's part of a piece. It's a reduction in dimension or an increase in dimension, but it is the same. And the currents of air between the planets in the galaxies are the same currents-- in appearance and feeling -- you feel it. It's the same as the wind blowing around you on the beach or blowing around you on the mountain. And the form of the mountains and all these movements I think are identical. And for some reason, it just seems to me if I really could experience this, it would be wonderful. And then I ask myself, why would it be? I haven't the slightest idea. I don't know why it would be. But, it would be wonderful to get that feeling in a painting and if I could and did (and may still) I haven't the slightest idea in the world why it should be of such consequence to me.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What you're seeking to do is to take this and translate into painted form?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, something that could have meaning for other people and for me.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You said once that you were basically a realist.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, yes, because I think the basic reality is what we've just been talking about. These currents, rhythms ____ of earth. I think that is realism and drawing somebody so that they look like they're ten years old and they have a certain kind of pants on, certain shoes and an expression of their face-- that is the most superficial essence of reality. The basic reality that this is a living form, existing in space, is infinitely greater reality than this person knocking golf balls or doing something else. The idea of reality, anyway, is so phony as it's used so much in painting. The 18th century was looked on as a period of reality in portraits of noble people and important people. Well, you look at Gainsborough's work Blue Boy _____ and they painted complete reality. They had this guy -- little head and shoulders, body, down to the feet. Well from the standpoint of reality.. .

[Tape 4; side 2]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: ..that's completely phony. Gainsborough's figure of Blue Boy-- he's ten feet tall. You've never seen a human being that wide. It was made so that when you looked at it, you looked up. Because he was an aristocrat, they put you in this position that you have to look up to this person. But reality had nothing to do with it. If you looked straight ahead at the standing figure from the standpoint of reality, the feet are quite small and the head is quite big. Because there's a greater distance between your eyes and the feet than there is between your eyes and the head. That's really reality. But that is what has always been distortion. The actual reality, if you use your eye measurements, that's what it is: tiny feet and a big head.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So these words like realism, mysticism, get bantered around a lot, but what do they really mean?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I don't think they mean anything. Say that I say to you, "Do you know so and so?" You say, "No." So, I'll say, "Well, he's a guy that is terribly conceited. He's kind of fat and he's unpleasant. He's about six feet tall and he has brown hair and so forth." Well, anything I've said that gives you the reality is this is a conceited person and so forth. Not the measurements; they mean nothing. There are thousands of people with big feet or little feet, tall and fat or slender. But as soon as I say he's conceited, immediately you have an idea-- right or wrong -- of what that person is. That's the reality of the person. What you are as a person and not as surface descriptions.

Am I making an idiot of myself, Beth?

Beth: No, not at all."

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Do I pass so far? Low grade but I pass.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Do you feel you've always maintained some link with the human figure in your work?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, I think there's a basic thing there. But I connect the human figure with animal figures at the same time. The animal world, in the sense of embracing humans and other forms of animals, has always been important to me. It sounds kind of silly when I say that includes mosquitoes, bugs and so forth. But visually speaking, it does. And it is the animal world of things that have movements I see in front of my eyes. And, I think that all these forms of life are alive. And I think a carrot is alive, and a cabbage, and a person, and an ant, and so forth. And I think that the carrot feels that it is on top of the world. And every other form of life does. Just as men tend to feel they're on top and you move down through the forms of life until you finally get down to a slug. A slug is way down there. [gesturing--Ed.] And a horse is up here. And a dog is up here. And so on. But, I think every form of life feels it is superior. They're on top of the mountain and the others in stages below them. And I think actually as far as life goes, basic reality, all these forms are the same. But I'm human so I think the human is on top.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Sure, you're coming from that point of view.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Me, by being a human. But I don't feel that these other forms of life accept their secondary position. One of the things in life is supposed to be sustenance; your innate urge in life is to obtain food and drink and warmth and clothing. Well, I think that is true of every form. Of all those forms, can you think of any form of life that has more successfully solved the problem of living than dogs and cats? Well, you know I'm not minimizing our dog. She has a very good life. She doesn't have to worry about making a living or anything. The parents of a girl or boy-- when they get to be 18 or 20 years of age and they are through school, they expect them to go out and make their own money to feed themselves. I'm not criticizing anybody, but I think that is just true. But no matter how old or young our dog is, Beth and I go to quite a lot of trouble to make her life simple. I don't think she's a Machiavellian dog who's working on us. But these living things have solved the problem of existence-- food and shelter -- infinitely better than almost any human being you can think of.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It seems like you're a very intuitive painter in that sense. But I do want to ask you if you feel that your writing, when you were writing, shaped your painting in any way?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, no. The only reason I wrote was because there was nobody in Seattle doing art criticism. The only ones that even mentioned art were the society departments-- girls. They didn't know about

art; there's no reason in the world why they should. Occasionally, somebody in the sports department might write something about art. There was nobody else writing. And I had this job at the museum and as part of my job, I felt that if I could write about art, at least it would be some description of the paintings and the sculpture that were being exhibited.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Because you could talk the language.

KENNETH CALLAHAN Whether my writing was good or bad -- I had no concern with that.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It didn't make any connections for you for your own work?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, not at all. I'd just look at an exhibition and say what I thought was good and what was bad. Because I've always felt that the mission, in the moral context of a writer on art, was to persuade people to look at art and experience art. Well, I could do that. It didn't mean a goddamn that I could or could not write criticism because at least what I was writing was about art. People could make up their minds but perhaps I could interest them enough to go see it. I think art criticism has grown tremendously since then. But that's what my writing was and I never was concerned with trying to become a critic.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Nor to work out issues that you were dealing with in that way? You do that all through painting.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, no. I kept my painting ideas completely separate from this. This was part of the job at the museum. And as I mentioned earlier, I [early learned that if I exerted myself in what I have to do], I can do a better job and I get through it quicker and I can dismiss it then. Because my conscience doesn't bother me and my taking a salary or anything. I'm through with that and I'm completely free.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So you really saw it as three distinct hats that you wore. You didn't view the writing as shaping your painting or the painting as shaping what you wrote, how you wrote.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, they were completely separate.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That's very interesting for those of us on the other side who are not painters but writers. We, of course, approach it so differently. Verbalizing it, for us, leads us to greater understanding often.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, you see, that I didn't want. I'd avoid that. That was the side of it which is extremely important. A serious and informed art writer [is important]. That had no meaning to me whatsoever. I didn't want to get involved in that. Rather than talking about the costumes the people at the previews of exhibitions wore, I'd talk about what these paintings looked like. That was all it amounted to. The only thing serious about it, which I think I was right about now, was my feeling that Mark and Morris and myself-- but I couldn't write about myself -- were doing paintings that warranted national attention, and that perhaps other painters here were also. So, I didn't try to analyze the paintings but I just wrote and said that there were very important artists. You see, I'm not defending myself whether I'm right or wrong, I'm just saying that's the way it was.

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TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH KENNETH CALLAHAN

AT THE CALLAHAN'S HOME IN SEATTLE

DATE: DECEMBER 19, 1982

INTERVIEWER: SUE ANN KENDALL

KENNETH CALLAHAN: KENNETH CALLAHAN

SUE ANN KENDALL: SUE ANN KENDALL

[Tape 5; Side 1]

SUE ANN KENDALL: You wanted to say something about.. .

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yeah. I know one thing we were talking about. You used the term, when Guy Anderson and I shared the studio. Well, we were friends and we never shared a studio. What I think that was in reference to was that we found this place in Robe Ranch, up in the mountains, my wife and I. It was just a ranch house and some shacks scattered around-- woodcutters' shacks. And Wirt, the old man who owned it, lived in one of the shacks. And then, so we moved into the ranch house, which wasn't huge but it _____. We paid \$50 a year for this ranch. Well old Wirt was on relief or something-- on an old-age pension, I think it was -- there wasn't any relief at the time. Anyway, we felt sorry for him and so we busied around and got, among others, Guy, to rent one of the cabins for \$25 a year. And we got Mark Tobey to rent another for \$25 a year, and I've forgotten who else-- several people. We got each of them to pay so that Wirt, collectively, would get a little more than \$50 a year for rentals. Int those days, \$50 or \$25 was a lot of money relatively speaking. But Guy painted in his place and then

