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Transcript

Interview

LB LOUIS BUNCE

RL RACHEL ROSENFELD LAFO

[Session 1]

RL Why don't you tell me something about your family background? I know you were born in Wyoming in 1907. What did your parents do? What was your father's profession?

LB He was in electrical work, electrical engineer.

RL And was your mother a housewife?

LB Yes.

RL Did they have any interest in the arts?

LB Yeah, they did. They did very much. My father drew quite a bit and in fact, he was a pretty good draftsman, I thought. At least I thought then__ it excited me. And he also made little sculptures, particularly of animals, desert animals like horn-toads, prairie dogs and this kind of thing. And then he cast them; he cast them in various kinds of metal. In other words he was working with a wax, something he could handle and then burn that out. Traditional wax casting.

RL Was he self-taught?

LB Yeah, apparently. It was just an interest he had and he used to draw quite a bit, and I think very early on I wanted to be an artist. I liked what he did, I really did. Just enjoyed it very much. I didn't know specifically I wanted to be a painter necessarily but certainly the germ was put there very early. And I remember I wanted paints and drawing materials which they furnished to me all the time, and so it was an incentive, very much so.

RL Did you have any brothers or sisters?

LB I had one sister.

RL Was she also artistic?

LB No, not really.

RL Did you grow up in Lander for those early years?

LB Lander and Casper.

RL Casper. Now those are, at that time, fairly rural communities?

LB Very small town. Lander was more of a rural community__ it was in a different part of the world. It was more mountainous and more lush in growth, whereas around Casper it was desert, very dry, open, windy, cold, very cold.

RL What caused your family to move to Portland?

LB Well I don't know the exact reasons except that a lot of members of my mother's family were living out here, and I think they encouraged them to perhaps come to Oregon and experience a different part of the world.

RL You were thirteen years old?

LB About thirteen or fourteen, somewhere around there.

RL I think it was 1920.

LB Well, I'd be thirteen. So that was quite a change for me and for the family too because suddenly you get into an entirely different environment__ not as cold, wetter, and a different climate. I don't mean climate climate but an existence, a different existence. This was a large city. Although Portland was not very large then, it was a large city compared to where we had been and grown up. You see, Casper was probably, well, it grew very rapidly when they discovered oil. It was a boom town, but before that it was what we used to call a cowtown. It's

about all there was: one street, lots of cowboys, Indians.

RL Do you feel that where you've lived has affected your artwork?

LB Oh, I think so. I think very much so. I think that the fact that I was born in an area where the landscape was very prominent__ I think this was an early interest. I was very interested in the land. Was out in it all the time as a matter of fact. When I came to Oregon, I think I was probably a little shocked by the kind of land until I discovered it. For instance, the ocean was a new experience for me, that kind of vastness. But I also discovered an urban landscape and that interested me very much. Life in the city and that undoubtedly had a great deal of influence on me, I think.

RL In what you were to paint__ _

LB Well, eventually, yeah, I mean it had some influence on me: the structures, the number of people that were on the streets and the life of the city itself. It always interested me. So, I had these two things actually. You know, the open landscape and also the urban landscape.

RL After you graduated from high school, you then went on to study at the Museum Art School.

LB Briefly, yes. I went to night class in the beginning and the next year, I was able to go to day class. But not full time. I had to work.

RL Who were your teachers? Do you remember?

LB A man by the name of Harry Wentz, who was more or less the head of the school. I don't know if he had a title or not. And there was a lady by the name of Stephens, Clara Jane Stephens, who was an early instructor of painting. And I had her for painting and drawing the first year. Later I had, well, actually when I went to night school, I had Harry Wentz, because he was teaching a drawing class in the evening. And, then I had history from a lady by the name of Henrietta Failing.

RL Who was the curator at the time, I think, at the museum?

LB Well, I don't know whether she had a title or not. The head of the school was Miss Crocker__ Annabelle Crocker.

RL Who were some of your classmates? Are they artists who are still in Portland today?

LB Well, yes. Bill Givler, who was later the dean of the school; he was a classmate of that time. And, who else was there? I really don't know what some of these people are doing. I haven't any idea whether they've pursued art to any extent, but there was one of the Failing girls there in the school, and Latta. There was a young man by the name of Flagherty__ Lyle Flagherty. And he's still around Portland, I think, but I don't really know what he's doing.

RL So, it must have been a very small class?

LB It was very small, yeah, extremely small.

RL I don't recall whether Raymond Jonson, the painter who is now in New Mexico__ do you know his work?

LB Raymond Jonson? He wasn't around at that time. I know he was here but at a different time. No, the school was very, very small. I think the night class was probably larger than the day classes because of trying to pull people in the community into classes.

RL What kind of work did you do during the day?

LB I worked at various kinds of jobs. I worked at Lipman, Wolfe for a while, and I worked in a couple of restaurants__ things like that. I was a Western Union boy one summer. (laughter)

RL So whatever you could do?

LB Everything.

RL As a student, what were you painting? All kinds of__ _?

LB Well, mostly the emphasis was on drawing at that time. And the painting, Miss Stephens would set up very simple still lifes. We didn't engage in painting the figure at all. This was during the first year. So the emphasis was on drawing really.

RL Was this your first formal education in art? Or did you take some of it in high school?

LB Well, high school offered very, very little in those days. They had what they called mechanical drawing and that was about the extent of it.

RL That's more like shop, machine shop?

LB Well, they call it art; they get you to try to do posters and things like that, but it wasn't art in the sense.

RL Well, then after that year or shortly thereafter, you decided to go to New York?

LB Well, yeah. Bill Givler was one of the people__ finally I went with him. There was another fellow by the name of Dan Northup, who was very interested and the three of us were going to go to New York. Dan sort of dropped out because his interest shifted to literature rather than painting. So, finally, Bill and I went and we both worked a lot of years, I recall, full time. I worked at Swift & Company that year in North Portland and tried to earn as much money as we could. Save our money, and have some money to go on. So, it must have been a year after that.

RL What was your reason for going?

LB Well, to study art, really, and to see some paintings. We hadn't been able to see much. Although surprisingly, there were some good shows here. Miss Crocker brought in some very good shows. For instance, she showed__ I remember specifically__ a show called "The Blue Four" which was Jawlensky, Feininger__ _ _ Who were the other members of that "Blue Four," do you remember?

RL Was it Franz Marc?

LB Franz Marc, yeah, and there was one other.

RL Kandinsky?

LB Was it Kandinsky or Klee?

RL I think it would have been Kandinsky in "The Blue Four."

LB Anyway, I don't know how she arranged this show but she was interested, and we were all very impressed by this show. And then she had shows of some modern Americans at that time. I remember seeing things like early Hartleys, and Weber, and a lot of these people. There were smallish paintings but they were paintings__ we were exposed to some paintings. Then, one year there was a visitor here from Chicago, as a visiting instructor. His name was Edmund Schildknecht. He was a German. And he brought reproductions, big facsimile reproductions out. He used to show them to us and we talked about them. I remember, Bill and I went to his apartment a couple of times, drank beer and talked about art. He kind of turned us on to a lot of things.

So we were building up a desire to see as many paintings as we could in the flesh rather than just a reproduction.

RL So that inspired you, and you chose New York because there was more happening there than, let's say, San Francisco?

LB Sure. Oh, you mean San Francisco?

RL There probably wasn't that much going on there at that time?

LB I don't think we even considered. I think New York was the goal. It was the mecca, the place that you go to, just like it is now. And, I think, we didn't think of other places, really. We had to work, as I said, for a good year to earn some money.

RL Did you know anybody there? Did you just arrive?

LB We just arrived.

RL Took the train?

LB Yeah, yeah, took the train. There weren't any airplanes to speak of. (laughter)

RL What did you do when you got there?

LB As I recall, I think we went directly to the League.

RL The Art Students League?

LB Yeah, knowing that we were going to go there, and I think they were helpful about suggesting places that we might stay. And we did find a room right close, around Columbus Circle, which was fair. And it wasn't too long until we met a lot of people around the League, people of our own age who were going to school there.

We looked at the city__ tramped the city__ discovered it, and found other places to live, so we all lived all over the joint. And we roomed with a couple of people that were going to the League__ people from Madison, Wisconsin, and one from Kansas City.

RL How did you find New York at that time? Was it what you expected it to be? Was it an easy place to get into the art world?

LB How do you mean get into the art world?

RL Well, I mean to get involved, to meet other artists, to__ __

LB Well, not immediately, but it wasn't very long. We went to shows all the time, we went around the League constantly. There were a lot of interested students, there was all the good schools. You know, you feed off of on another. Yes, we met people, you know, like the instructors, for instance.

RL Now I know you've told me in the past, but for this purpose, who were your instructors at the Art Students League?

LB Well, I studied with [Max__Ed.] Weber and a man by the name of von Schlegell__ William von Schlegell__ and he was very influential on me. I liked him as a person. And he showed me things he felt I would be interested in, things like Bonnard, who was a great love of his. So he introduced me to people like that.

RL Did he teach painting?

LB He taught painting, yes.

RL Also you had once told me that Boardman Robinson was a teacher?

LB Boardman Robinson, I took drawing from him. And, he was a very powerful personality. Very strong and you were conscious of him. Then there was one other chap by the name of Richard Lahey.

RL Who was also a teacher?

LB A teacher, yeah. He had painting and drawing.

RL Now, what about Max Weber? What was that like to have him as a teacher?

LB That was okay. He was a very vigorous person, too. And, he knew a lot about modern art. I mean, he'd been in the movement very, very early. So he had a lot to say about modern art, particularly about Cubism, which excited him very much at that time. There were other instructors. I didn't take any work from some of them but we still got to know them. We got to know them by going up to Maine a couple of summers.

RL At Ogunquit?

LB At Ogunquit, yes. And many of them, many of these people from the League would go there in the summer and so we had a chance to talk to them, visit with them on another level__ not as a student but a little different level. There was a person like Bernard Karfiol. Do you know his work?

RL Yes, we have one of his paintings in the collection which is on view right now.

LB He was kind of a strong influence on people.

RL I didn't realize that you had known him.

LB And von Schlegell would go up there. There was a lady by the name of Dorothy Varian who was a very excellent painter, and you don't hear much about her any more. But she was a very good painter. There was a sculptress by the name of Concetta Scarvaglionne, who was not only a beautiful girl but a good sculptress, really in the kind of tradition of Maillol and Despian. She was Italian and she lived most of the time in New York. But, most of these people came up to Maine in the summer, sometime.

RL Did you rent places up there?

LB Yeah, we rented a place from one of the instructors by the name of Robert Laurent, who was a sculptor. And we rented the place from him. And, it was not right on the beach, it wasn't right on the coast. It was back in the hills, maybe four or five miles. And it was a very wonderful place. My goodness, we had a lot of room and a big house and a barn and a nice well.

RL So what were your paintings like at that time? You must have been painting there.

LB Well, I painted a lot of landscape up there in Maine and some of the farm buildings around there.

RL And what about the ocean?

LB The ocean, yes.

RL Now, since you were involved in the New York art scene and had seen so many shows, I imagine, and were being taught by people such as Weber, who was influenced by cubism, did you find that entering your work?

LB Well, not at that moment, not as much as Cezanne. Cezanne was still my God. And I know that the things I did in Maine, those little landscapes, were "Cezannish," particularly in using the stroke, a certain kind of stroke in a directional way__ breaking down the color. But, they were looser, kind of pointed toward, maybe the influence of Bonnard, quite a bit. I think that was through von Schlegell, who talked about him a great deal. And he talked about Renoir__ he loved Renoir__ and I started digging Renoir, also. But, I was not so much into cubism at the moment. That was something I had to think about. I had exposure to it though because of the galleries. A lot of good galleries in New York then.

RL What were the galleries that stick out in your mind?

LB Well, for instance, Carl Nierendorf had a wonderful gallery and Valentine Dudensing, the Daniel Gallery__ you know those?

RL Yes, the names are familiar to me.

LB And then there was the Rehn Gallery which was pretty prominent then.

RL And some of them showed European work and some American?

LB Some showed almost strictly European work like Dudensing__ There were others, I can't remember some of the others. There were a lot of galleries, not as many as now, but considerable__ Then there was the Stieglitz place.

RL 291__?

LB Well, it was called American Place.

RL Did you go there frequently?

LB Oh, sure.

RL That sounds like it was a very influential gallery.

LB Yeah, it was. Of course what really knocked me over was that I was there when the Modern Museum [Museum of Modern Art__Ed.] opened and they opened with a Cezanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin and Seurat show. You know, this was something to see, I'll tell you. To open a new museum with these four great masters of modern art was just really a mind blower. I visited that thing constantly. I really got to know it, really looked at these things. It was quite an event. I'll never forget it.

RL Where were they located then?

LB They were located right on the corner of 57th and Fifth Avenue in a building called the Hecksher Building. They just rented a suite of rooms on the floor and kind of reconstructed a little bit for galleries; one led into the other. And they followed up with a Matisse show which was really exciting. This was the beginning - that was 1929. I still have a catalogue around someplace.

RL That was perfect for you to be there at the time?

LB Yeah, it was just the right time, really.

RL Who were some of your friends, other artists you got to know-I don't know if they influenced your work but__

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LB Well, I think the other students were influential, yes. A lot of them became quite well known later. And, well, I first met Pollock then. He was a student then.

RL At the Art Students League?

LB And Dave Smith was a student there, and those people were influential, sure. Not as artists necessarily but as___. You felt that they were in the arts, they were vital people in this world, in the art world.

RL Even at that time, you feel that they were___

LB I didn't analyze it that far, but I certainly kept track of many of them for years and years. There was a chap that I ran around with a lot by the name of Joe Meert and he was a very good friend of Jack's [Pollock] too. A friend of Jack's all of his life. And, who else

was there then? Gottlieb. A lot of people there that you got to know as students but necessarily as artists, per se.

RL Do you still have any contacts with people from those days in New York?

LB Well, most of them are gone.

RL I know, but you knew De Kooning at one point, didn't you?

LB Not at the League. He didn't go to the League.

RL So that was later?

LB He comes later.

RL Well, then at some point, you had to return to Portland- there was the Depression?

LB Well, the Depression came along so I came back to Portland after about four years there.

RL And you came back to find work in Oregon?

LB Well, I think we decided that we should go home after four years of school and see what the old man was doing. Anyway, we both went back and then the Depression, you know, became very rugged. It had hit out here very hard. It was starting to hit in New York but it wasn't so bad, really. There were a few people jumping off the buildings__ stockbrokers__ but I didn't feel like that. I didn't have any stock then. (laughter)

RL You weren't in a position to lose that much.

