



Smithsonian  
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Oral history interview with Peter Hurd,  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Peter Hurd on March 28, 1964. The interview took place in San Patricio, New Mexico, and was conducted by Sylvia Glidden Loomis for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project.

The original transcript was edited. In 2022 the Archives created a more verbatim transcript. Additional information from the original transcript that seemed relevant was added in brackets and given an -Ed. attribution. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

## Interview

SYLVIA LOOMIS: This is an interview with Mr. Peter Hurd at his home in San Patricio, New Mexico, on March 28, 1964. The interviewer is Mrs. Sylvia Loomis of the Santa Fe office of the Archives of American Art, and the particular phase of American art to be emphasized is that of the Federal Art Projects of the 1930's and '40's. I know you were involved in the Project for only a short time, Mr. Hurd, but we would like to know how it fit in with your career as an artist, and what effect, if any, it had on your work and your life. Would you tell us, first, something about yourself? Where you were born, where you were educated, and so forth.

PETER HURD: Mrs. Loomis, I was born in Roswell, New Mexico, just 52 miles east of where we're sitting now.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

PETER HURD: [Reads prepared statement.] My early days were spent here, attending schools in Roswell, public schools, and one parochial school, which happened to be near my father's farm. And then the New Mexico Military Institute. Then, I got an appointment to West Point, went there and with —entered with the class of 1925 in July of 1921. I left West Point by resignation in '23, to the dismay of my father, who thought I was missing a brilliant career as a soldier, and with a—furthering this bad news for him that I was to be a painter. That was about the last thing that my father thought of as being possible in our family, since there were no artists in the recent part of our lineage. But I must interpolate here that my father was later tremendously reconciled to my career and lived to see me have some small success.

I then went to Haverford College after leaving there, because my father insisted that my college education be completed. While I was at Haverford, I met some young—some fellow students. One in particular, whose relative was in the engraving business—the other students were related to other people in illustration and so forth, and this young man whose name was Charles Nash, was the nephew of the Beck Engraving Company people—a nephew of one of the brothers. And he arranged for an introduction to them, and they saw sketches of mine at their place in Beach Haven, down in New Jersey, where I was invited for Thanksgiving. That was November of 1923, shortly after my resignation from West Point. And these Beck brothers saw some promise in these sketches I had made and said, Do you want to be an illustrator? I said, Yes, I would like very much to be. They said, Do you know any illustrators? And I had to admit, not only did I not know any illustrators, I didn't know any artists. I had never met one in my life. Despite living in New Mexico, I lived miles from Taos. I had seen some go through town on fishing trips with my father and mother. I actually never met any.

So, it was arranged that I meet N. C. Wyeth, the man who's books I'd known as a child in New Mexico, and it was a great, great thrill to hear his voice over the phone that following month, December. It was high-pitched and I remember him saying, [imitates N. C. Wyeth] "Mr. Hurd, N. C. Wyeth. I don't know if you're going to be free to come down and see us here at Chadds Ford. Mr. Beck, Johnny Beck, called me the other day." My heart gave an enormous pound. Here was the man I'd wanted to meet more than almost anyone else in the world, and I'll never forget that short conversation. But I had to tell him that I was committed

over the holidays because of my Boston relatives having invited me up there, but he understood that completely, and we made a date for January.

I then began a most wonderful period of instruction under N. C. Wyeth, after that year in Haverford. My father got me off the hook as far as having to graduate from college with an eloquent letter to—I should say, Mr. Wyeth got me free. I made a mistake in that statement. Mr. N. C. Wyeth got me through my obligation to my father by a most eloquent letter to him, in which he pled the cause of the artist, particularly a 20-year-old one, who had no time to spare in learning the intricate techniques of painting. So, that is my education, and the background of my life. [End of reading prepared statement.] My father was not a farmer as my—inferred from the fact that a grew up on a farm. He was really a—he began as a rancher, sheep rancher, and then made use of his law degree from Columbia University to practice law in the territory. He came out to the territory of New Mexico in the 1890s and was interested in agriculture all his life.

[00:05:01]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I think I read somewhere that you also studied at the Art Institute in Chicago. Is that correct?

PETER HURD: No, that—I'm glad you reminded me. I didn't want to be too long winded about my education, Mrs. Loomis. Actually, it was the—I studied under Wyeth, and to him I owe 90 or more percent of my learning—of my—the tutelage that I got was by far the best and the most exciting and wonderful, which came in his studio. That tutelage under him was the most durable, enduring, and the most wonderful, unforgettable. The standard, and more or less routine tutelage in art came at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, which I attended two successive years, and then another year at night school. Meanwhile, spending summers at Chadds Ford studying landscaping, figure, and composition under N. C. Wyeth, but the reason—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: You were still under his tutelage, even when you went to the—

PETER HURD: Yes, even when I went to the Academy. Correct. The reason for going there in the winter was I could have life models, and he felt very desirous to have me learn to paint from the nude and clothed model at the Pennsylvania Academy. And his daughter, my present wife, went there.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Inaudible.]

PETER HURD: I said present wife—I mean, the only one.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Laughs] They only wife, yes. Well, when did you come back to New Mexico?

PETER HURD: Little by little, we returned in the '30s. I was so broke, and so it was very hard to make much of a living in those early Depression days that—and I had more or less a market until the Depression really cracked down on all of us, and I lost my advertising contracts—or they were badly reduced. Things such—companies as Steven Whitman, and the chocolate people, I did a series of ads for, and one big ad I remember paid all of \$1,200, which was an enormous amount in those days, for Tidewater Oil Company. [Inaudible] Oil painting showing the return of Byrd from Antarctica.