I painted in mine. We were not sharing a studio; we were living separately.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That's not the Granite Falls studio?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That is what's called the Granite Falls studio.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: What happened then was Wirt died, and his relatives were talking about selling the place. So Margaret found that we could get the adjoining property. Timber -- just an area-- some of it on the river. So we got that. It was \$1,000 and Guy wanted half, so he paid \$500 and we paid \$500. We got him to do that and got this property. Then we both built studios on the end of the property near the river. We shared the property but we didn't share a studio. We were living independently with different friends. Then, a couple years after that, Guy decided he had to go back to Edmonds because his mother was alone. He wanted to sell his part and we tried to get [Murray] Jensen and a lot of people to buy it, but they wouldn't. At that time, timber like there was on there, like hemlock, was valueless -- you couldn't give it away. Anyway, Guy decided that he wanted \$1,000 for his. Five hundred was for the property and his shack he built-- his studio, not shack -- \$500. We couldn't raise that much but we raised \$200 and agreed to pay him \$50 a month until it was paid for. That's what we did. So, in a sense we shared our lives for a time there, but not our studios.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Now that burned down?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: In 1963, was it?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. I was in Europe. It was after my wife's death. My son sent a cable. It caught up with me, I think it was in Germany. Anyway, he had a terrible time having to tell me that he and his wife and his son were in the house and they'd left it and the place burned down. It was a metal chimney and it just rusted out or something. Oh, I felt so sorry for him. See, they were living there. They were climbing up Mt. Pilchuck or something, and when they came back, it was burned. And the Forest Service got in there and kept the fire from spreading from the house and studio into the timber, but that's all they could do. There's no regular fire stuff up there except the Forest Service.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How much did you lose of your paintings?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, quite a lot of my paintings. And we used to trade paintings with each other, and I lost quite a number of Mark Tobey's paintings and a number of Morris's. I think there was one of Ambrose Patterson's and others. But the fire was so hot. It was made of cedar, the cabin, and in the back of it, a little alleyway. A little platform came out and the toilet was there. We had a waterfall in the creek in back of the place. It was enough of a drop so that I could put a little ridge flume from the spring down where it was high enough to turn a water wheel, and that pumped water into the house. We had coils in the kitchen range and the hot water tank, in back of the house, of the wall of the kitchen, and that was the toilet. We had a tub in there and these coils went down and fed into the kitchen range and then moved into the tank and heated the tank. We had hot and cold running water and a toilet. A toilet in a place at that time-- there was no power in the valley and I think only one other persons had a rig like ours and had running water and an inside toilet.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Great, very clever.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: This was the house here [showing a photo--Ed.]. First I used it for a studio and then we lived in it and then built a larger studio attached to the house. It was about 25feet or so high and about 18 by 20. The fire was so hot when it burned, it melted even these little brass urns with the muller that the drugstores used then to grind the pills and things. That was solid brass and that was burned down so that the sides were bent over. You couldn't identify any of the kitchenware because the kettles and everything else flowed into each other. It was just so hot and just melted in puddles. Anything like an axe, you couldn't recognize; it was just melted.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What started it?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: They don't know. But what I do think was undoubtedly true is that the kitchen range went up through a hole in the ceiling. There was a platform up there, making a room about 20feet long and about 6 feet high and some 10feet wide, running the length of it. There was a ladder up in back, in the middle, up into there. That's where our son slept and his friends. He always had boyfriends, friends of his from school and that's where the kids always slept. This was all cedar, and that's inflammable, especially the shakes on the roof. The pipe went through the ceiling and then a drum about this big and this high [gestures--Ed.]. Have you ever seen those? A regular stovepipe goes through it and that heats the room because the smoke goes in there and circles around this little drum and goes out. Well, then this pipe ran on out through the roof where the smoke escaped. I

think that where it went through the roof there, it rusted out. Ordinary stovepipe rusts very quickly and in a rain country, as this is, it doesn't take very long. It was probably only in there a couple of years. It just rusted out, and then one day there was some fire in there and the heat of it, if there was just a little opening in the pipe, the fire would catch on. Cedar is just like paper as far as catching fire. I think that's what caused it.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What did you do with the property then?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: We rebuilt.

[Interruption by Beth to correct KC's recollection--Ed.]

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did you sell the property?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, we gave it to our son and his wife. That part of my life was over and I didn't want to move back up in there. And that's when Beth and I went down to Long Beach where we'd been going every year on New Years for years. And then they rebuilt.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That's when you made the switch from up there to the beach?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. That's when we came back from Europe.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I'd like to ask you, too, about the Guggenheim Fellowship that you had in '54.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: There isn't much to tell except that I was told that previous to that it was rarely, if ever, that they gave it to anyone for just painting or art. Martha Graham was one that got it in 1930 to break the tradition as far as dance goes. And I think they may have considered me as one that was breaking the tradition from the point of view that I didn't have to make any reports or show results to officials of Guggenheim. Almost everybody that had had it previously were professors or teachers who had a project of studying the buttons on renaissance soldiers' uniforms or some damn thing. And they'd have to report to the foundation as to how they were progressing and, in advance, outline what they were going to do during this year in an academic sort of way. Martha Graham got it as a dancer, period. She could go where she wanted to and do what she wanted to do. And I was given it as an artist and I could go where we wanted to. In my case, I went to Europe. I was to make out the amount of money that we would need for this year for myself and my family where I wanted to live and travel, and that was the amount of the grant. I added it up. I was very careful about that, and I didn't put down a bottle of liquor or anything else that wasn't necessary. I kept it just to expenses of travel and paint and materials.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Do you remember what that came to in 1954?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, I don't, but I think it was something like eight or nine thousand.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It would be a lot more today. (laughter)

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh yeah, four or five times as much. Could you do it for five times as much?

[Beth interrupts the discussion saying the average Guggenheim does not cover the expenses and that the average grant today is between \$17,000 or \$18,000--Ed.]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: You know, what I've said about this Guggenheim, that may not be factual. That's my interpretation of it. I know what is factual is that it was to cover my painting expenses, the expenses of my wife and family, living expenses and all materials necessary to my living in Europe.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It was not tied to a project.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, and I didn't have to report anything to them as to what I'd accomplished or didn't accomplish or anything else. I think they asked me if I'd just write them and let them know whether I was satisfied with it at the end of the year, but no progress report.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It was a wonderful grant.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It was beautiful at that time; it certainly was.

SUE ANN KENDALL: In the early sixties, you were chosen to do murals for the State House in Olympia.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, that's when it was. Yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Can you talk about that, because they never materialized I know?

[Beth interrupts to clarify that these murals were for the State Library.]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: See, in the early sixties, the State Library, Northwest Room of the State Library, the architect was Paul Thiry. And it was through Paul Thiry, I was commissioned to do the murals around the walls of the Northwest Library in the Capitol Building. Have you seen that room where.. .

SUE ANN KENDALL: No, I haven't.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, they're still there. Anyway, that was commissioned and done and paid for.

But the ones you're really interested in talking about was the ones where recently the guy who's from the university-- at the moment I can't think of his. ..

SUE ANN KENDALL: Michael Spafford.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Spafford, yeah. And also Alden Mason was the other one that did the things [murals for the House and Senate chambers, respectively, in the State Capitol Building--Ed.]. Well, sometime, along in the -- originally I was approached probably in the early forties or middle forties-- they were talking about doing something for the building. I competed along with quite a number of other people. I can't recall who any of them were. And I did a number of things, one for the dome, and for various departments, panels, all about one inch to the finished model scale, and entered this competition. Nothing came of it, but I can remember very distinctly -- (Oh, and recently, the Secretary of State got the sketches from the State Museum and hung them in his office. He liked them.) Well, that was that.

At the time in the forties when I did these, I did them because I was very interested in doing murals. I'd been to Mexico and I was very enthusiastic about Orozco's murals and Rivera's also. By the way, one thing I read said that in the thirties I was so enthusiastic about the work of Mark Rothko that I went to New Mexico to study with Mark Rothko.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You mentioned that last time, that it was really Orozco.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, Orozco. Anyway, I was very interested in doing murals and so I was very glad to do these sketches, even though, as I can remember, I was quite convinced that not a damn thing would ever happen about it, to me or anybody else. I thought the guy-- no I better not say that. Well, I can say this. I thought the person that was kind of running the competition was a dreamer if he ever thought that the state legislature would ever raise money for murals.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Well, that's coming true, even today. They're still having trouble.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: That's what it is. The idea that I was turned down, or accepted either, doesn't mean anything because the whole damn thing didn't get that far enough for anybody to turn down, or accept it.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It was my understanding that this was in the early sixties, but you're speaking of the forties.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: In the early sixties, they decided to do something again and somebody asked me if I would be interested in competing, and I said no, I wouldn't. _____ I don't have the interest in murals any more, and the amount of work. I can't take painting casually. If I have something I have to do, say a mural commission, whether I think the result, the place, is important or it isn't, I cannot work casually about anything like that. I worry about it, I think about it, and I really work like hell, you know, to make it as good as I can. To make it meaningful to me. I'm no longer interested in devoting that amount of energy to doing something, because all the energy I have in the way of painting, as Beth knows, is in doing what I'm interested in now. And it doesn't leave a hell of a lot of energy left over. (laughter)

SUE ANN KENDALL: So you didn't want to get involved if it wasn't going to happen?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I didn't want to get involved whether it was happening or not. So I never was turned down on the recent thing; I never entered it. I just wanted to make it straight because there are people that would like to feel that here, this Kenneth Callahan has done lots of murals in the past, and he was very available to do these things, and then they got somebody like so and so, and so forth. Trying to build an argument on that, because it never existed. I haven't seen Alden Mason's nor Stafford's things, but I think they both are good artists. They probably are very much worthwhile.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Speaking of murals, I wanted to go back and talk a little bit about when you were interested in doing murals in the thirties. When you talked about it before, I was confused about it. I wondered about the Logging in the Northwest mural, most of which is gone now. What prompted you to do a piece of that grandeur? Because it was one of these things that could be extended, as I understand it, and extended and extended.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, I ended up with about 75 feet long and 12 feet high.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Can you describe it?

