



Smithsonian  
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Oral history interview with Ivan  
Messenger, 1964 July 31

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Ivan Messenger on July 31, 1964. The interview took place in San Diego, California, and was conducted by Betty Lochrie Hoag McGlynn 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.

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. The original transcript was edited. In 2022 the Archives retranscribed the original audio and attempted to create a verbatim transcript. Additional information from the original transcript has been added in brackets and given an -Ed. attribution.

## Interview

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now we can begin. This is Betty Lochrie Hoag on July 31, 1964, interviewing Mr. Ivan Messenger—that's I-V-A-N M-E-S-S-E-N-G-E-R—in his home in San Diego. Mr. Messenger, do you use a middle initial—

IVAN MESSENGER: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —at all?

IVAN MESSENGER: No, I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Just go by that name?

IVAN MESSENGER: Just the two names.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mr. Messenger worked on the Federal Arts Project in San Diego doing easel paintings. And was closely associated with all of the artists in this area, and shared much information with us already about—for which we're very grateful. And before we talk about it, I wanted to ask you a little bit about your own life. Would you tell me where you were born, and when, if you care to?

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes, I'd be glad to. I was born in Omaha, Nebraska, 1895. And my family left there shortly toward California, coming gradually. And we arrived in East Hollywood, of all places [they laugh] in the early part of the century.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This was when you were still a little boy then.

IVAN MESSENGER: Very, very small, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Uh-huh [affirmative], that makes you almost a Californian then.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes, I hesitate to say so, but actually, we came to California—my parents and I as a very small child in a covered wagon with—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You did?

IVAN MESSENGER: —on the Colorado River [ph] [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, isn't that interesting?

IVAN MESSENGER: If I'd have just—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't know they had them that late.

IVAN MESSENGER: Oh, yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'm surprised.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

IVAN MESSENGER: Dismantled the wagon, and took it apart, and put it on a rowboat to cross the river. And then, later on, transferred to a train. And the baggage car burned, and then all of our belongings were—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

IVAN MESSENGER: —burned up in the fire.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Heavens. How many children did your parents have with them?

IVAN MESSENGER: They were five then. And my mother, I remember, one of the first things, she was walking the streets of East Hollywood trying to find someone who would take a family in with five children [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, how terrible.

IVAN MESSENGER: She had a quite a—quite a difficult time really.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: But in those days, of course, Hollywood was a very different sort of place.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

IVAN MESSENGER: It had no reputation. [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Had your father planned to farm or something in this area? Or did he have a—

IVAN MESSENGER: No, actually—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —something waiting for him?

IVAN MESSENGER: —he was a rather—a nomad, following that early call, go West, you know? And he had the position offered as—on the Parker Indian Reservation is why I came—we came to the southern part of California at that time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Pardon, is that P-A-R-K?

IVAN MESSENGER: P-A-R-K-E-R, Parker—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, Parker.

IVAN MESSENGER: —Indian Reservation.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: He was supposed to have charge of teaching agriculture to the Indians in the area.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

IVAN MESSENGER: And, actually, I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Kind of a Point Four Program at home.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah. [They laugh.] Actually, I was the first—I was the only white child in school.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, how—

IVAN MESSENGER: The rest were Indians. And all I remember is they had these huge charts of the alphabet.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: They would turn the leaves over, and then we would read—every day we would review the one before, so [laughs]—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

IVAN MESSENGER: —at the most I got from that course was the English alphabet. [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Which you probably already knew anyway. [They laugh.]

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, I [laughs] hope I did.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] Well, how old were you?

IVAN MESSENGER: Oh, say five or six.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: Then I went to Los Feliz High—Los Feliz Grammar School two years, then Hollywood High School. You wish to know this too [laughs]?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, I was—I'm waiting for you to say that you got interested in painting. This probably happened at Hollywood High School, didn't it?

IVAN MESSENGER: No, that came much later.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Much later?

IVAN MESSENGER: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah. I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, good. Then, tell me what happened [they laugh] until then [laughs]?