So, when I had to put my belt in, anyway, I felt it'd be much better, more economical, to return to my beloved New Mexico, and my wife was in agreement. We then had our oldest child born—our first child was born, then. It was difficult for her to get here. She didn't really come out permanently until '39. She'd come back and forth, and I did the same. We maintained two residences. One, in a little rented apartment in Pennsylvania, and we then, by '34, had gotten a nucleus of what's become a small cattle ranch in southern New Mexico now here in San Patricio. And that was the first 40-acre purchase, which we made in '34, for a astounding sum of \$2,600.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

PETER HURD: You couldn't buy more than couple of acres for that now, but it was about—it was 40 acres, two adobe houses, a water line, and some orchard land. And it just seemed like the most wonderful, wonderful, fortuitous, marvelous thing that could happen—that we

found that little dab of land in a beautiful valley, near where I was born.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That's just—

[Cross talk.]

PETER HURD: That's where we're sitting now, yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Inaudible.] Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER HURD: This was the headquarters and is now—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Inaudible.]

PETER HURD: —small cattle ranch.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Did N. C. Wyeth ever come out here?

PETER HURD: No, alas, he never did. He would have, but he was killed in a terrible car accident in 1946, just before his first grandson was born.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, dear.

PETER HURD: He knew the child was on his way, but he was killed, and Mikey was born in February of '46. He was killed in October of '45, and it was an awful thing. A locomotive ran over his station wagon, with a grandson of two years old with him.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Now, his son was Andrew, wasn't it?

PETER HURD: His son—he has two sons and three daughters.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER HURD: [Inaudible]—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: They all painted?

PETER HURD: No, three of them do. My wife, the eldest of them all, is, of course, a painter. Paints under the name of Henriette Wyeth. The next daughter—the next child is a daughter. She also paints. Her name is Carolyn Wyeth, and she maintains a thriving school in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania and Maine, for painters. The third child is Nathaniel, who is an engineer and executive in the DuPont Company in Wilmington. The fourth was—is Annie, Ann Wyeth, who is a musician, and now paints, and rather charmingly, in watercolor, and even sells her things.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Where is she?

PETER HURD: Andrew's the fifth and youngest, and of course, you don't have to tell you who he is.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: You certainly don't.

PETER HURD: Ann—they all live in Chadds Ford—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, they do?

PETER HURD: —except Nat, who lives near there, in a town called—oh, it's just outside of Chadds Ford. All that beautiful farming country, but it's becoming suburban Philadelphia, I'm sorry to say, now.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

PETER HURD: In the Brandywine Valley.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes. Well, how did you become involved in the Federal Art Projects?

[00:10:00]

PETER HURD: I became involved in 1937, by having entered a competition for the—'36, it might've been—for the federal building in El Paso, and my three alternate designs were not the winning ones. My colleague and good friend Tom Lee in El Paso won that. And rightfully so, because his design was much better than any of mine. But that gave me a foot in the door. They liked my designs, and as a result of that—and as a result of the authorities in Washington liking them—Ned Bruce and Edward Rowan—they awarded me, for that competition, a fresco panel in Big Spring, Texas. I say they awarded me this fresco—they didn't stipulate that it be fresco, but I was passionate about fresco, having watched Diego Rivera paint in New York City. Like a quiet little mouse, I would creep in and watch the maestro on his scaffold, and it was a great experience. It really helped me tremendously.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Was that at the New School?

PETER HURD: That was a—no, I didn't see those. He was in the Heckscher Building, which then housed the Museum of Modern Art, and these were portable panels. I don't know what's become of them. He was doing over again, in smaller scale, a series that he had done in Mexico. The same themes adapted to the smaller, portable panels.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, now, you must've done something earlier than that for the Treasury Department, though, didn't you?

PETER HURD: Mrs. Loomis, that's the first [I ever did -Ed.].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that right?

PETER HURD: [Inaudible.] [Cross talk.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I thought some of those dates were—

PETER HURD: Ah, now that was for the PWAP.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes. Well, that was one of the Federal Art Projects, you see, when I say that, I mean all of them.

PETER HURD: Yes. I worked for the procurement division of the Treasury Department for three murals, and they were all—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That was earlier, wasn't it?

PETER HURD: No. These things came later, the things I'm telling you about. The earliest thing was the small subsidy that I got on a weekly basis from PWAP.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes. Well—

PETER HURD: And that I had omitted. I should have said that.

[Cross talk.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Inaudible.]

PETER HURD: I'm sorry that I omitted it. I didn't regard it as very important because it's all been destroyed now. But actually, that was a great boost. It was a wonderful thing to me, as it must have been to hundreds of other painters, but the real big boost came when I could work as a real pro on the government buildings, the federal buildings, in fresco. That was the great, great thing for me. And right here and now, I want to say, quickly, it was the greatest thing that ever happened to me, aside from meeting NCW. That wonderful intervention of the federal government, making it possible for me to be a mural painter. I feel that a mural painter's like an actor. He can call himself a mural painter, but if he hasn't got a wall to work on, he's like an actor, who says he's an actor, but if he isn't on the stage, what is he then? He's not—he just says he is. You can be a painter and go out and paint, and nobody can contradict it, but not a mural painter, because it's so darn expensive.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

PETER HURD: In general, and people aren't awarding walls right and left. Don't you agree with that?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, I certainly do. I should say so.

PETER HURD: So, I was like a straining—I was straining at the leash, as a budding mural painter in those days, and the Federal Works Agency, I believe it was called—the procurement division of that, gave me—isn't that correct?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That's right.

PETER HURD: Under Ned Bruce, a friend of President Roosevelt's—under his aegis— their aegis, I had three wonderful commissions. I have mixed feelings about the results, but certainly, as far as getting my teeth into something wonderful, that was it. That was the best.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, let's go back just a minute to those earlier—that earlier Project, PWAP. What sort of thing did you do then?

PETER HURD: I—would you like to hear how that began?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I would.

PETER HURD: The alumni of the New Mexico Military Institute—the alumni society came to me and said, We have some funds and we want to commemorate a certain teacher we all had and greatly loved, with a portrait. Well, he was not living then, and I said, Look, I think no portrait—posthumous portrait—is very good. Certainly mine would be very dismal, even though I knew Major Thomas. May I suggest that you put a mural in the Thomas Lounge, which is named after him, and let me do it for you, instead of a bust portrait from a photograph, which would be a very lame work, indeed, by anyone, because the portraits of him—the photographs are very poor. They don't suggest his sparkling personality. At least, I am not confident to do it. Had he been living, I'd like to have given it a whirl, but I couldn't, from this. So, they were agreed, and I did a triptych at the end of the room, for which they paid me \$1,400, their total investment—their total amount of funds they had put aside. And that, incidentally, just paid my—the larger part—slightly more than half of this \$2,600 farm I'd bought up in hills, the nucleus of our ranch. Another \$1,200 came from Liberty bonds my father had bought and we'd stored away for—.