LB No. Anyway, I think we probably got a little tired and wanted to check out the local ground. There was no specific reason why; we hadn't reasoned it out. It was a trip. I was always trying to move some place.

But the Depression did settle in very hard here as it did in the rest of the country and so you couldn't move as easily. Except we did. We took a lot of chances. Bill and I went back in 1934 to see the World's Fair in Chicago, because we heard it was going to be a good show and it was. It was a great show. But we rode a freight back there, had a couple of weeks.

RL Do you remember what you saw that particularly___?

LB Well, it was a large show. It covered the Old Masters and went into the modern period. It was a tremendous show.

RL So you managed to get around as much as you could. And you obviously were aware of what was happening in other parts of the country.

LB Oh, sure, we kept that up. I think we were both very excited about what we had found out, what we had done, our direction.

RL What did you do when you came back to Portland?

LB You mean in working?

RL Yes.

LB Well, it was just odd jobs again. Whatever I could do. I painted on buildings, did all kinds of things like that. But there were no jobs. Finally, the government came through with a little help, but it was very minor at the time.

RL That was the Works Progress Administration?

LB Well, no. The Works Progress, yeah.

RL WPA?

LB No, the WPA___ It started with another project. It was just three or six months, something like that. It was called Public Works of Art Project. It was called PWAP, and what they did was that they bought some paintings. They came to your studio and bought paintings which were allocated to tax-supported buildings through the country. They weren't restricted to Portland; a lot of them went East. I don't know where some of these things went.

RL So you don't know where your paintings went? How many paintings did you do for this project?

LB We didn't do them specifically for the project; they just came and bought them from your studio. Everyone managed to have a room some place that they could work in. Rents were very cheap then so, we paid \$10 a month or something, less than that, for a good studio. I wanted to remain in painting but I'm sure that I did this simply because I felt that that's what I was going to do and wanted to do. So I kept the other thing as small as I could- that is, work, money_earning work-as minor as possible. I just worked odd jobs or whatever. Painted signs for a while, all this kind of stuff. Swiped a few things.

RL Then, I know from conversations we've had in the past, you became more formally involved with the whole New Deal projects for artists, and didn't you get involved with the Salem Art Center?

LB Well, this comes a little bit later, now. We're talking about the middle '30s- about '34. I'm not sure when the WPA itself came into being, but it wasn't then. It was a little later. They had this PWAP, then finally, the WPA was formed and I went down to Salem to teach at the Art Center down there, which was a new project which was co_sponsored by the city. That was the way they'd set these centers up. In other words, the township had to put up a certain amount of money- quarters for instance-and then the WPA would pay salaries, and they had touring shows of WPA work that came through, and they brought people from the East. They had an exchange program so that they tried to decentralize some of the artists out of the heavier sections of the East and bring them to the West and so on.

RL And you were involved with the Salem Art Center?

LB I was involved in teaching down there and then I became- I had a title, finally, I was Assistant Director. That was a non-relief project. Now, what I mean by that was that I wasn't able to get on relief; no matter how broke you are, you still can't get on, as long as some member of your family was gainfully employed. So, I was not able to get on.

RL Who in your family?

LB Well, there were different members. My sister was working-she had a job- and my father had a job and so I wasn't, though I didn't live at home. Still, there were members of my family and that made me ineligible to receive relief, because you had to qualify for relief in order to get on a project. Like it is now, probably. So, there were a certain number of openings on all the projects for a non-relief status. That's how I got on. I got on down there.

RL So you did earn a salary?

LB Oh yeah, sure. I earned a regular salary that they paid. But, I was not on relief. I'm bringing this up simply because this had an influence later, too. So, I was there, and I can't remember the length of time, but I was there probably a year at least. And then I wanted to get on an easel project, that is paint, which I managed to do finally, and that meant coming back to Portland. So I worked on the easel project for a few months but still on a non-relief basis.

RL And the easel project was again where they would buy paintings from your studio?

NOTE: change first tab to 7!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

LB Well, then you were supposed to paint so many per month or per___ Let's see, how was that? It was very

liberal. I think you were supposed to deliver a painting approximately every six weeks or some such deal, which was very easy. But, you weren't supposed to put a lot of hours in. You had shorter hours; you didn't have eight hours a day. You put in much less than that as time. That was through the nation. You didn't have a forty-hour week; they had more like a thirty-hour.

RL I see from looking at the chronology that I prepared, that before you went to Salem, you had worked on some murals, one for the St. Johns Post Office.

LB Well, I won a competition through the Treasury Department. Now, that has nothing to do with relief. This was a competition, open competition. And a friend of mine by the name of Erich Lamade and I both got this job in the Federal Building in Grants Pass. And there was a panel on each of the lobby [sic] and Erich did one and I did other. We had to prepare sketches which were sent to Washington for approval. We got a contract for them. We were paid- actually it was the beginning of a kind of a one percent for art, I guess.

RL That was in the post office there?

LB That was the way it was handled then. It was a certain percentage, set by the building cost, for adornment. I'm not sure about the percentage but it was the beginning of what was termed as one percent.

RL What was the subject of that mural?

LB Indians. Kind of a rural, old-time Indians of the Columbia River Gorge.

RL Was that up to you or was that suggested to you?

LB It was up to me.

RL So you decided.

LB And then Erich did something pertaining to mining and working the soil.

RL Now, before that mural, didn't you also work on a mural for the St. Johns Post Office?

LB Yes, that was under the same program. That was under a man by the name of John Ballitor, who was actually the boss. He had won the commission and he hired both Erich and I to work on that.

RL So that's where you really got your experience to do that? That was your first mural?

LB John had been a student at Yale. He had learned tempera techniques, fresco secco and true fresco. He was excited about it and he kind of pushed us into it; so I learned tempera painting from John, really. And, then when I did the mural in Grants Pass, I used the tempera. That was my introduction to egg tempera.

RL Did you do any other murals at that time?

LB Not at that time, no.

RL So the paintings that you were painting for the easel project or just for yourself- what were you doing at that time? What kind of style?

LB Things that were around this environment; that is, the city, the river, the docks, the lumber, the lumberyards. The kind of desolateness of the Depression, probably, crept into them a little bit. I think they were all very quiet. The bridges, the river excited me.

RL Could you describe the style that you were painting in?

LB You have some of those paintings.

RL Right, I know. I think there is an element of surrealism in the work of the period.

LB I think I was excited about- I was acquainted with surrealism.

RL From New York?

LB Oh, yeah, New York, Chicago, San Francisco.

RL As you said before, it really wasn't until a little bit later that elements of cubism came in.

LB Well, cubism interested me, but not as much as surrealism, right at the moment. Now surrealism hit me a

little harder when I went to New York, later. We'll come to that. It was much more of an influence later because [the event] of some of the surrealists that were in New York. And it was in the air much more than it was here. But, it still interested me very much because I'd seen some things of DiChirico and Ernst, early. DiChirico particularly interested me as you can tell from some of those paintings.

RL Right, the stillness, and the shadows cast. Now, you saw a DiChirico exhibition in San Francisco? Do you remember when that was?

LB It was about, well I don't remember the date, no.

RL I may actually have that from before.

LB You might have that somewhere.

RL Was that the Golden Gate International?

LB Yeah.

RL It was 1939, then.

LB Well, that's a little later, you see. I think I saw some DiChiricos in Chicago in '34 when Bill and I went to see the big international show, which was a great show, I must admit. It was a marvelous show, and it was held over for two years, it was so popular. That was a marvelous World's Fair anyway. They don't put them on like that any more.

RL You didn't go to this most recent World's Fair?

LB No, I didn't go. The last World's Fair I went to was in New York

RL '64?

LB ___ '64.

RL The last one I went to also.

LB Where are we?

RL You were on an easel project and the Salem Art Center. And then at some point, you went back to New York.

LB Well, that wasn't until late '39, I guess or somewhere in there. I think my time was up in my easel painting project here. So I thought, well, let's go to New York.

RL Did you go with somebody this time?

LB I was married. I got married to Eda back in 1939. Was it '38 or '39?

RL I'd have to look that up; I'm not sure I have that date.

LB I can't remember. It was somewhere around there.

RL So, you got married and ___

LB So I went to New York. We just- still adventurous, you know. So, I wanted to get on the project there. I didn't know whether I could but that's what I wanted to do.

RL Were you able to?

LB Finally, yeah. Not right away.

RL How did you get on it?

LB Well, I had to qualify for relief and that was the most difficult thing because I was new to New York and you were supposed to have a residency of at least two years. So, I had a residency of at least two years; I think I was born in New Jersey, I believe. I think I was.

RL At that time, anyway.

LB Well, at that time. Somewhere in ___ My background was changed. So, I finally qualified for relief through the Henry Street Settlement House. That's in New York City.

RL Was that down in the East 30s?

LB Yeah.

RL I used to live near there myself. I grew up there. Now, how did that work? Was it an easel project?

LB I got on a mural project first and later I got on an easel project.

RL So where did you do murals?

LB I didn't get to do any. I did a lot of sketches. The thing was, to get something on a wall was pretty difficult because the same system was working. The person who you were doing a sketch for, they were interested, but they had to come up with a certain amount of money in order to match it. And half of the time they couldn't do it so a lot of murals didn't get on a wall. The biggest group that got on was during the Fair, in decorating those Fair buildings_ _ _

[Interruption in tape]

LB I got sketches submitted and practically approved- well, approved in essence- but there was no money. So, we'd just go on to do something else. And that wasn't a good experience, really. You know you do sketches, you do details and all that which is the accepted way of working. But then I shifted to the easel project. And that was better simply because then you work in your studio and you deliver paintings in the normal length of time and it was much better. I felt like I was wasting my time on the mural projects half the time because it was a period of waiting all the time. You didn't know what to hell you were going to do. And then they assign you a helper or two, and what do you do with these guys? You were supposed to keep them employed and, well, I had nothing for them to do. I'd have to send them to the library for research, but you can't constantly send someone up to the library unless he just wants to sleep.

RL Send him out for donuts.

LB Oh, well we ate donuts, yeah.

RL Where did you live at the time?

LB I lived in a lot of places in New York. When I got on the project, I was living way over on the East Side, on East 8th Street. Way over, practically to the river. It was ABC. I was living between B and C. It was way over there. It was a good neighborhood then.

RL Near St. Mark's Place.

LB Oh, way up further.

RL Further, much further East?

LB Oh my God, it was clear to the East River.

RL I guess they still call it East Village.

LB They call it East Village. It's changed a lot. No, it was way across Tompkins Square. It was just cheap rent. We had to get on relief, and it was the cheapest rent we could find. But I had been living over on Greenwich Street for a while; we'd sort of shackled up with some other people. And then later, I moved over to 16th Street on the East Side- that is near Union Square, right near Stuyvesant Square. And I had a pretty good studio there.

RL When was that?

LB Well, I don't remember the dates, honey. That's hard for me to pin down because there were so many changes and moves then.

RL Sometime between 1939 and 1942?

LB Yeah, it was somewhere in there, because Jon was born in 1941 and we were living on 16th Street then. So by '41 we certainly were.

RL What else was going on in New York? I know you were involved in other cultural activities such as jazz and literary groups.

LB Yeah, I was interested in jazz, very much, and a literary magazine which was called Now. It was one of the little magazines and I managed to interview some people for material. Everyone was excited about little mags then.

RL Whom did you interview?

LB Some poets and some artists. For instance, Davis wrote an article for us- Stuart Davis. And we got some material from Williams- William Carlos Williams- and from Cummings- e e cummings.

RL Did you get to know these people then?

LB I got to talk to them, yeah.

RL Were you an art editor? Or were you a writer?

LB I was the art editor.

RL How long did Now last?

LB Oh, about a year at the most. It was very tough.

RL Who was funding it? Who was the publisher?

LB Well, it was the three of us. There were three of us that were trying to fund it out of our own pockets, which made a hassle, I'll tell you.

RL Who were the other two?

LB Two guys from Reed [College in Portland-Ed.]. One was named William Johnson. He was the chief. And what was the other boy's name? Roberts, his last name was Roberts. What the hell, I can't remember his first name right now. He did a little writing and Johnson did too, particularly poetry. I don't know what happened to those people. I've lost track of them.

RL They had been teaching at Reed?

LB No, they were students.

RL Students at Reed, but they were back in New York.

LB Yeah. They had come back to New York. And I had known them briefly out here. So, we kind of got together and talked about starting a little magazine, which was exciting to do. We found a place down in the Village, a little basement area, located a cheap press, and hand set the first issue, which was a job, I'll tell you. Then we were finally were able to hire somebody to set type. It wasn't large; naturally it couldn't be very large.

RL Do you still have copies of them?

LB Somewhere I've got a copy of two now.

RL That would be interesting to _ _ _

LB I'll send them to the Archives. And we got some woodcut illustrations. Like, remember an artist by the name of Alton Pickens?

RL What's the first name?

LB Alton.

RL Alton Pickens- I'm not familiar.

LB Anyway, he became quite well known later for his painting and woodcuts. He did a couple of woodcuts for us.

RL Did you yourself do any illustrations for the magazine?

LB No, no, we tried to get other people. That was one purpose of the _ _ _

RL What about your involvement with jazz? Was it just going to various jazz concerts?

LB Going and listening a lot, and I had known some jazz people, particularly two-beat jazz in those years, and

had listened a lot, and had gotten acquainted with them. So, I sort of followed it, I guess, as much as I could. I was able to form some friendships with a lot of the players at that time. And, I remember we went to hear, well, we went to the opening of Cafe' Society. There was a friend of mine by the name of Anton Refregier, who did decorations, and he did a decoration for Mr. Josephson who opened Cafe' Society uptown. It was kind of a nice decoration. And Refregier managed to invite us there and it was our night out on the town there.

RL Where was the Cafe' Society?

LB It was uptown. I can't remember exactly the location now. It was kind of a neat place. It was beautiful. And I remember there was a jazz pianist by the name of Hazel Scott. And she was just absolutely great. That was the opening gun. It was quite an experience.

RL And that became a hangout?

LB Well, not for us, we couldn't afford that. That was too fancy. We had to go to the Village where there was a lot of jazz being played, as there always is in New York, and it was much less costly.

RL What about your own work? Were you having any shows in New York?

LB Not then.

RL But you did, I think it was '34, you had a one-man show in Seattle? How did that come about?