IVAN MESSENGER: Then, we—another move was up to Paso Robles, where I went the last two years of high school and graduated with—in Paso Robles High School.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: Four boys in the graduating class.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Really?

IVAN MESSENGER: So, we had quite an interesting—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

IVAN MESSENGER: —couple of years. [They laugh.] Yeah. Then, back to—back to Hollywood, and two years in the Los Angeles Junior College. Then to Stanford University.

[00:05:04]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What were you taking there?

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, I was interested in languages at that time. I majored in Spanish—romance languages. Still no art except the weekends that I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I graduated from Stanford too.

IVAN MESSENGER: Did you?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And there was—the art department when I was—

IVAN MESSENGER: Oh.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —there had 20 graduates.

IVAN MESSENGER: Oh really?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: So, I can imagine you were there before, probably wasn't much—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —of anything.

IVAN MESSENGER: —Pedro Lemos [Pedro Joseph de Lemos].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Lemos, mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah, Lemos was there. But, actually, there was very little art there, as I remember, at that time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'm sure there must not have been.

IVAN MESSENGER: No, I don't remember that, anything. I wasn't taking art anyway.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: So, I'd simply made a copy of—well, actually one of Rembrandt's paintings, *The Mill*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: And one or two other prints that were around the house. And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: At least you were starting with—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —something grandiose [laughs].

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah [laughs]. My first—my first original work was a sunset on a mountain ranch. For 10 years, we had a ranch out in the mountains back of—back of San Diego. It was a sky very well spattered with colored clouds. And it suggested sort of an explosion [laughs], maybe of a truck [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs] full of eggs or something like that. [They laugh.] But I only did artwork at weekends while I was teaching there. And then, I went to Stanford.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, wait a minute. You were teaching—when you were teaching where?

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This was later?

IVAN MESSENGER: I taught at the last—during my senior year at Stanford.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

IVAN MESSENGER: And then a graduate year; I stayed another year to get a master's degree.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: And, from there to two years in Texas University. But the only—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Also in languages?

IVAN MESSENGER: That is in languages too—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: —yes. I still—my only art was—well, in Texas, I had gone out to paint some of the bluebonnets, for example, that being the state flower.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: Done a little bit of work on that. Call it original, that was my first work.

And then, back—the hot summers were driving me out of Texas. They were too much. I lived in California so long I—the only opening in California, when I decided to leave there, was at Riverside Polytechnic High School. And so, that was my last official year of teaching. And I began to do a little more artwork and—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: About what year was that when you left Riverside Poly—

IVAN MESSENGER: Oh, it was about 1926.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And you were living there at the time? Or did you come down to San Diego after the—right after the—

IVAN MESSENGER: We came to San Diego. We had the mountain ranch for 10 years. And I would come home during vacation periods—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

IVAN MESSENGER: —to work on the ranch.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: Then I started to paint; went to the desert first around Palm Springs area. And I was interested in that. A little landscape classes. And it was with a Bulgarian sculptor, Katchamakoff and—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Would you mind spelling his name?

IVAN MESSENGER: K-A-T-C-H-A-M-A-K-O-double F.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Thank you.

IVAN MESSENGER: Atanas Katchamakoff.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: We started an art school here. Didn't have it very long or successful [laughs] period.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Are you a sculptor too, or dos—

IVAN MESSENGER: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I just wondered if you'd ever gone into that.

IVAN MESSENGER: No, I've never done any of that. Though I should like to sometimes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: But, so far, I've just stuck to painting, various types of painting, of course, and—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, have you done any teaching since, or—

IVAN MESSENGER: Off and on. Yes, I've had adult classes and some private classes. But, not regularly except at the state college where I—I was out there for a while—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: —[taking one of the teacher's places -Ed.]—Lowell Houser in fact.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, when Houser was there?

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: When he—when he was—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

IVAN MESSENGER: —was in the service.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, you took his class? I didn't understand—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah, his class.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —what you said.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, during World War II.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: And brick making, and structure, and composition.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And that would be when Mr. Jackson was there—

IVAN MESSENGER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —too then.

