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Oral history interview with Olinka Hrdy, 1965  
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# Transcript

## Interview

**BH:** BETTY HOAG

**OH:** OLINKA HRDY

**BH:** This is Betty Lockrie Hoag on March 13, 1965, interviewing the artist Olinka Hrdy in her studio in Woodland Hills, Los Angeles. Miss Hrdy was active in the Federal Art Project in Los Angeles and is going to tell us some very interesting things about it but before we get to that period which the archives are especially interested in I want to ask you something about your own life, would you like to tell us where you were born and when?

**OH:** I was born about a mile and a half of a little Czechoslovakian settlement in Prague, Oklahoma, P-R-A-G-U-E that is about 53 miles east of Oklahoma City. I was born in this little sod hut.

**BH:** Oh, you're a soddy.

**OH:** I guess that's what I am.

**BH:** My father-in-law's a soddy too. I understand that they have a very close kinship.

**OH:** Well, this little cabin is still in existence and the last time I was back there I went there with my favorite professor from the University of Oklahoma and as we stood there she said this is pretty unusual to find the cabin and the artist standing on the same ground. Usually one or the other are gone, but this was in the early territorial days in Oklahoma and my mother and father had this homestead north of Prague. Everyone in the little town is Czechoslovakian and my mother's maiden names is Benes and I am the second cousin to Edward Benes, Premier of Czechoslovakia, the former premier of Czechoslovakia. He came here in '42, he came to Prague, Oklahoma, to see my grandmother ♦ then his only living relative in this country.

**BH:** That's very interesting. Was your father of Czechoslovakian descent too?

**OH:** Yes, he was born in Plzn, Czechoslovakia, but my mother was born in Belleville, Iowa.

**BH:** Did you receive your education in Oklahoma?

**OH:** Yes. When I was about 16, my father and mother were divorced. Then my mother and I went to a big Indian lease, about several hundred acres, and she and I took care of this lease and I worked just like a man, plowing the fields and harnessing the mules and doing all the work. Anyway after I graduated from grade school.

**BH:** Excuse me, may I interrupt just a minute before that? What is a lease, like a reservation?

**OH:** No, it's not a reservation. It was near a reservation but the Indians were allowed to lease their land to white men for agriculture and so that's what we were doing.

**BH:** It was making it your farm, like renting it.

**OH:** Yes, something like that. We give them so much grain, so much corn instead of money. After I graduated from grade school, and high school I decided that I would go to the University and my brother had been there and he was telling me about the wonderful things at the University and previously\_\_ though before I did go to the University. I had been doing a lot of embroidery ♦ as you know the Czechs are famous for embroidery ♦ and I was almost an expert at that and earned some money on the side while I was in high school. But when I decided to go to the University, my mother gave me a gift of fifty dollars. That was all I had for five years and I went to the University .

**BH:** How did you ever manage?

**OH:** I don't know, because that was hardly enough to take me there. Once I got there I had this terrific fortitude and terrific faith. Maybe I should insert here about the Indians.

**BH:** Oh, I think it would be fascinating, I was going to ask you. This was when you know the woman who became the head of the Indian tribe.

**OH:** Well, that was when I was quite young. While I was there at Prague one of my cousins, Pearle Davis, who is part Seminole and I used to go over to Seminole, Oklahoma, which was just east of Prague to visit her grandmother who was Alice B. Davis. Now she is full Seminole and the Seminole came up from Florida and settled in Seminole Oklahoma. During the summers, as I said, I used to go over and visit her when I was quite young and this woman married a white man, George Davis, and when he died the tribe thought so much of her that they made her chief woman, probably the first and only chief woman that ever existed. Instead of chieftain she was chief woman.

**BH:** What had he done to the Indians?

**OH:** Who?

**BH:** George Davis.

**OH:** He was their chieftain. He was their chief until he died. He was a white man.

**BH:** I thought he was perhaps in charge of their reservation of the government.

**OH:** Oh no, he was their chieftain. That was unusual in itself and the Seminoles are part of the Tiger Clan and I had been there many times when she had quite a large kitchen with a big table, a big round table in the middle of the floor and often it was piled full of vegetables and fruit. We of course slept in the other rooms, but in the morning when we woke up and came into the kitchen, many times we would find ten or fifteen or twenty Indians laying on their little pads, all around on the floor, on this table and they had come sometimes as much as twenty or thirty miles during the night and come quietly into her backdoor and laid on the floor waiting for her to get up in the morning. And many of them maybe were starving or hungry but not a single Indian would reach upon the table and take a banana or orange or any vegetable unless they could replace it with the same. So in fact they I think are the most trustworthy people and the most spiritual people left on this planet. And I was taken into the Seminole tribe and also into the Kiowa Indian tribe which is up on the mountains. And the Seminoles and Kiowas were very friendly and we would get on horses and travel about seventy miles to the Kiowa Reservation. Near the Kiowa Reservation is a beautiful little waterfall called Turner Falls. We would just drop the reins of the horses and they would graze at the base of this beautiful waterfall maybe for days just as though they were tied there until we returned. And we would climb up narrow crevices unto a plateau and at two o'clock at night the Indians would, the men of course dance in the center and the women danced in the outside in the opposite direction to keep out the devilish spirits. But often it was my job to shell hard corn off of a cob and put it into a bowl or one of the Indian bowls and these men would dance clockwise around this hard, dry corn with such fury and such zeal and such faith that I have seen that corn sprout and that is all the faith you need when you see that done. Well you see the Indians have a terrific power and of course a lot of it has been lost now by the white man taking over like they have.

**BH:** Giving them different ideas. Is it after the ceremony that they break the jar? I've heard so often they break it to release the spirit.

**OH:** Well I never saw it broken although many times there was just a hollow place in the rock itself where they just ground their corn you know and a lot of times it was put right in the rock, in the hollow part of the rock. I have some right out here in my yard, I'll show you. I picked them up right here near my studio, of course this used to be all Indian country and I have arrowheads right up thereon my window sill, some of which were given me by the Kiowa Indians and some which I picked up right here and also an Indian hatchet that I picked up right here outside my studio door. I've been walking over it for months and didn't know what it was till I picked it up and looked at it carefully.

**BH:** I would love to have you tell the tape what you told me about the death of George Davis.

**OH:** Oh when George Davis died they carefully took the skin and all the flesh off the bones and then they took the knucklebones and various long bones of his body and made beautiful beads. You know how they're shaped there sort of fat in the middle and then come down to points to both sides all through and most of them are about four or five inches long and they shine just like ivory. Well that was about a seven or eight day ceremony and the strand of his beads would go, when put around my cousins neck would go down to the floor and back.

**BH:** Was that used cromoniously by the Indians? Was that necklace used by them in a ceremony?

**OH:** No it was given to their folks as a remembrance of course as they do that the you know the Indians think into their, well if they're doing jewelry for instance and the metal is red hot they think into it with such force, say love and health and all the things they want it to have and convey to the person who wears it they think in to it while its red hot and that stays there, they claim its part of the jewelry. In fact I have a beautiful Tibetan ring that is a fabulous thing, when you touch it you realize that something is in it, I'll tell you about that later if I don't forget.

**BH:** (inaudible) Well we probably should leave the reservation.

**OH:** So then I went to the University with fifty dollars and enrolled in the domestic art department not knowing much about what happened there. I thought well I might as well take up sewing I should know a little bit about that but I found that in a few weeks I was making such high grades that they made me student instructor to the assistant instructor to the instructor so I thought to myself, Olinka Hrady you better get out of here you're not learning anything. And I felt like I had nothing to teach anyway so I walked over to the art department and that fascinated me and I decided to enroll in the art department the very next semester. And when I enrolled in the art department my favorite and wonderful professor, Oscar Bruce Jacobson was on his leave of absence to Algeria for one year. And so I enrolled in the School of Creative Design under a wonderful teacher, Gwen Muse and Edith Mayer. Even then at the very end of that first semester my professors learned that I had no money, couldn't buy any materials shoes and stockings I wore so Edith Mayer arranged for me to do a little mural decoration in one of the instructors offices. And I didn't know what a mural was but I tried it anyway. They gave me a little poem to illustrate called the "Maker of Dreams" so that got my imagination going and I did this little fantastic mural in a little niche there in the office.

**BH:** What technique was it? A fresco was it?

**OH:** Well it was done in tempera right on the plaster and that at the end of that semester when Professor Jacobson returned he was ushered right into that little room to see that mural and told immediately that here was Olinka Hrady who had no money, couldn't even afford to go back to her home during the summer. So he took and interest in me and I stayed there that summer and took care of children and washed dishes and did all sorts of work and the next year Professor Jacobson called me into his office and asked me if I had any money for my tuition. I said well how much is it going to be? He said oh be about, you should have about two hundred dollars for your tuition and books and materials. And I said, no, I don't have anything so he said you sit in my office until I return. He walked over to the President's office and they got their heads together and they arranged for me to paint a series of twenty doors two feet by sixteen feet at the state dormitories for women on the campus at the University and there I received my room and board for the year. When I was given this project of course this was very new to me and I hadn't even seen the doors yet so the professor and Edith Mayer and I walked over to the dormitories, we looked at the doors and walked back to his office and he said, "I'll give you twenty minutes to get the design ready for a least one of the small niches at the top because you'll have to start today." I had to start producing today.

**BH:** Did he give you a subject for them?

**OH:** No, no subject, nothing was told to me in anyway. Would you like to see those pictures of those murals?

**BH:** I would love to see them, do you have them right here? Perfectly charming.

**OH:** So I quickly designed this small decoration that went into the top space here with a tray holding fruit of various kinds but on this project I had to furnish the paint. I couldn't afford to buy a pair of stockings so I racked my brain and thought well how can I do this for nothing? So I figured out that if I used a black line around all my decorations and put a very brilliant line within the black line, green for the leaves and red for the apples and so forth, I would get a very splendid effect and still not have to pay too much for the paint. So all my paint for the 20 doors cost me seven dollars.

**BH:** Only seven, isn't that amazing and I bet they were just beautiful.

**OH:** They're brilliant really and as you know I hadn't started in the art department yet. I didn't know a thing about design and it was forced upon me.

**BH:** Had your embroidery designs influenced you?

**OH:** Yes, I think it did because I see almost everything I do in line and I love the line so much and I'll also show you some little line drawings that I have here of this little waterfall I spoke of, Turner Falls. But if you can imagine, for instance this is black with brilliant Chinese red, and this is gold, that was light blue to give a smoke effect.

**BH:** They must have just glittered.

**OH:** Yes, they were absolutely fantastic. Anyway I was working along on these doors there for weeks, no body paid any attention to me, nobody even looked at my designs. And let's see, I think I was down to this panel here, the third panel, the third larger panel which is this jungle panel here and working furiously one day and I turned around and here behind me coming down this giant dining room was Professor Jacobson and Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams was by the way one of my professors who was from my hometown Prague, Oklahoma had a great influence in my life.

**BH:** Of course you'd known him before.

**OH:** Yes, well I didn't know him too well because he went away to the University when I was quite young but they were quietly walking toward me and of course my back was turned. When I turned around I was completely amazed holding this brush in my mouth where I usually held it and my mouth opened and my brush fell down on the floor and as they looked at my decorations and came closer to me both of them bowed completely to the floor and they thought, in fact there was no criticism given of any kind on the work except that they thought it was going along splendidly.

**BH:** What year was that?

**OH:** That must have been about 1920 and ♦ there is a date on here, maybe I have it here, well this was about 1927 I guess, '26 or '7.

**BH:** Are they still there do you know?

**OH:** Yes, they're still there. In fact the last I heard they were taken down and put into the Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma. I don't know whether they're still in the dormitories or whether they were put over there or not but besides this I did this the really my second year at the University. The last of my first year and the beginning of my second year then during the later part of my second year Edith Mayer arranged for me to do another big mural job for my board, at the Copper Kettle which was about fourteen hundred square feet in murals. The building was old English in architecture and in each case I tried to keep the mural in harmony with the architecture.