LB Well, that was through Ken Callahan, who was a curator then of the museum [Seattle Art Museum-Ed.], and he invited me to. Well, I had won a prize, one of the Annuals, and as a result, I think he and Dr. Fuller [Dr. Eugene Fuller, Museum President-Ed.] decided I should have a one-man show. So I had a one-man show and that was the first show I had in '34.

RL But in New York, were you trying to? Did you take your work to galleries? You didn't feel ready at that point? So during this time_ _ _

LB Well, later on the project some of us tried, but there was very little interest I'll tell you.

RL During that time period then, right around 1940-'41, when you were involved with Now magazine and jazz, what kind of work were you painting?

LB Fairly abstract, I'd say, very abstract- I think the influence of Picasso and Braque and Le'ger and others. And there were some influences of surrealism still. I would say very strongly because a lot of those people were in New York at that time. I was on the project and we came in contact with a lot of them. For instance, Le'ger talked to the Artists' Union one evening and we met Ernst, for instance. Now, I was running around a little bit with Jack then. And he was excited as well as I was about the surrealists. And I remember we went to see a big, beautiful Miro show at the modern museum [MOMA-Ed.] in '41. It was a dinger, I'll tell you. And a lot of those people were in New York at that time. Seligman, and Ernst came, and Tanguy.

RL You had many sources to look at.

LB Yes, right. And they were being shown a lot. There was one gallery by the name of Julien Levy Gallery which showed a lot of these artists' work. For instance Tchelitchew, whom I thought was a great draftsman, still do. And Berman, both of the Bermans. And he showed Matta; he was one of the first to show Matta, who was relatively new on the scene then. He was quite a young person.

RL I'm recalling your work of the time that we had in the exhibition. There's that small drawing the museum owns of a woman, like a dreamer, in a profile.

LB Yeah, well that's in the '40s.

RL And that again_ _ _

LB That has a kind of a surrealist mood, I think. Not strictly surrealist but it has something of it. Something of the neo-romanticist ideas, I think, in it.

RL You also started using collage at that time. Again, was that partly from looking at Picasso and Braque?

LB Well, Picasso and Braque. I think all these men who were masters at collage certainly had an influence on me. But I had seen some of that stuff before. It wasn't brand new to me; I had looked at it before.

RL So how did you use collage in your work? Did you save all kinds of papers?

LB I had a wallpaper book, I remember, for one thing. It had all kinds of great stuff in it. It had all kinds of wood-grained textures, printed, and all kinds of free stuff in the wallpaper book. (laughter) You could get wallpaper sample books in those days and cut things out of them. And, you know, we cut up other materials.

RL So you were doing works on paper in addition to paintings at the time?

LB Oh, yeah.

RL What about prints?

LB Well, I got started in silkscreen in those years.

RL In New York?

LB Yeah. Not on the project, outside of the project. But most of the people were on the project. And we got started what was called the Silkscreen Group, later became known as the Serigraph Society. But at that time it was called the Silkscreen Group. And we met in different people's studios who had some equipment. We experimented a lot with printing. I did my first print in New York, which was based on kind of a semi_abstract__ I call it Yard, which was a junkyard. I would say kind of semi_abstract.

RL That still exists doesn't it?

LB Oh, yeah.

RL I know the one you're referring to. Was silkscreen or serigraphy in its early stages then as an art form?

LB Early stages, yes. It was being used primarily to put out cheap banner signs, and there were two guys__ one was Anthony [Balonas], and the other name escapes me, but they saw some potentials there. And a lot of people did. And so we were experimenting on our own. It wasn't through the project, you see.

RL You were really teaching yourselves how to use the medium. Then did you show any of those silkscreens?

LB No, I wasn't trying to. I was just trying to find out something about it. You don't show everything you do, you know. You try to find out something about it. So you just paint, you know, what happens everyday.

RL It's something that you're constantly working at?

LB You're working all the time. You don't think about what you're going to do tomorrow or what you did yesterday. You just work day to day. (laughter)

RL What was Eda doing in New York?

LB Oh, she worked at different kind of jobs. Slave labor mostly. We didn't have any means.

RL And then you had a young baby.

LB Well, that comes a little later.

RL Well, '41, by that time__ __

LB That makes a difference in your life. I think it does.

RL It does; I can personally attest to it. So then, we're roughly around 1941 now, and we're getting close to World War II.

LB We're getting close to Portland.

RL Now, when did you come back? Did war break out and then you returned? Or what was the sequence of events?

LB Well, it broke out- now, when did it break out actually?

RL Well, it was actually 1940, really.

LB Well, I don't think we were in it then. We got in it at Pearl Harbor, that was '41; didn't we? December of '41. We came back to Oregon in '42. I was still on the project and I was there to the bitter end, I guess, in New York. But a lot of it had been closed down. They tried desperately to keep it going by offering to do decorations for Fort Dix and stuff like that. And do posters, war posters, and bomb shelters and all that stuff. We had bomb-

shelter scares then. And MX missile sites- oh, they weren't then, that's right. We didn't have MX missiles then. So, I was doing posters and all that kind of guff. It wasn't as interesting because we were all herded into King Street, the main quarters of the project. We had to work there. And it wasn't very exciting. You're directed more and you're ground down to doing some busy work. It was just busy work, really. I don't think any of the officials gave a damn about us, truthfully. So the project was just on its ass-end, so to speak, it really was. Well, anyway, I got called up for the Army, you see. I was an early bird. I remember my draft number was 171.

RL You still remember that?

LB I do. I still have it someplace- 171. So, I appealed. I said I wouldn't go in the army. I was pretty anti-war, I think.

RL What was the basis of your appeal? What was your reason?

LB I had a child, for one, and they were supposed to not call up married men with children right away. There were supposed to take the single men first. I think I pleaded that I was slightly crazy too. So they gave me a deferment on the condition that I would get a job immediately in the "war effort," and they said immediately! So, we decided to come out to Oregon. The shipyards were hiring like mad, we heard. So I came out and I got a job the next day, the next day after I arrived.

RL So what did you __ __?

LB I worked a Comptometer for the first few months. It's an adding machine you know [illustrating how the machine worked]. Well, it's a little different than just an adding machine. I was figuring weights of ships, parts of ships. Like we'd have to figure the weight of the bulkhead and how much material went into it. What does the damn thing weigh? What's this superstructure weigh? They were all very necessary parts of the whole complex, so they could do lifts and get a total weight. You know, where is the weight distributed? And if it gets too heavy, they'd lighten the plates or they'd put what they call lightening holes in it. When I first heard the word, I thought a bolt of lightning went through it, but it was to lighten it. (laughter) They'd make either circles or oblong shapes to lighten these plates.

Anyway, I had charge of a group of workers and I thought it was very boring. You know, figures, what the hell. It was all right, but why did I get into this? I thought maybe I could do something that would use my hands in a different method. So I kind of poked around the shipyards and asked around in different departments, you know, the chances of getting into that department, particularly if I saw something that I thought I was capable of doing, like drafting or some kind of illustration. They were employing illustration then, to help the novice workers understand a piece. So, finally, I went to the assembly department and there was a guy there by the name of Anderson that was head of it. And he said, "Sure, I think we could place you but you better get a little experience." He said, "I would recommend that you go and take a class at Benson High, which they're offering now, so that you're acquainted with the type of drafting they're using." And, so I did. I didn't finish the course. I went only a couple of weeks and the guy that was teaching it gave me a referral right back to the shipyards. He thought I could handle it. So I got in right in the assembly office, doing what was called production illustration. It was three_point perspective. We worked a three_point perspective so you're looking down and into a thing, so you can see it. You can see what the piece looks like. Take a bulkhead. You could draw it so that you can see __ you can't measure off it because it's not true to that __ but it's scaled nonetheless. But you look at it and you can see exactly where the pieces go and where the welds go, where the lightening holes go, where the wiring goes, and all this.

RL I think that's what they call axonometric drawing now. I know in architectural plans you can look down and see the actual __ __

LB I don't know what they call it. You can look down into it. It's a three_point; it's perspective. See, three points expand it a hell of a lot more.

RL Did you enjoy that?

LB I enjoyed it; it was very hard work, though, I'll tell you. That was very difficult work. We worked our hand off there. Because we'd get a ship which had to be broken down, and that was another thing that it was up to us, to take the master drawings and to break them down into shop drawings and it was a big job because these damn master drawings __ you just had to really go through them and study them intensely and refer back and forth and back and forth until you could come up with that particular thing. It was a big job. And we even built little models of parts of the ship in order to try to understand it. You know, like the stern casting, which was very complicated. So we had all this kind of work which was a lot of fun, really. I enjoyed that. And you know, something was happening. You felt like you were in it. At least you were doing something.

RL Did it give you any added tools to use in your own artwork?

LB Well, it probably did. I didn't think of it in those terms but certainly the yard itself was an influence on me, just visually. I made lots of drawings and paintings that had to do with that kind of area, you know__ the night, the plates, and the markings on them, and the kind of strange holes that they cut in these damn things, you know. I even made some smallish paintings of this big stern casting which was like an enormous sculpture. It was three times as high as that pillar out there. One casting__ it was a beautiful thing really.

RL So obviously, you did have time on the weekends or evenings to do your own work too. You didn't stop working at the time?

LB No, I didn't stop working. I did mostly small things but I kept doing things all the time. I even did some illustrations for the magazine for the shop and also I did some stage decorations for the Kaiser Company for the big production they put on.

RL The shipyards were Kaiser Shipyards? Here in Portland?

LB Yeah.

RL Where were you living in Portland at the time?

LB Well at that time I was living up on Willamette Heights. You know where that is?

RL Northwest?

LB You know where Mike lives? Mike Russo? It's up that direction. Up in there. I lived up there right at that time, but we moved a couple of times.

RL Now you're back in Portland and you're working in the shipyards. Were you involved with a group of artists as friends?

LB Well, I didn't see so many of the artists then. I really didn't have the time, I don't think, to be around the school or anything like that. I was working. I don't know, it was a different world, entirely different world, because there wasn't the interest in art, in modern art, that I had experienced in New York, believe me.

RL What was happening at the museum here? Do you remember? Were there still exhibitions that you wanted to see?

LB They had exhibitions, yeah. I got to see some things there. Later, it became a little richer but at the moment, I don't think, as I recall, I don't remember going around there very much.

RL Were there any galleries in Portland?

LB I think I went around some. Galleries? No, there weren't any.

RL So it was really hard for you to see anybody else's work.

LB Well, actually, it was very difficult to see.

RL So, you stayed at the shipyards throughout the war?

LB Yeah, again, I was one of the last ones to leave, like the New York project, I was wandering around all alone in the shipyards at the very bitter end. Really, all alone.

RL Then what happened when that finally ended?

LB Well, I debated whether to go back to New York or to [wallow]? around. I had worked briefly on the mock_up for the first Kaiser automobile, and they offered me a job, if I wanted to come as a designer. I thought about it; it paid very well and all that. Then I thought, well, I don't want to do that really. What a pain. I'd get hooked into trying to build an automobile and that hassle. And the money wasn't attractive. So, I was approached by Bill Givler one day, telling me that if I wanted to teach__ part_time, an evening class__ he could place me because the G.I. bill was coming into effect pretty soon and they needed to expand. So I accepted that.

RL So that was teaching at the Museum Art School? At that point he was dean? Bill Givler was the dean of the school?

LB I'm not sure now, was he dean or was he not? I don't know if he was actually the dean then or not. Maybe that came a little later. But the next year I think I went on days, as I recall, in day classes.

RL Teaching painting and drawing?

LB Drawing and painting. And then suddenly it was very crowded. You know they had a lot of G.I.s coming in and it wasn't a girls' school any more. It was a coed school.

RL It had only been a girls' school because it was mostly girls who enrolled.

LB Well, mostly girls, yeah. There were some men, but_ _ _

RL Were there any of the people who were students then who have gone on to stay in Portland and become well-known artists? That was in about 1946.

LB Well, in the '40s, yeah, '46. Just trying to think who has carried on. A lot have but not necessarily well known, or even in the field, but something that's related to it.

RL What about Manuel Izquierdo?

LB Well, he started school then. Manuel started, and a little later, Lee Kelly comes in. Hansen, Jim Hansen, was there as a student. I'm thinking of the early times: Jim Hansen, Manuel, Jack Hammet, who no longer is engaged in much work, I don't think. Rick Norwood, who was doing some sort of commercial work; Milton Wilson, who still paints. He was a student then.

RL What kind of, if any, relationships did you have with Seattle, Washington, painters?

LB Well, I still knew Ken [Callahan-Ed.] and Tobey and those people quite well. Yes, Anderson.

RL Did you get up to Seattle much?

LB Occasionally.

RL So you knew what their work was like?

LB I was familiar with their work.

RL I know we talked about this in the past. There are many theories about a Northwest style of painting. Generally, when you hear about it, it refers to the work of Tobey, Graves, Callahan, Anderson.

LB Well, I think that's overrated. Maybe it wasn't right then, but I think it is now. I don't think that exists any more.

RL I agree with you.

LB I think that's myth that was carried on for a long, long time.

RL Did you ever feel at all in tune with what they were doing?

LB I never felt close to that. Well, I never felt into that, no. I was doing something quite different. I was stronger in not the mystic thing at all. My subject matter was the landscape, primarily; yes, I'll admit that. But not through the kind of Orientalism that was kind of fake to me, a bunch of it. Much of the philosophy is just a bunch of baloney, really.

RL So that didn't interest you at all?

LB No, it didn't interest me.

RL Your work seems much more grounded in shape and form and then emotion.

LB Sure.

RL Then, since you were back in the art mainstream, at least teaching at the school, did you feel that there was more of a community, that there was more interest?

LB Well suddenly, there was more community for me, because I knew the students very well and I was with them a lot, quite a bit really. And I considered them my friends, you know. We were all the same; we were all artists. There wasn't the student/master painter relation. I was closer to them than that. I went out with them,

we went drinking together, we did all kinds of things together. But, we were engaged in art, yes. I was firm about you being there, and working. I was quite firm about that. No matter if we went out at night, I said, "Now, you know, don't forget your school. You be there, God damn it! I mean it and you're going to work. You can carouse all night if you want to but you're going to work every day. That's the only way you're going to make it." And they did. So, we got along fine.

RL What was your work going through at the time?