KENNETH CALLAHAN Well, there's just loggers. I have one photograph of it-- part of it -- but it's not here. It's down at the ocean. It was just the logging as it went on at that time. My reason for doing it was I was just back from Mexico and so was very enthusiastic, especially about the work of Orozco and Rivera in the Secretaria and at Chapingo. Wonderful murals. I was interested in trying my hand at one. Well, I had lots of energy and interest, and the fact I had no place for it nor could I conceive of anybody wanting it.. . At that time, I could buy four-by-twelve-foot panels of wallboard-- you know, it's about 1/4-inch thick. Now you can get it eight feet tall. At that time, you could get it twelve feet tall. In those days, the whole damn thing would be something like a dollar and a half. Well, I could afford to do those. I was working at the museum and there was a room in the basement at one end of the building that I could use because it didn't have any use to the museum. I only worked half time at the museum and I could spend the rest of the time painting in there. It was a big enough room and high enough ceiling so I could put six of these together in a line and paint them at one time, making a surface 24 feet long and 12feet high. And then I would get interested in extending it and I'd just take down the last two and put up a fresh two, and I could just work on from where I'd left off.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So you just kept going with it.

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KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did the ideas grow as you worked on them?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, yes it did. But it was essentially based on logging in the Northwest. It was a quite different thing than logging today. I just did it because I was interested in it; I had a lot of fun doing it. And then, when we had the studio up in the mountains, were building it, I had no use for these. Nobody wanted them, so I made the interior ceiling out of these logging panels and cut them where it was necessary to make it fit into the studio. It was kind of interesting to look up at that thing at times. I didn't use all of it. But the rest of it just burnt up, I think. When the studio caught fire and the house burned down, then that was the end of it.

SUE ANN KENDALL: In other words, it was a project that was a fun one for you. It didn't have any ultimate purpose.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, I must say this. Fuller did have it in the garden court of the museum for a period of six weeks or a month. And also, the Tacoma Lumberman's Association had it at an exhibition. They had a logging industry gathering or something in Tacoma. It was a big thing. They had it around the walls of this big hall where the loggers got together for this meeting. So, it had these two uses. I think it was the only time it was every exhibited. But in a way, it was exhibited in the Treasury Department murals division which gave me the commission for the Marine Hospital. It had an exhibition in Washington, D.C., and the guy who organized that heard about these logging murals and he wanted some photographs. Photographs about 24inches -- Beth, you remember-- of the logging camps. It was just a single panel of the mural but it was a big photograph. They had several of those large photographs in this exhibition in Washington, D.C., in the National Gallery. The idea was that they had pictures of the Marine Hospital mural. They showed murals of all the artists who had worked for the Treasury Department, decorating post offices around the country. And, they'd asked if I would include some photographs of the logging mural, even though it wasn't done for the government. They probably had each artist exhibit a few extra photographs. But that was the only use it ever had: indirectly for Washington, D.C., hanging in the garden court once, and in the Tacoma loggers' convention.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I can tell that you enjoyed doing it a lot.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yeah. I had a wonderful time. I made my own tempera at that time. I'd learned about that in Mexico from Tamayo, a Mexican painter. And so by making my own tempera, the painting was very cheap, and this wallboard being cheap, and having a studio I didn't have to pay rent for.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Everything came together and allowed you to do that.

I wanted to ask you, too, a little more about people that you've known over the years. Some have been associated with the museum, like Dr. Fuller and so on. You did talk about your relationship with him before. But I wanted to ask you how much influence you were able to have over him, say in terms of the collections of the museum.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, there's a great mistake made by many people, including his mother, I think. Because, every once in a while, when Dr. Fuller would be out of town, she would invite me over for lunch. They lived not far from the museum, on Federal Avenue. I remember one time. She said that Dick-- she called him

Dickie. ...

[Tape 5; side 2]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: ...Dick had plans for doing certain things in reference to the museum and so on, and she'd say, "Now Kenneth, if you have any influence, which I think you do, over Dickie, try and get him not to do that." She apparently thought I did have. But she was mistaken. No one was running him. He would ask my advice very frequently on things or we'd discuss thing -- how to do or what to do-- but he was completely and entirely his own man. That was one of the reasons that a lot of the artists did not like me in Seattle, because of the decisions the museum would make in reference to art. A lot of the artists thought that I was running Dick. He was my front man and I was the Machiavelli behind him, just telling him, "Now you go out and do this and go out and do that." I was not.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You don't feel that you had that much influence?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Not at all. Almost everybody who has an assistant would expect an assistant to be a person who maybe at times could suggest something that might sound good. But for the most part, the assistant was somebody to execute what the boss wanted done. And that's what I was in the literal sense. One thing that confused people was, you see, when Fuller was out of town, I was in charge of the museum, so I could make decisions. I had complete freedom to make decisions when he was out of town. But none at all.. .

SUE ANN KENDALL: Were decisions made in terms of the collections when he was out of town? Were you able to do that?

KENNETH CALLAHAN Well, nothing special. But what I meant was that-- well this is ridiculous but typical. Mr. [Yasushi--Ed.] Tanaka, a Japanese from Tokyo, who had the Yamanaka Company, a Japanese store in New York, in Paris, and in London and Tokyo, came, and Mr. Fuller was out of town. So he came to the museum and we were talking -- previously he'd been in town and his wife was with him-- and I'd forgotten for the moment that the Japanese, as part of their culture, that you do not express any emotion about your own losses. You know. The other person who hears this news is certainly expected to. But anyway, he was talking to me and I said, "And how is Mrs. Tanaka? I hope she is well." And he smiled, very gaily, and said, "Oh, she died two months ago." And, here I found this smile all over my face, that Mrs. Tanaka had died. I immediately, you know, explained and apologized for it. Tanaka was a highly educated and intelligent man, and he knew very well, under no circumstances, would I deliberately be rude about anything like that. And, he recognized that it was _____. I wasn't quite on my toes. So, in that kind of sense I would be. ..

SUE ANN KENDALL: You represented the museum.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I represented the museum in that. If there could be a question in reference to art and so forth which I'd have to decide, I'd make the decision on this basis: That I do not think the museum can do this -- I cannot give you a positive answer until Dr. Fuller returns and he'll give you a positive answer.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How do you assess his choices, in terms of the collections?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I think he had very good judgment. I do think I had something of an influence with him in the field of contemporary art, because he did not have the interest or the evaluation of contemporary art that he did in the field of Oriental art and the art of the past. I had a very hard time convincing him that Mark Tobey and Morris Graves, specifically, were of national importance. And I thought possibly some more painters here had national importance. I felt very strongly for those two who did have something very special that was quite unusual, and I still think I'm right.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Do you think the museum has a satisfactory collection of your work and Mark's and Morris's?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I haven't seen it for a very long time. The only thing was that Fuller-- he was a wealthy man -- and his mother were financing the purchases for all of the Asiatic Collection, including contemporary art and so on. A vast amount of their money was going to buying in the Oriental field. And so he tried to shave the costs of the things he'd buy from the local artists to as low a price as he could get. I don't think I'm doing him any injustice in saying that in one-man shows of an artist in the Seattle Art Museum, I do not ever remember him buying an expensive painting. Not the cheapest either, but he'd try and get something that was adequate, in an in-between range in the sense of price.

SUE ANN KENDALL: But not necessarily the best.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Not necessarily the best, because the best of almost all artists, the price was much higher. I would say the contemporary regional artists collection was a good but not exceptional one.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How did you feel about that at the time?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: About his doing that? Oh, I don't feel anything. I just felt that was the way he was. I can't remember taking any attitude about it except.. . Well, I think, for one thing, I had worked so hard at getting his interest aroused in contemporary art in general, and specifically in Mark's and Morris's, that I was.. .happy.. .the degree of his interest was.. .