**BH:** Was this a restaurant?

**OH:** Yes, it was a student eating place and it was just off the campus there. Now this decoration you see here is thirty two feet long and seven feet high and these figures here were taller than I was. In fact in my little book there I have a picture showing me painting it so you can get the proportion of me to the figures.

**BH:** Is this an old Chaucer story?

**OH:** Well what I did, all these faces are faces of students and friends of mine that I knew there and there is a giant arch that goes over here into the main dining room and over this arch I have all my professors, president Bazelle, Edith Mayer and all my friends and this happens to be one of the poets and writers there and as you see the women here were kneeling on the floor, cutting off her skirt, making a modern girl out of her, cutting, bobbing her hair and here's the braid they just cut off and this little child here was the proprietor's own little girl. Well the mural of course covered all the walls in the building and in the main dining room were little windows with just little spaces about a foot and one half by three feet all done, well that was about a half a block long. In between those windows I painted the background ground gold and I have all the shields and crests of all the sororities and fraternities on the campus and also the names of some of the presidents who were there at the time. But even though the thing was Old English, there are incidents there where the students were burning effigy at stake and all an old English costume but the faces of the students you could recognize on campus. And in the center of this arch and at the very top is a self-portrait of myself with a robe on with a hood on like they wore in those days and signed and dated \_\_\_\_\_ it happened to be on my own birthday that I finished it.

**BH:** That was your second year.

**OH:** No that was my third year. Well the third year and then I had part of that to finish on my fourth year. Then after just as I was about to graduate there I was made student instructor in creative design and of course I was all over the campus doing murals and other things by that time and a young architect and his wife from Tulsa, Oklahoma came to the University on their honeymoon. This young architect's name was Bruce Goff. Do you know Bruce Goff?

**BH:** Yes my husband is an architect and a great admirer of his work.

**OH:** Well Bruce and Evelyn came into the university as I said on their honeymoon and she knew some girls who stayed at the state dormitories, so they had lunch there at the dormitories and Bruce was the only man among about fifteen hundred girls so he felt very ill at ease until he looked down and saw these dormitory doors and he said for his seat to be changed so he could view them and take a good look at them. . .After lunch he said, "We must meet this person immediately," because they were leaving that evening to go back to Tulsa. So they went from place to place, they went up to my little studio in the art department and he went to the Copper Kettle or places wherever which she just left here, she's gone there, and they'd just been missing me, by seconds. Bruce said "I'd almost given up but I told Evelyn let's try it just once more and go up to her studio." So sure enough when they got there and it was almost train time I got to talk to Bruce and that was my last year at the

University. Bruce said "I'm an architect in Tulsa, would you like to come to Tulsa, you paint all the murals and I'll do all the buildings." That was quite a thing to have happen in my very last year. Also when I graduated there I was the winner of the Letzieser gold metal for art.

**BH:** Do you know how to spell that?

**OH:** LETZIEZER, LETZIESER.

**BH:** Now what did that entail? What kind of award was it?

**OH:** Well its the highest award that you can get in the art department.

**BH:** Is it a money award or traveling award.

**OH:** No its a gold medal, solid gold metal which was worth more then the money I came to the University with in the beginning.

**BH:** Oh what thrilling completion of your schooling.

**OH:** Of course I was given many other awards and citations. And while I was there and especially my last year I think I carried the heaviest load of any student at the University, plus teaching, student instructor and doing all these murals.

**BH:** You probably had a wonderful time.

**OH:** Oh I certainly was, it was one of the highlights of my life. Well after I graduated I was given a commission to do a couple of murals in Oklahoma City at a high school there. This is one of the photographs, as you see that is in line too.

**BH:** Was this with Mr. Goff?

**OH:** That was before I went to Tulsa.

**BH:** Its the same technique as the other one you'd done.

**OH:** You see its getting a little more mature. By that time I knew a little bit more about art. This is a color sketch but that was, oh what was that eleven feet by fifteen. There were two, the buildings I say was Greek and so I did the two murals on either side of the entrance way to the auditorium and one decoration was the development of the mind showing music, painting, and sculpture with acropolis in the background. And the other decoration on the other side was the development of the body showing the discus thrower, the javelin thrower and the runner I believe.

**BH:** What room was it in the auditorium did you say?

**OH:** That was in the entrance way leading to the auditorium.

**BH:** And is that still there?

**OH:** I imagine it is. I don't have much time to go around and pick up photographs of all these things but you can find out if they're there. But I don't have photographs of all these things but to give you some idea.

**BH:** Did that take you about a year to do?

**OH:** No it only took me the summer. I did those two during the summer and in the beginning of the year I went to Tulsa where I began doing the murals with Bruce Goff. The first building was a little piano studio on Riverside Drive. This is a picture of the side of the building and this is a picture of the front of the building and the entrance is on either side here and the two doors here. And this in front here is a very modern lotus pool with a very modern fountain done by Alfonso Ianelli of Parkridge, Illinois. Now behind this large circular window which is partly frosted and partly clear I have a sixteen foot mural there. This being a very modern building and a piano studio I worked out a series of decorations on music. This is the large decoration just behind the large circular window with doors on either side leading into the main studio and in the main studio are these decorations. They're five by sixteen feet which is a very odd shape to try to work in because it is so narrow and so long, so tall. So we bent the decorations up on the ceiling and of course we had to have heat down below here. . .

**BH:** It makes them decorative the way they put them in.

**OH:** Yes it does and it gives it a good solution.

**BH:** Did Bruce Goff study with Frank Lloyd Wright?

**OH:** No, he didn't. No he was a great admirer of his but 

**BH:** He has a little of the feeling of Lloyd Wright Mexican influenced work.

**OH:** I think he did go there for a few months later, at a later time but he didn't directly study with him because he was a self-made genius and I contend that Bruce Goff and Mr. Wright, whom I had the privilege of being with at Taliesin East where I was instructing Creative Design and manager of his estate.

**BH:** Oh well we have more things to talk about.

**OH:** ---was one of the greatest highlights of my life.

**BH:** Were you a musician too?

**OH:** No in fact the only music I had heard up to this time was the tom tom rhythmic beats of the Indians. And also in my little home town we had one picture show in which there was a very wonderful woman. She had one of these old fashioned player pianos with rolls on them and in order to see the moving picture I used to go sweep out the place with another friend of mine so we could go see the pictures. But every evening this music kept making an impression on me. I didn't realize until later when I met Bruce and Evelyn and Bruce was a collector of fine records and I mean the most modern, the finest, in fact he has the second finest collection of records in the world. I think first was George Gershwin and then Bruce Goff. So that's where I got introduced to music and Bruce and Evelyn and I would listen to this music night after night in his music room. And as I listened to this music it began dawning on me where have I heard the Afternoon of the Faun, where have I heard The Sunken Cathedral and many of these great composers and I realized it was in that little theater in Prague, Oklahoma.

**BH:** She had it on the roll?

**OH:** She had it on the rolls. She loved good music, she had the finest but I didn't know what it was. She played it every night.

**BH:** Background to the cowboy movies.

**OH:** Anyway to introduce me to music, naturally I listened to it many evenings but to see this brilliant ultramarine blue this was the color of the wall, so that is what I had to work to. That was the color of the entrance way. Of course there wasn't too much space there, it was simply a narrow panel and then wide doors and some more blue out on the side. So there wasn't too much blue there but just enough to give you a shock when you entered this door. So I used, this is Evelyn's figure dancing, music and the architectural forms and then about here it came up over the ceiling again with the flood light at the top.

**BH:** Are these more of the panels?

**OH:** I don't know if these are in order or not but this is the vocal music panel showing the round sounds that people make and then the little staccato like sounds and those that pour out and at this point you know most of those bent over the ceiling so it sort of runs out there. This is the piano music panel showing the foot pedals and the hammers here with one hammer hitting a string here and causing this terrific vibration there.

**BH:** Did the owner of the house love that one?

**OH:** Oh yes. Well she was, she taught piano. This was sort of a monument to jazz. I felt that jazz should come in there but she didn't care too much for jazz. Now this is the trumpet, this is the symphonic music, that's that one there. See when you see them in color you can see how unafraid I was of color and how much Indians. . .

**BH:** How much you were really enjoying having enough paint.

**OH:** Yes, to use all the color I wanted. This is a modern discs and electrical music of the future. This was the choral music panel, it has a nice, effect there and this is the one I just showed you. This was the primitive music panel, Indian, African, Tom Tom rythmic beats and when my friends the Kiowa came into this studio they saw this panel they began dancing immediately. They recognized that as their panel, the Indians. You see all this indicated to them. It has a simplicity to it that the others don't have, you can see here how strong it is because its done in black and gold and Indian red and then these very light little block like design, you see even there that looks Frank Lloyd Wright. I didn't know Mr. Wright but Bruce was gradually introducing me to his work. This was the string quartet music panel.

**BH:** And it worked not only the designs but the execution is simply beautiful.

**OH:** The color of the wall was a beautiful aqua green. Now we're coming down to the project but first I guess I'd let's see, well in Tulsa I did many other things that I don't even have photographs of, decorations in public and decorations on mirrors and also a large decoration I did for, I have that here, this is a large stage curtain I did for the Convention Hall in Tulsa. Bruce did the interior. This is the interior and this is all gold, the ceiling is done in about three shades of green and these great giant light fixtures are about sixteen feet long with a big gold ball hanging at the bottom. Frosted glass and then a sheet of green glass that is set in between this and when you look up into it you see this beautiful white and green effect. But this stage curtain here is fifty feet long, twenty-two and a half feet high and its painted on asbestos. This is the curtain they let down only for a few seconds, fifteen minutes before and after each show. Now on this project like all the other projects I had a very nice and interesting happening that happened here. Of course I had a lot of scaffolding that was put up here by the contractors so that I could work at the top of this decoration and day after day while I was working on this decoration I had one assistant at the time, while I was working at this decoration two men would come and sit on the scaffold each day and they said now look, Miss Hrды, you have to take out a union card. And I said no I'm not a house painter, I don't think I'll take one. Anyway they came day after day, well I had about twelve days to do this decoration in and also one in the entrance way because they were opening this convention hall for Ruth St. Dennis, who is now one of my very wonderful friends and was then that I met Ted Shawn and in fact I just went to one of their parties last week. He was here from Jacob Stillo in Connecticut. Let's see now what was I going to say there about, oh I was going to say the opening of this was going to be for Naginsky in Tulsa, Ruth St. Dennis and Mary Garden, so of course I was working day and night for twelve days and as I say the men sat there on my scaffold trying to get me to take out a union card. So finally we got to know each other so well that I gave them part of my lunch. But as it neared completion and it was time, practically time for the opening night they cleared away all the scaffolding and the decoration was rolled to the top and dry and I was standing down here bundling up my paints and all my paraphernalia getting ready to leave and they blocked me and said well this curtain will not come down tonight. Miss Hrды and just as they were saying that a tall stately woman came from the back of the stage and towards me and she said, what is the argument? It was then about four o'clock in the evening and we were ready for the first show.

**BH:** Excuse me our tape is. . . END OF TAPE PART I, OLINKA HRDY TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW OF OLINKA HRDY PART II BY BETTY HOAG

**BH:** This is Betty Lochrie Hoag interviewing Olinka Hrды on March 13th 1965, tape number II. You were saying about this woman who was coming forward on the stage straight for you.

**OH:** I wonder if we got that on the other tape?

**BH:** And she wanted to know what the commotion was about.

**OH:** This tall, stately woman was coming toward me, coming down the steps and was asking me what the argument was about and I said "These men who are from the Union say that I must have a union card which costs about two- or three hundred dollars before they will let my curtain come down tonight. Well she says let's see the curtain so I clapped my hands and one of the men lowered the curtain, she faced the curtain and she said "I will not go on the stage tonight unless the curtain does come down." Oh, so I turned around and I said, I put out my hands and said "I am Olinka Hrды, may I have your name please?", She says, Mary Garden. So you see.