LB Well, I was still engaged in a kind of landscapy thing. I had some time down at the ocean and the beaches, particularly around Newport and that area. And it was quite influential on me, the area. Very influential. And, then later I did a lot of things that related to eastern Oregon, particularly up around Black Butte and that country- Bend, which is closer to Wyoming, I guess. It was drier and open and more rugged and I liked that very much. And then I had that period of time up in Mosier which is earlier. We are jumping back in time a little bit, but that still fascinated me, all of that wonderful area of going into eastern Oregon but still western Oregon at the same time.

RL And the paintings that the museum owns- they may be a little later, very early '50s, but the one is called Canyon and the other Cliffside- would those be based on landscape of eastern Oregon?

LB They were based on landscape, either eastern Oregon or maybe southern Oregon. I was down in southern Oregon quite a bit too. Right around Grants Pass and Medford.

RL Just traveling around?

LB No, I had some classes down there, summer classes. So I did spend quite a bit of time there, you know, during the summers. And, it was very influential on me. Klamath Falls and all the madrona [native Northwest tree-d.] which grows down there, which you don't see up this way as much. Again, this is a drier kind of country, and very open, very beautiful. The Rogue River, all of this.

RL What about the figure? I know that at times in your art, the figure comes and goes.

LB The figure comes and goes. I'm interested in the figure, yes. But, I'm not interested in it to the extent of- I think I'm more interested, and my subject matter is more landscape, really. I think that's the thing that I tend to lean very strongly towards rather than the figure. But some of the landscape becomes kind of figurative too. Not that I'm pushing it that way, but it so happens. A lot of people have read figures into it. But, I have done figures.

RL Certainly the recent show of yours in Seattle, which was figure drawing_ _ _

LB Yeah, right, well, portraits.

RL Which is something that you really didn't do very much of.

LB Well, I have through time, yes. All these things interest me. It's just that I think the majority of my work has been landscape, really. What that's meant to me, that kind of space, the kind of openness of it, and the color, more than the figure as such. I don't ignore it, I don't want to say that.

RL There's a period in the, I think, middle to late '60s where those figures started coming back in boxes_ _ _

LB Oh, yeah, right.

RL _ _ _ sort of jumping ahead a bit, but after the late '50s or early '60s where you had those enormous abstract expressionist, very exciting brushy canvases.

LB Yeah, some of that- that's kind of landscape though isn't it?

RL Those are landscapes. Then it seems you moved into a tighter period where the figures started appearing.

LB Well, the figurative thing came in from some other experiences too.

RL Well, before we jump ahead to that, I know that in 1949 you and Eda founded the Kharouba Gallery. Was that partly because there were no_ _ _ Was that the first gallery in Portland?

LB It was the first gallery that tried to show strictly contemporary work, at that time.

RL Where was it?

LB On S.W. Morrison Street; it was between 10th and 11th streets. You know where the Fine Arts Building is?

RL Yes.

LB It was right across the street from the Fine Arts Building. It was a street-level shop.

RL And what did you show?

LB We showed mostly Northwest people. I think that was easier. Though we did show things from elsewhere. I took a couple of trips east and brought some things out.

RL Can you tell me, just generally, what_ _ _?

LB You know a painter by the name of Ann Ryan- a printmaker and collagist? Well, I brought a show of hers out.

RL Did any of them sell?

LB I think there were two.

RL Did you yourself keep any for your personal collection?

LB I have one of them. But they were very cheap then. Anyway, I brought that out in my suitcase.

RL They're very small.

LB Well, the biggest one was about like that [illustrates]. And I brought a show of Berman out, E.G. Berman. I borrowed that from Knoedler.

RL From Knoedler? How did people respond to that?

LB It did pretty well, really. Yeah, people liked it.

RL Did you also show Mark Tobey?

LB We had a show of Tobey- we didn't sell anything of Tobey's. (laughter) I think that's very funny.

RL That is very funny.

LB Yeah, we didn't sell a damn one. There weren't many sales, I'll tell you. The things of Ann's- this is interesting to me. You know one person who bought one, that was Ken Shores. And there was another guy that was running some radio store here in Portland; he bought one. I don't know what happened to that one, but Ken told me here just within this past year that he decided that he was going to sell it, the Ann Ryan. So he shipped it off to Parke Bernet and he said, "Do you know what I got for that?" And I said, "No, what'd you get?" He said he got about \$5,000. I said, "No kidding. Do you remember what you paid for it?" Yeah, he paid \$60. I said, "That's not bad, is it?"

RL That's a pretty good return.

LB Yeah, that's a good return.

RL But you still have yours?

LB Oh yeah, I still do.

RL I'd like to see it sometime.

LB I don't know where it is right now. It's probably in a trunk some place.

RL You should lend it to the museum, on loan.

LB Okay.

RL Really.

LB Yeah, it's kind of on the light side. She got a lot of handmade papers at that time and she was very excited about paper. And some she tinted just a little bit; it was a very pale kind of tint. They're very beautiful.

RL If you can someday find it_ _ _

LB Oh, I'll find it, sure.

RL Who were some of the Northwest artists you were showing? I imagine you showed your own work?

LB I had a show there, yeah. We showed Jack McLarty, we showed Manuel, a lot of those people. We were giving them some of their early exposure, really.

RL I asked you earlier, in New York, if you'd shown anywhere? You said not really, the first show was Seattle. But now that we're almost to 1950, I know in the decade of the '50s, you were in many traveling shows and shows back East.

LB Yeah, I showed a lot then.

RL So you were just about this time, 1950, starting to have your work_ _ _

LB Actually, yeah, getting it around. I sent to lots of open shows, that is, competitive shows, drawing shows, and I was in practically all the Brooklyn Museum shows at that time. Damn near all of them. San Francisco had an Annual, and I was in practically all of those for a number of years. And sent stuff around, you know, like that. And then I finally had a show in New York, later, but not right at the immediate moment. Because things were changing in New York too.

[Interruption in tape]

RL You were flashing back to 1941.

LB Yeah, to backtrack, for a minute, to '41. We were talking about showing, and you had asked, I think, previously, about did we try to show our work in those years.

RL Right.

LB Well, I remember one occasion. Jack [Jackson Pollock-Ed.] and I took our paintings uptown. This is in New York. And we didn't meet with any success at all. As a matter of fact, we were kind of turned down by all the galleries. They said, well, we don't show American art, except certain people. And I remember on one occasion, we went into Pearl's, Frank Pearl's Gallery. It was on Madison Avenue and about 58th or 59th street. He looked at our work and he liked it. He said, "Yeah, I kind of like your work." But he said, "I can't handle you. I can't sell these; I can only sell European work." He says, "I have a couple of Americans, but I really couldn't do you any good at all." Then he found out that I was from Oregon and he said, "Well, I have an Oregonian here." I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah, his name is Darrell Austin." He said, "You know he was telling me about Oregon; it's so wet out there, he says the ground is covered with, from what I understand, about two feet of water all the time. And he says these glass balls are floating around." I said, "That's bull." He says, "Well, I guess they're floats from off the nets the Japanese throw around."

RL He had a very unusual view.

LB Well, he had painting of Darrell's. I remember seeing it there. It was one of those kind of wispy nudes that he was making, you know, kind of pretty- she had water up to her ankles- and there was little glass balls floating around. He took it from there. And I thought, honest to God, you know, it was an awful painting.

RL It was interesting that he decided to show Austin.

LB He was popular. Austin was selling like mad then. He was successful and he was interested in success, you know.

RL Who were some of the other artists, American artists, showing at the time? Was Hartley showing?

LB Oh yeah, Hartley showed. And of course there was the Downtown Gallery. You know, Mrs. Halpert had a lot of good people- you could see Davis's, you could see all these people. And that was a good gallery. Very good gallery.

RL Did you try there?

LB No, no. That seemed to be out of our range.

RL What was Jackson Pollock painting then?

LB What was it like? Kind of Picasso-ish. And also influenced somewhat by some of the Mexican paintings, like Orozco, particularly Orozco. We had watched Orozco paint. We went to see him paint at the modern museum.

He was doing a portable panel which I think is probably in the collection. Had about six panels, eight, nine feet tall. And he was doing it in one of the galleries simply to show people how fresco was built up, and kind of a demonstration thing. But it was very interesting to watch him; it really was. He had a plasterer with him that would work at the end of the day. He'd cut back, trowel back, you know, so he would get ready for the next day. It took him quite a little while to do this. You know Orozco only had one arm, and it was fascinating to watch this guy.

RL I didn't know that; it must have been a lot more difficult. So he had a studio in New York where he was working?

LB He was around New York for a while, yeah. He did a lot of oils. I remember the subject matter had a lot to do with the subways. They were very lonely kind of things, people kind of hunched over, waiting in these dark corridors. He'd also done a mural down at the New School, which I don't know whether it's still up there or not.

RL I've never seen one, but of course I'm not sure where it would be.

LB Well, the New School was on 13th Street then, wasn't it?

RL Yeah, it's still there. It's now on 13th Street and Fifth Avenue.

LB Yeah, it's right about in there.

RL Yeah, it's the same place.

LB And Benton [Thomas Hart Benton-Ed.] had a mural there. We used to go and watch Benton work. Well, you see, Benton was kind of the father of Pollock; at least Ben tells it that way. And actually Jack liked him very much. He liked Rita better, his wife. He really liked her; he was very fond of her. But Benton was always kind of pushing him around, telling him, "I don't like your work," or later he'd say, "Well, I like your work."

RL Did you get to know Benton?

LB Yeah.

RL Well, back to Portland, to 1949.

LB Yeah, let's get back to Portland, now. That was just a side trip.

RL So the Kharouba Gallery lasted about a year?

LB Oh, it lasted longer than that.

RL How long did it last?

LB Well, I don't remember the dates, but it was in existence longer than that. It kind of changed over time somewhat. We had to rely upon other sales to make it go. We had jewelry, handmade jewelry, and art supplies too. And that was the only thing that really kept it going because the sales out of the gallery were so minor.

RL How did you come up with the name Kharouba?

LB It was existent. I don't know what had been there before, but it was sort of intriguing. We didn't want to change the lettering.

RL So it was called Kharouba Gallery, or just Kharouba?

LB We just added the word "gallery."

RL And then when you finally went out of business, it was largely because there wasn't enough money to keep it going?

LB Well, that was part of it. And then Eda and I broke up too_ _ _

RL Well, then what was the next_ _ _?

LB The next step?

RL Periodically, you went back to New York and took trips to other parts of the country?

LB Yeah, I went back quite often. Managed to do that. You know, I'd take off for a month or six months, or as

long as I could hack it.

RL But you were teaching all this time, is that correct? At the Museum Art School?

LB Yeah, right. So it would have to be restricted to when I could get time off. I would get time off, sabbaticals and things like that, and then I'd take off for a while or get another job.

RL In the '50s, what exhibitions- either exhibitions that you saw of other people's work or exhibitions of your own- would you consider the most important?

LB Most important?

RL Anything that sticks in your mind as being either very influential on you, or something that you had that was important to your career?

LB Well, just off the top of my head, I don't think of anything, except that I saw a lot of good shows in those years. But I can't remember particularly things that you're trying to get at.

RL You were invited to be in the Sao Paulo Biennial in Brazil in 1955?

LB Yeah, right.

RL Did you get to go there?

LB No, I didn't. No.

RL Then you had your first retrospective exhibition at the Portland Art Museum in 1955.

LB 1955. That's when Tom Colt was the director; he kind of pushed for those things.

RL Did you feel good about that?

LB I felt all right about it. Yeah, Tom was director. Don Jenkins was there, I guess as a kind of a lackey.

RL Back in '55? He's been connected with the museum for many years, back and forth. As a faculty member at the school, was there a lot of back and forth between the museum and the school? Did you use the collections in your teaching?

LB A lot, yeah. Well, Tom was very much for that. He was quite open. He was very open to the students; in fact, he was very close to them. He was good. He was excited about art.

RL It seems like during the years he was director, the museum purchased a number of important works of art and had some very good shows too.

LB Well, he had some good shows. They didn't purchase as much as he would have like to have had them do. And in fact, they made some rather minor purchases in his eyes. But I shouldn't talk about that. That's something the museum should do.

RL That's museum history.

LB They had another man, earlier, by the name of Davis, who purchased some very good things. That's when they acquired the Hofer, the Kokoschka, those things. And also, he did acquire a Beckmann, but it was exchanged later for the present one that you have.

RL How did it rate with the one we have now?

LB I liked both of them very much. I did like Beckmann's work very much anyway. They had a big show of Beckmann during those years, just before the breakdown in communications between Germany, and also Italy. They had some good shows of Italian painters. In those days, they were trying to use the painters as propaganda. It was before they kicked them out of the scene. So there were some damn good shows that came through of some of the German painters, and a lot of good shows of the Italian painters- some excellent shows as a matter of fact. Would have been time to have bought a lot of stuff because it was extremely reasonable. Astonishingly so. And if one had any kind of money and any foresight at all, they should have bought it. I mean really cheap. You know, three or four hundred dollars for some big Beckmanns.

RL Were there people in Portland at the time collecting?

LB Yeah, there were some but there wasn't a lot. There was a lady, what the hell was her name, she had mostly

German painters. She had a big Kokoschka. The museum I think wanted it but I don't think she gave it to them. What was her name? [Refers to Sally Blodgett-Ed.] I remember I had taken students out there.

RL Is she still here?

LB No, she's not here. I think the whole collection was dispersed. And then there was Sally Lewis that had a big collection. She finally left the Modigliani head to the museum. But she had a tremendous collection, really. The museum should have gotten a lot of that, but they corned that one up too.

RL Actually, they did get quite a number. You mean the Brancusi head from Sally Lewis.

LB Yeah, the Brancusi head, not Modigliani.

RL And of course, she gave the museum quite a bit of classical art.

LB Yeah, but look at all the modern paintings that she wouldn't ___ She was on the outs with them a bit. And this other lady, I can't remember her name now; it's terrible. She had a tremendous collection, mostly German: Klee's and Kokoschka, and Beckmanns and so on. Really good collection. She had that marvelous dancing couple of Kokoschka. Great big painting ___

RL So all of that was dispersed.

LB ___ which was a self-portrait of himself dancing with the gal who was married to the composer, Mahler.

RL Alma Mahler. Well now, at this time, let's say we're moving towards the middle to late '50s, your own work, as I said before, the canvases started getting larger, much more abstract even if they were based on a landscape.

LB I always thought of them as landscapes.

RL Always. But it seems to me in that period, they're more abstract than they had been before.

LB I don't like the word, I guess.