SUE ANN KENDALL: You were happy for whatever he did?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, and I think he did a very good job. I think he was a very important man in that sense, because at the time I'm speaking of, there were damn few people who thought Mark Tobey and Morris Graves's paintings were of the slightest consequence. Most of those people thought mine was equally of no consequence. There were very few people in those days who felt any artist they called extremist in any sense could really be a good artist.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How things have changed.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, they've changed. And he changed through the years too.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What about people like Dottie Malone? What role did she play? Of course, she's still around.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: She played the same role as she did then. She was the perfect secretary, the personal secretary to him and the museum secretary. She had complete faith and believed in him as a person and as the director of the museum. She and I always have been good friends and we still are.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How about Joanna Eckstein?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, Joanna Eckstein.. . See, in those days, she didn't exist, as far as the museum was concerned. It was Nathan Eckstein, her father, who had to do with the museum. They lived right close to the park up there, the big brick house, and I got very well acquainted with Nathan Eckstein through taking a walk up around there in the morning before going to work. Nathan Eckstein was then running this Master Grocery Company which he owned. He'd be taking a walk and so we got in the habit of meeting each other, agreeing on a general time on the corner. I never went to his house to meet him nor did he come to ours; we'd just meet there and walk for a number of blocks around. So, we became quite good friends. He was a person that struck me was kind of a forcible impression because he had a very strong German/Jewish accent. He used funny terms, you know, Eastside New York Jewish people-- some of them talk funny. ..

SUE ANN KENDALL: Almost their own dialect, yeah.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, amusing. To find a man -- he was the first one that I'd known closely-- who had a very strong and funny accent but was extremely intelligent and sensitive. I've met quite a few of them that seemed like kind of dough heads (laughter) with the accent. But this was a man with at times a ludicrous accent, but a sensitive man and very knowledgeable man. Anyway, just a wonderful person.

SUE ANN KENDALL: He was knowledgeable of the arts?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes he was, up to a point in what he was familiar with. He was very sensitive about the arts and he admitted his prejudice, right off, for some academic things.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Can you specify more clearly?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, he'd admire Gainsborough much more than Rembrandt. Certainly, Gainsborough is worth admiring in context with a lot of portrait painters of that period. But, I mean the two men are not equal. And that would be the things I would find he was missing. He was honest about those things and he was very sensitive. And if he felt that I felt very strongly about a certain painter or painting and he didn't, he would always say, "Now, I know that you feel this man is a very good man and I accept that. But, I can't quite go along with you." Anyway, I liked him very much. He had us to his house on two or three occasions and we'd have an evening. We'd have a drink and he'd have these very expensive cigars-- I'd smoke them. I didn't smoke a lot in those days. He imported them from Cuba. [Conversation with Beth.] But anyway, she [Joanna] was never included -- Olga Eckstein, he wife-- but Joanna, I never met her there because she was just a young girl. Whether she was away at school or not, under no circumstances would she have been there in the evening because we were especially her father's friends, and her mother's -- really, basically between Nathan Eckstein and myself. I don't know how I got so much onto Eckstein?

SUE ANN KENDALL: I think I asked you to talk about it a little bit.

How about Nellie Cornish? Did you know her very well?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yeah. She used to stay here quite often. She used to come to our house.

Oh, I know one of the things I was talking about was these meetings at our house. None of these, except on a number of occasions when we were trying to work out these symbols, was ever such a thing as a meeting. These were just friends of ours we'd invited up. Mark was very often there because he was a very close friend. And there were a great many other people who were there quite a lot. George Mantor-- who is not an artist or writer - - was there a lot, and Jim Stevens and Theresa, who was a writer. Those who came to our house-- Bill Cumming, later; in the thirties, Bill Cumming was a little child. Along in the forties Bill Cumming came into it. But they weren't meetings; there wasn't a club. There wasn't a group of artists. They were mostly artists and writers because my wife was interested in writing and I was interested in painting. So naturally at that time it was true of the people. ..

SUE ANN KENDALL: I was asking about Nellie Cornish.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, Nellie used to come out quite often. We were very good friends. But we didn't see her too often because she was terribly absorbed in the Cornish School. It was a very active school then, and she was constantly getting people from Europe to teach there, or people that had previously taught there would be visiting. So she was very active. Then as far as her entertainment went, she had to promote the school. She was solely responsible for keeping the thing going. So she promoted quite a number of the socially elite people who had the money to help Cornish School. Many of her gatherings had to be designed for that. And so we didn't see her so much but we used to go several times. ..

Charles Ross and Nancy [Wilson--Ed.] Ross -- they were divorced several years ago. She wrote, oh, I've forgotten the name of it. Anyway, over in Hood's Canal, they had a place. We used to go over there. One time I remember going over there with Nellie for a weekend. We'd get together with Nellie and go-- my wife and Nellie and myself. Nellie was saying about Nancy -- Nancy's father was a janitor in Olympia in a capitol building; he was head custodian or something like that. He was known as a "character" by all the politicians. You know, like "Old John" or some such name as that. Everybody knows "Old John"-- isn't he a wonderful guy and slap his back and all this! A character in other words, and Nancy did not like that.

[Discussion with Beth]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: On the way over there, Nellie said, "Nancy knows what she wants. She knows how to get it. When she first came here as a student at Cornish, I knew that she's going to be a success in life in some way or another, because she has her mind made up and nothing is going to stand in her way." And she did not like any reference to her father being a character. Well you can see that. A young and impressionable kid-- that their father was a character would be awfully hard to take. That he was a man that was friends with so and so, that would be minor, or that they liked him very much and he liked them.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I wanted to talk to you about your association with various galleries, over the years.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Galleries? Ah, well, I had very little association with any because, you see, in 1930 I was in the first Whitney show. Then Maynard/ Walker, a dealer in New York, saw this painting in there and wrote and asked me if I wanted to send him some paintings. I sent him a batch -- six or so. He had a gallery of his own and so they were there in New York for several years. And then there was some scandal that occurred-- I don't know what it was all about. But his gallery closed up, so he sent these things back.

Then in 1942, Marian Willard of the Willard Gallery was out at the museum and that's where she first saw Morris's things. I got a whole bunch of those things of Morris's to show her at that museum and I spread them all over the floor of the studio room. Dorothy Miller was also there. Dorothy Miller was then the curator of the Whitney, no, of the new Museum of Modern Art. And Marian Willard was with Dorothy Miller, and a little shrimp I never liked -- Holger Cahill-- Dorothy Miller's husband. So then she got this show for Morris. And the Museum of Modern Art bought [his paintings--Ed.] through Dorothy Miller.

[Discussion with Beth about galleries]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, this was 1940 or '41.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And Morris had a show?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, not then. Marian Willard opened his show in '42 [sic; actually a group exhibition at Museum of Modern Art--Ed.], and it was very much of a success and the Museum of Modern Art bought several of his things through Dorothy Miller. And she knew of Mark's paintings, Marian Willard. Then two years later, in '44, she gave Mark a show and it was a great success. Many people today feel that Mark Tobey was a very well known painter in 1942-- that he was known to everyone before his Willard show. Well, that's not true at all. He was terribly impressed with the show and he was mad as hell at Morris Graves's success. Then, in 1944, his was just as much a success as Morris's.

And, then Dorothy, no, Marian -- I'm not sure if it was Marian Willard or somebody else-- anyway, she got

interested in my work and suggested having a show in 1945, a year after Mark's. I was very pleased at that. And then she decided. .. Oh, Max Ernst came into the gallery and she mentioned to him that she was going to have a show of mine and he said, "Going to your gallery is just like going to Sunday school -- with all these religious people." You know, Morris, Mark and myself. And so she wrote me that she wanted to cancel this thing for the time being and she'd let me know later. Well, that made me mad and so I wrote and said that under no circumstances would I have anything to do with the gallery then or at any other time.

But then Maynard wrote; after being out of the gallery business for several years, he was then associate director of the American-British Arts Center. Alice Storey was the director. That's on Fifth Avenue there-- about 57th and Fifth -- 58th I guess. Anyway, my show was a success. That was in 1946. Shortly after they had this show at the American-British Arts Center, then Maynard opened his own gallery again on 57th Street. And he wrote me and asked if I would be interested in going with him-- exhibiting the things. So, I did and I was there until 1967. Then he was going to close up and retire. There was a collector in New York, Dan Rabin, who'd been buying things of mine for some years through Maynard, and he and his daughters came up to Skauegan, where I was teaching that summer. [They were on] their vacation, and he said that he knew that Maynard was retiring, closing up, and he asked me if I'd be interested in Miss Kraushaar's gallery. Actually, from my point of view, that was one of the galleries that I was very interested in, of any of the galleries in New York; that was one of those I was most interested in.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Um hmm!

KENNETH CALLAHAN: And so I was delighted. And shortly after that, before the show was put on, Francis Taylor, who was the director of the Metropolitan Museum, said that he'd be very glad to suggest to Knoedler's that they take me-- if I wanted him to, he'd be glad to. I said no, because I'd already said yes to Maynard Walker -- I mean to Alice Storey. And so then I was with Maynard for those years, and then-- oh yeah, I'm getting this mixed up. No, see I was in there for -- how many, thirty.. .? [KC consulting Beth, who replies: 1967 or 1968, when we were in Boston, was when Maynard closed.]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh yeah. And that's when I went with Kraushaar, that's twenty years or so.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You went with Kraushaar, rather than the Knoedler at that point?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No. It was just a possibility, Frances said.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That's what I thought. Okay.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Anyway, so Dan Rabin spoke to Miss Kraushaar, and she was interested and so I went down to.. . What?