**BH:** The curtain came down that night.

**OH:** It certainly did and everybody stood up in their seats, of course this is a brilliant thing. Somewhere I have a color sketch of it but as you see already it has a bright influence so it seems that each time I got to a place at the University without being able to buy shoes or stockings my professors came bought my stockings, my shoes and supplied all my food, all my lodging for me. Mary Garden walked right over and that was solved. So then. . .

**BH:** This was around 1930 or so, did you come to California right after that?

**OH:** No right after that, I'd been making pretty good money in Tulsa averaging about a hundred dollars a day at that time, that was just before the depression and also working for Miss Jackson's shop a very exclusive decorator there and I had quite a little bank account so one day I just decided I would go to the big city and see what New York was like never having been further then Tulsa or the university or my little home town which is just a little space of about thirty miles apart and or the Indian reservation. So I got my little bank account together and went to New York all alone. The reason I wanted to go to New York was when I was there on this Indian lease that I spoke of. When I used to have to cultivate the mile long rows of corn with two giant mules each day and harness them when I was sixteen or seventeen somehow and I don't know where it came from I got hold of the National Geographic and I took this National Geographic with me on the plow each day and I would read it from beginning to end. In this very National Geographic was an article about Nicholas Bordrick and with one of his pictures reproduced at the top of the article. Each day as I went up and down these long rows of

corn I would talk to this wonderful mule that I had, Jack, and he understood everything he said, his ears would go up and down and I would say "Jack, just as sure as you take your next step I'm going to go meet Nicholas Rorick, do you hear that?" And his ears would go up and down so after I earned this money in Tulsa I decided to go to New York City because that was there they had the Nicholas Rorick Museum so I took a few pictures under my arm and arrived there rather late in the evening. Oh it must have been about five o'clock and just as I was crossing the ferry to go over to the main island, New York they were beginning to turn on the lights in New York City. I was standing at the head of this ferry and as I saw these lights coming on I was jumping up and down clapping my hands oh I was in ecstasy to see this wonderful fairy land in front of me. Everybody was standing and watching me, they weren't looking at the lights turning on and one of the passengers says "Well now that you've gotten this far away from the country what are you going to do the first thing? You going to see Park Avenue? Fifth Avenue?" I says "Don't show me Park Avenue, don't show me Fifth Avenue, I'm getting a taxi cab and I'm going to 310 Riverside Drive. Well what's that? That is Nicholas Rorick Museum." So I did, went right up to the museum and by that time having been introduced to mostly millionaires in Tulsa whom I'd been working for with Bruce I walked into the museum and I says "Who's head of the museum please?" They said well "Seymore Lipman is", I says "May I be ushered into his office immediately?" And I, they let me off on the third floor and I walked down the hall and set my pictures outside near the door in the hall way. I walked in and introduced myself and she says "My that's a beautiful name, and unusual," and she says, "Are you an artist?", and I says "Yes, I am, I just came from Tulsa, Oklahoma." And she says "Did you bring some of your work?" I says "Yes, it's sitting out there in the hall." So she says "Well bring it in and let me see it." So I brought it in and showed her some of the murals and sketches and various things I had done. And she said "Miss Hrdy, would you mind leaving these here tonight because tomorrow at ten o'clock we're giving away a scholarship? will you come in tomorrow and talk to me?" The next morning at ten o'clock I walked in and about fifty students and the professor Harold Giles came in and they said Olinka Hrdy won the award for the scholarship for one year with all tuition and all expenses paid with an apartment in the Rorick Museum. Just like that, that was timed to the split second. Now I didn't know a thing about the scholarship there, but the urge was there so I made an effort... I didn't know. So then Mr. Giles says "Miss Hrdy would you like to study in the daytime or in the evening?" and I says "Well Mr. Giles, I'm use to working and making money and I think I'll have to get a job in the daytime and I'll probably study at night." So I took up Dynamic Symmetry which I didn't know.

**BH:** Pardon me I don't understand what you mean took it up.

**OH:** I studied it.

**BH:** Well was it being taught as a course?

**OH:** That was all they taught, that was all Howard Giles taught, they did have various other classes like charcoal but I wasn't interested in that. When I found out that this was mathematical I was terrifically interested in it. So the very next day I came right back up to talk to Miss. Lipman to Howard Giles and I said "I think I would like to get a job as a textile designer and will you tell me who the biggest textile designer is in New York City?" So they said "Well, Hans Schwitzer is the best known designer in town." So I got his address and took a cab and went down to 35th and 5th Avenue to see Hans Schwitzer. I walked in with a few things under my arm, walked into his desk and he was a tall, very bright eyed Swiss and I says "Mr. Schwitzer I have come all the way from Tulsa, Oklahoma to do fabric designs for you." And he says "Oklahoma? Is that in Mexico?" I said "Not quite" and he says "Do you think that you can do textile design?" I said "Mr. Schwitzer as many are leaves on trees that many designs can I make because the little oil well won't run dry." And he says "Alright how much do you want?" I says "I will start at thirty-five dollars a day." He said "Thirty-five dollars a day and you don't even know how to make a design?" I said "Mr. Schwitzer I will start with that, I am use to making a hundred dollars a day." Well he was so flabbergasted that somebody coming from way out in Oklahoma talking like this. So he says "Alright you know you've got a lot of nerve, I'm going to hire you." So he went into this terrific studio where he had about seventy-five designers working and he told one of the men to get in the taxi, go down to 12th Street and get this girl the supplies she wants and he said "You can sit here at this desk and two girls on each side of you will put the designs into repeat." I says "No Mr. Schwitzer, I want a brand new drafting table, I want a T square, I want a triangle, I want architect's tools." He says "But we don't make designs like that." I said, "But we are from now on." And he says "Alright boys get her whatever she wants." So he got in a cab, went down to 12th Street and while he was up there getting my equipment I walked up and down the rows and watched the designers make designs. . .to see how it was done. So when they came back and set up may table and all my equipment, everybody was all sitting on my table, I walked right into Mr. Schwitzer's office and I said "Mr. Schwitzer," I says "I am ready now to find out how to make the first design." And he says "Well tell one of the girls to show you how." I says, " Mr. Schwitzer, I only take orders from you." And he says "Alright I'll come in and show you." So he walked in and sat down at this table and everybody in the room nearly stood on their heads. "Alright you take a piece of paper five inches square, no larger, no smaller and don't use more then three colors and you create this design. Don't worry about the repeats, the girls will take care of that." And when he gave me all the cue on this, I sat down I took my T square, triangle and I made a very primitive Indian design using red white and black which I knew would click. So in a few minutes Mr. Schwitzer came in there, picked up this design, he turned it around and said, "Hm-m-m this is different from anything we see around here," and he says "My biggest is sitting in my

office, take it in and see if I can sell it." So he took it in and in about twenty minutes he came back and he patted me on the shoulder and he says "Can you make more of those designs? I just sold that for fifteen hundred dollars." So I says "Mr. Schwitzer, I told you as many as there are leaves on trees, that many I can do, the little oil well won't run dry," so he said "I'll be back to see what else you've got." So I became their most modern designer and anyway by the end of the week I walked into Mr. Schwitzer's office and I said, "Mr. Schwitzer I'm ready for a raise." He says "What, your getting thirty-five dollars a day," I says "I will work now for seventy-five dollars a day and no less", after all he was selling them, they were just milling out like hotcakes, getting fabulous price for them, he says, alright you're hired so I knew that I was on the right track. Anyway in a few weeks he came in and he says, they didn't call me Olinka, they called Oklahoma, he says "Alright Oklahoma," he says "have you ever done posters?" I said, "Yes, sure I can do posters." He says "Well I'd like to have a couple of posters for either the entrance ways at the Westchester Club." I had heard of the Westchester Club clear down to Tulsa and I knew that only millionaires belonged to it. I said "Mr. Schwitzer is this going to be seen in the day time or at night?" He says at night. That's all I needed to know so he says "You can do them right here at your drafting table." I said "No, Mr. Schwitzer, I would like to have a little office where I can do this with privacy." So they did, they found me a little place where I could do the posters. So he put them up and they were a Christmas gift to the Westchester Club and they put them up on the side of the door. They made such a terrific hit that he came in and he says "Have you ever done stage sets?" I said "That's just my meat Mr. Schwitzer, the bigger the job the better." So I walked into his office and he says "How would you like to do all of the stage sets on Broadway?" I said, "I'd like nothing better," but I said "Mr. Schwitzer, not for seventy-five dollars a day." He said "You're not an artist, you're a businesswoman." I said "That's right, Mr. Schwitzer, we can't do it here we have to have more space." He says "Well they have some rooms upstairs for it." Now this was Thirty-Fifth and Fifth Avenue. They had some rooms upstairs and the whole place was empty. I said "Mr. Schwitzer, we'll take the whole floor," he says "What?" I said "We're going to make money aren't we, lots of money because I'm going to be head of it and see that we make it." He says "Alright you're it." It is an amazing story, but anyway each summer all the designers took a couple of months off and went to resorts and various places and then we opened again in I think it was August or September. So that summer I decided to go to Chicago to Ianelli's studio who I had met in Tulsa who did that beautiful fountain there for the Riverside studio, so I went to.

**BH:** Pardon me is that spelled MELLI.

**OH:** No its IANELLI.

**BH:** Oh, Ianelli in one word.

**OH:** So I went to Parkridge where I did some twenty-four sheet posters for the billboards and also gold trophies and cups for the World's Fair, this was about 1933 and then of course I had been hearing so much about Mr. Wright that I wanted to go up to Taliesin so I did that summer. And in fact I had written to Mr. Wright when I was down in Kansas and he admired my work a great deal and of course I had the terrific yen to go to visit him. And here is a beautiful letter that Mr. Wright wrote to me.

**BH:** And it has these wonderful little red squares.

**OH:** I had that in my pocket. So I went over to Taliesin that summer and as you know he had the cream of the world there one hundred fifty boys and one hundred fifty girls and I was to be instructor in Creative Design but while I was there Mr. Wright came in one day and said he was leaving for Chicago and would be back in a couple of days. And his office was around the corner from one of the big drafting rooms and as you went over to Mr. Wright's private office you went through a library which was shelved from floor to ceiling sort of a passage way. When Mr. Wright went to Chicago not knowing quite what to do with myself because no body gave any orders or told you what to do, I went and stood in this library and began looking at these fabulous and beautiful books. Now a lot of the students had read the books and some had just thrown them back up on the shelf and I saw the terrific disorder there so while he was gone I just began with one row at a time and carefully put all the German books, all the Japanese books and other things in order, separating architecture from flowers and so forth. And dusted everything and every thing was neat and clean. When Mr. Wright came back from Chicago of course he was going to his office there he stopped and he said "Oh, Olinka Hrdy must have passed through." Anyway he called me in and he said, "Miss Hrdy, I am having a Maharajah from India who is coming here with his group to talk to me about doing a city in India," and he said "They will have to stay in Madison which is about fifty-three miles away." I says Mr. Wright that's absolutely crazy, suppose at three o'clock in the morning the Maharajah wants to talk to you or you want to talk to him he'll be in Madison, he should stay right here." He says, "Where can he stay at Taliesin? We haven't had a spare bedroom here for twenty years." I says "Mr. Wright if you will give me a key, a padlock and tell me just about the units you would like to have him stay in," I says "Give me the project, give me sixteen boys with good study backs to move things and build furniture, and" I says "in three days I will have a place ready for the Maharajah." He says "Alright its your baby." So he was gone part of that time too and it was a section of rooms near where I was staying so it was very handy for me. I, as you know with so many boys and girls there, there were many couches in the rooms and everything was in perfect disorder so I moved out this furniture and I went to his cabinet department and he had a very wonderful and young man

there Samuel Vandervolt from South America head of that department and after I got everything all cleared off we painted the wall and got ready for the furniture so Samuel and I stood there and we talked about it. Well this should be this high and this should be a part of that so forth and in three days all this furniture was made, put in place and I put a padlock on the door and I handed Mr. Wright the key and I says the first spare bedroom apartment at Taliesin in twenty years. He walked in and saw how beautifully and simply it was done, fit for a Maharajah and we were standing near two tall windows something like that and just outside the window was a beautiful tree and the sun was pouring through it and glistening on the leaves, it was making a beautiful vibrant green poem. At about ten o'clock in the morning I took that green shade that was particularity on the leaves and carried it right down the wall so that the trees came right into the house. When Mr. Wright stood there and looked at that he said nobody but Olinka Hrды would do this so anyway it was a beautiful place. Well when he saw how well I could get boys to move furniture and do things he says how would you like to be manager of Taliesin and I said well that's quite a chore because you see we had three hundred students along plus guests to feed three times a day, breakfast, lunch and dinner do you know what that is? Quite a chore.