RL Well how would you describe them?

LB I think they were just a different person expressing the same thing. They weren't less abstract or more abstract. It was a style.

RL Why did you paint larger?

LB Why did I paint larger? It was in the air, for one thing. And also I found it very exciting to work a little larger then. I'd often worked on some mural projects.

RL Right.

LB And it was quite an advance, you know. To transfer your energies to a bigger scale does something to you, there's no question about it. Well you cover that area quite differently than you do when it's on an easel, smallish. You treat the surfaces differently, you treat the colors differently.

RL Well, those are what I find personally some of your most exciting and beautiful paintings from then.

LB Yeah, from that period.

RL Late '50s, early '60s.

LB Well, I painted a lot then, I must say I was painting very, very hard, every day strong, and had lots of painters in. And I suppose that shows up in some things.

RL I think it does.

LB I don't know what happened to a lot of them. They just disappeared. I don't know. It shows up every once in a while. I haven't kept track of things.

RL You mean works from that time period show up every once in a while?

LB Yeah, they'll show up every once in a while.

RL Well that's why I think that one, that smaller one on your easel now, seems to be from that time period.

LB Ah, approximately, yeah.

RL I don't know if I told you this but I think I did. Last year, the Ethical Studies Society, which doesn't really exist any more, gave us one of your paintings, which is from 1960 and it's called Yellow Mean.

LB Yellow what?

RL It's called Yellow Mean. No, wait a minute; that's the title of something else. Well, it's yellow and it has a title to do with yellow but I can't- that's not the title.

LB Where did it come from?

RL The Ethical Studies Society.

LB Who owned it?

RL Well, the society owned it. You apparently were a member at one time? And I think you may have instead of paying dues, you may have traded them a painting.

LB Ethical Society?

RL Ethical Studies- does that ring a bell?

LB It wasn't the Aesthetic Society was it? Is that what you're talking about?

RL Aesthetic Society? I think it was Ethical Studies. I can look into it and let you know.

LB I did belong to a group called the Aesthetic Society. We talked about all kinds of things, you know: all the arts, dance, music and so on. I just painted.

RL Well, I'll give you the name. I'll let you see it if you come in. I'll show you the painting. It's a nice painting.

LB How big is it?

RL Well, it's pretty big. Oh, 48" by 50" or something. Again, it needs some conservation work. Got a few dents in it.

LB Has it got any shapes in it that are__ __?

RL Well, if you remember those paintings from your show, again around 1960, a lot of them were green, where you had some big, kind of roundish color shapes, and certain very thin areas. It's like that.

LB Okay. Well, I don't place it in my mind. I've lost track of that one. But they do kind of show up every once in a while. It's all right, but it's just__ __ They come down to the gallery a lot. People will inherit something or they're breaking up the family or their business goes out of business or some damn thing. So they throw it on the market, which is all right, I guess. It's kind of annoying.

RL That bothers you to see them resurface?

LB I like some of them but, I don't know, I find it hard to keep track of them, I guess.

RL At that time period, this is a general question. Did you feel that your personal life had a lot to do with what you were painting at the time? I mean if you were going through ups, if you were going through divorces, or whatever kind of stress. Did that affect your production?

LB I don't think so, no. I really didn't have that tension. That's something else. I mean you handle that on another level. It doesn't show.

RL But many artists, if they're going through a bleak period sometimes their palette gets darker or they work on a smaller scale. Some people__ __ Picasso was certainly very his work often showed__ __

LB He was interested in all those girls.

RL I'm sure you were__ __

LB Well, sure. Relationships make some differences, yes. Sure that whole Idalia series that I did, undoubtedly

was a personal experience. So, it's there, yes. But I don't think I got, I wasn't necessarily under stress, to make my paintings stressful or dark. I like to work on both sides of the palette anyway. That one scene- that dark one there, which I want to get repaired because it needs restretching__ that's really dark. And I wanted to paint it sort of black, something mysterious. That was all, you know.

RL If you don't mind my asking, after you and Eda split, what was your living situation like?

LB What was it like? Well, there was a lot of changes, yes. I changed the place where I lived, changed my lifestyle a little bit, had a different place to work in, studio. So, I suppose it does have some effect. The landscape around me was a little different too. So it has some effect.

RL Did Jon live with his mother?

LB He lived with us for a short while, when he was going to high school.

RL When did you remarry?

LB About that time.

RL I mean, how many years after your splitup with Eda?

LB Oh, it wasn't very long. A couple of years.

RL At the end of the '50s, there was the big controversy with the airport.

LB That was in '57, wasn't it?

RL 1958, I think.

LB 1958, was it?

RL Did you want to briefly describe what happened with the airport mural controversy?

LB I don't know exactly how to begin on that. It was a kind of a long, drawn_out scene.

RL Was it a competition? Or did they come to you directly?

LB No, it wasn't. They had a committee from the Port of Portland empowered to select someone and apparently they visited a number of studios to view what that artist was doing and talk to him. And so they finally came up and offered me the job. I don't know how many people they interviewed. I have no idea about that. So, I accepted it. I thought it was an interesting job for me and a nice new building and the architect was all for it. So, I was asked to prepare some sketches, which I did, and I scaled the sketch to that wall size and submitted it to the Port of Portland.

Well, it kind of went haywire right there. This was unfortunate. Looking back, it should have been handled a little differently. It was maybe partially my fault, but I think it was also partially their fault in that I was given to understand that I would be able to show my sketch to the board and talk about it and explain to them what I wanted to do. Well, I took the sketch down and I gave it to the secretary of the board who said, "Well fine, I'll let you know when we meet for this purpose." Well I shouldn't have left it there. That was one thing. But I didn't know that. And what Mr. Mills did was to hang it up after I left. He hung it up in the board room. Well, there was no preliminaries. There was no previous discussion. I had no chance of talking about it. So when the board met, two or three came in and they looked at it and they said, "What the hell is that?" It sort of shocked them because it was a new experience for them. They hadn't seen anything like that. (laughter)

RL They weren't used to anything that was abstracted at all?

LB No, apparently not. No, the majority were not. There were a couple that were but the majority were not. And on that board meeting, it came up. One of the committee members, and I know who it was, brought it up and wanted to vote on it. Right then. And they should have shut him up, I think, and given me a chance to come and appear before them. But that didn't happen, and they voted it out. And I didn't know about it until I picked up the paper the next morning and here it was splattered on the front page. They had rejected it. I was astonished, really. I was kind of mad about it because that's no way to treat a person. You're kind of working with a group and you think you have it all kind of outlined what you want to explain. I wasn't trying to sell them a bill of goods, but at least I should have had a chance of talking about it a little bit.

Well, it was voted out. So that created quite a controversy in the community, I guess. And then, giving it to the press that way, leaking it to the press right away, with a big fat picture, saying, "What is it?"

RL That's right, I've seen those newspaper clippings.

LB Which is unfortunate. So, it gets the public riled up immediately, you know. They think all kinds of things. They're using public funds, which is money for the airport; it becomes political, you know. They think you're trying to pull something on them. You know, there's even a question of whether you're a communist__ all this bullshit that goes on. And it got off to a bad start, that's all. So it was finally given over to the Portland Arts Commission.

RL That was a group of people who made decisions about art in the city?

LB Yeah, it was like the Metropolitan Arts Commission. And, I forget who was on there but I know that Doug Lynch was on there, and Mrs. McMonies, Walter McMonies. Kay Corbett I think was on there.

Anyway, they passed it. They recommended that I be given the job. Well, I already had the job in essence, for goodness sakes. They'd offered it to me. It got all mixed up.

RL Did the board accept the Portland Art Commission's suggestion?

LB They did, finally.

RL Did you have a chance to talk to the board about what you were trying to do?

LB No, I just talked to a couple of committee members then. I think they all got very frightened about it. But anyway, I was given the goahead to paint it. And I did tell them, you know, "When I get on full scale, it's going to change somewhat. You can't avoid that. I mean some of these spaces are going to look very overfilled or some are going to look empty as hell. So, I'm going to have to adjust all those things." They were still following my mood; they were empowered to consult with me, in case_ _ _ (laughter)

RL Did you do the work in your studio and then_ _ _?

LB No, I did it at the museum.

RL Oh, that's right, you had a gallery at the museum. Do you remember the general dimensions of the mural?

LB Oh, it's about 120" by 130" or something like that.

RL What technique were you using?

LB I used oil on canvas.

RL In panels?

LB No, stretch.

RL One stretch piece.

LB One big stretch, yeah. The big stretch.

RL The big stretch! (laughter) How long did it take you to paint the_ _ _?

LB It took me a few months. I couldn't work on it every moment, but, it took a little while to paint.

RL Did you have any assistance?

LB Not too much, no. Lee helped me on some things- on stretching the canvas, for one thing.

RL Lee Kelly?

LB Yeah. God, it was a big job to do that, and to size it. We had to size it. It was a hell of a job. Anyway, no, I didn't have any assistance to speak of.

RL I've seen it, of course, and I know that, at least at the time, reading all the newspaper clippings and your description of it, it was to deal with the sense of being up in the air, the sense of play.

LB The movement, the sense of play.

RL And you weren't necessarily interested in depicting anything particularly representational?

LB Although there's lots of representational elements in it- lots of them. There's the kind of jet force, the airplane forces or movements of what would be the earth, and all kinds of turning and shifting and changing, and air. Lots of kinds of air, the feeling of air. So it's realistic in that sense.

RL But more in providing a general sense of what it's like to be flying rather than specifically showing an airplane and__ __

LB Well, that would be corny to show a specific type of airplane.

RL Although, isn't that what some people__ __?

LB That's what they would have liked to have had, yes. Something that they're familiar with, you see.

RL How was it received when it was finally installed?

LB Fine, really, after it was installed and in there. Then people started to like it. And that shows you what the wrong kind of publicity can do. You don't get a chance.

RL How did that affect you? I remember again reading the clippings. Some of them were very nasty. Did you find that a very upsetting time of your life that there was such a strong response?

LB Well, I was sort of amused by some of it, I must say. It was kind of strange, kind of typical. I got upset with a couple of things. I answered a couple of letters which I thought were unreasonable and particularly coming from the particular person. So, I did answer a few. But I tried to avoid it because you'd get hooked up in that, and that would take your time, believe me. That would really take your time.

RL Take your time and energy.

LB So, I avoided that as much as I possibly could. But there was so much talk about it that it was very hard not to come up against it somewhere every day. Every day. You'd go downtown and someone would recognize you and start talking to you. They either liked it or they didn't like it. And all that business, you know.

RL Well, as a result of that, you obviously became better known in Portland.

LB Well, I wasn't interested in that.

RL You may not have been interested, but did it have any effect on other people commissioning you to do murals, because you'd gotten this recognition?

LB Well, I got that mural at that restaurant after that, I think as a result, yes.

RL That was the Fleet Donut Shop?

LB I think it was on the basis of that, yeah. I think he wanted the publicity. And I agreed to it because he'd let me have a free hand, you know.

RL And that was the one that is now in the Memorial Coliseum?

LB Yeah.

RL Which really depicts scenes of the city of Portland. What other murals have you done?

LB Well, I did the one at the Broadway which is sort of a rehash of all kinds of crap. That was just a fun thing to do.

RL Their painting with- I can't remember now who had it- with just a nude woman lying reclining?

LB Well, that wasn't part of it.

RL That was something else that was at the Broadway at one time?

LB There was a big mural in the back room. You didn't see that one. That was all broken up. Then, I did a mural for the Oregon Centennial which was a commissioned job.

RL In 1959?

LB Geez, I don't know the date there, again. When was that?

RL I must have it here somewhere. I don't know that I have it with me.

LB That was all panels and it was broken up and dispersed, sold in individual pieces.

RL What was the subject of that?

LB Kind of a garden. It was the entrance of the garden exhibits. And I kind of related it to that kind of thing, to growth, and gardens, and flowers. It got kind of decorative, pretty. That's about all I think I did.

RL In terms of murals?

LB Well, some smallish kind of decorations.

RL You had one, was it actually done as a mural, for a house that an architect had designed?

LB Yeah.

RL That was actually done in the house?

LB Yeah.

RL Does that still exist now?

LB I don't know. I really don't know.

RL It's hard to find out?

LB Well, I haven't bothered to keep track of that stuff. There's been people living there; I suppose they are. You know, what they did with the mural, if they own the building, they can do as they damn please, I suppose. But I did a wall, in a kind of a sun room. It was called a sun room. It was an all-electric house. It was the first all-electric house, and the whole thing was bound around electricity as a heating source, and sun; it was almost, could have been solar, if they wanted it to but they didn't know about that.

RL That would be an interesting mural to see. That was in a Northwest [Portland neighborhood-Ed.] home.

LB It was up near Wilson High. The architect that designed the house- his name is Walter Gordon. I think he lives down the coast now. I sort of lost track of him. It wasn't a big job; it was a smallish job. It was sort of a sun room like this except it had one big wall, about twice as big as this wall in back of you. And it went from the ceiling to the floor.

[Interruption in tape]

RL As I was saying, we just left off approximately 1958 or 1959, and I had one question. We'd been talking about the various places you exhibited, and we talked about the Kharouba Gallery. And I know that the Petersons, I think it was Norma and Ron, who founded the new Gallery of Contemporary Art_ can you tell me something about that?

LB I don't remember the dates of that but they had a smallish gallery where they lived at that time and they called it the Contemporary Arts Gallery. I think that was it. And they had a series of shows, of one-man shows, group shows and so on, and introduced some new people.

RL People from this area?

LB Mostly people from this area, yes. I'd say the majority were.

RL Did you show there?

LB I had a show there one time. And I was included in a number of group shows. I remember on one occasion- it must have been in the '60s, the early '60s- I had a one-man show there. The reason that I recall it was that I was teaching at Berkeley that year and did come up particularly for that show.

RL Was Ron an artist?

LB Yes, and so was she.

RL So that's what caused them to_ _ _

LB That's what motivated them, yes. They'd been students at the school, both of them, and had had a spell in the East, had lived there for a short while, then came back to Portland. And they wanted to start some kind of gallery, which they did. And it was pretty successful. I don't know how well they did financially but I think for the area it was an innovation, an exciting event.

RL Where was it?

LB It was in their house; it was in the southwest side of town in what we'd call- you know where Duniway Park is?

RL That's Lair Hill.

LB It's in that area. They had kind of a big old two-story house. And they lived there, so it was in their living quarters, really. But they just turned over, maybe two or three rooms on the first floor for gallery purposes. Worked out fine. It was a good space.