IVAN MESSENGER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wasn't he head of the department?

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes, mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't put that on the tape this morning because I wasn't sure.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah, he has been for a long time, just recently retired.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: Now, of course, he's having a wonderful time [laughs] catching up. I must tell you this incident. When I knew he was to retire, I said, Well, I suppose it'll take you a while to get adjusted to your retirement. He said, Oh, will it? He said, It'll take me about five minutes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] Oh.

[00:10:03]

IVAN MESSENGER: [Laughs.] He's been spending what time he could across the border. As you know, he's quite interested in—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

IVAN MESSENGER: —Mexican work.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, he's working madly. He was—

IVAN MESSENGER: They were—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —drawing away—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —the whole time I was interviewing Mr. Houser this morning. He wasn't wasting one minute.

IVAN MESSENGER: He has a wonderful concentration.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Doing some nice things, mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes. Even during school class, our offices were in the same part there, I was surprised to see that he could come out of a classroom and sit down [and draw. Our

offices were in the park then -Ed.], and even between classes, he could—he could do a little drawing, you know [laughs]? But most people can't—they can't profit from a few minutes that way.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No, they can't concentrate, mm-mm [negative].

IVAN MESSENGER: No. So, he's very fortunate being able—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

IVAN MESSENGER: —to do that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He's a lovely person.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I enjoyed talking to him.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah, a wonderful friend, and a wonderful painter too.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: Illustrator, and some wonderful things. Illustrations—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I saw some of his books this morning.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah, they're beautiful.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Anyway, we'd better get back to you here. [Laughs.] I have you taking some classes with a sculptor in his art school down at Palm Springs.

IVAN MESSENGER: No, we just—I didn't take a class.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You were painting.

IVAN MESSENGER: We were together. Yeah, we—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

IVAN MESSENGER: —got the school going and started organizing.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I'm sorry. You were teaching then—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —of course, yes.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah, painting. Then, I was only there about two years. And then my wife and I found a cabin up near Julian and were there off and on for a period of years back and forth between the desert and the mountains.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wonderful combination for a painter.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah, it was pretty good.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

IVAN MESSENGER: Nice contrast of country, climate, and [inaudible] our first prolonged trip to South America.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What year was that?

IVAN MESSENGER: That was 1936.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: And I was—and my wife was interested in food lore at that time. So, I used to go to the markets and pick up samples of fruit that we were not acquainted with. And make sketches of them, and cut them in half, and draw the inside too. And put their



names, and their uses, and drinks, and dishes. And, at that time, I was—I had picked out Ecuador because of their Quechua Indians, and their colorful dress, background for some juvenile writing I had hoped to do on that subject, and also for sketching material.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: And my wife thought the Cocora Valley in Columbia offered a very rich field for culinary interests. So, we spent six months in Ecuador and six months in Columbia.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you—did a book come out of this combination of—

IVAN MESSENGER: No, we both worked on [laughs] our material but [laughs]—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, it sounds like it should have with your drawings and her understanding about the cooking.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes, we—it may some time or the other.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: We've gotten away from it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And then, let's see, the Project period comes in there, then, if that was '36.

IVAN MESSENGER: In '36, yes, wouldn't it have been.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah, so let's jump over that and come back to it—

IVAN MESSENGER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —shall we?

IVAN MESSENGER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Fine. What—let's see, this would be then after World War II, about, because that was the end of the Project. You were here during the war.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Right? Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: That's the—we had gone to Mexico. Then that was '30—let's see, the first trip was probably '36, '38, I think '38—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: —we went to Mexico. Well, it seems rather strange, but I entered the Project in the archeological field [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, you did?

IVAN MESSENGER: [Laughs.] [Inaudible] because of my interest in Mexico.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. Well, how interesting. I didn't know that.