[00:15:11]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER HURD: Well, getting back to this. I did the frieze, I did the triptych, including a central panel over the fireplace, and two side panels, separated from the central panel by two tall windows. There's a very interesting light in the room. It was a very fascinating commission, and I enjoyed doing it. But I projected, with the help of my friend Paul Horgan, a novelist and historian, a whole frieze around the room. After two more panels, the funds ran out completely, and the Depression was on us strongly, so there were no more available funds.

One day, a man walked in and introduced himself to me, while I was painting, as Theodore Van Soelen. I've known his work in the East, where he exhibited frequently at the Pennsylvania Academy and the New York shows. He was a well-known—and still is, a very well-known painter. So, I was delighted to meet him and told him of my great pang of nostalgia that his New Mexico landscapes would give me when I saw them in exhibitions in the East, and he said, Well, I like what you're doing here, young fellow. I think if you—is there any chance—what's the future about this? You gonna continue the frieze? I said, I would love to, but I'm afraid it's impossible because funds are lacking. I had no idea what he was doing. He said, Well, I'm running a survey for Jesse Nusbaum, and I think you fill the bill. Though there are other people lining up for this job, I'm going to vote for you. And I'd like to see you continue it. That's exactly what he did. He allowed me to continue two more panels. Three more, maybe, there were. I believe there were three. Reason I'm vague about it is, unfortunately, they were destroyed by fire some few years after they were completed.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

PETER HURD: But that was when I really got my foot in the door, thanks to my good friend and very generous friend to artists, Theodore Van Soelen. He's just been extraordinarily helpful to many young artists all through his life.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, then you went from that into these larger murals and—

PETER HURD: That was—then the next—yes. I haven't gotten them in this tape in chronological order, but I hope I've straightened it out now.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, that's fine.

PETER HURD: I proceeded then to work for the federal government directly, not on a payroll basis, but on a basis of award—contract award, usually involving three payments. One, upon acceptance of the design—preliminary design, one upon half completion, and one upon completion and approval.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Now, tell me more about those three larger works.

PETER HURD: First one was the Big Spring mural, which is entitled *O Pioneers*, and I shamelessly adapted and changed a line from Walt Whitman's "Pioneers" ["Pioneers! O Pioneers!"], but I don't think that any sacrilege was perpetrated. Making it fit my own—I condensed two lines, as I remember—and used it as a lettered phrase under—and incorporated in the fresco, in the lower part of it. I can't quote it for you right now, I'm sorry to say. I'd like to, later in the—if I could dig it up—dig up a photograph of that. Perhaps we can.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I'd—if it's all right, if you just talk about where you can find it [laughs].

PETER HURD: Yes, well, I could find it in my files. I never thought of bringing it out. I'd like to refer to that, because it's—it was—it epitomized just what I felt about those people that pioneered West Texas. And the fresco was, as I remember, 17 feet long and five feet high. It was over on a screen wall in the foyer of the post office in Big Spring. And I got down there, I met Mr. Nat Schick [ph] the postmaster, and he called me "Boy." I'm afraid I looked a little more boyish than my 30-some years. He said, [imitates postmaster] "Boy, come in here. Listen, now, I hear you're going to paint this mural [sic] here for us. Now, I've got some ideas for you. I want you to"—mind you, I had the design all approved by the federal government—[imitates postmaster] "Now, I've got some ideas here. Now, I want you to begin over here on this right hand side of it, with some old-timey plains people out here with covered wagons coming in, and then I want to have a Pony Express, and then I want to have—now, I want you to make some notes on this, because I want you to have it, just, you know, like we want it, we don't want nothing dinkey in this post office." I quote him verbatim, in that expression: "We don't want nothing dinkey in this post office."

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER HURD: Well, gently, I told him it was not in my power, or his either. That the designs had been approved, and that his—I didn't say this to him—his very banal and cliché ideas wouldn't do at all. But with, I think, utmost diplomacy, I made him ruefully give up the project. He said, well, he knew some big wigs in the post office department, and he was going to see what could be done about it.

[00:20:10]

Well, lest you think, you who are listening to this, that I'm being cruel in my facetious parody of Mr.—the postmaster there, Mr. Schick [ph], let me tell you at once that he became my strong ally when he saw the thing, and he forgot his ideas, and he was a wonderful friend and ally, and he still comes to see me. An old man in his 80s now. He's a good friend, and it all went beautifully.

[Cross talk.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Did you have the sketches with you at the time?

PETER HURD: I hadn't—I had just gone down to investigate it and look at the wall, and I'm not sure whether I had it or not. That's a good question. But I assume—he came out there and bragged about me to his friends, and he was a wonderful person, really. Oh, he was—

[Cross talk.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Inaudible.]

PETER HURD: I'd go to his house in the evenings for dinner. We were the greatest of friends. But it began in an awful way.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I should think, though, it was closer enough, what you had in mind, so that it—

[Cross talk.]

PETER HURD: Yes, he didn't mind a bit. No, he finally was all on my side.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: He saw the [inaudible]—

PETER HURD: But it was a very low hour when I had to listen. [They laugh.] But those ideas just wouldn't do.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I know that problem came up for—has come up before in interviews, where the sponsor—

PETER HURD: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —didn't like the sketch or would insist on—

PETER HURD: His ideas.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —his ideas. That has made quite a problem for some of the artists. Mural artists, particularly. Well, now which—

PETER HURD: But you see, he had a proprietary interest. It was rather admirable.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, it was.