RL How long did it last?

LB Well, that I don't remember now.

RL A few years?

LB A few years, I'd say.

RL So those were some of the early galleries. Sounds like the Kharouba Gallery and the New Gallery and then probably the Fountain Gallery?

LB Well, the Fountain comes- well, let's see, I can't pinpoint the date either.

RL I think it was '61 or '62. Wasn't last year their fiftieth anniversary celebration?

LB Well, still I'm not sure. But it has been in existence quite a while. What did you say, twenty years?

RL How could it be fifty; it would have been twenty years, of course.

LB It wouldn't be fifty, no; twenty years. They've been in existence at least twenty years. They started out in a downtown location, right on the corner of Second and Ash. Again, I really don't know the date, precisely, but we'll say it's early sixties. Then later they moved to the Hughes Building, which was much larger quarters and as you know, they were burned out there, in a very disastrous fire. Then, they were forced to move to their present location and they've been there since the fire.

RL Do you know how Arlene [Schnitzer-Ed.] got into the business?

LB Well, I think that she had been going to some classes at the museum. There was talk about starting some kind of a cooperative gallery. I wasn't around at the time, so I'm not sure. You'd have to find out from other people. Anyway, it kind of bogged down a little bit and she was excited about it and decided, "Well, I'll do it myself." So she did. That's the kind of brief story I heard.

RL So that she herself was already involved in the arts and knew a lot of the artists.

LB Yes, she was already in the arts to the extent of going to some classes and learning a good deal about it. So, she went into partnership with a lady- I don't recall her name- and her mother. And they started it out at the location on Second and Ash that I mentioned. It was a relatively small place, but very nice. And I think she wanted to be in the old town part. And then later they moved to the Hughes Building.

RL Where was the Hughes Building?

LB That was on Fourth and about Ankeny, right in there.

RL What do you think, in your opinion, made the Fountain successful? To have lasted for that long- many other galleries in the area have come and gone in a few years. What do you think is the key to the Fountain's success?

LB Well, I think she was able to support it, for one thing. I think fortunately having the support of her own family, and her husband; this certainly helped. But she had the support of a lot of the artists, too. And she became probably the most professional gallery. So, it's still in existence, which is rather unusual in this town.

RL Around the same time, as you mentioned, you were already an artist-in-residence at Berkeley; and, going back to the chronology that I've developed for you, you were artist-in-residence in many places during the sixties. Also at the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver.

LB Yeah, that was before I went to Berkeley.

RL How long did you stay at these locations?

LB Well, it would depend- some were on a semester system, some were on a quarter. You might be invited for a quarter; you might be invited for a semester; you might be invited for a full year. So they varied a good deal.

RL Did you enjoy those experiences?

LB I enjoyed it very much, yeah.

RL You taught and you also had a studio to work in?

LB Well, usually I had a studio; it was a furnished studio, as a general rule. And you'd teach a couple of classes and usually have crits with the upper classmen. They made known the fact that you were on campus and you were open to talk with the students, not necessarily just in the classroom. But usually, most everyone had one more or less formal classroom work, as a rule. It could be drawing, it could be painting, whatever.

RL Did you also have shows of your own work at the college?

LB Yeah, usually they would give you a show. I had a good sized show at Berkeley. I had a good sized show at Illinois where the Krannert Museum is there. And I had a show at Washington.

RL So you were artist-in-residence at the University of Washington, University of Illinois, University of Oregon, University of California at Berkeley, and University of British Columbia. While you were at these various places, did you have the opportunity to get to know some of the other faculty members?

LB Oh, yeah.

RL Were there any people who stand out in your mind at any of those places?

LB That's a loaded question. (laughter) I think I enjoyed Berkeley as much as any. I think they had some very good people there- that is, the permanent staff; and they had a big visiting program going on in those days. Earl Loran was the head of the department and he was vigorous and interested. So, they usually had [key] people each year, each semester, and you might be invited to stay longer. They had the same system at Illinois. But the faculty, it was not as exciting to me as Berkeley.

RL Who were some of the faculty there? Do you remember?

LB At Berkeley?

RL Yes.

LB Well, Sidney Gordon, who's still on permanent staff there. Do you know his work?

RL I think I've seen some.

LB He was a sculptor but then he moved towards painting more. And Felix Ruvolo, a good painter. I don't know whether he's still there or not, I haven't heard. Earl Loran was head of the department, and he was a painter and did a lot of writing. In fact, it was a very vigorous group, I thought.

RL It also gave you the opportunity, I would think, to go to all the museums in the Bay area.

LB Yeah, sure.

RL What was happening at that time? That was 1960.

LB About sixty, yeah.

RL In terms of the famous Bay area style of painting. Was that in its "heyday" then or was it__ _?

LB Well, the people that I would remember would be David Park and Diebenkorn and Bischoff. They were all producing a lot. And the other young man that was close to them- oh dear, names, I can't recall names sometimes. But the so-called "funky" group, yes, there was a lot of that going on too. It was interesting, some very interesting things. Bruce Connor and early Joan Brown and Jay DeFa0; all those people were really working hard.

RL Did you get to know these people too?

LB Oh yeah. Pete Voulkos was at the university- started up there. And Harold Paris came at the same time. They did a lot in ceramics, changing the point of view towards ceramics, both of them, particularly Voulkos, as you know. Voulkos was painting quite a bit right then. He had big studio in the building that he worked in. Harold Paris was doing a lot of prints then. When he came here, he came on the basis of being a printmaker rather than a painter or sculptor. But then he gets into sculpture and doing ceramics later, under the influence of Voulkos, probably, somewhat. But a very vigorous guy in his own right. Wonderful person, a really wonderful guy.

RL So how long were you at Berkeley? Was it one semester or did you stay longer?

LB No, I was there for a half a year, whatever that is.

RL Didn't you, right around that time period, have a heart attack?

LB That was before.

RL That was before you went to Berkeley?

LB Yeah.

RL Just working too hard?

LB Probably.

RL Painting all those large canvases?

LB Probably. I don't know, that's probably a combination of things. I had it in British Columbia.

RL That must have taken you out of commission for awhile?

LB Ah, thirty days, more or less. Well, it took me out of commission, yeah. But, I was determined to [meet] some of the other things I wanted to do, so I did.

RL Then you went on to Berkeley anyway.

LB Right. And then from there I went on to Tamarind [Tamarind Lithography Workshop-Ed.].

RL I want to talk about Tamarind too. But first, again, I'm going out of sequence here. This may have happened before, the Dada Exhibition that you were involved in in Portland?

LB Oh, I wasn't involved in it. I had some things in it. I was not in the city right then.

RL Do you remember when that was?

LB Well, it has to be around in that time. Again, I wouldn't pinpoint the dates. I can't because I was not here; I remember coming up on one occasion.

RL I see, it's 1961, according to _ _ _

LB Well, you see, I must have been probably in Berkeley or Tamarind. I don't think I would have run up here from Tamarind, just for that show. Maybe I did.

RL Tell me about it.

LB What, the Dada show?

RL Yeah, were there a group of artists here who were _ _ _?

LB Mostly local people, yeah. People from around the school, Manuel and Jack McLarty and Laverne Krause- you know, some of the younger, probably ex-students by then. Bert Garner, Lee Kelly and _ _ _

RL What gave them the idea to do a Dada Exhibition in Portland?

LB That I really can't speak about because I wasn't involved in the organization of it. I really can't. So I don't know what really went on, what inspired them to do this. But it was kind of interesting to participate in it. I did a couple of objects, that was about it.

RL What did you do? Do you remember?

LB One was kind of a meat grinder. What I did was to grind through Plasticine- which is sort of a nasty gray color_ and embedded in it were eyeballs and a nice plate of eyeballs and that sort of thing, and other nasties.

RL Sounds very appropriate. Then you did another piece too?

LB Can't remember what the hell that was.

RL Whatever happened to those? Were they destroyed at the end of the_ _ _?

LB Someone bought one of them. I think someone bought the meat grinder.

RL So it might still be in existence somewhere?

LB It could be in existence someplace. I can't remember what the other one was. There were so many objects, you know, and events going on.

RL Did they also do performances?

LB Apparently, I didn't see some of those. Yeah, they did have some performances.

RL Too bad there was no videotape at that time.

LB Well, you know, it was probably pretty well photographed. You haven't looked into that?

RL I remember when I was working on your exhibition, seeing some newspaper clippings, but nothing terribly extensive.

LB Well, the only photographs I had were somewhere we were having a mask made and those were utilized in the show. Masks of all the people who were taking part in it.

RL Where was it held? At the museum?

LB No, it was held in a building downtown on Stark which is called Bishop's House. You know that building? And at that time, the top floors were unoccupied. There was an architect in the lower part and arrangements were made with him to utilize the top floor which worked out fine.

RL Did people come?

LB Oh yeah, a lot of people came and a lot of people were kind of shocked by certain objects and certain language, I'm sure. Propaganda was used.

RL It must have been part of the inspiration- as Dada always has the element of shock.

LB That's what it was and that's what they were trying to do. And I think they were probably pretty successful. Quite original in some areas. Some of it's bound to be repeated. You know certain kinds of things that you would do. But I think generally it was pretty good. At least it got a lot of notoriety. You even hear of it yourself.

RL What was your painting like at the time, other than the Dada show, which was a special event? What were you doing, let's say in Berkeley?

LB I was doing the same thing, landscapes probably.

RL It might be interesting when you're feeling up to it to go on to talk about Tamarind.

LB What do you mean?

RL Well, the reason that I say that is that I remember again working on your show, that after you came back from Tamarind, when you were doing lithography, black and white, you did a whole series of paintings in black and white. And you said, when we talked about it a number of years ago, that that's the reason .

LB Well, I think it was interesting to me, and also to work in a gray scale. Not necessarily because of lithography- it can be in color, goodness. But I happened to be working in more of a black and white area. But as far as subject matter goes, I don't think there was any shift or much of a change there.

RL So the lithographs that you did there were also based on the landscape?

LB That's what I would say, yeah.

RL Well, even if the landscape has always been a theme that runs throughout your art, the style in which you depict it can evolve and change.

LB Sure.

RL I think, as we talked about last time, the early sixties was still the period of those large canvases, fairly large color areas. And those paintings that are black, white and gray from the early sixties often have collage elements in them.

LB Yes. They have.

RL How long were you at Tamarind?

LB I was there for the initial period which is a month or something like that, and then I went back again later the next year and was there for a short while.

RL Were there other artists working there?

LB Oh yes, they usually had two artists. But they had a lot of visitors come in too. They could do a print, say. They didn't have a term there but they would do a print. If they were in the area, June Wayne would probably invite them. So there were a number of Europeans that came through and she would invite them too to maybe do a print there. And they'd move on. But the ones that were invited through their jury process were there for a term of time so that you could accomplish more.

RL That's how you got there?

LB Yes.

RL Also through a Ford Foundation Fellowship, is that right?

LB Yes. Well, no, that wasn't the Ford Foundation Fellowship. It was funded by Ford Foundation so in essence it is.

RL Did you consider that a very important__ __?

LB To me, it was very important to be there in L.A. and to have the chance to work in lithography under almost ideal circumstances. My goodness, you had a printer, you get all the prints that are made, and you come out on top. You can't fail. Besides, they give you a subsidy. So you live there and have a good space to work and it's very ideal.

RL Had you done any lithographs before that time?

LB Oh, I'd done some but just in a very minor way. But this was a chance to really look into it. So I enjoyed it, yes. And benefited from it.

RL Then when you came back, I imagine you used what you learned there. Did you continue to do lithographs here?

LB I didn't, no.

RL You didn't. So that was really the only period that you did lithographs?

LB Well, as a period of time, yeah. There was no chance to do lithography here. Well, you could at the school a little bit, but not under those kind of terms.

RL How about now, now that there are several studios in town?

LB I'm doing a print now.

RL At North Light Editions?

LB With North Light, yeah.

RL Good.

LB So, I'm involved in it, I guess. Well you know, Myrna, she comes from Tamarind. That is the background of Tamarind, and she knew Garo Antresian quite well; he had been one of my printers at Tamarind. So we had that kind of connection. And she was anxious for me to do a print. And so was Antresian. He said, "Get that guy on

the stone again." So, I am.

RL That's great, that's great.

LB I'm doing a color print.

RL How many colors?

LB Well, so far, we hope to make it in four. It could be, probably, it's going to be five, though. You know that's determined by the way the proofing goes, whether you need another color.

RL Landscape?

LB Yeah, seascape, based on some of those rock forms in the sea.

RL I'd love to see that.

LB It's a variant on a painting I did which I called the Sea Sentinels. It's kind of a variation of that.

RL How large is the edition going to be?

LB They do an edition of 30, which is a fair size. It'll be a full sheet.

RL That's pretty exciting.

LB Yeah. And she's a very good printer- first rate, very careful about her technical side. And she's very good to work with because she is quite open about consulting about certain things. Well, they're all good. The ones at Tamarind, that is in L.A., were very good. A couple were not as interesting people, but generally, I would say it was first rate.

RL Where did you live in L.A.?

LB Well, I had a little apartment near Tamarind; it was within walking distance. I would say it was okay.

RL What was the art scene like down there?

LB Well, I probably stuck around Tamarind as much as anything. I did get to the museum and some of the galleries. I did show down there at, oh goodness, you know, I get confused about dates. But I did have a show at one of the galleries- The Comara Gallery. So I knew the galleries. I knew a lot of the people that were showing down there. Some old friends of mine like Hassel Smith, who was really from the Bay area but he was showing in L.A., and Emerson Woelffer- a number of those people that I knew pretty well. So I got around, yes.

RL After that, you returned to Portland.

LB I always had to come back to Portland.

RL As a stop off point.

LB Well, I've got my bed here, my roots.

RL I asked you about jazz before as an influence on your work. I presume you're still interested.

LB Not that direct influence on painting. I suppose everything has an influence on painting. I was interested in jazz, yeah.

RL Did you have the opportunity when you lived in L.A. or San Francisco or Berkeley to go to jazz clubs there?

LB I did, yeah.

RL There's just something about the certain beat to jazz music that sometimes I think could possibly be compared to the way you paint.

LB I don't see it that way at all.

RL You don't like to think of any direct relationship- just one of the many things you're interested in.

LB No, it's really enjoyment for me. I don't see any direct influence except the kind of freedom of it.

RL Well, that time when you painted to music for the T.V. station?