**BH:** Well you didn't have to be the dietitian as far as planning the meals.

**OH:** Yes I did, I did part of that too. Of course part of the students were out growing corn and tilling the soil, and taking care of the vegetables and what but that's part of the job too. But I was very fortunate in that Mr. Wright took a great interest in me and it all began the very first, well when I first got to Taliesin not having any spare room Mr. Wright says "Olinka how would you like to come and stay in the house here and sleep on the couch that is behind the \$100,000.00 screen given to me by the Emperor of Japan?" So I stayed in the Wright house and near my couch was a French door that opened out into the yard so that I could come and go quite easily without going down the hall and near their bedroom. So the very first morning I'm an early riser, I like to get up at four o'clock in the morning but I go to bed early and I didn't know that was one of Mr. Wright's favorite things to do either. So it was a beautiful day, I got up early and I went out nobody else was stirring. I went out and I sat near this beautiful lotus pool near the front door. I'm sitting the looking at the lotus when lo and behold Mr. Wright walks out and of course there was a lotus blooming there and he sat and quietly took apart that lotus for me mathematically. Each flower of course is built in terrific geometric patterns mathematically. Well anyway that began our morning walks. So almost every morning he used to like to take a walk so we would either walk out into the giant trees which were toward the north or down the road which led to the family little church on their grounds and their cemetery. And Mr. Wright morning after morning told me personally his life and I have seen tears roll down his cheeks and usually we would walk down this road arm in arm or arms around each other while he told me these terrific stories about his life. Now this morning, that one morning when we were walking down the road and I didn't know that the little church was on those grounds and I didn't know where I was going to come to as we walked down this road he was picking wild flowers as he walked and nothing too much was being said, I picked flowers as I walked too and the little church is a white church, a beautiful little thing sitting there.

**OH:** Is it a Welsh church? One of the original churches of the area or had he built it?

**BH:** Oh he built it and it looked something like a little American white church with a steeple and an open door and benches and planks, as we walked down we were picking wild flowers and he was telling me the story about Catherine, his first wife that he loved so much. And as we came to the back of the church there was the cemetery and we came to a white slab upon which was a pure white piece of marble approximately three feet square, not quite its a certain dimension. Anyway he told me that you know she was killed by that Negro who went insane there when he came back from one of his trips he found her and it just absolutely broke his heart.

**BH:** He found her dead when he came back?

**OH:** And he went to this little town of Springgreen which is just six miles away to see if he could buy a coffin and they wouldn't sell him one.

**BH:** Why?

**OH:** Because they heard so many stories about Mr. Wright that people didn't know what to think about him in those days. So he came back to Taliesin, he told me this story he said I came back to Taliesin and I told the boys come with me, they walked into this forest just on the grounds there and he said cut down this giant tree and plane my boards to a certain thickness and while they were doing that he went into the drafting room and designed a coffin which they made. And they, he had them hitch two giant white horses to an open bed wagon. And he himself personally dressed the body and put it in the coffin, and when it was already after they had dug the grave, he walked beside the horses and down this road that we were now walking on, chanting these Welsh songs and picking wild flowers and throwing them up on the coffin and so when it was time to bury the body the boys came to help lower the casket there and when they covered it over he laid the slab, they poured the slab and he had made known to various countries that he wanted this pure white square of marble without a blemish. Do you know that they nearly turned the world over before they could find one without a flaw. And somewhere in

Greece they heard about his wish and they sent him this pure white square of marble. And these boys of course poured the cement slab after it was poured he dismissed everybody and he told me that morning as we were laying the flowers on that white slab he says, "Just before the cement dried and it was time to lower the square of marble, I knelt here and I poured out my heart in this wet cement, nobody but I and God. Nobody there and then I lowered the white cube in place," and he said "that is one of the incidences of my life." But to hear them from him and to have the man just weep tears, wet the ground with his tears was one of the greatest experiences in my life. So then I went back to New York to continue my textile designing.

**BH:** Pardon me how long were you there?

**OH:** Well I was there that summer and the next summer because I got a scholarship then the next year at Rorick which is very unusual because they only gave it one year to one person at a time. But when I went back to New York to continue the textile designs. H. Schwitzer and wife, H. Schwitzer was killed in his Deussenberg and his wife was so mutilated that they claim you couldn't even recognize her in this terrific accident, I think it was in Chicago. So the studio was without a head and one of the men tried to run it but of course nobody had the terrific foresight that Mr. Schwitzer had to see ahead. Foresight to hire me even so.

**BH:** Well pardon me I have to go back a minute, we never did say anything about your buying the theatrical stage sets.

**OH:** No that was what I was going to start doing when I came back after being at Mr. Wright's. And then Mr. Schwitzer was killed and the whole bottom dropped out of everything. So the Depression was coming on and actually I didn't know quite what was happening out there because I was working during the day and I was going to school at night so I was not on the street and I didn't know what was happening in the country. And I do know that one time I went to the Metropolitan Opera and about twelve o'clock at night I was in this taxi and I saw these lines of people standing out in the street and I asked the taxi man I said "what are all those people doing?" He says, "Madam don't you know that they're hungry, don't you know there's a Depression on?" I said "No, I didn't know it." That's how far away I was from reality so it dawned on me that something terrible was happening to the country and I had better get out of New York. And I didn't like New York too much anyway because I was born in the country and I liked the trees and I used to spend most of my time in Central Park there because there were some trees there. But I'd heard about Hollywood and California so I still had money left and I was making money so I wired a friend of mine in Tulsa who had been to Hollywood and I said "How would you like to go to Hollywood, I'll stop by in Tulsa and pick you up." He said "Well you know I'm broke and so is everybody I know." I said "Don't worry about that," I had some money in my pocket.

**BH:** Miss. Hrdy suppose we stop and have lunch and continue. You had written to a friend and asked if he wanted to go to Hollywood. He didn't have any money, that nobody did and you said I have some.

**OH:** We came out here and as you know that was the beginning of the Depression and \_\_\_\_

**BH:** Say that was 1932 or so?

**OH:** It was about 1933 somewhere around there. Anyway things got worse and worse but we were in a pretty good location because we at least had orange groves and not a lot of concrete buildings to look at like you would in New York. Well like most of the artists in California I got on the Federal Art Project and naturally I had quite a few decorations behind me so they put me right to work designing murals. And the first mural I did was one called Deep Sea Magic which I did for the Lowell Junior High School in Long Beach. And here is a picture of the sketches and I think the decorations are twenty feet long and seven feet high. This is a close up of that giant octopus. But actually you had to see these murals to see the beautifulcolor that are in these.

**BH:** I was hoping I could get down there before I came out to see you.

**OH:** These are of the unfinished mural where I used plastic what is it called?

**BH:** Acrylic?

**OH:** No, its not a paint its a plastic that you paint on just like paint and instead of making stencils you put on your plastic and then do your spraying or painting so nothing gets into your clean canvas. Then you take it by the edge and pull it out instead of using stencils you know which would be quite a job. Because some of this background there was sprayed.

**BH:** I'm interested in the effects of your hills here, it harks right back to those first murals that you were telling us about when you were trying to save paint. Remember how you had outlines and then the color in between, this seems very similar, a least in the photograph, was it?

**OH:** Well no, of course these are all formations under in the water. After you see the murals you'll realize but

they are sort of in line.

**BH:** As far as the way that you've treated them and got that effect, it feels the same. I wondered also these are probably project photographs because Paula Park I think was in charge of them.

**OH:** That's a close up of one of the sections that's a little more finished there. For instance, this giant squid, the tendrils were all of ten feet long, all in purple pink and blues, various colors and this was almost transparent so you could look through it and look here all the eyes of all the fish were done with either gold or silver so that when you walk by the is mural you see the glitter of these eyes all watching you.

**BH:** You use quite a bit of silver and gold don't you. I notice this lovely thing on the wall with the butterfly here in your room has the gold.

**OH:** I love gold and silver, especially gold.

**BH:** That was a detail of this one them.

**OH:** See these are gold or silver eyes of the big giant fish there. The lines are in place but the fish are not there yet. Gives you some idea of the proportion. That's a little oil sketch I did and then I had this special cabinet made it held this big metal palette that I always used and I had a big compartment made there with water in it and all I had to do each evening was just put my palette under water and the morning take it up and stand it on edge so it was ready to go instead of scraping the palette each evening.

**BH:** Is this you standing there? Haircuts of those times were different you know people always looked. . .

**OH:** Well it was a short haircut with curls and \_\_\_\_\_ and things. Now this is another mural that I did for the Board of Education in the cafeteria down there.

**BH:** In Long Beach?

**OH:** Los Angeles. But when they put the freeway in they took off part of this building and the big library it was that had another big mural project in it. Beautiful mural project. I've forgotten now who did that.

**BH:** That wasn't the Board of Supervisor office?

**OH:** No. It used to be called the Hill Street school, in those days but now its the Board of Education.

**BH:** I'll have to get down there and see if they took the murals down.

**OH:** No these are both gone. These were done on a very rough canvas, I mean a very rough wall which was a kind of a porous wall and it was painted a very beautiful dull green and these are right over the cafeteria there, but for instance this watermelon was three and one half feet big, they don't look so big here but when you stand here and look up and see the space in this building you realize, you see this is not quite life-size but even the figures here are pretty big. But this is sort of another festival of foods and flowers, of all these nationalities from all over the world bringing in their foods and flowers to this place.

**BH:** Now it looks like you were having a lot of helpers with you on this.

**OH:** Yes I have five here.

**BH:** Do you remember any of them?

**OH:** Well this is Serena Swanson, oh here is Serena Swanson here, do you know her?

**BH:** No I don't. She still here someplace?

**OH:** The last I heard she was working for Hughes Aircraft Company in the design department there.

**BH:** Is that a married name or has she married?

**OH:** No she never married that I know of. And that's Mr. Lighter, I can't remember his first name. He was a very fine artist and draftsman and I can't remember these other people because these two sisters stayed with me thought the whole project and these would change a number of times.

**BH:** Were those two with you on your first one?

**OH:** No.

**BH:** Did you have any helpers?

**OH:** Yes, I did this project on Seventh Street and yes I had Mr. Bannister helped me work on these murals, they were two panels. As far as I know these are down in Long Beach in the entrance way of the high school there. These murals as you'll find, its too bad you can't see them because the wall was very pebbly and very porous and what was done here, this is done with casein and we mixed the casein and we'd take the side of the brush and just sort of rub it over the wall and say that we wanted to get an iridescent color we would take ultramarine blue and put that on and then put a lighter blue on top and the deep blue would show through. The colors would show through because it was so rough. This was a wonderful project to work on, then too I had plenty of time to work on it. Now on this project even before I got this project finished they had a dining room back in the back for just the instructors. They wanted me to do a mural for it and I did want to, you see these little sketches here. I think you'll realize how unusual this idea was. Now they claimed that this was so unusual as a mural that they couldn't quite see it.

**BH:** Beautiful drawings of flowers my goodness.

**OH:** Its kind of hard to see because you won't get the continuity. The original sketches were beautiful but you see here the first flower to be shown and to be held was by this tiny baby's hand and it was a hibiscus. And then the hands began maturing and I finally came through you might say a life pageant showing the development all through the hand. And this was a mature woman's hand and this you might say was her husband's hand, as they sort of went through life. And then it ended up here... the flowers started very brilliantly and then the flowers got more beautiful and more delicate and when it came down near the end near the old ladies hand with the wedding band and the little delicate lace here holding this delicate...