PETER HURD: What you say is all together true, and he felt it was his post office. He'd done a lot to get that post office there, by political wangling [ph], I suppose, perfectly legitimate wangling [ph], saying Big Springs' growing, we need this fine post office. He was proud of it. It was the pride of a worthy servant of the government, and was perfectly understandable.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What date was this?

PETER HURD: '37.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: '37.

PETER HURD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And then, what was the next one?

PETER HURD: The next one was—the next one was—I have to think a moment, which came first. The next one was Dallas. That I won in open competition. I think open to artists west of the Mississippi River. I could be wrong on that detail, but I believe it was. In any case, one of the great thrills of my life, after hearing NCW's voice on the phone, was a telegram I got in Santa Fe while out on the town with some friends. It reached me when I got back. It had been forwarded from my father in Roswell, saying "You have won the competition for the Dallas federal building." And that was a great moment. And I did that—completed in '40. We went to Mexico in March of '40, my wife and I. She had been in Pennsylvania, and I'd done the frescos with the help of a Mexican boy named Ernesto Burciaga. Who, I'm sorry to say, is very sad to think of. He lost his life needlessly in the war, when he was shot down by American fighter planes, staffing a group of people they presumed to be Germans, and he and many other good Americans died in that needless and tragic accident of warfare.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What did you say his name was, again?

PETER HURD: Ernesto. E-R-N-E-S-T-O, B-U-R-C-I-A-G-A. and of course, his name is on the fresco. Burciaga, yes. He was born in Durango, Mexico, and was putting himself through our state university. It was then called New Mexico A & M. Had a pilot's private license—a brilliant boy, a wonderful man. He painted and he was an all-around craftsman, with excellent wood-carving.



SYLVIA LOOMIS: What was the subject of this mural?

PETER HURD: This mural, the two su—there were three panels. One was *Airmail Over Texas*, showing an early-day plane—which, by the way, is still flying. I think it's the earliest plane there is, and that's the—still in the air—that's the DC-3 [ph]. With an air beacon on top of mesa. An imaginary scene, but the beacon is flipping its light around, as we see in the still, and the DC-3 [ph] at dusk, is up in the air, just after sunset. The Texas landscape with a ranch in the foreground. The second panel was *Pioneer Home Builders*, showing some people on the banks of the—around the Dallas area. Imaginary, also—building a log cabin. And the third one, which was never painted, because of the impending war, was to have been Eastbound Mail Stage. And the reason that the department gave me continuing frescos was that the building was to be augmented, enlarged, and that that wall would be torn out and the fresco would be lost. But I felt that that was a lame excuse at the time, because everyone knew we were arming for war, and even to this day, at least, the last time I was there, three or four years ago, the lobby hadn't been altered. It was just a device. It was just something they had to tell me.

[00:25:02]

So, that panel, called Eastbound Mail Stage, depicted a overland [ph] stage in a great cloud of dust, meeting an immigrant train bound West—Westbound, with covered wagons and so forth. It was just an imaginary meeting. It must have happened, because they used the same trails. I never read about it or saw it. And it was 22 feet long, 12 feet high. It would have been my biggest fresco.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Was this the one that was vandalized?

PETER HURD: No. None of these have been vandalized. They're well out of reach of anyone, anyway.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

PETER HURD: I find vandalism, or vandalizing, occurs only when the public can get their little patty-paws [ph] on it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

PETER HURD: I've never had rocks or eggs thrown anywhere. No missiles, yet, have attacked my murals.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see, yes. What was the third one, then?

PETER HURD: The third one was that—I told you about. Oh, Alamogordo, I beg your pardon. The three panels I thought you meant.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No.

PETER HURD: The three panels. And then I was given—awarded, without competition, the post office at Alamogordo [NM]. And that was to have been inside the building, but the light was dim in that pseudo-pueblo building, made of adobe, I believe—or at least in the New Mexico architectural style, they adapted the pueblo style. And the light was so dim—and fluorescent lighting was just beginning in those days. In fact, I bought my first florescent lamp while working on a mural in Dallas, as a result of a man showing me the first one I ever saw in 1940.

So, I persuaded the government to let me do the murals on the loggia outside, what we would call in New Mexico a portal [ph]—a porch outside. And this loggia was imminently fitted for a mural, I felt, because the mural was designed to embrace the doorway, over, above, around the doorway, and on each side. One side depicts a lady—a young girl, early-20s, perhaps, with a child beside her. She has a hoe in her hand and is beside the irrigation canal, and the background is the farming country of Alamogordo. The other side shows a sheep herder in the mountains, with his upraised hand, looking prayerfully toward the sky while storm clouds are gathering over him and beyond him. He's feeling for the first drops of rain. And under his figure, in a ribbon running the entire length—that is, the entire width of the panel, is the legend [speaks Spanish]: "*Ven, Lluvia bendita, ven, a caresser la tierra seca.*" Which means, in English: "Come, blessed rain, come to caress the thirsty earth." On

the left side, is the legend in English, which I'm sorry to say, I can't quote correctly now. It, more or less, is a similar summons to summon rain, to bring fertility to the green earth. Sort of a prayerful thing it was, indeed. And Frank Dobie, [ph] who was and is my good friend, helped me with the legend on the left, and I'm sorry to say it's confused in my mind, still. That mural is the one that's been vandalized. Would you like me to tell about that?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I would.

PETER HURD: Well, being so near to the ground—the mural runs right to the pavement in the loggia, right to the flagstones, and from there, up to the ceiling. On each side of the door, a distance of about five feet of the wall, and possibly more—I'd say about ten feet of the wall, on each side. The mural was arranged to fit that, arbitrarily. We just stopped there, arbitrary point. And the kids, I think, in the city of Alamogordo—it was then just a small town. It's now grown a great deal since. The military have moved in there—near there, with two bases. The children of the town, feeling that it was no different than any billboard, would write their names on it, and they'd put big brands on the sheep beside the sheep herder, and they drew mustaches on the girl, and so forth. It was a really bad thing. It was difficult to retouch it, even though it was fresco, which you can wash—it's hard to watch pencil marks off fresco, and indelible pencils they used—and then they would scratch it with rings or nails or something. It looked pretty bad. I made three retouching jobs on it. I didn't charge anyone anything, until the last one, which was an extensive one. I was paid for that. Then, by federal—by the GSA, General Service Administration Authority, a band—a tall band of thick plexiglass was put over it. It certainly didn't improve the quality of the mural, as far as its visibility goes, but it will prevent vandalism, unless they shoot at it with a buckshot or a '45 revolver. What's the next thing? I don't really think anyone did it purposefully, in the sense of—they did it just as this weird age of kids are going, now. They—just get rid of everything they shouldn't.