IVAN MESSENGER: I knew at that time the librarian, a very interesting lady. And I had said I was—wanted some material in that field and started digging out books. And by the time she had finished—it had been 15 or 20 minutes—the table was [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs] stacked with these books [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

IVAN MESSENGER: And very soon, I realized [laughs] it was too much material for me to do. And someone else doubtless could be better trained and possibly more interested in that, and I'd better do my painting. So, then I switched to the painting side.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You mean, this was at the Project—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —when you first started in—I see. [They laugh.] So, you—

IVAN MESSENGER: Although I found it very fascinating, of course, the archeological—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

IVAN MESSENGER: —background. But it seemed to me that painting was my forte rather than that, and I'd better stay to that. So, I transferred to the other. And—

[00:15:01]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You were in easel painting—

IVAN MESSENGER: I—yes, I thought since I'd recently been to Mexico and was interested in Mexico too. And perhaps [it would be good subject matter -Ed.] I talked [it over with Mrs. Martha Farnum and decided I should do something -Ed.] in that line, and made three paintings. As I remember now, with the data that accompanied them, one of the market in Mexico and one the road to market, and then there was a native Mexican village.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: One of those was Xochimilco, wasn't it, with the flower arrangers?

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah, that's right, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That—in 1936, I had a—

IVAN MESSENGER: That's—yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —memo that you'd done that, mm-hmm [affirmative]. And these were all things that you had—no, you hadn't been to Mexico in '36. You said you went in '38.

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, I had been there first in 20—from Texas I went down—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

IVAN MESSENGER: —the first time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: 20—let's see, 1923 or '4.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You've really always been interested in the Indians, particularly, then.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes. I suppose—my first show in San Diego contained several things with Indians and—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: —the Indians I remembered from the Parker Indian Reservation; cremation scenes, and then mother and child ideas, and that sort of thing I was interested in —

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What Indians are on the Parker Reservation?

IVAN MESSENGER: Oh, they're the Yuma stock.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yuma?

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes, because at that—at that time I was impressed with the contrast of the schooling of the Indians, and the—and their natural ease in native life. See, they were forced to come to school. That's one thing my father had to deal with. When they wanted to play hooky, he'd have to find them and bring them back to the school.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: And the girls had to wear these tight shoes and—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: —everything. It was—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Regimented.

IVAN MESSENGER: Regimented, you know?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, [inaudible].

IVAN MESSENGER: Even then I sensed that—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Really?

IVAN MESSENGER: —and so I could understand why they would—wouldn't want to stay there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: At that time, the government was giving them certain rations. And they would come—there were wagons, I remember, long before ration day. Just sit, you know, to sit around and wait for their—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: —rather than going out and planting anything—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

IVAN MESSENGER: —and turning their own. It's psychologically bad influence as it's doling, as you know—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

IVAN MESSENGER: —in a more civilized [laughs]—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mother tells me stories in Montana about things that happened, too, when those rations finally came. Like, one time, all of the women in Browning, Montana — and I don't know how many, maybe 30 women in this one settlement, were given the same calico for their—

IVAN MESSENGER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —clothes for the year. And, one time, they got a whole—a half a train car shipment of women's shoes and they were all a left shoe. It was some—

IVAN MESSENGER: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —fouled up some place, you know [laughs], and the red tape. These poor people. And the calico, of course, made mother so furious because they're just like any other women; who wants to have the same dress on that the woman next door has [laughs], you know?

IVAN MESSENGER: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible] terrible.

IVAN MESSENGER: They got hoppers [ph] around? [They laugh.] Goodness. Well, this tribe in Oklahoma [inaudible] the government decided to be very generous and help them as much as possible. They built each family a little cottage with a fireplace. And they found later, sending representatives down to investigate, that the Indians had cut a hole in the middle of the floor, and a hole in the roof so they could sit around the fire, as they were accustomed to do, and smoke [inaudible]—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The way they liked it.