[Beth corrects that Mrs. Kraushaar came to Boston for KC's show.]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I know she did.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So, you made the switch then to the.. .

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, it wasn't a switch because Maynard gave up, see. It was just a few months later that I went with Mrs. Kraushaar and I've been there ever since. So, as far as dealers go, in that period of forty-some years, I've only known two dealers: Maynard/Walker and Mrs. Kraushaar.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Were you that pleased?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yeah. Both of them are low-keyed, and neither are high-pressured of any kind. I like that. They put no demands on me whatsoever. And some dealers, if a person has a show that is successful, then the dealer wants more of this style that sells. There was none of that with Maynard or Mrs. Kraushaar. Most dealers, it is because it's merchandise. And if it's pictures like this [KC points--Ed.], you know you're going to be able to make so much money on these. What happens if you have them like that? [KC points again--Ed.] Totally different thing. Maybe they won't like these. So, Maynard never put any pressure on me, nor has Miss Kraushaar. I'm still with Mrs. Kraushaar and I'm very happy about it. There's never been a word of contract. Neither of us have ever signed a paper of any kind of what our responsibility is to each other. It's just that every two years, approximately, I have a show and that's that.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What about locally? There was a long period of time when you didn't have a show here locally.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Occasionally during this 20-year period I did exhibit in many places in the U.S. and several other parts of the world. But I didn't have any locally.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was that by your choice?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I can't remember. I didn't try to get anyone interested. Apparently, no one was interested or I would have had a show!

SUE ANN KENDALL: Did you feel bad about not showing locally?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, no. My ego was completely satisfied by the New York shows. Many of these New York shows were very successful. Articles even appeared in the New Yorker and different newspapers, The New York Times.

[Tape 6; side 1]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I had write-ups in most. I was having exhibitions and my shows in New York went on every two years during that period. That was infinitely more important to me and meant something, whereas at that time a local show would not have. If I hadn't had any shows at all during that period, I'd feel very differently, but as it was.. .

I never have wanted to spread out too far. Because what would happen if right now-- see, I've had offers -- one from Palm Beach, one time from San Francisco and Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., and galleries at different times. And I do this show at Kraushaar every two years. Then, in between that now, Foster/White [in Seattle-- Ed.], I have a show every two years in different years. And I occasionally wind up somewhere else-- Portland's Fountain Gallery. But, if I said yes to a show in Los Angeles, yes to a show in Palm Beach, and yes in Washington, D.C., and the Foster/White and the Kraushaar, Beth and I'd be busy every minute of the time, picking out paintings, getting them waxed and framed and all the writing up and getting the price on them and the titling and packing and shipping them and unpacking them and shipping others. And all of these galleries, wherever they are, have an opening and they kind of expect that artist to come to the opening. That's part of the deal. What time you weren't busy packing up pictures and crating them, you'd be going to exhibitions, you know, the openings. You'd have no time to paint and no time to think.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You started showing with Foster/White again, was it in '76?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I think it was. That's the first time. That was fine with me because I had had an accumulation of paintings over the years because, never did these New York shows. . .

Then in addition to these New York shows, every once in a while some university in the south or east coast or middle west somewhere would want a show of my work. And then they'd go to Kraushaar or Maynard and pick out the things and he would send it to them. There were quite a few shows that Maynard sent out of mine; he never even notified me about them because he felt, well, there was no reason to. I mean, "Kenneth knows that I'm doing my best to promote his work and this is part of the promotion to provide these shows." And if he didn't happen to remember to write me about it, well he wouldn't. I knew about one of them, at least, because we found the catalog. When Maynard closed up, I went to New York and got the things of mine he was leaving in storage. Going through them to look at them, I found this catalog of some show in [Lehigh?] University. And that was the first time I'd known about this show. The point is that was our casual relationship, what makes it easy for me. Because he assumed it wasn't necessary to write me to tell me how good a job he was doing in sending these out. He took it for granted that I knew he was interested in doing a good job. If he thought of it, he would have sent me a catalog. He didn't think of it, so he didn't.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It sounds like you appreciated the role the dealers have played?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, I do very much, because there's no pressure on me. You see, neither of them ever would suggest that we want more of this kind of thing. Same is true of the Foster/White. Certainly. The only reason I didn't mention Foster/White in this is because we were dealing with the New York scene.

SUE ANN KENDALL: True.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: But in a local scene, the same applies to Don Foster. We were friends as well as a business arrangement and so there was no pressure whatsoever of any kind from Don. He's just a good friend of ours. We do things together because we like to do things together. It has nothing to do with art.

SUE ANN KENDALL: A lot of artists sort of revolt against their dealers sometimes. And there are lots of situations that become unpleasant for various reasons. It sounds as though you had very good experiences.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I had very good experiences. It has certainly proven true.

[Beth interjects that KC has expected good treatment from dealers and has received it.]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: This happened, too, on two or three occasions in New York. I'd be in some gallery, a competitor's gallery, and the guy would recognize me. And he would say, "Mr. Callahan, how much can you

figure you get from Maynard a year, on a percentage from a sale of some of your work?" And I would always answer that really I didn't have any idea; I'd never even thought about adding it up, which was true. And then he'd say, "Well, I'll tell you, if you were ever interested in leaving Maynard or Mrs. Kraushaar, I will guarantee you twice as much money, as return, as you get from Maynard/Walker or Mrs. Kraushaar." If I said yes, because a lot of artists would jump at that chance. They'd drop Maynard and go with this guy, 'cause this guy is a hot-shot. No wonder. Everybody knows him and his gallery, and that gets into the news all the time. Big-time stuff. And, so he would go and put on a show and get a few exhibitions, like in London and Paris in exchange with a dealer there. He sends those works to them and those dealers sent their European works to him; gives an international flavor to both galleries, you see. But, what happens-- this big fanfare for one year, a lot of sales. Oh boy, the money is pouring in. The next year, there are practically no sales. Well then the dealer will suddenly lose all interest in this artist. "I'm sorry, but I'm filled up now; for some years I can't give you a show." And there they are.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That ends that.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Then, they're out looking for another dealer. A lot get onto that chain of being forced to because they accept this promotion as being. .. They all feel -- and I think it's understandable; I think I probably do too-- that there's nothing too good to happen to a thing like that. This is like something real -- quite important-- a painting of mine. So if somebody would say I can guarantee you twice as much for it, well that's obvious that these are people who know twice as much as those who've been buying it. They're going to pay for it.

And I think it's very easy for an artist to feel that. Well, someone has been given the Prix de Rome. [Boy, does that prove unimportant.] The Prix de Rome, the Venice Biennale, that thing, that was organized (not especially that one but many of these things are): it's time for this country -- it's time for Bulgaria; no artist in Bulgaria ever won the first prize, so it's Bulgaria's turn. And next year, it'll be Norway, or Denmark, or the United States. It is completely warranted, because if you get a lineup of twenty artists of each country, no matter who selects them, you're going to find damn good artists scattered all through there. You can only have one prize once a year. An easy way-- it simplifies the jury's thing -- this is the United State's year; we'll pick from the United States. So you're only in competition, as far as that word goes, with other artists in the United States. And the exhibition has already been selected by a group in this country, so that group is sending four American painters they've selected. Only way you can give first prize to the American is one of those four that were sent there. none of the other Americans could possibly get it, because they weren't included. But this is no news-- this is a lot of the old stuff.

SUE ANN KENDALL: The way it works.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, the way it works. And I don't regret it, but I think every artist should know something about it. There's no reason for their being frustrated about lack of recognition and so forth. Because if you're not turned down by anybody, you can't feel like you're turned down. You know, you can't go around saying, "Those bastards turned me down," because they didn't turn you down. They never considered you.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You have to understand the process and then you can accept it.

What about the collectors who have collected your work? Who have been some of your major ones?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Emily Winthrop Miles. That's kind of interesting. To me it is. Emily Winthrop Miles is a New Yorker and she's a sculptress and poet -- quite a good poetess. She's the daughter of the Winthrop-- the Boston banker -- that fantastic library he gave to the museum. Anyway, Emily Winthrop Miles was living in New York and over a period of 25years, from Maynard Walker's gallery, she had bought paintings of mine, two or three every year. She got quite a large collection and she wrote me; a couple of times she sent verses that she had written, based on looking at her paintings. But she never wanted to meet me. See, every two years I had a show in New York and I'd be there and she could have but she never wanted to meet me. Maynard told me why. He said, "I didn't want you to feel that there was a lack of interest on her part. She loves your work and she really finds great meaning and significance in it and she says she's scared to death to meet you and find that you're some slob she can't stand." (laughter) You know, that could be too. You read something and you imagine this man or woman that wrote it and then you meet some slob.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It just doesn't connect.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Anyway, she never did. Just a few months before she died, she'd become sort of crippled up. She had some kind of a crutch. She wanted to meet me in the gallery. We did meet and she was a very charming, lovely person and I liked her very much. It was only about ten minutes or so and then it was over. A few months later, she bought several more things, so I apparently passed. Then, about a year after my meeting with her, she died.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Where are the poems she wrote?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I don't know. See, an awful lot of that stuff burned down when the studio burned down.