[00:30:04]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: You said something about the cost of that, compared to the cost of the original.

PETER HURD: The restoration, yeah. I was paid \$1,200 for that mural, as I remember. It might have been \$1,250—something like that. And out of that, I had to pay my assistant, because it was a contract, and for the plaster and everything. And of course, I get a good deal more than that for watercolors nowadays—a single painting. Mind you, I'm not being resentful in the least. It was wonderful to have that opportunity, and even had I had to pay the government to do it, I'm again like the actor without the stage. I yearn for a stage. I yearn for more wall to paint on, and the money was unimportant, but it is curious how values have changed. And what was I was going to tell you about the price? Oh yes, the restoration price was three, four times that, at least, including the small amount paid me. I was paid \$500 for my work on it, which was pretty extensive. I really had to go all over, within all of it. In fact, over much of the painting, even where people couldn't reach, because it hadn't been taken very good care of.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. Were you involved with Vernon Hunter in the WPA, at all?

PETER HURD: Not directly. I knew him—for many years, I've known him. Let's see, I've—must have met him in the middle '20s—late '20s, possibly. I was married in 1929. It seems to me I met him through Paul Horgan before we were married—before Henriette and I were married. Quite sure I did.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But there was no connection, as far as your work on Federal Art Projects were concerned?

PETER HURD: No, not at all. I think, this, I'd like to say to the memory of Vernon. Actually, his work, in its starkness and in its voracity, had a certain effect on me. I was very, very moved by these plains things that he did. The stark Texas plains and the stark white—the lack of picturesque meets the lack of the obvious. What he went after delighted me and really had an effect on me—had an influence on me, I should say. I hope that mine are regarded as that.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, then you had no actual supervision during any of this work with the Federal Art Project?

PETER HURD: You mean supervision from Washington?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. [Inaudible.]

[Cross talk.]

PETER HURD: Nobody came by to look at me.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Inaudible] just okay [inaudible]—

PETER HURD: As I remember, nobody came by. Seems to me, Ned [sic] Rowan came by one night, or one day, when I wasn't around, and reported having seen me, but I didn't see him, Ned—Ed Rowan, at all. I think he was on his way to Mexico, and what calls it to mind is skimming through those letters we had just been looking at—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

PETER HURD: —I noticed one of them, said, I'll be in Mexico then. Or I'm on my way back. I seem to think he did, but I didn't see him, I'm quite sure. Anyway, no interference of any kind from the government.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: At all?

PETER HURD: My things were not controversial. They had no propaganda in them. They were not way yonder in the avant-garde, so therefore, I had no problem of any kind.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, are there any other comments that you'd like to make, just about your work during that period?

PETER HURD: Only this, that I think it was a most stimulating period at that time, due to the fact that I felt I was key to the progress of our country, and that I had a real—my life had certain—suddenly, assumed a new meaning, as a result of this interest in me of—by our federal government. And I felt a certain prestige, kind of, from them, and felt [on my mettle (ph)] do the right best I possibly could, as a result of this. And to let nothing stand in my way to do the very, very best possible. I look back on them now, of course, with eyes that have acquired, through many years, a calculating, critical ability, I think, because it seems every artist seems to—any artist that grows—that wishes to grow, must first of all create within himself a critical sense—a self-critical sense, not necessarily the works of other people, but certainly of his own work. Look at them with the most unbiased vision possible.

I remember a dealer of mine in New York, William Macbeth [ph] and Son—Bob Macbeth [ph] was alive during my lifetime—was my first dealer in New York. And a wonderful man he was. And Bob Macbeth [ph] said to me one time, You know what young artists should do? And old ones, too, for that matter. As soon as you've completed the work, and you've done it, and it is completed, turn it faced to the wall. Put it in a closet. Get it out of your sight and don't look at it for six months. Then, someday, feeling neither very sanguine, or very hopeless, just in an alert mood, take that painting out and look at it. See what's good about it, and above all, see what's bad about it. And that is a very good piece of advice. Unquestioningly, you can't always do that. But I go back to my early murals and see what I was after, and of course, inevitably wish they were much better than they are.

[00:35:20]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Have you done any murals since then?

PETER HURD: Yes, I have. I've done quite a few since then. I did one big one for the Prudential Building in Houston, and the largest of all was 16 big fresco panels in Texas Tech, the rotunda of the Texas Tech Museum, and that was a very interesting commission. And we're now—my associates and I, my son-in-law—who's a London-born painter, a very talented young man—and I, and our group is bidding on—or have won, we believe, a mural commission in Texas, for the governor of Texas.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: So, you're still doing it?

PETER HURD: So—yes, but I think I'm going to—my hands are going to do the leg work, now.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. What is your son-in-law's name?

PETER HURD: His name is Peter Rogers [ph].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Peter Rogers [ph].

PETER HURD: I hope—he does a [inaudible], I'd love to have you meet him. He's a wonderful man, full of talent and lots of pep and bounce, and I'm sure proud of him.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, that's nice to have a colleague right in your own family.

PETER HURD: Isn't it true? Yes. The Wyeth and Hurd families seem to abound with colleagues so far, though. I hope it goes on.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, what affect do you think these Federal Art Projects had on the art of America?

PETER HURD: That's a difficult question for me to answer, Mrs. Loomis, for the reason that I'm so isolated here. I just don't know. I would say a very salutary effect, and a very stimulating effect. I don't know about—

[Cross talk.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Inaudible], certainly.