IVAN MESSENGER: Why not [laughs]?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah. Well, I— isn't it funny that they didn't realize that, why not from the beginning and give them that? I mean, why shouldn't they have it? That way, they could still give them plumbing and a few other things [laughs] to help—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —along with the fireplace.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah, the necessities—it seems the people who were in charge of that hadn't the experience or the understanding.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

IVAN MESSENGER: They don't understand the regimentation, trying to make other people live as [inaudible]. [They tried to force people to live as they thought they should. -Ed.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, we learn bit by bit, I guess.

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, maybe. I hope so. [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I do too. People—the Indians at Palm Springs you were speaking of —

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —apparently having it a little easier. Well, we should get back to the curricula—or the Project here. Incidentally, when I mentioned this painting of Xochimilco of 1936, I have it—that it was done in the San Diego curriculum. Were you part of that curriculum project that the Clarkes were active in?

IVAN MESSENGER: I would think—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It was done with the—or it was a Federal Arts Project, or was it—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —part of the curriculum for the school?

IVAN MESSENGER: No, it was Federal Arts Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, it didn't have anything to do with the curriculum proper—

IVAN MESSENGER: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —as they used it for the schools. You didn't illustrate any of those books.

[00:20:01]

IVAN MESSENGER: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They weren't part of that.

IVAN MESSENGER: That's what I mean.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I don't know [inaudible]. That is a mistake because I thought you did just the easel paintings for it. And do you know what happened to any of your—the paintings you did?

IVAN MESSENGER: I only remember that one later, I understood, had gone to one of the schools some place. And I don't remember whether—seemed to me it was up north of here, whether it was Fallbrook or Escondido. This—I don't remember it now. I understood that they were held in the visual education department until there was some call or some program in which they might have an appropriate place at the time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

IVAN MESSENGER: But actually, right now I don't know what has happened to them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'm certainly going to keep my eye out when I get around to the school [they laugh] and see if I can find some of these. It's terrible. Would you mind telling the tape what you discovered in a school the other day?

IVAN MESSENGER: Oh, yes. That one of Reiffel's very handsome back country scenes for which he had become famous in this area. This particular one of an orchard in bloom, very handsome mountain in the background, a cottage in the center, had been used in one of the schools as an announcement board. And this time I saw it, well perforated with pin holes and tack holes. [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That is just ghastly. It just makes you feel sick. It's a beautiful, beautiful painting. How anyone in the first place could have put the first tack in it, I can't understand.

IVAN MESSENGER: I can't either unless they could possibly have thought that—well, even if they had thought it was a print, I wouldn't see how you could do it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, you still couldn't.

IVAN MESSENGER: You still couldn't—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No.

IVAN MESSENGER: —do it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, from here you can't see the dots very much. And it's just lovely. And I hope you can restore it.

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, I should try because—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Because up close it—

IVAN MESSENGER: —it's too nice. We have two others of his—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, have you?

IVAN MESSENGER: —about that size; two of these small ones. He lived in our studio for a while, [up in Julian (ph)].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, he did?

IVAN MESSENGER: So he was a very good friend of ours, of course. Always had my great admiration. He was one painter that never became old, actually. He took up, oh, abstract art when he was well along [inaudible]. I think way over past 70 and he did very, very well at it. He was always very open minded, and eager, and active, and one of the good painters too, and an individual. So, it's a relief to know that he never had to discover this painting in the [laughs]—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

IVAN MESSENGER: —so mutilated.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, it's a good thing he didn't know. There is always so much luminosity in his paintings. Do you think he studied the impressionists? Is that the way he achieves it in these paint—

IVAN MESSENGER: Well—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He always was so conscious of—

IVAN MESSENGER: Of the light.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —the wonderful light in his paintings.