**BH:** Oh this goes back to Mr. Wright, Frank Lloyd Wright.

**OH:** Sort of. I wish you could see this in color and I've often threatened to sit down and do these in color because when you see the whole thing from the tiny babies hand... but you can imagine one of these hands over five feet across when they realized that they were going to have these giant hands holding giant flowers they couldn't, they were afraid of it. Like Walt Disney and Mr. Wright and other people said well you're twenty years ahead. That's what is the matter although these are quite realistic but that would have been a beautiful thing, you see when they hold these up in the air they don't look so nice, but they just couldn't think.

**BH:** They would not accept the plan, oh what a shame.

**OH:** But even before I got through with that project there at the Hill Street School I was called down to the state building to work on some educational exhibits down there. Down next to Exposition Park, you know where that is.

**BH:** Los Angeles County Art Museum.

**OH:** Well, Doris Bothwell and Grace Clemens were there working on part of a big wing that was going to be redone and modernized. You've probably seen how modern it is now haven't you? Well a lot of that is my work down there because I was called down there right after this project to work on a bee Exhibit and the exhibit is still there showing.

**BH:** What do you mean by "B"?

**OH:** Well it is the life of the honeybee. And I took a section out of a beehive and enlarged it fifteen hundred times and the cells, each cell which is about this big, shows the tiny egg down to the full bee ready to come out of a cell. But of course that was an education in itself. It was a fabulous thing to work on.

**BH:** I've not seen this building I'm sure then, I don't know where it is.

**OH:** Science and Industry they call it now, right across from the Rose Garden.

**BH:** I know where the building is but I haven't been in there.

**OH:** Well I did such a beautiful job, I don't even have any pictures to show you. [Inaudible].

**BH:** No I mean for the archives, if I can get something microfilmed. Well this is in an exhibit case? On the wall?

**OH:** Well its a set in exhibit, an educational exhibit on the life of the honey bee. And then there is... then I painted a bee enlarged fifteen hundred times showing... you'd be amazed how the tiny little, well it looks almost like fur when you look at a honeybee, each one of those are carefully set, I mean its so beautifully arranged you'd wonder how nature can do such a beautiful job. But after I worked on that Mr. Bynota who was Secretary of the Building and manager who is now gone, thought I did such a wonderful job I was appointed by the

governor of the state of California because of my architectural background with Bruce and Mr. Wright and others, cause I was able to lay out the exhibits as well as to plan them, that I was given a state job as Chief Designer for the State of California. And I worked there for quite awhile until 1942, until the War came along and then all of us had to go out and get a war job.

**BH:** Now was this at Sacramento?

**OH:** Well now its right in Exposition Park.

**BH:** I didn't understand what kind of a position it was, chief designer for the building or for the museum.

**OH:** Chief designer for the state of California at Exposition Park.

**BH:** I see, I didn't know they had such a thing.

**OH:** So that was a wonderful experience because we had to work on all the big industries for the state of California like cattle raising and breeding and housing and you know dairy cattle and swine, sheep, pigeons, rabbits and all the various industries of California. If you want to find out whether you would like to raise Chinchilla rabbits or pigeons you could go down there and in a few minutes through visual education you can tell whether it'll take fifteen- hundred dollars to start this business and how much you can expect by the end of the year or whether you can start on five hundred dollars. Its pretty well set for you. Because a lot of the farmers and people can go down to farm and learn more about the industries there.

**BH:** Well someplace along the line had you done something for Pasadena Junior College, a mural?

**OH:** No.

**BH:** I don't know where I had this information, you had an oil on canvas in progress, two panels for a mural and nothing for the Santa Monica High School?

**OH:** No.

**BH:** What about lithographs, did you do any of those?

**OH:** Oh yes, on the project I started out in the lithography department and I worked under Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and did quite a few lithographs of which I have very few to show you. I have one in here that's the only one I have left of this cat.

**BH:** Oh isn't that a beauty. Was it your cat?

**OH:** No it was a friends cat. I was living in a little apartment then and I did this cat. But you see even then everything has a pretty set line, pretty set form to it. Well after the War then I went down to Douglas and got myself a job in electrical wire department and after the War was over I came out here to this studio and by the way that's a fantastic story, I'll have to tell you how I got here on this place. Then I went to Pasadena and was Industrial Designer for Hicon Manufacturing company where I did big electronic cabinets for them. Up to the time I got there they would just sent up a front for a cabinet and they put the wires in the back and drilled a hole from the back and that's where the knob was. When I got there we put all the knobs carefully in the front. For instance if they were building a \$100,000.00cabinet for the Navy and some young man had to sit there and manipulate this, say some electronics or something out at sea, and the unimportant things were put very close to the floor or very high above the head, the important ones were right here at his fingertips so that he could reach them all in a very short notice. But before I went over the Hicon Manufacturing Company, I worked for a plastic company right out here from my studio and I designed plastic tablemats and I just walked out in my yard for a few of the designs and all of my things for the mats and the things I was designing. And I did clothes hampers for them. These are fabrics that are laminated with plastic and the whole thing is about a half an inch thick. Its practically indestructible and fireproof.

**BH:** Did they go ahead and build these?

**OH:** Well they were making them in New York but I was designing them out here and at that time too I guess I was the highest paid designer in California.

**BH:** You should be, those are beautiful presentations and drawings as well as \_\_\_\_\_.

**OH:** Then later on I did some radio designs for a company in San Francisco. You see most radios have a sham back and you have to set it against the wall so you don't see all the works in there, but this one as you see is complete all around and these two are handles, you just pick it up by these handles like you do a teapot or something. And this is transparent and makes a night light, the sound pours out of these, molded boards here

which are open to the equipment which fits in from the bottom.

**BH:** Did you design the thing yourself?

**OH:** Oh yes. I wanted to show you some of these table mats.

**BH:** Oh isn't that beautiful, in organdy.

**OH:** These were printed on organdy and then laminated with plastic. Sunflowers, this is a beautiful thing when you see it on the table because its so thin that it looks almost like a piece of organdy. Almost transparent, but you set a clear glass plate on that and it give an even nicer look. Patio type thing for barbecues, place here for the knives and forks and glass, coffee cup.

**BH:** You must love hibiscus.

**OH:** I see to always bring them in, sort of Wright.

**BH:** Yes, Mr. Wright would like that one. Its true that you always get the feeling of the Indians and Wright.

**OH:** Well to me this is more Wright then Indian yet it looks very Aztec too doesn't it?

**BH:** It did to me first, I didn't think of the Wright until you said it.

**OH:** Then I did wall paper designs for, \_\_\_\_\_.

**BH:** More hibiscus.

**OH:** No this is a petunia and my idea on doing these wall paper designs was that if somebody had a home and they had a favorite flower, say like the hibiscus or the lotus, you could take that one flower and look at it from different ways and do the whole house in lotuses. Now wouldn't that be a beautiful thing? Say a sun room and breakfast nook or an entrance way or a powder room.

**BH:** I think you'd have to like the flower very much or you'd get tired of living with it.

**OH:** Well I mean you could have it so delicate in places that you would hardly know it was there.

**BH:** Hm-m passion flower.

**OH:** Passion flower. The nice thing about this design was that you could put it this way too, in a sun room, say. Now this is the same flower, same as that but you see how much more this might look like a powder room or an entrance way and this would look more like a living room wall paper.

**BH:** Same sort of developed design, you have a little bud here.

**OH:** Little different. Same flower but I was just trying to show you how you could.

**BH:** Were these done for some particular company?

**OH:** Yes it was for a company in Los Angeles.

**BH:** I notice that you have the name of Designer on some of these. Did you, were you working here in the studio where we are now as a free lance designer?

**OH:** It was done right here.

**BH:** You actually have been ever since then.

**OH:** Well I've always called myself a designer because actually most of my work is the design type. Then while I was here in my studio I got a commission to do this interior of a DC3 for a Maharajah of India. Some friends of mine called up and they said, "Olinka do you think you could spend four thousand dollars very quickly and make it look like four thousand dollars?" I said, "Sure give me forty thousand dollars and I can do a better job." They said "Well that's what they want, they want a setting for a Maharajah," so I did this for Aviation Maintenance Corporation out here and the first sketch was just a floor plan of the plane. Of course these were huge, these were done on a drawing board about like that, large illustration board and then I did this one showing this compartment and the third one was in color. So when they called me over I told them, I asked them if the Maharajah was coming into look at these things and they said yes he would, so I said "You put five hundred dollars in the bank for me to do the brochure for him to look at." So I went down to Hollywood and I commissioned someone to do a DC3 hand tooled on a large piece of leather, leather the size of that illustration

board, and each one of the drawings were spiraled together so that they folded up in this folder of leather. And when the Maharajah came to look at them I had them completely clear a room and I had two big couches put over there and giant tables put here so that they could open this up and put them on this table, all he had to do was lay there and look at the whole thing all at once. And then I supervised the interior of this plane and all the walls here were done in tan suede and the rugs were cherry red. And these cabinets were designed to specifications and this was for his turbans and his wardrobe and everything in here that was metal was twenty-two carat gold plated. And this little cabinet that looks like a little night stand is actually a jewel cabinet that would stand a drop of five thousand feet, that he could carry his jewels in. And they serviced this plane in Van Nuys California when he wanted to play golf with the Maharajah next door. That is how fabulous that story was but unbelievable.

**BH:** You didn't get him to take you with him on one of the golf trips?

**OH:** No I should have. Then about every year I did the honey exhibit for the Los Angeles Beekeepers Association at Pomona Fair. And usually I clear everything on one of my desks here and I set the rules in front of me and I find out which one is giving the most points. For instance if color or the show of honey itself or the byproduct gives thirty-two points, that's the thing I work on first and I'll work on the last point last, the one that only gets one point. So my aim is always to win this. END OF TAPE TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH OLINKA HRDY PART 3 MARCH 13, 1965 INTERVIEWER: BETTY LOCHRIE HOAG (Tape #35)

**BH:** This is Betty Lochrie Hoag on March 13, 1965 interviewing Miss Olinka Hardy on Silver Hill, in Woodland Hills, California, Part 3. There are so many things I want to. . .

**OH:** This is the last photograph that I happen to have here, this is a large radio recording cabinet I did for the Hanson Music Company in Beverly Hills and as you see there are no hinges and no handles on this cabinet.

**BH:** Is it a magnetic catch?

**OH:** It is a magnetic catch which is black ebony here, it's flush with this, and only the owner knows where he puts his finger. When he presses that these doors open automatically and the lights turn on, but this cabinet is quite a giant cabinet and they did three of them, they sold for twelve hundred dollars apiece then. And Adrian, the designer, bought one, and I knew Adrian, and he told me later ♦ he said this is the only cabinet that I ever bought that I could set out in the middle of the room and walk around. As you know, that's what I believe in. I don't believe in putting things back. This is the radio and record player, the tape recorder is up here and the loud speaker down here.

**BH:** What is it ♦ fruitwood, or did you select the woods?

**OH:** I didn't select the woods but this was a very beautiful wood as you can see the grain here. . .

**BH:** It's magnificent.

**OH:** And this is black ebony here. But it just looked like things sitting on each other, you know, instead of blocks, almost a block type of thing. But yet it was very beautiful the other one they rented to the movies for their sets. I did want you to see these little line drawings that. . .

**BH:** Oh, aren't these ♦ now what were these done for?

**OH:** These are the little waterfall in the Armuchamonga Mountains near the Kiowa Indian reservation and when I was a student there at the University we used to go down there on weekend trips to make these sketches. I guess I made hundreds of sketches of Turner Falls. In fact they say I made it famous with the sketches. Mr. Wright loved these because you see they are ♦ this was before I knew anything about design or art and I contended that when a drop of water started here you could see that one drop makes a whole line, which is the way the Japanese looked at it. . .

**BH:** Oh, is it really?

**OH:** I didn't know that till later because naturally that one drop comes all the way down, you know. But most people fake it up and see many drops. . .