LB Oh that was another kind of fun thing. It wasn't necessarily trying to_ _ _ Because I don't work to music at all.

RL What about the sense of improvisation. I think you did once say to me that the idea of improvisation in jazz_ _ _

LB Well, that's true, sure. That interests me very much. So maybe that's the connection. It's not any more than Stuart Davis, who certainly didn't ignore jazz; he loved it very much. But he didn't try to make something to illustrate it. I mean he was involved in improvising as jazz musicians did, particularly in color and, I would say, in shapes. And even theme, for him, a little bit. I think he did the urban landscape and jazz, it seems to me, was concerned about people, about the urban landscape.

RL It's a decidedly urban form of music.

LB To me it is, yeah. And that's exciting.

RL Well, what were your working methods like at the time? Were they very improvisational?

LB Yeah, very much so.

RL Did you do preliminary sketches or just whatever came to mind?

LB I always make sketches but I don't necessarily use them, as a direct- I don't lift them and put them on canvas. I always make drawings and sketches, yes, but nine times out of ten they don't end up as a painting. So, I would start very freely as I [might] a drawing. Just a mass of color might get you going or a shape or a gesture might move you to conceive a canvas. So it comes under the impulse of painting itself.

RL And you still feel that way in your work?

LB Ah, no, I think I'm closer to kind of subject matter right now. For instance, now we're jumping ahead, but a couple of years ago, I was driving down the coast and I stopped at Crescent City. It happened to be one of those absolutely gorgeous days, towards evening. It just impressed me very much. It impressed me so much that I couldn't get it out of my mind. The sky, the evening sky and the sea, and the color- everything. And this started me off on a whole series of things that had to do with the sea. It had to do with the sky, the vastness of it, whether it was clear or cloudy or whatever. It just kind of generated one thing after the other. And I didn't necessarily make drawings of particular locations. It just was in me; I just painted these things.

RL That one experience provided you with enough inspiration to do quite a lot of work?

LB Well, I would say I probably did eighty or ninety canvases. Well, not all huge ones- a lot of them were small. But it just generated a whole group of things. Now I don't know, maybe I'm out of that now, I don't know. Could be.

RL Right now, you don't know exactly where you'll go?

LB No, I really don't know because I really looked; I went through this a lot. Perhaps I got as much as I could out of it. I really don't know. But I haven't been painting, just recently, so we'll see.

RL In 1963 you went to Europe, for the first time, I think.

LB Yeah.

RL Where did you go?

LB Went all through Europe. Came in at Copenhagen, flew over the pole. Went to Copenhagen first and then down to France and into Spain and then back up to the low countries again. Took off from London coming back.

RL Who were you traveling with?

LB A friend of mine, by the name of Taggart, Bruce Taggart.

RL How long did you stay?

LB Oh, we were there a couple of months, I guess. We had a lot of fun.

RL I imagine you did. What impressed you the most?

LB Everything. Yeah.

RL You didn't have any specific revelations, having gone to a particular place you had always heard of?

LB Well, I was impressed by a lot of things there. Spain was very exciting, extremely exciting to me. And to see some of the great museums: the Prado, spent time in the Louvre, spent time in Germany, in the Stedlijke Museum in Amsterdam, looked at all the museums we could possibly look at, probably. We got around by one of those Eurail passes, which was very convenient, very good really. And we took the bus sometimes, just short distances to go someplace else. But we went to a lot of places and we began to not try to sort them out as being better or worse, but I was impressed by many, many things. I thought the National Gallery in London was superb, absolutely superb.

RL When you came back, did your work change because of the trip?

LB Not necessarily. Just confirmed a lot of things I do already.

RL Have you been back to Europe since then a number of times?

LB Yeah, a number of times.

RL Was the last time when you went to Paris to see the Picasso show?

LB That was a year before last.

RL Where are you going to go next?

LB I don't know. I'd like to go to Spain again.

RL Weren't you going to go to a Bach festival?

LB I didn't make it. I was going to. That was in Madeira. That's every year. Maybe I'll make it this year. I doubt it, though. I really wanted to go, but I wasn't able to, finally. Anyway, I would like to go to Spain again, to Portugal. Kind of poke around that area.

RL When you were there- I don't know if Bruce Taggart, was he an artist?

LB He was interested in painting, yeah.

RL Did you have the chance to meet artists in Europe, either Americans traveling or Europeans?

LB Not really, no. We weren't there that long. I knew a few people but they were Americans living there.

RL You didn't study over there at all. You were just traveling around?

LB Traveling and eating and looking and drinking and all that goodies.

RL Then you came back and you were artist-in-residence at the University of Washington and University of Illinois. And you were teaching at the Museum Art School in Portland at the same time? Were you just taking leaves of absence?

LB Well, you had to take a leave of absence unless it would fall in your sabbatical. But I'd take a leave of absence to go to Illinois, for instance, or to go to Berkeley, for instance.

RL Sounds like they were fairly generous that way then?

LB No, they really weren't.

RL No? Because you were gone quite a bit.

LB Yeah. I think it annoyed them a lot. I was told at one time that, "This is causing us a great deal of inconvenience." I said, "Well, it's too God damn bad, isn't it?"

RL They had to keep hiring someone to replace you?

LB Well, sure, they didn't pay me. I took a leave of absence. They didn't pay me. So they could hire someone. It was just- well, I don't want to go into that because I'm pretty bitter about some of that stuff. Well, I am. Maybe I should say it on the tape. Maybe that's a good idea.

For instance, I accepted a short term at the University of Oregon, in which I had a sabbatical that year. And the museum and the school wouldn't pay me because I had taken a job at the University of Oregon. They said this

was against the principles of the sabbatical. I said, "Well you don't pay me enough to do anything." I thought if I'd work there for a few months, a quarter, then I could make some money and really do something. So, they docked me. They wouldn't pay me. They took my sabbatical money away. Now if that isn't absurd. You know, I lost faith in that place, right then; that's when I thought, "Well, to hell with you." The first opportunity, I'm going to get out of here. I'm going to wait until I'm eligible to retire and it was just a few years. I could bear up with that. But I certainly lost a lot of faith and interest.

RL So you did last until your retirement?

LB Well, I felt, my goodness, I don't want to throw that away.

RL Tell me about your teaching now. You obviously taught for so many years, so many different places.

LB I enjoyed that very, very much. I got a lot out of that, a hell of a lot.

RL From the feedback from the students___ Maybe you don't have one, but did you have a philosophy of teaching, a certain kind of approach?

LB Not really, I just believed in work. The students would work for me; they'd work for themselves really. And that's all it's about. You find out by doing something; you don't find out by theorizing about it. You find out by actually engaging yourself with it, every day, day by day. You don't make a bunch of plans for tomorrow. You don't make any plans. You forget about what it was for, even. You just that time. You try to understand that, you see.

RL Did the artists who taught, let's say at the Museum Art School, or the local artists in Portland, get together for critiques of each other's work? Was there a sense of communication?

LB You mean of each other's paintings?

RL Right.

LB No. I don't think they were that interested.

RL Or even people outside the school? I'm not sure exactly who was on the faculty then, but let's say you and Mike Russo and Carl Morris. Would you ever get together and talk about painting, talk about art, talk about everything?

LB No, very, very seldom.

RL So there wasn't that sense of a community in that way?

LB No.

[Interruption in tape]

RL In 1972, the Portland Center for the Visual Arts was formed.

LB Is that the year it was formed? I don't recall. 1972? That's the year I retired from the museum.

RL Well, you needed something else to do, I guess.

LB Oh, was that it?

RL Actually, maybe it wasn't 1972, but it was around then.

LB Well, that was the year I did retire, '72. I remember that.

RL What happened at your retirement? Was there a big party?

LB Yeah, there was a big party. An enormous party.

RL Well, that was fitting, wasn't it?

LB Well, it was pretty nice, sure. I was quite surprised.

RL Oh, so it was a surprise party.

LB Yeah, it was a surprise party.

RL Did it have an art theme or was it just a big party?

LB Well, it involved all the students and faculty. And the theme, well, they all gave me a rose so maybe that was the theme.

RL City of Roses [Portland-Ed.]. Were you glad to retire by that point?

LB I certainly was.

RL Then what were your plans after that or did you have any?

LB I didn't have any plans. I just wanted to work and paint. That's my day-by-day existence.

RL Your job.

LB Yeah.

RL Well, you were involved in the formation of the Portland Center for the Visual Arts [PCVA-Ed.]. Correct?

LB Yes.

RL In what way, were you a founder?

LB Well, I guess I was one of the founders. We had talked about some ideas, a number of us in the community, talked of various ideas of maybe wanting to do something to bring paintings that we normally weren't seeing to this community. We had a number of discussions and finally, this opportunity came up, the place, that is, the location. The gentleman who owned the building at that time was a Portland man. He had been at Techtronics for a number of years but had left this community, briefly, but had his roots here nonetheless. And he was interested. His name was Davis. Bob Davis. And he had this building, which is the present location of PCVA, and he was willing to give us a big break on the rental for the first year in order to get started. As a matter of fact, it was a contribution from him to our formation of it. And he even got in there and labored like mad himself to help fix it up, putting studding up, taking an old elevator out, and closing up the hole in the floor and all this. He was enthusiastic and we were very fortunate to be able to have a person of his means and influence to give us that first kind of push.

RL So he must have been interested in arts?

LB He was interested in the arts, yeah.

RL Was he a collector?

LB No, not necessarily. I don't know exactly where he is right now. He was involved in some islands in the Caribbean, developing a couple of islands as a kind of sanctuary. And I don't know what has happened since then.

RL So he hasn't been in Portland for some time?

LB Well, I haven't seen him. I don't know whether he's still around here. I'm sure he still has his roots here. He comes here quite often, but I haven't seen him for quite a while.

RL So, which artists- do you remember which artists were involved?

LB Well, there was Mel Katz and Mike Russo, and Jay Backstrand, and myself and a couple of others that originally were_ _ _

RL Why did you decide PCVA was needed?

LB As I mentioned, we felt that this was an opportunity to bring shows to this area which normally weren't being shown. That is, we could invite- we talked about means and money to do this, and did plan to appeal to the National Endowment for funds, and with an idea to primarily bring shows to this community because the museum wasn't doing very much at that time.

RL In contemporary art?

LB Yeah. And no one else was showing anything. The galleries didn't have the means to bring shows of any caliber here, so that was the impulse really.

RL Was the main purpose then to bring shows from outside this region?

LB Well, primarily outside the region, yes.

RL How did you feel at the time? I know since then things may have changed, but at the time how did you feel about doing shows of local artists?

LB Well, we'd have perhaps one or two through the season of West Coast. Not necessarily just Northwest, but West Coast. And some West Coast artists would show there as a result. But primarily it was national, based on the national idea. It didn't matter really. We didn't try to allocate a certain number of shows to the community or to the West Coast, or so on. Depending who we could get and who we wanted to get. And we had an exhibition committee that talked these things over and decided who we might try to invite and if it were possible to get their work. It wasn't always possible.

RL Where did you get your initial funding from?

LB From the National Endowment.

RL Did you then have to match that?

LB Oh, yeah, we had to match it. And so we had to establish a membership to help raise funds and try to get funds locally from various foundations that were willing to give us money.

RL And you were obviously successful because it still exists.

LB Well, yeah, we were very successful. The first year was sort of tough sledding and we experimented with people to direct it, to help establish it. And finally settled on Mary Beebe who finally became our director. And it was a marvelous choice. She was perfectly wonderful in what she was able to do.

RL What had she been before that? Do you remember?

LB As I recall, she was employed in some capacity up at the Catlin Gabel Schools and she had studied art history in school and had had a little experience around the museum and some of the local galleries. Not too much of a background really. But she just had that kind of feeling and know-how to go after it.

RL To put it together. Do you remember the first exhibition you had there?

LB Yeah, the first was a painter by the name of Jack Youngerman. That was the first show we had.

RL Did he come out for the exhibition?

LB Yeah. That was another thing we tried to do. If at all possible to have the artist there, either at the opening or sometime during the show, and to meet with the community and those interested. He wasn't asked to give a formal talk, but at least if he could be there we thought it would be very beneficial. And most everyone went along with that.

RL The center paid for their way out here?

LB Oh, yes, we tried to pay their way, and put them up for their stay here and whatever else was necessary. There were some parties organized for those people. Lots of them didn't want that kind of attention. But we left it up to them. They didn't have to give a talk or they didn't have to appear at a party for them or anything. It was up to them, actually. We left it as much as possible to those people that were showing.

RL What about the performance aspect?

LB That came a little later; that was established a little later.

RL Whose idea was that?

LB As I recall, I think it was Mel Katz's idea.

RL And do you know how they chose- the same way they chose artists? The committee thought of people and suggested them?

LB The exhibition committee.

RL Thought of performance artists as well?

LB Oh yes.

RL You must have been on the exhibition committee for a while?

LB I was on for quite a while.

RL How did that operate?

LB By open discussion and suggestions from the group. Well, the exhibition committee would vary from maybe four or five to even ten. And we'd get input from that group. And from other people, other members of the board that wanted to. Anyone was allowed to say, "Well, we'd like to see so and so." The first few years, it was very vigorous, I would say. I'm not on the board now and I'm not connected with it so I really don't know how it's going at the moment. The emphasis seems to be much more on performance, to me, from what I understand.

RL Of course, they're continuing with exhibitions.

LB Yeah, but not on the same level that we were.

RL That may be true, that may be partly a funding problem.

LB I don't think it's necessarily that. I think it's just whoever is suggesting or trying to get shows. It seems to be a little bit different to me right now than it was at that time.

RL So once the committee- at least when you were involved with it- had bandied about some names and suggested some possible artists, was it Mary's responsibility to try to contact__ __?

LB No, not always. She was most helpful in doing that, but it was all our responsibilities. Many of us wrote letters and corresponded. It might be one of the committee members who might know a person personally. And he would usually try to get hold of him, to see if this were possible. But Mary was very helpful in all of these situations, believe me. She was a great director. And we were sorry we lost her, of course. But fine for her, she went on to something that was very important to her.

RL A very exciting job. Do you remember over the years any shows that stand out for you?

LB Well, there were so many good shows from that period. I remember, particularly, when Alice Neel had a show here and it was quite an event, I must say. She was most gracious and stayed for a number of days, talked very well, showed good slides. And she obviously enjoyed her stay here. We had a great show from her, it was absolutely, perfectly beautiful show. Now that was a show in which Mary and myself made the choice. We went to New York and met with her gallery and she herself and chose the paintings that were to be in the show.