[Beth: They're in boxes that Bonney-Watson [Seattle funeral home--Ed.] has been told to move after they have moved us. (laughter)]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: And also, Beth, it's perfectly possible they were in the things I sent to the Archives of American Art. For many years-- 25, 30 years ago-- they kept wanting things of mine. Finally, I went up in the attic and I got all kinds of old catalogs of European exhibitions. I had things there of some of these big posters from Brussels, of this _____ of Kenneth Callahan, letters, all kinds of reviews in New York and Europe. So I decided that I should do something about the Archives (the headquarters, I think at that time, was in Chicago or Washington). Anyway, several times I started looking through cartons of junk and picking out stuff to send them. I got so interested in looking at these damn things, I'd find that two hours had gone by and I don't think I'd gone an inch deep in a carton and there was another over there I hadn't been into at all. I realized there was no sense in it whatsoever because I'd never get anywhere that way. So, one day we just tied up two cartons and just shipped them to the Archives. So their job was to sort out what they wanted.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Back to collectors. What about local people, like the [Michael--Ed.] Johnsons in Bellevue? Are they big collectors of yours?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, they have two or three things. [Interruption by Beth] What do they have-- four or five - - I don't know how many. But it's not a big collection in the sense of-- I think that Robert Sarkis is the biggest collector locally. He must have twenty-five.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I've seen several of his but I didn't know he had that many.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, he has quite a number. He keeps them in storage and he keeps changing them in his house. And then there's Peter Armsby; Charles and Alice Ross; both of those have quite a number. Martin Selig has quite a few and Manfred Selig has quite a number. Oh yes, Mary Nolte. One of her paintings was in that show that the Henry Gallery gave recently. We didn't see the show so we don't know what was in there; I understand some of hers were. Morris Alhadeff is a large collector, and I think an interesting collection, if dominated by horses and racetrack.

And in the east Roy Neuberger -- he's quite a noted collector. He has quite a number of things. Well, there's just two or three in the collection. They're now in the National Collection of what's his name-- Joseph Hirshhorn Collection.

SUE ANN KENDALL: And now they belong to the museum.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Now they belong to the National Museum. There's quite a number of people -- oh, Lee and Barbara Yates. They have a number of very good paintings.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I'd like to ask you a little bit about the bronze sculptures that you did in the late fifties. I'm not familiar with the work and I don't know whether you've done any since?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: The Kalamazoo Museum of Art some years ago got the idea of any American artists that were in their collection, who were not sculptors, they would invited them to come to Kalamazoo. They have a big foundry there, connected with the museum, that was founded for them by some industry in Kalamazoo. The idea was that I was invited to spend as much time as I wanted to and I could make some bronzes. They'd show me how to do the lost wax process, which I didn't know. And they would cast them. For their part of it, the expense of this, I would give them a choice of one of the bronzes that I made for their collection. I went back there-- about ten years ago or maybe about twenty years ago. I did about ten or so.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What happened to the rest of them?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I think there was one that was stolen at the show I had at the Henry Gallery, that LaMar [Harrington--Ed.] arranged. Nothing was done about it because I agreed that nothing should be said. If people were interested in stealing from the museum, the moment they read in the paper that something was stolen, then all the others would be inclined that way: "Oh, that's a good place, maybe I want to take a look around there and see if I can get away with something!"

SUE ANN KENDALL: When was that?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, ten years ago, twelve years ago.

But anyway, I have several of them down at the beach and then I think that some of them were sold by Maynard/Walker.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What kinds of sculpture were they?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: They're all reliefs, bronze reliefs.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Figurative?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: They're almost all figurative, yes.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Horses, and. ..?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well just general figures and horses and figure groups. See that drawing over there next to those figures from Costa Rica? That drawing is sort of like some of my bronzes.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Bob Sarkis has one, doesn't he?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, I think he does.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I have seen that one. So that's the kind of thing that you did.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, and those are all I've done in bronze.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How did you feel about working in that medium?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I thought it was fun. I enjoyed it very much. That's why I accepted it because it seemed to be fun to do. I wanted to do it also because I thought well, maybe this is a medium I'd like to really get serious and try to work in. I found it was a lot of fun but I was not tempted to make a career out of it.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So you're really a painter?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, really a painter and not a sculptor, although I did some slate carvings during that period. I had some chunks of slate; I have one at the beach so if you come down there sometime you can see it. It's a blackboard from a grade school being torn down. A friend saw it and picked a piece that's about five feet long and three feet high. It was broken at the end, but anyway, I carved into that. I did a number of those slate carvings some years ago.

SUE ANN KENDALL: That may be what Bob Sarkis has. It was real dark. It was a slate carving, perhaps?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, I think he has one of the slates.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Okay, that's what I saw.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: That's what you saw. And that also was one I was thinking maybe I would like to.. .carving.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was that the same time, pretty much?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I just can't remember. There was a period I did a lot of etchings-- this was early, 1925 or so -- and I tried lithographs too, drypoints, to find out whether maybe I wanted to be a printmaker. And I was secretary of the Northwest Printmakers for a year or two around 1924.

SUE ANN KENDALL: But you always came back to painting?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. I dropped the others and I haven't done any prints for years. But, I wanted to try it out and see what.. . There was recently a guy here from the east; he was a lithographer, a printer. He has a regular ____ job printing lithos and such. He has a number of very well known American names. He makes lithographs of their paintings. The idea would be in selling it he'd get a percentage and the dealer would get a percentage and I would get one. You've seen those things of various people like Warhol.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Sure.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Prints like that. He wanted to come out here and work with me for some months some summer soon so I could see his process. I'd do the paintings and he could take that and translate that into lithography and make prints. But, I decided not to do that. I just postponed it indefinitely.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Why is that?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, that again would take a lot of time on my part and, seriously, it's just this. I'm 77 years of age. There's a lot of people die of old age before they get to be 77, and how long is my mind going on working before I become senile? I hope it never will but the idea is, you don't know. And my health is good

enough now so that I enjoy walking, I enjoy painting, and I'm living the kind of life that I want to. But, I have only limited energy, and just by the virtue of years going by, it will probably be increasingly less energy. You have to consider those things.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You want to make your own choices.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes, I have to make the choices. That's why when there was a suggestion recently of something that I'd like very much to do-- an architect called me and wanted to know if I'd be interested in doing some murals for a new Catholic church. Well, I'm not a Catholic, but if I was 50 years old, I'd be very interested in doing this. It would have to be on the basis that it would be my interpretation; it wouldn't be the Catholic's interpretation of the Bible stories. But I'd be very interested in doing a religious mural, a big one for a church, if I was younger. But the amount of energy and all it takes for that, I turned it down. Just on that. Because now, as I was saying, I can paint the way I want to. I have the energy and the time for painting now and we make enough money to live on. So, it's not necessary for us to make more money to keep going in the way we want to live. And so anything like that, I turn it down now.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You also dabbled in something else in the seventies, which was sets for Macbeth.

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KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, that was another thing that interested me very much. When Duncan Ross and Peter Donnelly asked if I wanted to do this, the sets and the costumes for Macbeth [for Seattle Repertory Theater-- Ed.], I had been interested because I've known quite a few dancers and a number of people connected with the theater-- Sterling Holloway and so on. I thought I'd enjoy doing it and I did. I made these designs for the sets and they were satisfied. In fact, I made several.

SUE ANN KENDALL: These were paintings that were across the back of the scene.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, it was just a painting, trying to get the feeling of what the play meant, as a stage set. The total thing was a painting, but the idea was this would be built in actual three dimensions and become the stage. And [in color and] everything. The lights being used for color primarily.

Anyway, I did it, and then I did the costumes. I had a wonderful time and we became very good friends with Susan Clark who played the lead in it. So that was a positive addition to our lives. Then she brought her husband -- Alex Karis, the famous football player-- down to the beach and visited us for a weekend. Alex has become a friend of ours. I couldn't remember his name for the moment, but I can't remember my own at the drop of hat sometimes. Anyway, I enjoyed doing this thoroughly. And the people -- the whole cast, everybody connected with it-- were very nice and cordial and everything to me. They had to have a regular stage designer interpret my painting to build the sets, to go to steel and metal.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So they actually did execute it in three dimensions?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yes. It filled the Repertory Theater stage and it was built into the audience to a degree. It was quite successful locally, I gathered.

[Tape 6; side 2]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: And then Peter asked me if I'd be interested in doing another thing, just a few years ago. It was an interval of some years between. But again, I turned him down because of that very thing I was saying about.. .