PETER HURD: I don't feel that we are in an age of art, I'm sorry to say. We live in an age of man's—the spirit of man has turned away from art. That is, the great brains of today, it seems to me—the ones that parallel the Renaissance period and turn to such fields and such lucrative fields as advancing medicine, conquest of space, and things of that sort. And alas, the artist is not in that league. But don't let me sound the least disturbed about this, because I have no reason to, for this reason: we artists never had such an audience—to use that expression broadly—we never have such interest in our work. We never have such prices paid before, such eagerness to acquire works. And perhaps, after all, it will turn out one day better than I think we will.

I'm not an innovator, anyway. Sometimes I wish I were, but since I'm not designed to be an innovator, I stick to traditional methods and approaches, and stay, pretty much, close to home. I'm, for better or for worse, a realist—a regionalist, because I'm deeply moved and activated by this country of mine, and this very landscape, and this light, and this life that I live in.

[Cross talk.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: You certainly catch the—

PETER HURD: This austere—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: quality of it in your paintings.

PETER HURD: Thank you. I feel I'm just cracking the surface. I used to hear my father-in-law say that. "Oh, give me more time. I'm just barely getting under the dirt, scarring the surface." It's nice to know people are accepting my work and willing to pay most generously for it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, don't you think that this period did make the general public more conscious of art?

PETER HURD: I do, indeed. I think that was a leavening. That was the yeast, right there, that made the loaf expand. We had the makings of it before that, but I think the federal interest in art, from PWA—that is, the WPA project, I should say wherein the poor suffering people who needed food were able to sell their works to the government—was a great stimulus and couldn't have been anything but beneficial to the artist, in more than a—in other ways than the purely materialistic. In a spiritual way, we felt we were being recognized by our government. Our life has a meaning now. A real meaning, it gave us.

And I certainly felt it very deeply, and I was—I felt, almost, a fanatic commitment to do the very best possible I could on those walls, and let no stone be unturned as far as technique,

or as far as any of the principles of art be concerned. Everything, in technique and durability, and so forth. The results—I don't want to refer to. I don't know anything about how that works. It certainly was true that I did my best and I believe the rest of us did. All the men I talked to felt very much like I did, enflamed and inspired by this great opportunity with the federal government, that allowed us.

[00:40:03]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, well I think that it really did have that effect on people, in general.

PETER HURD: I do, too.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But before that, to buy an original work of art was sort of a category of the rich people.

PETER HURD: Exactly, and now, true enough, that is certainly—exactly true. So true. People from those days on, have bought works from all of us on the basis of monthly or quarterly payments, or yearly—however they want to. And most of us, myself included, are perfectly happy with such arrangements. Right now, I have two, three people paying me on an installment basis.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Inaudible.] That's nice. Now, after this part in your life, I read that you went as war correspondent for *Life* magazine.

PETER HURD: Yes, I did.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: You drew sketches of the armed forces.

PETER HURD: That's correct.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Can you tell us something—a little about that?

PETER HURD: I left in May 1942, having received a telegram from my new friend and, ever since, fast friend, Daniel Longwell, editor of *Life* magazine saying, in effect, Get on your horse, we want you to go abroad as we have discussed—all the plans we've outlined. *Life* had previously sent me to California during the defense efforts, to make a painting which the editor selected for me to do, and it turned out to be something I was able to do, but as it usually happens when another fellow suggests the subject, it isn't what one would've—what I would've picked myself, in my case. But one would not have been picked—as you see, it takes a very special sort of rapport between the artist and the suggester of the subject, and we—Dan Longwell, my good, good friend—fast friend, from all these years, didn't quite pick what I would have done. It showed machine gun practice, with tracer bullets flying through the air. I see just what he meant with his fine journalistic sense. He saw the drama of this thing. It was a real, real chore. That was not a highly successful thing, but *Life* printed it and they were friendly about it, and complimentary.

From then on, I went with assignment to the air force, and I could tell you for the rest of the day what happened during that period, of course, but basically, it too was a thrilling experience. I have mixed feelings on—very little feeling about having contributed to the war effort. And I felt constantly as a frustrated soldier because I would meet my classmates from West Point all over the map, and they would look at me with some mixed feelings also, seeing me in a correspondent's uniform. Having had pretty good military training. But that seemed to be my best, to me, and that's what it was. I couldn't combine both, obviously. I couldn't work for two people, Uncle Sam and this—the organization known as *Time* incorporated [ph]. So I chose the latter, and it was with my life well insured, as it seemed in those days. And a \$500 a month salary, and an arrangement with the air force—with the military in general, to be flown wherever I wanted to be—to go, and to be fed at officer's messes and lodged free of charge. I paid what other officers paid, as the case may be. I spent from June—it was June before I got to England until close to the end of the war, racing around the globe.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: June, when?

PETER HURD: June of '42.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: '42.

PETER HURD: Yes, until nearly the end of the war. I was back home in '43 to complete large works from the sketches and notes made in the various theaters of operation. I was with 8th Air Force, with the 12th, the 15th, and the ATC, the Air Transport Command—was then the ATC. ATC now stands for Air Training Command in the Air Force. I learned the jargon that flyers learned to respect and greatly admire them, and I had never flown in an airplane, except for one time, until the time I found myself bound for Europe, in a blacked-out bomber. No, that's wrong. It wasn't a bomber that time. It was a transport—contract transport. I flew in many a bomber and many a transport, and one or two jump seat fighter planes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And when was it you came back, then?

PETER HURD: I came back finally in '44.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: '44.

PETER HURD: Yes. I wasn't the war at all in '45, in the sense that they—in any theater of operation. I was working for *Life* magazine completing the drawings I made in '44.

[00:45:05]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Now, what—I read also that you—that's when you could get into your work in watercolor.

PETER HURD: I did, indeed, and I want to tell you about that, before we close.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes.

PETER HURD: My brother-in-law, Andrew Wyeth, was a precocious brat, as a little boy of six, when I met him—met his father, and he would sit by the hour, splashing watercolors at World War I soldiers. Whom he'd never seen, but he was fascinated by the works of John W. Thomason, a marine artist—a Marine Corps artist—United States Marine Corps. He was a professional soldier in the marines, and they—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Thomason?