**BH:** Oh, this looks like Fuller Hill country.

**OH:** No, this is near Turner Falls there. I wish I had. . .

**BH:** Oh, that is just charming! Had you used these drawings for anything?

**OH:** No, I was making a series of these, in fact I've got the rest of them there to work on for a furniture company

in Philadelphia.

**BH:** What were they going to do with them?

**OH:** Well, they're going to use them in connection with their furniture exhibitions and sell them. And when I get through I will put them all on a wall and make them all harmonious, you know, so one won't be weaker than the other so that they'll look like one continuous thing almost.

**BH:** You'll have them all framed?

**OH:** Well no, they'll just be set behind sheets of glass without any frame, maybe six this way, and six up and down going around the corner but there'll be about fifty of them altogether when I'm through.

**BH:** Isn't that lovely! It's no wonder Mr. Wright liked them. I should say for the tape this is Mr. Frank Lloyd Wright, not Stanton Macdonald-Wright.

**OH:** Oh yes. See even those have an almost architectural tone to them because I used my drafting tools there. .T square and triangle.

**BH:** The other night at twelve o'clock I was sitting in my husband's office watching him make these lines on the top of a ♦ you know ♦ the design for a roof, he was making lines like that, when I looked at this I suddenly thought twelve o'clock last night the same thing...

**OH:** I thought you'd enjoy looking at those.

**BH:** I am so glad you showed them to me. They are beautiful.

**OH:** Now this is...

**BH:** Just while you're getting that I wanted to ask you, do you have lithographs of you "Black Tulip" or "Good Earth", do you? Those were...

**OH:** I think I have the "Good Earth" here. It's the only one...

**BH:** ...shown at the Los Angeles County Museum in 1939, I believe.

**OH:** Here is the "Good Earth".

**BH:** It was mentioned in several magazines. Oh, that is beautiful!

**OH:** This is taken right out here as you come a little toward Woodland Hills. Now this is full of houses and subdivisions.

**BH:** Miss Hrdy, did you work in the lithography shop where Dorothy Jenkins did? She was telling me about...

**OH:** Yes, in fact she sat next to me.

**BH:** Oh, you did? She did some awfully nice things.

**OH:** Oh, she did beautiful lithographs.

**BH:** She told me that the Library had a lot of the lithographs that were made which they let people check out like books.

**OH:** Oh, they do?

**BH:** No, they did during the project. It was part of the project.

**OH:** Oh, I didn't know that.

**BH:** I didn't either an no one else remembered, and she told me about it.

**OH:** Well, as I often tell people, I have reams and stacks and stacks of work, it's all somewhere else, I have very little to show here to people.

**BH:** It's a beautiful lithograph.

**OH:** You'll probably be interested in these things. They are some...

**BH:** Are these oil paintings?

**OH:** Yes.

**BH:** Mmmm. Now this is a completely different type of work altogether.

**OH:** I think an artist has to be very versatile in this day and age you know, you have to be able to paint a flower exactly like it looks, or a butterfly with all the little hair on it; or something abstract.

**BH:** Or your lovely geode 🎨

**OH:** That's another story.

**BH:** "From Without In" it's called.

**OH:** Those things are fantastic, I have an envelope full here and there. You see, after I went over to High town and began working with these tiny dimensions, 3/32nds of an inch, and all that for electronics I realized that I was being held down and I was getting too mechanical. I came out to the studio one day and I said to myself, "Olinka Hrdy, you must balance yourself, otherwise you're going to be nothing but a mathematical figure. Maybe 3/32nds of an inch." So I began doing these things which I call "Spiritual Experiments," watercolors, and always on my birthday, or on Christmas morning early in the morning I get out here in my studio and I do these watercolors which are free flowing and actually I don't know what's going to happen. I have the least to do with it, and I claim that the creative force flows through everybody, you and anybody walking down this street. They all have it but they don't know how to tap it. But once they learn how to tap it, it's amazing what you can do with that force. And you see how different these are from that or from my murals.

**BH:** One would think they were a different artist completely.

**OH:** I claim I'm twelve personalities anyway, and I guess the people who know me think so too. But you have to have many, many avenues to travel down.

**BH:** I think you enjoy living very much more when you can do something like that.

**OH:** I wanted to show you this. Now this is a dummy for a book called "By a Waterfall," and it has one of my little waterfall drawings in it.

**BH:** It's Turner Falls again.

**OH:** And this little Indian girl sits here and sees the reflections of these great masters in the water. Now the words were written by Dick Colburn and when you read this it's terrifically spiritual but you will see how different these things are from anything else you've seen. How primitive and how almost Indian but you can't say they're Indian. You have to say 'that's strictly Olinka Hrdy'.

**BH:** Well, how are we going to get all these things on microfilm so the Archives will know without getting. . .

**OH:** I've got. . .slides.

**BH:** But they can't take 🎨 they don't film. . .

**OH:** Oh, they don't?

**BH:** No, microfilm just 🎨 well, it's like a photograph, they put things down and it photographs.

**OH:** Oh, look down on it and shoot.

**BH:** Then when it comes out it's just like a motion picture, just like a tape thing.

**OH:** Oh, it's continuous, it's not like a slide.

**BH:** No, unfortunately.

**OH:** I thought maybe they could use these slides because I have a lot of those things.

**BH:** No. This breaks my heart, most of the artists have colored slides of their paintings especially, and we haven't any color, of course. . .

**OH:** Oh, it's all black and white.

**BH:** If people give us any photographs for the Archives that's wonderful but as far as the microfilming. . .

**OH:** Actually you have to read that to realize what this is, you see this is like a great chieftain with the blanket going the other way. And this is ♦ you see how primitive that is ♦ it's almost African, and I did these years ago before I went to art school for my little Indian cousin. We were laying on the floor and I said, "You tell me what to paint and I'll do the painting," so she would whisper these fantastic stories, she'd say, "Here's the great chief riding horseback, riding horseback without the horse, he's just gone under a tree and broken his sword, and this is a big log he's got to jump off it," she said.

**BH:** When I come back I would love to read them if you'll let me. That would be fun.

**OH:** But these are the things that Mr. Wright- all the architects love these things- and they have tremendous possibilities. And some day I would like to do a great mosaic, say, forty feet long with these things, and seven feet tall, small and large, almost Japanese-like, you know, some of them almost transparent. But Richard Nuytra wanted me to use these in his school down in Westwood, and I wanted to show you a couple of the sketches. When they saw that they absolutely backed clear out in the street. They said, "That's so modern we can't understand it."

**BH:** Well, this was his Emerson Junior High School probably.

**OH:** Emerson Junior High School, yes. But do you know when they turned down that project he stood there with tears running down his cheeks? He said, "You don't know what you're missing." But these figures ♦ not exactly these, I was going to make others,. . .

**BH:** Especially for it.

**OH:** Especially for it. As I say as many as there are leaves on trees that many can be done anyway. This is the thermometer \_\_\_\_\_ has been drinking wine, see, red nose, but in his project down there I was going to do the history of writing through the ages and I was going to start with Egyptian, Babylonian and clear down to the modern printing press, down through the Indians and all the primitive people showing their hieroglyphics in the background with these fantastic figures, you see. Introducing each one in a different kind of writing through the ages.

**BH:** And that's such a handsome building it would have been perfectly beautiful.

**OH:** Oh, it certainly would have been.

**BH:** It would have been lovely. Some day you certainly should get this published.

**OH:** I sent this up to Stanford but they thought it would be too expensive because they thought they should be reproduced exactly like this then it would be quite. . .

**BH:** Full color reproduction.

**OH:** . . .but now I think with more modern presses they probably could do it cheaper. But these may still be used somewhere. I hope so, I hope they are some day.

**BH:** I think they could ♦ it just couldn't be that they wouldn't be used, they're so nice they have a place some place.

**OH:** I think they will especially lend themselves to mosaics.

**BH:** I think they would too. Has Al Kane seen them?

**OH:** I don't think he has.

**BH:** He isn't doing anything with it now but he would enjoy seeing them, he would appreciate them.

**OH:** He's never been out here although he promises to come. But I guess he's doing so many things I guess he can't make it.

**BH:** Yes, he's busy too. Well, Miss Hrdy, I think we should stop for the day. . .

**OH:** All right.

**BH:** . . .and I do thank you so much, it's just wonderful, and when you think of more questions before I come back why save them. I'll be thinking of. . .

**OH:** All right. And maybe we can go down to the desert later on.

**BH:** Definitely. But I mean as far as the Archives and the tape go.

**OH:** Sure.

**BH:** Thank you. END OF THIS INTERVIEW, that is Part 3 TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH OLINKA HRDY PART 4 March 17, 1965 INTERVIEWER: BETTY LOCKRIE HOAG (Tape #35) (Mrs. Lou Morris is also present)

**BH:** This is Betty Lochrie Hoag on March 17, 1965 interviewing the artist Olinka Hrdy. And our friend Mrs. Lou Morris is with us. Miss Hrdy, I want to get back to a couple of questions about the project period. There were some people I wonder if you remember knowing, some of them I know you know; if you could tell us anything about them, anything that would be of interest, any stories you remember from project days, or anything, I'll just name them and you tell me if you know anything. . .

**OH:** First, for the record I would just like to say I welcome you both to Silver Hill Workshop.

**BH:** Thank you, we are happy to be here. Suzanne Miller ♦ she was a friend of yours wasn't she?

**OH:** Yes, I knew Suzanne very well. Suzanne was a very fine and sensitive artist and I think a very strong thinker, she had many ideas of her own and she never diminished any of her thinking. No matter what her ideals were she always stood by them and went through with them.

**BH:** She's working in mosaics now up in Ojai doing some nice panels rather than painting at all, I think. And Althea Ober is your friend on the desert.

**OH:** Yes, Althea and Suzanne I know both very well, and Althea used to have her studio at La Conyada (?) and she later sold it and went to Cathedral City. And on the project Althea was in the lithography department and she did very beautiful lithographs of desert flowers, mostly cactus and they all had a very spiritual quality to them. Most of hers were done directly on stone and I think stone is really the medium in lithography. Later on they used zinc plates I guess to make it easier for the printers but I don't know whether Althea has actually worked on any mural of her own or not, but I think she assisted Suzanne Miller on her mural.

**BH:** Yes, perhaps she did. Miss Jenkins told me about the fact that the artists had their own stones at that lithography shop and that was the first time most of them ever had one and what a thrill it was for them.

**OH:** They were assigned a stone and then they could be kept, you know, just for a year. All of them were about the same size so there wasn't any difference in that.

**BH:** Did you have a chance to look up yesterday's paper about the Tamarind Workshop?

**OH:** Yes, I did. In fact I just talked to June Wayne.

**BH:** Oh, really? That's interesting. I feel that probably the lithography workshop during the project was the direct forerunner of that workshop.

**OH:** It was. I don't know whether she knows it or not. I didn't mention the lithography department because in the article it says that they're having quite a time getting the stones and I think they're getting them from ♦ is it Belgium?

**BH:** I don't know.

**OH:** I believe it is Belgium and the quarry is running out and they're wondering where they can find a new supply of stones. And I often wonder what happened to those stones that were on the project because they're useable until they are an inch thick and those were about five inches. . .

**BH:** That would be an interesting thing to look into.

**OH:** Yes.

**BH:** Who was the man in charge of that? I think you told me his name before. . .

**OH:** Well Mr. Nahr used to be in charge of the lithography department but he died several years after that, and also Glenn Stirling worked in that lithography department as a printer, and ♦ what was his name? ♦-I couldn't think of the other man's name. But I would think that Mr. Macdonald-Wright and Mr. Feitelson would know what happened to those stones.