Oh, I was going to say that one of the things that made this very enjoyable and interesting in every sense to me: it permitted me to be back stage at rehearsals and so forth and to hear these actresses, some very sweet looking: "Well, for Christ's sake, what's that goddamn noise out there?" You know, accepting me as part of the cast in the theater. If they thought it was a visitor, she would have never said that.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Comfortable.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: So, I had a very good time, but as an amateur in theater design, stage manager, costume designer. If I'd done another one, I'd no longer be an amateur. I'd be on my own. I'd be a professional to a degree and I wouldn't have all these willing helpers, all these willing actors. I was accepted completely as part of the family. But the whole family recognized that I was an amateur. Ignorant. And being very nice to me because of it.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What happened to the painting?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh.. .

[Beth: I'll tell you what happened to it.]

SUE ANN KENDALL: Could you explain what happened?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I've forgotten now. I don't know.

[Beth: Steve Sherman bought it.]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yeah. That's right. Our son's wife's brother bought it-- Steve Sherman.

[Beth: At the auction.]

SUE ANN KENDALL: Was it just one painting or were there several?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: There were several. The costume sketches were all there but I think it was just the one painting that was used and that was in this exhibition. The Foster/White (before it was the Foster/White) had wanted to show these sketches and the proceeds went -- I think we got some amount of money, some small percentage, maybe ten percent of the proceeds. [Beth interjects several times to refresh KC's memory--Ed.] The rest went to the benefit of the Seattle Repertory Theater. They didn't arrange this show; I did. But we just felt that-- [Beth interjects with the name of Anne Hauberg--Ed.]. That's right. Anne Hauberg arranged that and I thought because I had such a good time, I gave the sketches to the Repertory and they sold them.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You gave the sketches to the Rep and they sold those and made the proceeds from that?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. I don't know whether we got anything or not. It's of no consequence. Primarily, it was benefiting the Rep because we were [sympathetic with them]. We could never sell those things, our consciences would never permit us to sell them and collect the money off these sketches, this production.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Are there photos that documents the actual play?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah.

[Beth: The papers.. .]

SUE ANN KENDALL: So there's a record of it then.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Can you talk a little on how you work as an artist, like what kind of schedule do you have for painting?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, now, I find quite a few things are affected by.. . For so many years I had to work part time. When I'd be out of a job in the old days in San Francisco and so on and I'd be going to kind of a hamburger stand/restaurant ____ places. After five o'clock, no matter whether I had any money or not, I was free. There was not a damn thing I could do about being broke and so I'd be free until ten or eleven. Wherever I was living I could go and work there perfectly freely. Because there was nothing I could do to change the statute.

And at that time, I, yes, this was what I was getting at, really kind of rambling on. I had so very little money and materials were expensive to get. Brushes and paints and canvas and paper stuff. And so when I'd get some money, I'd get a certain amount of paint and brushes and whatever I could get. And canvases. Then I'd always be kind of held back because I felt I had to do a good job because it was so damn expensive. I had to do a good job of this drawing or painting and that's not the way to make good art. And so later, when it became easy, [sufficient] money so I could buy whatever materials I needed-- I still tend to do that, to buy considerable quantities. Because if I have a small quantity -- this paper, you see, it costs \$4.60 for a sheet. Well, if I had three of those sheets and I used them in an afternoon, not successfully, I'd think, "Good god, that's \$14 thrown away. So I buy in large quantities. I have a whole bunch over here now. Well, maybe it costs \$10 a sheet now, but I feel perfectly free because I have so many of them left. I can use as many as I want.

SUE ANN KENDALL: So this gives you the freedom to try something.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. The process, as far as I'm concerned-- my way of life down at the beach in general pattern. I don't believe in a special time for things. The freer you can be the better, and I don't like a schedule: I have to work so many hours and I have to paint so many hours or this or that. My conscience doesn't bother me, but anyway, I try and live as freely as.. . The average pattern down there -- we get up in the morning, Beth and I, and breakfast around eight and nine. Then I'll take Teena and go for a walk along the beach for an hour or two. Then, we get home and I'll go into the studio and I'll just monkey around a little in there. That'll be the time Beth is getting lunch ready. Generally speaking, I go back to the studio and spend the rest of the day until evening in

there. Sometimes at three o'clock or so, I again take Teena and go down to the beach for an hour, or not. But, that is it. My conscience would not bother me if I didn't work. I don't do that every day. But, I've never had the problem of not wanting to work, of having to force myself. The only time I can remember it being a kind of problem was when I was doing a mural I wasn't very interested in and then I'd have to kind of pressure myself.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You don't find constraints to do things you're not interested in now.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: No, I don't. And that's one of the reasons I spent so damn long working part-time at the Seattle Art Museum. For several years after having very real success in New York, where most of the art critics-- the New York Times and the Herald Tribune, New York Sun, and the various magazines, the Town and Country and Newsweek or Time, Life and so forth, had favorable things in there about me. I could have quit the museum. I didn't for quite a long time because I was afraid I couldn't stand the pressure. If I was dependent upon the sale of paintings for a living and there's a certain type of painting that sells and the museum wouldn't buy it, or collectors, I would then feel the next show I had I should try and base it stylistically on the show that I had previously.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Which doesn't leave you freedom.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It doesn't leave me freedom, and I was afraid. I didn't trust myself is what it amounted to, not to start imitating myself. So I kept the job much longer than I needed to. So it was a great favor to me when I was fired; I should have left long since. And I also found out-- I may have said this already -- that whatever I had to do for a living, the more interested I let myself get into it, the quicker the time would go by. And each time as soon as the moment came when I was through with the job for the day, I was completely a free person. And I found that was a freeing thing. When I think of it, I think most of my life [trying to free time] to paint. It was one of the very strong motivating things.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You say, freeing your mind to paint?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah. So I didn't feel that I was hurting the museum, or I was hurting this hamburger joint owner, or whatever it was.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You'd fulfilled your obligation to them.. .?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: ..to them for the day, yeah. Whatever the problem was, I was through for that day. I dropped all those things.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How did you relate your walks on the beach to your paintings?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I think they're directly related. All these walks, or anywhere at any time, because when you're thinking your own thoughts-- and I enjoy walking and you're seeing things all the time. But one of the things about seeing is that I had got completely accustomed to wearing a sailor's watch cap outside of town. I don't wear it in the city because it would attract attention; it's a little unconventional. But you see I have complete peripheral vision; nothing blocks my vision. A hat blocks all this up here. With the watch cap on, it keeps my head from getting sunburned in the summer and keeps it from getting cold in winter and everything my eyes can take in, I can take in.

I think everything I do, it always has been, was really primarily, basically based on visual experience. What I see. And that's the outer eye. And then before I paint it, in almost every instance, it goes through my inner eye and comes out as my work. The only thing that doesn't do that are these drawings that I've quite often made of landscape and things you see around there and down at the racetrack, the horses. I'd watch these jockeys exercising the horses in the mornings and all this. So, I'd be drawing specifically; I'd draw what I saw. But when I came to painting, using it, that's percolated through my inner eye, which is the totality of me as an artist. I think your subconscious is a very important element in making art, making poetry, writing. One of the things I feel about the subconscious and its importance is: If you or I or Beth were describing some person that I didn't know and you were trying to tell us what kind of person she was or he was, the last thing in the world you'd think of was how tall she was, how much she weighed, what color hair and what color eyes, the size of her feet and on and on and on. But you'd say she was very kind, she was a very generous person, or she's mean, she's kind of vicious. You'd say all abstractions that you'd have to deal with to find out what you'd really want to know, what a person is really like. The surface description was not given because you see 500,000 people with a surface description.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Which is just descriptive, appearance.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah, physical. But the physical thing is where this first comes to me as an artist. The actual person or objects or waves or currents or insects and stuff. Then it goes through your subconscious and then hopefully comes out alive, to make a living form. Not necessarily a recognizable living form, because what

you feel, your total reaction to this visual experience, _____ your memory, what you know and experienced in the past, it goes through all of these things. So there's a reservoir of your total experiences to draw from in making this come out. I've always hoped to paint a living art. Not in the sense of physical activity or recognizability of people or things necessarily. But, the feeling of this. I think this great force, the rhythm. I think there's a basic rhythm, a basic current, and it's very obvious in the waves, the movements of waves in the sand patterns and mountains and animals and the flowing of blood, and breathing process of human beings and animals, and all the muscles of them all. You know there is. It's the rhythm. There's a basic rhythm to everything.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Yes.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: The same basic movements, forms and shapes, go through everything, I think from the smallest to maximum. And I think, as I said probably before, that all these people going into space and coming back, not one of them has brought back the slightest thing that is contrary to what we know about life and our visual experiences of the world and what's around us. All these planets, apparently, have only the same kind of life.