PETER HURD: Thomason. T-H-O-M-A-S-O-N. A Texan with a tremendous amount of ability and—both literary and artistic minds. Illustrator mind. He wrote such books as *Fix Bayonets!* and short stories called *Red Pants*, and so on. Wonderful books. Very great stories in them. So, Andrew was under his influence, strongly, with splashing watercolor. Well, when I came back in '44, Andy was no kid then. See, he was born in 1917, so that would make him—what? Let me see, now. 27. 17—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: From what, '45?

PETER HURD: '44. January of '44.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Then he would be 24. 27.

PETER HURD: 27, was he? You can see why I had trouble with mathematics at West Point. [They laugh.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I have to do it on paper.

PETER HURD: So, Andy volunteered to take me out and show me watercolor, which had always been a mystifying technique for me, but he had a natural and wonderful adeptness with it, and aptitude for. So, sure enough, we went out and drew all over the place. Hills, and make notes, and I would look over his shoulder, I'll never forget watching Andy with a big pad of paper, great full size—full sheets that he made into pads, sitting down on the cold earth in January—it was in December or January when we were doing this—scratching away with a razor. Fighting it—it looked like he was having a battle with himself on the paper, picking up, slapping watercolor into puddles of water, lifting the paper pad and tilting it this way and that way. Flinging the color on, scratching and muttering to himself, telling me why he did this, and why he did that. And out of it, though my technique couldn't approach Andy's, it isn't even attempting—it isn't even in the same direction, it was amazing how something magical would come out of these efforts.

One day, I recall we were up there—and by then I had some small notoriety as a war

correspondent, my things having appeared in *Life*—and the owner of the land, the estate on which we were painting— with a view looking over the Brandywine—overlooking the Brandywine—appeared, and looked over my shoulder—ignoring Andy, who was a very youthful-looking 24-year-old. He said, "You're Mr. Hurd, aren't you?" "Yes, sir." "Well, I own this land," and I had known he did. He introduced himself, and showed no resentment about using it as a perch. "I think that's a wonderful painting you're doing," completely ignoring Andy's, which was so far much better than mine. So much farther than mine. He said, "Would you consent to sell that to me?" And I said, always ready to turn a quick buck, "Yes, I will sell it to you." I think he bought it from me for \$300, ignoring Andy's still, and Andy's would have brought so much more than that thing of mine. He used mine for a Christmas card, only because of the fact he knew my name, as a correspondent. He's dead, now, I'm sorry to say. I don't even remember his name. I wouldn't want to use his name, anyway. But, that's a strange sort of flip fate, isn't it?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, it is.

PETER HURD: Andy's gone so far ahead.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And was that [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

PETER HURD: Yeah, Andy's was very free, Mrs. Loomis. His had that wonderful, scintillating—that coruscating freedom of color overlapped, one color over the other. It was a marvelous impression of that snowy landscape, of ice skaters below us. A beautiful thing, but mine was—I was still very literate—that's not the world I mean. Very—what is the word, exactly? Very faithful to the fact.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

PETER HURD: I was realistic and observed and set down just what I did, in this work I was doing.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, that was when you started emphasizing watercolor, isn't it?

PETER HURD: Yes, from then on, because I knew I couldn't travel with the ATC very well and have a tempera outfit, and who was going to supply the fresh eggs? In England I lucked out and found that dried eggs, dried egg yolks, were perfectly fine. I've seen some of those things since, and they're wonderful.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that right?

PETER HURD: Yes, eggs were absolutely unattainable in Britain, so that's what I used.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What other media have you worked in?

PETER HURD: Fresco, egg yolk—egg tempera—as a student oil of course. Oil and charcoal. But, as a professional painter, egg tempera, watercolor, fresco, lithography, and wash and quill drawings, pen and wash quill drawings. I think that's just about all.

[00:50:05]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I don't know if we have time. I wanted to ask you a little bit about your agreement with the Roswell Museum. I spent yesterday afternoon there.

PETER HURD: Oh, so, did you?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. And—

PETER HURD: That is certainly the greatest tribute any native son could have by his town, don't you think?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, I certainly do.

PETER HURD: To create that beautiful wing—[Cross talk.] And there are many things that aren't—there's not room enough to shown them there.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I saw—

PETER HURD: I mention this only to let you know people have gone on buying these things for the museum. And again, as it happened with me with the federal government puts me on the wonderful spot. I'm on the spot but it's a good spot, to feel that I have to live up to this tremendous faith in me, you see?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: How did that come about?

PETER HURD: It came about through a wealthy oilman who settled in Roswell temporarily, and he wasn't the typical roustabout turned lucky and millionaire, or any such thing. He came from a farm background in the Middle West. He'd gone to Williams College. He had done a lot of very charitable things. That's not quite the word to describe it. He had this new wealth that he found in the oilfields of eastern New Mexico, done tremendous *pro bono publico* things. I seek for just the word. Things of an eleemosynary nature. Things that were good for the community. And he said to me one day, I've been buying your lithographs. He was a client of my father's and a good friend. He said, I'd like to buy all your lithographs, now, and present them to this little museum here—which had been built by the WPA, incidentally, and was harboring no paintings or work of any kind except some WPA artists' efforts, mostly in the form of hand-carved furniture, and such. And it was a rather musty, old place, without sufficient funds to keep it clean, and much smaller. There was only the big room—a central room, you know? And it was beautifully made out of adobe, however. A splendid architectural—solid architecture, very well-made, and in good style and good taste, I feel.