RL I was wondering about that. How much directional choice the center had.

LB Well, it didn't occur always but that happened to be one occasion which I guess we were sort of responsible for the choice.

RL Other times the artist or the gallery would__ __?

LB That's right. We had a marvelous show of Frank Stella. It was a great show. And he made the choice there, in relationship with his own gallery. We weren't involved__ __ We usually left it up to the artist. He could show one painting or he could show twenty if he wanted to. Another good show__ __ I guess I'm thinking of people that were kind of exciting as individuals, not only their work but as individuals who came here. Like, Scarpitta.

RL Salvatore Scarpitta.

LB I think the community was most fascinated by this guy and his work also. It was a beautiful show. And he was a beautiful performer. Were you here at that time?

RL I think I was although I didn't hear him talk.

LB Oh, he gave a great talk. It was absolutely fantastic. And it wasn't a prepared talk; he just rambled on. He spoke about himself. Beautiful.

RL Do you still go to most of their events?

LB I haven't recently at all, no. There's no particular reason why I don't; I'm just not getting around as much as I did.

RL Did you get to see the Castelli show that was there?

LB Yes, I liked part of it. I don't think it was the best representation of the men he handles but that wasn't the idea anyway. I realize that. But there were some terribly interesting things to me.

RL How do you feel about the art scene in Portland today?

LB I think it's quite vigorous, really.

RL I mean, how would you compare it to any other time that you were here?

LB Well, it's so much larger now. For one thing, there's more people working here. There's numerous young people that I'm not even acquainted with. It's a shame that there's not more opportunity for them to show. There's only two or three galleries. Well, maybe there's a little more than that. But there's not very many opportunities to absorb that many people that are working in the field.

RL Although, I think that a lot of the college galleries have grown up in the last few years, ever since I've been here, such as Marylhurst's Gym, and the University of Portland, Portland Community College. Portland State now has two separate galleries. And they are, some of them, not all of them maybe, but some of them are showing a lot of good work.

LB Well, of course Portland State has always had that gallery; it's just changed in location a little bit. But they've had that for many, many years.

RL Well, the Littman Gallery?

LB That's relatively new. But there was a gallery there before.

RL There was a gallery, but now they have two galleries plus a gallery where they show just the student work. So, it's nice. And Marylhurst, of course, is a nice space.

LB Yeah, that's a good space. That's the new space, the one in the gym.

RL Granted, there never is enough opportunity for people.

LB No, there really isn't, particularly people that want to show in a commercial gallery and hopefully make sales. There's not many of those opportunities. Blackfish Gallery has been very successful, it seems to me, in promoting younger people, and showing work from outside. A very successful cooperative really. This is one gallery that has made a success of the cooperative principle. Not many have hacked it that long. But they've done a very good job and they've got a good space.

RL Yes, beautiful.

LB Beautiful space to me. And I think they've consistently had pretty good shows. Well presented and lively, and new people. I think that's been a great addition to this city.

RL Would you- I don't know if you mind answering the question- but what artists here do you_ _ _ Whose work do you like?

LB Oh, I like a great number of them. I'd hate to say I like this particular person and this particular person.

RL Maybe you could even say it on a national scale, so that you're not talking about people locally.

LB What do you mean on a national scale?

RL Which artists do you most admire? If some people come to mind?

LB You mean on a national scale? Well, that's a difficult question, too. I admire lots of people.

RL So there aren't any particular favorites?

LB I suppose I have favorites like anyone else but I find it very difficult to say, "Well, I admire this guy and this gal above all else." I've got lots of admirations.

RL Okay, that is a difficult question, I guess.

LB I think it's very difficult. To single out someone, to say this is the greatest.

RL Did you know that Ann Hughes, who of course used to have a gallery, seems to have started up some other- I don't know if it's actually a gallery but I got an invitation.

LB Well, I was over there the other evening, at her little opening, I guess you'd call it. And it's not a gallery really. She's always been excited about doing various kinds of things, organizing all kinds of little ideas, and those are people that she's known and showed in the past and has an admiration for. And so she puts on a little show, which is very nice. She's also been helping North Light Galleries by selling a few things for them and taking things around.

RL What was her gallery like when it did exist? That was before I was here.

LB Well, she started out in a house___. It was in the Northwest section, up near Everett Street. And she had kind of a nice little gallery going. It was in one floor, and she did pretty well there. Then, she went downtown and took over an existing space that had been occupied by a Sally Judd Gallery. And I don't think the move was too beneficial for her. It didn't quite get off the ground, like it had been established in her own house, and I can't analyze why. Maybe the location was one, maybe it was not quite the right time, maybe it was the people she was able to get. There were a lot of factors there, I'm sure, but she didn't do very well. She didn't sell enough to really meet her overhead and was ultimately forced to kind of give it up.

RL Do you remember who she showed in her gallery?

LB Well, she had some people from here, she had some people from Seattle. She had a few people that were outside of this area, the Northwest. I remember she had a show of Judy Chicago at one time there. That was from California as you know. But primarily it would have been people from the Northwest.

RL So when her gallery closed, those artists probably had to find other outlets for their work.

LB Yeah, they did.

RL Do you know how many artists Arlene [Schnitzer-Ed.] represents at the Fountain?

LB Oh, goodness, she's got an awful lot of artists, really. I would say probably thirty or forty, anyway.

RL That's quite a lot.

LB I think it's a hell of a lot; it's almost too much.

RL Then does she have a responsibility to give each of those artists a show?

LB No, not necessarily.

RL So it doesn't work that way. Maybe you don't even know this but how does she decide who gets a show and when? I mean, is it

totally___?

LB Well, I'm not sure how she decides that.

RL Are you planned for another show?

LB Well, I usually have a show there about every other year. I haven't any plans for the immediate future. I had a show last year so if I

were going to have a show, it would have to be next year, I suppose. But there's no plans.

RL What about in Seattle? Are you going to be showing in- I think you may have mentioned that.

LB Well, there's a new gallery going to open. I don't know their name. They haven't decided on a name yet. But I'll be showing with them.

RL This is the one that will be run by Linda?

LB Linda Hodges and her friend, I forget her name off_hand. Anyway, they are going to open a gallery. I'm not sure when. I think it's not until possibly March, April, somewhere around there. They do have a space though.

RL In Pioneer Square?

LB Pioneer Square.

RL That's a good place.

LB Yeah, that's a good location.

RL Well, I know we have talked about your work periodically throughout the tapes and you've said that landscape remains basically the current of your work.

LB Yes, what I mainly respond to, I think, is landscape.

RL Although, of course, there have been periods when, as you've said, you've painted a figure, maybe inspired by a particular person you had met, or_ _ _

LB Maybe it was an ad I saw in the paper or something.

RL And there were times when your work was very expressionist, if I can say that, or very tight where they were more geometric. A tighter style, would you say that? In some of those where the figures appear in the boxes- some of those are a little more organized. Do you know what I'm referring to?

LB I think I do.

RL Actually, what we didn't talk about at all was those series of collages and some silkscreens, I think, that you did, of machines.

LB Well, I've always been doing collages, way back, years back. So, it's nothing new with me. In fact, none of these things which you're asking about divide into periods; they're all part of me anyway.

RL Of course, they don't leave. But the ones I'm referring to specifically, I think we showed at least one or two or three in the show.

LB What are you talking about?

RL Like the one that was called Pitkin Papers and then there was the one called Flying Machine. It was like a cross between a juke box and/or a home entertainment center or something.

LB Yeah, those were collages.

RL What inspired that group?

LB Well, I can't recall what brings on some of these things. I really don't know. I get het up about some idea and kind of pursue it, I guess, for a while. And I might use collage, I might use painting, or it would vary.

RL But those were definitely non landscape. That grouping that you did.

LB Well, they were urban though, urban landscape. I think they have a relationship. Sure, the presentation- the subject, the presentation- is somewhat different but they're all part of a body of work. I find it very difficult to say well, you know, I got this period and that period and so on. You know, recently, I've worked, and I think we talked about it, got excited about the things at the coast, the Oregon coast. Well, that led to a whole series of things that were- some were very abstract, some were quite realist in their presentation. Well, I probably have run through most of that right now. I haven't been working with that subject recently. But I must have done eighty or ninety things, some large paintings, some smaller ones, some collage, a whole group of things.

RL All mixed together.

LB Yeah.

RL Now the three canvases that are ready to be used_ _ _

LB That's for a mural decoration.

RL A commissioned mural decoration?

LB Yeah.

RL Where is that going to be?

LB At the Justice Center Building.

RL Oh, I didn't realize that you had a piece going in there.

LB Yeah. It's in one of the courtrooms.

RL What's the subject going to be? Is that pre-determined?

LB It's just going to be a painting. Let's forget about the subject in this case. I'm going to make a painting. And I'm sure that it'll have some relationship with things that I've been doing. I'm not going to force myself to do something that has to do with justice or the jail that's going to be housed there or anything like that.

RL So they put no stipulations on you that way?

LB No, they don't. They accepted my ideas, on the basis of what I'd shown them, which is fairly abstract. There's three courtrooms that are going to have decorations. One is by myself, one by Anne Johnson, who is teaching at the museum as you know, and the third is by Alden Mason in Seattle. Well, they're all vastly different. All three people are quite different. And I would say all three are somewhat abstract in their presentation. Certainly Anne is and certainly Alden is. Maybe I'm the most realist because I tend to use some forms that are somewhat recognizable in nature. So, there is that difference. But as far as presentation goes, I think that my presentation is usually fairly abstract and reductive in principle. I cut out a lot of stuff and hold back, and hold it down. I'm interested in composition just as much as anyone else. I'm interested in color and I'm interested in all those facets of what make a painting just as much as Joe or Gus over here, you see.

RL I look forward to seeing that. When does that_ _ _?

LB Well, the building is not scheduled to open until the fall of '83, around October. Though I'm sure we'll be able to get in there and install the paintings before that time. But it is scheduled and I think they're ahead of schedule, from what I understand. So it could possibly come in September. But there's no guarantee of that. But it is scheduled for around October.

RL So that's your next project when you start painting?

LB Well, that's one project. That's something that'll occupy me for a little while. In the meantime, I hope to do some other paintings. That won't take all my time, but it will take some energy and time.

RL It turns out all together to be a pretty large_ _ _

LB It's approximately 18 feet long and about 5 feet high. It's a long mural panel.

RL They're courtrooms you said, but will the general public be able to see these pieces?

LB Yeah, I think so. The courts vary and there will be district courts, and there'll be circuit courts, and there's a couple of courts that are probably not open, where they are trying felonies or things like that. They're not always open to the general public. But I think the public is allowed to go to most any of these sessions. A couple of them are going to be traffic courts, mainly, and that's a hodge-podge of all kinds of things going on in there.

RL Now, I'm going to ask you a question which I know you don't like me to ask you, but it's about the Northwest art scene. Not so much the gallery scene, which we just discussed, but we did mention it briefly- this whole idea of "Is there a Northwest tradition?" I'm not now referring to Tobey and that period, I'm talking about today. Do you see any style, like, you know, the funk style that's associated with California?

LB No, I don't at all. I don't at all.

RL So do you just_ _ _

LB I see it very diverse and very individualistic and I don't think there's any group that's kind of leading a certain direction, like you mentioned the funk school. And that doesn't exist so much any more anyway, I don't think. No, I find it very individualistic and very diverse in the kind of thing the artists are doing here. You know, you get someone like Bob Mackie who's working in a very limited but beautiful style in his sculpture, to someone who is completely opposite in direction, and yet they're all the same generation, you might say. There's no kind of tight school. But schools are always kind of a funny way to put it anyway. I never did see the abstract expressionists being a school either, and I don't think they intended- there was never a school, so to speak. They were lumped together by certain critics and lumped together as a generation. But not stylistically and not direction at all.

RL I think most of the stylistic schools that one discusses in art history- hope, that most critics seem to realize that the artists weren't necessarily associating themselves. It's just that future historians put them together for stylistic reasons.

LB Or, some critics lumped them together.

RL Even the impressionists didn't necessarily consider themselves a group.

LB Well, they knew each other, somewhat. But look at the vast difference a person like Jack Pollock and De Kooning. There's a hell of a big difference there. Or Mark Rothko. They were all very individualistic and existed as artists in their own right. Not necessarily belonging to a school. I think that on occasion there's been two or three artists that kind of grouped together very strongly and looked into certain stylistic things as a group. Now that certainly did happen in California, somewhat. You know, when Diebenkorn and Bischoff and Park and Lobdell were working together, they were very close. And they were thematically very similar there for a while. But then they split off and went on their own. And it probably happened with the so-called funk school, which seemed to have centered around a couple galleries; the Delexie Gallery and numerous people who were working in Davis, California, at the university. And yet, there's a great big difference between them individually, nonetheless.

RL That's always the case, I think. Artists always maintain their individual style and personality.

LB Yeah, I think so.

RL I asked you because I often in my travels or when I meet other museum people or galleries, get asked if I think there's any Northwest style that I see coming out of the work.

LB Well, do you?

RL Not really, I haven't yet.

LB I think there's been an emphasis on the color and the atmosphere of a place. I don't think you can get away from that. When I worked in New York, I certainly responded to that landscape in quite a different manner than I do here. And it influenced me, sure. Certain structures that were in the city and the light and color is very different. Those things are influential on you. And the very gentle kind of atmosphere here has been influential on me- certainly on how I use my palette.

RL Is there anything, reminiscing about the last few years of your life, that you find significant, that you'd want to mention that we haven't covered?

LB Well, I don't know what it'd be, except that just to paint every day is a problem. You know, to keep it up. And it shouldn't be a problem but it has become a problem because you're pushed more and more into not having the time to do it. And I think that's disastrous for a lot of people.

RL You find that's more true now?

LB More than I've ever experienced it.

RL Why now do you have less time?

LB I don't know why. I've tried to explain that to myself. Maybe I don't have as much energy as I had. That could be part of it, but_ _ _

RL You just find that there's too many other things you need to get done and that doesn't leave enough time and energy?

LB Well sometimes it seems to be that way.

RL So that's the main battle you're facing now?

LB Well, I don't have any real battles either I guess.

RL But that's the problem that you see?

LB Why, sure.

RL But you see yourself continuing to paint?

LB I see myself continuing, yes, for a long time. I'm fairly healthy.

RL I hope so. Well, great.

[End of Interview]