IVAN MESSENGER: Light, yes. And he had an individual way, too, of bringing the light forward from the rear by, very often, encircling. His chief forms is sort of a halo of—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

IVAN MESSENGER: —warm light. That it makes it—the light shine through, which is rather a distinctive of his—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: —particular work.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'll have to watch for it. I couldn't put my finger on what it was but you always recognized his—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —paintings immediately. They're different from other people.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes, I'm very fond of his back country stains.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What medium is this one? You told me—

IVAN MESSENGER: This is gouache.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Gouache.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah. See, in his early days, even before he came to California, he'd done a couple of gouache—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: —work.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You know in 1937, the Federal Arts Project put on an exhibit of the grease crayon paintings that he'd done at the San Diego Museum. And I read a little article about him last night in which it said that he had developed this because the curriculum in the projects worked with the schools.

IVAN MESSENGER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And the children, of course, using a grease crayon. And he felt that something could be done with them to help the children, so he'd gone ahead and developed it. And, of course, he ended up with these quite beautiful crayon—they're really paintings, if you can call them that, that he did for—where he used, isn't it sgraffito—where he'd—

IVAN MESSENGER: Mm-hmm [affirmative], scratch things.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —scratch things through with his nails as someone told me. [They laugh.] But I believe this is a medium that, otherwise, hasn't been used much since the last two or three years. I've never heard of anyone, that early, working with crayons as a serious medium. Have you?

IVAN MESSENGER: No, I don't—I don't think so. It's rather rare, I think.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I was amused at what you told me about his answer when someone asked how he'd got some of his soft effects. Would you mind telling [laughs] me again so the tape can have it?

[00:25:04]

IVAN MESSENGER: He said that he was asked one day how he got the beautiful surface effects of his—on his crayon work. And he didn't want to tell them the truth, so he said that he had used a certain formula for it and that seemed to satisfy them. And he laughingly said at the side, "Well, of course, I—all I did was just spit on my shirt sleeve and then rub it. [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

IVAN MESSENGER: He was wonderful—wonderful man, I think. Still talking about painting even when he was hospitalized and unable to get out—get off the bed, really, he was thinking what he was going to do as soon as he could get up. He was well along in his 80s.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did he die in the hospital?

IVAN MESSENGER: I think so, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And how old was he, I wonder?

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, in his 80s. I don't remember just what year now. But he—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No, they had a—

IVAN MESSENGER: —[inaudible] young spirit.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —his 75th birthday party for him in 1937. That was in the paper I was reading too.

IVAN MESSENGER: 1937, huh?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And also, I believe it said that some—there were some Danish dances composed for the birthday celebration. Was he born in Denmark, I wonder? I'm asking because—

IVAN MESSENGER: I don't know.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —there's very little information about him at all.

IVAN MESSENGER: I don't know that, no.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And I wondered why, unless he were Danish, they would—

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, I didn't go. I may not have been here. I don't remember that party.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The name sounds French, doesn't it?

IVAN MESSENGER: Right. You should be able to find out someplace about that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I—since his wife has died too there seems to be no one who—

IVAN MESSENGER: He has a niece some place. Many of his paintings, [inaudible] I think, went to some relative, some—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You don't know, because you're my last hope. Everyone—

IVAN MESSENGER: Am I?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —has finally said that—[they laugh] Messenger will know, ask him. I'm disappointed.

IVAN MESSENGER: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, we'll find out. But another per—excuse me.

IVAN MESSENGER: Relic of his, those scissors up there [he points to them -Ed.] is one of his [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Goodness, what did he use them for [laughs]?

IVAN MESSENGER: Cutting paper. Just like a tailor's scissors. He had several little things that he left when he—[in our cabin at Julian -Ed.].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: But honestly, I'm sorry, I don't know much of his background.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, we'll find more of it from someone sometime. I've been interested in it because there's quite a bit of his work around. And it's just so nice and everyone obviously loved him. And he was—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —had a terrific character, as well as a good painter.

IVAN MESSENGER: Didn't he come from Silverton, in east Connecticut—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: From Connecticut.

IVAN MESSENGER: It couldn't be one of—someone—someplace there we could write to.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, that would be a good way to trace it down.