So, this man, who preferred to be anonymous all through his dealings with the museum, said, I want to buy a collection of your watercolors, so I rounded up every one I'd done. I'm sorry, lithographs, I mean to say. A collection of your lithographs for this museum. Soon, Paul Horgan came along and said—no, then he said, I would like to do—present one each year of your tempera paintings—or, your paintings, whether watercolor or tempera—to this museum. And I don't want to beg down on your price, your going price is what I'll pay. And that's just what he did, for several years. Then, along came Paul, who grabbed the ball and ran, and said, Let's build a wing with public donation. So, he went around to key people in Roswell, 10 or 12, including my mother and father, who contributed, I think, \$1000 or so apiece, and that created the wing. Then, the city of Roswell came into the picture and said, We'll maintain it, with our municipal funds, we will maintain the museum. Well, now, it's expanded tremendously beyond that.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

PETER HURD: And I'm a small part of it, actually, but I'm very happy to be in any part of it—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, oh.

PETER HURD: —with a wing to myself.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: It certainly is a beautiful display of your work, and I was going through the history of the museum, and I saw that it's—the life of it was revived about 1949 with your wing.

PETER HURD: That's true.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And that—

PETER HURD: And that was Paul Horgan, who was its first director, and he has a plaque and a bust made by a sculptor in Colorado, to commemorate his very signal action in activating and—

[Cross talk.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, well, I—

PETER HURD: —[inaudible] museum. But the unknown—that is to say, the known but anonymous donor, was also a man of tremendous imagination.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. Well, I just wondered if there wasn't somebody else—



[Cross talk.]

PETER HURD: Yes, there was, a man with a lot of money, and he said, I don't want to be known in this, because I don't see a reason for it, but I would like you to know that I want something to go back into the community. I've taken a great deal of money out of the earth in this general area, and you have municipal parks, you have a new hospital, you have various other facilities—he named, having gone into the matter in depth. Now, what you haven't got is anything of the spirit, of the human spirit, you have nothing in the way of a museum, and therefore, I'm going to start that. And he and a relative of his has done a tremendous amount—have done a great deal of work in [inaudible].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I thought it got a big shot in the arm, about that time, and it coincides with your—with the wing.

PETER HURD: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And also with the Paul Horgan's interest, as I read— his brochure that he put out at that time.

PETER HURD: Paul was the director for several years and a very enthusiastic and imaginative one, as you can imagine, being an artist himself. He could have been a painter if he wanted to.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that right?

PETER HURD: He chose literature with some indecision, actually. And this present director, entirely different to Paul Horgan, is equally efficient.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That's Mr. Smith?

PETER HURD: That's Mr.—no, I didn't mean the director. I'm sorry. I did say director.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

PETER HURD: Paul was not director. Paul was chairman of the board of directors.

[00:55:01]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

PETER HURD: They call them board of regions, or whatever it is. The present chairman of the board is Donald Anderson.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes.

PETER HURD: And he is excellent in a different way to Paul. Just as good. There's no—not any difference. But both, in his own way, have been marvelous. They sort of both lucky—the museum is lucky in both men, in my opinion.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: It's a beautiful museum. The first time I [inaudible]—

PETER HURD: Isn't it? For a small town like Roswell, that's quite a triumph. I'm glad to notice that they're picking their visits—or their visitor numbers are picking up tremendously.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I've been hearing about it for years, but I just never had occasion to come down so that I knew what programs were carried out particularly when Dr. Gebhart [ph] was here. I knew him, so that I kept track of what was going on. Well, now I just wonder if you care to comment about your feelings on the popular art movement today versus the type of painting that you do. I see—

PETER HURD: I have never seen a single work in popular—Pop art—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No, I didn't mean Pop art. I meant the type of art that is being shown, generally, with great big washes of color, with no—maybe some design or color, but no representation subject matter at all. That has apparently just, sort of, swept over the country, but I feel that—I feel that there's a trend in the other direction, now.

PETER HURD: I feel it is—I do, too. My feeling about it is that that had to come—that sort of freedom had to appear, and it's done quite a lot of good. I believe, for this reason, that anytime the academic and the stultifying influence of the studio painter becomes too strong, as it did in the 19th century, until the Impressionists took it out of doors—took painters out of doors, that's a bad period for art to go through. And I feel that this has been very excellent, this—I couldn't begin to know how to paint an abstraction. I wouldn't know anything about it. I've seen some fascinating ones, and they have enlivened my interest, and I find when I'm on a jury, I often pick a great many of those things that may be meaningless, but the colors fascinate me—meaningless as far as anything but a completely emotional impact is concerned, you know. In a special way, in the way music has, let's say.

But I am in no sense sneering at any of them, though if I were given my choice between the greatest abstraction I've ever seen, and the greatest art of the masters of the past, I wouldn't hesitate one second, or even an indifferent work by a master of the past would appeal to me more because, often, they have abstract design in them, as well as a soul, a heart, a meaning. There's a certain understandable quality, which is often missing in abstract art, to me. I believe art is a communication, and above all, it must be understandable. If you have to learn a new language for each Abstractionist that appears on the scene, you're going to run out of all language ability. You can't possibly make it. This is a stumbling sort of end to this thing, but I think it's been good, do you?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, I do, too.

PETER HURD: I hope I stated my—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, yes.

PETER HURD: Sometime, I'd like to hear it rerun, if I could.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: All right, well—

PETER HURD: Time won't allow now, but.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, are you going to be in Santa Fe anytime in the near future?

PETER HURD: No, but I'll remember where you are and I'll look you up.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I don't have the—I won't have the tape recording after I send it to Detroit, and then they send it back to me to—

[Cross talk.]

PETER HURD: [Inaudible] unimportant.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —correct the transcript.

PETER HURD: Doesn't matter a bit.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But maybe I could get you a copy of the transcript.

PETER HURD: That would be sort of fun, wouldn't it? If it's simple and doesn't cost anything to the foundation. I'd rather use it for better purposes than supplying me with one.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, we're very grateful to you, and also for these papers that you're letting us—

[Cross talk.]

PETER HURD: You take those.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —microfilm.

PETER HURD: Fine, you take those.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And then we'll get them back to you.

PETER HURD: Did that answer all your questions?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, that's—we got right to the end of it, just about the end of the tape.

PETER HURD: Good, good.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Thank you very much, Mr. Hurd.

PETER HURD: Hey, this was [inaudible]—

[END OF TRACK AAA\_hurd64\_176\_m.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]