And you know, sometimes on summer nights, there's a little fly kind of thing, it's kind of small-- like that [illustrating--Ed.] -- and there's one dangling thing. The dangle is twice as long as the fly is itself. Well I got one of those one day. I put it on a piece of white paper and I was making drawings of it because it looked so fantastic. I said, "What the hell is a thing hanging around like that?" It looked-- it didn't fit. And so I made it and then I made a drawing of it without this dangling thing. And it was just like drawing a human being without a head; it took this dangling thing to make the total structure. So, nothing was fantastic about the goddamn structure. It was just as natural as an elephant's trunk. And the fact that your nose is not very big and the elephant has a terrific nose is nothing contradictory, because it's still a nose.

SUE ANN KENDALL: How do you feel about contemporary movements in art, like earthworks? Are you interested in those things?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Not for myself, but I don't think it's such a new thing. I think the idea about it is, but I think it used to be called landscape architecture and gardening; basically, I think of it as the same thing. Well, there's this castle in Scotland; it's right on the border of Scotland and England. From up on top of the castle you can look out over many rolling hills. It used to be all covered with trees, as you know, in ancient times. These were logged off, all surrounding this castle. And this was really doing the same thing as these earthworks. Because this was the route from Scotland, the Scots attacking the English. And from the castle up there, they left the groves and cut others so that they could see way off people coming. And the people coming-- the roads were such that they were always inside of the timber. They couldn't see the castle until they got up close. But the people on the ramparts of the castle could see the army coming.

And, another thing they had were figures made of lead with a lance and bows and arrows. Eight or ten of them around the ramparts of the castle. Then, they had one or two live guards up there. But these lead figures -- to these people from the distance-- it looked like all kinds of people and guards of the castle watching for attack. It wasn't done specially to make the castle look attractive or anything. It had quite an elaborate reasoning in back of it. Well, these earthworks have too. There's more than just making this dump look pretty. It's involved with life. In your thing there, you were quoting this man in today's paper? His explanation was that these were people who lived in these things. Well, isn't that exactly what happened in this castle? They involved the total life of the people in a meaningful way. I think these are completely acceptable. I accept them as completely as sculptors or painters, artists, or whatever they want to call themselves. But I think it is very much the same thing as the best of the used-to-be landscape architects. The best of their work would be classed as very high examples of the earthworks.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I understand.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I think it's a wonderful development of an old thing. Because they've taken those big blocks, those ugly things on the edge of the lake. Well, you've seen those things and they're ugly as hell. Well, for somebody to put trails through them and make them significant; it's a wonderful thing to do. I'm just delighted that they do these things.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You're not tempted, huh?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I'm not tempted, nor do I find this in competition in any way with the problem of trying to create a world on a flat surface. It seems to me such a totally different kind of effort. There's no reason in the world why I, doing what I like to do, should like what they do. I do like most of those things I've seen very much. I completely accept them as a direction. But, on the other hand, I don't see the slightest reason of the world why the finest of those should like or dislike my paintings. I think it's something quite different.

SUE ANN KENDALL: There's room for everything.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Room for everything. One thing I do feel is that painting is dismissed. Today, many people believe in the developments, in the earthworks, and so on, and they speak of traditional art as something that has no living vitality in today's world. Well, one of the unfortunate examples of the lack of validity of that is that you go to every cheap fair or look in the hallways or foyers of middle-sized banks and so forth, and what do you see? The same kind of paintings-- of flowers, a stag on the edge of woods -- that you've seen for the last hundred years. And, you can find them in Germany, you find them in Scandinavia, in the Middle West, here, or on the coast or in New York. There's a lot of galleries in New York that have this stuff. These paintings, unfortunately, are exactly the same things that you saw when you were two years old and I did, even longer ago than that. And so I don't think there's any reason for any of the earth people or the easel people to object to each other. I don't think there's anything that's old-fashioned about what you experience visually with your eyes.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I certainly don't.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: There is an interpretation of that. What is writing? The novel of great consequence? There's no such thing as saying, "You can't use words any more. Nobody uses words now." It would be just as much nonsense to say that you shouldn't use words to write poetry with, because that's what the old-fashioned people did from the Middle Ages; even they were using words.

SUE ANN KENDALL: It would be saying like you can't use paint to paint with any more.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Yeah.

SUE ANN KENDALL: What do you like to look at in contemporary painting in terms of, say, new movements that are in New York?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Well, I think the same that it's always been with me. Because always what interests me is an experience that I haven't previously had. In the world of, say, easel painting, it may be dripped on, as Pollock did, or rubbed on, or painted with brushes. But if it's alive, it's alive. If an artist living today can produce a painting that is alive, it's not more alive than a Rembrandt. Nor is Rembrandt more alive than it is. They are both alive. No matter how much time has

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gone by, if it is alive to you, it's alive. It's a living experience. That's why I don't feel that I could answer that question because if I see anything in a painting-- maybe it's in New York or somewhere like in China, where we were a couple of years ago - I cannot say this is more alive than my first experience with Rembrandt or my first experience with Turner or Liszt.

Turner, by the way, is an example of one of those people in my life. When I first was doing quite academic watercolors and I got one into a national show when I was sixteen or something, oh, boy, that was big-time stuff to me. And, it was realism, you know. Little dots and figures, little waves. So at that time, I thought Turner was wonderful. Then with seeing these things [Klee, Feininger, Kandinsky and Jawlensky--Ed.] with _____ in San Francisco, then I dropped that. The next time I saw Turner in London I really didn't like it, because I was then newly discovering the world of painting represented by the Blue Four.

Then some years went by and I felt much more secure in what I was doing in my own way. And, I saw this exhibition in the Tate in London of Turner's and I realized that he was really a great painter. He'd done an awful lot of superficial things because a great mass of these things were being bought by people. But he was a great painter. So over this period of many years, I went through a number of different changes in reference to Turner and not one damn stroke of any one of those paintings changed an iota during that time. I was the one who'd changed. Once I realized how alive they were, then he, of course, had remained alive and I'll see very bad ones of his and very good ones.

[Tape 7; side 1]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: I think it takes a good artist to do bad paintings because if you get an adequate artist, everything they do is adequate at least, but nothing ever exceeds the adequate. But a good artist is one that's constantly trying to do something he can't do, or she, or never's done and they're going to fail a lot of times. But, if they get it, it's better than anything they've done in the past because it's alive.

It's like the stock market-- the higher the risk, the greater the chance of failure, but if you hit it, you hit it.

You know this with the stock market: a book came out years ago surveying the stock market in terms of art. There were ten artists -- several Frenchmen, others, I can't remember. But one of the ten was myself, as a speculative or growth issue. In terms of the stock market, there were the "blue chips," the obvious ones like Picasso, Monet, Matisse. Then there is the speculative and growth issue. But, we did see, just about four or five years ago, Wall Street Journal came out with quotations from that book.

SUE ANN KENDALL: You were the speculative growth issue? (laughter) What was the name of the book again?

[Discussion with Beth, who says she can't remember the name, but they have the book--Ed.]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: It's down at the beach. We'll show it to you. But anyway, it was kind of an interesting thing. I've never really known what a speculative or growth issue was and since I read that, I always hoped to hell that that's an important thing. (laughter)

But at least it was mentioned. It's like the Who's Who in the World. We got a copy of that and it had just three Callahans. One was the British prime minister, spelled with a 'g', then an industrialist in New York, and me.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Ah ha! Good for you.

[Beth: "Big deal."]

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, that's something I must tell you. This was a time, years ago, when I just had a little tiny mention in Time magazine. It was just about this much, you know [illustrates--Ed.], in an article about something or other. We were at this party over in West Seattle at the Greens. There was quite a lot of people there and everybody was saying, "Oh, that's wonderful, Ken, read you name in Time today--have you seen it? -- isn't that wonderful?" Their (the Greens) fourteen-year-old son came along and he said, "Yeah, big deal!" (laughter) Isn't that wonderful? He was so right.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Really sort of said it all, didn't he?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Ever since then, I really liked him. As it happens, he and his wife-- his girlfriend, I guess it was -- frequently visited with our son up in Canada and they are good friends.

SUE ANN KENDALL: Well, I take it you intend on continuing painting?

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yeah. It really is an interest of mine twenty-four hours a day. I don't feel any pressure to get to work on it. In fact, in the last fifteen years or so, I've been much more relaxed about painting. I don't feel any hurry any more at all. When I was young, I used to feel that, my God, time's going by and I'll have to really get at this and get this thing and really make a good thing of this. So, it was just all hurry. Well, now, I feel I have endless time. Of course, obviously, I don't. I couldn't get a nickel's worth of life insurance. (laughter) I feel I just have plenty of time and it's kind of wonderful because I feel quite relaxed about it. Whatever I'm involved in, it's fine. As soon as I get home to the studio, the first thing I want to do is go to work. But I don't feel we have to race around in order to get there and do it.

SUE ANN KENDALL: I'm sure that's a pleasant way to have it, now.

KENNETH CALLAHAN: Oh, yes. It's much better and more relaxed.

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