IVAN MESSENGER: I'm sure we should know more.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Another person who isn't with us anymore is Dan Dickey. And—

IVAN MESSENGER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —I wondered if you can remember anything about him in relation to the Project that would be interesting. I know that he was a friend of yours.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes, he was—I know him quite, quite well. But I actually don't remember what he did on the Project. He might have been in a different—in a different branch. See, I worked next to Reiffel and next to George Rhone, and one or two others I didn't know very well at the time. And we were sort of in a little group there ourselves. And I don't remember Dan Dickey being there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

IVAN MESSENGER: He might've been in a different department.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I'm amazed that you were in a department. I thought that all the easel painters just did their things at home and brought them in once a month.

IVAN MESSENGER: Oh?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You were actually in—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes, we worked there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: At the center—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —wherever they had up there. Was this at the time that Mr. Field—Thyrus Field—was in charge or before that? Or do you remember?

IVAN MESSENGER: Martha Farnum was—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Martha Farnum.

IVAN MESSENGER: —in charge when I was in—working there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

IVAN MESSENGER: I did work at the library a little while, the children's department. I was working on some juvenile—well, I was working on some juvenile stories of Mexico, too, at the time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You mean illustrating it or writing it?

IVAN MESSENGER: No, writing it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

IVAN MESSENGER: And I worked some over there. And—where it was quiet, it was a different atmosphere.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: But I don't remember just what Dan Dickey did.



BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well—

IVAN MESSENGER: Didn't Ettilie Wallace—didn't she have some material on that?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah, I'm sure she will have. I've written to her, but I haven't had—  
[cross talk] —to see her on this trip. I will get out again—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —and she can tell me then. But you just mentioned George Rhone and I've been trying to find out about him also and no one knows. And all I know is he worked on the design index, because he made a copy of a painting that's up in the Sierra Museum.

[00:30:06]

And what—do you remember [cross talk] what else he—

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, he and Reiffel did those murals and all in the high school.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Russ Auditorium?

IVAN MESSENGER: Russ Auditorium. The murals on either side of that—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't know Rhone worked with—

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —Reiffel.

IVAN MESSENGER: They worked—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

IVAN MESSENGER: —they worked together on that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now, that's another case of something sad. I understand they're very beautiful. I haven't seen them. And they keep velvet drapes over—

IVAN MESSENGER: They're covered.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —them because of acoustics.

IVAN MESSENGER: Is that it?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: So, they tell me. It's a shame that they—

IVAN MESSENGER: [Inaudible] how that works out.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —can't be where they're enjoyed.

IVAN MESSENGER: [That's what a good number of -Ed.] people think. That happens, of course. Lots of Reiffel's work, and Fries' work too, in different buildings in San Diego that are not where they are really appreciated, no one pays attention to, or they're stuck in walls, back of offices, and back of desks.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And I found one in the civic center way down—

[Cross talk.]

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —behind—no one knew what it was or—

IVAN MESSENGER: Scattered around—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —cared. And it was a nice landscape.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes, too nice to be way out in some corner where—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

IVAN MESSENGER: —no one can see them. Of course, that's true of Fries. Fries didn't work on the Project, did he? Steve [ph] or Charles Fries?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Charles. Yes, that's whom I met. I say, I found one of his—

IVAN MESSENGER: Oh—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —one of his paintings; I found two Reiffel's in one office I just happened to be in. I wasn't looking for them, but they looked like that period so I went over and, sure enough, here was a little placard, you know, "WPA 19—" whatever it was, '37, '38. But this George Rhone, do you know anything else that he—

IVAN MESSENGER: No, I'm sorry. I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —did, anything about him?

IVAN MESSENGER: I've asked too many people, and no one yet has brought to light any information as to where he is or when he left. So, I don't—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

IVAN MESSENGER: —[inaudible] trace him.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, let's get back to your Mexican juvenile story. Was it a published or used, or do you know?

IVAN MESSENGER: No. I don't remember now whether we were aware—went off on a trip or what was a culmination of my service to the Project [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You don't remember the end of it at all.

IVAN MESSENGER: No. I don't remember the end of it, really.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, you warned me that you hadn't done much for it, so I think you've remembered a lot considering that.