**BH:** Well, I will certainly ask them because. . .

**OH:** Because she would probably be happy to buy them, as they're having quite a time getting a supply.

**BH:** Well, its interesting, I will certainly ask them.

**OH:** When I talked to June Wayne yesterday I was telling her that I was interested in getting a grant for Ruth St. Denis for her rhythmic choir, which is a wonderful thing. And she has these older women, most of them snow-white hair, and most of them dancers who do this ♦ it's all done silently in pantomime, this rhythmic choir for churches. You see actually the dance began years ago in the church and she is trying to bring it back. And Miss Wayne was very good in that she gave me the direct addresses ♦ the addresses to write to and was happy to help in any way. . .

**BH:** At the Ford Foundation?

**OH:** It's in New York \_\_\_\_\_ she gave.

**BH:** Isn't that fine? I'm so glad.

**OH:** She knew St. Denis and was happy to give any information she could.

**BH:** Well, I certainly hope something comes of it.

**OH:** I do too, because I think St. Denis is worthy of a grant and she certainly has a wonderful thing in mind for the country. And, as you know, she's a real patriot of this country.

**BH:** Oh, that would be wonderful. Well, let's see, I have Bartlett and Swiggett. Do you know them? I think they were both men. ♦-Jean. . .

**OH:** Yes, they were. I don't even know which department they were in. I remember the name.

**BH:** Actually, these people were all doing murals down in Long Beach about the same time you were in different schools and this is the reason I thought you might know them.

**OH:** Oh.

**BH:** Napolatone?

**OH:** No. I remember the name. Wasn't he a sculptor?

**BH:** I don't know.

**OH:** I believe he was a sculptor but, as I say, I was always somewhere doing murals so. . .

**BH:** And A.F. Brasz (that's B R A S Z)? I haven't been able to. . .

**OH:** That name I don't even remember.

**BH:** Or Grace Bancroft?

**OH:** Oh, is that the same as Grace Clemens? I think. . .

**BH:** I don't know.

**OH:** Yes, that is. She was married at the time, I think; and that was her married name, but she. . .

**BH:** This is fine then, because I know it's the same person she teaches up at Mendocino she's head of the Art Department there now, and the person up there will talk to her.

**OH:** Well that isn't the same person because Grace lives over here in the east end of town . She married a very famous astronomer, an astrologer, whose name I can't remember either because I only met him once, and through her efforts they have just published a very wonderful book on astrology. I think it sells for twelve dollars and I think they themselves financed the publication of it.

**BH:** Now, it wouldn't be Pacific Palisades where they live, would it, because there is a couple down there who have done this?

**OH:** No, this is in the east end of town. Somewhere around here I have their address.

**BH:** Oh good, maybe when we're through you can look it up for me. I certainly would appreciate it.

**OH:** All right.

**BH:** And then Ralph Dickinson?

**OH:** No, I don't know him.

**BH:** Or Charles Dyer?

**OH:** No.

**BH:** Or Ella Buchanan?

**OH:** I remember the name but I don't know what they did.

**BH:** Or Stephen Briendt (BRIENDT)?

**OH:** No, I don't know them.

**BH:** That exhausts my list of people I thought you might know about.

**OH:** You see, many of them were in the mosaic department working on that big project down in Long Beach.

**BH:** No, these were things done for individual schools so they were important people and that's the reason I'm trying to find them.

**OH:** Although somewhere here in my file I found a list of all the people who were on the project and all their addresses.

**BH:** Oh no, how wonderful!

**OH:** Which I'll give you.

**BH:** How wonderful! I'll turn this off for a minute.

**OH:** We were discussing these things in this book and there was one little thing I wanted to say here on these illustrations which are quite primitive. And you'll probably enjoy these too because they are quite Indian-looking, and as I said before, this book is a very spiritual book. Actually you have to read this to realize what these are, and these are great masters that this Indian girl sits and sees reflected in the water at the base of this waterfall. It's interesting. . .

**BH:** You had done these for your little Indian cousin?

**OH:** I had done these for my little Indian cousin, Daisy Deauville (?) and, as I said, we were on the floor and I was painting these things and she was telling me these little fantastic stories about these great masters that were being reflected in the water. And as you see, the proportions of these have never been changed from the time I first did them. And when you realize how dynamic these things are, when I took these to New York and I got my scholarship there at the Rorick Museum to study J. Hambige's Dynamic Symmetry, I didn't realize till after I had learned something about Dynamic Symmetry and I put these under a transparent Dynamic Symmetry sheet, these were already in dynamics.

**BH:** Isn't that interesting.

**OH:** And the professor and all the students were amazed that they were already in dynamics and none of the angles had to be changed to conform to Dynamic Symmetry. And Frank Lloyd Wright used to say you either have these dynamics or you don't. And even in the little line drawings that I showed you that he liked so well, they were already in dynamics even when a rock was done on the slope and the angles one against the other were in perfect Dynamic Symmetry

**BH:** It's an intuitive design sense.

**OH:** It's a design sense that you either have or you don't. But if you have a sort of an architectural sense along with art and design I think you're more likely to have this dynamic sense too, I mean the angles working one against another.

**BH:** Oh yes. My husband has been fascinated applying it to architecture, it's very creative.

**OH:** Well, in architecture Howard Giles used to say that if you work out a room in Dynamic Symmetry and used those proportions he said when you enter that room you realize how peaceful it is because it has the proportions one against the other, and then if you go as far as working the furniture out, and the rugs, and everything else, then you've really got something very wonderful.

**BH:** Through coordination.

**OH:** Well, that's the thing I wanted to bring out.

**BH:** Well, I'm awfully glad you told us that because it wasn't on the tape. I think when we stopped last time you had just finished telling me about the Nuytra designs, which were not built. The ones that you did that they wouldn't approve money for, and I wonder what came after that chronologically.

**OH:** Let me see. (looking for pictures)

**BH:** Did you find pictures of them?

**OH:** I did find a couple of pictures of the decoration there. Well, you see in the Nuytra design I was to use those very abstract figures. I guess that's the only one I have. But in the background I was using the very primitive Indian designs that I had done research from and then these great figures were to sort of overlap and become almost transparent, you could see through into the back design and as I say, this was going to be the history of writing through the ages and each one of the separate designs was to have one of these figures.

**BH:** No wonder he was disappointed when they wouldn't allocate funds for it. It's just a crime.

**OH:** He was very disappointed in not being done. . .

**BH:** That building is slightly cold and it would have made all the difference in the world to have. . .

**OH:** Yes, it would have to have some very strong decoration there. This isn't much of a design to show you because they have the original ones in color and this just happened to be one that I threw away.

**BH:** Yes, you can visualize it knowing your other work. Her color is so beautiful anyway. LM: [inaudible]

**OH:** Ideas and sketches for the murals for Lowell Junior High School in Long Beach. I submitted this drawing and, as you see, this is really worked out dynamics. And she didn't see the other sketches but the others are realistic, I might say. But they have some dynamics in them because I have, say, a blue school of fish with a silver school going through them in sort of a dynamic flow. But this is really dynamic and you can see where the lines are sort of, you know. . . LM: Yes.

**BH:** The fishes are very geometric, it would make you afraid to go under the sea.

**OH:** I know it, but actually this is what they look more like than the realistic form; of course, these corners like this could be taken off a little bit so they wouldn't have to be so angled, but I like them angled myself. See here's the water line away up here with those bubbles and the rays coming down through there. But don't you think this would make an interesting mural? LM: I think it would be charming.

**OH:** But you see I like that, quite a few years ago this was so far out they couldn't even see it. LM: I suppose so.

**OH:** But today they could, and this would be wonderful, for mosaics. You see everything in here belongs to mosaics.

**BH:** Isn't it beautiful. LM: It would be just great.

**OH:** But you see how I thought twenty and thirty years ago.

**BH:** You certainly did.

**OH:** Frank Lloyd Wright and Walt Disney and these people I've talked to said "you're way out there thirty years ahead." To me, of course, this was nothing and if I was given, say, a mural commission today I'd probably be another twenty years ahead. In fact I might even be afraid to start.

**BH:** I think you should just be lazy and use these and let them do some work.

**OH:** Well they could be used because they're right up to now. . .

**BH:** Yes, they certainly are.

**OH:** . . .because they could understand that today, really it isn't, as far as I can see, it isn't far out at all. I'd just be afraid to give them something I thought was far out.

**BH:** I would be interested in seeing something like that. LM: Yet what do you think is far out today?

**OH:** Well, what I intend to start on and do, I have some watercolors here that sort of bring up to what I think is far out. And I want to do something like it in oil, and it is what I call working into the fourth dimension or going  instead of going this way and that way in a painting and making it flat, to go in and forward, you see, and I'll show you some watercolors that give you that effect. . .

**BH:** Wonderful.

**OH:** . . .although that isn't what I was doing mural/ that isn't what I was doing mural job because these are watercolors are strictly experiments to keep my balance. But I wonder if I should do that next, I guess I might as well do the watercolors. Now, as you noticed the other day, I have so many personalities to myself that you wonder if it's the same person doing all this.

**BH:** Many techniques.

**OH:** Now these little watercolors I think are probably the finest things I do but they look awfully insignificant. But if these were done in murals, and I have these drawings in colored slides there and we had taken and projected them on a wall at Mount Washington about ten feet high and one of the slides there was projected there most of one day. And when some of the nunciats (?), I think they call them monks saw this on the wall they came in and fell completely to the floor, they said, what is in this the real splendor, because it is what I call the flowing in of the creative force that's all around us all the time. All we have to do is tap this creative force.

**BH:** Miss Hrady, where is Mount Washington? I'm not familiar with it.

**OH:** Well, that is the SRF, Self Realization Fellowship, started by Yogananda (?), he also has a place there on Sunset Boulevard.

**BH:** Yes, self-realization.

**OH:** Self-realization, yes. Well this is the main office, the main place.

**BH:** Well, these are much like the geode or it is one of the group because I love it. It makes me think of the geode I don't know whether that. . . LM: It also makes me think of inner things of the. . .

**OH:** See when I do these and I said I usually do them on Christmas morning early, or on my birthday almost always without fail, as I'm doing these things and I stand there and ask that the creative force start flowing through me, I have no idea what's going to come out because, as I say, I have the least to do with it. I'm simply the instrument through which the creative force works. Even the name is given to me. Like in that one, I call that on "From Without In" and you can see how this seems to turn and go in, you see. It's almost like a cold thing coming into a very hot force. Two forces working with each other. Now I've got a couple of them over here I'll show you first. I think people are like a gem, they have many facets and one side reflects at a time, you know you can't reflect them all at the same time especially when you're creating. The day I did this, I usually do about five or six that come out very good, the day I did this one  you see how almost Chinesey this looks. It has almost a Tibet-like aura about it, or you could almost say it's like a great bird with the mouth here that's coming into existence.

**BH:** This wasn't done the same day, was it?

**OH:** No, that was done another day.

**BH:** It's completely different. . .

**OH:** But the day I did this one they were all harmonious, and almost like certain self that was just coming out. I call that the "Magnetic North", in fact at that time I was doing a lot of concentrating on the North Pole and I was thinking of all the intense cold and the crystallization of the Aurora Borealis and the colors that must be at the North Pole.

**BH:** You certainly can feel it in the painting. It's lovely.

**OH:** See, this one looks like it might be just the parting of clouds here and you look into the great beyond and you see planets that are flying through infinite space.

**BH:** "Forever Onward" you called it.

**OH:** Yes, I call that "Forever Onward." Even the name is given to me when I'm doing these things. In fact they talk to me. It's amazing, most people don't know what I mean but if you've done these and you had this terrific thrill, you might say, about this happening, coming out before you, it's ♦ well, it's an ecstasy really and these things happen so fast. I did these in one and a half minutes. That's important.

**BH:** For goodness sake! I can't even get the paint on the paper let alone. . .

**OH:** Well, I come along later there and maybe put in a line or put in some little dots, but the main part is done very quickly and I turn on my symphonic music and as I am listening to, for instance "The Firebird" ♦ somewhere around here I have one that I did when I was listening to "The Firebird" and you hear that terrific chirping of the firebird. I tried to, as the music goes on I try to hold that part in my mind and put it down on paper so you have to do it very, very quickly.

**BH:** It's a spontaneous movement as you react.

**OH:** Well, it certainly limbers you up and you have this free flowing that pours out of you and it keeps you well balanced, and I think that's what almost all artists need, especially since I've been doing so much technical work for industrial design and designing for various corporations, that it was awfully important to do something like this. Actually we need a. . . (lapse in sound on tape)

**BH:** The aversion. . .

**OH:** The aversion that I have toward black. And several years ago I went through my wardrobe and I just gave away all these things and when I did I cried. I thought well somebody else is going to have to wear this black and I can't stand it.

**BH:** To be able to get the contrast in tonal values with just colors is very \_\_\_\_\_.

**OH:** When you start using the pure colors, the high pure colors it is quite a challenge. LM: I notice you say 'the high pure colors' which are more the blues, the purple, the pinks, the different shades. . .

**OH:** Which are the spiritual colors. LM: Spiritual but I don't see the reds and yellows and the. . .

**OH:** You'll see some. Here's one.

**BH:** Oh, a monkey! LM: But. . .

**OH:** They're not \_\_\_\_\_ (lapse of sound) No, I haven't shown. . .

**BH:** Invite him to come over and see them. He should.

**OH:** I think he'd enjoy this very much. I fact I want to get busy and make more of them but I find that good watercolor paper is getting hard to get. This is not even good watercolor paper here; this is very good here and if it's good why I would love good paper. When I have a good piece in front of me I just say, "Ohhhhh, just let something wonderful happen!" Because I like. . .

**BH:** Is this the Strathmore Bond?

**OH:** This is Strathmore here, but this is just regular watercolor that I got down here but it doesn't compare to the wonderful papers you used to get. But I would like to see some of these reproduced, say, in ♦ I think of this being done on glass with lights behind. LM: Yes, lovely. When you mentioned the church. . .

**OH:** I think these all have possibilities, though they are small, they look insignificant somewhat, but if you just saw this thing blown up there ten feet like they did you at Mount Washington and it was just a living light this one it \_\_\_\_\_ what it was they just. . . LM: Projected it on a slide.

**OH:** Projected right on the wall.

**BH:** Speaking of your not having time to do more of them I think we should get caught up on the tape about what you're doing now, and I know that part of it is book illustration, as well as the industrial work, and I want to be sure you tell us some on the tape.

**OH:** This a little children's book that I illustrated for June Johnston, and those are the little line drawings and very simple little figures and of course most of them are dynamics, just naturally.

**BH:** Do you mind if I read the names because they can look it up, they would have it in the libraries back there, it's "The Outdoor, Indoor Fun Book" By June Johnston and it's published by Harper & Bros. Publishers in New York

1961, line drawings throughout.

**OH:** Yes. This isn't what I call a book in any way. She has, I think, four boys and one girl, and she got this idea of getting them to do little things out of paper, out of matches and little boxes and things and she found many of these things in other books I think, because, see, they're just indoor, outdoor games. . .

**BH:** To help mothers.

**OH:** Yes, mostly to help mothers to keep their children indoors during the rain. So these are just little diagrams. You know I did another book quite a few years ago called "Japanese Flower Arrangements for the Modern Home". Margaret Printinger was the author of it. I have about two hundred line drawings in this book, I have a couple of originals here that I can show you. You know the Japanese have a very set way of making these flower arrangements and each part is put in there very carefully.

**BH:** You don't remember who published that?

**OH:** Little, Brown & Company. But do you know that I don't even have a copy myself. It was a large book and a beautiful book, it sold for fifteen dollars. But it was quite a large book, white, and they were simply diagrams showing how to set the leaves and flowers into Japanese utensils. Now here's another little book that. . .

**BH:** This is one you written yourself too, isn't it?

**OH:** Well, I didn't have anything to do with the writing of it because it is the story of creation, word for word from Genesis. And I have several versions of this same little book. As you see this little book looks quite a bit like a Bible, and it's a coloring book for children from three to seven. I want to show you this one first because I have the commercial one over there which is in New York and in order to sell these things they have to be quite commercial in this day and age. Now first I just have this little 'presented to', say, "Aunt Mary to June" and then, you see and then the day and the birth date, it's sort of a little record of the child's birth and so forth like you find in all bibles. And you open the first page and have this outgoing heart, it says, "open your heart to God within us", actually the first word that they see is "God" and the rays pouring out, and the frontispiece is. . . But these are all very simply little line drawings so that a three year old can understand it. In order to get down to this I did two others which are ready for the press too but they're for the sixteen year old, very spiritual, something like my little watercolors with beautiful rias and clouds and things around. But the three year old I found could not understand it. Now all these  the words are in here so the mothers don't have to give that any thought and if they don't know what the first chapter in Genesis is, they're not ashamed because here they can read it to their child and pretend that they know it.

**BH:** And these are for them to color?

**OH:** Yes. And they can also finish the writing of this where the dots are you see. Now the idea was to show some of this on tracing paper so they could look through and see the picture that is coming up underneath. "In the beginning God created the heavens" you see they can finish writing these words and these hands here show the creation. I have other things here showing "God said", "God saw", the Eye, and so forth. But on each one of these transparent sheets it tells what's going to happen next. "God created the heavens" and in the beginning, as you know, "everything was dark and void" so there wasn't much light there.

**BH:** The tape can't see this so I'll have to tell them that what Miss Hrdy means is that the printing is on the transparent piece of paper and then the drawing is underneath which the child can color in and this goes through each phrase of the book of Genesis, of the story of creation. It's hard to get this interpreted so they know what we're talking about. (Lapse of sound)

**OH:** \_\_\_\_\_ commercial. . .

**BH:** Now has this been published? No, this is your drawing. . .

**OH:** No, this is the one that's in New York now at the agent's and I found that a lot of the people have an aversion to the story of creation and also the "Genesis" being on the front so I've changed it to "How the World and We Began." Picture coloring book, down here very small, word for word "Genesis." . .

**BH:** Carrying the same idea throughout.

**OH:** The very same idea except that you see everything is enlarged, there's the earth, and the lettering is on the same page with the illustration.

**BH:** That makes it an easier size for the child to handle too.

**OH:** Yes.

**BH:** I certainly hope they do publish it and very soon, it's a beautiful thing.

**OH:** But both sides of the page of course are used. See it's strictly a coloring book now, which they'll be able to understand I hope.

**BH:** This has the page with the prayer on the back too, I hope?

**OH:** Well, yes, the story of Genesis goes clear through on each page, you see. "And the evening and the morning were the sixth day," and then we start Chapter Two. LM: Betty means does it end with the hand?

**OH:** Oh no, this one- I left out the hand. But it can be done in various ways. There's no reason ♦ but you see this begin so hard to show a publisher or even an agent, I think once they accept that and once I get in there I've got three more ready to go.

**BH:** Yes, you can follow up with \_\_\_\_\_. Well those are very interesting. And I want to ask you before we stop too about having done Christmas cards for Hallmark.

**OH:** Yes, I did a group of 365 cards for them called "The Good Wish Card" and in fact their letters to me say that they're going to have to build a special cabinet because each card is for each day of the year ♦ if you're born August 7 there will be a card just for you.

**BH:** Oh, what a great idea.

**OH:** With your birthstone, which is a little plastic gem and your flower in the beginning and you open it up to your verse -just for August 7, another one for August 8, you see. Very personal.

**BH:** Those have not come out on the market yet?

**OH:** Well, I don't know, I haven't contacted them ♦ Mr. Watson. As I say, I don't even have time to go around and get photographs of my murals let alone. . .

**BH:** A couple of weeks ago I did an interview with Tyrus Wong who did so many of those lovely Christmas cards for Hallmark.

**OH:** Oh. I love Tyrus.

**BH:** They should have you do some Christmas cards. Some of your things would be beautiful.

**OH:** Oh yes, any of those would make fabulous Christmas cards In fact first the little one I showed you there I don't think they'd pay me what it would be worth, you see, they give you a few dollars for your idea and then they do millions of them and you only get a pittance for it. I think it's better not to show them around too much and do them for murals when the right time comes.

**BH:** Oh, I think you're right. They're so well adapted to that. Miss Hrdy, before I complete the interview I nearly always ask the artist in general what they feel the project was worth to the community and the artist themselves, either good or bad as far as the development of American art went. I'd love to have you tell us what you feel about it.

**OH:** Well, I think it was probably one of the greatest things that happened in America, and it was certainly a step in the right direction, something that had never been done in America before, and I think that every artist that was on the project should probably feel the same because it gave everyone a chance to express their ideas ♦ and although some of mine weren't accepted because they were too far out, but anyway I enjoyed working on every mural I did for the project.

**BH:** I have not had anyone yet say that it wasn't just wonderful so maybe I should stop asking the question but I do think it's good to get everybody's opinion about it. Of course, you were a gifted and experienced artist when you went on it so you didn't get any influence from other sources.

**OH:** No, I didn't.

**BH:** But so many of them have told me that this was one of the great things that came. . .

**OH:** No, I was able to start right in and take up the brush and go on with what I had already started in Tulsa and Chicago and New York and other places. So it wasn't a new experience for me. I enjoyed meeting and knowing these artists, some of them are my very best friends and will continue to be.

**BH:** That's an interesting result of it too.

**OH:** And I think too that a lot of these artists feel too, that if they do, some tremendous job ♦ for instance I was going to do a terrific mosaic job near Flagstaff, Arizona and it didn't materialize, but it was going to be a fantastic project all in mosaics and that's where they were going to use those very abstract Indian figures of mine, eight feet tall going down forty foot walls in mosaic that they would wash down with the hose. And of course this doctor who was going to do the facade for, that supplied this idea said, "That's what I want". He said, "I'm ready to employ somebody like Olinka", and I thought at the time well how wonderful it is to know all these people and drive them over there to assist doing that. You know it's pretty hard to find people to do the things after you get the commission. And that's one good thing about the project, you do know a lot of people you can put your hands on quickly to help you.

**BH:** That's a very interesting point that I've never heard brought up before.

**OH:** So you always keep those in the background, you know. It's nice to. . .

**BH:** As you told me that I suddenly remembered the tunnels down at the airport that are tiled where you go through, you know, these tunnels that go so far, wouldn't it be wonderful if Miss Hrdy's murals could be along those where hundreds of people go every day where they could enjoy those ♦

**OH:** You mean International Airport?

**BH:** Yes. They build them radially. You have your lobbies and then these big tunnels go out to the different ramps where the planes come in, and they're a long walk, I would say at least a city block most of them, and they're all covered with beautiful tile. . .

**OH:** Just plain tile?

**BH:** Well, they have it graded in colors usually. It's rather interesting because it goes from, oh, lavender to blues and then works around to rose, you're conscious of it but everybody thinks about this color as they walk. But what a wonderful place to have something really intriguing for them to think about and study as they walk.

**OH:** You know on those primitive figures I had an idea at one time of doing those on glass, say, five feet wide and, oh, twenty feet tall and doing them in luminous paint, say, for a great bar, which they have ♦ I'm not too enthused over ♦ but say it is in a bar and you light this glass from the back and you have these luminous figures, some small, some large, doing fantastic things like flying in glass airplanes. And you look through the whole thing, the planes, the figures, and all, you see. Can you visualize what I'm trying to say? How fantastic they would be. And the longer you sit in the bar the more fantastic they would become because they would be done with luminous paint.

**BH:** It would be interesting. LM: \_\_\_\_\_ with alcohol.

**OH:** That's right.

**BH:** Before we stop the tape I also want to thank you so much for having the Frank Lloyd Wright letter Xeroxed so we could have it microfilmed today. It was very gracious of you to go out and do that.

**OH:** Well, I'm happy to help you do anything. . . [END OF INTERVIEW]

**BH:** The prodigious amount of work of Miss Hrdy seems perfectly endless. After we had turned off the she began showing us other examples of her work and I think one that should be mentioned here is games for children that she has designed; they are her ideas, the concept of the games which are semi-educational, and of course the execution of them, and they're simply beautiful things. One of them teaches the child all about the life of the honeybee at the same time he's playing a game rather like our game of Parcheesi.