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, I remember this one incident.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good.

IVAN MESSENGER: Reiffel and I were working together. We noticed across from the room a young lady sitting beside a huge barrel, pulling pieces of newspaper apart, just into little bits, and dropping them into the barrel. And went on hour after hour, day [laughs] after day.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How strange [laughs].

IVAN MESSENGER: Every little bit, Reiffel would look up and he would say, "Messenger, what's that girl doing?" And I looked over and I said, "Well, I don't know. I was wondering too." And then we'd [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs] try to get back to our work and concentrate. [They laugh.] And after about four or five days he said, "Well, I can't stand this anymore, I can't keep my mind on my work. I'm going to find out what she's doing." And so, we went over and she said very wearily, just tore another newspaper into little pieces, "Well, I'm doing this for papier-mâché."

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh no. [They laugh.] It was a Project job.

IVAN MESSENGER: [Inaudible] project. I thought she'd [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, she needed to be replaced by a machine. [They laugh.] Oh, the poor soul [laughs].

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, it's very useful work, a good deal of [things were made from papier-mâché -Ed.] and—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, of course—

IVAN MESSENGER: —someone had to do it. [They laugh.] Well, he said, "Well, maybe she's doing her work, and it's just as important as ours." [They laugh.] Made fun of the—so, we got back to our own work [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, in general, if you were going to summarize your opinion of the Project and what it did for art in San Diego, and the artists who worked on it, what would you say?

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, I think on the whole it was a—it was a beneficial thing. It certainly helped a great many of the artists over a bad period. While there's been derogatory comments about it, the aesthetic—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: —effectiveness and durability, undoubtedly in such a large affair as that where so many are brought in it is natural for a certain proportion of it will be weeded out sometime or other. Does not appear to be too important.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: And I'm sure, on the whole, many of the murals that were done, you know, that are permanent and—certainly in the—in the curricular field of textbooks and all that world of material that would otherwise never have come to light—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

IVAN MESSENGER: —have been useful [inaudible].

[00:35:08]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: San Diego has a real treasure in those I think.

IVAN MESSENGER: I would imagine.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They're beautiful.

IVAN MESSENGER: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

IVAN MESSENGER: So many worked on that. I don't know how extensive that field was, but it must have been very broad.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I saw about five shelves [of curriculum books -Ed.] down at the Visual Ed—

IVAN MESSENGER: Oh?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —library. And, you know, they're small. Most of them are only so wide. And it's just unbelievable. I couldn't think that they could have done that many. And I kept pulling them out and looking at them. And they're all kind of subjects that had to do with this area. It's fascinating [inaudible], and still being used.

IVAN MESSENGER: Are they now?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah. Yes, they're very fine.

IVAN MESSENGER: [Inaudible] very worthwhile. Certainly what you're doing now to revive it is very [laughs] worthwhile.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I'm really happy that the Archives are. I think it's a great thing.

IVAN MESSENGER: It's wonderful. Who originated the idea of reviving it and restoring the material that—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I don't know whose idea that was. In fact, I haven't been asked that question. I'll have to find out. I mean, why it's this period for this research, I don't know.

IVAN MESSENGER: [It is important to get materials from various ones, even though they can't remember too distinctly what happened. -Ed.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

IVAN MESSENGER: You know what the—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I don't think anyone remembers very well 30 years ago until, you know, you can remind them from something that you've read or that someone else says. It's certainly fun for us researchers doing this. And I appreciate so much your being so nice, giving me this talk.

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I've enjoyed it.

IVAN MESSENGER: I've enjoyed talking with you. I only regret that I can't remember more definite details about my particular part of the Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, if you do before I come down next time, do jot them down and we'll get them again. Because if you're like I am, a lot of things will come up at some time you go around the corner [laughs]. At least [inaudible]. Thank you again, Mr. Messenger.

IVAN MESSENGER: Well, thank you [inaudible].

[END OF TRACK AAA\_messen64\_8833\_m.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]